

Clarion

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Ruling Elders

As title for this introduction* the previous Office-bearers' Conference gave me the following: "The Background of the Presbyterian Idea that Elders and Deacons Are Representatives of the People and Its Evaluation". There is, however, a slight incorrect element in this title. I have not found that the Deacons are ever

called the "representatives of the people" and thus we shall have to confine our topic to the Elders, and then, more specifically, the Ruling Elders. The proper title would, therefore, be "The Background of the Presbyterian Idea that the Ruling Elders Are Representatives of the People and Its Evaluation". For brevity's sake I have simplified it and wrote as title

above this introduction simply "Ruling Elders".

Further, in the original title of this introduction, it is taken for granted that it is a Presbyterian idea . . .

*What follows here is the text of an introduction delivered at the Spring Conference of Office-bearers, held on Saturday, March 30 in Ebenezer Church, Burlington.

Further, in the title of this topic it is taken for granted that it is a Presbyterian idea that the Ruling Elders are called the representatives of the people. However, do we realize that the Canadian Reformed Churches, in Article 11 of their Church Order, state the following: "On the other hand, the Consistory, representing the Congregation . . ." The Canadian Reformed Churches extend the representation apparently to the whole Consistory, that is: the Ministers and the Elders. And in the Form for the Ordination of Elders and Deacons we read, "And thus the ministers of the Word, together with the Elders, form a body or assembly, being as a council of the Church, representing the whole Church . . ."

These quotations may show that we are to be very careful and not to judge by the sound of the words. When two different persons use the same expressions, they do not necessarily mean the same thing. And, as we shall see, even within the Presbyterian camp not everyone understands the same by what is expressed in the title of our introduction.

Much work in this respect has been done by Dr. S.G. Huh, who received his Th. D. degree from the Theological College of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands. The title of his doctoral thesis is *Presbyter in volle rechten* and he deals mainly with the controversy between Charles Hodge and James Thornwell, two theologians who influenced the thinking in the Presbyterian Church in the United States in the middle of the 19th century. Hodge found his followers more in the Northern Church, whereas Thornwell influenced the Southern Church. In the latter, you will recall, a liberation took place recently, resulting in the formation of The National Presbyterian Church.

In this introduction I shall borrow freely and gratefully from the results of Dr. Huh's study.

It is not so that the term "representatives of the people" was more or less introduced by either of the above-mentioned theologians. The *Form of Church-Government* which was adopted by the Assembly of Westminster in 1644, speaks of the "Other Church-Governors" as follows:

As there were in the Jewish church elders of the people joined with the priests and Levites in the government of the church; so Christ, who hath instituted government, and governors ecclesiastical in the church, hath furnished some in his church, beside the ministers of the word, with gifts for government, and with commission to execute the same when called

thereunto, who are to join with the minister in the government of the church. Which officers reformed churches commonly call Elders.

In a 1957 edition of *The Form of Government* of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, we read of Ruling Elders:

Ruling elders are the particular representatives of the people, chosen by them from their own number for the purpose of joining with the pastors or ministers in the government and discipline of the church. This office has been understood, by a great part of the Protestant Reformed churches, to be designated in the Holy Scriptures by the title of governments and of those who rule well but do not labor in the word and doctrine.

It must be said that, to my knowledge, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church has not dropped the expression "particular representatives of the people". I just quoted the *Form of Government* to show that the expression was indeed used.

The question is what is meant by that term. Here the explanations may go different ways, as the explanations of Hodge and Thornwell parted. From Dr. Huh's study I derive the following description of their respective convictions.

The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. held in 1843, stated that Ruling Elders are no presbyters as the ministers of the Word are. The same Assembly stated that the specific character of the office of ruling elders is that they are "representatives of the people". This involved, the Assembly conceded, a denial that the ruling elders are "bishops", "pastors", "ministers", and even "presbyters" in exactly the same sense that ministers are presbyters. That was in the line of Hodge's stand. The elder, Hodge stated, as lay-representative, belonged to a different *order* than the minister of the Word. The office of the ruling elder does have a Scriptural basis: for the people have a right to a substantial part in the government of the Church. The minister of the Word is *the* office-bearer in the Church, he is the presbyter, the overseer, the pastor, the teacher. That does not mean that he alone is to govern the Church. No, according to the Scriptures and all Protestant Confessions, the people constitute the Church. We should not fall into the trap of Rome which claims that the ecclesiastical authority and power rests with the bishops. The Holy Spirit dwells in the Church, and they in whom the Holy Spirit dwells, are the bearers of the power of the Church. But when the seat of the power of the whole Church is the Church as such, that is: the

Church people, then it is only a matter of course that the believers as members of the Church also have a right to an essential part in the government of the Church. The people exercise this right through the ruling elders. "Ruling elders are declared to be the representatives of the people. They are chosen by them to act in their name in the government of the church. The functions of these elders, therefore, determine the power of the people: for a representative is one chosen by others to do in their name what they are entitled to do in their own person: or rather to exercise the powers which radically inhere in those for whom they act." Hodge considers the proper title for an elder not "presbyter" but "government". "Ruling elders are properly the representatives of the people, and chosen by them for the purpose of exercising government and discipline in conjunction with the pastors or ministers. This office has been understood by a great part of the Protestant Reformed churches, to be designated in the Holy Scriptures by the title of governments, and of those who rule, but do not labour in the word and doctrine."

With the above we have, for our purpose, sufficiently summarized what Charles Hodge taught about the position of the ruling elder.

James Thornwell, on the other hand, stated that the term "representatives of the people" was grossly misunderstood. A "representative", he stated, is completely different from a "deputy". A "deputy" is just a substitute and nothing more; but a "representative" acts pursuing the dictates of his own understanding and seeks himself for the best ways to promote the interests of the people. Thornwell considers the title "representatives" to be the equivalent of "chosen rulers". Thereby only the manner in which the office is acquired is designated, but it does not say anything about the source of its power. Even though the ruling elders are called "representatives of the people", this does not mean that they are the "delegates" of the people, but "they are the persons whom the people have selected, as duly qualified and called of God, to perform the functions which Christ has enjoined upon the rulers of His house." To a certain extent, Thornwell is willing to speak also of the ministers as "representatives of the people". The office-bearers are the organs through which the Church as a whole realizes its divine life. He says, "The only point about which we are solicitous is, that the relations of the Ruling Elder to the Church are precisely the same as those of the Minister. They are both, in the same sense, though not to the same degree, representatives of the people, the Church. The Minister represents her in rule and in preaching the Gospel and dispensing the sacraments. The Ruling Elder represents her only in rule. The extent of their representation is the only official difference between them." And, to give a last quotation to characterize Thornwell's conviction: "I take my brother, the Ruling Elder, when I meet him in any church-court, by the hands as my brother and my peer. As Presbyters, as members of any Presbytery, from the lowest to the highest, we are all perfectly equal in authority, although some of us have another function or office, being ordained to labour also in the Word and doctrine."

From the above it may appear that the expression "representatives of the people" receives different interpretations. The one explains it in this way that the Ruling Elders represent the people and that through them the people exercise their right to take part in the government of the church; the other explains it in this vein that they are the organs of the Church through which the Church

exercises her Christ-given functions: by the term "representatives of the people" only the manner in which they come into office, not the source of their authority is designated. In the former case there is no hesitation to call the ministers of the Word clergy and the ruling elders lay-representatives. In the latter instance the refusal to call the ruling elders laymen is evidence of the conviction that there are not two different "orders", but that there is only one office, while some office-bearers have received an additional task, namely to preach the Gospel and to administer the sacraments.

It must be admitted that the position which a minister occupies in the Presbyterian system is apt to promote the thought that the office of the ruling elder is of a different nature than that of the minister of the Gospel. Ministers, it is well-known, are members of the presbytery, and they are subject to its discipline, not to the discipline of the session or consistory. *The Form of Church-government* adopted by the Westminster Assembly, 1645, states that "Ordination is the act of a presbytery." "The power of ordering the whole work of ordination is in the whole presbytery, which, when it is over more congregations than one, whether those congregations be fixed or not fixed, in regard of officers or members, it is indifferent as to the point of ordination. It is very requisite, that no single congregation, that can conveniently associate, do assume to itself all and sole power in ordination."

The Form of Government of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, 1957 edition, provides that a call "shall be presented to the presbytery under whose care the person shall be, so that, if the presbytery think it expedient to present the call to him, it may be accordingly presented; and no minister or candidate shall receive a call but through the hands of the presbytery." I am not aware of any basic change made by the Orthodox Presbyterian Church since that time.

R. Stuart Loudon published some lectures which appeared under the title *The True Face of the Kirk: An Examination of the Ethos and Tradition of the Church of Scotland*. It appeared in 1963.

In this book he states that reverence for the office of the ministry of Word and Sacrament is a very deep-seated tradition among Scottish Church people. The minister, he says, is not primarily regarded as minister of a locality: he is a minister of Christ's Gospel. The Kirk sees this ministry exercised under the absolute sovereignty of Jesus Christ, the sole King and Head of the Church, and the majesty of the sacred office lies in the fact that Christ, the Head, deigns to use the ministry and speaks through the minister's words to the souls of men. There are no actual successors to the Apostles in terms of their office and status as Rome teaches. Yet, the work of the Apostles is continued in the work of the minister of the Gospel. "The emphasis in the Church of Scotland, then, has been upon the *one* essential ministry of Word and Sacraments, the ministry which is a reflection of that ministry found in the New Testament Church, and referred to here under the various terms of the minister, presbyter, bishop, or pastor . . . The important concern in genuine apostolic succession is to ensure that the Church intends to continue the apostolic practice, and to ensure that the Church a duly authorized ministry which fulfils the functions exercised in the apostolic pattern of ministry." (p. 24)

Loudon also speaks of the ordination of a minister, and emphasizes that he is not a minister of a local Church, but

Election '74

One thing is clear. Election '74 is not a replay of election '72. The intervening eighteen months have seen a remarkable change in Canadian politics. Though the players may not have changed, the script is considerably altered. We have been through a period of minority government in which the Liberals under Trudeau were supported by the New Democratic Party in an informal alliance. As long as the Liberals were prepared to concede to some of the demands on the NDP shopping list, the NDP would support the Liberals and collect the political credits, so they thought. When the government did something of which they did not approve, they could protest and vote against the government, which would then probably fall (as it did in May).

I believe it was a situation which was not wholly disagreeable to the Liberals, since in this way Trudeau could propose some of the things which he himself believed in but might have felt he could not do until given the opening by the NDP. In fact, it would fit his own stated theory, expressed some time ago in one of his writings, that socialists must be prepared to use present institutions to bring about societal changes of a more radical nature. Once you have the power you can divert the vehicle which brought you there.

