



Science, Scripture and the age of the earth

By C. Van Dam

In a preceding article, I concluded that there was nothing in the Bible to suggest that the six days in which God created heaven and earth were long periods of time stretching to thousands or millions of years. If the Bible is so clear on this point, why then has there been so much controversy about this matter?

The rise of science

The answer is that many have been trying to harmonize what was perceived to be scientific truth with what is written in Genesis 1. Prior to the nineteenth century, the age of the earth was generally regarded at about six thousand years and there was no concerted effort to make the days of Genesis 1 into something more than that. However, with the rise of scientific theories, (initially especially the study of geology), all that changed. The gap theory and the day-age theory (which earlier articles in this series dealt with) were the two main means used to attempt to harmonize what science had concluded and what Scripture said.

Should one not be concerned with what science is saying? There is certainly a legitimate place for science; but, when we are dealing with issues like the creation or origin of the world about which science can say *nothing* in the strict sense of what science is all about,¹ we need to rely on God's account of what happened. He was there. He created the heaven and the earth. And He has informed us in His Word what we need to know about that topic. Accepting that account for what it is, namely *God's Word*, must be our starting point. "*By faith* we understand that the world was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was made out of things which do not appear" (Hebrews 11:3; cf. Job 38:4; Isaiah 40:25,28).

The latest theory from science about origins should not influence one's exegesis. When one surveys the vast majority of "conservative" literature on the subject of Genesis 1, it is obvious that there is still far too much concern to harmonize Scripture with the current scientific theories on how the world began. These theories come and go. But the Word remains forever and it is that Word that must be understood in the first place, not on the basis of what science is doing, but on the basis of what Scripture itself says about the issues under discussion.

We live in an age in which often more is expected of science and large periods of time than of the ability of God to create as recounted in His Word. It is therefore interesting to note that in the early centuries of Christian exegesis Augustine suggested that God created everything in a single moment. The days thus expressed not the temporal but the causal order in which the parts of creation relate to each other.² Although this exegesis is to be rejected, it does reveal something of the mind-set of one like Augustine. Such an understanding presupposes that God did not need six days to

do what He surely could have done in a single day or even in an instant! Such a view assumes that God is omnipotent and that He can do whatever He desires. But *such* an assumption hardly functions in our scientific age. Instead one often sees contrived ways of making room for large periods of time in which the origin of the world could have taken place. Today, Biblical scholars often appear embarrassed by the work of creation taking place in six days and seek ways to avoid such a conclusion. In the evolutionistic thinking of this secularized age there is no place for Almighty God, Creator of heaven and earth. We must be very careful that this worldly spirit does not influence our approach to the creation account in Genesis.

The age of the earth

A question that is often raised in this context is: How old is the world? Very briefly, the following two factors should be noted.

It is not the purpose of Scripture to answer such questions of curiosity. However, what the Bible tells us is true and needs to be taken into account also when discussing issues like the age of the earth. Two critical factors immediately stand out. First of all the length of the days during which God created all things. We have seen that these were not long periods of time, but days as we also experience days, with evening and morning, darkness and light. The second factor is the genealogies which are found in Genesis 5 and 11.

Can the genealogies be used to compute precisely the amount of time that has elapsed from creation? The answer is no. The reason is that genealogies recorded in Scripture frequently omitted generations. A well-known example is the genealogy found in Matthew 1. In Matthew 1:8, three names which are found elsewhere are missing between Joram and Uziah; namely Ahaziah (2 Kings 8:25; 2 Chronicles 22:1), Joash (2 Kings 11:1; 2 Chronicles 24:1) and Amaziah (2 Kings 14:1; 2 Chronicles 25:1) and in verse 11 Jehoiakim is omitted after Josiah (2 Kings 23:34). Indeed, in verse 1 the entire genealogy is summed up thus: "Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham." Many Old Testament examples can also be mentioned.³ Genealogies were often reduced because a full listing was not necessary for the purpose of the author. This should make us cautious in assessing the chronological value of the genealogies found in Genesis 5 and 11. Indeed we know, for example, that Genesis 11:12 skips a generation. It says that "when Arpachshad had lived thirty-five years, he became the father of Selah." From Luke 3:38 we know that the name of Cainan has been omitted so that if there are no other omissions, Genesis 11:12 actually tells us that when Arpachshad had lived thirty-five years, he became the *grandfather* of Selah by begetting Cainan, (for according to Luke 3:36, Cainan is the father of Selah). The

point is that terms like "became the father of" or "begot" do not necessarily indicate direct father and son relationship. The expression "became the father of" can refer to a grandfather or great-grandfather relationship to the distant relative who is named, rather than referring to an immediate offspring. As one scholar has correctly expressed it: "So in Genesis 5 and 11, 'A begot B may often mean simply that A begat (the line culminating in) B'."⁴

In the light of the above, it is understandable that the Bible never deduces a chronological statement from these genealogies. Nowhere are the numbers given in these genealogies totalled. Scripture does not tell us how much time elapsed from the creation of the world or from the worldwide flood. (Scripture does give numbers of years for other important events. Cf. Exodus 12:40 and 1 Kings 8:1.) The genealogies in Genesis 5 and 11 do not have as their purpose to give chronological information and we should therefore not use them for that end.

We must thus reject the famous calculation of James Ussher (1581-1656) by which he placed creation at 4004 B.C., a date he derived in part also by using the genealogies

in Genesis as a chronological tool. On the other hand, the Old Testament gives every reason to believe that the world is thousands and not millions or even billions of years old. Since the Bible does not tell us how old the world is, a precise answer cannot be given on that basis. Among those who accept that God created everything in six days, the age of the earth that is often mentioned is no more than ten thousand years. The evaluation of the scientific data on which such a date is based is beyond my competence;⁵ but such an age does not seem impossible in the light of Scripture.

□

¹ Cf. my earlier article, "Bible and Science: Some Basic Factors."

² Noted by Bavinck, *Gerreformeerde dogmatiek*, II, 460.

³ For example, compare 1 Chronicles 6:3-14 with Ezra 7:1-5 and the impossibility of the completeness of the genealogical relationships found in 1 Chronicles 23:6 and 26:24. See further W.H. Green, in W.C. Kaiser, ed., *Classical Evangelical Essays in Old Testament Interpretation* (1872) 13-21.

⁴ K.A. Kitchen, *Ancient Orient and Old Testament*, 39.

⁵ See, e.g., P.D. Ackermann, *It's a Young Earth After All* (1986) 60; J.A. van Delden, *Schepping en wetenschap*, 182; W.W. Fields, *Unformed and Unfilled*, 198-199.

The power of the resurrection for the life of the church

By M.H. Van Luik

The event of Easter has great significance for the church of our Lord Jesus Christ. The resurrection of Christ is, together with His death at the cross, the foundation on which the existence of the church rests. The book of Acts describes the great impact of the resurrection of Christ upon the early church. The news of the resurrection gave great joy and jubilation. The very fact that Jesus Christ arose from the dead gave the disciples and followers of Christ renewed hope for their own lives. As long as the body of Christ was in the grave, their hope was dashed.

This is why there was such sorrow and gloom among the disciples of Christ after the events on Good Friday. Jesus had been their great hope. They had looked to Him as their Saviour and Redeemer. They had expected Him to set up God's kingdom here on earth, a kingdom in which they would have received important positions. They had seen in Jesus the fulfillment of the Old Testament promises. But when Jesus was crucified all their hopes were shattered. Their lives were filled with sorrow and gloom. How could Jesus, who became a victim of hatred and death, and who lay in the grave now carry out the promises He had made?

Therefore when the resurrected Christ presented Himself to His disciples on Easter, they were filled with amazement and joy. All at once their sorrow was replaced with joy; their despair with hope. Jesus Christ was risen from the dead, He could again fulfill all God's promises. Salvation was certain, His kingdom was established!

This faith in the Risen One and this new hope, caused the early church to proclaim, and continually profess Jesus Christ. Thus, the citizens of the city of Antioch began to call the believers "Christians," whenever they were continually speaking about the Christ. In fact, all preaching in and by the church of Christ centers around the death and resurrection of the exalted Lord. This is clear from the very first sermon delivered in the early church on the day of Pentecost. On that day Peter stood up and addressed the people in Jerusalem. He proclaimed to them: Jesus Christ whom you crucified, God raised up from the dead. Shortly after the day of Pentecost, the leaders of Israel became annoyed because the disciples "were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead" (Acts 4:2). And when the apostles were questioned by the Sanhedrin, by what power or by

what name they healed the lame man in the temple, they answered, that this was done by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, "whom you crucified, [but] whom God raised from the dead . . ." (Acts 4:10).

That in the early church all preaching revolved around the resurrected Christ is also shown by Paul. He writes to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 15): "When I first preached the gospel to you, then I delivered to you that which was of first importance, namely, that Christ died for our sins . . . that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day." Paul then mentions the many eyewitnesses of Christ's resurrection. In 1 Corinthians 15 Paul puts great emphasis on the fact that Jesus Christ is really resurrected from the dead. Wherever Paul brings the gospel, he proclaims the crucified and risen and living Lord. The church of Christ preaches Jesus Christ raised from the dead. If Jesus Christ is not really risen from the dead, then preaching in the church of Christ is meaningless.

Therefore, it is a very serious thing when many people today deny the real physical resurrection of Christ, and consider the resurrection to be only a myth which teaches us a valuable lesson.

There is no agreement on what this lesson is. But those who deny the real physical resurrection of Christ have destroyed the power of the gospel. All preaching has become empty. Paul says, (1 Corinthians 15:14) ". . . if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain." This means that if our preaching and our faith is not based on the real physical resurrection of Christ, our preaching and our faith have no substance. Then our preaching and faith are only based on the vivid imaginations of man. What comfort, what hope does that provide us?

Paul also says to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 15:17ff.), "If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all men most to be pitied." If the events of Easter are not real, then our life of faith is of no value. Then our hope is a false hope, our joy an empty joy. For if Christ has not been raised, then we are still in our sins, and we still lie under the terrible curse of death.

The fact that Christ is risen, means that He is our victorious Lord. This also came out clearly in the preaching of the apostles. Peter said on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:24), "God raised Him up, having loosed the pangs of death, because it was not possible for Him to be held by it." Therefore, preaching in the church of Christ is the proclamation of the great victory of Christ. Having been raised up, He has destroyed the power of death. Therefore we must see the resurrection of Christ as a climax in a long and terrible struggle.

