

# *A Manual for Ruling Elders*

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## **Chapter 2.**

### **The Ruling Elder and the Teaching Elder**

The word "elder" is a translation of the Greek word, "presbyteros", which means "the senior" or "the older one". Age is supposed to bring wisdom, and it is on the wisdom of experience that all races and ages have tried to rely. The word "presbyteros" is the source of our word "Presbyterian". In the Roman Catholic Bible the word "presbyteros" is translated "priest", which it did become to mean in a later period. But we Presbyterians believe our government of the Church is founded on and agreeable to the Holy Scripture, and so for the meaning of this word we go farther back than the Church of Rome and take the original meaning. The wisdom of the "Elder" is both human and Divine, and it is the wisdom of God (James 1: 5), added to the God-given human wisdom, which makes the Eldership of the Church so effective.

There are two divisions of the Eldership, the Ruling Elders and the Teaching Elders. The "Ruling Elders" are usually spoken of as "Elders" and the "Teaching Elders" as "Ministers". Together they make up the Kirk-Sessions, the Presbyteries, the Synods and the General Assemblies. Ministers are also Ruling Elders, but Ruling Elders are not Ministers. Here, and in other spheres of the government of the Church, we have the principle that "the greater office includes the lesser office". An analogy to this is that an Army Major is a Captain; a Captain is not a Major, but both are officers.

You will sometimes hear both Ministers and Elders referred to as "presbyters", and by using the word "presbyters" we can refer to both Ministers and Elders without distinction, and say, as is sometimes said, that the government of a Presbyterian Church is a government by presbyters. This, and other details, will be discussed in Chapter 11. Our Canadian Church, however, uses the terms Ruling Elders or Elders, Teaching Elders or Ministers, all being of the Eldership. The word "presbyter" has acquired special meanings, and many scholars, on theological grounds and the ground of common usage, use it to refer to Ministers only.

The presiding officer in Kirk-Sessions, Presbytery, Synod and General Assembly is called "The Moderator", and in Canada the Moderator is always a Minister. When in the Chair he is referred to as "The Moderator" and addressed, "Moderator". The number of Ruling Elders and Teaching Elders in Presbytery, Synod and Assembly is equal by Church law. By fact, due to the inability of Ruling Elders always to attend the meetings,

there may be an actual attendance of more Ministers than Elders. In the Kirk-Session, however, there are more Elders than Ministers; usually there is only one Minister. Sometimes there are retired Ministers who have been elected Ruling Elders in the congregations where they worship. As such, they are Ruling Elders in the exercise of their office.

The foregoing paragraphs will serve as a brief introduction to the office to which you have been called and to which you have been ordained.

There is another important thing which may well be mentioned in this place. A moment's thought will show you that in this system of Ruling and Teaching Elders we have the essence of democracy. It is not an undisciplined democracy, of election campaigns and foolish slogans. It is a democracy of measured responsibility. The people elect their representatives in the Eldership, but the men elected are ordained to govern, to be overseers in the Church. They cannot be Elders without the approval of the Session to which they are elected, and they cannot be deprived of their Eldership except under the laws of the Church, which are stringent in this matter. Elders are not responsible to the Congregation, except in the spiritual sense. They are responsible to God, to the Head of the Church, Jesus Christ, and to the Courts of His Church. They become undershepherds of the flock (1 Peter 5: 1-5). Ministers are called by congregations, but cannot be dismissed by a popular vote, nor do they hold office for a fixed period as if they were members of a parliament. In the modern idea of Democracy, people seem to think everything can be settled by a popular vote. This is wrong: questions of mathematics and medicine, for example, are not settled by popular votes! How mathematics and medicine may be applied may, at times, be settled by a popular vote. As an Elder, you are elected by the people, but when elected and ordained your responsibility is in a different sphere. As we shall see later, there are matters which may be referred to the Congregation by the Session for its judgment, but the members of the Session (like teachers and doctors in this analogy) look elsewhere than to the people for the real basis of their authority. This authority is from above, from God through the Church. Thus, you can see immediately as an Elder you are not in a new sort of club, or even a member of a religious association. You are more than that; you are a member of a unique thing—the Eldership of the Church.

Let us consider further a matter of the democracy in the Church. The struggle for power in the world is one of the most familiar things to anyone who has ever read a book of history, or even to anyone who reads a newspaper. Mobs have gained this power and have filled nations with their lawlessness, and aristocrats and kings have gained this power and have ruled with corruption. When a struggle for power gets within the Church we also have trouble. Without mentioning names, we can say there are Christian Churches wherein the government can be an unbridled rule of undisciplined congregations. There are others wherein the government is by ecclesiastical tyrants. We are not without problems ourselves concerning power, but through the rule of the Teaching and Ruling Elders, in graded responsibilities from Congregations to Assemblies, we have a unique freedom and discipline. It is an orderly government wherein all have their voice and duty—even those who are adherents of the Church and

not communicants. We seek not power, but the will of God amongst us. We strive to express in government a practicable adjustment between freedom and authority, remembering that in following the will of God is found the only true freedom.

The importance of the Ruling Eldership has been demonstrated in our own time. One of the things we noticed after the Church Union controversy of 1925, when we were so short of Ministers, was this: if there was a "strong" Session the Congregation held together in something of a goodly life, even when three or four years passed without a Minister being found for that Congregation. But if the Session was "weak", the Congregation tended to disintegrate. Even now a Congregation that has a "strong" Minister and a "weak" Session is usually a weak Congregation, but a Congregation that has a "strong" Session and a "weak" Minister is usually strong.

These things are not by accident. We believe this orderly government is God-given. We do not, however, thereby say that other forms of government lack God's blessing. We often use the phrase "drawing near to God", generally applying it to prayer. We Presbyterians believe that in government also we draw near to God, and He draws near to us. The ordination of a Minister or an Elder is a visible assurance, among other things, of what God's relationship is to the Church. The Divine is linked with the human for His glory.

In our next chapter, Chapter 3, we will look at the Eldership in the New Testament Church. It is from the New Testament that we derive our doctrine and practice.

## Chapter 3.

### Elders in the New Testament Church of Jesus Christ

There are about as many impressions of the Bible as there are people who read it. But there is one impression which we have in common, though perhaps we have never tried to put it into words. It is a book about people as people, not about people as kings or commoners, as rich or poor, as wise or foolish. Our school histories have often been written on the basis of the reigns of kings, which, of course, is important and a good way to write history. Clever historians often write histories now on the basis of medicine or music or art or economics or science. A history of mankind could be written around the clothes that are worn! But the Bible concerns people as people, people in their relationship to God. Now just take your recollection of Sunday School lessons and you will see how it is. You will find yourself recalling great characters of the Bible, men and women, not because they were kings or queens, or fools, but because they had something to do with God, or God has something to do with them.

Worldly distinctions are of little account in the Bible. Namaan, Generalissimo of the forces of the King of Syria, "was a great man with his Master", but it is clear from the Bible that the nameless serving girl who told her mistress, Namaan's wife, of the prophet in Israel who could heal Namaan, was great with God. And wasn't the nameless boy, who gave his fish and bread to Jesus (John 6: 7-11) for the feeding of the five thousand, also great with God? That is the sort of thing we find in the Bible.

According to the prophecy of Jeremiah, God establishes a new covenant with His people (Jeremiah 31:31-34). We call the New Testament "New" because it gives us this new covenant of God with His people. The spiritual relationship is the supreme thing. The relationship in a home is more than the incidental ties of blood and the legal ties of marriage; if it is only a physical and legal relationship it isn't very much.

In the Bible the relationship of faith is fundamental. That is one of the major threads woven into the Bible. Abraham believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness, and he was called the friend of God. (Romans 4:22, James 2:23). Paul said (Romans 1:17, Galatians 3:11), quoting from Habakkuk 2:4, "the just shall live by faith". In a family, the parents may be proud of their children's achievements, but if the children have no affection towards their parents their achievements are an empty glory. God does not need our little achievements, but He desires our affection - our faith. All other things are secondary to that faith. We have learned from our modern psychologists, if not from our Bibles, that this affection is creative in life. Dr. Thomas Chalmers (1780-1847) preached a famous sermon, "The Expulsive Power of a New Affection", in which this truth was amplified. If a child has not a background of security and love its life may go astray. This doctrine for all of us was grasped long ago by the saints of the Old and New Testament, who said that we live by faith, not by sight. We believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and we are saved (Acts 16: 31).

The Church is the household of God. We don't make that household. Jesus gives it. As He Himself said, Matthew (16: 18), He builds it on a confession of faith. It is the Lord Who adds to the Church such as should be saved. (Acts 2: 47). The Lord intervenes in human affairs, and out of all these people of whom we have been speaking He makes a fellowship of faith. He makes the Church.

This has been elaborated upon for a little that we might move to the next step and see that in this fellowship of faith, in this household, there must be discipline and order. Perhaps it would be good to break the reading of this chapter at this point and read the Epistle to the Ephesians, chapters 2 and 3, to learn Paul's lofty view of the Church.

It is plain in the New Testament that this possession of faith comes before all other distinctions, and that love becomes supreme (1 Corinthians 13: 13). For example, read the Epistle to Philemon, which has only twenty-five verses. We see there that the master and slave relationship takes a second place to the relationship in Jesus Christ. It is through the Church that God gives us a new world in which to live.

It is obvious that this new world must be governed in some orderly fashion. In our homes our affection for one another must be an affection with self-discipline and discipline for children. The word "love" is not a simple word; it is a word of profound meaning. Love that does not contain the elements of justice, wisdom, mutual understanding, and many other things that could be named is not love: it is nothing more than a fumbling sentimentality. To love one another is a sufficient rule for living if we know what is involved in the total idea of love. In the Church we spell this involvement out where necessary, and here we are talking about the orderly fashioning of things. The Church is more than a local spiritual family; it is worldwide. The conception of the Church that is held by some people here and there, existing in separate, individual groups, without any tie of authority of one group with another, may be a pleasing little picture of earnest piety — but it is not the Church of the New Testament. That Church was visible, spiritual—and one.

The Eldership of the Church, Ruling and Teaching, is the means of government, guidance and discipline in the Church. The people of faith choose men in whom they have confidence, and these men are ordained as Ruling Elders. It is God's way of maintaining the continuity of visible organization in His Church. The Ruling Elders are literally governors of the Church with the Minister. See, for example, Acts 16:4, "...they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem". Any definition of an Elder that just speaks of him as serving Communion and delivering Communion cards misses the main point completely.

The Eldership is a particular form of the fellowship of faith for the governing of Christ's Church upon earth. It is to that particular form of fellowship you as an Elder have been ordained. Your responsibility is just as real as your Minister's, and you, with him, will be answerable to God for the discharge of your duties.

At this point, for several reasons, we must consider the authority for the Eldership as we know it. One of the reasons is, that we live in communities where there are often other Christian Churches that have not Elders, or the equivalent of Elders, in their congregations. Some of them will contend, quite sincerely, that their Church alone has the right organization.

An Elder should be acquainted with our view in this matter. Let us say first of all, that we do not deny the faith of these other Churches. We believe God uses them, as we trust He uses us, and that their form of government and worship has its virtues, and also has its authority somewhere in the history of the Christian Church. We simply say that our way is founded on the Word of God, and is the earliest definite form of Church organization.

Actually, the Eldership goes back long before Christian times. Moses, on the advice of his father-in-law, Jethro, chose men to assist him in his work for it had become too great. (Exodus 18: 13-27). The example of Moses was followed in Judaism. The men chosen by Moses were really Elders of "The Old Testament Church". As we shall see later, this was largely lost in the time of the Papacy due to political and economic influence and changing doctrine.

There are many passages in the Bible where the word "elder" is found. Separating the passages where the word is in reference to "the elders of the Jews" who were in opposition to Jesus, and taking those passages where the reference is to Christian elders, we have the following - Acts 11:30; 14:23; 15:4, 6, 23; 16:4; 20:17; 1 Timothy 5:1,17,19; Titus 1:5; James 5:14; 1 Peter 5:1, 5; Revelation 4: 4, 10; 5:5, 6, 8, 11, 14; 7:11; 13; 11:16; 14:3; 19:4. See also, concerning government, Romans 12:8; 1 Corinthians 12:28-30; Ephesians 4:4-12. The reading of these verses, just by themselves, will indicate how large was the place of the Elder in the New Testament Church.

The identity of "elder" and "bishop" is held by Presbyterians. The passages of the New Testament where the word 'bishop' or 'overseer' is found are - Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:1, 2; Titus 1:7; 1 Peter 2:25 and Acts 20:28. In Philippians 1:1 we find a greeting to "bishops" (note that the word is plural) in a single congregation. In Acts 14:23 and Titus 1:5 we saw that Elders were to be ordained in every church, and in Titus 1:7, without a break of thought, the bishop is mentioned. Now the word 'bishop' is a translation of the Greek 'episcopos', which means 'overseer'. It is on the basis of these texts and others that the Presbyterian Church says that "bishops" and "elders" are really one - although we must be careful not to read into these words the full content of the modern meaning of each. This critical point of the identity of bishop and elder is now conceded by scholars of practically all Churches.

In a later period the 'bishop' became the chief ruler in one congregation, then the chief ruler in a group of congregations. The pastors became settled in single congregations. The pastorates of the New Testament, because of the needs of organization, were short. Paul's at Ephesus, less than three years, was likely the longest, with the exception of James at Jerusalem. The first period of apostles and teachers was

characterized by the ordaining of Elders in every church with young ministers like Timothy as pastors. This was succeeded by a period of bishops and ministers, and the Eldership as we know it gradually fell into the background. It is estimated by some scholars that a period of forty years was enough to make the change; others say approximately a hundred. The ministry of the Church became that of bishops, priests and deacons. (But these deacons were not deacons or 'managers of the Church' in our usage of deacons or managers). It took the Reformation to re-form the Church and give us the Eldership again.

The "presbyter" came to be a term meaning the "teaching elder" only, and with the years the bishop became the pre-eminent presbyter. Yet the original parity of the clergy comes out here and there at unexpected moments in Church history. In the ordination of priests in the Church of England, it is not the bishop alone who lays on hands but the bishop and priests who are present. But bishops are consecrated as bishops by only bishops. In the Roman Catholic monastic orders there was and is a trace of the ancient eldership, a point that is difficult for their historians to explain unless they concede that the monks electing their abbot and consulting with the lay brothers on occasion reflects a very early brotherhood such as we have. McKerrow in **The Office of the Ruling Elder** lays great emphasis on the shifts in thought, and quotes Ignatius, Polycarp, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Ambrose and Jerome to show the lingering rights of ruling elders and people. His quotation from Ambrose (of the fourth century) will show what was happening, "For even among all nations old age is honourable. Whence both the synagogue, and afterwards the Church, had Elders, without whose counsel nothing was done in the Church. Which thing by what negligence it grew out of use, I know not, unless perhaps through the teachers' slothfulness, or rather haughtiness, while they alone would be thought somewhat".

We repeat that we do not regard a system of government by bishops (or episcopacy as it is commonly called in the United States) an illegitimate thing. On the contrary, we recognize its ordinations and its sacraments without question. This does not mean we recognize its **doctrine** of ordination and sacrament. The Church of Rome is also an episcopal Church, but has seven sacraments. Our position is that we see in the New Testament a definite form of Church polity, and we believe we are bound to adhere to it.

Another thing we must note is the theory of "apostolic succession". In its sternest form, it means that the apostles gave authority to the bishops who transmitted that authority in turn to the priests. If a person (such as a Presbyterian Minister) is not in that "line of succession" his ordination is "invalid". Likewise, unless a bishop has "laid hands upon the head" of the person wishing to make a profession of faith, that person is not really a communicant of the Christian Church. This ceremony of "laying on hands" is called "Confirmation" by the episcopal Churches, and we use the word, but not in this background with a bishop. Some who hold this rigid view will say that it has pleased God to let His grace go beyond the walls of the Church (and they alone are the true Church, they say) to reach us, but it is all very irregular! John Cardinal Newman was asked about this after he left the Church of England for the Church of Rome, and replied that the grace of God had overflowed the Roman Church to reach others! The doctrine of

apostolic succession has been softened in modern times by some to the point where they say there is a real ministry in Churches like the Presbyterian Church, but it is still irregular. It is so irregular to them that if a Presbyterian Minister wished to be an Episcopalian or Anglican Minister he would have to be ordained again by a bishop. To be a member of an Anglican Church a Presbyterian has to receive confirmation from a bishop; his or her own profession of faith made in the Presbyterian Church is considered at least technically invalidity some: by others as really invalid.

These views of the Church and ordination make the grace of God and the faith of the Christian something like the family silver handed down by one generation to another. You either have it, or you don't have it. We believe that God is not bound by such theology, and that all the Churches may have the grace of God. The proof of this is seen, for one example, in their life and work. On this point see the Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 25.

The relationship of the episcopal or Anglican Churches to the Church of Rome deserves a note. Episcopal Churches recognize the ordination of a Roman priest, but the Church of Rome does not recognize the ordination of an episcopal or Anglican priest, and it has declared the orders irregular. The Church of Rome, therefore, ordains an Anglican priest who enters the Church of Rome desiring to be a Roman priest.

This is all part of the question of "faith and order" with which every Elder should have some acquaintance, particularly to appreciate what we recognize. We instruct clergy who come to us from other denominations. We recognize Anglican and Roman ordinations and communicant membership. Now this is not to say we recognize, say, the gospel preached in the Church of Rome as a true Gospel, or its sacraments true sacraments. We can say that we recognize a man has been called to serve God as a Minister and that he is ordained without saying we approve the devious things he once believed. We can say that a person has had faith and that faith should be recognized without saying that we approve the form in which that faith once expressed itself. We are a doctrinal Church, and there are limits to our tolerance.

The practice of the Presbyterian Church in Canada concerning ordinations of other Churches is in accord with this. The Acts and Proceedings of the General Assembly, 1948, appendices, page 110-111, contain a list of Churches whose ordinations we immediately recognize. If a Minister comes to us who is not a member of one of these Churches we do not re-ordain him if we are satisfied that his Church, regardless of its history, is one in which the grace of God has been manifested and in which he has been ordained by a group of men, properly appointed by that Church, and with the laying on of hands and with prayer. We give these men and cases long and detailed scrutiny.

What do we say about the doctrine of apostolic succession? We say, with a great company of scholars—and many of them are episcopal scholars—that it is just a theory formed to justify things as they exist in some Churches. There is no historical evidence to support the exclusive ideas that have been indicated in the foregoing paragraphs. We believe in apostolicity rightly understood. We say there is a succession. You, as an Elder,

are part of an unbroken line of faith from the first disciples and elders, and you were ordained by prayer by men who possessed the same grace. Through the Church of Scotland, long before the Church of Rome dominated either England or Scotland, Ministers and Elders are part of an historical succession, but not in the terms of the theory of apostles to bishops to priests. Moreover, this ministry can be justified without any reference to historical ideas of succession because God has honoured it. As the late Dr. W. R. Inge, Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral, London, has written, "the only true apostolic succession has been in the lives of the saints".

You will perceive, then, that the Presbyterian Church believes in a definite continuity of the Ministry. We are not a "new Church", but a re-formed Church, a Church of the New Testament.

We take the same view in ordinations and sacraments that Peter took about Cornelius (Acts 10), who learned that when God honoured a man by the giving of His Spirit he, Peter, could not deny the giving of a sacrament. To deny the faith of another man, or to deny another Church is a very great sin, upon which our Church looks with horror, even though that other Church may deny our faith and the form in which we express it.