This campaign has seen a change in approach on the part of the Prime Minister. No longer is he merely going

across the country "having a conversation with the Canadian people," as he stated so grandly in the last election. He now finds himself in the position of having to defend past policies and tackling the issues head-on. Even though the media are to some extent focusing on the charisma angle of the P.M. and his young wife, he cannot bank on that on July 8th. He has been in power now for six years and must face up to the consequences of past government action and inaction.

One myth that should be dispensed with is that this election was forced upon the people of Canada unwillingly. It was caused by the failure of the government to present a budget which would tackle the economic problems of the country in an adequate way and thus lacked the support of the majority in the House of Commons. If Mr. Trudeau had not wanted an election he could have brought in measures to please the other parties or he could have advised the Governor-General upon defeat of his government, to call upon the leader of the Opposition to try to form a government.

I think it is an election to be welcomed because it presents an opportunity for the people of Canada to face up to the problems besetting this country and offers alternative ways in which this can be done.

As the campaign wears on, we will hear politicians expounding var-

ious remedies to the country's ills, making promises to various groups and regions in order to win enough votes to give them the required number of seats to form a government. Let us not be too much impressed by that. No party is going to have all the solutions to all the problems - unemployment, housing, food costs, high interest rates, and so on. But as responsible citizens we have a choice to make as to which party is most suited to deal with the country's many troubles and which leader is able to give the most "leadership" in the fight against relentless inflation, which, the papers tell us, is worse than most of us have experienced in this country.

On the day that the latest cost of living index is made public the Prime Minister is telling Canadians not to get too excited about the problem of inflation - not a very promising remark for a leader who is supposed to be offering solutions to ever-rising costs. Is it true that inflation is a worldwide problem and that there is little any single government can do about it? Yes, inflation is indeed a world phenomenon but I do not think that there is nothing any single government can do to alleviate its effects and to start a reversal. I am not competent to explain the causes and effects of this problem in technical language. There is plenty of division too among "experts" in economics. Others may wish to go into the subject deeper. It seems to me that inflation is not simply an economic problem, for otherwise the knowledge and skills of experts would have been able to find a solution. It is more a political and spiritual problem - yes, spiritual.

It is political because, in order to

rather of the Church Catholic. "In the Church of Scotland," he writes, "the Presbytery, acting in name of the Church Catholic, ordains a man to the ministry of the Church Catholic. One who has received the inward call of God, and, normally, also the call of a congregation of God's people, is made by the Lord Jesus Christ, sole King and Head of the Church, a minister, pastor, or presbyter of the Catholic or Universal Church, although his ministry lies within the jurisdiction of the Church of Scotland to whose discipline and courts he is subject." (25, 26). "In Presbytery, duly constituted, there has been gathered up this apostolic authority to ordain and induct. The oversight of the flock of God (Episcopo) regularly continued from Christian generation to generation, is corporately exercised and transmitted through Presbytery, in good church order." (39)

Louden does not wish to speak of "clergy" and "laity". "The people of God, the *laos*, are not 'the laity', but the entire fellowship each in his office and calling. It is

as representing the wholeness of the Church, the whole congregation of believers, that the elder emerges in his representative capacity within the congregation, commissioned and dedicated to represent the whole Church in the deliberations of its various sacral courts. Such 'elders of the people' have their place at all levels from the Congregational level of the Kirk Session, right up to the Supreme Court of the Church of Scotland, the General Assembly." (41)

Not all Presbyterians agree with the above or write in the same vein. John Macpherson, for instance (*Presbyterianism*, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1949) defends the "oneness" of the office of Elder, some of whom only rule, some of whom also preach. However, for our purpose we have quoted sufficiently, I think, and can now proceed.

vO

to be continued

stop inflation, it will mean certain self-restraints on the part of Canadians. The government must persuade people that they cannot continue to demand more and more in terms of goods and services without an increase in productivity (on their part). Every housewife knows that she will soon be in serious financial difficulty if she continues to spend more than is warranted by the income of the family. If more money does not become available there will be a crisis. One thing the government can do which the housewife can't is to increase its money supply by printing more money or extending its credit. A day of reckoning must come, however, as it does for everyone.

For us as a nation that time has come and I suggest that we will have to face some tough days if we want to prevent total economic chaos such as is facing Italy today. The fragile structure of the economic system was amply illustrated during the oil crisis when so many European countries and others suddenly were faced with the prospect of depression. We are not immune to the forces of international economic life but neither are we powerless to do something within the country to stop the trend of inflation and to give an example of restraint to other nations.

I said it was a spiritual problem because it is the emphasis upon material aggrandizement (man is his own god) which has fed the fires of inflation. Men want more goods for less work and some politicians will tell us that we can have it if only we force the big corporations to give up more of their profits, not acknowledging that the money must ultimately come from the suppliers and consumers of industry's products. Does the government have the right to those profits? Could it not then be accused of "ripping off" the corporations? Do we then accept the principle that everyone must have a fair share of the national pie? What is the extent to which government interference in the marketplace can be tolerated before the state becomes the most powerful entity in the country and by its very

OUR COVER

Summer in Ottawa: a familiar sight on Parliament Hill. [Courtesy Ontario Ministry of Industry and Tourism]

power is able to control the lives of the citizens. If it is frightening how often one reads that someone says the government must do this, the government must do that. In such increased powers lie the seeds of dictatorship. The trend is definitely towards more government intervention, coercion, regulation, and so on.

In view of the above, are the measures to control inflation as proposed by the Conservative party acceptable? I suggest that a particularly serious disease sometimes requires a radical cure which must be effected for a short time. It is essentially the idea that inflation is inevitable which must be defeated.

If we accept that governments have a responsibility to protect the weak, to preserve equity in the marketplace, to promote social justice, then we can support a policy which will slow down the mad competition for goods and services presently going on in our society. Those who are rich and powerful, those who are organized will look after themselves, if not by legal means then by illegal - striking during the term of a contract being only one example.

The government, by its own example, must show the Canadian people that self-restraint is necessary. It can do this by cutting its own expenditures, stop wasteful programs and balance the budget instead of increasing the national debt and the consequent taxload on the people.

The paramount question for me is, which party and which leader seems to offer the best hope of some amelioration of the problems which beset us, especially that of inflation. It is clear that the present government has failed in its efforts in the past six years and has in fact contributed to inflation by its programs of spending. It promises more of the same. There seems to be little enthusiasm to tackle the problems or the will to adopt hard, unpopular policies. Trudeau told us in 1970 that we had the problem of inflation licked, remember?

We are being offered a clear choice between hard measures and drift. We are being challenged in fact to be less selfish - something which is not attractive to most people. Yet one cannot ignore the realities. We are a rich nation, indeed, but we cannot afford to squander our heritage by profligate spending on the part of individuals or governments.

Though not the only issue, eco-

nomics is the major one and it is my opinion that the present government does not have the will or the insight to deal with it in a meaningful fashion. As I stated before the '72 election, the country needs a change in governing parties for the health of the parliamentary system. I think the Conservative party deserves that chance. There are many reservations one can have regarding the party, some of its policies, some of its personalities, but on the whole, it is national leadership on the central question of our day which is required. It has been suggested that Stanfield's proposals can be likened to Churchill's "blood, sweat and tears" challenge of wartime. Though this is not wartime, we are facing dangers which, if not met and conquered, will consume us.

In previous articles I have talked about what we as Reformed people can do in politics and one of my personal frustrations is that another election is upon us without anything concrete having been done on our part. Will the voice of the concerned Christian be added to the national debate on priorities the next time an election is held in this country? Do we know what should be our priorities? I hope so.

HAROLD J. LUDWIG
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EDITORIAL COMMITTEE:
*Editor: W. W. J. VanOene
Co-Editors: W. Helder, D. VanderBoom*
REGULAR CONTRIBUTORS:
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Recommended to His Grace (3)

“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.” [Revelation 22:21]

THE WORD OF HIS GRACE

Great and rich is Christ’s grace indeed, the grace which we need to be able to lead a true Christian way of life.

We have been given the Word of His grace. When the apostle Paul took his farewell from the elders of the Church of Ephesus, he recommended them to God and to the Word of His grace.

In Ephesians 4:29 it says: “Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may

minister grace unto the hearers”. The Gospel is a lively power.

Christ’s grace wants to exhort us to do good works. It is intended to help us produce “works”, when we are called to listen to the preaching of God’s Word week after week.

BENEDICTION

Yes indeed, it is a great thing to go to Church every Sunday. It is great and rich to be there, and sit down under the preaching of God’s Word.

It is also a great thing to be dismissed at the end of each Church service with a “benediction”.

When the apostle Paul was sent out to preach the Gospel and was recommended to the grace of God,

this was accompanied by the laying on of hands.

At the end of our Church services the believers - though in a somewhat different way - are dismissed by the laying on of hands. The minister then raises his arms and speaks the “Benediction”.

In particular the New Testament form - which is mostly used in the afternoon or evening services - is very clear: “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all”.

At that moment we are recommended to the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ in the above mentioned sense.

This liturgical gesture and form are really symbolic and of a nice meaning. The congregation is dismissed. The brothers and sisters are



YOUTH COLUMN

YOUTH, OBEY YOUR PARENTS (5)

III. TO OBEY - A LEARNING PROCESS

We live in an “instant” generation. Everything is done quickly and efficiently. We have instant coffee, instant milk, instant tea, instant (minute) rice and many other instant foods and materials. There is not much time, hurry . . . Everything is instant.

However, there is no “instant obedience”. We need to learn to obey. It is a process which lasts as long as our parents live. To learn obedience we need patience and perseverance, especially when we are in our morning-glory years. The Scriptures tell us that Jesus, “although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered” (Hebrews 5:8). If we remember that He was sinless, and we are sinful, then certainly our pathway to obedience will not be less difficult. It is this process of learning to obey your parents to which we want to pay some attention in this column.

Obedience can be considered an important part of godliness. We know that godliness is not inborn in us. God works it in us through His Spirit and Word. God also calls us to use His word. He calls us to put it into practice. Paul once wrote to Timothy,

On the other hand DISCIPLINE yourself for the purpose of godliness; for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come (1 Tim. 4:7, emphasis is mine).

Obedience, part and parcel of godliness, comes then through discipline. Both the Scriptures and experience clearly teach this. Paul uses a word here with which many Greeks were familiar. It is the word “*gymnazo*”. Our words

“gymnasium”, “gymnastics”, etc., come from it. In Paul’s days many Greeks and Romans spent part of their day exercising their bodies. Gymnasiums were available for this purpose. Paul in the text quoted above makes a comparison between godly gymnastics and bodily gymnastics. Both require much effort and work. However, bodily gymnastics profits little in comparison to godly gymnastics, which reaps profits in both this and the coming life. Let’s pay attention to Paul’s word discipline or exercise [*gymnazo*]. Does an athlete laden with gymnastic talents receive instant skills? Can he make complete loops on the high-bar, can he walk the parallel bars on his hands, and can he do flips over the saw-horse the first time he tries? Oh no! It takes practice, practice and more practice to do balancing acts on the single beam, for instance. It takes discipline. That discipline involves a structured and well-organized program of training. Regularity is a key. For most people there is no easy route. To excel in gymnastics (any athletic sport) daily, regular, routine exercises and training is an absolute must. The same goes for godly gymnastics or godliness. There is no easy road.