The resurrection is a climax in a struggle that began immediately after the fall in sin, with Adam and Eve. It is a climax in the struggle between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. This struggle was not just a minor skirmish, or a friendly tussle; it was a struggle to the death. In that struggle the seed of the serpent has tried to destroy the seed of the woman. The devil and his followers have tried for ages to wipe out the church of God, the seed of the woman, and many times in the history of the church they appeared to have succeeded.

We can think of a number of occasions. In the days of Noah, all of mankind had become wicked and perverse. But God saved believing Noah and his family from the great flood. When the people of Israel rebelled against the Lord in the wilderness, it again seemed as if the devil had won. But God did not allow that to happen, for He gave the land of promise to a new

generation. Again, a few hundred years later, the church is carried off into exile into Babylon. It appeared as if the devil had won the battle, but the Lord saved a remnant for Himself. Then our Lord Jesus

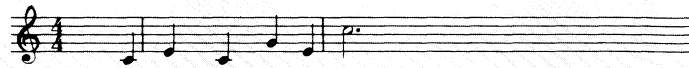
Had the powers of darkness, had the devil not won the victory? Indeed, the devil would have won, had our Lord Jesus remained in the grave. But Peter said to the Jews on Pentecost, that it



HYMN 35

Darwall's 148th

John Darwall, 1770



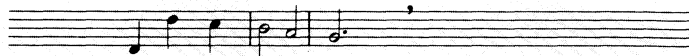
1. Re-joyce, the Lord is King;



Your Lord and King a-dore.



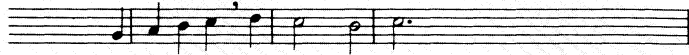
Re-joyce, give thanks, and sing,



And tri-umph ev-er-more.



Lift up your heart, lift up your voice;



A-gain I say, Re-joyce! Re-joyce!

2. Jesus the Saviour reigns;
To Him let praises ring.
The Christ who once was slain
Rose as victorious King.
Lift up your heart,
lift up your voice;
Again I say, Rejoice! Rejoice!

3. His kingdom cannot fail;
He rules o'er earth and heaven.
The keys of death and hell
Are to Christ Jesus given.
Lift up your heart,
lift up your voice;
Again I say, Rejoice! Rejoice!

4. He sits at God's right hand,
Till all His foes submit,
And bow to His command,
And fall beneath His feet.
Lift up your heart,
lift up your voice;
Again I say, Rejoice! Rejoice!

5. Rejoice, He comes again.
The Lord will not delay.
He who from heav'n does reign
Will come on His great Day.
Lift up your heart,
lift up your voice;
Again I say, Rejoice! Rejoice!



Christ entered into this world. Throughout His life He suffered at the hands of His enemies. Finally it again looked like the devil had succeeded in his attacks, for Jesus Christ, the great seed of the woman, was crucified. He died and was buried. It looked like the end of the road for the church of Christ.

was not possible for the grave to hold the Christ (Acts 2:24). On the third day, Jesus Christ conquered the power of the grave, He overcame death, He destroyed the powers of darkness, He defeated the devil.

On many occasions the devil tried to land the deathblow on the seed of the

woman, although he never succeeded. But now Jesus Christ has struck the decisive deathblow on the devil and his hosts. The resurrection of Jesus Christ has freed the church of Christ from the powers of sin and evil, it has freed us from the domain of darkness, so that today we may enjoy the marvelous light of the gospel. Therefore, if Christ has not been raised, there can be no preaching, for there would be no gospel of salvation and no hope to proclaim. But Jesus Christ has won the victory. Therefore the church proclaims the risen Lord.

Wherever the church proclaims the resurrection of Christ under God's blessing, there the gospel comes with power, power to transform and change the lives of men. The preaching of the living Christ raises men up to a newness of life. Peter says, (1 Peter 1:3) ". . . we have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead . . ." Through the power of His resurrection, Jesus Christ is able to break down the great barrier of darkness that surrounds our hearts. By His resurrection He has destroyed the power of sin and satan that had total control over our lives. He has broken the bond of death that held our lives in its grasp.

In Jesus Christ our old nature has been crucified and put to death. Today, as believers, we are no longer enslaved to sin and evil, for Jesus Christ has raised us up to a new life, a life that is dedicated to serving the Lord our God. The resurrection of Christ has a tremendous influence upon those who are His. The Risen One completely changes our way of life. As believers we no longer walk in the ways of the world, but we desire to walk in the ways of our Lord. We are willing to forsake the sinful pleasures of this world, in order to serve the Lord our God.

Therefore the resurrection of Christ is basic for Christian living. We see this clearly in the life of the early church. For the Christians in Jerusalem, the resurrection of Jesus Christ was not just a cold fact of history. His resurrection affected their daily existence. Because the living Christ was raised from the dead, they saw it was vital that they also "walk with Christ" in their lives. Their whole life was transformed (Acts 2:43ff). They were no longer captivated by their own needs and their own desires, and there was real and genuine concern for others. Members of Christ were willing to sell what they had in order to help their needy brothers and sisters. Day by day, they attended the temple together to worship the Lord, they broke bread to-

gether in their homes, and they praised God in their daily lives. The joy of knowing the living Christ so changed their lives, that their whole life, day by day, was given to the service of the Lord.

Their walk of life did not go unnoticed by the men of Jerusalem. The men and women in Jerusalem, looked upon the Christians with favour, "and the Lord added to their number day by day those

for his own pleasures. Materialism has become the name of the game. Man is extremely busy striving for the things he wants in life. His life is filled with worldly ambitions and striving to achieve material gains.

This is one of the greatest dangers we as church of Christ are faced with today. Too often we are so wrapped up with trying to improve our own position in life that we forget about the needs of our brothers and sisters. We are so busy pursuing the things of the world, that we no longer have time to properly read and study God's Word, nor time to worship with our Lord on a daily basis. Perhaps Sundays become the day of worship, and on the other days of the week worshipping is put on hold. We must examine ourselves whether there is the real joy of knowing the resurrected and living Christ. Is it our desire to "walk with Christ" in our daily lives? Does the joy of knowing the living Christ also lead us to worship and praise our Lord daily? Can the men and women of this world also see in our daily walk that we truly know the resurrected Christ who has renewed our lives? Christians know a better way of life. It is a life that forsakes the ways of the world, and that walks in the way of the risen Lord. It is a life that knows the power of the resurrection of Christ. **C**

"The Risen One completely changes our way of life. As believers we no longer walk in the ways of the world, but we desire to walk in the ways of our Lord."

who were being saved" (Acts 2:47). We may ask ourselves, does the resurrection of Christ affect our daily living? Is the resurrection of Christ for us only a cold fact of history? Or is the resurrection of Christ so vital in our lives that we desire to "walk with Christ" in our life? Today we live in a self-centered world. Man is completely out for himself, and



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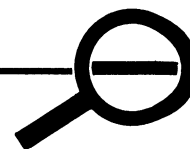
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By C. Van Dam



The Reformed cause in Britain and Zaire

News about the spread of the Reformed faith is always reason for joy and gratitude. I would like to draw your attention to two separate developments in England and in Zaire (the former Belgian Congo).

England

Nederlands Dagblad (14 December 1989) reported that a new Presbyterian church is being formed in England. Although this development is still in an early stage, it has received attention in the Netherlands. Rev. John Nicholls, minister of the Free Church of Scotland in London (a sister church of our Dutch sister churches), visited the Netherlands seeking aid for the Presbyterian Association of England (PAE) which is predominantly found in southern England. The PAE is especially active in the London area, but has contacts with small groups in Durham and Hull in the north as well. Via these groups, a small fellowship in Accrington (also in the north) has come into contact with the PAE too. The Rev. L. Moes, a retired minister of our Dutch sister church in Driebergen-Rijsenburg, spent a month in Accrington helping out, by "preaching," teaching catechism and conducting family visitations.

The Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland (EPC), (a sister church of our Dutch sister churches), is involved in the "church planting" in northern England. The fellowship in Accrington hopes to be received into the EPC. However, the PAE is also open to more contacts in the north of England.

The deputies for contact with churches abroad of our Dutch sister churches are watching the situation closely. They have written both the PAE and the EPC for more information.

Zaire

According to *Tot aan de einden der aarde* (January 1989), De Verre Naasten (the equivalent of Mission Aid in our Dutch sister churches), has received a request to start a project in Zaire which will help Reformed believers there. The Dutch awareness of the growing Re-

"The developments in England and Zaire look promising."

formed church in that country largely came about through the contacts made by Rev. A. Kooij. De Verre Naasten is now in the process of committing itself to a long-term project in six years in Zaire. The country is in an economic crisis, as a result of which everyone has to see to

his own food supply. De Verre Naasten hopes to start an agricultural project which will help church members in the area of Lubumbashi (formerly Elisabethville).

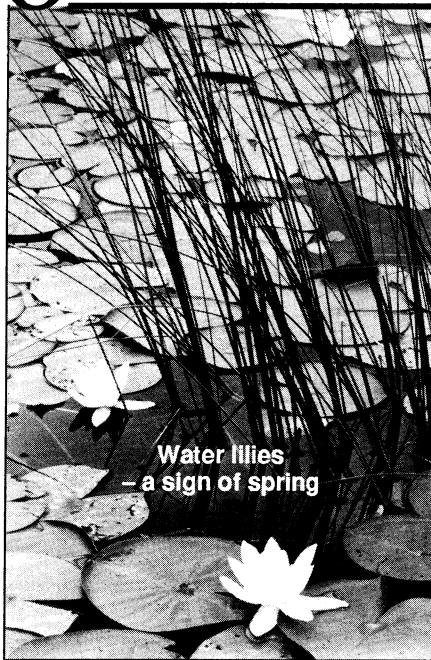
In a relatively short time, L'Eglise Réformée Confessante au Zaire (ER-CZ), the Reformed Confessing Church of Zaire, was formed. Instrumental were the French language broadcasts of "The Back to God Hour" conducted by Rev. A.R. Kayayan. His program "Perspectives Réformées" had great impact in the villages and towns of this former Belgian colony. From the beginning, the Reformed Church in the U.S. (RCUS; the "German Reformed" Church), a small conservative body, has helped the ECRZ and humanly speaking made it possible for a Reformed church to get established in Zaire. The RCUS continues to provide support for the ECRZ in different ways, including the sending of desperately needed clothing and Reformed literature in the French language. It also co-operates with the Dutch initiative by contributing financially to the project of De Verre Naasten (*The Reformed Herald*, November 1988).

