



The place and significance of the offices in the congregation of Christ

Those who speak about the offices in the congregation of Christ tackle a subject that in the last years has received much attention both in the church and in theology.¹ In the current discussions about the offices we can distinguish at least four prominent views. There is, in the first place, the clerical view, which proceeds from the apostolic succession and the significance of the consecration sacrament. This view is held by the Roman Catholic church and the Church of England. In the second place, there is a charismatic view, which assigns a central place to the Spirit-endowed, religious personality. We find this view in Pentecostal churches and in some that favour congregationalism. In the third place there is a sociological oriented view, which sees the congregation as a religious group that cannot do without a leader. There officebearers are people who are appointed by the congregation herself in order to preserve her own identity. This view comes to the fore in publications from both Dutch Reformed and Synodical Reformed circles.²

Then there is yet the Reformed view of the offices, as it is known in our Reformed churches and concretely expressed in our confession and in our *Form for Ordination*. The last view will form my subject. It is my intention to show how our reformed view goes back to Scripture and how in it the intentions of the Holy Spirit have been formulated in a most excellent way. The Reformers fought for *Sola Scriptura*. They also wished to honour this adage, when they spoke about the offices in the church. Reformed church polity recognizes no other law than the Word of Christ the King. It alone should rule in His church.

The charismatic congregation

In order to gain a proper perspective of the function of the ecclesiastical offices, we must first of all take into account the structure that the congregation has according to the New Testament. In the old dispensation, the structure was determined by representation: the priests and the Levites represented the people before God and acted in the sanctuary on behalf of them. It is not coincidental that the priests are called the "approachers" (cf. Exodus 19:22). They alone were designated by the Lord to approach Him and to serve in His holy presence.

In the new dispensation the structure of the congregation is characterized by participation.³ The officebearers no longer function as "mediators" and no longer act on behalf of someone. Everyone has access to the Father (cf. Ephesians 2:18) and everyone may enter into the heavenly sanctuary (cf. Hebrews 10:19). The Spirit not only rests on special persons, but the whole congregation shares in the gift of the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 2:16-18; Romans 8:15).

Because the congregation has received the gift of the Spirit, she also possesses various gifts of grace or *charismata*.⁴ Through His Spirit, Christ from His fullness, gives the gifts she needs to be truly His body (cf. 1 Corinthians 12:27).

According to the New Testament, the congregation is fully a charismatic congregation: a congregation that participates in the many gifts of the Spirit and in which no member is excluded.

Paul writes in Ephesians 4:7: "*But grace was given to each of us according to the measure of Christ's gift.*"

And in 1 Corinthians 12:6 he speaks about God "*who inspires them all in everyone.*"

Because everyone in the congregation shares in the grace gifts of the Spirit, everyone also can and must participate in the up building of the body. The image that the New Testament presents of the Christian congregation is, therefore, not the image of a passive congregation, in which the officebearers do everything and the congregation is a mere object of the pastoral care, but its the image of a very active congregation where the members take care of each other. In this connection it is correct to speak of a "diaconal congregation."

In the congregation everyone is called to serve other members with the gifts he has received (Galatians 5:13).

The apostle Paul admonishes: *"As each has received a gift, employ it for one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace."*

It is remarkable that many of the words that typify the work of officebearers are also used in the New Testament for the service which the members of the congregation render to one another.⁵ This makes it clear that the officebearers do not have a monopoly on admonition, correction, comfort and assistance.

Also the congregation has to reprimand (cf. Matthew 18:15), to admonish (cf. Hebrews 3:12, 13), to comfort (cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:14), to teach (c.f. Colossians 3:16), to help (cf. Galatians 6:10; Matthew 25:31-36). In Ephesians 4:16, Paul, therefore, points out the responsibility of "each member" with respect to the "growth" of the body.