God started the program of godliness (we called it godly gymnastics) when we were still very young. Every day again our parents had to train us. We were so forgetful. What mom said yesterday we had to re-learn today. Sometimes parents became exasperated, “How many times haven’t I told you . . .” We were a daily struggle for our parents. Slowly but surely they trained us to obey. At first this often took a negative approach. “Pick up your toys” became “clean up your room and put your things away neatly”. Later on parents had to remind us to come home on time, for example. They taught us to talk respectfully to

going home. The next day they will stand in the midst of daily life again, many of them in the midst of "this world".

There they have to produce the "works", the fruits of their faith as living branches of the true Vine, the Lord Jesus Christ.

There they have to keep their eyes open for all sorts of dangers. There they have to take a firm stand, not compromising with the false messianic ideas of others. There they have to show that they belong to Christ, their faithful Saviour. There they have to prove their faith.

And on the works which they do in everyday life, either good or bad, they will be judged in the great covenant judgment when Christ will be there.

However, those who really believe in Him take with them into

everyday life "the Word of grace" which they have heard in Church. They go home, and return to their daily work, having received the "benediction", that very fine symbolic gesture, even more than a mere symbol: a strong assurance that Christ with His grace will abide with them.

They have been recommended to His grace!

CONCLUSION

It is to be hoped that from now on it will not only be a nice word but really something to us and that it will have real meaning when at the end of the Church service we are dismissed with the words: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ . . . be with you all".

G. VAN RONGEN
(*Pro Ecclesia*)

Books

Guillaume Groen van Prinsterer, *Unbelief and Revolution*: Lecture XI. Published by The Groen van Prinsterer Fund, c/o Hoofdgebouw 13A-31, Free University, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, 1973. \$2.25.

The above translation of Lecture XI is the first instalment of a planned translation of Groen's whole *Unbelief and Revolution*.

It will not be expected that we review the lecture itself: Groen's work has long proved its worth and importance. What would we be able to add

The only thing we can do right here is express our gratitude that this important work becomes available to the English speaking world. We also express the wish that the translators be enabled to realize their plans vO



them and to older people; they trained us to listen to dad as prophet and king in the home; they taught us to be helpful around the home and they taught us to understand the Bible and how to pray properly to God. I have only mentioned a few of the ways in which our parents disciplined us for the purpose of godliness.

As youth you are still under the supervision and guidance of your parents. However, the older you grow the more you should take over the responsibility for continuing this program of godly gymnastics of which obedience is an essential part. We have said that discipline or training [*gymnazo*] involves a regular routine. And here we come across that wonderful capacity that God gave to man - HABIT. For example, fellows, did you button your shirt up or down this morning? Did you start at the top or the bottom? You probably will have to think about that one. It is a habit to which you have become so accustomed, you pay no attention to it anymore. That is good. If we had to worry about every little detail in life we would probably become "neurotic". Our good habits will carry us through many storms. Our bad habits will cause many downfalls. Similarly, there are good habits of obedience and bad habits of disobedience.

Peter mentions those whose hearts are "TRAINED in greed" (2 Pet. 2:14). So there are bad, trained habits. We must follow the orders of our Boss, Jesus Christ, who said and says to all His disciples, "Let him DENY himself and take up his CROSS DAILY and follow Me" (Luke 9:23). The cross to which Christ referred did not consist of the hardships - crabby parents, too strict or too lenient parents, or un-understanding parents - we must endure. Rather, "to take up one's cross" means to put to death or to crucify oneself (daily). We must put to death our old sinful habits that we have learnt by repetition. Put to death all habits of disobedience. Instead, "follow Me daily", says Christ. To follow Christ means to do Christ's bidding and to walk in the ways Christ prescribed. For our subject that means to

train yourselves daily in new patterns of obedience. In our previous articles we mentioned some of the things involved in obedience - love, honour, fidelity and open lines of communication. All these things might have sounded nice and ideal to you, but they seemed beyond your grasp. What we have tried to show in this article is that all these habits of obedience take daily practice, before they become part of our way of life. You must exercise and repeat them often, even daily.

As we have seen, learning to obey is one part of God's program of discipleship for you. By learning to obey - by erasing bad habits and by practising good patterns - we become converted to God. Our old man is put to death and the new man is made alive (see L.D. 33). By learning to obey our parents we learn to thank God.

And there is a promise attached to this commandment of obedience to parents. Paul says this is a principal commandment with a promise, namely, "that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth" (Eph. 6:3). Notice the N.T. perspective in this reference to the fifth commandment. Paul writes, "that you may live long on the EARTH". Not only the promised land of Canaan is meant but the whole earth, yes, the new earth which lasts forever. Our life will be long! And then there is Paul's other statement, "Godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come" (1 Tim. 4:8).

Obedience teaches you valuable lessons for other parts of life. The good habits of obedience will benefit you later on. It teaches us how to bear patiently with people's weaknesses. We learn to respect and accept authority at work and in the state. We are trained not to blow up or clam up at every difficulty. We learn how to share our life. We learn how to love, honour and be trustworthy. Really, it prepares us for all of later life. That is why it is so important to learn it properly at home.

W. HUIZINGA

Hoek van Holland

Uitsluitend rechtstreeks of ook de "Kerkelijke weg"?

Er is in de laatste afleveringen van "Clarion" een discussie ontstaan, waaraan ik graag ook in onze Nederlandse rubriek enige aandacht besteed.

Laat me eerst het onderwerp van het gesprek tussen onze eind-redacteur en mij kort mogen samenvatten.

De kerkeraad van Hamilton had bij de Maart-classis van Ontario-Zuid een voorstel ingediend om in de kerkelijke weg - dus via classis, regionale en generale synode - een besluit ongedaan te krijgen dat door de generale synode van Homewood-Carmen in 1954 was genomen. Deze synode, de eerste Nationale Synode van de Canadian Reformed Churches, besloot het onderhouden van art. 70 der Kerkenordering in de vrijheid der kerken te laten. Genoemd artikel stelt: Alzo behoorlijk is, dat de huwelijke staat voor Christus'gemeente bevestigd worde, volgens het Formulier daarvan zijnde, zullen de kerkeraden daarop toezien. De kerkeraad van Hamilton wil dit artikel weer in zijn waarde herstellen, kennelijk om de band tussen de gemeente van Christus en het huwelijk van haar leden duidelijk te doen uitkomen en om het toezicht van de *kerkeraden* op de huwelijksbevestiging te herstellen. We gaan op deze zaak, hoe belangrijk ook, thans niet in. Het gaat ons nu om de kerkrechtelijke aspecten van de behandeling van dit voorstel.

Onze eind-redacteur was van oordeel dat het een vreemd verschijnsel is en een verkwisting van tijd, arbeidskracht en geld om zulk een voorstel dat alle kerken raakt en dat uiteindelijk alleen door een *generale synode* tot een bindend besluit kan worden verheven, in de door mij hierboven geschetste kerkelijke weg in behandeling te brengen. Geen classis of regionale synode mag immers handelen, alsof het een generale synode is. Voorstellen die alle kerken in het gemeen raken, behoren naar zijn oordeel rechtstreeks aan de generale synode gezonden te worden.

Ondergetekende verdedigde daartegenover dat de "rechtstreekse" methode geoorloofd is, maar het gaan "in de kerkelijke weg" niet minder.

Een classis of regionale synode mag niet handelen alsof zij een generale synode is. Daar zijn we het over eens. Maar wanneer een classis of een regionale synode een *oordeel* uitspreekt en een *voorstel* doet, neemt zij geen beslissing die haar oordeel of voorstel tot een voor alle kerken bindend besluit verheft. Een *voorstel* en het uiteindelijk *besluit* zijn onderscheiden.

Naar ik hoop is de hoofdzak van onze vriendschappelijke en broederlijke discussie nu duidelijk geworden. Graag zou 'k nu allerlei kleinigheden ter zijde willen laten. Ook wil ik graag onderstrepen dat onze eind-redacteur en ondergetekende op een belangrijk punt overeenstemmen. We willen beiden een hiërarchische ontwikkeling voorkomen. Het opmerkelijke is alleen dat we het gevaar van hiërarchie juist vanuit een andere hoek zien komen!

Eenvoudig gezegd: Wanneer ik pleit voor een erkenning van wat ik gemakshalve de kerkelijke weg heb genoemd - in onderscheiding van de eveneens voor mij aanvaardbare directe methode -, doe ik dat, juist omdat ik daarin een anti-hiërarchische tendentie van ons gereformeerde kerkrecht tot haar ontplooiing zie komen.

Wanneer namelijk een voorstel van een kerkeraad eerst door een classis wordt besproken, worden aanstonds alle kerken in dat classicaal ressort bij de zaak betrokken. Indien de classis het voorstel, al of niet gewijzigd, overneemt en het als haar voorstel op de regionale synode brengt, weten de afgevaardigden van deze classis precies welk gevoel er in 'hun' kerken leeft ten aanzien van het onderhavige stuk. Vanwege het agendum van de regionale synode worden daarna alle kerken in het regionale ressort bij de zaak betrokken. Zij kunnen via de afgevaardigden van hun eigen classis hun oordeel kenbaar maken. Indien de regionale synode het voorstel, al of niet gewijzigd, overneemt - en deze wijzigingen kunnen verbeteringen betekenen die de behandeling ter generale synode vergemakkelijken en bespoedigen -, komt het voorstel op het voorlopige agendum van de generale synode. Aangezien dit agendum aan alle kerken wordt toegezonden, worden thans ook de kerken in het andere regionale

ressort bij de zaak betrokken. Zij kunnen rechtstreeks of via de kerkelijke weg verbeteringen voorstellen of een geheel ander voorstel met betrekking tot dezelfde zaak indienen. Afgevaardigden van beide regionale synoden kunnen dan precies weten wat er in hun ressort ten aanzien van een bepaalde zaak leeft en zij kunnen ter generale synode in de besprekingen dat oordeel kenbaar maken of er in elk geval mee rekenen. Is dit niet de beste methode om hiërarchie te voorkomen?

