

21.4 REPORT DEPUTIES DOCTRINAL MATTERS: REPORT STUDY GROUP – OFFICE OF THE ELDER (Artt 92, 139)

- A. Rev SD Snyman delivers the Report.
- B. **Decision:** The Report is referred to Commission Doctrinal 1.
- C. Dr CJ Smit reports on behalf of Commission Doctrinal 1.

D. REPORT

INTRODUCTION – FORMAT OF THE REPORT

- 1. The Report consists of 4 sections.
 - 1.1 Section 1 contains the assignment of the Deputies.
 - 1.2 Section 2 contains the different study pieces that the Deputies formulated and studied in the execution of their assignment. These study pieces are included in their entirety, because some of the studies contain valuable material that can also be of good use in other terrains of our church life. Synod will take note of this part of the Report.
 - 1.3 Section 3 contains summarising conclusions that the Deputies reached from all the study material. The Synod can take note of this.
 - 1.4 Section 4 contains the recommendations from the Deputies. The Synod should give an approving or rejecting verdict on this.
- 2. The names of the persons who initially formulated the studies included in Section 2 and who repeatedly included the comments of the Deputies are mentioned. The aim with this is to give grateful recognition of the work that has been done.

Decision: Note taken.

SECTION 1

ASSIGNMENT OF THE DEPUTIES

- 1. Assignment

“Synod decides to appoint a Study Deputy Group to make a thorough study of the office of elder in order to use this office optimally in the light of the need of the churches for people who will take responsibility for the diverse, specific and specialised ministry in the churches” (Acta 2006:805, 2.3.7.6).
- 2. Origin of the assignment: The request for a study on the office¹ of elder has its origin in the Report of the Curatorium at the National Synod of 2006:

“2.3.4.2 Training for diverse, specific and specialised ministry (training not aimed at ministers)

 - (i) Churches, especially churches in the African context (but not only they!) feel a great need for trained persons who can serve as pastoral co-workers in congregations. Up to now these persons were often called evangelists or preaching assistants, but in terms of church polity, it is necessary to organise this matter.
 - (ii) It seems preferable to confirm such persons in the office of elder and to provide them with optimal training.
 - (iii) There will have to be more discussion with churches with regard to which qualifications will be adequate for this purpose.
 - (iv) In this regard the Curators Synod 2006 requested a thorough study of the office of elder in order to uncover the full potential of this office with the aim of meeting the ministry requirements of churches, especially those in

¹ The Deputies prefer the word “service”, but because the word “office” is used in the assignment and in the CO, the two words are used interchangeably.

the Africal context, but with the inclusion of all other churches in the GKSA” (Acta 2006:803-804).

Decision: Note taken.

SECTION 2

STUDY PIECES

STUDY 1

BIBLIOLOGICAL STUDY ON THE ELDER IN THE NEW TESTAMENTAL CHURCH

Fika J van Rensburg

1. Introduction

1.1 *Assignment*

The assignment is produce a Biblical motivation for the study group on the office of the elder.²

1.2 *Interpretation of the assignment*

The task of the study group is very specific: not to do a general study of the office of the elder, but more specifically to ascertain if the service of the elder provides for an elder doing duty as a pastoral co-worker in a congregation.

The “Scriptural motivation” is shaped by this interpretation of the assignment. It is furthermore taken into consideration that the Report itself should not be technical, but should be user friendly for believers without theological training; yet it is – in any case for the Commission – important to work with the Greek terminology, especially because the 1983 translation rendered it in a way that makes the Afrikaans confusing.

Underneath follows first a bibliological study of the elder in the Early Church as is evident from the New Testament, and after that a formulation of the implications for the Biblical foundation of the service of the elder:

2. Relevant Greek words, and relevant revelation-historical lines

2.1 ἐπισκοπέω and ethimologically related words

2.2 πρεσβύτερος and ethimologically related words

2.3 ποιμαίνω and ethimologically related words

3. The revelation in the New Testament regarding the (service of) the elder

4. Implications for the current question regarding the service of the elder

2. Relevant Greek words, and relevant revelation-historical lines

A word study of the relevant meanings of the words involved consequently follows, as well as a revelation-historical study, in order to determine what the Scripture revelation regarding the (service of the) elder is. The relevant Greek words for the meanings that is regarded as important in a bibliological study of the service of the elder, are the following:³

(i) ἐπισκοπέω (*to have the ministerial responsibility*) and ethimologically related words

(ii) πρεσβύτερος (*elder*) and ethimologically related words

² Du Plooy (2007:??) indicates that the Afrikaans text of the church order uses only “service” (and not “office”) throughout, and with that something of the Scriptural information regarding this service as well as of the Latin words are lost. In the Latin text of the Church Order different words are used that all in general have to do with the concept of “service”, but each with a separate emphasis. The Latin words are: *ministerium* (ministry in general), *munus* (service as assignment or task; for instance CO, art 18), *officium* (the completion of work on a service/task; bv. CO, artt 16, 23, 25), *functio* (the functioning or practice of a *munus* or assignment as a service; for instance CO, art 2). All these words indicate that in the church the essence is humble service, and not rule. It therefore at least seems necessary to avoid the word “office” and to replace it with “service”, since “office” has the connotation of authority, position and status, which is strange to the New-Testamentical idea of a special service. Therefore the term “office” is for the rest of this study replaced by the word “ministry” or “service” (as CO, art 1 uses it).

³ In addition to these ethimologically related groups, attention could also be paid to the words ἡγούμενοι and προϊστάμενοι and their ethimologically related words. Paul does not use the term *presbuteros* in his early letters, but rather refers to the functions of those involved as κοπιῶντες, and as the persons who have received the χάρισμα of ἀντίλημψις and κυβένησις. However, the given three are for the purposes of this study viewed as the three main groups.

(iii) ποιμαίνω (*care for as sheppard*) and ethimologically related words

In the discussion that follows a definition is first provided of the meaning of each word, and after that the different contexts in the New Testament where the relevant word is used with this meaning, are quoted (the Greek is provided in the footnotes). A conclusion follows for each ethimologically related group, and these conclusions are ultimately summarised in the final conclusion.

2.1 ἐπισκοπέω and ethimologically related words

2.1.1 ἐπισκοπέω

The basic possibilities for meaning (according to the Louw & Nida Lexicon) of **ἐπισκοπέω** are the following: ^a to take care of: 35.39; ^b to guard against: 30.46; ^c minister/serve: 53.70. ⁴ Especially possibility ^c is relevant.

❖ **ἐπισκοπέω**^c: Louw & Nida (1988:53.70) defines this meaning as “to have the responsibility of taking care of someone, with the implication of an official responsibility within a congregation”, and provides translational possibilities as “to minister/serve, to take the responsibility, to take care of.”⁵

This word is used with this meaning in the following parts of Scripture:

1 Pet 5:1-3: To the elders among you, I appeal as fellow elder, a witness of Christ’s sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed: Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, serving as overseers – not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.⁶

2.1.2 ἐπισκοπή

The basic possibilities for meaning (according to the Louw & Nida Lexicon) of **ἐπισκοπή** are the following: ^a visitation: 34.51; ^b service as guardian: 53.69; ^c position of responsibility: 35.40. Possibility ^b is relevant, which does not exclude possibility ^c.

❖ **ἐπισκοπή**^b, **ἥς**: Louw & Nida (1988:53.96) defines the meaning as “a religious role that includes service and guardianship”, and provides the translational possibilities as “service, position, ministry as guardian.”⁷

This word is used with this meaning in the following parts of Scripture:

Acts 1:20: “For,” said Peter, “it is written in the book of Psalms, ‘May this place be deserted; let there be no one to dwell in it’ and ‘May another take his place of leadership.’ (Quoted from Ps 109:8).⁸

1 Tim 3:1: Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task. Now an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife...⁹

2.1.3 ἐπίσκοπος

⁴ Louw & Nida (1988, by 53.71) makes the important remark that with the translation of ἐπισκοπή^b (53.69), ἐπισκοπέω^c (53.70), and ἐπίσκοπος^b, it is important to combine the concepts of service and leadership, in other words, both the responsibility of taking care of the needs of the congregation and the task of giving direction to the activities. A good translational equivalent could for instance be “helper and leader”, or perhaps the more archaic “guardian”.

⁵ Louw & Nida (1988): **53.70 ἐπισκοπέω**^c: to have responsibility for the care of someone, implying a somewhat official responsibility within a congregation—‘to minister unto, to be responsible, to care for.’ ποιμάνετε τὸ ἐν ὑμῖν ποίμνιον τοῦ θεοῦ, ἐπισκοποῦντες μὴ ἀναγκαστῶς ‘be shepherds of the flock of God committed to you, being responsible for the care of such and not as a matter of obligation’ 1 Pet 5.2. It is possible, however, that ἐπισκοπέω in 1 Pet 5.2 is not to be understood as designating some official responsibility but merely as a role of helping and serving (see 35.39).

⁶ **1 Pet 5:1-3:** Πρεσβυτέρους οὖν ἐν ὑμῖν παρακαλῶ ὁ συμπρεσβύτερος καὶ μάρτυς τῶν τοῦ Χριστοῦ παθημάτων, ὁ καὶ τῆς μελλούσης ἀποκαλύπτεσθαι δόξης κοινωνός. **2** ποιμάνετε τὸ ἐν ὑμῖν ποίμνιον τοῦ θεοῦ [**ἐπισκοποῦντες**] μὴ ἀναγκαστῶς ἀλλὰ ἐκούσιως κατὰ θεόν, μηδὲ ἀισχροκερδῶς ἀλλὰ προθύμως, **3** μηδ’ ὡς κατακυριεύοντες τῶν κλήρων ἀλλὰ τύποι γινόμενοι τοῦ ποιμνίου.

⁷ Louw & Nida (1988): **53.69 ἐπισκοπή**^b, **ἥς**: a religious role involving both service and leadership—‘office, position, ministry as church leader.’ τὴν ἐπισκοπὴν αὐτοῦ λαβέτω ἕτερος ‘let someone else take his office’ Ac 1.20; εἴ τις ἐπισκοπῆς ὀρέγεται, καλοῦ ἔργου ἐπιθυμεῖ ‘if a man is eager to fulfill a ministry as a church leader, he desires an excellent work’ 1 Tim 3.1. See discussion at 53.71. For a more probable interpretation of ἐπισκοπή in Ac 1.20, see 35.40.

⁸ **Acts 1:20:** τ· ν· π·ισκοπ· ν· α· το· λαβέτω· τερος.

⁹ **1 Tim 3:1:** Εἴ τις **ἐπισκοπῆς** ὀρέγεται, καλοῦ ἔργου ἐπιθυμεῖ. **2** δεῖ οὖν τὸν ἐπίσκοπον ἀνεπίλημπτον εἶναι, μιᾶς γυναικὸς ἄνδρα

The basic possibilities of meaning (according to the Louw & Nida Lexicon) of **ἐπίσκοπος** are the following: ^a guardian: 35.43; ^b overseer: 53.71. Possibility ^b is relevant.