To sum up: The Eldership is based upon both the Old and the New Testament, upon the practice of the apostles in obedience to Jesus Christ, and you, as an Elder, are in that spiritual and visible succession.

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## **SECTION 3: The Elder at Work**

### **Chapter 8**

#### **The Law of the Church: The Book of Forms**

Government, worship and doctrine have made Presbyterian Churches ones in which people of many races, languages and colours have found for centuries their spiritual home and strength. This chapter will give an outline of what the law of the Church means as it bears upon government, worship and doctrine.

Church law is a highly necessary thing, as all law is. There must be law, written or unwritten, at any level of living. The left side of the highway is just as good as the right side on which to drive a motor car. In England one drives on the left; we drive on the right. In a Canadian court no motorist will get anywhere by defending himself for driving on the left by saying that's what the motorist does in England. To despise law, as the fashion seems to be now and then, even in the Church, leads to wild confusion. The purpose of Church law or order is orderliness. Paul said, "Let all things be done decently and in order." (1 Corinthians 14: 40).

We believe that in the Presbyterian Church we have restored the kindly authority found in apostolic times, and that our law is based upon the Bible. When Ministers and Ruling Elders say they believe the government of the Church is founded on and agreeable to the Word of God, they are really saying they believe God has revealed His holy will in orderly government and by that they are willing to be bound. Parts of our Church law reflect the absolute moral and ethical decrees of God, and other parts are regulations outlining the fitting and convenient way of doing things. The requirements of God for morality, ethical conduct, loyalty to His Son's Church, and so on, need no illustration. The law of the Church also contains administrative powers, and we believe these have been given to us by Jesus Christ Himself, the Head of the Church. He said that what we bind on earth is bound in heaven, and what we loose on earth is loosed in heaven (Matthews 16: 19). In these words we believe He gives us, among other things, administrative powers to rule the Church under the guidance of His Spirit in brotherly

affection. Let us take a very minor illustration from our Church law: to call a meeting of certain of our Church courts, a notice of ten days must be given. This allows at least one intervening Sunday for a pulpit announcement, and allowed sufficient time, in the days of poor transportation, for the notice to be received and responded to. Five or fifteen days might do equally well for most occasions, but ten is set. We have power to make the regulation; we make it, and it is binding on us. It can be changed. The moral law of God cannot be changed.

Our Church law is found in a book of about 190 pages, called the "Book of Forms". To page 107 there are 413 "sections". From pages 108 to 172 we find Appendices, in three parts; they give us forms to be used in Church courts, regulations of the Boards of the Church, and Trust deeds. The rest of the Book is index.

With this Book we guide the Church at every level of its organized life—congregations to general assemblies. How are we able to do so with such a small book? A visit to any lawyer's office will show dozens and dozens of books on law, and all of them necessary, yet the Church is cared for in a manual one may slip into a pocket. (The Westminster Confession of Faith, Catechisms, etc., may be obtained in another book, equally small.) We deliberately keep the Book of Forms small that we may avoid wearying details. Where it is precise we follow it precisely. Where some situation arises that does not seem to be covered by some section, we seek to follow the underlying principles. In cases of ambiguity, reference is made to the Clerk of Presbytery or of Synod, or to the Clerks of Assembly. The Assembly itself may be asked to make a ruling, which is usually done by a special committee reporting back to Assembly. From time to time the Book of Forms is revised to include rulings and changes that have come about.

These changes are made with great care. Anything that touches "doctrine, discipline, government or worship" must first be approved by Presbyteries under what we call "The Barrier Act" (Section 293 (1) ). The Assembly may then deal with it, but only under the terms sent down under The Barrier Act. In emergencies an "Interim Act" may be passed (Section 293 (2) ). The Assembly has the right to pass what is called a "Declaratory Act" (Section 293), clarifying what it believes to be the law of the Church on some point Where law does not exist to cover the point, the Assembly may make law. Such a situation is quite rare, and Section 294 outlines this right of Assembly.

The Acts and Proceedings of Assemblies, and Minutes of Synods and Presbyteries, are valuable in showing the operation of law and, indeed, often establish a basis for subsequent law. They are also valuable in determining and illustrating the wont and usage of the Church, and in illustrating customs.

There is no hierarchy of **individuals** in a Presbyterian Church. The organic unity of the Church is preserved in a hierarchy of courts, that is in courts, each with its duties and responsibilities and standing in the stated relationship to other courts. When a court is said to be subordinate to another court, as a Session is to a Presbytery, it is not to say that it is of little consequence or may be overruled in all things. It means it is sub-ordered in the graded responsibilities, as a city government is sub-ordered to the provincial

government. The authority is "ministerial and declarative, announcing what Christ has revealed, and applying His law according to His direction". Section 3, from which this quotation is taken, is pivotal in the Presbyterian conception of government.

The whole Church, through its Ruling and Teaching Elders, is always represented in Presbyteries, Synods and Assemblies. Each congregation or pastoral charge has a Representative Elder and he, and his Minister, are supposed to attend every meeting of Presbytery and Synod. The General Assembly is not quite "general" as it consists of only one-sixth of the Ministers and an equal number of Ruling Elders. In some smaller Presbyterian Churches the General Assembly consists of all the Ministers and an equal number of Ruling Elders, but with us geography and costs make the one-sixth advisable. Democracy in any Presbyterian Church is a responsible democracy, but we must not confuse the word 'democracy' here with its popular usage where 'the people' are supposed to be the rulers. Our obedience is to Jesus Christ, and our primary responsibility is also to Him.

Let us look generally at the outline of the chapters. Even the order of them is significant.

Chapter I. Three sections. The historical basis of and continuity of the Church.

Chapter II. 101 sections. General rules for Church courts.

Chapter III 71 sections. The work and procedure for Kirk-Sessions, Congregations and Boards of Managers.

Chapter IV. 83 sections. The Presbytery.

Chapter V. 18 sections. The Synod.

Chapter VI. 36 sections. The General Assembly.

Chapter VII. 93 sections. Church discipline.

Chapter VIII. 8 sections. Doctrinal standards and subscriptions— the formula signed by Ministers, the questions asked Elders, Missionaries, Divinity Students when licensed to preach the Gospel, and so on.

Appendices. Three parts, as mentioned earlier.

We find a closely-knit, orderly system in the Book of Forms. It is really a thing of supreme worth among the books or codes by which the many denominations govern themselves. We find in it the rights, privileges and responsibilities of every Church member and adherent. A Ruling Elder should have more than a passing acquaintance with it, and diligent reading of it will be rewarding. It is not something written yesterday or the day before; many readers will find some of the phrasing delightful; in some cases this phrasing comes from the 1560's and is so noted, as in Section 13.

If we are going to be disciples of Jesus Christ we must be disciplined. The Book of Forms is not a new Book of Leviticus. It is a book to assist us in being disciplined people in seemliness of order, correctness of doctrine and purity of worship that we may

glorify God and enjoy Him forever. In all things we must humbly bow before the authority of His Word and His Spirit.

## Chapter 9

### The Worship of the Church

An Elder should have some acquaintance with the meaning and background of the worship of the Church. This chapter will attempt to give a general outline and will leave those desiring more details to refer to the pamphlets of the Assembly's Committee on Church Worship, or to the pamphlets of the Assembly's Committee on the Revision of the Book of Common Order. These pamphlets are obtainable through the Minister. In each year's "Acts and Proceedings of the General Assembly" there is a report of the Committee on Church Worship, and a report of the Committee on Church Architecture. Copies of the proceedings of the "Church Worship Association" and the addresses given at its meetings may also be obtained through the Minister.

We are so accustomed to the Order of Worship in our local Church that we give little thought to it. Wherever we go we find so few variations upon the Order familiar to us that it takes us only a few minutes to be at home in another Congregation. We have always worshipped in a certain way, and we may catch ourselves thinking that that is all there is to it.

Basically the public worship of God is the approaching of God in solemn reverence, being called to prayer, confessing our sins, praising Him in suitable praise, listening to the reading of His Word, offering our prayers as that Word directs, offering ourselves with our gifts, hearkening for His voice in the declaring of the Word (which we call the sermon), and receiving the blessing and the benediction of the Lord through His Minister as we leave. On sacramental occasions we have all of these, and we have also the setting forth of His grace in the Lord's Supper or Baptism, and each of these calls us to the renewal of solemn obligations.

The Elder should read all of the Directory for the Public Worship of God, which is found in most volumes in which the Westminster Confession of Faith is found—the volume it was suggested each Elder should obtain. This Directory for Worship lacks the giving of the offering as we know it; in those days the Church was not supported by the gifts of the worshippers, and Stewardship was not known in the terms we know it. This is discussed in the chapter of this Manual concerning the Elder and the Kirk-Session.

The doctrine of the Church among Presbyterians is a "high" doctrine. We are consistently spoken of by other denominations as a Church of high and solemn worship. We see the Church as the gift of God to us, as the mystical Body of Christ in which we are members and in which the life of Christ is shared with us and in which Christ rules in His own Person. The Church is not a religious association or leisurely hobby; it is the fellowship where God meets us in a very special sense and where our worship of Him must be in spirit and in truth (John 4: 24). It is a place where nothing slovenly of speech or manner should be found.

In its foundations, our public worship of God is in the form given to us by John Calvin. In that we, throughout the world, have made a few changes. We have not followed Calvin's desire to have a weekly Communion service, nor have we clung to his teaching that only Psalms or other portions of Scripture should be used in singing. (There are certain smaller Presbyterian Churches, however, in which only metrical psalms are used for praise and where no organ is to be found).

John Calvin's service was "richer" or more "liturgical" than the one we commonly use, but there is no difference in the conception of worship or in the essential acts of worship. In the chapter of this Manual on the history of the Scottish and English Reformation we see how the attempts of King Charles I and Archbishop William Laud provoked a reaction in Scotland, and thus anything that sounded like the Anglican service was cast aside. The "Covenanters" had an austere service. For various reasons, the services of most of our Canadian Churches are closer to the Covenanters than to John Calvin in their outward form. The Directory for Public Worship reflects the austerity; it was drawn up in the midst of the troublous times referred to.

The tendency today is towards the use again of some practices once commonly found in Presbyterian Churches, such as the Reformation practice of having the Church Officer bring the Bible to the pulpit a few minutes before the service begins. (This is called "The Lesser Entry"). Some Congregations use the Apostles' Creed often (Book of Praise, 830), or such portions of the Book of Praise as the "Te Deum" (821), a Gloria after a Psalm is read (829), or will chant the Lord's Prayer (832). A Gathering Psalm or Processional Hymn is frequently used, the Choir and Minister coming to their places as the Psalm or Hymn is sung. These tendencies will not be found in all Congregations. There are those that keep the service very simple, and an occasional Congregation is known where the Lord's Prayer is not repeated in unison lest it become, in the people's minds, as a vain repetition (Matthew 6:7).

The fact is, that before the time of the Covenanters (second half of the 1600's), or before the Westminster Assembly (1643), the service of the Presbyterian Church was richer in its forms. One has only to scan John Knox's liturgy to see that many Congregations today are using varying forms of worship that are not really departures from the principles of Calvin. The Presbytery has a responsibility to see that the purity of worship, as authorized by the Church, is followed, but that purity permits freedom. It does not, however, permit such things as calling the Holy Table an Altar and placing it against a wall. It does not permit the lighting of candles for liturgical purposes. It does not permit the use of statues within the Church, and is very cautious about wall decorations. It does not permit "novel practices" or unseemly shouting or grotesque behaviour in the House of God. How the various parts of the service shall be linked and follow each other is a matter of much consideration these days among Ministers and Elders, but we all know what is basically Presbyterian.

The Minister who uses stately prayers, ancient prayers, modern prayers, or prayers of his own composing, instead of talking casually to God, is a Minister who

understands Presbyterian ways. "Free prayer" is preferred by most of our Congregations, but that does not mean the Minister leaves the prayers to the inspiration of the moment, which often becomes desperation. Prayer should have an order to it. Public prayer is Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving and Supplication. (A-C-T-S). (Supplication is prayer for ourselves; Intercession, which is here included in the word, is prayer for others). Sometimes the prayers are divided and offered at two or three separate times. It is an interesting modern development that certain denominations, which once used only prayers as printed in their books, now encourage their clergy to use comparatively "free prayer" and furnish those clergy with manuals of suitable prayers as a guidance. Public prayer for a Minister is a more taxing task than his preaching: let the Elder be sympathetic.

The prayers in the prayer books of other denominations are only in part prayers written by their own clergy. They are drawn from many sources, chiefly pre-Reformation or Reformation sources, and are sometimes from Calvinistic (Presbyterian) influence. At the funeral of the late Queen Mary, of beloved memory, one of the prayers ran ... "that it may please Thee, of Thy gracious goodness, shortly to accomplish the number of Thine elect". Prayers such as this one, and the services in our Book of Common Order, reflect our beliefs that the prayers of the Church before and at the time of the Reformation, if sound in doctrine, are part of our heritage of faith. The Book of Common Order is given general approval by Assembly "for voluntary use". It is not a series of liturgies to be followed as the Roman Mass is by a priest, who must not change or miss a word. Elders who take the trouble to study our Book of Common Order—the Minister will have a copy—will find inspiration and larger understanding of the doctrine and worship of the Church.

The preaching of the Word is a prerogative of the Minister. The Elders cannot tell him what to say, or how long to take in the saying. They may suggest, but they cannot order. He enters the pulpit to speak for God from His Word. If he is blameworthy in any respect, the Elders or people may have recourse to the Presbytery. Preaching is not, or should not be, the giving of personal opinion; in it, despite all the stammering or stumbling of thought, God speaks, if it is a true preaching, and all should hearken. The Word of God should symbolically be opened at or just before the beginning of the service, and should be closed symbolically at the end of the service. The occasional Minister who reads his text and then closes the Book (perhaps to show he is preaching without notes!) is astray. At Church weddings it is a fine custom for the Bible to be brought in and opened that it may give silent witness from the lectern or the pulpit to the foundation of the union about to be solemnized.

Customs change. Many older people can remember when the Congregation rose for all prayers and sat for all singing. The reading of one or more lines of a hymn by the Minister is not necessary now as most Congregations have a hymn board, but the custom lingers. It is a relic of the day when the line was given that the preceptor, who led the praise, might not make a mistake in the number desired by the Minister. Customs may change, but principles remain.

Many comments could be made upon a host of things concerning public worship. We shall go on to consider some things in more detail.

### **The Music of the Church**

The music of the Church, its hymns, paraphrases and metrical psalms, its choir and organ work, is a neglected subject. There are the occasional complaints about choirs not singing distinctly, about the organ music being too loud or not loud enough, and especially about "the old tunes" not being used often enough. Study of the Church's music is rewarding, and choirs should be given a course in the history of music and hymns.

Music has always been part of the worship of God. We speak of the Church giving a ministry of the Word and Sacraments; it is really a ministry of Word, Sacrament and Song. The psalms of the Old Testament indicate here and there what we believe to be the tunes, as, for example, the title of Psalm 22, or indicate that instrumental music was used, Psalm 144:9. The word 'selah' in the psalms is thought to indicate an interlude for trumpets, or other instruments. The Temple had musicians in its service; the number is estimated to be high, perhaps as many as 4,000 on the roll. Other psalms, such as Psalm 24, are clearly antiphonal psalms, that is, songs in which one part of the choir will sing and is answered by another part of the choir. The Book of Psalms provided for subjects of praise all the way from personal devotions to the state occasion of the crowning of a sovereign.

In the New Testament we find such as "And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the Mount of Olives" (Matthew 26: 30), and "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" (Ephesians 5: 19). The 'hymn' of Matthew 26: 30 was doubtless a psalm, and the phrase 'psalms, hymns and spiritual songs' doubtless a saying in the Apostolic Church; it is found again in Colossians 3: 16. There are texts in the New Testament from which we believe the Church had hymns, the texts being quotations from a hymn; Titus 3:4-7 is an example. The Magnificat, The Benedictus, and the Nunc Dimittis, numbers 822, 823 and 825 respectively, in the Book of Praise, are also hymns of the Church from the New Testament. The Eastern way of learning is by recitation aloud, usually in unison, and it is likely that much doctrine was learned by being chanted in rhythmic speech, which may be the origin of some of the examples given. The doxologies of the New Testament are more than prose and may have been sung in a rhythm of speech. Jude 24, 25 is an example. Metrical forms as we know them did not come in until about the fourth century, but there was music written to words like the psalms, exalted language in a rhythmic form. Pliny the Younger, Governor of Bithynia and Pontus, writing to his emperor, Trajan, in 112 A.D. tells how he found it was the custom of Christians on Sunday mornings to sing hymns, before or at dawn, to Christ as God, singing antiphonally. The Church has always been a singing Church.

We have not space to trace the development of music through the Church of the Fathers into all the musical and poetical wealth of the years before the Reformation. The mediaeval minstrels and the people sang, and St. Francis (1182—1226) told his followers

to be "Gods gleemen". It was one of these followers, Brother Henry of Pisa, who said that the Devil shouldn't have all the best tunes. This saying is credited also to Luther and John Wesley; perhaps they re-coined it, but it was Luther who brought us the popular hymn as we know it. The Jesuit fathers learned the power of his hymns, for one of them said that his hymns damned more souls than all his books and speeches. Luther wrote simple words and used music from many sources—the old Hebrew and liturgical chants and the songs of the people. Luther was a fine musician. The words and music of Hymn 542 in our Book of Praise, "The Battle Hymn of the Reformation", were written by him.

Calvin mistrusted hymns, believing they might contain false doctrine. He encouraged the use of the psalms in metrical form—in fact, he made a few translations—sung to suitable, singable tunes. Louis Bourgeois (see No. 211, Book of Praise) was a master in music and the greatest contributor to the music of the Genevan Psalter. Beza and Marot translated all the psalms into metrical form. Out of Geneva the use of the metrical psalms came to rest of the Reformed world, and the Genevan Psalter is the parent of the Scottish Psalter. At the end of each metrical psalm in our Book of Praise is a note as to where the version came from; "Scottish Psalter, 1650" occurs frequently.

In Robert Burns' "Cotter's Saturday Night" there is mention of three tunes—Martyrs, Dundee and Elgin—which might lead us to think there were many. There were not. In Aberdeen in 1755 a Session protested the work of precentors (they led the praise, there being no organ), who were introducing new tunes, and ordered them to sing only "the twelve tunes commonly sung in Scotland"! The wealth of Church music in Europe was great, but not for a long time in Scotland. However, we may remember the significant story that when John Knox was escorted to his house after his last preaching the people broke out in psalms, singing in four parts; but this was the year 1572, nearly two centuries earlier than the Aberdeen action.

The Assembly of 1647 directed that portions of Scripture other than psalms be set to metre, but it was not until 1741 that an Assembly got action to give us paraphrases that were acceptable. By 1781 there were 67 paraphrases, and these are known to us as "The Scottish Paraphrases". It is not uncommon to find in some of our homes old Bibles bound with copies of these psalms in metro and with the paraphrases. The paraphrases are now scattered through our Book of Praise, twenty four of them, and perhaps No. 599, "O God of Bethel", is the best known. Each is noted, "Scottish Paraphrase".