In de andere gedachtengang gaat het zo: Een kerk dient een voorstel in bij de roepende kerk van de generale synode. De classis waartoe deze kerk afgevaardigden zendt of de regionale synode van het gebied waartoe deze kerk behoort, is niet geoorloofd over dit voorstel te handelen, ook al is het op een ordelijke wijze bij haar ingediend. Afgevaardigden van een regionale synode vernemen dus niet het oordeel van de vergadering die hen ter generale synode afvaardigt. Zij hebben geheel en uitsluitend zelf te oordelen en te beslissen op grond van de stukken die door plaatselijke kerken bij de generale synode zijn ingediend.

Maar is, om een modern Engels woord te gebruiken, het gebrek aan "feedback" dan niet een gerede aanleiding om in hiërarchie te vervallen?

Laat ons eens luisteren naar de "vaderen". Er is een handige verzameling van kerkrechtelijke wijsheid, nl. het boek van F.L. Bos, *De orde der kerk*. Natuurlijk weten we dat kerkelijke besluiten feilbaar zijn en dat men voor elke verkeerde beslissing wel een precedent kan vinden. Maar we kunnen een doorgaande lijn in de kerkrechtelijke praktijk niet geringschatten.

Dr. Bos schrijft dat kerkelijke behandeling naar art. 30 K.O. betekent, "dat althans in algemene zaken *de kerken in de gelegenheid gesteld zijn om hun afgevaardigden te instrueren.*" (p. 110). Hij verwijst dan naar een hele reeks kerkelijke uitspraken.

De eerste generale synode van De Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland, Emden 1571, sprak bijv. uit dat de roepende kerk voor de provinciale synode drie maanden tevoren aan de kerken een afschrift zal doen toekomen van alle aan haar toegezonden hoofdstukken of artikelen. "Elke kerk moet zich daarover vroegtijdig bera- den en zijn oordeel op de classicale vergadering naar voren brengen, op dat zij die in naam van die classis

afgevaardigd zullen worden, het te voren overwogene en door alle kerken van de classis besprokene naar voren brengen."

De synode van Dordrecht 1578 sprak in gelijke geest en voegde er aan toe dat deze regel die als doel heeft "opdat een iegelijk zich rijpelijk daarop beraden mag", ook in de generale synode gehouden zal worden. Dr. Bos vermeldt nog uitspraken van provinciale synoden van Goes 1597, Kampen 1606, Dordrecht 1608, enz. We zullen het niet allemaal citeren, maar uit deze uitspraken blijkt m.i. duidelijk dat men de kerkelijke weg verkoos, juist met het oog op rijp beraad en opdat de mindere vergaderingen "hun afgevaardigden met voorbedachte resolutien over de voorgeschreven punten" zouden afvaardigen.

Het anti-hierarchische bedoelen wordt naar mijn oordeel door Dr. Bos goed omschreven, wanneer hij een volgend punt aldus inleidt: "Onjuist moet geacht worden, dat een meerdere vergadering een definitieve beslissing neemt in zaken van leer of orde, die de kerken in het gemeen aangaan, voordat de mindere vergaderingen daarin zijn gekend." Hij citeert o.a.

Groningen 1607: Of enige zaken ter synode gebracht mogen worden, voor en alear zij in de classen onderzocht en daarover geoordeeld is? Antwoord: neen. Woerden 1664: (De synode zal) zich met gemene kerkelijke zaken niet inlaten, eer zij op de classen gediend hebben.

Woerden 1674: Over de kwestie, of ook enig besluit ter synode kan worden genomen over zaken die de gemene kerken hetzij in orde of anders raken, eer die op de classen hebben gediend, werd geoordeeld, dat zij eerst in de classen moeten worden onderzocht en uitgeschreven.

We doen uit de verschillende uitspraken slechts een greep. Maar naar mijn oordeel is het duidelijk, dat de kerkelijke weg voor voorstellen die gemene kerkelijke zaken raken, juist in hoge ere werd gehouden.

Het anti-hierarchische element proef ik in de uitspraak van de provinciale synode van Edam 1604, of beter nog in de vraag: Of het niet behoorlijk is . . . dat de grote zwarigheden . . . aan alle classen uitgeschreven worden, opdat de afgevaardigden van de classen daarop welbesloten ter synode mogen komen, en dat zij daar *niet verder en meer* besluiten . . . *dan*

zij in hun instructie hebben . . . (gelijker) synode van Dordrecht 1578 en Middelburg (1581) . . . is besloten? Is geantwoord, dat men in deze vergadering aan dit synodaal besluit vasthoudt . . . wel te verstaan in 't stuk van leer en kerkelijke orde, wat even tegelijk alle kerken en classen van deze synode in 't gemeen aangaat . . .

Het komt mij voor dat onze kerkenordering deze kerkelijke weg van het indienen van voorstellen die de kerken in het gemeen aangaan, vooronderstelt in artikel 46.

In dat artikel lezen we: De instructien der dingen, die in meerdere vergaderingen te behandelen zijn, zullen niet eerder geschreven worden, voordat over de daarin voorgestelde punten de besluiten der voorgaende Synoden gelezen zijn, opdat hetgeen eens afgehandeld is, niet wederom voorgesteld worde, tenware dat men het achtte veranderd te moeten zijn. De achtergrond van dit artikel is, naar het mij voorkomt, de bepaling die de synode van Emden 1571 maakte over de bijeenkomsten der classen.

'k Citeer nu uit de nieuwe uitgave van de Acta van deze synode, verzorgd door J.F. Gerhard Goeters (Neukirchen, 1971). Nadat gesproken is over de afvaardiging naar de provinciale synode volgt dit artikel: "al eer dat men beschrijve die stucken, die men in den provincialen synodo sal voorstellen, is raetsaem, dat men neerstelijk door lese de acta der voorgaende synode, op dat niet in de provinciale ende voornaemelijck in de generale synode wederom voorgesteld worde, tgene eenmael bij gemeyne bewilliging is affgehandelt, 't en sij saecke, dat nieuwe oorsaecke van twijffelachticheyt van 't selfde mochte voorgevallen sijn."

Krijgt men hier niet de indruk, dat in dit hoofdstuk over de *classen* gezegd wordt: Indien een classis een bepaald voorstel wil doen aan een provinciale synode of aan een generale synode, laat zij dan eerst de Acta raadplegen om te zien of over de bepaalde zaak niet reeds eerder een besluit is genomen?

Dan veronderstelt de regel van wat nu artikel 46 der kerkenordering is, dat voorstellen die de kerken in het gemeen betreffen, in de kerkelijke weg - dus via een classis - aan de orde kunnen worden gesteld.

Hoofdzaak van mijn schrijven was uit de geschiedenis te doen zien dat het indienen van voorstellen in de kerkelijke weg niet zulk een vreemd

verschijnsel is, niet een "strange phenomenon", en dat het geen zaak is van verkwisting van geld, arbeidskracht en tijd. Het dient tweeerlei nuttig doel: 1. rijp beraad in de kerken aangaande een zaak die alle kerken aangaat, en 2. voorkoming van hiërarchie. Afgevaardigden kunnen nu weten wat met betrekking tot een bepaalde zaak leeft in de vergadering van de kerken door welke zij werden gedelegeerd. Het zou dus verarming betekenen, indien deze mogelijkheid van het indienen van voorstellen in de kerkelijke weg zou worden afgesneden of bemoeilijkt.

J. FABER, Hamilton.

NOTE

1. *Some time ago one of our readers asked whether we had completely eliminated Dutch articles from our periodical. As the publication of the above article shows, such is not the case. Another reason why it appears in Dutch is the fact that it would not be easy to translate the decisions which Dr. Faber quotes.*
2. *In a much appreciated little note I was told: "Your 'Response to Remarks' was too long. Don't do that." Since this issue also contains an article by Rev. G. Van Dooren on the same topic, I shall refrain from further comment on the point in question. We have paid sufficient attention to it for the moment.*

vO

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news medley

Let us begin this time with some mission news. You all will have read, either in **Clarion** or in your local bulletin, the appeal made by the Board of Mission Aid of Toronto: they urgently need someone who is willing to be sent out to help the Rev. H. Knigge in the mission field and, to a certain extent, to continue the work after our missionary has returned in early 1975. For, and this is another sad thing, Toronto has not yet been able to find a replacement for the Rev. Knigge, let alone that two missionaries could be found! And now also the Board of Mission Aid is seeking someone to serve there in Irian Jaya. May I here express the wish that many be found willing to be sent out! There are not many fringe benefits that go with such a position, except this that they will stand there to receive their benefactors in the everlasting tabernacles. Our young people are preparing themselves for all sorts of positions and they make their plans for years ahead; is there not someone whose thoughts went or go into this direction?

In Brazil there is much activity, and it is certainly a reason for great gratitude that the Mission Aid in the Valley did find the John Kuik family willing to go down there. It is a pleasure to read their reports as also the reports sent by the Rev. C. Van Spronsen. We who are living in luxury, even though we complain about inflation and rising prices, have only a very slight idea of the poverty in which many millions of people are living. And we also have to ask for much wisdom for the mission workers (as well as for the Deacons) that they may bestow the gifts only on those who have need, and there where the greatest need is found. I wish we could publish the whole **Mission News** that is issued by the New Westminster Church. It is good to know what is going on, and it would also prevent our mission workers from getting the impression that they are a forgotten and neglected group of people. I do not wish to say that they do get that impression; they know also from letters they receive that they are being remembered.

Where are those who will take their places?

I already mentioned the Deacons. They too need wisdom to bestow the gifts only there where the greatest need exists. However, various bulletins (and you know that it is not in a derogatory sense that I call the weekly or bi-weekly periodicals "bulletins") contain statements which make us think that in many instances the Deacons do not have many indigent brothers and sisters to take care of. On the one hand, the Lord has greatly blessed us by enabling the large majority of the Church members to earn sufficient income for themselves and their families. On the other hand, we can always find ways and means to show mercy.

Some Deacons support orphanages in Korea or at least contribute towards such causes. Others look for other ways and means to cause the moneys collected to bear fruit. Cloverdale's Deacons asked the Consistory for advice whether they would be allowed to support a Reformed minister in Hungary. The Consistory replied that, in principle, there was no reason why they should not be allowed to do so. The Deacons should not collect large

sums of money and hoard them. Many years ago it was frequently so that the Deacons held stocks and bonds, and owned houses whereas, on the other hand, the needy sometimes were neglected or received far less than what they should have received. I still recall the stories which I heard out of the mouth of elderly and old Church members some thirty years ago. Fortunately, the thinking has changed considerably and we can only benefit from that. However, let's go to something else.

Let me return to Brazil for a minute. If everything went according to plan, the new Church building in Sao Jose was "dedicated" on May 19th. It seems that there is a separate tower, and thanks to a generous gift, the Rev. VanSpronsen was able to buy a sound system with a large outside speaker. Via this sound-system people will hear chimes announcing the time of the worship services. May we, in due time, publish a picture of the new building? And of your homes, brethren Van Spronsen and Kuik?