❖ **ἐπίσκοπος^b, ou:** Louw & Nida (1988:53.71) defines this meaning as “someone who serves as guardian in a church”, and gives the translational possibility “guardian”.¹⁰

This word is used with this meaning in the following parts of Scripture:

Acts 20:28: “²⁸Πας julle self op en die hele kudde ~~wat die Heilige Gees onder julle sorg gestel het. Soos wagtors ’n kudde versorg, so moet julle die gemeente van God versorg oor wie die Heilige Gees julle as **overseers** (ἐπισκόπους, 1933/53: ‘overseers’) aangestel het, om as herders op te tree (ποιμαίνειν) vir die gemeente van God, wat Hy vir Hom verkry het deur die bloed van sy eie Seun.”¹¹~~

Fil 1:1: Van Paulus en Timoteus, dienaars van Christus Jesus. Aan almal in Filippi wat deur Christus Jesus aan God behoort, met hulle ~~ouderlinge~~ **overseers** en diakens.¹²

1 Tim 3:1: Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task. Now an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife...¹³

Tit 1:7: ⁷Ἡ ~~Ouderling~~ **Overseer** is immers ’n bestuurder van die huishouding van God. Daarom moet hy onberispelik van gedrag wees, nie aanmatigend en opvlieënd nie.¹⁴

2.1.4 Conclusion: the meaning of and revelation with ἐπισκοπέω and ethimologically related words

From the preceding discussion it is clear that a ἐπίσκοπος is a guardian. This person’s task is leadership through service; thus – someone who has church leadership as ministry. From 1 Pet 5:2 it seems that they also have a guarding function in the congregation with regard to the followers of God (ποιμνιον τοῦ θεοῦ), laid upon them by God (κατὰ θεόν). This guarding task means that they have to take care of God’s flocklike shepherds (ποιμάνετε), which amongst other things means that they have to be able to instruct (διδασκικόν, 1 Tim 3:2) and should be able to educate with the good doctrine and to refute opposers (ἵνα δυνατὸς ᾦ καὶ παρακαλεῖν ἐν τῇ διδασκαλίᾳ τῇ ὑγιαίνουσῃ καὶ τοὺς ἀντιλέγοντας ἐλέγχειν, Tit 1:9). Acts 20:28 explicitly states that “die Heilige Gees julle as overseers (ἐπισκόπους) aangestel het, om as herders op te tree (ποιμαίνειν) vir die gemeente van God”. Tit 1:7 uses another image: the guardian is the manager of God’s household (θεοῦ οἰκονόμον); it means that God is the *kurios* (boss of the house), with the *episkopoi* who manages the house with a mandate from the house boss.

It seems from Phillipians 1:1 that there is a distinction between the *episkopoi* and the *diakonoi*.

2.2 *πρεσβύτερος and ethimologicalle related words*

2.2.1 πρεσβύτερος]

¹⁰ Louw & Nida (1988): **53.71 ἐπίσκοπος^b, ou:** one who serves as a leader in a church—‘church leader.’ δεῖ γὰρ τὸν ἐπίσκοπον ἀνέγκλητον εἶναι ὡς θεοῦ οἰκονόμον ‘since he is in charge of God’s work, the church leader should be without fault’ Tit 1.7. For ἐπίσκοπος in 1 Pet 2.25, see 35.43.

¹¹ **Acts 20:28:** προσέχετε ἑαυτοῖς καὶ παντὶ τῷ ποιμνίῳ, ἐν ᾧ ὑμᾶς τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον ἔθετο ἐπισκόπους ποιμαίνειν τὴν ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ θεοῦ, ἣν περιποιήσατο διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ ἰδίου.

¹² **Phil 1:1:** Παῦλος καὶ Τιμόθεος δοῦλοι Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ πᾶσιν τοῖς ἁγίοις ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ τοῖς οὖσιν ἐν Φιλιππίοις σὺν ἐπισκόποις καὶ διακόνοις.

¹³ **1 Tim 3:1:** Εἴ τις ἐπισκοπῆς ὀρέγεται, καλοῦ ἔργου ἐπιθυμεῖ. **2** δεῖ οὖν τὸν ἐπίσκοπον ἀνεπίλημπτον εἶναι, μιᾶς γυναικὸς ἄνδρα ...

¹⁴ **Tit 1:7:** 7 δεῖ γὰρ τὸν ἐπίσκοπον ἀνέγκλητον εἶναι ὡς θεοῦ οἰκονόμον, μὴ αὐθάδη, μὴ ὀργίλον ...

The basic possibilities for meaning (according to the Louw & Nida Lexicon) of **πρεσβύτερος** are the following: ^a old man: 9.31; ^b elder: 53.77. Possibility ^b is relevant.

- ❖ **53.77 πρεσβύτερος^b, ου:** Louw & Nida (1988:53.77) defines this meaning as “a person with the responsibility and (bevoegdheid)ability¹⁵ with regard to socio-religious matters, in both Jewish and Christian communities”, and provides the translational possibility of “elders”. However, it seems better to make a distinction between the Jewish and Christian structures during translation: “family heads” for the Jewish, and “elders” for the Christian.¹⁶
- ❖ **53.78 συμπρεσβύτερος, ου:** Louw & Nida (1988:53.78) defines this meaning as “someone who is with another elder”, and provides the translational possibility of “co-elder”.

These words are used with these meanings in the following parts of Scripture:

Acts11:30: ³⁰Hulle het dit gedoen en die geld met Barnabas en Saulus aan die **ouderlinge** in Jerusalem gestuur.¹⁷

Acts14:23: ²¹Paulus en Barnabas het ... na Listra, Ikonium en Antiogië toe teruggegaan. ... ²³In elke gemeente het hulle **ouderlinge** gekies.¹⁸

Acts15:2–16:4: ²Toe Paulus en Barnabas hulle daarteen verset en in 'n heftige meningsverskil met hulle betrokke geraak het, is daar besluit dat hulle twee en nog 'n paar ander van die gemeente na die apostels en **ouderlinge** in Jerusalem moet gaan in verband met hierdie vraagstuk ... ⁴Toe hulle in Jerusalem aankom, is hulle deur die gemeente, die apostels en die **ouderlinge** verwelkom ... ⁶Die apostels en die **ouderlinge** het toe bymekaargekom om hierdie vraagstuk te bespreek ... ²²Daarna het die apostels en die **ouderlinge** saam met die hele gemeente besluit om mense uit hulle geledere saam met Paulus en Barnabas na Antiogië toe te stuur ... ²³Hulle het die volgende brief saamgestuur: “Van die apostels en die **ouderlinge**, julle broers. Aan die gelowiges uit die heidendom in Antiogië, Sirië en Silisië. Groete ... ^{16:4}Soos hulle van stad tot stad gereis het, het hulle die besluite wat die apostels en **ouderlinge** in Jerusalem geneem het, aan die gelowiges oorgedra en hulle beveel om daarvolgens te handel.¹⁹

Acts20:17: ¹⁷Van Milete af het Paulus 'n boodskap na Efese toe gestuur om die **ouderlinge** van die gemeente te laat roep.²⁰

Acts21:18: ¹⁷By ons aankoms in Jerusalem het die broers ons hartlik ontvang. ¹⁸Die volgende dag het ons saam met Paulus na Jakobus toe gegaan. Al die **ouderlinge** was daar teenwoordig.²¹

¹⁵ Here the Afrikaans word “bevoegdheid” () is used on purpose in stead of “gesag” (authority). The elder does not have authority, but does have bevoegdheid (of: volmag) to bind and lead, and to in this manner serve the authority of Christ.

¹⁶ Louw & Nida (1988:53.77): **53.77 πρεσβύτερος^b, ου:** a person of responsibility and authority in matters of socio-religious concerns, both in Jewish and Christian societies—‘elder.’ ὅπου οἱ γραμματεῖς καὶ οἱ πρεσβύτεροι συνήχθησαν ‘where the teachers of the Law and the elders had gathered together’ Matt 26.57; ἀπὸ δὲ τῆς Μιλήτου πέμψας εἰς Ἔφεσον μετεκαλέσατο τοὺς πρεσβυτέρους τῆς ἐκκλησίας ‘he sent a message from Miletus to Ephesus asking the elders of the church to meet him’ Ac 20.17. In some languages πρεσβύτερος^b is best rendered as ‘older leaders,’ but in other languages the more appropriate term would be the equivalent of ‘counselor,’ since it would be assumed that counselors would be older than the average person in a group as well as having authority to lead and direct activities.

¹⁷ **Acts11:30:** ὁ καὶ ἐποίησαν ἀποστείλαντες πρὸς τοὺς **πρεσβυτέρους** διὰ χειρὸς Βαρναβᾶ καὶ Σαύλου.

¹⁸ **Acts14:23:** ... ὑπέστρεψαν εἰς τὴν Λύστραν καὶ εἰς Ἰκόνιον καὶ εἰς Ἀντιόχειαν ... **23** χειροτονήσαντες δὲ αὐτοῖς κατ’ ἐκκλησίαν **πρεσβυτέρους**.

¹⁹ **Acts15:2–16:4:** **2** γενομένης δὲ στάσεως καὶ ζητήσεως οὐκ ὀλίγης τῷ Παύλῳ καὶ τῷ Βαρναβᾶ πρὸς αὐτοὺς, ἔταξαν ἀναβαίνειν Παῦλον καὶ Βαρναβᾶν καὶ τινὰς ἄλλους ἐξ αὐτῶν πρὸς τοὺς ἀποστόλους καὶ **πρεσβυτέρους** εἰς Ἱερουσαλήμ περὶ τοῦ ζητήματος τούτου. ... **4** παραγενόμενοι δὲ εἰς Ἱερουσαλήμ παρεδέχθησαν ἀπὸ τῆς ἐκκλησίας καὶ τῶν ἀποστόλων καὶ τῶν **πρεσβυτέρων** ... **6** Συνήχθησαν τε οἱ ἀπόστολοι καὶ οἱ **πρεσβύτεροι** ἰδεῖν περὶ τοῦ λόγου τούτου. ... **22** Τότε ἔδοξε τοῖς ἀποστόλοις καὶ τοῖς **πρεσβυτέροις** σὺν ὅλῃ τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ ἐκλεξαμένου ἀνδρᾶς ἐξ αὐτῶν πέμψαι εἰς Ἀντιόχειαν σὺν τῷ Παύλῳ καὶ Βαρναβᾶ. ... **23** γράψαντες διὰ χειρὸς αὐτῶν, Οἱ ἀπόστολοι καὶ οἱ **πρεσβύτεροι** ἀδελφοί τοῖς κατὰ τὴν Ἀντιόχειαν καὶ Συρίαν καὶ Κιλικίαν ἀδελφοῖς τοῖς ἐξ ἐθνῶν χαίρειν. ... **4** ὡς δὲ διεπορεύοντο τὰς πόλεις, παρεδίδοσαν αὐτοῖς φυλάσσειν τὰ δόγματα τὰ κεκριμένα ὑπὸ τῶν ἀποστόλων καὶ **πρεσβυτέρων** τῶν ἐν Ἱεροσολύμοις.