Christ gives officebearers

Even though the structure of the congregation shows this participation and activity, that does not mean that the care for her up-building rests solely on her mutual service. In Ephesians 4 Paul begins to speak about the charismatic congregation in which "to each of us" grace has been given. Immediately thereafter the apostle speaks about the officebearers. It is important to note that, according to Paul, the congregation does not give herself officebearers. It is not the congregation that calls offices into being because she realizes that there have to be people that enable her to hold fast to the Word of Christ and call her to service.⁶

In Ephesians 4:11 Paul points to Christ and writes: *"And his gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers."*

The word "and" here has the meaning of "at the same time" or "in addition."⁷ Besides the many gifts of grace or *charismata*, Christ has given officebearers. The words "has given" point out that also the gift of officebearers permanently determines the structure of the Christian congregation.⁸ The office has no lesser structural significance than the *charismata*.⁹ In Acts 20:28 we read that Paul says to the elders of Ephesus that *"the Holy Spirit has made you overseers."* That Spirit is the Spirit of Christ (cf. Acts 16:7), of Him who *"nourishes and cherishes"* His congregation (cf. Ephesians 5:29) and who is always with her, *"to the dose of the age"* (cf. Matthew 28:20).

This implies that we can say that it is Christ, who through his Spirit, appointed the elders of Ephesus as overseers. The fact that the congregation has officebearers does not rest on a pragmatic basis, nor is it due to human inventiveness, but must be ascribed to the care of Christ. The offices do not come from below, from people, but from above, from Christ.

It is, therefore, completely correct, when the *Form for Ordination* begins by pointing us to Christ who from heaven has given officebearers to His congregation.

How Christ gives

Even though Christ gives officebearers, that does not mean that the congregation is completely eliminated from the process. Officebearers are not "dropped" on the congregation from heaven. Also in the process of acquiring officebearers, it becomes clear that the Christian congregation is a completely emancipated and active congregation which shares in the gift of the Holy Spirit.

In the old dispensation this was different. Then the Lord Himself determined who were to hold office and Israel had no active part in it. However, after the outpouring of the Spirit the process involving the offices also changes. We see in Acts how the congregation is involved when the need for officebearers arises. In the first place there is the election of Matthias in Acts 1:12-26. To be sure, the office directs. Peter points out the requirements for the new apostle, but he addresses the "brethren," the congregation. The apostles themselves do not fill the vacancy, they involve the brethren. The brethren propose two brothers for the office and one of them, Matthias, is chosen by the casting of lots.

In Acts 6:1-6 we discover that the congregation becomes further involved with the appointment of officebearers. Again the office directs. The twelve apostles call the disciples together, explain the situation in the congregation and formulate the requirements that must be met. The congregation has to be active as well. They must, in the first place, "look for" suitable brethren and next the election takes place. The last phase in her activities is that she "proposes" the elected persons to the apostles.

When we read in Acts 14:13 that Paul and Barnabas appointed elders in each congregation, it does not necessarily mean that the role of the congregation was eliminated.¹⁰ The believers prayed and fasted (verse 23b). They were involved with the appointments. Moreover, "appointment" could be a protracted way of speaking. Luke here sums up the process in one word. The action of the apostles, as we learn from Acts, was correctly understood by Bucer and Calvin as prescriptive for the later church.

The apostles laid the foundation of the church not only as ear and eye witnesses, but also in the manner in which they provided leadership in the apostolic church. Their "*way of doing things*" (cf. 2 Timothy 3:10) remains normative for the congregation of all ages.¹¹

Paul's argument in 1 Corinthians 12 makes it clear that the place someone may occupy in the congregation is based on the gift of grace, the *charisma*, that has been given to that person. That also is the case for officebearers (cf. verses 28f.). Paul admonishes Timothy not to extinguish the *charisma* he has received, but to rekindle the fire (cf. 1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6). In the office a person, endowed by Christ's Spirit, receives the calling and responsibility to use his special ability regularly for the up-building of the congregation.¹² In 1 Timothy 3 Paul says that the overseer must be able to teach.

It is the task of the congregation to notice these special abilities, these gifts of the Spirit. It is a completely spiritual matter when the consistory asks for the names of brethren who are suitable for office. The consistory in this way honours the fact that the congregation also has received the Spirit and that she is capable of making a discerning judgment.