Those chimes remind me of the days when we lived in a village and every Sunday morning were told by the big bells of the church building close to our home that the time for going to Church was there. It also brought back memories of the times when I visited Hoogeveen, where every Sunday morning a drummer went through town to summon the citizens to go to Church. But let's not become nostalgic.

I have no definite news about Church buildings, except that I saw the first arch of Burlington West's building erected. Due to high winds they had to stop that day, otherwise there would have been more. New Westminster seems to have adopted plans for the new building, if I understand the information in **Church News** well.

From buildings to the services and activities in those buildings is only a short step.

New Westminster decided that smoking shall be abolished during the meetings of the Consistory. That is a wise decision, although it may be hard for some. Especially where there are brethren who cannot stand it and have to leave if the smoke becomes too thick, we should refrain from it. That may be easy to say for someone who does not smoke; on the other hand, he is also able to speak from experience what it means when you have to sit in a room where others smoke!

The Abbotsford Consistory discussed the question whether more services should be held in English than has been the case up till now. It was decided not to change it for the time being. At Lincoln's Consistory, however, they decided to have two more Dutch services in June. The Consistory is considering to discontinue the Dutch services, but would like to hear any objections which members might have against that.

Smithville adopted the suggestion to have Bibles and Books of Praise available for eventual visitors. That is a pleasant piece of information, for it proves that we do get visitors now and then. It happens more often in the one place than in the other, but they do come. It is good when there are at least a few copies of God's Word and of our Book of Praise available for such visitors. And, to stay in Smithville for a little longer, a meeting was held of those living in (what I gather is) the region towards Dunnville to consider purchase of a lot if they should have to erect another Church building in that area due to institution. To govern is to look ahead and to provide, it is sometimes said. It cannot but be called a wise thing to keep the future in mind in that manner.

Burlington East also spoke of the purchase of Bibles, but this time for couples who are going to get married. We read: "Inflation has also influenced the price of Bibles, but the Consistory selected a beautiful, though expensive, edition as a wedding gift for the upcoming weddings."

The Barrhead Consistory decided to purchase a second-hand electronic organ of good quality for reasonable price. I put no quotation marks with the previous sentence, but it is an almost literal quotation. For the old instrument they received an offer from a non-Churchmember.

The Edmonton Consistory received the report of its committee appointed to investigate the possibility of celebrating the Lord's Supper with the chronically ill. No decision was made. We are also told that the power of the radio station which broadcasts programs submitted by the Edmonton Church, has been increased. When starting off with a rather low-power station, and that for a reasonable price, the possibility is great that you can stay with it also when the power increases and thus your reach becomes wider.

In Brampton the Consistory decided that whenever a sermon has to be read, it will be a sermon on the Heidelberg Catechism. They will start with Lord's Day 1, and thus they will have a Catechism sermon every Sunday.

These are all the Consistory decisions which I could find worthwhile to be mentioned.

The summer time is not the most suitable period of the year to have meetings. That does not apply to the League days or Rallies! Then the summer time seems to be the best time of the year to have them.

The young people are planning their National Youth Rally, to be held the July 1 weekend, in Carman, Man., and Winnipeg, Man. I mention both these places since it is more or less a combined effort, even if we look already at the problem of providing lodging for the many who, hopefully, will attend. The theme for this Rally will be "The World We Live In", and the speakers will be the Revs. Geertsema and Werkman. Have a good time and trip. Unfortunately, we'll be just too late for it!

The Women's Societies in the Valley chose as their topics "The Beginning of History" and "Observance of the Sabbath Day". We mentioned the Alberta Rally or League Day before.

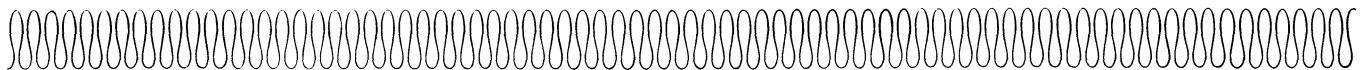
Calgary's bulletin tells us that the Coaldale Church Camp has been tentatively scheduled for July 29 - August 3 in the Cypress Hills, and Camp Cryps in Ontario has been scheduled for the week of August 24 - August 31.

These are the days of travelling and holidays. Your humble servant too will do some travelling, the Lord willing. We do not know how it will go with our News Medley. Maybe we'll be able to make one up (not: cook one up!); but you'll see.

Meanwhile we wish all Ladies Aids or Ladies Auxiliaries much perseverance. Maybe you will be encouraged when I tell you that the Ladies Auxiliary in Abbotsford collected \$202.67 from their sale; the one that is called "Orange Aid" made a profit of \$648.50. This "Orange Aid" has nothing to do with orange juice or orange crush or something like that. It is an organization to aid the William of Orange School. But maybe you knew that already. We continue: in Hamilton the ladies sent about 2,500 stamps away for the mission. The Ladies Auxiliary planned a barbecue on June 22. Their support is urgently needed, for we are told that the school expects no less than 19 new students to arrive in September! Speaking of growth! It is heartwarming to read that.

For those who are planning to do a lot of driving, it might be advantageous to contact an expert in this field. My colleague M. Vanderwel was the over-all winner in the Victoria Day Car Rally, organized by the CYRO. He had only 19 demerit points. Small wonder that his Valley-colleagues placed what amounted to an advertisement, containing a congratulatory message. I am as impressed as they are, and add my congratulations to those of the brethren Mulder and VanBeveren as published in **Church News**. Drive carefully. Bring yourself back alive!

vO



Church News

The Rev. W. Huizinga of London and Watford, Ontario, has declined the call from the Free Reformed Church of Launceston, Tasmania, Australia.

* * *

The Board of Mission Aid of the Church at Toronto urgently requests persons interested in Mission Aid work in Irian Jaya to contact this Board before June 30, 1974.

Letters to be sent to: Rev. D. Vanderboom, 3 Knotty Pine Trail, Thornhill, Ontario.

GUELPH

Sunday, the 2nd of June, Anno Domini 1974, was a great day for the Congregation of the Canadian Reformed Church at Guelph. First of all it was the day of Pentecost, the day on which the Church of Jesus Christ remembers the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in His Church. For the Congregation at Guelph it was the first Sunday she had her worship services in her own Church building.

In the weeks before, many hands were busy to get the building renovated. Many things have still to be done in the basement, but the auditorium was ready in time.

In the morning Prof. Faber Conducted the worship service. The Congregation praised the Lord with Psalm 150: 1 and 3. As text was chosen 1 Cor. 2:12 and 13. The

theme was: The Gifts of the Spirit, which were a. The Knowledge of the Spirit; and b. Speaking the Word of the Spirit. In his sermon Prof. Faber spoke about the work of the Holy Spirit in the preaching of the Gospel as teaching the Congregation the way of life, the life which she has in Christ. This preaching has to be done in the words of the Spirit as given to the Church in God's Word, the Bible. In relation to the situation of this Congregation, he expressed the wish that the Lord may use this Church building as an instrument and workshop of the Holy Spirit where every Sunday and in all activities of the Church members He can work with His Word in the hearts of us all, young and old.

The Congregation praised the Lord again at the closing of the service with Psalm 138:1.

“The Ecclesiastical Way” and Art. 84 Church Order

Our editor, the Rev. VanOene, does not need my support in the defense of “the ecclesiastical way” as he described it in his recent article (in answer to some remarks by Dr. J. Faber).

I wholeheartedly agree with his contention that matters belonging to the Churches in general (to the whole Federation) should be brought where they belong: on the table of the General Synod. They do not have to climb the whole ladder from consistory to classis to regional synod to general synod.

This policy has through the years been advocated by Canadian Reformed Magazine: bring ‘general’ matters to ‘general’ synod.

It may be beneficial to recall one of the arguments for this ‘direct’ way, as Dr. Faber called it (is not the direct way always better than the roundabout way?).

I want to add a remark, additional to the references Rev. VanOene made to article 30 of the Church Order (alas so often confused with art. 31, also in talks about “the ecclesiastical way”).

C.R.M. has in the years past warned against an, unintentional of course, danger to the equality of the local Churches as expressed in art. 84 C.O. “No Church shall *in any way* lord it over other Churches . . . etc.”

I put the words “*in any way*” in italics.

The reader will understand that in these words of art. 84 the principle involved may also be elaborated on in the following way: “no group of Churches shall lord it over another group of Churches.” This is a fundamental principle, re-discovered in the struggle of the Liberation 1944. I am not prepared to say that this principle, since 1944, has always been carefully applied. Therefore the present discussion is the more to be applauded, if conducted in the proper way.

How, then, do I see a danger, and damage to art. 84 C.O. if that roundabout way would be followed in matters pertaining to all the Churches?

It is not hard to see it.

Our federation of Churches consists of two ‘halves’: the territory of

the Regional Synod in Western Canada, and a similar one in Eastern Canada.

Suppose the way Dr. Faber advocated would be followed, what do we get? A consistory has an overture for the General Synod because it concerns an article of the Church Order. Only a General Synod is allowed to make decisions on such an overture (art. 86. This article states, “no particular Congregation, Classis, or (regional, vD) Synod shall be at liberty to do so”, i.e. “alter, augment or diminish” any article).

Now, this consistory goes with its overture to Classis. Art. 86 states that it does not belong there, but, some think, this is “the ecclesiastical way.”

What happens now? The consistories of that classical region receive the agenda and, rightly so *if* it is an overture for classis, they discuss it; look at it from all sides, form their opinion, possibly have amendments. In one word, they “dig into” the matter.

Suppose again that that classis adopts the overture, makes a decision on it (a decision!), and then decides to forward it to the regional synod. What happens now? The territory of the regional synod contains two classical regions. Thus, if the provisional agenda arrives in time (that is not always the case), the churches of that other classis, and that classis itself, “dig into the matter” too. They ‘fix’ their opinion, and experience tells that, once an opinion is fixed, it is hard to let go of it again.

Now all the churches, at least the consistories, of that regional territory have intensively and extensively thought about the matter, discussed it, even made ‘decisions’ on it. They are not only informed about the matter but even involved: it is *their* baby.

From there it goes - if adopted by the regional synod - to the general synod, which consists of delegates from both regional synods.

But look at the ‘un-equality’!

One half of the Churches is well-informed, well-prepared and deeply involved in the matter. Their delegates, once become synod members, are out in force to defend “their”

proposal. The other half of the Churches, however, knows only the end-result. It is not in any way as well prepared, let alone involved in the issue, as the first half.

Result?

A danger that one half of the Churches lords it over the other half. Instead of following the normal (according to the norm) and ‘direct’ way to inform all Churches equally and simultaneously about the matter.