²⁰ **Acts20:17:** **7** Ἀπὸ δὲ τῆς Μιλήτου πέμψας εἰς Ἔφεσον μετεκαλέσατο τοὺς **πρεσβυτέρους** τῆς ἐκκλησίας.

²¹ **Acts21:18:** **17** Γενομένων δὲ ἡμῶν εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα ἀσμένως ἀπεδέξαντο ἡμᾶς οἱ ἀδελφοί. **18** τῇ δὲ ἐπιούσῃ εἰσήει ὁ Παῦλος σὺν ἡμῖν πρὸς Ἰάκωβον, πάντες τε παρεγένοντο οἱ **πρεσβύτεροι**.

Within Jewish structures: Acts 23:14: ¹⁴Hulle het na die priesterhoofde en die familiehoofde toe gegaan en gesê: "Ons het 'n dure eed afgelê dat ons niks oor ons lippe sal neem voordat ons Paulus doodmaak het nie." (Also Acts 24:1; 25:15).²²

1 Tim 5:17: ¹⁷Die **ouderlinge** wat goeie leiding gee, behoort dubbele erkenning te kry, veral dié wat hard werk deur te preek en onderrig te gee.²³

1 Tim 5:19: ¹⁹'n Beskuldiging teen 'n **ouderling** moet jy nie aanneem nie, tensy dit deur twee of drie getuies bevestig word. ²⁰Dié wat verkeerde dinge doen, moet jy openlik bestraf sodat die ander ook afgeskrik kan word.²⁴

Tit 1:5: ⁵Ek het jou op Kreta agtergelaat met die bedoeling dat jy die dinge wat nog gereël moes word, in orde moet bring en dat jy in elke dorp **ouderlinge** moet aanstel soos ek dit aan jou opgedra het.²⁵

Tit 1:7: *Wys presbuteros en episkopos is sinoniem; in 1:5 is die woord presbuteroi gebruik, en van dieselfde persone word in 1:7 gepraat as episkopoi: 7 δεῖ γὰρ τὸν ἐπίσκοπον ἀνεγκλητὸν εἶναι ὡς θεοῦ οἰκονόμου.*

Jak 5:14: ¹⁴As daar iemand van julle is wat siek is, moet hy die **ouderlinge** van die gemeente laat kom, en hulle moet vir hom bid en hom met olie salf onder aanroeping van die Naam van die Here. ¹⁵En as hulle gelowig bid, sal dit vir die sieke genesing bring: die Here sal hom gesond maak.²⁶

1 Pet 5:1-3: As **mede-ouderling** en getuie van die lyding van Christus en ook deelgenoot aan die heerlikheid wat geopenbaar sal word, dring ek by die **ouderlinge** onder julle daarop aan: ²Pas die kudde van God wat aan julle toevertrou is, goed op. Hou toesig oor hulle, nie uit dwang nie, maar gewillig soos God dit verwag; nie om eie gewin nie, maar uit toegewydheid; ³ook nie deur baas te speel oor dié wat God aan julle sorg toevertrou het nie, maar deur 'n voorbeeld vir die kudde te wees.²⁷

Op 4-5,7,11,14: ^{4:4}Reg rondom die troon was daar vier en twintig ander trone, en op die trone het daar vier en twintig **ouderlinge** gesit. Hulle het wit klere aangehad, en op hulle koppe was daar goue krone ... ⁹Elke keer wanneer die lewende wesens heerlikheid, eer en dank toebring aan Hom wat op die troon sit, wat tot in alle ewigheid lewe, ¹⁰kniel die vier en twintig **ouderlinge** voor Hom wat op die troon sit, en aanbid Hom wat tot in alle ewigheid lewe. Hulle sit dan hulle krone voor die troon neer en sê: ¹¹"Here, ons God, U is waardig ... ^{5:4}Ek het baie gehuil omdat daar niemand gekry is wat waardig was om die boek oop te maak en daarin te kyk nie. ⁵Toe sê een van die **ouderlinge** vir my: "Moenie huil nie. Kyk, die Leeu uit die stam van Juda, die Afstammeling van Dawid, het die oorwinning behaal en kan die boek met die sewe seëls oopmaak" ... ⁶Toe het ek voor die troon wat omring was deur die vier lewende wesens, tussen die troon en die **ouderlinge**, 'n Lam sien staan, die Een wat geslag was ... ⁸Net toe die Lam die boek neem, het die vier lewende wesens en die vier en twintig **ouderlinge** voor Hom gekniel. Elkeen van hulle het 'n siter gehad en 'n goue bak vol wierook, die gebede van die gelowiges. ⁹Toe sing hulle 'n nuwe lied: "U is waardig om die boek te neem ¹¹Toe het ek rondom die troon en die lewende wesens en die **ouderlinge** 'n groot menigte engele gesien ... ¹⁴Die vier lewende wesens het gesê: "Amen!" En die **ouderlinge** het gekniel en God aanbid ...

²² **Acts 23:14:** οἵτινες προσελθόντες τοῖς ἀρχιερεῦσιν καὶ τοῖς πρεσβυτέροις εἶπαν, Ἀναθέματι ἀνεθεματίσαμεν ἑαυτοὺς μηδενὸς γεύσασθαι ἕως οὗ ἀποκτείνωμεν τὸν Παῦλον.

²³ **1 Tim 5:17:** Οἱ καλῶς προεστῶτες πρεσβύτεροι διπλῆς τιμῆς ἀξιοῦσθωσαν, μάλιστα οἱ κοπιῶντες ἐν λόγῳ καὶ διδασκαλίᾳ.

²⁴ **1 Tim 5:19:** κατὰ πρεσβυτέρου κατηγορίαν μὴ παραδέχου, ἐκτός εἰ μὴ ἐπὶ δύο ἢ τριῶν μαρτύρων. **20** τοὺς ἀμαρτάνοντας ἐνώπιον πάντων ἔλεγχε, ἵνα καὶ οἱ λοιποὶ φόβον ἔχωσιν.

²⁵ **Tit 1:5:** Τοῦτου χάριν ἀπέλιπόν σε ἐν Κρήτῃ, ἵνα τὰ λείποντα ἐπιδιορθώσῃ καὶ καταστήσῃ κατὰ πόλιν πρεσβυτέρους, ὡς ἐγὼ σοι διεταξάμην.

²⁶ **James 5:14:** ἀσθενεῖ τις ἐν ὑμῖν, προσκαλεσάσθω τοὺς πρεσβυτέρους τῆς ἐκκλησίας καὶ προσευξάσθωσαν ἐπ' αὐτὸν ἀλείψαντες [αὐτὸν] ἐλαίῳ ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι τοῦ κυρίου. **15** καὶ ἡ εὐχὴ τῆς πίστεως σώσει τὸν κάμνοντα καὶ ἐγερεῖ αὐτὸν ὁ κύριος.

²⁷ **1 Pet 5:1-3:** Πρεσβύτερος οὖν ἐν ὑμῖν παρακαλῶ ὁ συμπρεσβύτερος καὶ μάρτυς τῶν τοῦ Χριστοῦ παθημάτων, ὁ καὶ τῆς μελλούσης ἀποκαλύπτεσθαι δόξης κοινωνός. **2** ποιμάνετε τὸ ἐν ὑμῖν ποιμνίον τοῦ θεοῦ [ἐπισκοποῦντες] μὴ ἀναγκαστῶς ἀλλὰ ἐκούσιως κατὰ θεόν, μὴδὲ αἰσχροκερδῶς ἀλλὰ προθύμως, **3** μὴ ὡς κατακυριεύοντες τῶν κληρῶν ἀλλὰ τύποι γινόμενοι τοῦ ποιμνίου.

7:11 Al die engele het rondom die troon, die **ouderlinge** en die vier lewende wesens gestaan. Hulle het toe voor die troon gekniel met hulle gesigte na die grond toe en het God aanbid ... ¹³Een van die **ouderlinge** vra toe vir my: “Hierdie mense met die wit klere aan, wie is hulle en waar kom hulle vandaan?” ¹⁴“Ek weet nie, Meneer,” sê ek vir hom, “maar ú weet.” Hy sê toe vir my: “Dit is dié wat uit die groot verdrukking kom ... ^{11:16}Die vier en twintig **ouderlinge** wat op hulle trone voor God sit, het toe gekniel met hulle gesigte na die grond toe en het God aanbid ¹⁷en gesê: “Ons dank U, Here God, Almagtige ... ^{14:1}Toe het ek die Lam op Sionsberg sien staan en by Hom honderd vier en veertig duisend mense met sy Naam en sy Vader se Naam op hulle voorkoppe geskrywe ... ³Hierdie mense sing ’n nuwe lied daar voor die troon en voor die vier lewende wesens en die **ouderlinge** ... ^{19:4}Die vier en twintig **ouderlinge** en die vier lewende wesens het gekniel en God aanbid wat op die troon sit. Hulle het gesê: “Amen! Prys die Here!”²⁸

2.2.2 πρεσβυτέριον

The basic possibilities for meaning (according to the Louw & Nida Lexicon) of **πρεσβυτέριον** are the following: ^a Jewish High Council: 11.83; ^b group of elders: 11.84. Possibility ^b is relevant.