Hymns came in, almost with a rush. Prejudices, in all Churches, kept them out for a long time. It was an easy step from paraphrase to hymn, and on their own merit hymns won a place in the Church's praise. Isaac Watts (167 -1748) should be given the credit if any one man must have the credit. Elders interested in the fascinating story of the psalms and other praise will find Dr. Millar Patrick's book, "The Story of the Church's Song" inexpensive and highly readable. To it the author is indebted for some of the foregoing details.

Let us now consider something of the nature of the Church's praise amongst us. First of all, like our forefathers, we are lovers of the metrical psalter. In recent discussions with other English-speaking Presbyterians on the possibility of having one Book of Praise for all of us, we found that we desired more emphasis upon the metrical psalter than others did. Secondly, we have a really fine hymn book in the Book of Praise. It was published in 1918, and a revision is contemplated. It has a rich variety of tunes, a comprehensiveness of subjects for all occasions, and a wide range of poetical style and general appeal. There are hymns of evangelical fervour (Shall we gather at the river?, No. 637) and of the classical type (Near the cross her vigil keeping, No. 197) and hymns for children. It is also a "Catholic" hymnal, that is, in this sense, that it draws from the whole Church, Eastern, Western, Mediaeval, Reformation, and the various branches of the modern Church.

Thirdly, our Book of Praise offers an opportunity for increasing the richness of the Congregation's praise. If an Elder would keep note of the hymns used in his Church for a year's time he would likely find, as others have found, that as far as his Congregation is concerned, the praise consists of metrical psalms (and too few of these) and about 100 hymns. A Session could take steps to see that its Congregation increased its knowledge of hymns and tunes. For example, a Choir could sing a new hymn for two or three Sundays, and then let the Congregation sing it the following Sunday. Unaccompanied singing, that is, singing without the organ, has been used occasionally with great pleasure to all and with a new appreciation of words and tunes. This could also be encouraged.

There is much debate about our praise, particularly on the children's section. The late Dr. Cosmo Gordon Lang, Archbishop of Canterbury, is quoted as saying there were only six hymns worth singing, but, being a wise man, he declined to name the six. The proverb, "Each to his own taste", applies in the choice of hymns. New hymns sometimes rise to a great popularity, such as "The Old Rugged Cross", and people ask why they are not included in our official book. Hymn books are expensive to print. There must be careful choosing on the grounds of music, of literary value, correct doctrine, and popularity. Popularity is deceiving; hymns fade away as quickly as they rise. Does anyone remember "Where is My Wandering Boy Tonight" or "The Glory Song"? They were once at the top of the favourites. Charles Wesley wrote about 6,500 hymns. Of these, the United Church Hymnary has 43 and our Book of Praise 27. When the revision is made of our Book of Praise all of these considerations will be given much thought, for new books cannot be issued often. Tunes, such as 'Crimond', that have established themselves will doubtless be included, and also new hymns, both words and music, written in our generation. We have no hymns for travellers by air, and there are other deficiencies in the present Book of Praise. However, as it is highly praised by others, we should see its virtues and make more of it than we do.

At one time families stood around the piano or organ for an evening and had joy in singing hymns out of some small, popular hymnal as well as out of the Book of Praise. Perhaps when we get tired of television we shall get around the family piano again and lift up our voices in song.

All of us have favourite hymns and wish to hear them often, but our choices are not the same. The public worship of God cannot be determined by the likes of a few; it must be for all. The praise often reflects the sermonic thought of the day, and the praise in the course of a year should be representative of the wide range of teaching the faithful Minister will give as he declares all the counsel of God (Acts 20: 27). The Elder may find ways to glorify God in the Session discussions concerning the formal praise given Him in His sanctuary.

The Organist and the Choir are subject to the Session. Fortunate is the parish that has an Organist and Choir of great understanding both of music and the place of music in the Church, and that do not construe their joint task as that of having the organ played at the very limit of the Organist's technical skill or anthems sung at the limit of the Choir's ability, or beyond it. People can be educated in music as they are educated in other things in the Church. This may be accomplished by notes in the Sunday calendar, if there be such, in the Minister's sermons if he will take the time to have conferences with his Organist, or even in a few notes read during the time of the intimations.

Matters of discipline are always difficult, and no less difficult if they come up in connection with the praise of the Church. An old distinction used to be made in these words, "In the Presbyterian Church the Organist may be the Choir Director, but not the Choirmaster " The meaning of this is, that the Organist, though charged with a measure of discipline in the Choir, knows that the maintenance of a wholesome Choir life is primarily a Session matter. Most of our Sessions have a Music Committee of Session, consisting of those men who have a knowledge of music and possess tact, and they work in co-operation with the Organist. Professional organists have received instruction in the technique of "handling" choirs in fairness and firmness. The choice of an Organist is one that Sessions must make with care. See Section 109 (d).

The songs of the Church, all the way from the simple rhythm of the "Gospel hymn" to the Bach chorale, the magnificent anthem and the oratorio, are a glory of the Church that has been reformed. The people truly take part in the worship; they are more than silent witnesses of something being done remotely from them at an altar. There is a definite movement in the Church of Rome to have more participation by the people in their services, and our liturgical scholars are watching this movement with interest. What it will lead to we do not know; Rome moves slowly; but we do know there is a quiet and unofficial envy of the place that hymns occupy in our services. The truth of God often sings its way into our hearts where the spoken word fails. Despite all our claim of being cool-headed and touched chiefly by formal logic, we are really an emotional people. The ministry of music has been and is a wonderful thing. It's worth much thought.

### **Vestments**

The roles worn by Ministers and Choirs have a Reformation background. The black gown had its origins in the universities. The clothes of men, in those days, were a riot of colour and it was easy for a wealthy student to parade his wealth and colour in the

presence of his less wealthy fellow students. The universities decreed that all students wear a student's gown, and all were on one level. The colour of black may have been chosen from its practical nature. Or it may have been a protest against vanity, or both. The wearing of the academic hood marked graduates from undergraduates, and the shape and colour of the hood indicated rank. The "tonsure", the shaving of a portion of the head, indicated clergy or would-be clergy, but the indication was not too good as there were those who had a natural tonsure' The hood was once literally a hood; it was pulled over the head like a cowl when the classrooms were cold, and they were often cold. The colour of the hood still showed the rank, if not indeed the identity of the person wearing it as a cowl. It is likely that the hood was derived from the cowl and became a separate piece of apparel. The garb of the simple monk, which was a loose-fitting cloak, belt and cowl, was at one time the ordinary garb of common men. There is also evidence that the hood was used as a place into which gifts might quietly be slipped. There were many shapes, colours and sizes in university garments, and many of these are found in universities today.

The Church took its gown from that background as a natural thing to do, especially when many of the preachers, like Luther, were also professors. The purpose was not to attract attention, but to detract. Pictures of Knox and Calvin preaching show them wearing pulpit caps; this, again, was a necessity because of the coldness of the churches. Many of the Roman Catholic vestments once had a practical purpose; they are now chiefly ornamental and liturgical. It may be said that all vestments that come down in any of the Churches once were common garb. The white surplice, so familiar to us in Anglican services, was a pre-Reformation vestment. The word literally means "over the fur", as it was necessary to have protection against the cold. The Reformers kept away from any suggestion of Rome. They started anew with things that were acceptable. The Genevan gown, worn by Presbyterian Ministers, is of a particular cut. A reference that the author has been unable to check, leads us to believe that John Knox looked upon the Genevan gown as a symbol of the whole armour of God (Ephesians 6: 11). It may be deplored that some Ministers, perhaps because of cost, wear another and cheaper type of gown, or none at all; yet the Church has no law concerning vestments. A cassock, short or long, is usually worn under the gown. It was originally just a long coat - there comes that cold again.

Our fathers worshipped in cold churches, sitting on benches or standing, and thanked God for their freedom. We demand cushioned pews, thermostatic control of the temperature and air-conditioning for ourselves.

The clerical collar, often called a "Roman" collar, is not a Roman collar. Pope Pius IX (pope 1846-1878) is the first pope to be depicted with such a collar. Like other apparel, it had a common origin, or almost common; it was derived from the neck-linen of the 16th century and became starched in modern times. The old jest that a Minister wears his collar backwards is a jest in the other direction, for he wears it as collars were originally fashioned. It is the "layman's" collar that is worn backwards. There seems to be some objection to Ministers wearing a clerical collar. The chief use of the clerical collar, apart from its orderliness, is that it enables the Minister to confess Jesus Christ

before men (Matthew 10: 32), and it is especially helpful in a hospital where the very weak can make an instant recognition that a Minister is by their bed. The clerical collar marks a Minister for what he is, or what he is supposed to be. There is no law of the Presbyterian Church concerning the wearing of it; it is only custom. With us, a clerical collar by itself is a sign that the wearer has been licensed to preach the Gospel.

There is objection to the wearing of either clerical collar or gown or both by people within the Church and people outside of it. This is sometimes found among members of Presbytery, and occasions have been known where Ministers, taking part in a Presbytery's service, have declined to wear a pulpit gown. This is a matter for Presbytery itself to determine, to have order and the accessories of order within its public services. There are, frankly, many complaints that Presbyteries do not arrange their services with care, conduct them with decorum, or maintain reasonable consistency. There does not seem to be any doubt that the Reformation practice was in favour of the gowning of Ministers.

The objection within the Church seems to be based largely upon a fear of priestly pretensions. Outside the Church it may be a hatred of anything suggesting the "holier than thou" attitude sometimes alleged of a Minister. Or, it may just be a hatred of Ministers, which is called anti-clericalism. Certainly one thing is true; the wearing of a clerical collar instead of being an introduction can be a barrier. It depends on who is being met.

Another odd thing about it all is that if a Minister wearing a clerical collar approaches a group of strangers he will be greeted with much reserve, and has the task on his hands of getting the conversation back to normal. If he doesn't wear one and his identity becomes known, he will likely be told it is not fair to be disguised when approaching sinners. He can't win.

The pulpit bands (or "tabs" as some call them) have a background in law as well as in the Church. The origin of them is obscure; the minister's bands may be from the "amice", a mediaeval eucharistic vestment, and the lawyer's bands from the common wide collar of the reign of Henry VIII Both of them now indicate that the wearer has been "called"; lawyers are called to the bar, ministers to their ministry. Others think of them as the bonds of the Gospel. The bands were once of lace, as worn by the Moderator of the General Assembly, but are now in the familiar, starched form. They now also indicate to us that the men wearing them are ordained, although some have held that they indicate that the wearer is, or has been, an inducted Minister. Their use pre-dates the use of the clerical collar, as many will recall thinking of pictures of Ministers of a hundred years ago, showing bands but not quite the clerical collar. At one time, the wearing of bands was very common in the Church of England; in 17th and 18th century England the clergy often wore gown and bands as street attire. Pictures of early bishops in Canada, such as Bishop John Strachan, show the use of bands. The most popular picture of the great John Wesley shows him attired in gown and bands.

Reverting to the hood: it was once worn by all the clergy entitled to it. The First Prayer Book of Edward VI (1549) gave certain freedom in the wearing of the surplice and gave permission in "Cathedral churches and colleges" for the wearing of the hood, and stated that graduates, when preaching, should wear the hood. At the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II it was noticed that Professor Pitt-Watson, Moderator of the Church of Scotland, who presented the Bible to the Queen, wore no hood. Whether this was by choice, or by direction of the authorities of the ceremony, the author does not know. Anglican scholars have told the author that the use of the hood is disappearing in their Churches as "an intrusion of the academic into the religious". The Prayer Book of 1928, rejected by Parliament, authorized it, however. There is a tendency in our own Church for Ministers, entitled to hoods, not to wear them. The Church has neither law nor custom regulating this. It is generally felt that the use of a hood, which always has some colour in it, lightens the drabness of the black. Until the Church pronounces upon this, the author believes that it is wisdom for Ministers to consult their Sessions, but without conceding that the Session has any right to make the answer. And it is also wisdom for Presbyteries to determine how their Ministers shall be robed for public services.

Choir gowns have been black, but our Churches are tending to go into colour. This is a thing that needs care on the part of a Session. If the decision is to break away from the black, which is to break away from tradition, it must be done with sound reason and not just to be different. There is a tendency to break away from the use of hats for the women singers, to have no head covering. Mortarboards (the hats with the square, rigid top from which a tassel falls) are not the best for appearance, being academic and difficult to place attractively with some styles of hair dressing. Perhaps the stiff appearance of the mortarboards has led to the practice of using no head covering at all. However, there are caps available in different styles, much better in appearance than the mortarboard, and neat. The Session concerned with this question could make inquiries of the robe makers, but always remembering that the robe makers have their prejudices and ideas which may not accord with the Presbyterian outlook. The remark applying to the Minister's vestments as being to detract, not to attract, applies much more to choirs. Most choirs are in plain view of the Congregation, and if there be a riot of colours—no matter how attractive in other places—there is bound to be distraction.

### **The Architecture of the Church**

The architecture of the church is a subject that many Elders have had to deal with, especially since we have built so many new churches. The big question is, chancel or central pulpit? There is no official answer from the Church. The Assembly's Committee on Architecture prefers the chancel type for several reasons, the chief one being that it enables us to emphasize that the Ministry of the Church is a Ministry of the Word and Sacraments. The pulpit, for the declaring of the Word; the lectern, for the reading of the Word; and the Communion Table and the Baptismal Font are all in such positions that the nature of the Ministry is plainly symbolized. Another advantage is that the Minister has not so central a place as in other arrangements; at least, that is considered by some as an advantage. Some hold to the chancel idea strongly, and some to the central pulpit. The

advocates of the central pulpit point out that a balanced symbolism can be achieved, and question whether or not the Holy Table in the central position of the chancel is true to Reformation teaching, maintaining the Word of God is central. An interesting development is found in some of the new Anglican and Roman Catholic churches where the altar, once against the wall, is now brought right out, in some cases to the centre of the Church. This makes the altar among the people, and not remote from them, and more about this later as it applies to us. The Pope, so far as we know, has always celebrated a public Mass standing behind the altar, not in front of it as his parish priests do. This is called "the basilican posture" and preserves the ancient position, which was restored to us at the Reformation.

A curiosity of Church architecture is that almost anything in style or arrangements of the necessities of worship can be justified by an appeal to some practice at some time in Church history. Wherever the Church has gone it has done much adapting of things as they were found, and changes may be imposed on existing things according to emphasis on doctrine or established practice. Long after the original impulse is gone, things linger. For example, a Congregation may not be able to afford "Gothic" windows, but for its little sanctuary will use a standard rectangular window and paint a Gothic arch over each and a Gothic arch on the wall behind the pulpit. This spells "Church" and satisfies the feeling that a Church should be different. There was a time when all of this was deliberately avoided; the Church was barn-like and called a "meetinghouse".

We cannot grasp the problem without an understanding of the history of these things. Let us begin with the early Church. The influence of synagogue architecture was doubtless strong in Palestinian Churches, but it is the influence of the Latin Church that has remained with us. A casual recalling of pictures in High School texts will bring to the reader recollections of the Roman arches through which the triumphant Roman legions and their commanders passed. This spelled "victory" to them as the shaking of hands spells "friendship" to us. Certain Roman buildings, basilicas, had this arch at the front of the auditorium and under it or behind it the Roman officials sat in state, usually elevated a little above others present. The arch was a half-circle. The Gothic or pointed arch came in when the art of throwing the weight sideways to the pillars, rather than to the centre of the arch, was discovered. The Churches with the half-round or Romanesque arches were heavy in appearance, and heavier still for safety as the buildings became larger. The Gothic arch gave height with safety and the air of space and freedom within the Church.

So the arch became the distinguishing thing in Churches. Clergy and distinguished visitors alone sat within the arch, in what we now call the chancel. The word 'chancel' is from a word meaning 'screen', for this portion of the Church had a screen between it and the lay worshippers. The clergy were the singers. At the time of the Reformation there was fumbling as to the significance the chancel should have. Where ancient Churches became Churches of the Reformation, and there were hundreds and hundreds of them, of course, the altar was moved from the wall that the Minister might be behind it for Holy Communion. In Anglican Churches, however, it remained against the wall, but there was no hesitation in having the laity sit within the chancel, though the position of the altar rail varied. (Note that in Roman Churches it is between the chancel

and the people, and in Anglican Churches usually between the choir in the chancel and the altar.) In the Reformed (Presbyterian) Churches choirs were a late development, and the choir has been moved around like a guest for whom no chair can be found. The Roman Church puts the choir in the gallery behind the worshippers, if the choristers are of the laity. Those who tell us today that this is the position for the choir should consider that no one listens to secular music with one's back to it, and why should it be so in Church?

The mediaeval Churches, particularly the greater cathedrals, had chancels of great splendour. The use of transepts, right and left as one stands at the entrance to the chancel, made the Churches in the form of a cross, but the transept is a late development. The pulpit was once called the "ambo" from a Greek word which means to cry aloud. It was not always at the chancel arch. In some modern Churches it is part way down the nave for better hearing. (The word "nave" for the main portion of the Church is from the Latin word for ship, the Church being the ship of salvation.) A sixth-century Church in Rome has two pulpits part way down the nave. In one Roman Catholic Church known to the author, the pulpit, a heavy and elaborate piece of cabinet-work, is on wheels and is pushed into position at the centre of the chancel steps for the sermon, and pushed out again when the sermon is finished. It is a "central" pulpit for the time being.

Following the Reformation there was a period when the "Reader" took a portion of the public worship of God. The "Reader's Desk", as it was called, was sometimes opposite to the pulpit, thus giving the pulpit and lectern appearance with which we are familiar. In other Churches it was immediately below the pulpit, the pulpit being high often at the height of the gallery. There are many old Churches in Canada having a high central pulpit with a lesser pulpit below it. Within memory of those living, the lower pulpit was used by the preceptor as he led the praise.

There are many variations, even in Canada, reflecting the old world. We see pulpits at the middle of the long wall of the Church; boxed-in pews with doors, elders' pews, manse pews, and the controversy over "pew rents" is so recent that some Churches have signs in the vestibule of the Church reading, "All Pews Free".

The answer to the question, Side pulpit or central pulpit? Chancel or no chancel? must be found theologically, and the architecture adapted to that.

The phrase, "The Ministry of the Word and Sacraments," is not complete, as was said earlier. The total worship of the Church is Word, Sacraments and Song. In Reformation times the preceptor was in the congregation's eye, of necessity, for the total worship then was also of Word, Sacrament and Song. Unlike the Roman Mass, in which the people had little part, the Reformed worship was one in which the people sang. Our theology implicitly includes the element of praise led by a choir, and our practice is of long standing. We must frankly face the fact, architecturally, that the place for a choir must be an integral, harmonious part of our designing of Churches. A seemly place must be provided for the organist even as a place was provided for the preceptor.

This author has no choice between the chancel pulpit and the central pulpit, providing the architecture is fitting. St. Andrew's, Toronto, is a perfect example of the chancel type, especially as it provides seating behind the Table for many Elders with the Minister. Whether or not we believe the Session should be constituted for Communion, or whether or not we believe the Elders should assist in the distribution of the Bread and the Wine, the practice is almost Church-wide that the Elders sit with the Minister for Communion - and thus all gather "about the Table", which is theologically correct. In the chancel type we have a silent witness of the Table, and, during the service, the emphasis on the reading and preaching of the Word. On the other hand, the central pulpit, often said to emphasize the person of the Minister, need not do so. There are Ministers who from the force of their personality and preaching draw emphasis to themselves no matter what the architecture, and that without design on their part. One thing must be stressed; if the pulpit is central the Communion Table should not be some insignificant bit of woodwork, but in size and beauty as impressive as the pulpit, and clearly seen.