At the moment there are 30 congregations with an average membership of 200 for a total of 6000. By far the largest part of the church is found in the south, in the Shaba region. There are only two ministers, no church buildings and 90% of the church membership is unemployed.

The Synod of Spakenburg-Noord (1987) appointed deputies to continue to stimulate the work of the church reformation in Zaire and to follow further developments in the L'Eglise Réformée Confessante au Zaire. (In the past our Dutch sister churches have supported a student from Zaire studying in Aix-en-Provence, France, for the ministry in Zaire.)

The developments in England and Zaire look promising. We hope to keep you posted as further news is forthcoming. Could this not also be an area for the Canadian Reformed World Relief Fund to consider?

OUR COVER



Water lilies
— a sign of spring

Rather "poor" than "stuck"

By W.W.J. VanOene

In the issue of January 20, Dr. K. Deddens made a plea for inviting the professors at our Theological College as advisors to our general synods and even to make it a custom to do so, following the example of our Netherlands sister-churches, and not only of them.

This is an interesting point which has never been raised in this manner in the history of the Canadian Reformed Churches.

Now that it has been raised, it demands a reaction.

To put it clearly right at the beginning: rather voluntarily "poor" than stuck with something which, once introduced, will prove to be impossible to get rid of, if it appears to work the wrong way to the detriment of the churches.

A good element

There is a good element in Dr. Deddens' suggestion.

This element is that the churches should avail themselves of all the help they can get and of all the gifts which are found in their midst.

There were cases in the past when general synods would have acted prudently and most likely would have prevented wrong decisions or lengthy discussions, if they had asked the advice of one or more of our professors.

I would certainly not be opposed to it, but would be all in favour if a certain general synod decided to ask such advice in a specific case.

But why only a general synod? Does not *each and every* ecclesiastical assembly have the right to ask the advice of anyone it chooses, including our professors?

The point

However, the point is *not* whether advice may or in some instances even should be asked.

The point is whether we should introduce the custom or the "rule" that our professors are invited to our general synods in an advisory capacity.

To this suggestion I say: "No!"

There is, of course, the point that in this case the lectures at the College

would have to be interrupted. It is a point which should put some weight into the scales. Usually our general synods are held in the fall, mostly the month of November, unless there are specific reasons to have them earlier in the year, as will be the case with the forthcoming synod of Winnipeg.

There is also the matter of cost. If a synod is held in Ontario, these costs would not be too prohibitive for our rather small federation, but if there is a synod in British Columbia, the picture would be different.

The main point, however, is that the broadest assembly is a gathering of delegates from the churches, and that it should remain just that. Asking advice

". . . that the broadest assembly is a gathering of delegates from the churches, and that it should remain just that."

from someone who is not a member of the assembly in specific instances is different from giving non-delegates the permanent position of members of the assembly, even though they do not have the right to vote.

I am speaking here of regional or general synods. For classes we have the rule that also non-delegated ministers of a church have the right to attend classis in an advisory capacity.

Also with a view to the rather small number of delegates who together form a general synod (sixteen in total) it would not be wise at all to add four non-delegated brothers. These four would constitute 20% of the total number.

Recalling the disproportionately large influence which professors had at synods of the Netherlands churches, which synods had approximately three times as many delegated members as the

Canadian Reformed Churches, we can well see the effects on our synods if the custom were introduced.

Between brackets: Is it historically correct to state, as Dr. Deddens did, that "the professors were mostly not present at the synods to give their advice"? And even if some stayed away either intermittently or regularly, the ones who wanted to make their influence be felt were there almost all the time.

Frequently they were the first ones to ask for and receive the privilege of the floor; oftentimes they drew up the reports of the committees to which they had been added as advisors, read and defended these reports. Everyone can verify this statement and, although I usually do not work with quotations, I would be prepared to give scores of examples.

Their place

I realize that Dr. Deddens wrote: "When advisors know their place as *servants*, there is no danger of hierarchy."

Is my brother now really so naive as to think that the future safety and security of the *churches* is sufficiently safeguarded and protected by what men feel in their hearts and are aware of?

I have no doubts that our present professors know themselves to be servants of Christ and in the service of the churches. I would have no hesitation *at the moment* to invite the professors we have.

But what we need is guarantees for the future. Even the pope of Rome calls himself the "servant of servants of Christ." And is not *everyone* who promotes his stand convinced that he thereby truly serves the Lord and His church?

Dr. Deddens must be aware of it that it was more often so that many of the advisors *abused* their position than that they used it well.

Who were the ones that, at crucial moments in the history of the churches, steered everything into the wrong direction?

Who reported in 1905 about the objections to the teachings of Dr. A. Kuyper Sr and came up with a formulation which haunted the churches till the Liberation

and basically made these teachings acceptable? His son, Prof. Dr. H. H. Kuyper.

Who exercised his influence as a member of the committee which dealt with objections regarding the way in which Dr. J. G. Geelkerken was suspended in 1925 and caused the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands to set out on a path of hierarchy? Prof. Dr. H. H. Kuyper.

Who were the reporters at the Synods of 1942 and 1943 in the Netherlands and who dominated the scene? Would things have gone the way in which they did develop if the "pre-advisors" had not been there? The few good ones could not stem the tide. Besides, Dr. K. Schilder was being sought by the Germans and could not attend many of the sessions, as he was "underground."

Long-time objections

I do wish to stress that my opposition to *making it a rule* that professors shall be invited to our general synods has no reflection at all on our professors of the moment.

I have been opposed to this rule or custom or whatever one wishes to call it ever since I saw the detrimental effects in 1942-1944.

That's why the consistory of the church which I served at that time tried to enlist the support of the sister-churches at classis as well as at regional synod to have the General Synod of Enschede 1945 decide to discontinue this practice.

Our proposal was not taken over. Instead, there came a proposal to take such measures "that the position and work of those who are 'pre-advisory

members' is more in accordance with the character which by its very nature the institution of 'pre-advisory members' ought to have." (Translation and single quotation marks are mine.)

It was, therefore, not just at the Synod of 1951 that proposals for a change were introduced. The churches certainly were happy to have their professors and that they could add to their number. But I am not so sure that this happiness extended to the fact that now there were more 'pre-advisors' at Synod, as Dr. Deddens suggests.

The conclusion of the report at Synod 1945 spoke of "numerous and serious objections which have arisen against the institution of 'pre-advisory members'."

We would speak of "members in a pre-advisory capacity" or rather of "members in an advisory capacity." The term "pre-advisory" as used in the Netherlands suggests that they give their advice before a decision is made or even before anyone else gets the floor. This is what happened frequently.

At that time it was clear that a proposal to discontinue the practice was not directed against either of the professors we had. There were only the two of them: Dr. S. Greijdanus and Dr. K. Schilder, both of whom we esteemed very highly and loved dearly because of their faithfulness and for what they suffered for the sake of Christ.

What we wanted to do was: prevent a recurrence of what we saw had happened in the past twenty-five years.

It was understandable that the brothers of 1945 did not wish to offend the

two professors who stood in the breach, and so the Netherlands churches remained stuck with the custom.

And then we would act wisely when introducing this custom?

I don't believe a word of it.

Rather than let it depend on the awareness of advisors who "know their place as *servants*" the churches should prevent any possibility of abuse of the position by not creating this position, by *not* making it a custom that all professors are invited to all general synods in an advisory capacity.

Let the churches and let general synods ask their advice by all means at any time when in specific cases their advice is desired. It can only be to the advantage and benefit of the churches.

Like Dr. Deddens, so I have been and still am being asked to give advice in specific instances, although I have not kept such a meticulous count as he appears to have done.

There is nothing against that and everything is in favour of it.

But let the churches remain free to ask when *they* consider this necessary.

As is the case in the Netherlands, so the Canadian Reformed Churches will be unable to discontinue the custom if things turn sour in the future, and may the Lord graciously forbid it.

As matters stand now, the brothers are not offended when the custom is not introduced, for it is no reflection on them.

This is better than that the churches will have to offend brothers in the future if they should decide to discontinue the custom, something which they won't do, as history teaches.

What do we read in the Church Order?

As was agreed upon in the meeting of the editorial committee in September last year, Dr. Deddens took up again the question regarding the proper use of Article 31 of our Church Order, about which a discussion was published in the 36th volume of our magazine.

It is always good together to try to come to a responsible understanding of what we have agreed upon, and for this reason I welcome the opportunity to elaborate on it further.

At the end of his article, Dr. Deddens expressed the "hope that the Rev. VanOene will reconsider his views in this respect."

Sorry, but I have to disappoint him.

Although he produces an impressive

list of quotations and although he brings to the fore the names of famous persons with whom to disagree may seem audacious for one who cannot match their fame in any respect, yet he has not convinced me at all.

"This, ' someone may mischievously remark, "is hard especially with you."

Not really, if only one comes with good and convincing arguments. I have not reached my conclusions overnight; they have been arrived at in the course of many years. I have also seen in church life what the results were of a not abiding by the promises which the churches made and laid down in their Church Order. Of some of the wrong things I myself was guilty as well, and I

do not put any blame on anyone in particular. But, as the French say it, "Un homme averti en vaut deux" or, as it is said in English: "Forewarned is fore-armed."

We shall see whether Dr. Deddens adduced any arguments which compel us to come to different conclusions.

Following his article, we come to the following points.

Principles?

Does the Church Order contain "principles"?

According to the quotation of Dr. F. L. Rutgers which Dr. Deddens gave, it does.

If Dr. Rutgers had written: "The

Church Order only gives general *guidelines*; their elaboration and explication are left to ecclesiastical assemblies," I would have agreed.

It is and remains my thesis that only the Word of our God contains the principles that bind us and that these principles have been summarized in our confessions.

It is and remains my thesis that our Church Order does not contain any "principles," but shows how the Scriptural and confessionally formulated principles are to be applied in the life of the churches.

Take, for example, the present Article 74: "No church shall in any way lord it over other churches, no office-bearer over other office-bearers."