❖ **11.84 πρεσβυτέριον^b, ου:** Louw & Nida (1988:11.84) defines the meaning as “a council of elders, with the emphasis on the ripeness of judgement rather than just on age”, and gives the translational responsibility as “a group of elders”.²⁹

This word is used with this meaning in the following parts of Scripture:

Within Jewish structure: Acts 22:5: ⁴Ek wou die mense wat die leer van Christus volg, totaal uitroei. Mans sowel as vrouens het ek gevange geneem en in tronke laat stop. ⁵Dit kan die hoëpriester en die hele **Joodse Raad** bevestig.³⁰

1 Tim 4:14: ¹⁴Moenie die genadegawe wat jy het, verwaarloos nie. Dit is aan jou gegee deur die profesieë toe die **raad van ouderlinge** jou die hande opgelê het.³¹

2.2.3 Conclusion: the meaning of and revelation with πρεσβύτερος and ethimologically related words

Within the Early Church an “elder” was a person with the responsibility and bevoegdheid³² with regard to religious-ethical matters, and had to provide guidance. The following matters can be deduced from the Scriptural information:

- (i) There is mention of elders in specific congregations: Jerusalem (Acts 11:30; 15:2 – 16:4, 21:18); Listra, Ikonium and Antiogië (Acts 14:24); Ephesus (Acts 20:17); every town in Kreta (Tit 1:5); amongst the addressees of 1 Peter (1 Pet 5:1).
- (ii) The elders were elected (χειροτονήσαντες, Acts 14:23) and appointed (καταστήσης, Tit 1:5), and had to fulfil their duties “as God expects it” (κατὰ θεόν, 1 Pet 5:2).
- (iii) It is evident from the “apostle-convent” in Jerusalem that the elders have decision making capacity with the Apostles, and that these decisions have authority (Acts 15:2 – 16:4).
- (iv) The tasks assigned to the elders include: giving guidance (προεστῶτες, 1 Tim 5:17); some preach and educate (οἱ κοπιῶντες ἐν λόγῳ καὶ διδασκαλία, 1 Tim

²⁸ **Op 4-5,7,11,14:** Telkens: πρεσβύτερ*

²⁹ Louw & Nida (1988:11.84): **11.84 πρεσβυτέριον^b, ου n:** a council of elders, with emphasis upon maturity of judgment more than mere age—‘group of elders, elders.’ ὃ ἐδόθη σοι διὰ προφητείας μετὰ ἐπιθέσεως τῶν χειρῶν τοῦ πρεσβυτερίου ‘which he gave you when the prophets spoke and when the elders laid their hands on you’ 1 Tim 4.14.

³⁰ **Acts 22:5:** 4 ὃς ταύτην τὴν ὁδὸν ἐδίωξα ἄχρι θανάτου δεσμεύων καὶ παραδιδούς εἰς φυλακὰς ἀνδρας τε καὶ γυναῖκας, 5 ὡς καὶ ὁ ἀρχιερεὺς μαρτυρεῖ μοι καὶ πᾶν τὸ πρεσβυτέριον.

³¹ **1 Tim 4:14:** μὴ ἀμέλει τοῦ ἐν σοὶ χαρίσματος, ὃ ἐδόθη σοι διὰ προφητείας μετὰ ἐπιθέσεως τῶν χειρῶν τοῦ πρεσβυτερίου.
³² This bevoegdheid is already evident from the fact that the Early Church uses the same word than is used in the Jewish structure for the bevoegde body of the priest heads and family heads, namely *presbuteroi* (in the 1983-Translation rendered as “family heads”; see for instance Acts 23:14, 24:1, 25:15, and often in the gospels. The bevoegde Jewish Council is called the πρεσβυτέριον; the same goes for the “council of the elders” in the Early Church (for instance 1 Tim 4:14).

5:17); pray of the sick and anoint them (James 5:14); they should guard the flock of God as shepherds (1 Pet 5:2).

- (v) There are specific discipline measures (punishment measures) for handling complaints and giving punishment (1 Tim 5:19).
- (vi) Tit 1:7 indicates that *presbuteros* and *episkopos* are (at least for the writer of Titus) synonymous. In 1:5 the word *presbuteroi* is used, and the same people are called *episkopoi* in 1:7: **7** δεῖ γὰρ τὸν **ἐπίσκοπον** ἀνέγκλητον εἶναι ὡς θεοῦ οἰκονόμον.
- (vii) In Revelations (Rev 4-5,7,11,14) the “24 elders” probably refers to the church in its fullness.

2.3 ποιμαίνω and ethimologically related words

2.3.1 ποιμαίνω

The basic possibilities for meaning (according to the Louw & Nida Lexicon) for **ποιμαίνω** are the following: ^a guard sheep/goats as shepherd: 44.3; ^b lead and help, like a shepflockhis herd: 36.2. ^c rule: 37.57. Possibility ^b is relevant.

❖ **36.2 ποιμαίνω^b**: Louw & Nida (1988:36.2) define the meaning as “a figurative expansion on the meaning of ποιμαίνω^a ‘take care of sheep/goats as shepherd,’ 44.3, namely to lead, with the implication of taking care of”, with the translational possibility “to lead and to help, to lead and to take care of.”³³

This word is used with this meaning in the following parts of Scripture:

Acts 20:28 (Paul’s instruction to the elders of Ephesus: “²⁸Pas julle self op en die hele kudde wat die Heilige Gees onder julle sorg gestel het. Soos wagtters ’n kudde versorg, so moet julle die gemeente van God versorg oor wie die Heilige Gees julle as overseers (ἐπισκόπους) aangestel het, om as herders op te tree (ποιμαίνειν) vir die gemeente van God, wat Hy vir Hom verkry het deur die bloed van sy eie Seun.” ...

³¹Wees waaksaam. Onthou dat ek elkeen van julle drie jaar lank onderrig het, aanhoudend, dag en nag, baiekeer met tranen. ³²Maar nou vertrou ek julle aan God toe en aan die woord van sy genade. Die woord is magtig om julle op te bou en julle in die seëninge te laat deel wat Hy aan al die gelowiges as erfdeel belowe het.³⁴

1 Pet 5:1-3: As mede-ouderling en getuie van die lyding van Christus en ook deelgenoot aan die heerlikheid wat geopenbaar sal word, dring ek by die ouderlinge onder julle daarop aan: ²**Pas** die kudde van God wat aan julle toevertrou is, goed **op**. Hou toesig oor hulle, nie uit dwang nie, maar gewillig soos God dit ver wag; nie om eie gewin nie, maar uit toegewydheid; ³ook nie deur baas te speel oor dié wat God aan julle sorg toevertrou het nie, maar deur ’n voorbeeld vir die kudde te wees.³⁵

Op 7:17: ¹⁷want die Lam wat in die middel van die troon is, sal hulle herder wees as Herder versorg en hulle na die fontein met die water van die lewe lei; en God sal al die tranen van hulle oë afdroog.”³⁶

2.3.2 Ποιμήν

The basic possibilities for meaning (according to the Louw & Nida Lexicon) for **ποιμήν** are the following: ^a shepherd: 44.4; ^b minister: 53.72. Possibility ^b is relevant.

❖ **53.72 ποιμήν^b, ένος**: Louw & Nida (1988:36.2) define the meaning as “a figurative expansion of the meaning of ποιμήν^a ‘shepherd,’ 44.4, namely

³³ Louw & Nida (1988:36.2): **36.2 ποιμαίνω^b**: (a figurative extension of meaning of ποιμαίνω^a ‘to shepherd,’ 44.3) to lead, with the implication of providing for—to guide and to help, to guide and take care of.’ ἐκ σοῦ γὰρ ἐξελεύσεται ἡγούμενος, ὅστις ποιμανεῖ τὸν λαόν μου τὸν Ἰσραήλ ‘from you will come a leader who will guide and help my people Israel’ Matt 2.6.

³⁴ **Acts 20:28**: προσέχετε ἑαυτοῖς καὶ παντὶ τῷ ποιμνίῳ, ἐν ᾧ ὑμᾶς τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον ἔθετο ἐπισκόπους ποιμαίνειν τὴν ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ θεοῦ, ἣν περιποιήσατο διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ ἰδίου. ... **31** διὸ γρηγορεῖτε μνημονεύοντες ὅτι τριετίαν νύκτα καὶ ἡμέραν οὐκ ἐπαυσάμην μετὰ δακρῶν νοουθετῶν ἕνα ἕκαστον. **32** καὶ τὰ νῦν παρατίθεμαι ὑμᾶς τῷ θεῷ καὶ τῷ λόγῳ τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ, τῷ δυναμένῳ οἰκοδομῆσαι καὶ δοῦναι τὴν κληρονομίαν ἐν τοῖς ἡγιασμένοις πᾶσιν.

³⁵ **1 Pet 5:1-3**: Πρεσβυτέρους οὖν ἐν ὑμῖν παρακαλῶ ὁ συμπρεσβύτερος καὶ μάρτυς τῶν τοῦ Χριστοῦ παθημάτων, ὁ καὶ τῆς μελλούσης ἀποκαλύπτεσθαι δόξης κοινωνός. **2 ποιμάνετε** τὸ ἐν ὑμῖν ποιμνιον τοῦ θεοῦ [ἐπισκοποῦντες] μὴ ἀναγκαστῶς ἀλλὰ ἐκουσίως κατὰ θεόν, μηδὲ αἰσχροκερδῶς ἀλλὰ προθύμως, **3** μηδ’ ὡς κατακυριεύοντες τῶν κλήρων ἀλλὰ τύποι γινόμενοι τοῦ ποιμνίου.

³⁶ **Rev 7:17**: ὅτι τὸ ἄρνιον τὸ ἀνά μέσον τοῦ θρόνου ποιμανεῖ αὐτοὺς καὶ ὀδηγήσει αὐτοὺς ἐπὶ ζωῆς πηγᾶς ὑδάτων, καὶ ἐξαλείψει ὁ θεὸς πᾶν δάκρυον ἐκ τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν αὐτῶν.

someone who is responsible for the care and guidance of a Christian congregation”, with the possibility for translation as “shepherd/pastor, minister”.³⁷

This word is used with this meaning in the following parts of Scripture:

Eph 4:11: ¹¹En dit is die “gawes” wat Hy “gegee het”: apostels, profete, evangeliste, en **herders en leraars**. ¹²Sy doel daarmee was om die gelowiges toe te rus vir hulle diens en vir die opbou van die liggaam van Christus ... ¹⁶ en uit Hom ~~groeï die hele liggaam~~ bewerkstellig die hele liggaam die groei van die liggaam. Die verskillende liggaamsdele ~~pas by mekaar en vorm saam ’n eenheid~~ is goed saamgevoeg en saamgebind deur elke ondersteunende ledemaat. Die verskillende liggaamsdele pas by mekaar en vorm saam ’n eenheid. Elkeen van hulle vervul sy funksie, en so bou die liggaam homself op in liefde.³⁸

Heb 13:20: ²⁰God wat vrede gee, het ons Here Jesus wat deur die bloed van die ewige verbond die groot **Herder** van sy kudde is, uit die dood teruggebring.³⁹

1 Pet 2:25: ²⁵Julle het immers soos skape rondgedwaal, maar nou het julle teruggekom na julle Herder en die Bewaker van julle lewe.⁴⁰

2.3.3 Conclusion: the meaning of and revelation with ποιμαίνω and ethimologically related words

An elder has to lead and help the congregation that was entrusted to him like a shepflockhis herd. The following matters can be deduced from the Scritpural information:

- (i) God gives certain persons as gifts to the congregation as “shepflockand minister” (τοὺς δὲ ποιμένας καὶ διδασκάλους, Ef 4:11).
- (ii) The shepflockhad to guard the flock(προσέχετε, Acts20:28); act as shepflock(ποιμαίνειν, Acts 20:28; ποιμάνετε, 1 Pet 5:2) for the congregation/flockof God; be waaksaam (γρηγορεῖτε, Acts 20:31); and has to be an example to the flock(τύποι ... τοῦ ποιμνίου, 1 Pet 5:3); should equip believers for their service, namely for the edification of the body of Christ (πρὸς τὸν καταρτισμὸν ... εἰς ἔργον διακονίας, εἰς οἰκοδομὴν τοῦ σώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ, Eph 4:12).
- (iii) The shepherds should remember what they have been taught (μνημονεύοντες ... νοουθετῶν, Acts 20:31).
- (iv) Elders are edified by the word, and it gives them the inheritance (τῷ λόγῳ ... τῷ δυναμένῳ οἰκοδομῆσαι καὶ δοῦναι τὴν κληρονομίαν, Acts 20:32).
- (v) Jesus Christ is “the great Shepflockof his herd” (τὸν ποιμένα τῶν προβάτων τὸν μέγαν, Heb 13:20), and the “Shepflockand Guard of your life” (τὸν ποιμένα καὶ ἐπίσκοπον τῶν ψυχῶν ὑμῶν, 1 Pet 2:25), as Lam he will care for you as Shepflockand lead you to the fountains with the water of life (τὸ ἄρνιον ... ποιμανεῖ αὐτοὺς, Rev 7:17).