Where shall we put the choir? In the chancel type of architecture, the choir draws little attention to itself except when it rises. The common complaint that they cannot be heard because the two sections "sing at each other" is met by having the members turn somewhat towards the congregation when they rise. In the central type, whether the choir is behind the pulpit or in front of it, we have the problem of any slight movement in the choir attracting attention, especially as the choir is above the main floor in level. The placing of the choir at one side may not be much off balance, if the Baptismal Font, of fitting dimension, is at the other.

This leads to what may become a general solution. Instead of a Chancel, let us revert to the Roman apse—the semi-circular area of the Roman basilica. Here the Table is placed, and is central. Behind it are the chairs for the Minister and Elders. At the left side, as one faces the Table, is the pulpit against the wall where it joins the arch of the apse, and on the right side the lectern. Farther over at the right, the Baptismal Font, and farther over at the left, the choir and organ console. This makes a fairly-well balanced arrangement, avoids the deep chancel and its problem of the remoteness of the Table, and gives emphasis to Word, Sacraments and Song. Indeed, it is this general arrangement which without much planning has been adopted by those building new Churches and who found they could not afford the expensive chancel.

The sorry thing is, that in the building of new Churches, these details are given but a flurry of thought in the Congregation. It is providential that many "have builded better than they knew". The excitement of having a new Church leads to hasty judgments, the architect presents his plans, often following his own ideas, and the plans become determinative. The Presbytery, if it has a mind on the subject, hesitates to use its powers of oversight, or the Presbytery may be divided on the subject and thus does nothing.

It may be remarked, finally, that a display of organ pipes, once so common, is passing out. Yet there are those who bewail the passing of the silver and the gold that once dominated the Church above both pulpit and Table.

## Symbolism in the Church

Within the Church (building) there is usually some symbolism. The arch, as we have seen, is symbolism of a kind. But by symbolism we mean such as a harp, an eagle, a ship, a circle, a dove, a vine and branches, and so on. They may often be found in stained glass windows, as carvings upon the pulpit, chairs, or on the paneling of the walls. The Apostles and other saints are often indicated by their symbols; Paul is given the symbol of two crossed swords, and Mark is given the symbol of a lion. A pamphlet, "Symbols and Terms of the Church", published by the Board of the United Lutheran Church in America, and obtainable for about fifteen cents from any Lutheran bookstore in Canada, is available to any interested and gives definitions and illustrations. Many books have been written on this subject.

The burning bush (Exodus 3: 2) with the motto "nee tamen consumebatur" ("yet it was not consumed") is used as an unofficial seal by our Church, and some other Presbyterian Churches. This is an old usage, and a witness to the Divine Life within and to the fires through which we have gone. The burning bush is found on corner stones, as a wall decoration within the Church, as a carving on a pulpit, chair, or panelling. The commonest use is on a pulpit fall (the cloth that falls from many pulpits). The catalogue of Presbyterian Publications shows this and other designs for pulpit falls. The St. Andrew's Cross (an 'X' as in the Union Jack, for St. Andrew, by tradition, was crucified on a cross of this shape) or a Celtic cross are also common symbols for us on pulpit falls. The Celtic cross, which is mentioned in our discussion of the Reformation, is a cross with a circle, the upright arm being longer than the horizontal arm. This is a symbol which was used in Scotland before the conquest of British Christianity by Rome, hence the name 'Celtic'. Many of our new Church buildings are using this outside the building, or inside, chiefly against the wall behind the Communion Table. It is distinctly a Presbyterian symbol, and its increasing use has met with wide approval.

Two other symbols should be mentioned. The 'INRI' is the inscription on our Lord's Cross (Luke 23: 38), given in all the Gospel, Luke and John mentioning the three languages in which it was written - Greek, Hebrew and Latin. INRI is an abbreviation of the Latin, 'Iesus Nazarenus Rex Iudaeorum', 'Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.' The 'IHS' or 'IHC', a common symbol on pulpit falls, is used more often than the INRI. It is variously explained as "I have suffered" or "I have saved", or from the Latin for "In this (cross) safety" or from the Latin for "Jesus, the Saviour of Men." Bernadine of Siena took IHS for "Jesus, the Saviour of Men" in 1347. However, it is not any of these. The IHS or INC is the first letters of the Greek name for Jesus, and is properly shown with a small mark over it to indicate it is an abbreviation. We indicate an abbreviation by a period, such as Dr. for Doctor, but the Greeks used a small line over the abbreviation. In Philippians 2:10 we read "that at the Name of Jesus every knee should bow." In Churches of other denominations, which are highly liturgical, when the Holy Name of Jesus is spoken or sung, one will often see the worshippers making a genuflection. ('Genuflection' is from the mediaeval Latin and means 'the bending of the knee.')

This bowing is most often observed in the Churches mentioned when the Apostles' Creed is recited or sung and worshippers come to the words, "And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord."

Children can be taught many elementary things in the faith from the symbols used in the Church, and they may be used to teach adults also. Is it commonly known, for example, that the circle is a symbol of eternity?

### **Should Flowers be on the Communion Table?**

One of the smaller controversies of our day is, Should flowers be placed on the Communion Table? It is hoped that the mention of it here will not introduce it to Sessions who were unaware of it! It does serve to illustrate how much aware we are of the various things in our services, and how eager we are to be truly sensitive that the worship of God may be in spirit and in truth.

In the early Church there is evidence that the people brought their gifts for the Church and laid them upon the Communion Table, and these were offered to the Lord in prayer. Out of them the Bread and the Wine were taken for the Holy Supper, which was celebrated every Sunday. From this the statement is now made that the Table should have on it only the offering plates and the necessities of Communion when celebrated. The Table is the one place where flowers should never be placed; such is the contention. On the other hand, there are Congregations where the Table is the one place that the offering plates are never put, perhaps because of an unexpressed conviction that money is not "spiritual". To most people flowers on the Table are decorative only, or in memory of someone deceased, or an offering of the people of beauty in the House of the Lord. To a few they are a silent witness of glory when the Communion is not being celebrated, a reminder of

"His reign shall know no end;  
And round his pierced feet  
Fair flowers of Paradise extend  
Their fragrance ever sweet."

However, the difference of opinion happens to be of more moment than what may be in the person's mind who sees the flowers—or doesn't see them on the Table. In the Roman Mass there is an "offertory" before the consecration of the elements. Some scholars aver this is a relic of the presentation of the gifts, as mentioned in the preceding paragraph, still embedded in the Roman (and in other Communion orders). One priest friend of the Roman Church has explained this to the author by saying this offering is in **anticipation** of the consecration. Professor C. Anderson Scott in **Romanism and the Gospel**, pages 122-125, discusses this. Holding that it is a relic of the presentation of the gifts and proof of the earlier doctrine of the Lord's Supper, which was certainly not an offering of the consecrated elements or any idea of offering unto God a propitiatory sacrifice. He points out that the 1928 Prayer Book of the Church of England, which was rejected by Parliament, had transferred a prayer of the 1662 Book, which follows the receiving of Communion, to a place immediately after the Consecration. In **The Prayer Book, What it is and What it May be**. (1928) Sidney Dark quotes a bishop as saying, "The new prayer is consistent . . . with the idea that a sacrifice is offered by the priest for the remission of the sins of the living and the dead."

Our own practice, when we follow our Book of Common Order, is that immediately after what others call the Consecration the Minister says, "And we beseech Thee to receive this memorial of Thy Son's passion which He has commanded us to make until He come." In other words, we have in the Canadian Book what the English Parliament rejected for the Anglicans in England! No wonder certain scholars of other Churches get excited when they see this in our Book of Common Order. It must be remarked, of course, that they are reading into our words what we do not read. We fulfil the Lord's words, and in adoration and thanksgiving we offer Him our loving obedience at this point, and we offer ourselves. Note that the words are not "we beseech Thee to receive these elements", but "to receive this memorial".

Is it not a curious thing that a simple question like, Should we have flowers on the Communion Table? runs back to apostolic days and is part of one of the most burning questions in the theology of other denominations?

### **Should the Congregation Stand When the Minister Enters?**

We have in this another question that is often asked, though to many, like the previous question, it may seem to be a petty one. The question has come to the author, it should be said, not from Ministers but from Elders, and with the greatest sincerity. It is thought that the practice is growing, and where it is followed it is taken as respect to the office and not to the man. Where the Minister enters and sits down, and all sit down, and the Minister then rises alone to begin the service, the mark of respect is a pronounced one. But when the Minister enters and begins the service while all remain standing, the mark of respect is a less obvious one. Comments on the two points of view may be summarized in this manner: for the first, "It is in keeping with the solemnity of worship, and a sign of the needful respect for the office of the Minister": for the second, "The Choir and Minister take their places with us as worshippers in the Sanctuary of God; our respect for the office is obvious and implicit in the service itself." On this question the author does not care to express an opinion, but to say only that failure to stand for such as a visiting Moderator of Synod or Assembly is less than courtesy.

In the whole subject of this chapter, the public worship of God, there is a saying attributed to Jesus, not found in the Gospels, which is applicable. It concerns a man whom He saw working on the Sabbath Day, and to him Jesus said, "Man, if thou knowest what thou doest, thou art blest; if thou knowest not, thou art curst." Ministers and Elders should know fairly exactly what is being done and why in the public worship of God and all that pertains to it.

## Chapter 10

### The Elder And The Kirk-Session

The Kirk-Session, as a Court, represents the level at which the every-day work of the Church is chiefly done, or supervised. In this chapter the author will discuss various phases of the work and comment upon questions and difficulties he has known to arise, and hopes the paragraphs will be clear and useful. It would be good for the Ruling Elder first of all to read carefully all of Chapter III of the Book of Forms and Dr. T. Wardlaw Taylor's pamphlet, "The Ruling Elder, His Office and His Duties."

The popular impression is that a Ruling Elder, by being ordained, immediately comes into the right to sit about the Communion Table and to assist the Minister at the celebration of the Lord's Supper, and this constitutes the main reason for his ordination. It will be observed, in most of our Churches, that the people pass the Elements to one another after receiving them from an Elder. They are not all personally served by him. In reality all assist visibly at a Communion Service.

The prime thing about the Eldership is not anything of the Table. An Elder is a Ruling Elder, and it is in this thought of ruling that we have the clue to the Eldership. John Calvin used the word 'governor', and the Ruling Elders are the governors of the Congregation. The Minister is also a Ruling Elder; the "greater" office of teaching includes the "lesser" office of ruling. The Minister is part of the Session. The phrase "Minister and Session" is an incorrect one when used in the Congregation, for he is part of the Session and governs with the other Ruling Elders. In the Presbytery, however, the phrase, "Minister and Session", indicates that the Minister is the Executive of the Presbytery. See footnote to Section 105.

A mark of Presbyterian Churches is their discipline. We are, or should be, an orderly people. The words 'discipline' and 'governor' are likely to be misunderstood. In 18th century Scotland, as in 16th century Geneva, the discipline of the Church was rigid. Elders were then moral policemen and summoned offenders for all kinds of sin. Early records of old Sessions in Canada reveal the same practiced. It is common for even some of our people to speak slightly of the discipline of those times. It should be remembered that it was expected in those times. Robert Burns, the Scottish poet, had trouble with the Session but did not object to being summoned by the Session. He objected to the type of men who were Elders. He satirized them in his poem, "Holy Willie's Prayer", and rightly. The Session was often the only authority in a community in those days. It was expected to be as a magistrate's court, and was. A man or a woman was judged by people whom he or she knew—it was something of the jury idea—and some historians, without any desire particularly to defend Sessions, believe the judgment was less severe and more understanding than might be found in the rough justice of some of the civil courts of the time.

This has passed away, without lament, but it may be that the extreme has been reached in the other direction. Sessions do not now exercise this type of discipline except

under great pressure, and always with an eye to the civil rights of those concerned. Nor do Sessions, except in rare cases, inflict such penalties as debarring people from Communion. Seventy-five years ago a common sentence of Sessions was expulsion from the Holy Table for six months, and restoration of privileges only on humble appearance of the offender before the Session. If anyone today were to receive such a sentence he or she would probably walk out in indignation and walk brazenly into another Church with a smile — and be received without question. There are many who desire to see some discipline restored for the honour of Christ and His Church.

But what is "discipline"? What do we mean by "governing"? The word 'discipline' means more than to correct and punish. See Sections 313, 314 of the Book of Forms for a full definition of discipline. The meaning of the word is from "'disco", to learn. The governing of the Church is for the well-being of the Church. It means the maintenance of the family in a wholesome way, that through discipline we may become true disciples of the Lord.

The responsibility of the Session is to govern in the good interests of the Congregation. Section 128 says that the Session may require any organization in the Congregation to report its proceedings to the Session. See also Section III(d). Here is the point at which Sessions go astray. They think of their own duties only in terms of Communion and membership, and the duties of other bodies in the Church as something which is mysteriously controlled by the annual meetings of the Congregation. Annual meetings (Section 153) receive the report of the Board of Managers; there is no mention of the report of the Session being received. Sessions, strictly speaking, do not report to the Congregation. It is only a courtesy on their part to give a report. Some Sessions instinctively realize this and make their 'report', really a kindly letter of exhortation and commendation.

A Session has the full responsibility of seeing that congregational affairs are done in order. To do so, it may have to establish policies. For example, will the Ladies' Aid Society, or Guild, or whatever it is called, be permitted to have any number of teas and suppers, or go into the catering business on a large scale to raise funds? Are "Bingo" and raffles permitted in a Presbyterian Church? A Session should know the answer to these questions, and make it clear to the Congregation that whether welcome or unwelcome they are its governors. They are duly elected by the people, but responsible only to the Word of God, their own conscience and the courts of the Church. This is a "high" doctrine of the Eldership, but there is no other acceptable doctrine. In fact, there can be cases where not even the General Assembly can overrule an act of Session; they may call it hasty, foolish, or what you will, but they cannot set it aside.

It is the privilege of the Session to consult the Congregation, and the privilege of the people in the Congregation to appeal to Presbytery against any action of the Session. Nevertheless, the Elder must do his duty without fear of appeal. He is not an honorary official to be seen only on "state" occasions; he is a ruler in Israel. He must take great care to avoid vindictiveness and partisanship.

## The Session is a Closed Court

There are four courts in a Presbyterian Church—Kirk-Sessions, Presbyteries, Synods, and Assembly. (Some Presbyterian Churches, smaller ones, have the Synod as their supreme court, making a total of three courts.) Presbytery, Synod and Assembly are normally "open" courts, that is, open to the public, but they may sit "in camera", that is, with doors closed to all except members and others permitted to sit. There are certain cases when they must sit "in camera." The Session, however, is normally a "closed" court. Elders should cultivate, if they do not already possess it, a strict code of honour in this, not to abuse their privilege or in any manner to take advantage of their position to the disadvantage of any person. The nature of Session work requires at times great confidences, and the Elder who talks of Session business outside the Session destroys the effectiveness of the Session. He must take great care not to divulge any Session debate anywhere. A particular place of danger is in his own family whose members may innocently or even deliberately pass along information they have astutely gleaned. When there is a break in Session confidences the Session may as well close up shop so far as ruling in the Congregation is concerned. There are Ministers who have to assume the entire burden of making difficult decisions because their Sessions, though technically closed courts, are wide open. Elders are elected by the Congregation to do a particular work as spiritual fathers in patience, sympathy, confidence and discretion. Let them do it in that manner.

The decisions of a Session are like the decisions of a cabinet in our provincial or federal government. The cabinet stands as one, and so should a Session. An Elder who says throughout the Congregation, "Well, I wasn't in favour of having the Sunday School at three o'clock (or whatever the item was), but they outvoted me" has betrayed his Session. If an Elder is not satisfied in conscience he may have his dissent recorded in the Session Minutes. If he wishes he may make an appeal to the Presbytery. **BUT HE MUST NOT MAKE DISSENT OR APPEAL TO THE CONGREGATION OR ANY MEMBER OF IT.** A loyal Elder stands by his fellow Elders, and his fellow Elders stand by him. All of this is not secretiveness; it is just plain, common, family sense.

A particular place in which this may be seen, and can be an illustration of the last paragraph, is in the election of new Elders. After the ballots are in, the Session has the right of veto, that is, of refusing to have as an Elder someone the Congregation asks for by its votes. (Most elections are by ballot: Section 132 (2), which permits an open vote, is rarely used.) Of course, the Congregation should not know the number of votes, and most Sessions guard against this danger by having only a small committee of the Session knowing the totals. But let us say that Joe Doe is elected by the Congregation. One of the Elders says he exercises his veto on the ground that Joe Doe (the name here, of course, is fictitious) is known to him as an unconfessed thief, and he cites his evidence. Joe's name is struck from the list, and the Elders are usually admonished by the Minister to divulge the information to no one. A name can be struck from the list only for cause, and that cause doesn't mean the majority of Elders think the man won't make a good Elder, or that a member of Session doesn't personally like him. To exercise the veto is not to cast a black ball as in some secret society. In this fictitious case we see why a Session must be a

closed court and why the Elders must be men of very strict conscience. They must always be. See Section 132 (4) and c, 113 (c), and Edict, Appendices 1 (6) concerning elders-elect.

The above illustration should not lead Elders to think that all matters are handled in a Session meeting. On the contrary, much is done in a quiet, personal way, by an Elder or Minister with individuals, striving to help them. The formal processes of discipline are indicated in Sections 313-405 in the Book of Forms, covering Communicants, Ruling Elders and Ministers in all courts. Section 134 is also a matter of discipline as touching Ruling Elders. Before there is formal discipline all of Section 322 applies. There is so much that never comes to a formal action because there is a friendly Minister or Ruling Elder meeting each little crisis and solving it by the exercise of tact, patience, counsel and prayer. See Section 112 on this point.

### **Some of the Chief Duties of Session**

The chief duties of Session are covered in the statements of Sections 109-114. Much could be written on these. We make a few points for clarity and advice.

Section 109 (a) reads, "The Session regulates the hours and forms or modes of public worship." In some Presbyterian Churches the Minister determines what the Order of Worship shall be. It has been contended for us, that as the Minister is responsible to the Presbytery, and the Presbytery must regulate matters concerning the performance of public worship (Section 198), that in Canada also the Minister determines the order of public worship. The Clerks of Assembly, since 1925 at least, have uniformly held that the wording of 109 (a) is clear: the Session, the Minister being a member, determines the Order, subject to oversight by the Presbytery. The Minister is responsible to the Presbytery for discharging his office and supplying his pulpit. This regulation, 109 (a), does not prevent the Minister from making special arrangements for special services. The purity of worship as authorized by the Church permits variations. It is surprising, with so many strands, racially and otherwise, in the background of our Canadian Church, that we haven't more variations than we have.

Where conflicts arise between the Minister and Ruling Elders in a Session concerning the Order of Worship, there should be much mutual understanding. It is foolishness, to say the least, for a Minister to insist on using the Apostles' Creed at every service when the Elders do not wish it—or for him to decline to use it when the Elders want it. Elders are usually good judges of the service that will be most helpful to the people, that is, within the limits permitted by the Church; certainly better judges than a Minister, new to a parish, who is set upon particular liturgies. A Minister may present his convictions to the Elders, or the Elders to the Minister. Both often need instruction. See Section 198 concerning "novel practices" and so on.