We must view the election from this high perspective as well. Then the congregation makes known, who, in her judgment, is the most capable person.¹³ In all of this the congregation should take heed of what Bucer, the reformer of Strasbourg, called the "*wal des H. Geistes*" (choice of the Holy Spirit) By "looking out for" and the election of the congregation, Christ gives officebearers. The *Form for Ordination* formulates this matter excellently when the brother to be installed is asked:

"Do you feel in your heart that God Himself, through His congregation, has called you to this office?"

Why Christ gives

All the work in the congregation must certainly not be done by the officebearers. The congregation, according to the New Testament, is a serving congregation. Paul points out in 1 Corinthians 12 that the members of the body must "*have the same care for one another.*"

He also writes: "*To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.*"

The purpose of the officebearers' work is not to relieve the congregation of her work, but to activate it in doing all kinds of service. One can say that officebearers serve so that the congregation begins to serve. Paul clearly points out this purpose of the officebearers' work in Ephesians 4:12. Christ has given the officebearers *"to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ."*

The exegesis of this verse has caused quite a stir.¹⁴ Older exegetes thought that Paul here lists the triple task of the officebearers. In the first place they must equip the saints, secondly, they must do the work of service and thirdly, they must build up the body of Christ. Today that opinion has faded. The most important objection to it is the fact that in verse 16 the building up of the congregation is seen as a task for all believers. The best explanation is that Paul wants to say that the officebearers have been given to prepare the saints. This preparation is for the work of service by the saints themselves and this work of service is intended for the building up of the body of Christ.¹⁵ The Greek word that Paul uses for equipping means to give someone something so that he can fulfil his purpose and can function fully. From this it becomes clear that the task of the officebearers is to give the believers that which is necessary for them as members of the body to function in keeping with their calling. The saints must serve and so the body must be built up. Christ gives officebearers to equip the saints for that work.

In Ephesians 4:16 we also hear a little more about the task of the offices. Paul uses an image in which medical terminology is very prominent. He speaks about "supporting ligaments." Ligaments hold the body together and give it firmness. According to J. H. Roberts, these ligaments are the officebearers.¹⁶ Here the coordinating task of the office comes to the fore. The officebearers have also been given to coordinate the gifts of grace in the congregation. In the congregation there may not be a working against or apart from each other. Through co-ordination, disorder is prevented in the body, and harmony is established (cf. 1 Corinthians 14:33). Everything must be directed towards a true up-building of the congregation.

Many people still see a sharp contrast between the office and the charisma. The office in their view seriously threatens the functioning of the congregation as a charismatic community. Many New Testament scholars see a sharp contrast between the so-called true letters of Paul and later developments that we meet in Acts and the Pastoral letters.¹⁷ In these later developments the original charismatic congregation would already have been pushed to the background.¹⁸ However, what Paul says about the task of the office in Ephesians 4 makes it clear that the office does not threaten the gifts of the Spirit. It is intended precisely to activate and co-ordinate these gifts.

*"The office is there to serve the charisma, just as charisma is there for service to the body, so that it will be build up."*¹⁹

Three offices?

In our churches we recognize three offices. Article 2 of our *Church Order* states: *"The offices are those of the minister of the Word, of the elder, and of the deacon."* When, however, we read the New Testament, we come across a multitude of official and non-official positions. In Acts we find *"the seven"* (Acts 6:3; 21:8), the *"evangelist"* (Acts 21:8), the *"prophet"* (Acts 11:27; 13:1), the *"teacher"* (Acts 13:1), the *"apostle"* who did not belong to the twelve (Acts 14:4,14), the *"elders"* at Jerusalem (Acts 11:30; 15:6)²⁰ and the *"elders"* appointed in the various local congregations (Acts 14:23; 20:18).