³⁷ Louw & Nida (1988:53.72): **53.72 ποιμήν^b, ἑνός:** (a figurative extension of meaning of ποιμήν^a ‘shepherd,’ 44.4) one who is responsible for the care and guidance of a Christian congregation—‘pastor, minister.’ αὐτὸς ἔδωκεν τοὺς μὲν ἀποστόλους, τοὺς δὲ προφήτας, τοὺς δὲ εὐαγγελιστάς, τοὺς δὲ ποιμένας καὶ διδασκάλους, **12** πρὸς τὸν καταρτισμὸν τῶν ἁγίων εἰς ἔργον διακονίας, εἰς οἰκοδομὴν τοῦ σώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ ... **16** ἐξ οὗ πᾶν τὸ σῶμα συναρμολογούμενον καὶ συμβιβασζόμενον διὰ πάσης ἀφῆς τῆς ἐπιχορηγίας κατ’ ἐνέργειαν ἐν μέτρῳ ἐνὸς ἐκάστου μέρους τὴν αὐξησιν τοῦ σώματος ποιεῖται εἰς οἰκοδομὴν ἑαυτοῦ ἐν ἀγάπῃ.

³⁸ **Ef 4:11:** καὶ αὐτὸς ἔδωκεν τοὺς μὲν ἀποστόλους, τοὺς δὲ προφήτας, τοὺς δὲ εὐαγγελιστάς, τοὺς δὲ ποιμένας καὶ διδασκάλους, **12** πρὸς τὸν καταρτισμὸν τῶν ἁγίων εἰς ἔργον διακονίας, εἰς οἰκοδομὴν τοῦ σώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ ... **16** ἐξ οὗ πᾶν τὸ σῶμα συναρμολογούμενον καὶ συμβιβασζόμενον διὰ πάσης ἀφῆς τῆς ἐπιχορηγίας κατ’ ἐνέργειαν ἐν μέτρῳ ἐνὸς ἐκάστου μέρους τὴν αὐξησιν τοῦ σώματος ποιεῖται εἰς οἰκοδομὴν ἑαυτοῦ ἐν ἀγάπῃ.

³⁹ **Heb 13:20:** Ὁ δὲ θεὸς τῆς εἰρήνης, ὁ ἀναγαγὼν ἐκ νεκρῶν τὸν **ποιμένα** τῶν προβάτων τὸν μέγαν ἐν αἵματι διαθήκης αἰωνίου, τὸν κύριον ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦν.

⁴⁰ **1 Pet 2:25:** ἦτε γὰρ ὡς πρόβατα πλανώμενοι, ἀλλὰ ἐπεστράφητε νῦν ἐπὶ τὸν ποιμένα καὶ ἐπίσκοπον τῶν ψυχῶν ὑμῶν.

3. Conclusion: the revelation in the New Testament regarding the (service of) elder:

1. From Tit 1:7 it is evident that *presbuteros* and *episkopos* are used synonymously⁴¹; what goes for the *episkopos*, is therefore also applicable to *presbuteros*, and vice versa. Yet it is important to translate it distinctively, as “elder” (*presbuteros*) and “overseer”⁴² (*episkopos*). The third term, *poimên*, plays on the shepflockmetaphor⁴³, and manifests itself in the same semantic field as the other two.
2. An ἐπίσκοπος is someone who “opsien”, who has church leadership as ministry. This overseerskap also includes a task of oversight that is dedicated to them by God (κατὰ θεόν) (1 Pet 5:2). A *presbuteros* is a person with responsibility and bevoegdheid with regard to religious-ethical matters in which he must serve by providing guidance.
3. The Holy Spirit appointed the overseers (ἐπισκόπους) to act as shepherds (ποιμαίνειν) for the congregation of God (Acts 20:28); God gives certain persons as gifts to the congregation, as “shepflockand ministers” (τοὺς δὲ ποιμένας καὶ διδασκάλους, Eph 4:11).
4. The tasks for which elders receive the bevoegdheid (=volmag), is that they should do the following:
 - a. Look after the kudde (προσέχετε, Acts 20:28); take care as shepherds (ποιμαίνειν/ποιμάνετε) of the kudde of God (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet 5:2); and be an example to the kudde (τύποι ... τοῦ ποιμνίου, 1 Pet 5:3)
 - b. waaksaam wees (γρηγορεῖτε, Acts20:31)
 - c. remember what they have been taught (μνημονεύοντες ... νοουθετῶν, Acts 20:31); Elders are edified by the word, and gives them the inheritance (τῷ λόγῳ ... τῷ δυναμένῳ οἰκοδομῆσαι καὶ δοῦναι τὴν κληρονομίαν, Acts 20:32)
 - d. equip believers for their service, namely for the edification of the body of Christ (πρὸς τὸν καταρτισμὸν ... εἰς ἔργον διακονίας, εἰς οἰκοδομὴν τοῦ σώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ, Eph 4:12)
 - e. instruct (διδασκτικόν, 1 Tim 3:2)
 - f. educate with the healthy doctrine (παρακαλεῖν, Tit 1:9).
 - g. teësprekers weerlê (τοὺς ἀντιλέγοντας ἐλέγχειν, Tit 1:9).
 - h. Give guidance (προεστῶτες, 1 Tim 5:17)
 - i. Some preach and give instruction (οἱ κοπιῶντες ἐν λόγῳ καὶ διδασκαλίᾳ, 1 Tim 5:17)⁴⁴
 - j. Pray for the sick and annoint them with oil (James 5:14)
 - k. Another image than that of the shepherd-flockis used: An overseer is the manager of the household of God (θεοῦ οἰκονόμον) (Tit 1:7); this implies that God is the *kurios* (boss of the house), with the *episkopos* who manages the household with the mandate from the house master. The *episkopos* receives the bevoegdheid, die volmag. He does not have the authority himself, but serves the authority of Christ by leading and binding.⁴⁵
5. In the NT there is a distinction between the *episkopoi* and the *diakonoi* (Phil 1:1).
6. The elders are elected (χειροτονήσαντες, Acts 14:23) and appointed (καταστήσης, Tit 1:5), and should fulfil their task “as God expects it” (κατὰ θεόν, 1 Pet 5:2).
7. The elders have decision making authority with the apostles, and these decisions have authority (Acts 15:2 – 16:4).

⁴¹ The use of these synonyms only becomes clear from the later letters of Paul. It is notable that Paul does not use the term *presbuteros* in his early letters, but focuses more on the service as “office”.

⁴² In Afrikaans “overseer” would be good, but is archaic.

⁴³ The shepflockimage is also used in reference to Christ: He is “die groot Herder van sy kudde” (τὸν ποιμένα τῶν προβάτων τὸν μέγαν, Heb 13:20), and the “Herder en Bewaker” of their lives (τὸν ποιμένα καὶ ἐπίσκοπον τῶν ψυχῶν ὑμῶν, 1 Pet 2:25), and as Lamb he will take care of them as Shepflockand lead them to fountains with the water of new life (τὸ ἄρνιον ... ποιμανεῖ αὐτούς, Rev 7:17). This means that the elders have to base their task as shepflockon that of Christ.

⁴⁴ See the distinction between governing and instructing elder (Study 5, p. 27 ao). The distinction as it currently occurs in the practice of the GKSA, is therefore not developed in the New Testament itself.

⁴⁵ It is notable that the word “head” of the church is only used in reference to Christ. The only case where a person is the “head”, is within marriage, where the man is referred to as the head of his wife.

8. There are specific disciplinary measures for handling a complaint against an elder and for the punishment of an elder (1 Tim 5:19).

4. Implications for the current question regarding the service of the elder

This bibliographical study shows that the service of the elder comprises a wide mandate of tasks, including “specialised” tasks. Scripture does distinguish between governing and instructing elders; the implication of this distinction is further argued in the rest of this study.

Quoted sources

Louw, JP, & Nida, EA. 1996, c1989. *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament : Based on semantic domains* (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition.) . United Bible societies: New York.

Decision: Note taken of Study piece 1.

STUDY 2

BIBLIOLOGICAL STUDY ON THE REQUIREMENTS FOR BEING AN ELDER

Francois Muller

1. Introduction

This section focuses on the requirements of the *person* who wants to/has to serve in the office. There is furthermore a distinction between the *requirements of* and the *assignments to* elders. The aim is to ultimately make it clear how an elder (should) look – precisely so that he can fulfil his duties – or perhaps so that it does not hinder him in this (see the use of *deixis* in 1 Tim 3:2).

2. Relevant Parts of Scripture

2.1 Tim 3:1-7 & Titus 1:5-9

2.2 1 Petrus 5:1-3 and 2 Tim 2:24 do not have to be considered here. Although these parts do refer to elders, they do not provide important additional information and this study also deals with duties rather than characteristics.

3. 1 Tim 3:1-7

3.1 *Basic requirements for elders*

- a. **Onberispelik** (ανεπίλημπτον = someone on who others can not easily get a hold). It is not merely someone with a good name, but rather someone who is worthy of his good name.
- b. **True to his wife/husband of one wife** (μιας γυναικός άνδρα = literally: of one woman a man). From the word order it becomes clear that an elder should not be a polygamist. Titus 1:5 has the same word order. (The emphasis is not on the fact that it should be a *man*.)
- c. **Sober**. It is crucial to be able to this soberly in order to see to it that things run orderly – that *Biblical principles* are applied *sensibly*. A fanatic would therefore not make a good elder (see also 1 Peter 4:7).
- d. **Sensible/reserved** (σώφρονα): This links to sobriety and flows from it – that someone not only knows what is right, but acts accordingly (with restraint).
- e. **Civilised/decent** (κόσμιον). According to the dictionary of Louw & Nida this deals with the fact that such a person should be “modest in the sense of moderate and well-ordered”. Louw & Nida also speaks of “becoming”. Such a person should be neat (in the figurative sense), create a good impression and should not be uitspattig.
- f. **Hospitable**. These days in our life of “each person for himself and for his own family” this aspect becomes even more important. An elder should make people feel welcome – not push them away.
- g. **Capable of teaching/instructing**.