Section 109 (d) concerning the "leader of praise" should also be clear. It comes up frequently that a Session determines the salary of the Organist or Choir Director, or the Board of Managers undertakes to make the appointment on the ground that so-and-so will

do a decent enough job whereas another is no better and wants much more salary. The answer is—the Board sets the salary as directed by the Congregation (Section 164), but the Session makes the appointment.

Where there are members of Session who are also members of the Board of Managers, which is an excellent thing, a liaison is established which meets possible difficulties such as these. Many Sessions have joint meetings with the Board to discuss Budget and sundry things of mutual interest. This also is an excellent thing. An official statement by Assembly of the relationship of Managers and Elders will be found in the Appendix of this Manual.

The Session has authority to admit people "to the communicant membership of the Church." All of Section 110 is clear reading, but it may be wise to emphasize the sentence, "The vote of the Session to admit to the Lord's Table is the reception of such communicant without further ceremony, but the new communicant may be asked to make a public profession of faith." This should be emphasized as the custom has been so uniformly for a public profession of faith that many unconsciously consider there can be no true membership without it. The point is, the Session recognizes the **possession** of faith even as Peter recognized the faith of Cornelius (Acts 10: 17-48). The Session, for the intending communicant's own good and the fellowship of the Church, may ask him or her to make a public profession of faith. There are those who through infirmity cannot attend to make a profession, and they should not be led to think their admission is partly defective or that an "exception" is made for them.

An Elder must avoid the practice (which has been occasionally known) of saying to some person, "You should be on our Roll; I'll have the Session add it at the next meeting." This is an abuse of the Session's right to add names by its vote. Coming into the fellowship of the Church and first Communion is a solemn occasion. Nothing should lighten the significance of it, either to the Church or to the communicant.

Members coming from other congregations, Presbyterian or otherwise, have their names added to the Roll as under 110 (c), but read also 125 (c), 126 and 332. There is no direction in the Book of Forms concerning any ceremony for those coming by Certificate of Transference, but the Book of Common Order (page 87, 1948), provides a ceremony. The primary thing, again, is the vote of the Session. Some Sessions have found a quiet objection on the part of people who are transferring and are asked to "make another profession of faith," as they consider it that. These, if they pressed the point, might be able to establish a case that the law of the Church does not require it, and that the ceremony of the Book of Common Order is only a voluntary thing. Many Ministers, whose Sessions do not require participation in such a ceremony, read the names at the Preparatory Service and Communion Service of all whose names have been added to the Roll since the last Communion, with a welcome and a request to the Congregation for the prayers of the faithful for the new communicants and the fellowship of the Congregation.

There is no law of the Church concerning the admission of people who leave a neighbouring Church as a result of some dissatisfaction and show up with their certificate

in your Church. Section 126 requires the giving of a certificate unless the Session of that Church has discipline under way or desires to make inquiry. The Church to which the certificate is presented has some leeway under Section 110 (c), which reads . . . "unless they have good reason to believe that there is against the applicant matter of discipline sufficient to merit suspension of Church privileges." See also 125 (b). This is delicate ground, but the author has followed the practice of saying to such people, "For us to take your certificate now judges in your favour a quarrel you have obviously had in the Church you left. We cannot do this. We will consider your certificate in a year's time if you present it then." But this has been done only in extreme cases; the usual way in these cases is to have a conference with the Minister of the Church that gave the certificate, that the honour of both Congregations may be preserved, and the matter handled accordingly. The person in question should know that the Session has the right to admit, to guard its membership zealously, even if the certificate does read "a member in good standing" or is "commended to the fellowship of the Church" (See Appendices, Part 1, 4 for the form of the certificate.) To repeat, this is all delicate ground, but Church tramps are a nuisance and a Session may properly mention their wanderings as sufficient cause to deliberate upon receiving their certificates.

### **The Elder Has a District**

Each Elder is assigned a district. This is one of the oldest parts of Presbyterian procedure. As a definite regulation, it dates from 1648 (Section 114.) The purpose of it is obvious. A shepherd should know his sheep. He should visit adherents as well as communicants. An Elder may feel incapable of doing this work, especially if in his district there is the home of the man for whom he works. Or it may be he is the employer and is called upon to visit the home of one of his men. In either case it is a test of Christian relationship, both the Sunday relationship and the week-day. The Elder should not belittle himself; he is there, not by his own choice, but by the choice of the Congregation and by direction of the Session.

Visiting has greater importance in this generation for several reasons. The chief one is, that the Minister is not able "to cover the Congregation" as in older days. The Elder should do his part. Congregations are organized into many societies and many of them ask, nay demand, the skill of the Minister to help them. He has less time to study, less time to visit. He becomes a religious manager instead of a minister or pastor. Pastoral charges are larger than they used to be. Economic conditions, the increase in population, the shortage of ministers, have all combined to compel amalgamations of smaller charges into larger ones, and the load on the Minister is increased. The Elder can help out here by taking his district seriously and doing regular visiting.

The problem can be illustrated by the fact that the average length of pastorate is now shorter than it was two generations ago. There may be several reasons for this, but one of the reasons is definitely that the Minister finds the nature of the work makes him more of an organizer and a community official and less the pastor and member of Presbytery. People seem to be pleased that their Minister is able to do so many different

things, and is so active in the community. They do not realize he may be doing some things because they won't, and he can't let his Congregation down. They do not realize they may be destroying the Presbyterian tradition of long pastorates in which their Minister is truly a pastor and a scholar. The Minister quietly makes his choice and moves on, gaining time for study in a new charge by using old sermons. (What's wrong with using old sermons? Nothing. If a sermon is worth preaching once, it is worth preaching a dozen times. If it isn't worth preaching a dozen times, it isn't worth preaching once.) Let the Elder consider this paragraph for what he may think it is worth, and move personally to do both visiting and administrative work as a governor of the Church.

Some Elders feel embarrassed in visiting. A neat way is to prepare a little list of things that may be talked about in each home concerning the Church for each visit. The list may be memorized, and the Elder can introduce the subject frankly in some way like this, "On my visit in my district this time I am speaking in all our homes about . . ." (It may be the Budget, or more faithful Church attendance, or the Church School work, and so on). People really appreciate this; they look for a word from the Church; they look for more than a social call. The Elder is not a truant officer or a moral policeman; he is a friend. Let him go believing that and he will find that is the way he is taken.

In response to the draft of this Manual, an Elder in British Columbia made a comment well worth quoting, "A recommendation of a visitation at least once a year is far from adequate. In my opinion, we should recommend that the Elder get away from the idea of visitations." Get on such a friendly basis with each member of your district that a visit or friendly call is common place . . . Eldership must make the Elder humble and understanding. He must give of himself to each member in his district. In this way is friendship built and the membership of the Church can be welded closer together."

Elders who enter their work with enthusiasm are frequently discouraged to find that in their district there are families who, although receiving the Elder with courtesy, will make no effort to respond to him or to the Minister. Such families are known to all denominations. The new Elder may be deceived into taking the veiled hints of some of these people that if the Church had a new Minister, or if there were fewer hypocrites in the Church, or if the Church were a little more friendly, and so on, they would be there. But after some experience in these matters the Elder learns these people, though perhaps sincere, are spiritually dishonest with themselves, and any excuse is good enough. They, however, are willing to take the ministrations of the Church in full measure, and with the same critical spirit. When an every-person canvass is made they reveal themselves clearly in that they are not willing either to do or to give. They are part of the tribulations that every Session has.

Many Sessions simply ignore these people, even if there are communicants among them. However troublesome they are, the Session should not break the tie. They are part of the parish, or have been, and until by word or action they declare themselves out of the Presbyterian Church, the Session should deal with them in the patience of God Himself. It is not at all unknown that the second generation rebels against their parents' indifference and becomes zealous workers.

The foregoing two paragraphs are not to let the Elder think that every indifferent family can be so classified. There can be genuine causes of the breach, causes that go back many, many years. There can be a failure of the Church itself or its Minister in sympathy, in just a lack of care on the part of the shepherds. Sheep go astray, and they must be sought out; that is the point. It may be wise also to note that there are people who are not naturally of the pious type and rarely "go to Church". Yet these may be financially generous to the Church, and, money or no money, it is not wise to suggest to them they are not Presbyterians. They never fail to make clear in their own circles where their loyalty lies among the Churches. They are usually upright in character, and of them we may say they are not far from the kingdom of God. The discerning Elder will distinguish between them and the purely indifferent fault-finders.

### **The Keeping of the Communion Roll**

The mention of members brings up naturally the keeping of the Communion Roll. The common practice of having two Rolls, one of active members (reported to Presbytery), and one of inactive members or non-resident members (not reported) is illegal. Where this practice is found by Presbyteries in their examination of Session records, the Presbytery should instantly order the making of one Roll, including all names, and order the Session to cease using two Rolls. There may be many lists, dividing the Congregation by areas, by resident and non-resident, and so on, but there is only one Roll. In olden time, membership was a civil right as well as an ecclesiastical right, and to remove a name or to place it on a list of something less than a Roll was a grave offence for which strict penalty might be assessed. In these days there is still a civil right, under the law of the Church, whereby the communicant has a vote in the control of Church property. That cannot be called into question; a person is either on the Roll or off it. If a person's name should not be on the Roll because of neglect of ordinances (Section 125 (e) ), the Session has the remedy of purging the Roll. (See all of Section 125.) If it hasn't the courage to purge its Roll, it should not seek a subterfuge by setting up an "Appendix to the Roll." See 125 (c) as to the force of an appendix.

The reason for this tampering with the Roll has usually been to avoid a full assessment of Presbytery and Synod dues, or to lessen a Budget allocation, or to show a more favourable percentage of Communion attendance, or all of these. Such tactics are unworthy of a Session. Sessions using an Appendix to the Roll will not report the total of names on that Appendix. Yet if a person whose name is on the Appendix applies for a certificate, the certificate is given with no hint to the person that the name has been on an Appendix; perhaps there is a resolution of Session to restore the name to the Roll, and then the certificate is given. This is not discipline, for the person concerned knows nothing of it; many words can be used to describe just what this really is.

The foregoing statements, in the draft of this Manual, provoked a spate of objections. Most of them were to the contention that Section 125 of the Book of Forms is a "dead letter," and that Assembly should take action to recognize the wide-spread

practice of having two or more Rolls. However, Section 125 is not a dead letter. There are Sessions that systematically obey it. Village and rural Sessions will find it difficult to purge the Roll because of personal involvement. The choice remains: purge the Roll, or report the total of the names. It is conceivable that the superior courts of the Church may order obedience on the part of all Sessions to Section 125.

However sympathetic one may be to the plea to recognize two Rolls—and the author does not claim perfection in his conduct as Moderator of any Session—the fact is, as before stated, there are legal considerations here that cannot be swept aside.

Taking up the question of the Roll from another and perhaps happier point of view, the Roll is not a sentimental list of those who are communicants in the Congregation. The Session Minutes should show the date of admission of each communicant, and manner of admission—profession of faith, certificate, restoration, or whatever it may be. The removal of names must likewise be definitely recorded. Although the Canadian Church does not require the keeping of funeral records, and few Congregations keep them, such a record is a good thing to keep. The Communion Roll has a column for dismissals, and those who have departed this life may be noted there as 'Deceased', with the date. See Section 120 (c).

A common occurrence is the problem of receiving into the membership of the Church a person whose denomination will not give a Certificate of Transference. To require of such a person a profession of faith is not in accord with our teaching of the catholicity of the Church. The author believes that the principles underlying Section 110 (a) apply here. If the person concerned can show evidence of having made a profession of faith or of having been confirmed, then the Session can add the name to the Roll by resolution. This evidence is usually an affirmation that Communion has been received in another denomination and given with sufficient detail to assure the Minister or Session that there is no doubt the person concerned is as if a technical document were being presented.

Examination by Presbyteries of Communion Rolls often indicates they are carelessly kept. Notations are made in pencil, names stroked out with no reason given, names added by the Clerk or the Minister for which no corresponding entry is found in the Minutes of Session, and generally shoddy work. On the contrary, there are eminent examples of diligent and perfect work.

Let us follow along with an example of keeping the Roll. A young man, to whom we shall give the name of James MacKay, becomes a communicant by profession of faith. It would be wisdom to find his full name, and enter that, say, James Anderson MacKay. In brackets may be put the usual way in which he is addressed by mail, say, James A. MacKay, and address. The Clerk of Session should be careful of the spelling. Is it MacKay, McKay, Mackay, Mackaye, or what form? Modern life has taken from us many things once thought to be rights; the right to have one's name spelled as one wishes it should not be taken away by the Clerk of Session. Is Johnson really Johnston or Johnstone? and so on. When James A. MacKay marries, to write in his wife's name as

"Mrs. MacKay" is not the best practice. It should be Mrs. James A. MacKay (lest there be confusion with a mother or aunt who is Mrs. MacKay), and, for the historical record, her maiden name may be put in brackets, (Mary Ann Smith.) For both, the date of becoming communicants should be given. In time, when a new Roll is made up, the old one having become full or otherwise less serviceable, all this information should be transferred. Should James A. MacKay or his wife die, and a second marriage is solemnized, the second spouse should be clearly indicated. In short, the Roll should be so kept that an examination will find it as orderly and clear as the records of a county court. The blank communion rolls all have narrow columns: two or more lines may be used to record information.

All records of Session are confidential records, and must be kept confidential. Even the very old records of a Session are to be yielded with caution, if at all, to those making historical research. The author recalls an amusing incident of many years ago when the request was made by a competent researcher for permission to make photostatic copies of Session Minutes, and permission was declined. The reason was not divulged to the researcher, and he was much offended. It can be told now: he would have discovered that the ancestor of people prominent in the community's life had once been convicted by the Session as a bootlegger!

Baptismal records must also be guarded with care. There is a great deal of curiosity about the ages of people, and those applying for certificates of baptism for others (usually to prove age to qualify for pensions) should present solid reasons as to their authority to ask for a certificate. In no case should the person be permitted to scan the Baptismal Register. Let the Clerk or Minister do the searching and give the certificate. See Sections 20 and 21.

### **Communion Cards**

Communion cards are used by most of our Churches. They are part of what is almost an historical continuity from early times. See Revelation 2: 17 for a thought that bears on this, "and in the stone a new name written." In the days when it was dangerous to be a Christian, some password, some sign or token was needed.

(The use of a simple cross was not the first secret sign of the Christian. The first secret sign is believed to have been the making of the outline of the shape of a fish, for which the Greek word is "ichthus", which is found in our "ichthyology." Each of the Greek letters in this word in turn were the first letters of the Christian's confession, "Jesus Christ, the Son of God, Saviour." If an answering sign were made, there was mutual recognition of faith; if not, the first sign was meaningless, just what we now call doodling.)

When the dangerous days were passed, the sign or token was retained and has now become our Communion Card. Within the memory of some living the "card" was a metal token, given out only at the Preparatory Service by the Elders. The Communion

Card is the indication to the communicant that there is no discipline against him or her, and is a reminder of the forthcoming Communion at which all are expected to be present—such is our general practice.

The giving and receiving of the Communion Card used to be a very solemn thing, for discipline, as mentioned earlier, was strict. It has now become little more than a sentimentality. It should be held rigidly to its uses.

The return of the Communion Card on Communion Sunday indicates the presence of that communicant, and the Roll is marked accordingly for attendance. The attendance should be kept; among other things it is the only way the Roll can be purged—see Section 125 (e). There is much difficulty in recording attendance, especially when people bring cards of absent members on Communion Sunday. Any Session that really wishes to keep an accurate attendance, and they should, should be able to work out satisfactorily some way for their Congregation. In the Appendix (to this book) is given an example of a card that may be printed at modest cost on which is printed a minimum of instruction. The card is used only for the Sunday indicated. This saves the annoyance of listening to people who say, “Oh, I have a card, I have lots of them”. Where it must be mailed an envelope with window may be used, and this saves addressing. Sessions may find this sample card worth studying; it does make for better and easier work. Each Elder should keep an attendance of communicants in his district, and the Session keeps the complete attendance lists.

If the Communion Cards cannot be delivered each time by the Elder, they should be mailed in good time. Hurried delivery on a Saturday night, especially by a junior member of the Elder's family (which is frequently known) is not in the dignity of the Church. If such things have to be done in some emergency, they should be done with an explanation and an apology.

The practice of the Church, and the foregoing remarks, imply that the delivery of Communion Cards is one of the things that must be done. There is no obligation on the part of a Session to deliver Communion Cards at all. As already indicated, the metal tokens were given and received at the Preparatory Service. It was then unthinkable that a communicant would expect an Elder to call with a token. The Anglican Book of Common Prayer still requires intending communicants to "signify their names to the Curate, at least some time the day before," but Anglican priests tell the author it is not followed in this generation. At the moment of writing, the Canadian revision of the Anglican Book is not available to see if this line is still in. We ourselves have become so concerned with "a good Communion attendance" that we almost beseech people to come and "do their minimum duty."

The result is what might be expected, and we have only ourselves to blame for it. Certain types of people demand the visit of an Elder as a right due them, failing which they will not attend Communion. They become quite patronizing about the whole matter. There are others, happily, whose devotion to Jesus Christ, brings them automatically to all services. Is it not a strange thing that some people must be "reminded" in their homes

that Communion Sunday is near, instead of learning it in the service on Sundays preceding Communion? The element of discipline in the Communion Card has passed out of sight. It is likely that the delivery of Communion Cards began as an occasion for the Elder to visit, in courtesy taking the cards. The courtesy is now presumed upon, and becomes a demand. The delivery of Communion Cards may also have begun in an attempt to overcome the poor attendances at Preparatory Services.

The question of the Preparatory Service is one of concern. Honour is due those Sessions that continue them, despite small attendances, knowing they are one of the distinctive things in the Presbyterian faith. The compromise—if one can call it that—of having the "Preparatory Service" on the Sunday preceding Communion instead of a week-day evening is an open confession that all is not well. The Presbyterian year is not characterized by holy days of obligation such as saints' days. The observance of a Preparatory Service on a week-day is a needed discipline wherein whatever sacrifice is made by giving that evening to the Lord is one for which we may be grateful. The poor attendance is part of the spiritual doldrums in which this generation finds itself. It is reflected elsewhere, for instance in the visit of the Moderator of a General Assembly. Can any significant number of Congregations report a good attendance at a week-day service of worship when a Moderator speaks, or even at an evening service on Sunday when he visits? The records are against it for years. There lies in all of this a matter of concern for Sessions.

### **The Church School**

The Church School is "under the care and subject to the direction of the Session", which comes as a surprise to some Elders. To feed the lambs was one of the last injunctions of our Lord, and if the Session can do nothing else in its spiritual responsibilities it should do that. The fact is, that for many years the Church Schools (Sunday Schools) of the Presbyterian Church in Canada gave more money to the Budget of the Church, some years four times as much, as the Church gave to its Board of Christian Education! The lambs were feeding the shepherds! For a Church School to be expected to finance itself through its own little offerings, and to carry on without the friendly, visible interest of the Session is a shame. To mention it in these words should be enough to start action to cure the intolerable situation of things in some Congregations.

Christian Education has become a field of intense study in our Church. The pedagogical and theological skills of experts have been summoned and used for the preparation of our lesson materials and to give guidance generally to the youth of our Church. The Board of Christian Education, either directly or through its Presbytery's committee stands ready to assist the local Church. The processes of education go beyond the youth of the Church; they extend to guidance for "Couple's Clubs", for "Presbyterian Men", and the Committee on the Laity is working in the same direction that by education the whole life of the Church may be quickened. Guidance is available for Adult Bible

Study groups. The Board of Evangelism and Social Action has many study pamphlets available on questions of the day.