The letters of Paul further mention brothers, *"who teach"* (Galatians 6:6), who *"lead in the Lord"* (1 Thessalonians 5:12), and *"pastors and teachers"* (Ephesians 4:11). The apostle also speaks about *"helpers"* and *"administrators"* and about the gift of *"service, exhortation, leadership,"* and *"showing mercy"* (Romans 12:7, 8). The same apostle also speaks about *"bishops"* and *"deacons"* (Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3). And in the letter to the Hebrews we find *"leaders"* (Hebrews 13:7, 17).

C. Trimp correctly notes: *Simple observation of these and similar facts from the book of Acts make it clear that the Bible does not give us a systematic description of the services that*

*functioned for the benefit of the Christian congregation. The announcements are incidental and show overall a fluid, lively and flexible character.*²¹

The great service of the Reformers, Bucer and Calvin, has been that in this multiplicity they recognized three fundamental offices necessary for the congregation of Christ, namely the preaching, the pastoral rule and the work of mercy.²²

O. Noordman correctly remarks: *"Teaching, ruling and serving are the three fundamental functions to which everything can be reduced."*²³

Our *Church Order* recognizes three offices. That, however, is not a number fixed in principle. The old *Church Order* recognized four offices. Besides the well-known three, there was also the office of "doctor" or "professor of theology" (cf. Art. 19 C.O.).²⁴ The Reformers of the sixteenth century were rather easy going when it came to the number of offices.²⁵ There had to be as many as were necessary for the up building of the congregation. That was the important point. The architects of the Reformed doctrine concerning the offices, Bucer and Calvin, especially promoted the offices of elder and deacon. That appears to be in keeping with the New Testament.

In the apostolic church we see the elder come to the fore as the officebearer who pastorally rules the congregation. Paul and Barnabas appointed elders, as we read in Acts 14:23. Paul addresses a letter to all the saints at Philippi *"with the bishops and deacons"* (Philippians 1:1). It is remarkable that the apostle precisely mentions the bishops and deacons in his salutation. In 1 Timothy 4:14, we meet the *"council of elders"* that apparently gave leadership.²⁶ Furthermore, in 1 Timothy 3 Paul describes the requirements for elders and deacons. Hence we may conclude that even though we meet a multiplicity of official and unofficial services in the New Testament, the offices of the elder and the deacon had more than a temporary character.

Article 2 of our *Church Order* mentions the office of the minister of the Word, of the elder and of the deacon. In the articles 16, 22 and 23, we find their service further described. We, however, must admit that these three offices, as the *Church Order* speaks about them, cannot directly be found in the New Testament. The *"dominee,"* as we know him, did not exist in the apostolic church. The *Form for Ordination of Ministers of the Word* refers to 1 Timothy 5:17 and reads (with Calvin) that there were two kinds of elders in the apostolic churches: elders who ruled and elders who were, in addition, called to preach and teach. The form very carefully says: *"The latter are now called ministers of the Word."* The text does not deal with two kinds of elders, but with the difference in intensity with which one could do the work of elder: there are those who labour and give much time to teaching and the doctrine.²⁷ Among the elders there were "full-timers" and "part-timers."²⁸ Neither do we find the office of our elder directly back in the New Testament. In the apostolic church *all* elders were teaching elders as well. From Acts 20:28-31; 1 Timothy 3:2; 1 Timothy 5:17; Titus 1:9, it appears that all elders had the task of feeding the congregation with the Word.

How the deacons precisely functioned in the apostolic church is difficult to reconstruct. Paul states the requirements for deacons in 1 Timothy 3, but does not speak explicitly about their task. Only in an indirect way can we conclude that they were involved with the work of mercy.²⁹

The three offices cannot be seen apart from the choices made in the time of the Reformation. That the office of the minister of the Word was seen as a separate office at that time, is undeniably connected with the great importance the Reformers gave to the preaching of the Word of God in the meeting of the congregation. They also set special requirements for this office, among others, an academic training and the ability to read the Word in the original languages.