- h. **Not** someone who **abuses alcohol**.
- i. **Not** someone who creates **conflict/a figher** (πλήκτην). Louw & Nida here speaks of a *bully* – thus someone who abuses power to *bully* someone physically of spiritually *without end*. The authority that an elder receives gives him considerable power.
But rather:
- j. **Insklik** (επιεικη = thoughtful, tegemoetkomend).
- k. **No vuilgewinsoeker** (1953: αισχροκερδη) does not occur in the UBS.
- l. **Peace loving/no strydlustige** (ἀμαχον), not a trouble seeker.
- m. **Not geldgierig**.
- n. **Not someone who has recently come to the faith/not a newcomer** (νεοφυτον = not a new plant/seedling – therefore someone who has reached maturity in the faith).
- o. With a **good testimony** from people outside the congregation (ἐξωθεν = those who are outside). It can be deduced from verse 7 that should there be comments, some elders may in reaction do something foolish. If people who for instance work with him (of which many may not be believers) hear that he has become an elder, they can tease him easily and say: “What do we hear, tit they make *you* an elder?!” The world usually does not know what is right, but is quick to notice what is wrong.

3.2 *A test in practice*

- a. He should be able to **manage his family well** (προϊστάμενον = guide [Louw & Nida], help actively). The same principle is valid here as with the fifth commandment that deals with the whole matter of the practice and acceptance of legal authority, especially where it starts in one’s own home.
- b. He should not only be able to manage his family, but should also do it in the right manner: **always dignified/decent** (πάσης σεμνότητος). **Verse 4** also uses (ενυποταγη = in obedience, in submission). This implies that an elder (or parent) may not be a dictator, but should exercise authority in obedience/submission to God. **Verse 6** precisely warns against arrogance – when a person stops taking God in account.

3.3 *Remark*

Most words in the text are dealt with reasonably simply by Louw & Nida. They are not “difficult words with fine, important nuance differences”. One should therefore probably try to form an idea of the whole rather than analysing everything in detail. Different words are furthermore dealt with under the heading: “Moral and ethical qualities and related behaviour.” This hangs together with the thought that a good character should lead to good behaviour. There are no requirements regarding an elder’s circumstances, but rather how he handles it – for instance not if he is rich or poor, but whether he is greedy. Ultimately an elder should act in such a manner that he remains credible and does not lose people’s trust.

The fact that Paul starts with “Ook moet hy buite (die gemeente) ...” in verse 7 almost as an afterthought, indicates that it is in the first place about the judgement of fellow believers with regard to the person who can serve as elder and not so much what people think of him in general.

4. Titus 1:5-9

To desire vs to appoint

Note that 1 Tim 3 starts with “wie ook al ’n ouderling wil wees” and then states the requirements. Here Paul instructs Titus to as it were select and appoint elders. Here the initiative comes from the other side. From time to time many Church Councils still have to do this.

4.1 *Basic requirements for the character of an elder*

- a. **Irreproachable in behaviour as manager/faultless as steward** (ανέγκλητος). Although Paul uses another word here than in 1 Tim 3, there is no significant difference.
- b. **True to his wife** (see note at 1 Tim 3).
- c. **His children should be believers** (τέκνα έχων πιστά) and should not be knows as rebellious and immoral. Where the emphasis in 1 Tim 3 falls on how the elder should raise his children, here the text deals with what the result of this education should be. Note that the Greek does not contain a command: "His children *must* have faith", but gives a description - a participle is used. Literally translated Paul speaks of "children who have faith".
- d. **Not arrogant** (μη αυθάδη = L&N: arrogant)
- e. **Not quick-tempered** (μη οργίλον = quick-tempered)
- f. **Not a drunkard/drinker** (μη πάροινον = same as in 1 Tim 3)
- g. **Not a brawler/fighter** (μη πλήκτην = same as in 1 Tim 3)
- h. **Not looking for dishonour profit** (μη αισχροκερδη = L&N: unashamedly greedy)
- i. **Hospitable** (φιλόξενον same as in 1 Tim 3)
- j. **Love the good** (φιλάγαθον)
- k. **Sensible/reserved** (σώφρονα = same as 1 Tim 3)
- l. **Just**
- m. **Pious/holy** (όσιον = LN: holy, dedicated)
- n. **Self-controlled**
- o. He should **keep to the Word**/one who keeps to the Word (αντεχόμενον = participle that rather denotes the characteristic than the action.)

4.2 *Remarks*

The fact that the two sets of requirements in 1 Tim 3 and Titus 1 largely agree with regard to content and order, but are not 100% identical, further indicates that the detail is not of such importance, but rather the whole that Paul sketches each time in order to make clear who is capable of serving as elder. This does not mean that the detail is not important. If someone fails miserably in one area, it will misconstrue the entire picture. With this one should keep in mind that Paul communicates all of this per letter. The accumulation that Paul uses every time gives the impression that he could close – if it was a conversation and not a letter – each requirement with the question: "Do you get the picture?" However, such a question does not make sense in a letter.

5. Conclusion

- 5.1 There are two lists with different requirements of how someone should be to serve as elder. The underlying thought is that a good character leads to good behaviour. The two lists largely agree, but are not identical. The emphasis therefore rather falls on the whole than on every detail. The characteristics should therefore not be ticked on a "checklist". However, if someone miserably fails in one respect, it would spoil the entire picture to such an extent that he can not be regarded suitable.
- 5.2 It is clear from the fact that specific requirements are set that not each person who wants to be an elder is suitable.
- 5.3 Whoever wants to do this specialised service, should meet the same requirements as the elder.
- 5.4 There is room for someone to ask to fulfil a specialised service and for a Church Council to call someone to it: "As iemand graag 'n ouderling wil wees ... (1 Tim 3:1).

Decision: Note taken of Study piece 2.

STUDY 3

THE OFFICE OF ELDER – CHURCH POLITY INDICATIONS MALAN VAN RHYN

1. Introduction

Origin of the assignment: The request for the study regarding the office⁴⁶ of elder has its origin in the Report of the Curatorium of the National Synod of 2006:

“2.3.4.2 Training for diverse, specific and specialised ministry (non-ministerial training)

- (i) Churches, especially churches in the African context (but not only they!) have a great need for trained persons who can serve as pastoral co-workers in congregations. Until now these persons were often called evangelists or preaching assistants, but church politically it is necessary to order the matter.
- (ii) It seems preferable to confirm such persons in the office of elder, and to give them maximal training.
- (iii) More discussion has to follow with churches on which qualifications will be sufficient for this purpose.
- (iv) In this regard the Curators Synod 2006 requested a thorough study of the office of the elder in order to open this office up maximally with the aim of meeting the ministry needs of churches, especially churches in the African context, but also with the inclusion of all other churches in the GKSA” (p803, 804).

“2.3.7.6 decide to appoint Study Deputies to make a thorough study of the office of the elder in order to use in optimally in the light of the needs of the churches for persons who can accept responsibility for diverse, specific and specialised ministry work in the churches (see 2.3.4.2)” (p 805).

Church political background

In his introduction to the Church Order booklet (1998:5) prof A le R du Plooy writes:

“* After the extra-ordinary services (such as apostles and prophets) laid the foundations of the church in and through Christ (Eph 2:20), the special services of the elders (instructing and governing elders) and deacons should build on this. All the elders (presbuteroi) were keepers or governors in the churches, and some fulfilled the service of the Word especially (Acts 6; 11:30, 14:23; 20:28; Pastoral Letters, for instance 1 Tim 3:2; 5:17; 2 Tim 2:2; Phil 1:1; 1 Pet 5).

* Through the ministry of the Word, the sacraments and the church punishment or discipline (Matt 16:17-19; 2 Tim 4:2; 1 Cor 10:16 ao; 1 Cor 11:23; 1 Cor 5) believers can be equipped and the church edified.”

It is therefore clear that elders did “specialised” service work in congregations – some elders served as ministers. All ministers were therefore elders, but not all elders were ministers. This study does not go into the distinction between instructing and governing elders since it is addressed elsewhere in the Report (see Section 2, Study 5).

2. The Church Order on the office of elder

The following CO articles are relevant:

Article 16

The office of the ministers of the Word comprises persevering in prayer and the ministry of the Word, serving the Sacraments, to pay attention to their fellow brothers, to the elders, to the deacons as well as the congregations, and ultimately to exercise church discipline with the elders and to see that everything is decent and orderly.

(**Article 22** – This article deals with the manner of selection and is not really relevant for this study.)

Article 23

The office of the elder comprises, in addition to what they do together with the minister of the Word, as specified in article 16, also includes see to it that ministers of the Word, their fellow elders and the deacons serve their offices faithfully; and furthermore to do

⁴⁶ The Deputies prefer the word “service”, but because the word “office” is used in the assignment and in the Church Order, the two words are used interchangeably.

house visit to the edification of the congregation as the circumstances of time and place allow, as well as before communion, to comfort and teach church members, and to entice others to the Christian faith.

Article 55

In order to maintain the pure doctrine in the congregation and to defend against false doctrines and heresies, the ministers of the Word and the elders turn to the means of instruction, refutation, warning and exhortation during the exercise of their different offices, during the ministry of the Word, during catechism instruction and during house visits.

Cooperation

Although the Church Order makes a definite distinction between the office of the minister of the Word and the elder, there are tasks and terrains where the minister of the Word and the elders serve together (for instance punishment and church governance).

Specialised service work of the elder

There are also tasks and areas where the elder serves independently (“besides that which they do together with the minister of the Word as laid down in article 16”). These are: “also to see to it that minister of the Word, their fellow elders and the deacons serve their offices faithfully; furthermore to do house visits to the edification of the congregation as the circumstances of time and place allow, as well as before Communion, to comfort members and to teach and entice others unto Christ.” We can summarise these tasks as supervision (and governance), house visits to the edification of the congregation and evangelisation.

House visit is understood as not merely a visit to the home of a member, but the pastoral care to and spiritual edification of the member. Seen as such, house visits are already specialised service. See underneath a.o. “3. Conclusion: the revelation in the New Testament on the (service of) elder” in the section: Bibliographical Study, p 13 a.o. According to article 23 the elder also has the task of evangelisation, which is also specialised service. This assignment is also contained in the Confirmation Formulary (elders): “Your assignment as elder(s) is thus the following: ... 4. You should call the deviants and heathens to conversion and faith in Jesus Christ, because in this manner the church comes together in Christ.” By assigning the tasks of house visits and evangelisation to elders, the church order therefore also gives a broad authority to the elders to do “specialised service”. “Specialised service” has therefore actually always been part of the assignment and task of the elders.