All of these things are the direct responsibility of the Session to foster in the local Church. Need more be said?

### **Stewardship and Budget**

"Stewardship and Budget" is a phrase that has become common amongst us, replacing the phrase of the turn of the century which was "the schemes of the Church." The present phrase is full of meaning. By "stewardship" we mean our discharge of the trust laid upon us by the Lord for all that we are and have—character, time, talents, and means—exercised in the fullness of Christian vision. By "budget" we mean those givings through which the work of the whole Church is supported beyond the bounds of the local Congregation.

This conception of stewardship and budget has risen sharply in our day because of the needs of the Church, the nature of the society and world in which we live, and because of our sharpened insight of Biblical teaching. There were always those who had this wide vision; nowadays more have it, and all Congregations should have it. The missionary activities of the Church, at home and overseas, the work of Christian education, and the responsibilities for "social action" are large demands upon the Budget of the Church.

These things were practically unknown in the days of the Reformation. Churches were largely national Churches, and the clergy were supported by the government or by endowments, and the visible fabric of the Churches was usually cared for by local patrons. Sunday Schools did not come in until the middle 1700's. Missionary activities overseas were few or non-existing. The offerings in the Churches were for the poor. The First Prayer Book of Edward VI (1549) directed that offerings were to be placed in the "pore-men's boxes." There was no dedication of the offering. The General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, 1648, made this enactment, "The Assembly understanding that the collections for the poor in some Kirks in the Country are taken in time of Divine Service, which being a very great and unseemly disturbance of Divine Worship. Do therefore hereby inhibit and discharge the same. And ordain that the Minister and Session appoint some other way and time for receiving the said collections." This was quite in line with the Directory of Public Worship, attached to the Westminster Confession of Faith, in which the instruction is given that the offering was to be taken so as not to interfere with the worship!

This has all been changed. The Church has begun to take Jesus Christ seriously when He said that we should go into all the world and preach the Gospel. For centuries we were just following our kin-folk here and there. He said we should feed the lambs. He said we were one in Him. We are more aware now of the need for Christian education, more aware that oneness has no geographical limits. We are a family in the local Church,

but we are also a family scattered to the four winds of heaven, and we have a family responsibility.

Among the Session's duties is that of seeing to the Budget and special financial needs of the Church (Sections 109 (c) and 111 (b) ). There is frequently tension between the Board of Managers and the Session on financial matters, and the Session takes the easy way out by doing nothing about the Budget—just leaving it to the casual impulses of people as they look at the "red side" of their duplex envelopes. Boards have been known to request Sessions not to admit new members unless they received a guarantee of financial support because the addition of members meant "a larger assessment by the Presbytery"!

Now let us look at this idea of giving. It is true that giving to the Lord is first of all a matter of the intention of the giver. It may be thought of as given to the Lord even though every cent of it really comes back to the giver in the good things of the local Church if he has given only to the local Church. But there is another side to this. There are many who hold that when we give only to the local Church, we do not really give to the Lord; we give to ourselves, for it comes back to us in the value of the local Church. Even when we give to the Budget, it is contended, much comes back to us in administration of the Church nationally, in the training of Ministers, and so on. There is also this to be considered, that there can be a true tension between local needs and national needs. The local needs may be very large, and there are not just enough money potentialities to take a proportionate share of the national (Budget) needs. Yet the contrast between neighbouring Congregations—equal so far as the eye can see—is often great; one Congregation handles both local and national commendably, and the other emphasizes the local, and has a hard time with it, and does little with the national. The fault, of course, lies in the conception of what stewardship means. If the idea is confined to money it becomes narrow; if it is extended to all that we are and have, glorious things can happen. Perhaps this very general outline will stir thought and discussion.

There is a popular belief that some things are "spiritual" and others are "temporal", and they must be kept apart. In Presbyterian teaching, the spiritual view is taken of all things. "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10: 31.) In terms of function, the Book of Forms provides that certain matters be for the Board and others for the Session. It provides that money matters for missions is the duty of the Session. Read 111 (b) again. The understanding of this, and mutual conferences of Board and Session, will eliminate or at least reduce some of the tensions that have been known.

The Elder must not let the idea get into his head that because he is an Elder he has now nothing to do with money, that somehow it is not "spiritual," and he is supposed to be helping look after the "spiritual." Money is spiritual, and if the Church ignores that there will be no place to exercise the virtues of what is thought to be truly "spiritual." Jesus said that where two or three are gathered together in His Name, He is there in the midst of them (Matthew 18: 20.) But where are they to gather? Places to gather cost money. He Himself provided an Upper Room for the Last Supper, and two of His men

went to see about it. Paul has a neat argument in 1 Corinthians 15 (see verse 46 especially) concerning the linking of the natural and the spiritual, and it is worthy pondering in this connection. In everything we are trustees for the Lord: we are stewards.

The author does not wish to go fully into the debate about tithes, that we should give one-tenth of our income to the Lord. The Old Testament tithe paid for many things now cared for by our civil government, and not cared for by the Church. A tithe does not at all represent the Christian duty of a person without family responsibilities and whose income is into the thousands a year. Nor does the tithe represent the responsibility of an aged person whose only income is the security pension—yet many tithers are found among these. These remarks are not to set aside the thought of percentage giving, which is really enjoined upon us in 1 Corinthians 16: 2, but to direct wider considerations. An intensive study of 2 Corinthians, chapters 8 and 9, will give the heart of Christian doctrine on giving.

Let it be emphasized again that money is just a part of our giving. We give ourselves first to the Lord.

Our Church offices give tremendous assistance in these matters with literature, advice and personal help. The Sector Projects and the Every-Person Canvass are means whereby people may be instructed in their duty and receive a blessing. Misers are never happy and the full Christian life is the life that gives. Presbyteries have responsibilities in stewardship and budget needs, but often in their attempts to reach into the Congregations with necessary inspiration and instruction, they are blocked at the level of the Session. A good thing to watch in Session, a personal test, when this subject comes up, is the first thought that comes to mind. Is it "How can we get out of it?" or is it "How can we get into it?"

### **The Struggle for Power**

In the Westminster Confession (Chapter 25) we read that Churches may degenerate as to become no Churches of Christ, but synagogues of Satan. The same can apply to single congregations in which, though there are faithful, devout, humble people, the congregation is nevertheless dominated by an individual or individuals, a group or groups against whom the quiet, peace-loving elements are powerless. This is a thing sad beyond words, and it is dealt with here because it is an occasional reality.

Part of a trouble like this is occasionally imputed to the disruption of 1925 when some congregations thereafter assumed more authority than allowed by the law of the Church. But these situations were known long before 1925. Most of them are traceable to the depravity of the human heart in which are harboured the seven deadly sins— pride, envy, sloth, intemperance, avarice, ire and lust, untouched by the grace of God.

The diagnosis is usually a struggle for power. It may be exercised with discretion, when, for example, the Session has made an unwise decision. The Session's direction is

quietly vetoed, ignored, or otherwise made ineffective. At other times the opposition is blatant and peremptory, and the Session is told in as many words, "Your job is to look after the Communion; the people will decide what else is to be done." "The people", of course, are these few, and by hook or crook they get their way.

No advice can be given that will meet every situation. There are, however, two chief directions in which action can be taken. One is an appeal to the Presbytery for a visitation. If the Presbytery has courage to tackle the problem—some Presbyteries content themselves with saying, after a show of investigation, "seek the peace of Zion"—much may be accomplished. Even a full investigation by Presbytery may not produce the truth as no one will say before the Presbytery representatives just what the root trouble is. There is an old jest that Presbyterians always hold two meetings: one in the Church where few speak, and cautiously, and the other outside on the walks where everybody speaks. An eavesdropper outside, if he is able to hear what a group trusting one another is saying, will find the truth. A Presbytery's committee may be sometimes unable to learn what everybody in the community knows, and a single member of the committee, staying in the community for a couple of days, playing the part of a private detective, would find the complete story without difficulty.

The other is for the Session to grasp the nettle and malice a "stand or fall" action. Such an action should be clear in its issue, and the issue is, "Does the Session govern the Congregation?" The point therefore becomes not whether the Session's action was wise or unwise, but whether or not it had the right to take it. Appeal against a Session's action is to Presbytery, not to the Congregation. Troublemakers appeal to the Congregation with a flurry about "democracy" and the "rights of the people."

There can be no peace unless there is order. This authority of Session, where there is a struggle for power, must be exercised in the light of all that is said in these pages concerning patience, kindness, and humility—but the authority must be exercised. There was a phrase of the Ecumenical Movement of this generation calling the Church to its duty in these words, "Let the Church be the Church." It may be paraphrased for the Session, "Let the Session be the Session."

Sessions finding themselves somewhere in the dark clouds of the struggle for power will have to find their own answer. They may wait and hope that virtue will triumph; they may appeal to Presbytery; they may clear the atmosphere by a storm. The risks and the agonies are great no matter what course is taken.

### **The Minister is not a hireling**

The Minister is not a hireling of the Congregation. He is not hired, as an employee is hired, nor can he be fired. He is called. The amount of his stipend is determined by the Congregation and Presbytery. It is called a "stipend" and not "wages" or a "salary" because it is the income out of which he supports himself and his family, and pays the expenses of doing his work. This work is done, not at the direction of those

who pay it (as if he were an employee), but at the direction of the Presbytery, within his own judgment of conscience and the wont and usage of the Presbyterian Church. The Call which he receives from a Congregation makes no mention of the amount of the stipend; it says that "We (office-bearers and members) ... further engage to contribute to your suitable maintenance, as God may prosper us ..." The Presbytery spells this out in the "Guarantee for Minister's Stipend" (Appendices 1: 10). A copy of this comes to the Minister, but when a Congregation calls a Minister the amount of his stipend is determined before the Congregation chooses who the Minister will be. The Minister is not permitted to do any bargaining. All of this is far from the master and servant or the employer and employee relationship. One no more hires a Minister than one hires a wife or a husband. The pastoral tie between a Minister and his Congregation is dissolved by an act of the Presbytery, not an act of the Congregation. Parallels, to use as illustrations, are difficult to find, but one may consider the physician-patient relationship. The patient does not "hire" a physician, though he pays him. The patient gives consent to what may be done in medicine or surgery, but does not determine what may be done. A Minister, by the nature of his call and the authority of his induction, is free from congregational control or the control of parties within the Congregation. The "Guarantee for Stipend" is a legal contract and is enforceable in law, as an occasional Congregation has discovered when it has endeavoured to compel a Minister to resign by reducing its givings. In older days many parishes were endowed and the people could not use money as a weapon against an unpopular Minister. In these days almost all of our Churches are on the basis of voluntary givings, and money can be a weapon. The Presbytery maintains the ancient relationship of pastor and people in the procedure of a Call and the ministry that follows the Call. A Minister is servant of all, but calls no man his master. A few minutes thought on these considerations will show the wisdom of them. See I Peter 5: 1—5.

### **And Some Other Details**

No Elder should think that the formal outlines of the Book of Forms exhaust what he may do. Times change, and there is freedom for us to meet those changes. For example, the introduction of projection lanterns and lessons illustrated by slides was often opposed by Elders on the ground that they were taught without newfangled things and they saw no reason why children should now have them. An Elder with a negative attitude may become a liability to the Session. Every attitude should be positive. Part of the reason for this Manual is to introduce Elders to the tradition and genius of the Church that they may follow in that freedom to new glories. A Session that is active may spend much time in discussing ideas that seem to be fantastic, and the good Elder soon learns not to be disturbed if some plan he thinks to be good is turned down. If one out of three ideas comes into some workable form the percentage is a high one!

One of the neglected fields of action in the Session is that in the interests of "The Presbyterian Record". The Every Home Plan, wherein the Congregation subscribes for every home in the Congregation, has been commended by Assembly, and Congregations that have adopted it find its benefits in quickened interest, better givings, and a greater sense of solidarity with the whole Church, to mention but three results. In the world of

religious journalism "The Presbyterian Record" is acknowledged by all experts to be one of the world's top publications. It seems as if the prophet again is not without honour, save in his own country, and because "The Record" is so modest in its price may be another reason that Sessions neglect it. But "The Record" has honour in its own country, as indicated by the high circulation in comparison to the number of families in the whole Church. The Session that furthers the interest of "The Record" serves itself.

The question of the number of men that should be on the Session, and their ages, comes up frequently. The Church does not think that the Eldership should be restricted to men of older years. The minimum age is twenty-one years, Section 106 (a). Younger men will be more active and may do their district work better, but this is not necessarily so; they may lack staying power.

As to the number of Elders, the danger rises after the election. A Session feels there should be more Elders, and therefore calls for the election of, say, six. Immediately the six are inducted it is found that six or more of the older men insist on being relieved of their duties in their districts, and the Session winds up exactly in the same position, but with more men ready to talk than to act. Such a Session has betrayed itself and needs a reformation. To bring in a large number of new men at one time is a mistake. They cannot easily be absorbed into the Session, and the result may be a break in the life of the Session which may have disturbing results in the Congregation. Elders have a tendency to drop out of activities when a Minister moves, and this forces the new Minister into an uncomfortable position. The work of an Elder is not so strenuous that an aged man, up and about, cannot do his part, especially when the load is lightened by the addition of younger men. Actually the modern Elder has lighter work than his brother of Reformation times. The Scottish Elder of the Reformation had the responsibilities of schools, of public relief, and of local discipline. Is there really any excuse for so large a percentage of so many Sessions being so inactive? The Bible warns us against being weary in well doing (Galatians 6: 9), and members of Session are not exempt from Scriptural injunctions.

A Congregation's life is often a delicately balanced one, and the Session must be sensitive to that life. The familiar round of services and meetings is only the visible framework through which the life of the Spirit is nourished within us, and no one of us must forget the great realities of grace that come to us. The abiding miracle is that Jesus is Emmanuel—God with us.

An Elder must be alert and willing, constantly seeking to glorify God. Such a positive attitude, aware of the miracles of grace, will bring results in the Session and Congregation, and happiness to himself.

Now that we have commented upon some of the details of the Elders' work and position, it would be good to read again all of Chapter 3 in the Book of Forms. Then the Supplement to Chapter 3, dealing with the Congregation and the Board of Managers, should be read with equal care. Many of the questions that an Elder may be asked in his visiting will be answered from the Supplement, such as, What really are the obligations

of Presbyterians? What about the property of the Church? Who can vote, and on what at annual meetings? Can special meetings of the Congregation be called? How? Who can be members of the Board?

Finally, for this chapter, we repeat its theme. The Eldership of the Church means the governing of the Church. It is a distinctive thing in our Church. The well-being of your Congregation depends immensely on you and your fellow Elders. Governing does not mean undue interference, but overseeing. The word "Elder" implies a person who has wisdom. The words of the Call extended to a Minister have the phrase . . . "being satisfied . . . of the prudence . . ." Prudence is wisdom in action, and prudence is required of the Minister as a Teaching Elder. It is good also for the Ruling Elder to possess it.

# Chapter 11

## The Office of the Elder and the Communion Service

A problem that has been with Presbyterian Churches ever since the time of the Westminster Confession of Faith (middle 1600's) may be stated in this way, "Should the Session be constituted for Communion?" The question is evidently one of consequence to many Ministers and Elders for no question has been asked this author, as a Clerk of Assembly, as frequently as this. The same problem may be stated in another question, "Should Ruling Elders be ordained with the laying On of hands?" or, "Should Elders be taken with the Minister for Communion with shut-in people?" or, "Is the difference between a Ruling Elder and a Minister simply one of function, or what is it?"

The problem is, What is the nature of the office of the Ruling Elder?

This chapter will discuss the question with theological and historical detail, for there is no other way to deal with it.

A Committee of the Pan-Presbyterian Council reported on this subject in 1884 and stated there were three theories:

(1) While the New Testament recognized but one order of Presbyter, there are two classes or degrees in it, viz: Teaching Elders and Ruling Elders.

(2) There is no warrant in Scripture for the office of the Eldership now existing. Elders are not Presbyters.

(3) In all things except training and the consequence of training, the Elder is the same as the Minister, that is, Overseer, Bishop, Presbyter and Elder (The wording of this paragraph is from Barr, **The United Free Church of Scotland**).

Theory (2) is what we call the "lay theory". Theory (3) is what we call the "presbyter theory". There is much overlapping among all three in the many authors discussing the points.

The question has been complicated for us by the rubrics in the Canadian Book of Common Order. (A rubric is a direction, so called because at one time rubrics were printed in part or entirely in red.) In the Communion Order of both 1922 and 1948 in the Book of Common Order we read, "The Session having been previously constituted in the vestry, the Elders shall take their seats about the Communion Table." In the 1948 Book, under the Section "An Order for the Ordination or Admission of Elders," there is a "Directory Note" at the end and this concludes. . . "In the custom of this Church, while ordination to the ministry has been by prayer and the laying on of hands, ordination to the eldership has been generally by prayer alone. There is, however, no ground in principle for this distinction." Here ordinations of Ministers and Elders are declared explicitly to

be of the same nature, although it does not follow Ministers and Elders are of the same order. In other words, as far as this goes, we have Theory (1).

The Book of Common Order is commended by Assembly for voluntary use; it does not carry the weight of Church law; it is permissive. Yet this Book is quoted by other Churches as being the doctrinal attitude of our Church, and we must admit that when a rubric is placed in our Book of Common Order it carries an uncommon measure of sanction with it.

There are opinions in the Canadian Church contrary to the implications of these rubrics. There is an untold number of Sessions not constituted for Communion. The rubrics are often challenged in the many friendly discussions on this question. In short, the "lay theory" is held. On the other hand, it has been called to the author's attention more than once that Elders are being ordained by the laying on of hands and being taught that the only difference between them and their Minister is one of function. That is of what they are specifically doing in the Church in contrast to what the Minister is doing in a full-time calling.

In the Book of Common Order of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. (now the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.), the laying on of hands for the ordination of Elders is optional. Hodge states this in **What is Presbyterian Law**, page 283. On page 93 Hodge says that the pastor, with an elder, may administer the sacrament to the sick and . . . "a record of the fact must be entered on the minutes of the Session." The practice of the United Free Church of Scotland is indicated in the requirement that a quorum of Session must be present for Communion, either in the church or in a home. In the Presbyterian Church in Ireland it is the Presbytery that ordains Elders, and ordination is with the laying on of hands of both Ministers and Ruling Elders, that is, of all the Presbytery. Elsewhere, ordination of Elders is by the laying on of hands of the Minister alone, or by the laying on of hands of the local Session, which of course includes the Minister. These examples are given, and many others could be given, to show the wide variation in practice for the ordination of Elders and for the place of the Session at Communion.

In the Church of Scotland it was not until 1931 that any official utterance was made by an Assembly that Elders were present at the Table and assisted the Minister in the distribution of the Bread and Wine, despite the fact that for many generations they had done so. Professor Henderson in **The Scottish Ruling Elder** quotes Mair's **Digest** (1887) of an Act of Assembly, 187B, as follows: "The administration is not by the Kirk Session but by the minister. Elders officiate at the administration as individuals co-operating with him. To constitute a meeting of Session before the day of Communion or on the morning of it and imagine it sitting till all the relative services are over is indefensible "

Many in Canada will take issue with this statement. It is argued, for example, that it would be a strange thing for the Session to arrange for the Sacrament, to take in the Bread and Wine (the "Greater Entry") and not be considered a Session but to be

considered as they enter simply the representatives of the people who, in the ancient Church, brought these things themselves. Or, as the Elders receive the Communion Cards at the door, are they receiving them as individuals or as a Session? Can they properly receive them as individuals?