This is not a "principle," but it is the concrete application for our ecclesiastical life of the *Scriptural* principle which our Saviour gave, for instance, in Mat. 23: 8-13; Luke 23: 25, 26; which Peter repeated in 1 Pet. 5: 2, 3, and which the church repeated in Art. 31 of the Belgic Confession in these words: "Ministers of the Word, in whatever place they are, have equal power and authority, for they are all servants of Jesus Christ, the only universal Bishop and the only Head of the church."

In Article 74 C. O. we state: See, this Scriptural principle means now very concretely for all the churches which form the federation that no church shall lord it over any other church nor any office-bearer over other office-bearers.

Likewise Article 31 C. O.: This article points out very concretely what in the case of someone who has appealed because he is convinced that he has been wronged this brother (or sister) has to do once a decision has been reached.

It also makes very concrete in his specific case what the Scriptural and confessionally-formulated "principle" that we ought not "to consider. . . decrees or statutes, as of equal value with the truth of God; since the truth is above all," demands him to do. See Art. 7 B. C.; Acts 5: 29; Gal. 1: 9.

That God's Word has (is to have) the final say in the church is not "guaranteed" in Art. 31 C. O.

It is guaranteed in the confession which forms the essence of the church federation.

Art. 31 C. O. specifies what this principle means for someone who received the decision on his appeal: if he can prove that this decision upon his appeal is contrary to God's Word or violates the agreement laid down in the Church Order, he has to let God's Word prevail, for the truth is above all and decisions of even the broadest assembly are not on a level with the divine revelation.

That Article 31 C. O. makes clear what the Scriptural rule means in a specific case does not mean that it now formulates a "general principle."

If Dr. Rutgers had written: "The *underlying* principle is here that God's Word has more authority than all the 'authority' of ecclesiastical assemblies," I would have expressed my full agreement, except for the word which I provid-

***... our
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ed with quotation marks, "authority" in the case of broader assemblies. They have none.

Even if no such making concrete of a Scriptural principle were found in our Church Order at all, this would not make one *grain* of difference: we have it already in the basis of our federation: God's Word as summarized in our confessions.

A church which tries to lord it over another church or an office-bearer who tries to do the same towards his fellow-officebearers violates not a "principle" laid down in our Church Order, but is disobedient to the Lord, the only Bishop of His church, and violates the confessionally-formulated truth which is the "*conditio sine qua non*" (that is: the indispensable condition) for our federation.

Correct Conclusion?

Dr. Deddens wrote: "The Church Order goes the good Reformed way, following the Scriptures and the confessions. This means that *principles* are laid down in the Church Order."

Frankly, I rubbed my eyes a few times when I read this.

Is this logic?

That our Church Order "goes the

good Reformed way, following the Scriptures and the confession" is something about which no differences exist between us. I have always maintained, defended and promoted this before, during, and after my work at our Theological College.

But does the fact that our Church Order follows the Scriptures and the Confessions *MEAN*, that is: does it logically follow from this that *principles* have been laid down in it??

If this is logic, I no longer know what *logica* is.

Here we find an impermissible jump from the one thing to the other.

A minister will (have to) "follow the Scriptures and the confessions", to use these words, in his sermons and, for that matter, in *all* his writings. But does this *mean* that now *principles* are laid down in either his sermons or his books or his articles?

He may expound in his sermons or articles or books how the Scriptural principles are to be applied in the concrete situations of the everyday life of the Christians, and he had better "follow the Scriptures and the Confessions," but this does not *mean* at all that now he "lays down principles in his sermons." It is clear that I have no quarrel at all with the lines that "we may say that the Church Order has a Scriptural and confessional character. . . . It means that the Church Order is built upon the basis of Scripture and the confessions."

The only change I would make in this is "the basis of Scripture as summarized in the confessions." The latter wording prevents any thought or impression as if the confessions have been *added* to the Word of our God.

Nor do I have any quarrel with what Dr. Deddens quotes from his and Rev. G. Van Rongen's booklet. I fail to see the relevance of this quotation for the topic under discussion.

As for what Dr. Deddens quotes from his father's speeches, it will be evident that I have no difficulty with that either. Is it not clear to the observant reader that Prof. P. Deddens stated in his words what I have been defending all along: that "The contents of the Church Order is nothing but a specified explanation of what the Belgic Confession says, e. g. in the Articles 7, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, and 32."?

The words quoted by Dr. Deddens do not state or confirm in any way what he claims, namely that all this means that *principles* have been laid down in our Church Order.

Open Bible

Again: Frankly, I do not know what Dr. Deddens wishes to achieve by

stressing "especially the matter of the 'open Bible' when discussing the Church Order."

As far as I am concerned this is kicking in an open door, unless Dr. Deddens wants to say that I leave the Word of God closed when discussing the Church Order. Such a statement may impress some readers, who may think with themselves, "Boy, that is bad, that Rev. VanOene leaves God's Word closed!", it needs more substantiation than its mere pronouncement.

Did I leave God's Word closed in what I wrote above?

Did I leave God's Word closed when, in Volume XIV of the then *Canadian Reformed Magazine*, I wrote about these things, taking my starting point from 1 Pet. 4: 15, where we are taught not to be "allotri-episkopoi," that is: people who act as if they have the oversight over and act as if they are allowed to interfere in the things and the lives of someone else, bluntly, who poke their nose into another man's affairs?

I do not think that Dr. Deddens meant it that way, but therefore I consider this to be a statement which cuts no ice, beats the air, as is the case with another exclamation which we heard in the past, – but *not* from Dr. Deddens! – namely that "God's Word is above the Church Order." There is no one among us, perhaps not even within the whole spectrum of Reformed Christians, who denies this.

And what the mention of the Rev. H. Bouma's words that "all kinds of articles of the Church Order are to be considered in the framework of texts, c. q. passages from the Scriptures" is to mean in our present discussion is not clear to me at all. Who ever denied this? I, for one, certainly did not.

I thankfully repeat Rev. Bouma's statement that "Article 31 C. O. discusses (???)VO a wrong due to a pronouncement ('uitspraak'), not a decision ('besluit') but a sentence, a judgment." I think that the word "discusses" should be replaced by "speaks of."

Indeed, we are to distinguish well here, too.

This means that an appeal is permitted only when there is a "concluding decision" which gives a definite judgment about a matter. As long, therefore, as a consistory has still not reached a conclusion and made a definite decision, a pronouncement, no member has the right to appeal. This also means that not just any decision by an ecclesiastical assembly may be "appealed," but only such decisions as contain a pronouncement by which one is wronged.

This brings us, finally, to the point in discussion, namely: what have the

churches agreed upon in Article 31 of the Church Order?

The question is not: "How do we read the Church Order?"

Neither is the question: "What do we read *into* the Church Order?"

Nor is the question: "What do we read *behind* the Church Order?"

The question is: *What do we read in the Church Order?*

Three things are provided in Article 31.

1. What a church member who complains that he has been wronged by a pronouncement is allowed to do.
2. What a church member who has appealed such a pronouncement must do.
3. What a church member who is convinced that either God's Word or the solemn agreements have been violated by the pronouncement upon his appeal is bound to do.

Let us pay attention to each of these three points.

What is allowed when one is wronged?

To start with: I do not quite understand the last quotation which Dr. Deddens gives from the Rev. Bouma's book, unless it is only to show that one has to approach the consistory first if one feels he is wronged by a decision or pronouncement.

The second point which I do not get is what (basic) difference is seen between a decision and a pronouncement. Does a decision become a pronouncement when a previous decision is upheld in spite of objections brought in against it? Is not a pronouncement a decision in a specific case? When is a pronouncement not a decision or when does a decision become a pronouncement?

It sounds a little complicated to me, although, if I understand it well, numerous so-called appeals would have been thrown out on the ground that Article 31 speaks only of a "pronouncement," not of just any "decision."

This shows again that giving quotations should be avoided as much as possible.

We do not know the context, no two cases are the same, and one can always find quotations which seem to or do indeed confirm one's stand. No one will look for quotations which either seem to refute one's stand or do so in fact.

Dr. Deddens asked: "What is now the Scriptural background of the right of appeal?"

He answered: "Of course, that no injury, no injustice, no wrong is to be tolerated in the church."

Really?

I beg to disagree.

Please do understand me well.

I fully agree that "no injury, no injustice, no wrong is to be tolerated in the church."

It is the duty of all members of Christ's church to prevent and eliminate all wrong, injury and injustice as much as is in their power *and province*. Don't forget this last element!

All members are to cooperate under the guidance of the office-bearers so that the Bride of Christ may be presented to the Bridegroom without spot or wrinkle, pollution or blemish.

But the question is: Is this now the "underlying principle" of Article 31 Church Order?

I can well understand that Dr. Deddens claims this, for it must support his thesis that, basically, Art. 31 C. O. gives the right to anyone to "appeal" any decision or pronouncement of any ecclesiastical assembly, if he is convinced that wrong has been done and that the purity and well-being of the churches are at stake.

Thus, if a classis or a regional synod made a decision or a pronouncement of which someone is convinced that it either causes or continues "injury, injustice, wrong," he will have the right – according to Dr. Deddens' stand – to "appeal" to the major assembly. He does not have to approach his consistory to ask it to start action to right the wrong; no, he is allowed to "appeal" to the broader assembly even though he himself is not directly involved in the case.

Sorry, but I don't buy that.

And what person who "appeals" would *not* say or state and maintain that he does *not* seek his *own* right, that he does *not* defend his *own* honour, that he does *not* do this because *he* cannot get his way, but that he has the interest of the *churches* at heart, that he fights for the honour of the *King* of the church, that he sees the cause of the *Lord* endangered?

In the line of Dr. Deddens' thesis one will always be able to find an element in a decision or pronouncement which can give the appearance of legitimacy to an "appeal."

Article 31 C. O. speaks of someone who himself has been wronged by a decision or pronouncement of a consistory. *That's* where it starts.

If there were no federation, and if the consistory were unwilling to change its position, the brother would have no other recourse than to do what David did: "Thou dost see; yea, Thou dost note trouble and vexation, that Thou mayest take it into Thy hands; the hapless commits himself to Thee." Ps. 10: 14; Ps. 17: 1, 2; Ps. 140; Ps. 142, and many more places from God's Word.