Also the fact that the deacon, according to Reformed polity, can be a member of the consistory, rests on a certain choice. The deacon does not have this right on the basis of what the New Testament says about his task, but on the basis of the authority given to the churches.³⁰

Task description

The three fundamental services that we meet in the New Testament were divided over three different offices in our churches. In the first place there is the office of minister of the Word. According to Reformed polity, the minister is an elder and together with other elders, he looks after the pastoral needs of the congregation. However, his first task is the preaching and teaching. The minister is the pastor but in the manner of the teacher. He is called to proclaim the Word of God in the midst of the congregation. For that he has received a special training. When the minister has to make so many visits that he has hardly any time for what is the crux of his office, a thorough re-evaluation of the way he does his work is urgently needed.³¹

L Wierenga recently argued that the apostles "*preached*," but that it is untenable to say that a minister preaches or "*ministers*" the Word. The apostles brought "*the great news but the minister, like all other Christians, is part of the team 'behind the news.'*"³² We possess the great news in Scripture, and everyone can read it. The minister only explains the Bible text, giving the congregation a reading lesson.

Wierenga writes: *The Bible is in every aspect, a very informative text ... and for many people it needs to be explained, amplified, applied, etc., if we as independent Christians are to "understand" the Bible. That requires trained people, with sufficient intelligence, wisdom, emotionality and with enough competency in the philosophical, exegetical, communicational and social areas, to assist the congregation in her Bible reading and — application. That then is a "sermon."*³³

Wieringa, therefore, is of the opinion that the concepts "*ministry*," "*proclamation*," "*preaching*," are dated and no longer apply.³⁴

I do not share this view. Even though the great news has been brought and the apostolic letters were read to the congregation (cf. Colossians 4:16), there were elders in the Apostolic church "*who labour in preaching and teaching*" (cf. 1 Timothy 5:17).

Timothy received from Paul the charge: "*Preach the word...*" For "*preaching*" the Greek word *kerussein* is used which at other places typifies the preaching of the Apostles (cf. Matthew 10:7; Mark 16:15; Acts 10:42; 20:25). In the Apostolic church there were also teachers (cf. Acts 13:1; 1 Corinthians 12:28; Ephesians 4:11) who taught the congregation and who through teaching preached the Word in a special way.³⁵ From these texts it becomes clear that the apostles were not the only ones who taught (Acts 5:42; 20:20; 1 Corinthians 4:17). We also find "*prophets*" (cf. Acts 13:1; 1 Corinthians 12:28; Ephesians 4:11) who "*utter mysteries*."³⁶ In Hebrews 13:7 we read about "*leaders*" who spoke the word of God to the congregation.

When Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 5 that God "*gave us the ministry of reconciliation*," he is definitely referring to himself and to Timothy (cf. 2 Corinthians 1:1), as well as to all others who were engaged in teaching and preaching. In verse 19 Paul says that God has entrusted "*us*" with the message of reconciliation. It is impossible that this "*us*" exclusively refers to the apostles, for others also "*proclaimed, taught and spoke in the Apostolic church*." In Romans 10:17 the same apostle states that "*faith comes from what is heard*." From the context he undeniably means the hearing of the preached Word. In 1 Corinthians 1:21 Paul points out that it pleases God "*through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe*." Both texts do not give any indication that we should restrict preaching to that of the apostles. What Paul writes counts for all times. This is the way of God the Holy Spirit!

All this evidence makes it clear that not only the apostles were engaged in the "*ministry*" of the Word, but that others as well were given the task to labour in Word and doctrine. They did not give the congregation a "*reading lesson*," but proclaimed, taught and spoke the Word.

The Lord Jesus has said that in His name "*repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached to all nations*."

When the apostles appointed officebearers in the local congregations (cf. Acts. 14:23), it are the elders who not only provided leadership, but also took it upon themselves to preach and teach (cf. 1 Timothy 5:17). This is in agreement with the requirements for the bishop, namely that he is an "apt teacher" (1 Timothy 3:2).