Those who subscribe to the "presbyter" theory of the Eldership to any degree will hold that the Minister and the Ruling Elder are both presbyters. They may not go to the extent of saying there is only one ordination, or that the difference is just one of function. But they will insist that the Ruling Elder is entitled to be called a presbyter— truth in his local Church and in the Presbytery. Principal Lindsay, **The Church and the Ministry in the Early Centuries**, pages 154 and 155, writes . . . "during the last decades of the first century each Christian congregation had for its office-bearers a body of deacons and a body of elders—whether separated into two colleges or forming one must remain unknown—and that the elders took the "oversight" while the deacons performed the "subordinate services." These constituted the local ministry of each Christian Church . . . These men watched over the lives and behaviour of the members of the community . . . and in the absence of members of the prophetic ministry they presided over the public worship, especially over the Holy Supper." McKerrow, **The Office of the Ruling Elder** (1846), Chapter 4, holds, however, that the distinction between the ruling elder and the teaching elder, both being presbyters, is clearly drawn in the New Testament. And later cites Church fathers through to the time of Jerome (4th century) as showing presbyters ruling and presbyters teaching.

The practice of the Church of Scotland is definite. Cox, **Practice and Procedure in the Church of Scotland**, writes of the Kirk Session, page 101 (1934 edition), "All are elders—ministers being teaching or preaching as well as ruling elders, and the others "ruling elders" only . . . Ruling elders in the Presbytery . . . do not lay on hands at the ordination of a minister . . . for this is outside of ruling; but they share in every step thereto." Page 107: "The Lord's Supper is a ministerial act, and the Kirk Session does not, accordingly, require to be constituted, unless it be necessary to hold a meeting for the admission of members or other business." Other eminent scholars, such as the late Prof. James Moffatt, held that only the Minister may be called a presbyter. (The cautious choice of words runs almost all through this controversy: our Book of Forms avoids calling a Ruling Elder a presbyter.)

In the area of whether or not the Session should be constituted, Dr. T. Wardlaw Taylor is specific. **The Ruling Elder, His Office and Duties**, pages 40 and 41, says, ". . . the Session, as a Session, has no part in the celebration of Communion. It is a common mistake, due to a misapprehension of the functions of the eldership, to constitute the Session before the service and to adjourn formally after the congregation has been dismissed... Around the table of the Lord, men and women meet as members of the mystical body of Christ, and not as office-bearers and members of an ecclesiastical organization."

The Westminster Assembly is one of the authorities to which those leaning to the "lay theory" appeal. The Westminster Assembly resisted the appeal of the Scottish

commissioners, especially that of George Gillespie, concerning the nature of the Eldership. The decision is on the side of the "lay theory". In the "Form of Church Government" under "Other Church Governors" we read, "As there were in the Jewish Church elders of the people joined with the priests . . . so Christ, who hath instituted government, and governors ecclesiastical in the church, hath furnished some in his church . . . who are to join with the minister in the government of the Church. Which officers reformed churches commonly call Elders." It is to be noted that the Westminster Assembly definitely refrained from terming them "Ruling Elders"; it just said they were commonly called that. In other sections of the Form of Church Government the phrase "preaching presbyters" is used of Ministers, but this is not to imply there are presbyters who do not preach, or implying there are Ruling Elders who are presbyters. We speak of "ruling elders," but there are no elders who do not rule. The weight of the Westminster Assembly was against the Scottish commissioners in their contention that the office of the ruling elder was divinely authorized, an essential part of Church government, and contained in the word 'presbyter'. This, admittedly, is not clear in the documents by themselves but is entirely clear in the records of the era.

So much of our trouble comes from making our modern word equal the ancient word, or in making wrong but apparently logical deductions. A king today is not much like the king of ancient times, but we retain the word and find the significant parallels. So with the word 'elder' or 'bishop,' and we are searching for the underlying principles.

The interpretation of the Westminster Assembly was a clear break with Calvin's interpretation of 1 Timothy 5: 17. This verse, on which we shall linger for a few moments, reads, "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine." It is easy to see here a distinction between Elders who rule, and Elders who labour in the word, that is, who are preachers. Calvin saw it that way, although the quarrel between the "lay" and "presbyter" theories came later. Now, "a position that has only one text to support it will be found to have not even that text" is an axiom in interpretation. But this is not quite the case here: Calvin was eager to establish the authority of the office, linked with the authority of the Minister, and he sees them here together. He also appeals to 1 Corinthians 12: 28 and Romans 12: 5-8. Around 1 Timothy 5: 17 much debate has raged; it is used by parties of both extremes. Calvin does not call the Ruling Elder a presbyter, however; see the **Institutes** IV: 4: 2, IV: 3: 8.

The use of the word 'presbyter' is almost perilous: to those outside the Presbyterian Church it invariably indicates a minister or a priest, while the term 'ruling elder' is distinctly a Presbyterian term. Those who hold to the "presbyter theory" will use it. The use of the phrase, "ruling elders and teaching elders," makes fairly common ground.

Henderson, **The Scottish Ruling Elder**, chapter 6, has an excellent discussion of the whole controversy. In addition to McKerrow and Lindsay, previously quoted, Lorimer, **Eldership of the Church of Scotland** (1841) is well worth reading.

At the risk of being more wearisome, we shall have to drive more deeply into the problem and see that the whole idea of ordination is basic to these theories. If ordination is just a recognition of office or work (which is not Presbyterian doctrine) then much of what is written here will seem trifling to the average reader, just a striving after consistency. Principal Denney (**Letters**, pages 191—193), was in favour of "ordaining" Sunday School teachers. At the opposite extreme are those to whom ordination is automatically a Divine conveyance of grace (as opposed to the orderly recognition of grace to be given or already given and manifested). Such a doctrine cannot be distinguished from the Anglo-Catholic or the Roman Catholic. The whole doctrine is too detailed for these pages, but must be mentioned in the author's opinion that it is basic to our understanding of the nature of the Elder's office.

To put it in another fashion, we must avoid dropping into the chasm of considering there are two classes in the Church, the clergy and the laity, whatever our thought of the Eldership and ordination may be. On this let Dr. Taylor speak, (*The Ruling Elder*, page 23), "Only in a very loose and popular way may any . . . speak of clergy and laity . . . While, however, . . . (the branches of the Reformed Church) . . . do not allow the ministry to be a separate order in the Church, they do teach, in evangelical form, what others call "the grace of orders." . . . In other words, just as "by the blessing of Christ and the working of the Holy Spirit" the sacraments become "effectual means of salvation," so the ministry. Our word "laity" comes from the Greek, "laos", which means "people", and all of us are the "laos" of God.

It is the fact that we are, all of us, the people of God, that gives us a common ground in the matters of this chapter. Whether or not the Session should be constituted for Communion, and whether or not one of three theories named is right to the exclusion of the others, are really small considerations in contrast to the fact that we gather together about the Lord's Table. It is His Table, not ours. He stands ready to do what the Sacrament shows, regardless of what we may consider the precise function of the Elder to be. All of us have need of the saving grace that is symbolized and made available in faith. We witness in the Communion Service to the Gospel truth that we are His and He is ours. We share equally in the Communion. As the Shorter Catechism puts it, "worthy receivers are, not after a corporal and carnal manner, but by faith, made partakers of His body and blood, with all His benefits, to their spiritual nourishment, and growth in grace." These words apply to all without distinction of Minister, Elder and Congregation. The supreme and glorious thing is not that we are this or that in His Church, but that He is with us, and as a worshipping and obedient company we do this in remembrance of Him.

Now, after sketching the background, what shall we say concerning the Canadian Church?

We must say, in common with all branches of the Reformed Church, that Christ rules in His Church. The phrase "the only King and Head of the Church" is not poetic fancy; it represents as great a reality as the sunshine of heaven. He speaks through the declaring of His Word, and through the grace of the Sacraments. With that ministry,

which rightly the Reformed Churches exalt as an office, the office of the Elder (however it may be defined) is joined for the gracious rule of Jesus Christ.

In particular for the Canadian scene, we must perceive that the law, practice and procedure of the Presbyterian Church in Canada reflect the law, practice and procedure of the many groups that made the Church in 1875. Diversities were found, and a way of working was discovered. Differences once thought to be important are sometimes now only historical curiosities. Things for which our fathers died over we may just find ourselves yawning over. It may be, in the Canadian Church, in the matter of the Eldership, we have a middle way, a compromise. Compromise is not necessarily an evil thing. As Edmund Burke said in 1775, "All government,—indeed every human benefit and enjoyment, every virtue and every prudent act, —is founded on compromise and barter." It cannot be said that our Church holds to either extreme of the "lay" or the "presbyter" theory of the Eldership. The Ruling Elder is stated to be a Ruling Elder, not one "commonly known" as such. He is ordained by the law of the Church, not just admitted, but the laying on of hands is not required for his ordination. The Book of Forms does not refer to him as a presbyter, but when he becomes a representative elder he is a member of the Presbytery, of equal vote and voice with his Minister. He becomes a Ruling Elder on election of his Congregation, but only if the Session approves, and he is then not responsible to the Congregation except in a spiritual sense. He may be removed from office, but like the Minister only by lawful discipline of the Church, not by a popular vote. His function is declared to be spiritual, as is the Minister's.

If the Ruling Elder becomes a Minister, he is ordained as a Minister. In that ordination, the Ruling Elders do not lay on hands, but where they are members of the Presbytery they have their share in preparing for the ordination. The Ruling Elder does not administer sacraments, but he helps arrange for them. His Minister is also a Ruling Elder.

The Ruling Elder shares with the Teaching Elder certain functions. In Canada, for instance, the Session determines the order of worship, in the manner discussed in the previous chapter. But the Ruling Elder has no control over the pulpit, as to what is said or how long is taken to say it. He can move against his Minister only by complaint to the Presbytery; he himself may be proceeded against for fault in his own Session. His rights as a communicant and as an Elder are guarded by the law of the Church. He has no authority in himself; his authority comes only from the Session or through the Session. Yet he is looked upon by the people both as one of themselves and as one who is set aside by his ordination. He shares matters of discipline in the Session, or from the Session. His calling is a noble one as a governor of the Church. In that calling, as a member of Session, he finds his Minister a fellow Ruling Elder.

Our Canadian Church does not pronounce upon several questions that lie in this whole problem of the nature of the Elder's office. The permissive element is large. There are, for instance, Ministers who take Elders with them for Communion with the sick and the shut-in. It is done, not to pronounce on whether or not the Session should be constituted, but by the presence and participation of Elders to make a witness to the

fellowship of the Congregation. There are others who think that the recognition of the Session as a Session at Communion is a restraint upon any sacerdotal, priestly tendencies in the Church. The age-old fear of the pretensions of priests is still with us. A constituted Session makes visible that although the act of dispensing Communion is plainly ministerial, it is being done by direction of the competent authority, which is the Session.

Another example of the permissive is found in the order in which the Bread and the Wine are received. The 1922 Book of Common Order has a rubric on this which reads, "all partaking in the order appointed by the Session." The 1948 Book repeats this and adds as a footnote, "In the practice of the Church, commonly distribution has been made first to the congregation, second by the Ministers to the Elders, and finally by a member of the Session to the Minister." This gives a nudge towards a practice which has grown up and which cannot be held to be apostolic. The Greeks did not have our sense of modesty; a Greek would say "I and my brother", not "My brother and I." Other examples of the permissive could be cited. In permitting degrees of latitude within our Church which has so many backgrounds and traditions, there may be much wisdom.

The Church, through its usual channel of overture or work by some committee, such as the Articles of Faith Committee, may proceed to a definite statement on the nature of ordination and the nature of the Elder's office. The statement, if made, will be of tremendous interest to all branches of the Reformed faith for they are aware of the same problems.

It may be said in conclusion to this chapter, that these branches are agreed that Jesus Christ truly rules in His Church. They are agreed that the office of the Ruling Elder—however it may be defined—is apostolic; that it disappeared as an election of the people with the rise of the presbyter-minister as a priest; that it was happily restored at the Reformation and given its direction by John Calvin, and it is today an office in the Church without which Presbyterianism would lose one of its most outstanding characteristics and strengths.

## Chapter 12

### The Elder and his Minister

The relationship between the Elder and his Minister is a unique one. They have a relationship as elders, one a teaching and ruling elder and the other a ruling elder. They are bound by the same creed; they serve the same Church, and sit side by side in every court of the Church. Wherever either may go he will meet men like himself. The bond is such that there is none closer in all the associations in which men, outside of family relationships, enter into with one another.

It is a touching scene in the Acts of the Apostles (20: 17-38) where Paul spoke to the Ephesian Elders for the last time. It was one of those rare occasions when the usual reserves of soul were broken. The mutual, though silent, affection of Ministers and Elders is very strong. When, as we do occasionally find it, that affection ceases and mutual respect is lost, we have one of the sadder things in the Church and it is of very bad consequences in the life of the Congregation. The usual mutual affection is perhaps indicated by the long-standing practice of most Ministers who address their Elders by their Christian names. The respect is shown in the other direction in that the Elder, though the Minister may be a very young man, rarely addresses him by his Christian name. This author holds that it is an error for a Minister to encourage people to address him or his wife by the Christian name, but bows to those Ministers who think otherwise.

To address a Minister as "Reverend" is wrong linguistically. This "Reverend" is commonly found in the United States and the Province of Quebec, and is growing elsewhere. The practice probably comes from a feeling that respect should always be paid to the office— "honouring the cloth" we used to call it. Dutch Presbyterians, and some others, use the title "Pastor" as a form of personal address. The word 'padre' should be reserved for men who have been or are chaplains in Her Majesty's Forces; the word 'padre' comes by way of India from the Portuguese language, and has antecedents in other languages. It means 'father.' Presbyterian Ministers in Canada are addressed as 'Mr.' or 'Doctor,' should they hold a doctorate, and either is addressed as 'Moderator' should he be in the Chair of a Court.

The title 'Doctor' as a form of address to those in the healing professions, such as medicine or dentistry, is a comparatively late development in language. It is entirely correct, of course. The public is becoming more aware of the word as applied to Doctors of Philosophy, Science and the like, due to the great growth of the universities and the increase in the number of men possessing these degrees. The Church's use of the word pre-dates the Reformation. (See "The Form of Church Government", 16451, under the paragraphs "Teacher or Doctor.") The word means "teacher", from the Latin, "doceo." When Jesus was found, as a boy, "sitting in the midst of the doctors" of the Temple (Luke 2: 46), these doctors were not medical men, but teachers. Some of our Ministers are Doctors of Philosophy, or holders of other doctorates which have been obtained by study and examination. The degree of Doctor of Divinity is conferred by our Colleges for

outstanding service to or eminence in the Church, given to Ministers of our own or other Churches. No College, in Canada at least, can be said to be prodigal in its giving of the D.D. degree.

The conferring of this degree, or any doctorate, entitles the holder of it to use it and to be addressed as "Doctor." This is the usage of the Church. There are other Presbyterian Churches where by custom it is noted in the official records of those Churches, but rarely used by the holders of the degree. The every-day using of the degree may be passing away. In England, for a long time, eminent surgeons have been addressed as 'Mr.' The late Sidney Smith, President of the University of Toronto, and afterwards a cabinet member of the Dominion Government, held many doctorates. In Parliament and in the daily press, as a Minister of the Government, he was known as Mr. Smith. The practice of Parliament, however, is not uniform in this as medical men, members of Parliament, appear still to be addressed 'Doctor'. What the tendency will be in the Presbyterian Church in Canada, concerning its doctors, will be seen only as time goes by.

The prefix 'Reverend' is a custom only, and for writing and for formal occasions. "Reverend Jones" is bad English. It should be "Reverend Mr. Jones" or "Reverend A. B. Jones." To be completely formal, it is "The Reverend Mr. Jones" or "The Reverend A. B. Jones." 'Reverend' is an adjective, and is used like 'Honourable' or 'Right Honourable' in Parliament. One does not say "Right Honourable Diefenbaker," but "The Right Honourable Mr. Diefenbaker." We may as well be correct in these things. In the minutes of Church courts, the word 'Reverend' is not to be used at all, although many courts do use it. The minutes should run, "Drs. A. B. C. . . , Messrs. D. E. F...., Ministers." The phrase "Reverends A. B. C..." is likewise wrong. If the adjective 'Reverend' is to be used with the plural the phrase is "Reverend Messrs..."

A Minister and his Elders soon learn one another's weaknesses. It takes time to learn their strong points. They work as a Session, and should make up for one another's weaknesses. There are always more than enough people in any community slandering men in prominent positions—doctors, lawyers, councillors and the like— without Ministers and Elders trying to make good fellows of themselves by running down their partners. A Minister rarely needs an Elder's support when he is plainly right in a difficult course of action, but he does need it when he is thought to be in the wrong. Ministers make mistakes—don't we all?—and even if the mistake is plain there is no sense in dwelling upon it. The same applies to an Elder. The person who is always picking on little things just shows a little mind. The Church, and the good Name of Christ, are more important than the individual.

The ideal relationship is indicated in Paul's words to Timothy, "Entreat him (the Elder) as a father . . ." (1 Timothy 5: 1). It is a family relationship where the dominant interest is that of the family and the affection that should be there. It is an Elder's privilege to have many a quiet chat with his Minister upon all sorts of things and with a kindly word of helpfulness. It's a poor sort of Minister who won't take from an Elder a suggestion of tempering attitude or action, and it's a poor sort of Elder who won't take the same from a Minister. When sharp differences arise, and they will arise, Ephesians 4: 26

is a good rule, "Let not the sun go down upon your wrath." The story of the Minister and the Elder who met each other on the street in the evening, each going to the other's house to say he was sorry, illustrates the application of the rule. We almost glibly speak of 'forgiveness', but to forgive often takes everything in our souls. There must be mutual forgiveness in the Session, and loyalty and understanding.

All Ministers know the need of receiving counsel from the Session. It may be said that young Ministers need this particularly, and older Ministers have a need of assistance in administration, but all need both. No Minister or Elder is perfect in his judgment or always entirely prudent. There is also the element of fatigue. Fatigue reduces efficiency. The strain of work can be really great, for the responsibility of souls is a heavy one. Errors can be made. Resentments can pile up and get out of hand. All of us need holidays to catch up physically, to do as Jesus said, "Come ye yourselves apart . . . and rest a while" (Mark 6: 31).

It is an Elder's privilege to be a candid friend to his Minister. It may indeed be his plain duty to be so without faltering, as it may be the Minister's with an Elder. We are here speaking of the week-by-week routine for the glory of God.

Where there are situations of heresy, tyrannous conduct on the part of the Minister, and so on, the Church provides procedure, beginning with the Presbytery. No Session can deal with a formal charge against a Minister—see Section 127. See also Sections 199 (c) and 377. Note also that Section 322 applies.