Now the churches have agreed that

someone who has been wronged by his consistory may ask the sister churches to come to his aid and to judge whether he has been wronged indeed.

Thereby the churches have declared themselves willing and prepared to submit such a decision or pronouncement to the scrutiny of the sister churches, and it is in the nature of the federative bond that they accept the verdict of the sister churches. If this had not been a matter-of-course, the churches would never have agreed to this procedure.

Knowing that they themselves are not perfect and that the office-bearers can and do make mistakes, that consistories can wrong a member, they gave church members the right to put their cause before a classis.

Is that not how it is, put in simple terms, and taking only *what* it says in Art. 31 C. O.?

The brother does not *have* to do this. He is perfectly at liberty to decide that he is going to bear the injustice and to entrust his cause unto the Lord who knows and sees all that happens and all that is in the heart.

Only the Lord knows how many times it did happen indeed that a brother decided to suffer and to leave it up to the Lord to vindicate him and to bring forth his right as the noonday, Ps. 37: 5, 6.

A brother does have the right, however, to seek his right with the sister churches.

That's what we have agreed upon.

If no appeal

What happens or what is to be done if, for one reason or another, the brother does not appeal but, for example, decides to bear the injustice?

Should then another member act as an "overseer of someone else's affairs" (1 Pet. 4: 15) and pursue the matter?

I can find no justification for this in the Word of God. There is an exhortation to the judges to "give justice to the weak and the fatherless; maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute," Ps. 82: 3; and to take up the cause of those who seek their right, but have no helper, what was what Job did, 29: 12-17.

It has always been allowed in church life for someone who could not speak well, could not express himself properly and to the point, to take someone else along as his "mouth" when he appeared to plead his cause.

It has also been customary to allow someone else to formulate an appeal for a person who was not able to put his thoughts and arguments into proper wording. Personally I did offer to do this more than once and even did write appeals to the best of my ability even though I disagreed with the appellant.

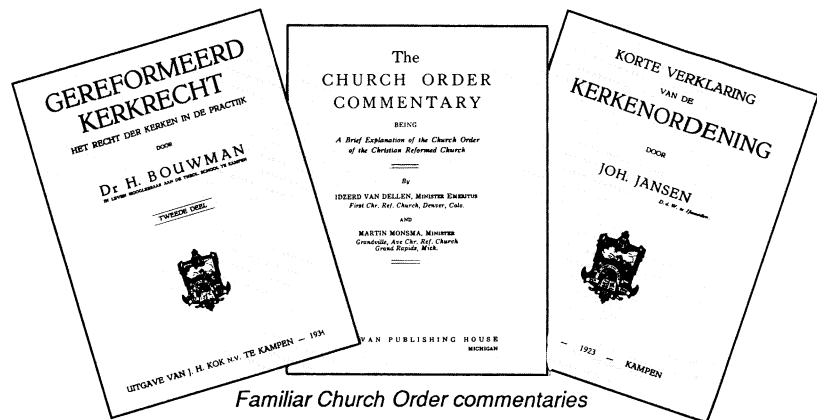
But this is basically different from taking over when the person whom it concerns decides to "groan and bear it," to imitate a well-known expression. I repeat: with an "open Bible" I can find no justification for such action.

What, then, if a person passes away and is unable to defend himself and have his cause vindicated?

Is it then not time to leave the whole matter anyway up to the Lord?

brochure by Dr. S. Greijdanus – which Dr. Deddens adorns with the title "book" – but could not find any sentence in it which supports Dr. Deddens' claim that "If there is injury, injustice, wrong in the church, everybody must have the right of appeal with regard to that evil."

Throwing around a few names of highly esteemed brothers and giving a few sentences from their works does not prove anything.



Familiar Church Order commentaries

When no justification can be found for interfering in the matter of someone who decides to bear the wrong, there is no valid ground for doing so when the Lord "has taken over" so to speak.

In case someone breaks with the church, he loses any right to be heard as yet. There is never any valid reason for breaking with the church.

Past broader assemblies sometimes did go so far as to deal with appeals from people who had broken with the church. I do not wish to state that they did a wrong thing by doing so, but they certainly were under no obligation to give one second of the churches' time to someone who chose that course.

We did quote Psalm 82 in the above; but what power of argument for the point in question does it have when Dr. Deddens mentions that Dr. S. Greijdanus quoted this text "in connection with the bad decisions of the General Synod of 1944 in the Netherlands"? It is totally irrelevant in this connection.

In the first place: all church members were affected and wronged by the decisions, the pronouncements of 1942, 1943, 1944. I wrote about this before.

In the second place: there were several legitimate appeals before those synods, which were all denied as far as seeking justice and redress are concerned. These synods refused to do right and to show justice and equity.

In that situation quoting these words was certainly appropriate, but mentioning this has no bearing at all on our present question.

I read again through the 43-page

In our Church Order we definitely do not say so. See Art. 31.

That "the freedom of God's children must be honoured in the church" is beyond doubt.

The churches did do and are doing this by giving the right to someone who complains that he has been wronged and wants to appeal to do this indeed.

But this freedom is not a "free-for-all."

That's what it would be if Dr. Deddens were right.

What One Must Do

In the second place we provide what someone whose appeal has been heard must do.

He must accept the verdict.

This is a part of Art. 31 C. O. which sometimes seems not to be in this article or not to be known at all.

In all the years during which I attended consistory meetings and major assemblies I have experienced only very seldom that an appellant did accept, did abide by the conclusion, the pronouncement, the decision of a classis. It was far more likely that the next regional synod had to deal with an appeal against the classical decision upon the first appeal. Once it was that far, it was practically unavoidable that the same matter reached the following general synod.

In case also this general synod denied the appeal, one would not have to be surprised when the whole process started all over again, for "justice must prevail," you see.

The rule is and should remain: one appeal should suffice.

However – and now I quote someone with whose writing I usually disagree, although not in the following – "With us it has become an established practice that a member of the congregation who cannot get his way with the consistory, can act the oppressed party and, with an alleged appeal to Art. 31 of the Church Order, can go to the classical meeting and to the particular synod and then can get on the docket of the general synod whatever he wants there. That is an adulteration of what the Church Order has arranged, an adulteration whereby the sessions of the synod are stretched out and from which the churches do not benefit. If a member of the congregation is of the opinion that, over against the stand of his consistory, the matter which he defends is of such an importance that it *has* to be on the agenda of the general synod, even then his consistory, although of a different opinion, does not hamstring him: there is freedom of assembly and freedom of the press; let him labour until the matter which he promotes is ripe to be dealt with."

Someone who has appealed a decision, a pronouncement by his *own* consistory regarding him, and has received the classical judgment on his appeal is obligated to abide by this judgment.

That's what the churches have stipulated.

But it has become a regular practice, indeed, to go to a regional synod if the appellant disagrees with – I beg your pardon: "is wronged by" – the classical decision. And so on. *Ad infinitum*.

This is a mockery of the freedom of the church members to enlist the help of the sister churches in case these members have been wronged by their consistory.

Besides: one cannot be wronged by a classical decision unless it is a decision upon one's own appeal or unless a decision has been made which is supposed to be binding upon all the churches in that area.

What one is bound to do

Since it is written in the "constitution" of the federation that "the truth is above all," the churches have made clear that this also applies in case someone is convinced that the decision on his appeal conflicts with the Word of God. They have even added another element: if, in the decision/pronouncement, the agreement laid down in the Church Order has been violated.

If this is the case, God's Word prevails here as well.

Thus someone who can prove that the above "transgressions" are a fact *must* let the Truth prevail, that is, he is obligated to reject the decision/pronouncement. We are not now speaking of all the questions which may come up in this connection. At the moment there is only one point the issue here: conflict with God's Word and/or unfaithfulness to the agreement, our Church Order, renders a decision or pronouncement void and of no effect towards the person whom it concerns.

All others are, of course, not affected or bound by a decision or pronouncement on an appeal of another member.

The member concerned retains his Christian freedom: the Truth sets him free.

The last part

Now about the last part of Dr. Deddens' article.

He begins with what is called a sledgehammer argument. In Dutch they call it a "dooddoener."

He asks: "Do we read the Church Order in a formal or even formalistic way? Do we say, when something is not literally mentioned in the Church Order, that the matter is out of order, and that we have nothing to do with it?"

This is always the accusation when one points to what we have agreed upon: "You must not be formalistic. According to the letter you may be right, but. . ." O that "but"!

And further: I am not speaking about what is *not literally* mentioned in the Church Order.

I only insist that we shall *abide by what is (literally) mentioned in this agreement*.

That's a different story!

Should that be hinted at as reading the Church Order "in a formal, or even formalistic way"?

And *if* this hint is not directed against what I defend, what, then, is the sense of this remark?

It is the going beyond what we have agreed upon which causes the trouble.

Abiding by what we have agreed upon will only promote the peace and well-being of Jerusalem.

The trouble comes when the attitude is taken of: "Yes, that is what we have literally provided, but what is not literally mentioned there is not out of order."

I heard this kind of reasoning in the years of the Liberation, too! I am certain that Dr. Deddens does not want to go into this direction at any price.

It is, however, the consequence of the stand he took.

Then anything goes.

I, for one, refuse to go this path and shall do what is in my power to warn the churches against it.

VO

□

Romans 5:7 – 11

For he who has died is freed from sin.

But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him.

For we know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over Him.

The death He died He died to sin, once for all, but the life He lives He lives to God.

So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

A double reply

By K. Deddens

Reactions

In *Clarion* of January 20 of this year I wrote two articles: *Voluntary poverty at out General Synods* and *How do we read the Church Order?* There were many positive reactions to both articles. I received written and oral agreement, almost daily, from coast to coast. The negative reaction came from the Rev. W.W.J. VanOene by means of his two articles in this issue of *Clarion*, *Rather "poor" than "stuck"* and *What do we read in the Church Order?* and in a letter to the Editor. Of course, these many positive reactions are not decisive and I do not mention them to give the impression that because of them the right is on my side. However, they point to the fact that these questions do live in the Canadian Reformed Churches, and that many are of the opinion that the right of appeal is not restricted to those who are personally wronged, as the Rev. VanOene maintains.