Thus (and we repeat it for a reason) since our Churches started to convene in general synods, C.R.M. has advocated that any consistory (in my opinion even any church member) which (who) has an overture that may serve the upbuilding of the Churches, forward it to the convening Church for the next General Synod. This may happen all throughout the time between two general synods.

Then this convening Church forwards copies of the overture to all local Churches, in order that they (and in our Reformed church life the stress is always on the local level) study it, check it with the Scriptures, with the Church Order and evaluate it. Then, as ‘K.S.’ (the late Dr. K. Schilder) so often stressed, “het hele kerkvolk wordt erbij gehaald” (the whole membership becomes involved on an equal footing). The convening Church therefore, should not wait till the last months before the next General Synod but pass on the incoming overtures right after they have been received. At the same time the benefit is that the wisdom of all office-bearers may serve the upbuilding of the whole federation.

And, again, the danger pointed out in art. 84 would be avoided.

* * * * *

Repeated mention of “C.R.M. in previous years” was on purpose. Lately we hear talking about “new”, even “newest” Church polity. But - although there were exceptions - the Canadian Reformed Churches have made history, and good history, in this respect.

I know that some say: but look at the benefit if first a classis, and then a regional synod, studies the overture (that belongs to the Churches in general!). In that way one may expect a better end-product. Changes will be made, amendments added, the set-up streamlined, etc. It sounds good, but it is a utilitarian argument that over-

Rules for the Election of Office-bearers

Our readers may remember from Clarion of June 2, 1973, that the Consistory of Chatham made a change in the existing election rules. For a better understanding of the changes made, the following may serve.

WHY VOTE?

Yes, why do we vote at all for office-bearers in the Church? The Lord does not call any office-bearer directly and personally as He called for example His servant Samuel. The Lord calls them via the congregation who elects these brothers. The congregation takes an active part in this work. But that does not mean that the congregation gives these office-bearers to the Church. According to Ephesians 4 the Lord Jesus Christ gave certain gifts to His Church when He ascended into heaven. It is He who gave to His Church apostles, prophets, evangelists and pastors and teachers. He still gives pastors and teachers to His Church here below. The office-bearers are Christ's *ascension gifts* to His Church. But He now uses the congregation in this work. That is a great honour for the Church. For now she may work together with

Christ. That is why the Consistory of elders and deacons asks the congregation to submit names for the office of elder and deacon. According to Art. 22 of our Church Order, the congregation then chooses, elects *half* the number of the names presented by the consistory. I am not referring now to the possibility that the consistory can also appoint the required number of office-bearers according to Art. 22. In most congregations the consistories present a double number of names to the congregation and the congregation elects half of the double number.

What does the consistory then really do? Does it actually mean to tell the congregation: brothers, here is a list of names you may choose from *if you please*; but we leave it entirely up to you whether or not you want to take any part in this work? Does it matter whether or not the congregation votes? Of course it does matter! For the consistory presents these candidates to the congregation and actually says: we deem these brothers worthy to be elders and deacons in the church of our Lord. We want you as a congregation to choose from these men elders and deacons as the

GIFTS of the Ascended Lord to His Church. The consistory expects the congregation to work together with the Head of the Church in order to receive new office-bearers. Who dares to refuse to take part in this work? Who dares to have the courage to frustrate this work of the Lord?

When the Church of the Lord needs for example three elders, then the consistory may expect the congregation to elect three elders. No more and no less. That is the normal and regular thing to do.

If someone hands in a blank ballot, his ballot is not counted, for he simply did not vote at all. That is very normal. But what if someone writes on his ballot only one or two names instead of the required three?

A DUTY OR A RIGHT NOT TO VOTE?

What does a person do when he elects fewer than the required number of office-bearers? Some will answer: he perhaps does not know the other brothers also nominated. But that is not really a good excuse. The names of the candidates are announced to the congregation for two consecutive Sundays. That gives everyone an opportunity to go and see the brothers in case they do not know them sufficiently. That is not something new. The well-known prof. dr. F.L. Rutgers writes on p. 142 of his *Kerke-lijke Adviezen, 1921*, that it is desirable and to a certain extent also necessary that the names are announced to the congregation in order that the members of the congregation will be able to inquire for information concerning their ability, aptitude, available time, etc.

Someone may object that a person may not have been a member of the congregation long enough to know all the candidates. But in that case the question can rightly be asked: how can he then vote responsibly at all?

Others may say: but if I cannot vote wholeheartedly and with a good conscience for the required number of office-bearers, then I have a right that the consistory accepts my ballot even though it has fewer names on it than the consistory requires from me. No one has the right to tell me that I have to elect the required number of office-bearers.

But that is turning things upside down. The question is not: does the consistory have a right to declare my



“The Ecclesiastical Way” cont’d.

looks the fact, pointed out by the Rev. VanOene, that it is not in the province of a classis to deal with matters that belong to the Churches in general. If such a classis would agree with that overture, it would have to do so on the basis of a decision-in-principle on the matter and that is not a classical business.

Only if a consistory would need help in formulating its overture, it could ask for advice “ad art. 41 C.O.”, although I even doubt that this article could be ‘used’ for this purpose. This article speaks about “any matter in which they (the Churches of classis) need the judgment and help of the Classis for the proper government of their Church”, not the Churches in general.

Finally, an argument from the practice in the Netherlands should not

impress us too much. Apart from Prof. J. Douma’s statement about the lack of productivity of general synods since the Liberation (in his book, *Bezinning en Verwachting*), let’s be on our guard. I, for one, would be very much against the Dutch practice of a “next” classis, reading and approving (!) the minutes (!) of the previous “meeting of classis.” But that is another matter, though related to the one under discussion.

I also refrain from remarks on the practice around art. 30 and art. 31 of the Church Order, although this would also be related to what is called “the ecclesiastical way.”

Let us, all together, stand guard over the precious heritage of the Liberation and endeavour to live by it, and not by any aberrations since 1944.

G. VANDOOREN

ballot invalid, but: do I have the right NOT to vote? Voting is our duty to the Lord who wants to give his office-bearers to His Church. I simply do NOT have the right not to take part in this work all the way. I simply do not have the right to fulfill this duty only partly! UNLESS there are serious objections against the candidates which make it impossible to accept them as office-bearers in the Church. Then indeed it would be my duty not to vote at all. Then I must come to the consistory with my objections and point out to the consistory that a particular candidate should not be nominated for the office of elder or deacon, but instead should be removed. For then the Lord does not want to see him as an office-bearer in His Church if he can not meet the requirements of 1 Tim. 3 and Titus 1.

Who gives me the right not to vote? The Lord Himself who points out in His Word whom He wants to give to us as His office-bearers. If a brother lives in a sin the consistory is not aware of, then the members of the congregation must object to the consistory and the consistory is bound to remove that brother from the list. But when a member of the congregation *prefers* other brothers above the one nominated, then that is no reason not to vote. The only time we have the right, yes even the duty NOT to vote is when we can say to the Lord: this man is not worthy to be an elder or deacon because of Thy Word in Timothy or Titus. But we never have the right to actually say to the consistory and to the Lord by a blank ballot or by a partially blank ballot: Lord, I prefer someone else above these brothers, and therefore I do not elect the required number of office-bearers.

When we in good conscience before the Lord cannot vote for the required number of office-bearers, how then can we in that same good conscience accept the same brothers as elders or deacons once they are elected and installed? Are there then all of a sudden no objections? But then there were no objections to start with. Certainly, we may prefer the names of other brothers on the list but that does not give us the right to frustrate the work of electing office-bearers in the Church. If our objections are so great and so serious that we cannot vote for those brothers, then we can in all sincerity not accept them as office-bearers later on either.

COMPELLED TO VOTE?

If our ballot is declared invalid when it does not contain the required number of names (as has been the rule in Chatham since last year) are we then not compelled to vote? Again, that is not the way the issue should be stated. The consistory is not compelling any one to vote but simply expecting every eligible member to take part in the work of the Lord in His Church. If the consistory compels here, we may also say that the Lord is compelling us here. Voting is a RIGHT - Voting is a DUTY. Out of thankfulness to the Lord who has given us this right we consider it our duty to vote. And then we do not in fact say to the consistory: you can put on all the names you want but we do not want those brothers at all. That is not sincere. When we are sincere about it, we will bring in our objections to the consistory if certain brothers should not be elders.

WHEN DO WE BRING IN OUR OBJECTIONS?

When certain brothers are elected and, after that, appointed by the consistory, it is announced to the congregation for two consecutive Sundays that if no lawful objections are brought forward, these brothers will be installed in their offices on a certain date. That is very normal. But that does not mean that this is the only time we can bring our objections to the consistory. Prof. dr. H. Bouwman is also of the opinion that objections can be forwarded after the nominations and before the election. He says on p. 534 of vol. I of *Gereformeerde Kerkrecht* that the congregation can and may, if necessary, bring in objections against the proposed candidates. The congregation is also involved when it comes to the nominations and a consistory cannot deny their right to bring in objections against the candidates. They must be lawful objections, of course.

SOMETHING NEW?

Is it indeed something entirely new what Chatham did when it made the regulation that ballots with more or FEWER than the required number of votes are INVALID? And that objections can be brought forward against the nominations?

Prof. dr. H. Bouwman writes on p. 544 of vol. I that it has happened that consistories declared ballots with

fewer than the required number of names invalid! He himself does not agree with it, but apparently it happened before. And the well-known Rev. Joh. Jansen in his *Church Order Commentary*, 1923, goes even further than Chatham did. When he writes about the ballots of absent members (ballots by letter) he says: "ballots of absent eligible members can be declared invalid" because it is difficult to check whether they are lawfully absent. And he adds that they FORFEIT their vote when they have no lawful reason to be absent.

Chatham never did that. Ballots by signed letter are still accepted. But blank ballots or partially blank ballots are not accepted for the reasons mentioned above.

A LOCAL RULE

According to art. 22 C.O. the election shall take place according to the regulations that are in use locally. Every congregation has its own local regulations. We can discuss them on a wider level, but they are *local* regulations. When members of the local congregation have objections against these rules, they always have the opportunity to come to the consistory.

When they have objections against any nominated brother, they will do the local Church a good service when they bring their objections to the consistory and prove that a certain brother should not be nominated as an elder or deacon because according to the Word of the Lord he should not be an elder or deacon. That is the whole point in this issue.

M.C. WERKMAN

THE DIVINE BALANCE

Augustine says: In weighing sins "let us not bring forward false balances to weigh what we please and as we please, according to our own opinion, saying, 'This is heavy'; 'This is light.' But let us bring forward the divine balance of the Holy Scriptures, as from the Lord's treasury, and in that balance let us weigh what is heavier. No - not weigh; rather, let us recognize what the Lord has already weighed."

quoted by John Calvin Institutes, II, 8 [tr. L.C.C.]