However, this does not mean that certain elders can for instance be identified for evangelisation only and be freed from the other duties of elders. (See the Synod decision of 1967 against Functional Differentiation of the office of Elder).

In 1967 Synod (Acta 1967:100-102) denied a request for the Functional Differentiation of the Office of Elder. The argumentation states: “By singling out elders for evangelisation and mission and dedicating these functions to them, new offices originate, which are unnecessary in any case, because essentially these functions are official ministry to the deviants and heathens in turn. It is the work of a minister of the Word.”

The last sentence is problematic: “It is the work of a minister of the Word.” If this should mean that it is only the work of a minister of the Word and not also of elders, it would directly contravene CO art 23 and the Confirmation Formulary that dedicate evangelisation directly to elders too. The argument that the elder is involved with evangelisation only in watching over the evangelisation work of the minister, also contravenes the Confirmation Formulary and CO art 23 clearly.

However, Synod did not *decide* that evangelisation is only the work of a minister of the Word. The Synod decision was against a request to differentiate the office. The part that apparently (wrongfully) argues that evangelisation is only the duty of a minister of the Word and not also that of an elder, is in the argumentation and is not part of the decision of Synod. The argumentation led to a decision, but the argumentation was

not the decision. The decision was to reject to request (that certain elders be identified to only fulfil certain tasks, such as evangelisation and to leave other duties of elderly work). The decision was therefore not against elders who do evangelisation, but against the thought that elders be singled out for only certain tasks and that this would set them free from the normal tasks of an elder.

3. Conclusion

It was clearly shown from the Church Order that elders are called to do “specialised service” as part of their calling such as pastoral care and evangelisation, but in such a manner that they do not neglect their general responsibilities. Specific elders can therefore focus on certain aspects of the “specialised service” without neglecting any other aspect of their service.

Decision: Note taken of Study piece 3.

STUDY 4

THE OFFICE OF ELDER – CHURCH HISTORICAL INDICATIONS HENNIE MOMBERG

1. How the elder functioned historically, especially in Gereformeerde Kerke

Selected sources:

For research of this matter mainly 2 groups of sources were used, something from the deposit of the Patristics, and also the description of the matter as it appeared in the history of the Reformation and after that. Obviously this is an enormous exercise if one would like to do it in detail. However, it is not the intention that we should redo the valuable work of very good and trustworthy works, but rather that we use the information in summary. I searched many of the original sources with the different search options and in the light of the special question to the Study Deputies attempted to focus on the following questions:

- a. How was the service in the office understood in general?
- b. How did the office of the elder function, specifically in relation to the specification of this in the office of the minister?
- c. How did assistance on different terrains in the congregations function in the offices to the edification of the congregations?
- d. In which ways were these assistant services acknowledged and used orderly?

A: How was the service in the office understood in general?

From the Reformed history it was, according to Van't Spijker, especially Maartin Bucer⁴⁷ who did the first foundational work on which other Reformers, especially Calvin, expanded.⁴⁸ In contradiction to different deviating views, for instance the static concept of office of Rome, as well as the spiritual functioning of the office in Rome (ex opere operato), Bucer revalued the priesthood of all believers from Scripture. The gift of the Holy Spirit, who makes us part of all Christ's virtues and merits, is foundational for the exercise of the office of the believer, and with that the calling to serve each other according to the range of our gifts. The matter is also dealt with thoroughly in the historical backgrounds of the service in the office by Voetius⁴⁹, Rutgers⁵⁰, Bouwman⁵¹. Yet the entire Reformed tradition agrees that there is also the calling and ministry with the aim of conversion, faith and the edification of the congregation, which is more than only a function of the Spiritfilled priesthood of all believers. All the believers has their task in the one body, but there is also a calling that does not go for everyone without distinction.

⁴⁷ Van't Spijker 1987, De ambten bij Martin Bucer.

⁴⁸ Institution Book 4

⁴⁹ his *Politica Ecclesiastica*, edited by FL Rutgers

⁵⁰ Rutgers' *Het Kerkrecht*

⁵¹ H Bouwman's *Gereformeerd Kerkrecht*, Book 2 section 1 ch 1

There is something of a *missio Dei*, a divine mission in which God himself has reservations and for which He send workers into the vine. Such workers are not above the rest of the congregation, neither are they opposite the congregation, they are rather one with the body and live as part of it ... when there is any speaking of standing opposite the congregation, then it is due to the Divine command ... then it is actually opposite the Word of God. No-one may preach unless he has been called by God (Rom 10).

Calling

The reformed tradition distinguishes a few aspects in this regard. Firstly, the gift of wisdom, eloquence, attentiveness, loyalty and the desire to serve the Word of God. Secondly, the finer training and competence for the task, not only for the necessary preparation for the service, but also for the eventual exercise of it. Thirdly, the recognition of these gifts by the congregation and election and ceremonial confirmation that belongs to it.

How was the distinction of the offices seen?

Die Reformers saw the distinction as different equipping ministries, in contrast against Rome that view it as static and gradual differences. Bucer even went as far as suggesting only one confirmation for episkopi, presbiters and deacons in his church order. Furthermore, in time the variation of the word ministering gifts as stated in Ephesians 4 was seen as variations of the presbiterial service of which some specialisations have fallen away and others remained, and even new ones originated. What remained is mainly the elders, the ministers, and the lecturers. Yet it has always been recognised that all the specialisations/variations are based in the office of the elder, and were meant to equip the office of the elder better for the equipment of the entire congregation.

The deduction can be made that it has always been the understanding in the Reformed tradition that the elders as shepherds (John 21; Acts 20; 1 Pet 5) were the basic special service for the edifying congregation. Through their service the congregation is equipped for service. The basic responsibility for the state of the congregation rests on the elder, even to such a degree that in Reformed church political definitions the existence of a congregation depends on whether there are elders present (see CO artt 38, 39). A congregation can be without an episkopos – and it would be constituted as a temporary shortcoming that has to be addressed quickly. A congregation can also be without deacons – and this would also be viewed as a temporary shortcoming that has to be addressed quickly. But a congregation without presbiters can not exist. According to the Reformed view of the church the council of the elders is the only body of authority that Christ instated to maintain the welfare of his congregation in his Name. From there the description of the how the Reformed faith views the Biblical church governance as the presbiterial church governance”. Each activity that takes place in the congregation stands under the supervision and discipline of the presbiters. It is a foundational point of departure for dealing with the matter under discussion.

There is thus no doubt that from the history of the Reformation it is evident that there has always been the view that where elders are thoroughly equipped for service, they can/must thoroughly equip the government. Where elders are called to supervise all the special ministries of the ministry of the Word, supervision and service of relieving poverty, it is a cardinal condition that they should themselves be equipped to do these things. It is then a task in their midst to instate special service through the ministry of members with special gifts based on the need and the calling of the congregation from their own midst according to the Word of the Lord. Bouwman's discussion of the instatement of assisting services in the congregation is especially noteworthy.⁵² He includes amongst these assisting services church administrators, visitors of the sick, catechism teachers, prelectors, caretakers, organists and church servants. He indicates in detail from the works of Voetius, *Classis Acta*, the Synods of Emden (1571) and Middelburg (1581), the

⁵² H Bouwman, *Gereformeerd Kerkrecht*, book 2, ch 1, par 28c

church history of the 17th century and onwards, that different assisting services were used to the edification of congregation under the supervision of the church council.

And then the principle of prophets training prophets also exist. Equipped presbiters who as are acknowledge by other presbiters as such, should train presbiters to equip the congregation to serve. Calvin's use of *La Congrégation* (the weekly gathering of ministers) as instrument for further training of ministers and incubator of his commentaries on Bible books, is telling in this regard:

The *congrégation* is an ecclesiastical institution, prescribed by the Church order of Geneva and intended for all ministers from the city and the surrounding villages, in order "to maintain purity and unity in doctrine" (*pour converser pureté et concord de doctrine*). The method of working was the exposition of biblical books in *lectio continua*. Every minister expounded (part of) a chapter, probably in order of seniority, when his turn came around. The colleagues added their thoughts or gave critique. Lay members from the Church were present and could ask questions or participate in the discussion. John Calvin had the lead in expounding a passage only when it was his turn. However, as the moderator he had the right to give his reaction first and always presented a summary at the end of the session and lead his brothers in prayer. That is whenever he was present in this session of the Company of Pastors of Geneva.⁵³

If the elders could call someone from the community of churches to join the congregation and to render special services from their midst – that is all well, otherwise they should see to the equipment for the service from their own midst!

The historical functioning of the elder in the Gereformeerde Kerke is best summarised by the description of the service of the elder in the Church Order (art 23), the Confirmation Formulary as well as the BC, artt 30 and 31. It is well-known that the Church Order of Dordrecht 1618-19, as we adapted it for use in South Africa, is the closer development of the work of Calvin as stated in his *Ordonnances Ecclesiastiques de Geneve*.⁵⁴ It is also known that the articles of the BC is the adaptation of Guido de Bres of the *Confessio Gallicana*, which was established with the cooperation of Calvin⁵⁵ while de Bres was a student of Calvin himself.⁵⁶ The Confirmation Formularies also come from the Reformation of the 16th century.⁵⁷

- a. BC, art 30 is especially striking. It has a strong emphasis on the mutual treatment of the service. All offices are mutually responsible as means of God's spiritual management of his church, of caring for the effective execution of the different tasks – that true religion is maintained, the true doctrine is spread, spiritual discipline is practiced and care of the poor is maintained. In this manner everything will happen thoroughly and orderly.
- b. Also striking is the description of the office of elder in the Church Order, art 23. The first and introductory sentence of their task description includes the things they should do with the minister of the Word as stated in art 16. In accordance with article 16 the ministry of the Word and maintenance of order, practice of discipline as well as prayer and comfort, are the basic tasks of the elders in the basic and conventional manner as well as the ministers in a specialised manner. In addition both article 16 and 23 both clearly mentions that they should fulfil their tasks together. It can be deduced with reasonable certainty that the task distinction between elders and the other offices is not essential, but rather on the level of specialisation where those who are more specialised, equipped and capable, equip others to the edification of those who are less specialised and equipped, and this mutually, in supervision and in cooperation with each other. The fact that the Reformed understanding of the functioning of the different offices is serious about the essential equality of the offices as well as the

⁵³ De Boer E, 2007, Article for *Acta Theologica*. Also see his article 'The Congrégations: In-Service Training Center of the Preachers to the People of Geneva', in: *Calvin and the Company of Pastors. Calvin Studies Society Papers 2003*, 57-87

⁵⁴ AV, book 2, ch 1, par 28b

⁵⁵ AV, book 2, ch 1, par 28b

⁵⁶ Biography of Guido de Bres ...