1. Members of the assembly?

My reply to both articles of the Rev. VanOene will not be extensive. I will restrict myself to the main points in both cases, starting with the matter of advice of theological professors at general synods. Rev. VanOene (hereafter VO) writes, "Asking advice from someone who is not a member of the assembly in specific instances is different from giving non-delegates the permanent position of members of the assembly, even though they do not have the right to vote." But I ask, where did I say that the professors must have the permanent position of members of the synod? I wrote in my article, "I am of the opinion that especially in the situation here in Canada it would be wise to have professorial advice at the synods." But that is something else!

To add four non-delegated brothers?

In connection with this, VO remarks, "Also with a view to the rather small

number of delegates who together form a general synod (sixteen in total) it would not be wise at all to add four non-delegated brothers." But I ask again, where did I say that all four full-time professors should be added to the delegates? I would advise VO to re-read my article, so that he can see that I stated something different, namely that *not* all the professors are to be involved in a synod. I wrote: "One can ask the question: is not the first task of the professors to teach at the Theological College? The answer is: this is true, and *I would not defend a proposal to invite all the professors to all the meetings of synod.*" (italics added, KD)

"... it is voluntary poverty, not to make use of the manpower which we have ..."

What is the agenda?

Who are then to be invited as advisors? I am of the opinion that this would depend on the agenda of the synod. If the matter on the agenda has to do with the confessions of the church, let the professor who teaches Symbolics give advice. If there are special questions regarding the Church Order, ask the professor who teaches Church Polity. In the case of exegetical matters, the churches have two professors who teach Exegesis of Scripture. Let us be aware that the Theological College is an ecclesiastical institution. Professor J. Kamphuis gave the farewell address on behalf of the professors-advisors at the end of the General Synod of Heemse, 1984/85 in the Netherlands. He said: "How good is it for teachers and students to keep continuously the churches and their labour in mind. If 'Kampen' were to start living, as it were, with its back to the churches,

that would mean, a loss of real strength first of all for 'Kampen' itself" (Acta, vol. II, p. 138). "Kampen" and "Hamilton" are both an ecclesiastical institution. I maintain that it is voluntary poverty, not to make use of the manpower which we have in the midst of our churches. It is in the province of the synod to make decisions in this respect. However, I would like to make the suggestion that reports and proposals should also be sent to the Theological College of Hamilton, so that also the professors as ministers in the midst of the churches can at least become acquainted with the agenda of the synod, so that they are well-informed beforehand when their advice is requested.

Well-founded advice

It speaks for itself that advice must always be well-founded. It does not make sense to ask advice from someone unless he knows what is going on. In his last speech to a synod before he passed away (the General Synod of Enschede, 1955/1956) my father, the late Prof. P. Deddens, said, "... well-founded advice can only then be given, if he who gives advice has been involved in the whole discussion right from the beginning, and if he is in close permanent contact with the synod and its advisory committee. If this is lacking . . . then it is possible, indeed, to give advice regarding principal questions, but one has to abstain from advice mostly, if not completely, when questions concerning the matter of a concrete case come up for discussion" (*Acts of the General Synod of Enschede, 1955/1956, art. 499*).

I agree completely with what is said here in this farewell address. It is not good to ask someone who has not been involved to give advice at the last moment of long discussions in a difficult matter. Also the International Conference of Reformed Churches, to be held at Langley, BC, in the second part of June, this year, works differently. In these months before the I.C.R.C. meets, papers are sent out which will be discussed at the conference. Now already two professors of our Theological College of Hamilton who were requested to

be advisors at the conference, receive the papers. Please keep in mind that I am not speaking now about involvement of advisors in *all* the matters demanding the permanent presence of advisors. I am referring to some applicable specific matter.

Other ecclesiastical assemblies?

"But why only a general synod?," VO said. He continues, "Does not *each and every* ecclesiastical assembly have the right to ask the advice of anyone it chooses, including our professors?" My answer is: that is right, but keep in mind that especially consistories ask for advice, while they give *time* to the advisor. They can do so, for they will meet again. But classes and regional synods meet (hopefully) just one day. Thus, for practical reasons, it is often impossible to ask for advice. But in the case of general synods it is different. They do not meet for just one day, but for a number of weeks. Besides, according to Art. 30 C.O., they deal especially with matters which belong to the churches in common.

Conclusion

It is up to the churches to ask professors to be advisors at general synods. Let it be only one, or at most two. But then make it possible for them to come with well-founded advice.

When I wrote my article *Voluntary poverty at our General Synods*, I did not know that, at least one and a half year ago, already one of the churches sent a proposal to the convening church of the upcoming general synod on this matter. I heard this recently. I hope that the Canadian Reformed Churches will go in this direction, without feeling "stuck!"

2. No principles

My second article dealt with the question, *How do we read the Church Order?* My reply to VO's reaction will not be long, because I want to restrict myself to the main question, which has, indeed, to do with the way in which we read the Church Order. According to VO there is a sharp distinction between principles (laid down in the Scriptures, as summarized in the Confessions) and the application of these principles in the Church Order. But is that distinction as sharp as it looks? What is actually a principle? Dictionaries mention mostly three meanings: 1. a source of action, 2. that from which something takes its rise, and 3. a primary element, force, rule or law which produces or determines particular results (cf. e.g. Shorter Oxford, ed. 1968, p. 1585; Webster, ed. 1972, p.

384). It is said in the former Art. 1 of the Church Order (now Article 74) that no Church shall in any way lord it over other Churches, no office-bearer over other office-bearers. This is not only an *application* of, for instance, Luke 22:24-26, or of Art. 31 of the Belgic Confession ("... they are all servants of Jesus Christ, the only universal Bishop and the only Head of the Church"), but it is also itself a *principle*. According to the meaning of the word, a principle is "a source of action" for the churches and the office-bearers, "a primary element" which produces "particular results" in ecclesiastical meetings, in home visits, in all circumstances.

In this sense Prof. J. Hovius of Apeldoorn could say, "Already in Wezel 1568 the *principles* are indicated according to which ecclesiastical life had to be developed." (J. Hovius, *Het Verband tussen onze Belijdenis en onze Kerkorde* [Sneek, 1962], p. 15.) Of course, in the Church Order some practical rules are given, but the main purpose of the Church Order is *to preserve* the churches by the Scriptures as summarized in the Confessions. Hence Hovius did not say: the Church Order is only an application of the Confession, but he stated that "there is an essential and very close relation between our Confession and our Church Order. Both are structurally as well as essentially correlated."

We may even say – and this has been taught for many years in "Kampen" – with the words of W. Niesel in his book about Reformed Confessions and Church Orders: "According to Reformed doctrine, also the order of the Church has a confessional character". (*Bekennnisschritten und Kirchenordnungen*, Zürich, 1938, p. V).

Only if personally wronged?

This brings me again to Article 31 of the Church Order, of which VO denies that it contains a principle. I read in Joh. Jansen, *Korte Verklaring van de Kerkenordening*, (Kok, Kampen, p. 143), that this article implies that decisions of ecclesiastical assemblies are not infallible but fallible. Jansen said this in the first edition of his book, in 1923, in which he adhered to the Church Polity of the Doleantie, as this was taught by Dr. F.L. Rutgers. I have already quoted Dr. Rutgers himself, who said that here a principle was given. The same was taught in Kampen for many years by Dr. H. Bouwman. I quote from his second volume of *Gerereformeed Kerkrecht*: "Now this article could be read in this way that the right of appeal is only given when someone is personally wronged by the pronouncement of a major assembly. *Undoubtedly this has not been the inten-*

tion (italics added, K.D.), as appears from the general formulation of the synod of Emden (1571, in fact the first synod, K.D.), that anyone may appeal from the classical assembly to the provincial synod. *Anyway, the right of appeal is never limited to those cases in which one's own personal rights are violated or one is personally wronged*" (italics added, K.D.). Dr. H. Bouwman then gives several examples, also from the beginning of the federation of the churches in the Netherlands, and he concludes: "The legal ground upon which an appeal can be based, is broader than the case that someone is personally wronged. This legal ground is also there when someone is of the opinion that a decision made by the consistory is in conflict with the Word of God and dangerous for the congregation. It is in the nature of the case that there must be the possibility to receive justice in a higher instance (*Gerereformeed Kerkrecht II*, Kok, Kampen, 1934, p. 41ff.).

Self-evident

Why was Dr. H. Bouwman so certain in his writing about this matter? Did he not know that history is not normative? I think he considered it as self-evident that an appeal must be possible, not only if someone is personally wronged, but also if injury or violation of justice is at stake. That has nothing to do with what VO quotes from I Peter 4:15. It has nothing to do with being a meddler, a busybody, but this has to do with the *principle* that no injury, in whatever form, is to be tolerated in the church, and that it is merciful to point to that injury or violation of one's rights, so that injustice can be taken away.

Around the Reunion of 1892

Not only in the 16th century was this practice regarding the right of appeal for each and every member of the church maintained, but also later on. I take as an example what happened at the first synod after the reunion of the churches of Secession and Doleantie, namely the synod of Dordrecht 1893. This synod had to finish a matter with which the last synod of the churches of the Secession dealt which, namely the synod of Amsterdam 1892. There was an appeal of a brother from Dedemsvaart on the decision of the maintenance of excommunication by the particular synod of Drenthe. This synod had maintained the decision of the consistory of Dedemsvaart. There was a discussion at the synod of Amsterdam 1892 whether or not the appeal was admissible. What was the case? Not the man involved, but his brother appealed. But the synod decided to deal with the appeal. Synod pro-

nounced that *a member of the church may appeal on a major assembly when he or she is of the opinion that the consistory has wronged another member of the congregation* (italics added, K.D.).

Finally the whole matter was solved by the decision of the first synod after the reunion in 1893. I think this was an important matter, because the new federation of Reformed Churches had just started and also the brothers of the Doleantie agreed with the decision. (See the *Acts* of the Synod of 1892, Amsterdam 1892, p. 34, article 56, also p. 76, article 99. See also *De Reformatie* XXXI, no. 19, February 4, 1956, p. 151).

After the liberation of 1944

In the liberated churches after 1944 this principle was maintained. Immediately after the liberation a brief explanation of the Church Order was published in Enschede, written by the three local

ministers, H. Meulink, H. Vogel, and I. de Wolff. (Enschede, n.d., p 17.) In this booklet they say: "This article deals with the right of appeal. He who is of the opinion that he is wronged has the right to appeal to a major assembly. *This is in force for assemblies as well as persons* (italics added, K.D.). Then there follows in Article 31 that most important part, in which a guarantee is given against hierarchy which wants to impose on the churches and the consciences of men human ordinances which are in conflict with truth and justice." As far as I know, "Kampen" taught the students in the same way after the liberation, even until nowadays.