Ministers' Workshop

Indeed it was a workshop on June 3, 1974, in the Theological College when the ministers who could, gathered together. Our convener, Rev. G. VanDooren, opened the meeting and tried to keep us all orderly. We were glad to see our travelling colleagues - Rev. A.B. Roukema and Rev. W. Loopstra - back in our midst.

In the morning we were treated to a real feast. Prof. J. Faber dealt with the Nicene Creed (or the Constantinopolitan Creed). He took us through the text in the original Greek. A few alterations such as "we believe . . ." to "I believe . . ." (in the translation) were pointed out. Then he traced the origins of this creed. Our professor also showed the historical background for many of the peculiar phrases and clauses in this creed. For example, this creed fights against the teachings of Arius. Arius did not deny that Jesus is God. However, Arius made a distinction between "God" and "very God", basing this on a wrong interpretation of John 17:3. Therefore the creed confesses that Jesus is "very God of very God." And we saw how clauses such as "he became flesh . . ." and "he became man . . ." were directed against the teachings of Apollonarius and his followers. The latter said man consisted of body, soul, and spirit. When the Word became flesh what happened is this: the Word (logos) took the place of the spirit of man. As a result Jesus was not completely human in "body and soul". Later on the anabaptists revived this error. Of course, the important and famous phrase "and of the Son" received ample discussion.

Many questions came to the fore. Our speaker ably explained each, keeping in mind the historical background.

After a hearty lunch and some good fellowship we tackled the subject "Towards Unity in Solemnization of Marriages", introduced by Rev. M.C. Werkman. He spoke of marriages which the Scriptures forbid, for example the marriages with unbelievers. Marriages must be "in the Lord". This phrase "in the Lord" is a compact expression. Our speaker pleaded for the norm that both parties should have done profession of the reformed religion before taking marriage vows. Marriage is not a uniting of two bod-

ies but a union of two temples. Various possible cases were mentioned. A frank and upbuilding discussion followed.

Our next workshop is planned for Tuesday, January 7/75, D.V. Rev. G. VanDooren will introduce the subject "Homiletical Findings". Another

speaker will be sought.

It is always sad to part company at 4 p.m., but we left having had a spiritual feast which will nourish us for some time.

As a note of encouragement to our colleagues out West, who cannot enjoy these workshops: it was decided to put these workshops on cassette tapes for your benefit.

For the workshop, W. Huizinga

Press Release

of the REGIONAL SYNOD of the Canadian Reformed Churches in Western Canada, held on Wednesday, May 8, and Thursday, May 9, 1974, at New Westminster, B.C.

The meeting was opened by Rev. M. VanBeveren on behalf of the convening Church at New Westminster. After reading of 2 Tim. 2:1-19 and singing of Ps. 84: 1,2 a short opening word was spoken. In this opening word Rev. VanBeveren expressed thankfulness for the fact that since the previous Regional Synod three ministers have been installed after peremptory examinations by the Classes. He also remembered the passing away of Rev. H.A. Stel.

The *Credentials* are reported to be in good order. Both Classes are represented by their primi-delegates.

Synod is constituted. As officers are elected: Rev. J. Mulder, chairman; Rev. M. VanderWel, clerk; Rev. D. DeJong, vice-chairman.

The agenda is adopted, after several letters of appeal have been added to the Provisional Agenda, prepared by the convening Church.

Correspondence received is dealt with.

a. A letter of Rev. W.W.J. VanOene, dated January 19, 1973, re Acts Art. 9a of the Regional Synod 1971/72, concerning missing items from the Archives concerning Regional Synod 1968. He informs the Regional Synod that the missing documents are not in his possession, and that he does not know where these documents can be found either. Taken note of. Copy of this letter will be filed in the Archives with the files of Regional Synod 1968.

b. Letters from three brothers of the Church at Edmonton, Alta., appealing against decisions of Classis Alberta/Manitoba of March 5/6, 1974, re their appeals against the Consistory of the Church at Edmonton in matters of education.

The following *decisions* are made:

The Regional Synod, *having read* the appeals of the brothers K. Visscher and J. Merkus and of brother J. Huizinga, requesting the Synod:

A. to declare that the consistory has not properly dealt with the advice of Church-visitors and Classis Alberta/Manitoba 1970 (Visscher and Merkus Point 1 and Huizinga Point 2 and 3),

B. to advise Classis to resolve its decision of March 1973 art. 10 and of March 5, 1974 (Visscher and Merkus Point 3 and Huizinga Point 7),

C. to state whether or not the consistory has the right to propagate and protect the mixed Christian School and neglect the own school (Huizinga Point 1),

D. to advise Classis and consistory that the consistory has to follow up the practical advice of the Church-visitors of January 23, 1970 (Huizinga Point 6),

considering:

I. That the advice of the Church-visitors, which concluded "and therefore the 'own' school" (rejected by the consistory in its statement on Reformed-or-Christian Education) stands on its own merits and the Church-visitors' argumentation, but that it was not adopted by a classis and that it cannot be ground of an appeal;

II. That the appellants interpret the decision of Classis Alberta/Manitoba of March/April 1970 in art. 86 so, that it advises on the desirability of Canadian Reformed education, for which interpretation the wording of the article does indeed give occasion;

III. That the appellants interpret the words "in the present situation" in art. 86 as a condition, which, if a change would occur, could give reason to invoke a classis judgment, for which interpretation the wording of art. 86 does indeed give occasion;

IV. That classes Alberta/Manitoba have referred to the decisions of March 1970, art. 86, in March 1973, art. 10, and March 5/6, 1974, art. 10; *judges:*

a. That it is the task of the believers to execute their mandate with respect to the education of their children in accordance with their promise made at the baptism of their children,

b. That it is the task of the consistories to see to it that the members are faithful in the execution of this mandate,

c. That it is not within the jurisdiction of a classis or a major assembly to judge or advise with respect to the practical execution of this mandate in a local situation (compare similar judgment by the General Synod of Homewood-Carman 1958 in Acts Art. 134, 3b),

d. That therefore art. 86 of the Acts of Classis Alberta/Manitoba March/April 1970 has unjustly left open the possibility that classis under certain circumstances may judge and advise as mentioned under c above, and decides regarding the respective requests:

Ad A: Not to grant the appeal in view of Consideration I and judgment c.

Ad B: To declare that in the light of judgment d. the decisions of classes March 1973 art. 10 and March 1974 to refer appellants to art. 86 of the Acts of Classis March/April 1970 were unjustified.

Ad C: To declare that it is not within the competence of the Regional Synod to judge on this question in view of judgment c.

Ad D: Not to grant the request in view of Consideration I.

* * * * *

Regional Synod,

having read the request (no. 2) of the brethren K. Visscher and J. Merkus that Regional Synod declare "that the consistory of the Church of Edmonton be examined as to how they stand concerning the Word of God, especially Deut. 6 and 11 and Ps. 78 and Art. 21, 41, 44 and 53 C.O."

considering:

a. that the brethren have directed the same request to Classis Alberta/Manitoba of March 1974;

b. that Classis Alberta/Manitoba of March 1974 (Acts art. 10) referred the brethren to art. 86 of the Acts of Classis Alberta/Manitoba of March April 1970;

judging:

that the Church Order does not give any evidence that an examination as is meant by the brethren is in the competence of a Regional Synod; decides:

not to grant the request.

* * * * *

Rev. D. DeJong did not vote, in accordance with art. 33 C.O.

Correspondence received (continued)

c. Letters of four brothers from the Church at New Westminster and a letter from the Consistory of the Church at New Westminster, appealing a decision of Classis Pacific of April 17, 1974 (Acts art. 7).

The following decision is made: Regional Synod, having read the

appeals of the Brs. G. Dam, K. Stam, W. VanderMolen, W. Eenkhoorn, and of the Consistory of the Church at New Westminster, in which they ask the Regional Synod to judge the validity of the decision of Classis Pacific, April 17, 1974, Acts article 7 which reads as follows: "to pronounce that the Consistory of the Church at New Westminster consider, upon implementation of their plans to relocate the churchbuilding, to provide a sectional meeting place in the Greater Vancouver area until such a time that upon growth this section may become an independent church or on decline discontinuation of the section becomes mandatory"; considers:

a. that Classis Pacific, April 17, 1974, failed to judge the arguments of the appellants against the decision of the Council/Consistory of the Church at New Westminster, dated March 21, 1974;

b. that this Classis bypassed the matter because the issue is not to provide a "sectional meeting place" but the request to have a separate congregation in the Greater Vancouver area, which was denied them; decides:

to declare that Classis failed to deal with the issue at stake and to judge the arguments of Council/Consistory and of appellants in this matter, and that therefore the decision is unjustified.

* * * * *

Concerning the request of the Brs. G. Dam and K. Stam for the Regional Synod to consider the matter and to advise the Consistory of the Church at New Westminster in this issue, the Regional Synod declares that it is not within the province of this synod to decide on this matter because the Regional Synod should not do what Classis should have done [Art. 30 C.O., part b.]

* * * * *

Rev. M. VanBeveren and br. L. Terpstra did not vote, in accordance with art. 33 C.O.

Reports

a. Reports of Deputies ad art. 49 C.O. concerning their attendance and dealings at three Classical Examinations are read and taken note of.

b. Report of the Church at Neerlandia on Inspection of the Archives is read and taken note of. All documents appeared to be in good order.

c. Report of the Treasurer, br. H. Leffers at Coaldale, Alta., is read and taken note of. There is a balance of \$924.03.

d. A report of the Church at Coaldale is read and taken note of. The Books of the Treasurer are found in good order.

Appointments

Deputies ad art. 49 C.O.: Revs. D. DeJong, J. Geertsema, J. Mulder, M. VanBeveren. Alternates: Revs. M.

VanderWel and J. Visscher. Church for the Archives: Church at Edmonton. Inspection of the Archives: Church at Neerlandia. Treasurer of Regional Synod: In a letter to the Regional Synod br. J. Leffers requests to be relieved from this work. This request is granted, with thanks and great appreciation for the work done. Appointed in his stead is: br. Harry Lubbers of Coaldale, Alta. Church to Audit the books: Church at Coaldale.

Nomination of Governors of Theological College to be appointed by General Synod 1974. Nominated are: the Revs. J. Geertsema (alternate D. DeJong); J. Mulder (alternate M. VanderWel); M. VanBeveren (alternate J. Visscher).

Delegates to General Synod 1974. Delegated are: the Revs. J. Geertsema, J. Mulder, M. VanBeveren, M. VanderWel. Alternates: the Revs. D. DeJong, J. VanRietschoten, J. Visscher (in that order).