⁵⁷ As described by Van't Spijker 1987, de Ambten bij Martin Bucer, Bucer se ordinatie en sy korrespondensie met Farel en Calvin, p377-385.

interchangeability and assistance with regard to certain tasks, is especially notable in CO, art 38 where the stipulation is made that where the elders are too few to do the work, deacons may also be included in the Church Council.

- c. The way in which the elder's task is described in the Confirmation Formulary is also striking. The formulation of the elder's task regarding the minister of the Word deserves special mention. They should "especially" supervise the doctrine and life of the minister. The implications of this for the purposes of the question to the Study deputies are far-reaching. Supervision requires that a person be equipped to supervise. It is also written as such: "To fulfil this service thoroughly, it is necessary that elders study the Word of God thoroughly and immerse them in the richness of the gospel."

The intention of the study is to look at the possibility of assistant services to the work of the minister/missionary. It seems from the history of the Reformation that the elders stood in the closest relationship to the minister/missionary.⁵⁸ From the earlier church history (Patristics) it is evident that the special guiding, teaching and supervising tasks were often given to presbyters.⁵⁹ The most well-known is probably Aurelius Augustinus. It was after he completed the special tasks as presbyter so well that he was appointed as bishop by the bishop Vallerius. His appointment as bishop was similar to the circumstances under which Ambrosius became a bishop in Milan while he was still an "unschooled" person. It is well-known from the history of the Reformation that Calvin, trained in law and never formally trained as theologian, was approached by Farrel for service in Geneva.⁶⁰ Calvin was a minister according to the description in our church order, art 8. Seen from the history of the Reformed faith the initial question should be inverted, namely to which degree should ministers give assistance for the primary service of the elders? Seen as such, there is no real stumbling block for assistance as long as it is done orderly within the congregation.⁶¹ Much information arises from the South African church history and the history of the GKSA that shows persons who had the necessary gifts who were used by congregations for assistance in matters that are normally left to ministers.⁶² We can mention pres Paul Kruger⁶³ as speaking example. He served as elder for long periods of time during his life, and was allowed in later years to speak in different congregations at different times, which was in actual fact preaching. As if this is not enough, even our beloved and honore predecessor, prof Dirk Postma, was confirmed as minister in the Netherlands before he came to South Africa based on his special gifts (KO, art 8).⁶⁴ Several examples were described in congregation histories where elders with special gifts received permission to preach, were used as primary missionary assistants, were singled out for special pastoral care, were used for youth ministry, etc. That assistant service already exists is a proven historical fact. Also that this assistance rests on special gifts, special equipment and training. Mostly the equipment and training given were not necessarily formal, and also not necessarily from the direct theological cader. However, the gifts were mostly developed within the community of believers and the theology.

Decision: Note taken of Study piece 4.

STUDY 5

THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN INSTRUCTING AND GOVERNING ELDERS

⁵⁸ Bouwman, Book 2 ch 1.

⁵⁹ Serge Lancel, 1999, St Augustine, 150-161; Peter Brown 1969, Augustine of Hippo, 138-145; K van der Zwaag, 1993, Augustinus, de kerkvader van het Westen, 64-70.

⁶⁰ Inst Calvin, Life view of Calvin by Beza, Afrikaanse translation 1984, pp6-12.

⁶¹ H Bouwman, Gereformeerde Kerkrecht, book 2, ch 1, par 28c.

⁶² Description of the behaviour of different elders before and during the arrival of rev Postma, as edited by BR Kruger 1957, The origin of the Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid-Afrika. See also the description of this by rev GBS Pasch in the Centenary Book, 1959, pp82-88. Also see Jooste, JP, 1958, Die Geskiedenis van die Gereformeerde Kerk n Suid-Afrika, p29.

⁶³ Biography~~

⁶⁴ Van der Vyfer, GCP, 1958, Professor Dirk Postma, 1818-1890, pp30-50. As well as rev C Spoelstra, 1915m Het Kerkelijk en Godsdienstig leven der Boeren na den Grooten Trek, p192-198.

1. The elder is a shepherd-and-supervisor and the minister is a shepherd-and-minister. There are therefore agreements, namely both are shepherds, and there are certain differences, namely the accent of the elder's work is on supervision and government and that of the minister on instruction.
The differences are only differences in focus and are not function-excluding differences. The elders should also instruct (1 Tim 3:2) and the minister should also supervise and govern (CO, art 16).
The difference in focus will have to feature in practice. If it is accepted that the New Testamental offices serve the three-fold office of Christ (Prophet, King, High Priest) there will be a clear indication between the office that mainly serves the prophet office and the office that serves the kingship.
However, the Biblical information does not lead us towards the great differences in task, equipment, responsibility or status that exists in current-day practice between ministers and elders.
2. That differences do exist, is evident from:
 - 2.1 the "especially" of 1 Tim 5:17⁶⁵
 - 2.2 the fact that the "angel" in the letters in Rev 2-3 (if it is assumed that it is the minister of the congregation) is not directly addressed to the entire Church Council.
3. That the difference is not that great, is evident from:
 - 3.1 The fact that elders and missionaries are instated with the same gravity (see Acts 13:3 with 14:23)
 - 3.2 1 Tim 5:17 which awards "double honour" to some of the elders
 - 3.3 The fact that Peter, the *primus inter pares* of the apostles, calls himself a fellow-elder with the other shepherd-supervisor elders in the realm of the Christians (1 Pet 5:1-2)
 - 3.4 The fact that the church is represented by elders (without any specification) in heaven (Rev 4-5)
4. Certain practical differences between the service of ministers and elders give the perception of a great "distance" between the two services:
 - 4.1 The ministers service full-time, the elders serve part-time
 - 4.2 The minister undergo special training, the elders do not
 - 4.3 The minister serves for life, the elder periodically (hangs together with full-time-part-time matter)
 - 4.4 The minister receives remuneration and the elder serves at own cost (also hangs together with full-time-part-time matter)
5. In principle the difference in training between ministers and elders are only defensible with regard to the matters unique to the minister's service, for instance the study of Bible languages, Liturgy and Catechism and Homiletics, and advanced study in Scripture analysis and Dogmatics and Missiology/Apologetics. Study that touch on the fields of the service of the elder (supervision and governance), such as Dogmatics, Dogma History, Symbolics (has to do with the adjudication of the minister's doctrine), church governance, Pastoral work, basic Hermeneutics, Exegesis and Revelation history (has to do with the Scripture explication and teaching that the elder should provide), Missiology and Apologetics, are in principle equally necessary for elders and minister. The fact that the study for elders and ministers should have an academic format, credibility and recognition, should be considered based on preferability and not necessity.

Decision: Note taken of Study piece 5.

STUDY 6

THE REMUNERATION OF ELDERS

⁶⁵ In his M-dissertation Pieter Kurpershoek argues the possibility that "especially" (*malista*) in 1 Tim 5:17 exegetical meaning, as in 1 Tim 4:10.

1. The principle is that the church of the Lord should take care of the livelihood of servants who can as a result of their service not provide in it for themselves (1 Cor 9:13-14; Gal 6:6; 1 Tim 5:17).
2. The extension of the principle means that the church should also supplement the livelihood of servants whose service keeps them from providing for themselves in full, something that may happen when well-equipped elders give much of their time to service in churches ("part-time" ministry elders).
3. The extension of the principle also means that the church should assist elders whose expenditure as a result of their service transgresses their own capacity for contribution.
4. However, result of the Roman system of a paid clerical corpus, will have to be consciously and carefully avoided.

Decision: Note taken of Study piece 6.

SECTION 3 CONCLUDING FINDINGS

1. The service of elder according to Scripture is to give spiritual care and guidance to believers. This includes "specialised tasks" such as for instance pastoral care, instruction in the Word and evangelisation (see Section 2, Study 1).
2. In the Reformed church history as well as in the Reformed church governance, as stated in the Church Order of the GKSA, the "specialised service" is seen as part of the service of elders, including for instance pastoral care and evangelisation. It is even possible that specific elders can focus and specialise in certain aspects of the service. However, this may not occur at the cost of the other aspects and general responsibilities contained in their service (see Section 2, Studies 2 and 4).
3. The special and strict requirements set by Scripture for elders show that this service has a weighty spiritual content and it is not merely a management of the outer facets of the congregation (see Section 2, Study 3).
4. The great differences in practice between ministers and elders are not Biblically motivated (Section 2, Study 5).
5. Biblically seen the elder's task is broad enough for all the pastoral needs in the churches, and therefore the institution of another office is not necessary. The office of the elder should just be developed to its full capacity. The solution to the matter studied on instruction of the Deputies therefore lies in the development of the office of elder to its full potential.
6. This development should especially take place through good quality and applicable training of elders.
7. All elders should be trained and equipped in such a manner that they can handle the necessary diverse, specific and specialised service needed in the areas of pastoral, evangelising and instructing service – excluding the parts reserved for the work of the minister.
8. Churches can, when an elder's service keeps him from fully providing in his own livelihood, or when an elder's expenditure transgresses their own capacity for contribution, assist them financially (Section 2, Study 6).
9. The ministers of the Word are primarily responsible for the training and equipment of elders.
10. Elder support and cooperation in this can – as in the case of the training as intending ministers – assist the churches.
11. There should be a decision on the content and nature (purely ecclesiastical + academic) and extent of training for elders. This should be offered decentralised and as in-service-training as far as possible with clear guidelines for Church Councils/Classes/Regional Synods regarding the nature, content and standard of the training.

Decision: Note taken of 1 to 11.

SECTION 4

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That churches and ministers be called to make an effort with the training and equipment of elders.
2. That the TSP provides guidance to intending ministers on the nature, content and standard of elder equipment.
3. That churches consider offering courses for elders on the level of congregations, Classes or Regional Synods continually and to in this manner care for the continuous training and equipment of elders.
4. That these courses include the following:
 - 4.1 Instruction in basic, relevant aspects of hermeneutics, exegesis and revelation history.
 - 4.2 Instruction in the doctrine of the church, with a focus on the confessions of the Gereformeerde Kerke.
 - 4.3 Principles and practice of Reformed church governance.
 - 4.4 Principles and practice of pastoral care.
 - 4.5 Principles and practice of Missiology and Apolotetics.

Decision: Pt 1 to 4.5 is approved.

5. Deputies are appointed to:
 - execute the work stated in the recommendations
 - assist churches by:
 - developing training courses
 - making alternative curricula and lesson material available for further academic training of elders (divers, specific and specialised ministry work)
- 5.3 That these assignments are read in the context of the decision of Synod 2006:805 and that the special context be taken into account.

Decision: Approved as ammended; ammendments already integrated – Deputies Acta.