There are some Elders who are always silent with the Minister, and others who run with every little story and weary the man with trivialities. Knowing this tendency to use a microscope, Section 315 warns against 'undue solicitude to pry into the private conduct of individuals or family concerns, or to interfere officially in personal quarrels, or to engage in the investigation of secret wickedness.' The Elder is not expected to be a relay-station for news, but at times he is expected to be a means of communication. The people expect this, and will drop a remark to an Elder thereby hoping to relieve someone's hurts or to remedy something they think should be remedied. The commonest thing is that old Mr. So-and-so or Mrs. So-and-so thinks he or she is forgotten and slyly remarks to an Elder, "'The Minister hasn't been around for a long time.'" Now these may be nuisances who wish to have the Minister "camping on their front step," or there may be a genuine grievance. If the Elder simply tells the Minister about it, the chances are the whole matter will be taken care of. It is usually wisdom for the Minister to ask whether or not he will mention that the Elder has spoken of this, whatever it is. But generally speaking, the Minister will call and the persons concerned will know why he is calling.

Sickness should always be reported to the Minister, and promptly. The sick, or their relatives, will rarely report this themselves. The game of our childhood, "Hide and Go Seek," is played by sick people and their relatives, and sick people are more sensitive to little slights than the well, and they respond to the kindness of a visit, counsel as necessary, and a quiet, simple prayer.

Experience will bring the virtue of tact to an Elder.

Every Elder should know that a new Minister begins his work without wishing to hear the story of old unhappiness in the parish. He has no wish or need to take up old quarrels, or even to hear them. He starts with people as he finds them, and the interesting thing is that others have found them wrong, or thought them to be wrong because of some shadow from the past. The new Minister gains their confidence and enables the Gospel, which is always the Gospel of forgiveness, to do wonders for these people. There is an occasional case where a troublesome individual quietly reforms between the leaving of one Minister and the coming of another; the past is then well forgotten. It is an unwritten law among Presbyterian Ministers that one, leaving, tells his successor nothing lest he fill him with prejudices. A Minister soon finds his bearings, and the Elder, without being a gossip or tale-bearer, has a duty of giving him some guidance.

Should a new Minister be taken around for his first calls by the Elder of the district? Most Sessions say yes; some Ministers prefer to make the first call themselves. The reason is that a call with an Elder might be stiff and formal. It depends so much upon both of them, and it depends also upon the type of people to whom the call is being made. An occasional family of the recluse type finds the first call of a Minister a trial of sociabilities, and to have Minister and Elder at once is overwhelming and they never get beyond the weather of the week. This is one of the things best worked out in the first Session meeting with a new Minister.

Is it necessary to tell Elders that the Minister's wife is not his curate or an assistant pastor? That she should not be expected to visit with him? That the Minister's call is pastoral, not social, that the presence of his wife may restrict the call to things social? Where the Minister's wife has special talents, they may be used with discretion in the Congregation, but it should be remembered she has many extra duties, as compared with other wives, in the way of entertaining visitors. Generally speaking, it may be held that she should be expected to do neither more nor less than the average housewife in the Congregation. This is all delicate ground, but Elders can ponder the worth of the commonly accepted saying that the Minister's wife should not hold any office higher than that of a vice-president in any organization, and that without necessity of moving into the president's chair.

Maps are very useful in Session work. A map of the community is always obtainable somewhere. A mark on it for each family will show the extent of the Congregation, and the Elders' district can be indicated. Where houses have no street numbers, as in many villages, a map becomes extremely useful even when the location of each family is known. For rural areas the Department of National Defence, Ottawa, has maps for most of Canada, section by section. These have been made from photographic surveys and show each house and barn and much other information. Inquiry concerning these can be made from The Map Distribution Office, Department of Mines and Technical Surveys, Ottawa, Ontario. The cost of each map is twenty-five cents. The area covered by each map varies, but it is usually about twelve miles each way at a scale of a

mile to an inch and a quarter. If the church building should happen to fall at the corner of a map, then four can be obtained to cover the parish, and the total cost is a dollar.

Perhaps the whole point of this chapter can be made by referring to the terms of the Call given to a Minister. It reads ... "promising you, on your acceptance of this our Call, all due respect, encouragement and obedience in the Lord" . . . The Church emphasizes that so exacting are the spiritual duties of a Minister that he must have respect, encouragement—and obedience in the Lord. It is for the Elder, in his relationship with his Minister, above all others in the parish, to see that the Minister is given these things. And it works the other way, too; the Minister should give his Elders respect, encouragement—and obedience in the Lord.

## Chapter 13

### The Elder Goes to Presbytery and Synod

Each Session, or Sessions of a pastoral charge if there be more than one Session in the charge, has the right of electing a "Representative Elder" who, on presenting his commission, becomes a member of the Presbytery and the Synod of his area. Many an Elder serves years and years in a local Congregation and has never had the opportunity of going to Presbytery or Synod as Representative Elder. Although it is wise to have the office shared among the Elders, that is, when one Elder has been in for a time, to have another Elder take his place that he "may learn the ropes", it often happens that one man has the office for a long time. He may be a most valuable and skilled man whose presence is almost indispensable. It may be that no one else has the time. Or it may be that no one else desires the office.

"Having the time" is the chief drawback. Some Presbyteries meet in the evening in order to let members attend who work during the day. Few can spare the time from their work, though the meetings may be so few as three or four a year. The Representative Elder, however, is frequently a man who is independent financially, the head of his business, or a retired man. It is fortunate that in rural areas many Elders are farmers who can break away from their work on occasion, and rural Presbyteries often make adjustments for their meetings to meet the farming schedules.

One of the weak points in our Presbyterian system is that we cannot always get a full attendance of Elders at Presbytery and Synod meetings.

If Sessions would avail themselves of the right to have an alternate Elder or Elders appointed, then there is a second—or third—to go if the "principal" is not able to go. The Presbytery is an open court; anyone may attend. And so every Elder should take the opportunity to attend Presbytery and Synod meetings, even if he is not an alternate, to learn something of the administration of the Church at these two levels. A Representative Elder takes his seat when his commission is formally accepted by the Presbytery. See Section 134 and footnote. His alternate sits in terms of Section 131 (c).

Space forbids the writing of a treatise upon the Presbytery, but a few notes will serve as an introduction. A Presbytery may be as small as having only two Ministers on its Roll, which are necessary for a quorum of three members (Section 183), or as large as Synod and Assembly may direct (Sections 273 (a), 292). Some Presbyteries have as many as fifty Ministers. Ruling Elders equal the number of Ministers on each Roll.

The work of the Presbytery is covered by Sections 176-258 of the Book of Forms. Its duties and powers are covered from 198-258. To summarize its duties to the Congregations: it oversees the life and work of the Congregations to take care that the Word is rightly preached, Sacraments rightly administered, discipline maintained, the visible property cared for, worship conducted according to the standards of the Church,

the Congregations visited, and new Congregations set up with Sessions elected. Its duties to the Ministry concern the care of candidates for the Ministry, licensing and ordaining, the calling and settling of Ministers, the disciplining of Ministers and the transferring and retiring of them. It has certain relationships to Synods and Assemblies.

A great deal of the work of Presbyteries these days comes by way of reference from the General Assembly, its Boards and Committees. Various studies are always under way in Assembly, and the Presbyteries from time to time are asked to share in these. Then, the work of what we call "the standing committees of Presbytery," Budget and Stewardship, Missions, Evangelism and Social Action, Christian Education, and others takes time. From time to time Presbytery appoints special committees for emergency needs. Section 4 of the Book of Forms should be read at this point. A Committee reports to Presbytery, and its report may be debated. A Committee is appointed to do "the spade-work", or work that the Presbytery as a whole could not conveniently do, but the responsibility of members of Presbytery is not relieved by a Committee that makes a report. Members of the Committee are not necessarily members of the Presbytery.

At times, a Presbytery will appoint a "Commission" rather than a "Committee." The difference is, that the Commission has power "to issue" in the matter with the full authority of the court. It reports to Presbytery that its work is completed, and how. Members of Presbytery can then enter their dissent against the action of the Commission, if they so desire.

The work of a Presbytery is also judicial. It is a court; a place where law is stated, applied, and judgments entered. The whole process of law is fairly exact in Presbyterian courts, with certain provisions of escaping the vexations and frivolities that sometimes characterize civil courts, and, indeed, may characterize our own at that. The basic principles are the securing of the rights of individuals and congregations, the rectifying of wrong, the maintenance of justice, and the providing of a wholesome life throughout the jurisdiction of Presbytery. There is perhaps no place where an Elder must guard his sense of honour and conscience so much as when serving on a "committee of investigation" or voting in a judicial matter. No relying on the experience, skill and knowledge of senior Ministers or the Clerk of Presbytery, can save him from his individual responsibility in such cases. Here the Eldership of the Church, again, is of immense value. He is not a juryman, but the development that led to the appointing of British juries is a development of the trust that was found in the Church beginning centuries ago.

The particular details of how a Presbytery functions, its various types of meetings, the order of debate, and so on, are quickly learned. It is the earnest desire of all Presbyteries that Elders would take a large part in its debates, expressing themselves freely. Moderators and Clerks of Presbyteries are usually watchful to encourage Elders to do so. As an Elder and member of Presbytery you should speak with the same freedom that you do in your Session meetings.

The Presbytery, like a powerful motor car, has reserves of power that are seldom used. Because they are seldom used they are forgotten, and Presbyteries have been known to do their work with an apologetic air instead of with the kindly authority that belongs to them. The statement has been made often, especially in Assemblies, that the Church has been drifting into "congregationalism," that is, to a position where the congregations are practically independent of one another, at least independent of the Presbytery. The author is not prepared to say this is true, but this much may be said, that a reading of the relevant sections of the Book of Forms will show that Presbyteries have authority and duty they have neglected.

The Synod (we have eight Synods in Canada) is usually a yearly gathering of all the Presbyteries within its bounds: it can hold special meetings. Its meetings, like Presbytery meetings, are "adjourned;" Assembly is dissolved. Every Elder who is a member of Presbytery has the right to go to Synod, and the Roll of Synod is equally of Ministers and Elders.

Much of what was said about the Presbytery applies to the Synod, except that the Synod does not call, ordain, induct, or superintend students. The regulations concerning Synods will be found in Section 259-276 of the Book of Forms. It has its standing Committees; at times it receives appeals from Presbyteries. As the Presbytery has oversight within its bounds, so the Synod has oversight of the Presbyteries and may on occasion correct the errors and omissions of both Presbyteries and Sessions.

Many Synods emphasize particular things in successive meetings, having more of a conference upon some subject than a Presbytery will. It may present for a series of lectures some outstanding authority on some subject. Its meeting usually runs to two days or more.

Unlike the General Assembly, which has only one-sixth of the Ministers and an equal number of Ruling Elders, the Synod may have all Ministers and Representative Elders of its bounds present. Thus the Synod is a time for a larger fellowship, more leisurely than at Presbytery, and is the opportunity of Ministers for a yearly association with one another. It becomes an opportunity for Elders to widen their acquaintance and to see the Church in larger perspective. Elders are advised to be sure as Representative Elders not to miss Synod.

## Chapter 14

### The Elder goes to The General Assembly

To attend the General Assembly is a high privilege that may come to you. Each Presbytery elects each year its commissioners to Assembly, Elders and Ministers, in equal number, and the law of the Church provides that even if you are not a Representative Elder you may have a chance to go. (See Section 258 b, and footnote). The General Assembly, strictly speaking, is not a "General" Assembly in Canada as only one out of every six Ministers and a corresponding number of Ruling Elders go. Some Presbyterian Churches, such as the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, have an Assembly of all the Ministers and an equal number of Elders. The Church of Scotland has one out of every four Ministers, and an equal number of Elders. Our distances are so great and our cost would be so correspondingly great that we have the ratio of one to six.

Assembly sits for at least seven days. Your travelling expenses are paid, and you are provided with a free billet in the city where the Assembly meets. Your Clerk of Presbytery sends in your Commission. You are not a delegate, but a commissioner, being charged with more responsibility than a delegate is. The wording of the commission is in Section 279 and is worth reading in this connection.

When you register at Assembly you will be given your kit of materials and publications. Among these is the Commissioner's Manual to explain Assembly and to instruct you how to take a full part in it.

The General Assembly is the highest court of the Church Section 292 of the Book of Forms outlines its work, culminating in the words, "to preserve the unity of the Church, and to advance the kingdom of Christ throughout the world." Sections 277 to 312 are the Assembly sections of the Book of Forms.

In the practice of the Church, as found in Assembly Minutes, the word 'Assembly' takes a plural verb as in the sentence, "The Assembly are meeting in June." In popular usage, however, which is followed in this book, the word takes the verb in the singular as in the foregoing paragraph, "The Assembly is the highest court."

Unlike Sessions, Presbyteries and Synods, whose meetings are adjourned, Assembly, at its final sederunt, is dissolved and another Assembly is appointed to meet at a stated place, day and time. The Moderator of a Session, Presbytery or Synod may be referred to as Moderator of that court at any time until his successor takes office, but the Moderator of Assembly, strictly speaking, is Moderator only during the time of Assembly. In the easy language of the newspapers, following Assembly, he may be referred to as "The Moderator of the Presbyterian Church", which he never is. He may be introduced to Congregations, following Assembly, as "The Moderator" but to speak precisely he should be introduced as "The Moderator of the last General Assembly." As a courtesy, however, the practice is generally to speak of him as "The Moderator" until the

next General Assembly. He presides at the opening sederunt of that Assembly, preaches, conducts the election of his successor, and installs him in the office. After that time he is usually introduced as "The Moderator of the (number) General Assembly."

The Clerks of Assembly are always referred to as "The Clerks of Assembly," particularly because they have work to do all the year round. In reality, from the dissolving of one Assembly to the opening of another, they are Clerks of that which does not exist. The Church however, not desiring to be painfully consistent, refers to them always as Clerks of Assembly, holding office continually, and does not re-elect them at the opening of an Assembly. To prepare for a succeeding Assembly, each Assembly appoints a Business Committee which includes the Clerks of Assembly. (Section 296).

From the fact that Assembly is the highest court, one would expect many differences to organization in Presbyteries and Synods. Instead of making comparisons, which an Elder will learn by his experience from attending all three, the chief purpose of this chapter will be served if we consider that the Assembly is the focal point for all the Church's work and general administration.

Under the authority of Assembly are the many Boards and Committees of the Church: Missions, Budget, Administration, Christian Education, Evangelism and Social Action, Colleges, Deaconess Training School, W.M.S., Pensions, Funds and Trusts, to name but a few. There are special committees appointed from time to time to do a particular work and report to Assembly.

If a copy of the Acts and Proceedings of the General Assembly of any year is examined, and the "Appendices" turned over slowly, an immediate idea will be gained of the number of Boards, Committees and special work that comes before the Assembly. Elders who take the trouble to do this for the first time will be literally startled at what the Church is doing, and the remark will likely be, "My, I had no idea of what the Church's work really is."

The growth of the Church may be gleaned by taking, say, the Acts and Proceedings of 1940 or 1945 and making a comparison with the latest issue in any division. One may particularly note this growth by taking the total of expenditures in such Boards as the Boards of Christian Education and the General Board of Missions.

There is always the danger in the Presbyterian form of government that Assembly Boards and Committees will assume powers they do not possess and carry on a half-independent work. Of course, there are always things that have to be done in an emergency (such as granting funds to assist the refugees of the Hungarian Uprisings of ~ 956) which the preceding Assembly could not foresee. In other words, there is the danger of a bureaucracy in which Chairmen or Secretaries become powerful administrators. How does our Church avoid this?

Well, the authority of a Board or Committee, and funds for its operation, is given by edict of Assembly, and that edict is often made specific. In special committees we call this "the terms of reference".

Assembly outlines what shall be spent, and often states the general policy. Each Assembly receives a report from each Board and Committee and deals with it and any recommendations that may be attached to the report. The Assembly can order changes, give new directions, or otherwise deal with the work of that group. Thus, the whole work has a yearly review, and those doing it are subject to the Church. The Commissioners to Assembly, Ministers and Elders, have the responsibility of examining each year all that comes before them. In our Church, this makes interesting debate as questions are hurled at those reporting. The Assembly works through motions "from the floor" to express what it believes the will of the Church is, as represented by those Commissioners.

It is to the Assembly that any Presbyterian anywhere in Canada and Bermuda can bring his grievance by orderly appeal up through his Session, or can call the Assembly's attention to something that needs attention and that only the Assembly can attend to. These are expressed in documents, regularly transmitted, to which are given the names of petitions, memorials and overtures, as each may be. (See Sections 65-67 and 76-80). Each year there are many overtures to Assembly wherein the courts, chiefly Presbyteries, make suggestions that they consider for the good of the Church, and they ask appropriate action. If an Elder will turn to a copy of the Acts and Proceedings, look in the Index for "Overtures" and then find the group of Overtures he will have a better idea of what an Overture means than many words here. Thus, the Assembly is always next door, so to speak, to every Presbyterian who has something he wishes the whole Church to know. All overtures are dealt with faithfully, assigned first to the Committee on Bills and Overtures, then mostly to special committees to consider and, finally, Assembly considers them and any Commissioner can speak to the question.

An informed Eldership is a thing the Church relies upon so much in the General Assembly.

This is a good place to say that the Church is indebted to a considerable number of Elders every year who each year or from year to year give their time and professional skill without charge in departments of the Church's work for which they are specially qualified. The late E. W. McNeill, for example, served for over twenty-five years as Treasurer of the Church.

The business of the Church is soundly administered. Business men, who are used to the costs of administration, frequently analyse the Assembly's financial statements to see what administration costs are. There has yet to be one who finds it too high, or as high as comparable secular costs! The General Assembly itself appoints the secretaries, the salaried officials of the Church, and also the College professors and faculty of the Missionary and Deaconess Training Schools. The Lord's business is done in a businesslike manner, and with devotion.

The very great work of the W.M.S., in its two sections, Eastern and Western, is a part of the Church. Presbyterials and Synodicals of the W.M.S. report to the Presbytery and Synod of the bounds, and the two sections report to the General Assembly. The extent of their work may be gleaned from their reports as printed for Assembly, from their own literature, and from the reports of the General Board of Missions.

We have made mention several times of the "Acts and Proceedings of the General Assembly". These are printed each year, under that name. The pages usually total 500. The reading of this book is an education in itself, and each year copies are sent to each Session through the Presbytery to make one copy for every three Elders and one copy for each Minister. It is too bad that in so many Church Vestries copies may be seen, untaken by Elders.

The reports of Assembly should be read by every Elder. Let him do it slowly for each Board and Committee, and, if he wishes, turn to the Minutes (which are at the front of the Acts and Proceedings) to see what action Assembly took for that particular report. There is no better way to learn what the Church is doing than through the words of those who are in charge of each section of the work.

The Acts and Proceedings also contain the statistics of the Congregations, Presbytery by Presbytery, summaries of these, obituaries of Ministers, and sundry pieces of information all of which reveal the Church that is ours.

Many Elders take an intensified interest in some phase of the Church's work and make that their special interest in Presbytery and Synod, if they are Representative Elders, or in their own Session. There are Congregations that have come to their allocations for the Budget just because an Elder has made the Budget his interest — his hobby—and got so thrilled about it that he has transmitted his enthusiasm to others. There is an open field for all Elders in the special studies sent down to Presbyteries by Assembly, or originating within the Presbytery itself. The intellectual and cultural level of the Presbyterian Eldership is a high one, and there are many Elders who could dip into this work to their own profit and that of the Church. Our potential here is great, and pretty much neglected.

Thus the circle of the Church's life goes on: Congregations to Assembly, and Assembly to Congregations, year after year. It helps keep us together as a family.