Elders: J. DeVos of Chilliwack (alternate H. Bosscher of Cloverdale); D. Teitsma of Winnipeg (alternate L.M. Toet of Winnipeg); T. VanLaar of Abbotsford (alternate M. Vreugdenhill of Abbotsford); E. Wierenga of Neerlandia (alternate G. Veenendaal of Carman).

Arrangement of next Regional Synod: As convening Church is appointed the Church at Edmonton, Alta. Meeting place will be Edmonton. The time is set for the first half of December 1975.

Question-period is held. It is asked that a change in the procedures be made for future meetings in order that the delegates will be enabled to study the material on the agenda in advance. The following decision is made:

Regional Synod, having heard this request, decides:

a. to request the convening Church for the next Regional Synod to send, wherever possible, the material (appeals included) placed on the agenda, to the delegates appointed to the Regional Synod, three weeks before Synod will convene;

b. to appoint a Committee with the mandate: 1.) to draft regulations for the improvement of the procedures of future Regional Synods, and 2.) to report to next Regional Synod, and send copies of their report in time to the churches.

Appointed are in this Committee the Revs. D. DeJong and J. Visscher, and br. D. Teitsma.

Censura ad art. 43 C.O. is not necessary.

Acts and Press-release are adopted.

On Thursday, May 9, 1974, at 10:15 p.m., Synod is closed after the singing of Ps. 138:2,4 and thanksgiving led by the chairman, Rev. J. Mulder.

D. DeJong,
Vice-chairman, e.t.

our little magazine

Hello Busy Beavers,

Busy Beaver *Margaret Tenhage* has a poem to share with you. It's called:

VACATION TIME

Put away your books and pens,
Say good-bye to all your friends,
Vacation time is here again,
A time of fun, a time of playing.
Use the time while it's still here
Before we start the next school year.

And here are two more vacation time poems for you! The first one is from our new member *Elnita Van Luik*.

SLIDING

Down the slide	Up we pop
We ride, we ride.	To reach the top.
Round we run, and then	Down we come again.

And the second one is from Busy Beaver *Grace Jongs*.

A KITE

I often sit and wish that I
Could be a kite up in the sky,
And ride upon the breeze and go,
Whichever way I chanced to blow.

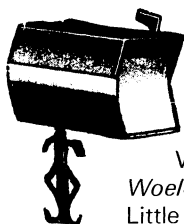
* * * * *

July is almost upon us! And what a happy time to look forward to! Holidays are here again, and for these Busy Beavers their birthdays come on top of that! We all wish you a happy, happy birthday and may the Lord give you many happy returns of the day!

Jeanette Hoeksema	July 1	Wilma Van Woudenberg	9
Jerold Van Assen	4	Jo-anna Flach	16
Ingrid Feenstra	6	Patricia Van Raalte	18
Sharon Van Grootheest	7	Alison Helder	21
Helen Linde	8	Margaret Vanden Haak	29
Jimmy Stienstra	9		

Now Busy Beavers, who would like a pen-pal? Busy Beaver *Simone Datema* is looking for someone to exchange letters with. If you are interested you may write Simone at this address:

Simone Datema
191 Bishop Avenue
Willowdale, Ontario



From The Mailbox

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Richard Woelders*. We hope you will like reading Our Little Magazine and joining in all our Busy Beaver activities. Will you write and tell us about your visit to the World Fair, Richard?

And welcome to you too, *Joanne Hulst*. We hope you

will really enjoy being a Busy Beaver, too. Thank you for your poem, Joanne. Write again soon!

Thank you for your big letter, *Elnita Van Luik*. I'm sure you'll make a real Busy Beaver. Please write and tell me your birthdate, Elnita. We want to be able to wish you a happy birthday along with the other Busy Beavers!

Hello, *John Ten Haaf*. I see you are a real gardener. You'll have to write and tell me how your vegetables and berries do, this summer. And you're right about having lots of work in a garden!

Thank you for your big letter, *Simone Datema*. You did very well on the quiz and I hope you soon get a pen-pal. Bye for now.

It was nice to hear from you again, *Anneke 't Hart*. I hope you will still have time to write us a story sometime, even though you are back in school now. Practice is very important for future authors, you know. Bye for now, Anneke.

Yes, I did enjoy reading your letter, and all the others too, *Cathy Dalhuisen*. How do you like living in your new house. Did you have a nice birthday? You did very well on the quizzes and riddles, Cathy. Keep up the good work.

Hello, *Loretta Dam*. I hope your weather is better now. That must have been some thunderclap to knock your picture off the wall. Thank you for the riddles, Loretta. I hope your family has a really good time at camp with all the children.

Have a nice trip when you go to Holland, *Grace Jongs*! When you come back be sure to write and tell us about it! How is your garden doing? And who will look after it while you are gone?

You did very well on the quiz too, *Hetty Witteveen*. And I'm glad you liked the riddles too. Are you glad school will soon be over, Hetty? What will you be doing?

Hello *Julia Huttema*. Did you have a nice birthday? You must be very busy practising your play for the graduation. Does your sister have her license yet? Buy for now, Julia.

Thank you for your letter, *Shirley Devries*. You did very well on the quiz too. Wait until we get our big Quiz Contest! Then you'll have a real quiz to work at!

It was nice to get such a big letter from you, *Alice Sandink*. You did very well on the quiz and puzzles. And thank you for the new quizzes, Alice. Keep up the good work!

What a big new school you have, *Mary Van Woudenberg*! I'm sure all the children do like it. Thank you for your lovely spring poem, Mary. But since it's summer now I'll save it for next spring, all right! Don't be like the other Busy Beavers then, who couldn't remember their own poem and wrote to tell me it wasn't theirs!

* * * * *

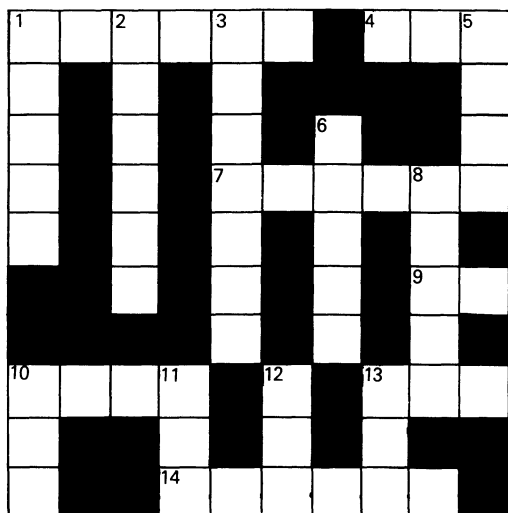
QUIZ TIME

Here is a cross-word puzzle for you from Busy Beaver *Mary Van Woudenberg*.

THESE ARE FROM GENESIS 42-44.

ACROSS

1. Second ruler in Egypt
4. For these ___ years hath the famine been in the land.
7. He warned his brothers not to kill Joseph
9. ___ are spies.
13. The brothers ___ in Joseph's house.
14. Put my cup the ___ cup in the sacks mouth.



11. And Joseph said unto ____ brethren.
12. Wherefore deal ye so ____ with me?
13. Benjamin was a child of Jacob's old

And here are the answers to last time's quizzes.

This time in rhyme

1. gods 2. idol 3. vain 4. Sabbath 5. parents
6. murder 7. words 8. steal 9. lie 10. covet

Nicknames of Fame

1. i 2. f 3. g 4. h 5. j 6. c 7. b 8. e 9. d
10. a

Did you enjoy the cross-word puzzle? And how did you do on last time's quizzes?

* * * * *

Now I want to wish all the Busy Beavers not just a *happy* holiday, but also a *safe* holiday. Please take care wherever you are. Remember your traffic safety rules and your water safety rules and *always* be "safety-minded". Don't spoil your holiday by a careless accident. We *all* want to be able to say in September, "What a wonderful holiday we've had."

Bye for now Busy Beavers.

With love from your
Aunt Betty

DOWN

1. Benjamin's father
2. He was left in prison
3. The king of Egypt
5. The brothers agreed to ____ their sacks for Joseph's steward.
6. He became surety for Benjamin
8. Where grain could be bought
10. If harm befall him by the ____

Books

J.A. Knepper / J. Kamphuis.
Gespreks - en Vergadertechniek - Het Jaaragendum voor de Kerkeraad.
Uitgeverij De Vuurbaak, Groningen, 1973.

Recently the Inter-League Publication Board informed us that the above book was available from them for the price of \$4.00. That is very reasonable, seeing that in the Netherlands it would cost Fl. 15.00. But it is not for that reason that I would advise those who have to attend or conduct meetings frequently to order it from the Publication Board. The main reason is that this book can be a helpful guide in this respect. Conducting meetings is not one of our strongest and most prominent virtues. Both authors give valuable hints and directives, pointing out specific weaknesses and showing ways in which improvement may be achieved.

The material found in the above book is not new: both authors published the contents of their contribution in periodicals. Since these may not be available to everyone, and besides, since it is much handier to have articles bundled in bookform, we can only express our satisfaction that

De Vuurbaak decided to publish them as a whole. vO

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G. van Rongen, *Elisa de Profeet.*
Utgeverij "De Vuurbaak", Groningen, Fl. 18.90; tijdelijke prijs voor leden van de Vereniging van Vrienden van "De Vuurbaak" Fl. 15.00.

"Our" Rev. G. Van Rongen wrote another book. He has a fertile pen, as we all know, and he has the ability to get across what he wishes to say. That becomes evident also from the above book. I do not think that we are mistaken when we assume that what we find in this book is the result of study for sermons on this part of the Scriptures. Yet we do not find sermons and meditations in the various chapters of the above book: what we find is a very pleasant, easy to read treatment of those passages which tell us about the work of the prophet Elisha. At the same time the author draws the lines to our present situation and the questions which we face in daily life. I was especially interested in learning what Rev. Van Rongen's explanation is of the advice which Elisha gave in II Kings 3, the advice to wage a total war, the policy of the scorched earth. I was pleasantly surprised when I discovered that

the author's conclusion is the same as the one I reached. That put me a little more at ease. Here is a book of which the author wishes only to listen to the Scriptures instead of imposing his views upon them.

vO

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A. Janse, *Eva's Dochters* (Groningen: Uitgeverij "De Vuurbaak") Tweede, herziene druk. Tijdelijke prijs voor leden Fl. 10.50. Voor anderen: Fl. 12.50.

The Uitgeverij "De Vuurbaak" provided us with a revised reprint of the above book of which the first print appeared in the early twenties. However, if someone should think that for that reason it is antiquated, he would be wrong. The late A. Janse was a man who brought forth new treasures out of the old treasury of the Holy Scriptures, and it is a pleasure again to read how he endeavoured to let the Scriptures themselves speak. Also for our present day situation we can learn much from what was originally written some fifty years ago. We are thankful that "De Vuurbaak" took steps to bring this book again among our people.

vO