Finally

History is not normative. But history is very instructive. We can learn much from it. The reformer Bucer wrote once, "God's Church did not just today fall

down out of heaven" (quoted by W. van't Spijker, *Goddelijk recht en kerkelijke orde bij Bucer* [Divine justice and ecclesiastical order in Bucer], Kampen 1972, p. 40). This must make us modest.

I quote again Prof J. Hovius: "The Church must be diligent that the Church Order does not degenerate to a petrified law that kills life in an atmosphere of formalism and legalism" (l.c., p. 25). This is not a sledgehammer argument, as VO says. It is a warning to read the Church Order always in the light of Scripture and Confession, taking into account their totality, comparing Scripture with Scripture, so that the articles of the Church Order are not read as an iron law, but in a *pastoral* way, because the church is the gathering of *living* members who, in the church, expect their salvation from Jesus Christ, the only Head of the church, who must always have the final word!

The alleged restriction of Article 31

Editorial Note: Mr. Hans Boersma made a historical study for professor K. Deddens on the origin, the history, and use of Art. 31 C.O. This study was thought relevant in the present discussion, and adapted for our magazine by the author.

Article 31 of the Church Order is well-known in the Canadian Reformed Churches. After 1944 the "liberated" churches in the Netherlands were known by the name "Reformed Churches in the Netherlands maintaining Art. 31 C.O." Lately this same article has again become the topic of discussion. It is said that churches or individuals are not allowed to appeal decisions with which they have difficulties when they themselves are not wronged.

The matter obviously concerns each church member directly. In April, the Lord wiling, the next General Synod will be convened. Appeals run the danger of being put aside with the argument: this person was not personally wronged. Indeed, the issue is timely and touches on the responsibilities which each believer has before God and the communion of saints.

For a correct understanding of our present article 31 C.O. it is necessary to examine its origin in some detail. History is not normative. But it does teach one about the practices of the churches and therefore about one's own historical background. If the churches adopt the new church-political rules as recently

suggested this means a break with a tradition which goes back to the sixteenth century. It is therefore well worth it to study the history of the issue at stake. In this article I will first deal with the history of the origin of article 31 and with the way in which it has been interpreted and will then conclude with some comments as to what Scripture has to say in this question.

Wesel

If one looks for something that vaguely resembles the present article 31, one needs to go back to the sixteenth century to Wesel. In this church order, which was adopted in 1568, one can find an interesting article at the end of the section "On Discipline." This article (VIII.11) is printed in the insert elsewhere in this issue. The article deals with someone who thinks "that he has been done an injustice *in this way*" (italics added). The phrase "injustice" is quite general but since this article is at the end of the section on discipline it is clear that the article speaks of injustice with respect to discipline. One can imagine that when a consistory has come to the conclusion that a person needs to be disciplined, that such a person will not always agree with the actions taken by the consistory. Well, says Wesel, if there are such problems, the person involved always has the right to appeal to broader assemblies. But the Convent of Wesel goes even further. Also if someone

thinks that he has been treated unfairly "in another way" he has the right to appeal. This right is not restricted to matters of discipline but applies to any situation in which he thinks he has been done an injustice.

Origin of Article 31

Article VIII.11 of Wesel is broad. It does not only concern church discipline but also any other area of concern. Still, Wesel does not explicitly state that one may appeal even if one is not *personally wronged*. It is quite possible that the delegates in Emden (1571) realized this and decided that a still broader formulation was necessary.¹ From now on, something "which could not be settled" at the consistory level had to be brought to the major assembly (art. II.3). A separate article on individual appeals was no longer included by Emden.

But this lack of a separate article on individual appeals must soon have been felt. What to do if someone wanted to appeal a decision while his consistory did not agree with him? Could he then still appeal this decision? This point had to be clarified. Therefore, the Synod of Dordt (1578) decided to make an extra article. From now on there was not only the above mentioned article II.3 of Emden (1571). This article kept the same number and remained, with a little exception, basically the same. The Synod of Dordt decided to add to this article an extra article which dealt only with individ-

ual appeals (art.II.4). From now on, if someone felt that he had been *burdened* by a decision, he could appeal such a decision. Note here the italicized word: *burdened* (in Dutch *beswaert*). This article is very important in the present discussion. For it led in the course of time to our article 31, the article under debate. Interestingly enough, this important article (II.4) does not say that one must be wronged, let alone personally wronged, if one wants to appeal a decision. Someone could be burdened by a decision that practicing homosexuals may be ordained as ministers. One would not be personally wronged but could be very burdened indeed. Of course this immediately raises the question: how come we no longer have the word "burdened" but have the word "wronged" in article 31?

Burdened or wronged?

Before I will try to answer that question it is necessary to concentrate a little longer on the Synod of Dordt (1578). For our present article 31 does not only come from the article of Dordt which I just mentioned (II.4). A comparison of article II.4 of Dordt with our present article 31 shows that Dordt II.4 corresponds only with the *first half* of our article 31. The second part has a different origin. It comes from another article of that same Synod of Dordt (1578): article II.8. Dordt decided that in all matters the majority decides. It did not speak here of certain appeals of individuals. No, all matters were to be considered as settled after the majority had made a decision. The article was not restricted to individual appeals, but also referred to cases in which churches could launch appeals.

These two articles, II.4 and II.8, were joined by the Synod of Middelburg (1581) into one new article (art. 23). The first part of this new article referred to individual appeals. But the second part referred to *all cases*, just as article II.8 of Dordt had also referred to all cases. And it is exactly the same with our article 31, for it is based on Middelburg's article 23. This means that if one looks at it from an historical angle the churches of the Liberation were quite correct when they liberated themselves in accordance with article 31. For the second part of this article had, historically speaking, always referred not only to individual appeals but to *all cases*.

But now that we know the origin of both, distinct parts of article 31 we must once more ask the question: how come that we no longer have the word "burdened" but instead have the word "wronged"? This change also came in 1581 during the Synod of Middelburg. This change may seem at first sight

more important than it really is. For when Middelburg put the two articles of Dordt (II.4 and II.8) together into one article it also made some changes in vocabulary. These changes are not changes in content but are merely changes in vocabulary and word order. Everyone can verify these changes for himself by comparing article II.4 of Dordt to article 23 of Middelburg: the word "judgment" (*oordee*) was changed into "decision" (*vutspraecke*); 'to bring his matter before a major [assembly]' (*syn sake voor een meerder betrecken*) was changed to "to appeal to a major [assembly]" (*hem tot een meerdere beroepen*); "he" (*die*) was changed into "the same" (*deselue*). This makes clear that we must see the change from "burdened" (*beswaert*) into "wronged" (*veronghelijckt*) in the same light. It was never intended as a change in content. It was only a formal change without any real significance.

A change of our church-political practice indeed may seem to build on the literal text of article 31, but the intention of this article is if one feels burdened by a decision, he has the right to appeal. This need not concern a personal wronging.

It is my opinion that the origin of the present article 31 shows that one does not have to be personally wronged in order to be allowed to make an appeal. It has also become clear that the second part of article 31 is separate from the first part. This second part applies to each and everyone whether that be individuals or consistories. It was certainly not a "church-political blunder" when the Reformed churches added the reference to article 31 behind their name.

Church attendance

The above all concerned the history of article 31 itself. I shall now deal with the history of its interpretation. I hope to show that it indeed is a novelty to insist that one has to be personally wronged before one is allowed to appeal a decision.

The well-known theologian F.L. Rutgers does not deal with the issue at hand, as far as I know. He only warns against the danger of people making issues out of nothing: "Whether the church service begins at 9:30 a.m. or at 10:00 a.m. cannot wrong somebody . . . A wronging would occur if the people were to be prevented from church attendance."²

Jansen uses almost the same example which Rutgers uses. The only small difference is that Jansen mentions two possibilities for appeal: cases in which someone is wronged (*verongelijking*) and cases in which there is a violation of justice (*rechtsverkrachting*). Unfortunately, Jansen does not go into fur-

ther detail. It is not exactly clear what he means by "violation of justice." It may be assumed, however, that he refers to cases in which somebody is not personally wronged. For he adds the possibility of "violation of justice" in addition to "being wronged."³

Bouwman goes into a bit more detail. He explicitly argues that it is not necessary to be personally wronged. His argument is strongly based on history. He says, for instance: look how broad Emden's article II.3 was. That means that we cannot restrict individual appeals to those who are personally wronged.⁴ One can appeal, argues Bouwman, if "someone feels that a decision taken by the consistory goes against God's Word and is dangerous for the congregation."⁵ This quote is interesting. Bouwman writes here what he thinks is at stake: God's Word and the well-being of the congregation. He also argues that "Reformed people have always permitted further [*hoger*] appeal."⁶ This issue is quite important in Bouwman's view. He discusses, for instance, the question whether it would be good to allow certain appeals only to go up to Regional Synod. General Synod would get it a bit easier that way. But Bouwman is against such ideas, because "for the appellants [*bezwaarden*] the right must remain open to argue their case before the assembly of all the churches."⁷

CRC and GKN

The Christian Reformed Church has also busied itself with the point in question. The well-known commentary on the Church Order by Van Dellen and Monsma gives the following definition of being "wronged": ". . . that is, when according to his [the appellant's] conception an injustice has been committed."⁸ A personal injury is certainly not required in order to be allowed to appeal:

He who feels that a minor assembly has come to an incorrect and dangerous conclusion, contrary to the Bible, the confessional writings, the Church Order, or the welfare of the churches, may and should indeed appeal to classis or synod.⁹

This quote is especially significant if one considers that there are some hierarchical tendencies in the CRC. Despite these tendencies, however, people in the CRC can still appeal in cases of simple "injustice."

As Rev. Wielenga has pointed out, the same is the case in the (synodical) Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (GKN).¹⁰ Their church order has the following stipulation:

Those who consider any pronouncement or action of an assembly in conflict with the stipulations of the church

order or who consider the well-being of the church damaged in another way by such a pronouncement or action, or who are of the opinion that they have been done an injustice by it can appeal to the next major assembly. If they consider such a decision or action in conflict with clear pronouncements of God's Word they are bound to appeal . . . [art.31.2].

Also in this church order it is striking that the right of appeal is not restricted to being personally wronged. Stronger yet, the personal injustice is only seen as a minor case in which one may appeal decisions. The obligation to appeal is there when God's Word is at stake.¹¹

This brief overview of the history of interpretation concerning the issue at hand gives the following conclusions:

1. There has been fear of flooding major assemblies with matters where no one is wronged (Rutgers, Jansen).
2. There is the realization that since there are more important matters than being personally wronged, article 31 C.O. must not be read in a strictly literal sense (Jansen, Bouwman, Van Dellen and Monsma, Nauta).
3. The above consideration has led to a rewording of article 31 in the CRC and in the GKN.

Word of God

Despite these conclusions I will not deny that it is possible that the Reformed practice throughout the centuries has been wrong. Historical arguments should certainly be abandoned if this is

**“. . . the right of appeal
is not restricted to
being personally
wronged.”**

required. But what reasons would there be to accuse the Reformed tradition of having failed so miserably on this point? Is it the fact that there are so many people who are simply out to get their way? This was already foreseen in Wesel. There was already spoken of "subterfuge" and "stubbornness." But these are merely practical considerations. Is that a reason for not allowing one to speak up for the truth when something important is at stake?

On the contrary, I think that there is sufficient reason not to give in to such argumentation. Rev. Wielenga has, in my opinion, dealt with the crux of the matter

when he refers to article 29 of the Belgic Confession. This article states that the true church "governs itself by the pure Word of God." Says Wielenga, "That is at stake. The Word of God must govern, and therefore every voice which claims deficiencies in that respect, must be admitted to the decision making bodies."¹² Would it not be against God's Word if one could freely appeal decisions when he is personally wronged while this would not be possible if Scripture itself were violated? No, it is better to stick with our Belgic Confession, which argues that nothing is of equal value with the divine Scriptures, "with the truth of God, since the truth is above all" (art. 7). There is only one lawgiver (James 4:12), and this lawgiver is not the hierarchy of the church. Let us then take care not to submit again to the yoke of slavery since Christ has set us free (Galatians 5:1).

The above makes clear that it is not without reason that the Reformed fathers allowed individuals to flood their synods despite the danger of people trying to get their own way. When the Word of God or the well-being of His church is at stake all else must fade into the background. Let us continue the old Reformed practice so that the Word of God may stand firm.



- 1 As is suggested by J.D. Wielenga, "Letter to the Editor." In *Clarion* 36:10 (May 22, 1987), 219.
- 2 F.L. Rutgers, "De bespreking der hoofdpunten van het kerkrecht naar aanleiding van de Dordtsche kerkenorde." I, 87. Unpublished lecture notes of 1892-93. See the library of the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches.
- 3 Joh. Jansen, *Korte verklaring van de kerkenordening*. (Kampen: 1923; rpt.) (Amsterdam: Ton Bolland, 1976), 143.
- 4 H. Bouwman, *Gereformeerd kerkrecht: het recht der kerken in de practijk II* (Kampen: Kok, 1934), 41. I do not think that this argument is valid. For Emden's article II.3 is not related to our article 31, but to the second sentence of our article 30 (see insert).
- 5 Bouwman 42.
- 6 Bouwman 43.
- 7 Bouwman 43.
- 8 Idzerd van Dellen and Martin Monsma, *The Revised Church Order Commentary; An Explanation of the Church Order of the Christian Reformed Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1967), 126.
- 9 Van Dellen and Monsma 127. The CRC also has made it clear that the second part of article 31 does not just refer to individuals. They have made this clear by again splitting up the two sections of article 31, as it was in 1578.
- 10 Wielenga 219.
- 11 Cf. D. Nauta, *Verklaring van de kerkorde van de Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland* (Kampen: Kok, 1971), 139.
- 12 Wielenga 392.

Wesel (1568) Art. VIII.11 If, however, someone thinks that he has been done an injustice in this way or in an other way, it is allowed to appeal the decision of the Consistory to the judgment of the Classes (after they will be instituted), and again to request help from Synod against a decision of the Classes. Even so, such subterfuge and refusal to acknowledge blame shall not be free from the mark of stubbornness.

Emden (1571) Art. II.3 If something would have happened in a certain church of Classis which could not be settled in that consistory, it shall be discussed and judged in a Classical meeting against which an appeal shall be made to the provincial [meeting].

Dordt (1578) Art. II.3 One shall not bring matters to broader assemblies except those which could not be settled in the minor [assemblies] or which concern the Churches in common.

Dordt (1578) Art. II.4 If someone complains that he has been burdened by the judgment of the minor assembly he shall be allowed to bring his matter before a major [assembly].

Dordt (1578) Art. II.8 In all matters (always except those concerning which we have an express word of God), when the opinions have been carefully weighed, one shall remain by the advice of the majority of the votes to decide after that which decision everyone shall be bound to observe.

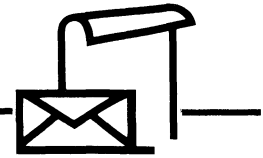
Middelburg (1581) Art. 22 In major assemblies one shall not deal with [something] except that which could not be settled in minor [assemblies] or which belong to the Churches of the major assembly in common.

Middelburg (1581) Art. 23 If someone complains to have been wronged by the decision of the minor assembly he shall be allowed to appeal to a major [assembly]. And that which has been agreed upon by majority vote shall be considered settled and binding, unless it were to be proven to be in conflict with the Word of God or with the articles decided upon in our general Synod as long as these have not been changed by another general Synod.

Present art. 31 If anyone complains that he has been wronged by the decision of a minor assembly, he shall have the right to appeal to the major ecclesiastical assembly; and whatever may be agreed upon by a majority vote shall be considered settled and binding, unless it is proved to be in conflict with the Word of God or with the Church Order.



LETTER TO THE EDITOR



Dear Editor

In response to K. Deddens' article in *Clarion* (Volume 38, No. 2) of January 20, 1989, please allow me the following remarks:

Br. Deddens in his article "Voluntary Poverty at our General Synods," pleads for professors from our Theological College to be invited to our synods as advisors. He reasons that with their knowledge and wisdom they could be beneficial to our synods.

Br. Deddens also advocates that these professors be allowed to take part in the discussions. If I read the article right, these advisors would be a permanent part of every General Synod.

I could not disagree more!

As Br. Deddens stated, "Synods are made up of sixteen people" who have been properly delegated. This number of members of Synod must decide on all items on the agenda.

To do this properly, they will in many instances form committees who will serve synod with their reports. These committees are free to ask advice from others outside of the Synod delegates or include them in these committees. Wisdom would dictate that if the synod or committees feel the need for advice they will obtain such. They should never feel compelled to ask for advice. Nor should unsolicited advice be offered too readily.

The notion that professors be included as advisors indicates that the sixteen members of Synod are not capable to perform their task properly; therefore, we give them advisors already in advance. Otherwise why suggest that advisors be included in synod when the need for advice has not yet been established?

It is my opinion that:

Advisors should be asked when the need for advice is felt. This should be the full extent of their services. They may be asked again for further advice

but should never, ever be given the right to take part in the discussions of the delegates at Synod. Also, professors can intimidate delegates and may carry the discussion in the direction of their viewpoint. This is not an imaginary danger.

Mr. Editor, we honour our Theological College professors because of their office and for that reason hold them in very high esteem. We also thank the Lord for them because of their work through which we receive faithful well-trained ministers who are able to take full responsibility when delegated to ecclesiastical meetings. This also will minimize the need for advisors. We should not impoverish our synods by allowing professors to participate in the discussions.

We also do not want all our synods held in Hamilton. There is more to Canadian Reformed Canada than Ontario.

T.M. VEENENDAAL
Carman, MB



PRESS RELEASE



Willem Hendrik Zwart Canadian organ tour 1989

The well-known Dutch organist Willem Hendrik Zwart (son of the famous Jan Zwart) is planning a series of organ recitals throughout Canada from March 30 - April 20, 1989. Mr. Zwart will play works of his father and other Dutch composers, among them Andriessen, Bijster, and Sweelinck. In addition, his programs will include works from the Baroque and Romantic periods.

Willem Hendrik Zwart was born in 1925. He received his first training from his father, Jan Zwart (1877-1937), a famous Dutch organist, composer, and organ-historian. After the second World War Zwart studied under the direction of renowned organ teachers such as Simon C. Jansen, George Stam, Stoffel Van Vliegen, and Willem Mudde at the conservatories of Utrecht and Amsterdam. As a student he already was appointed organist of the famous Hinsz organ at the Bovenkerk in Kampen.

Also as choral conductor, Mr. Zwart has earned international recognition. His choirs have performed the great choral works of Bach, Handel, and Mendelssohn without neglecting the simple beauty of the Dutch art of the choral. He has taken his choirs on tour in Germany, Belgium, Canada, and the U.S.A. and also has given organ recitals in France and Australia.

Besides many recordings, Mr. Zwart has also published his own compositions based on psalms and hymns. His Fantasy on Psalm 25 is one of the best selling pieces of Dutch sheet music available in Canada. He was the first Dutch organist to perform an organ recital on U.S. television.

Mr. Zwart's reputation as accompanist of congregational singing is second to none. One of the highlights of this tour will be the recording of psalms from the Anglo-Genevan Psalter, to be sung by choirs and audience with Mr. Zwart at the organ at Hamilton's Central Presbyterian Church on March 31, 1989.

Organ recitals are planned for Beamsville - Canadian Reformed Church, March 30; Sarnia - First Christian Reformed Church, April 1; Chatham - St. Andrews United Church, April 4; Fergus - Maranatha Canadian Reformed Church, April 5; Oshawa - Simcoe Street United Church, April 6; Attercliffe - Canadian Reformed Church, April 7; Thunder Bay - St. Paul United Church, April 11; Winnipeg, Manitoba - Westminster United Church, April 12; Lethbridge, Alberta - Auditorium of Emmanuel Christian School, April 14; Calgary - Emmanuel Christian Reformed Church, April 15; Neerlandia, Alberta - Canadian Reformed Church, April 18; Edmonton - Robertson-Wesley United Church, April 19; Red Deer - Gaetz Memorial United Church, April 20.

These concerts are sponsored by
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