To be sure, the congregation has Scripture. The Word, however, must be proclaimed, taught and spoken. In 2 Timothy 4:16-17, Paul lauds the Scriptures, but immediately instructs Timothy, "Preach the Word..." (2 Timothy 4:2). In 2 Corinthians 5 Paul constantly interchanges "reconciliation" with the "ministry of reconciliation."³⁷ It is dear to him that this ministry is the way in which salvation reaches the world and the congregation. To the apostle, salvation and preaching belong together.

Proclamation belongs to reconciliation

J. T. Bakker correctly remarks: *Reconciliation has been accomplished for us and that means that it cannot be seen without its relation to humanity; that also means that preaching is part of the reconciliation. In the "for us" of reconciliation lies the kerugma, for the kerugma means that the divine work is turned towards us and available to us.*³⁸

On that basis Luther and Calvin praised preaching as the means by which the Holy Spirit appropriates Christ and all His treasures for us.³⁹ In keeping with this reformational conviction the *Heidelberg Catechism*, therefore, says that the Holy Spirit works (n.b. present tense!) faith by the preaching of the gospel (cf. Answer 65).

Over against L Wieringa I maintain that the preaching of the Word is a service that, according to Calvin, the church always needs and which requires its own office. The essence of the office of elder is the pastoral rule over the congregation. The elder has to feed the flock (Acts 20:28), and to tend it (1 Peter 5:2). He is the "bishop" (1 Timothy 3:2) and has "oversight" (Acts 20:28). In the New Testament these words all have a pastoral flavour.

The office of an elder is the office of a shepherd. The pastoral care of the elder is carried out especially by means of family visits. When the elders visit the members at home, they do not come as inspectors, but as shepherds who look after their sheep. We can say that elders also minister the Word, for with the Word, the sheep are fed. The difference between them and the minister of the Word is that elders do so privately, while the minister does so publicly.

The essence of the office of the deacon is rendering assistance, especially in cases where there is not (as yet) help available. The deacons also take care of the good progress of the ministry to which the congregation is called. The *Form for Ordination* says that the deacons ought to encourage and comfort the members of the congregation who receive Christ's gifts of love with God's Word. The deacons also minister the Word, but this ministry has its own angle. The deacons apply the Word to the need in which a particular member finds himself. During his diaconal visits he also stimulates the ministry of service in the congregation with the Word of God. The ministry of the Word of a deacon is more restricted than that of the elder. The latter lets the Word shine over the whole life of the congregation.

The authority of the officebearers

With what authority do the officebearers come to the congregation? That question was also heatedly discussed in the sixteenth century. According to Roman opinion, the priest has authority by virtue of the consecration sacrament which confers a special grace and impresses an ineffaceable mark upon its recipient.⁴⁰ The Reformers rejected this view. Bucer and Calvin tied the authority of the offices completely to the Word.⁴¹ Typical of the French Reformation is this statement by Calvin:

"We must remember that whatever authority and dignity the Spirit in Scripture accords to either priests or prophets, or apostles, or successors of apostles, it is wholly given not to the

men personally, but to the ministry to which they have been appointed; or (to speak more briefly) to the Word, whose ministry is entrusted to them..."⁴²

Officebearers have no authority of their own. The authority by which they can act in the congregation is none other than the authority of the Word. In Hebrew 13:17 the call is heard to *"obey your leaders and submit to them."* That it deals here with the obedience to the Word, with which the leaders come, becomes clear from verse 7. There we read about leaders *"who spoke to you the word of God."* Paul reminds Timothy to present himself *"to God as one approved, a workman who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth."* In Colossians 1:25 the same apostle says that his ministry is *"to make the word of God fully known."*

The office in the church has a servant character. It concerns itself completely with the *diakonia* to the Word of Christ.⁴³

W. E. Jonker remarks: *"Not because someone holds office, but because and insofar he, in his office, is a bearer of God's Word and is an 'instrument' in the service of the Holy Spirit, his work has authority for the congregation. This means that the authority of the officebearer, according to the New Testament, is a delegated authority that completely depends on the manner in which the Gospel is served by it."*⁴⁴

When an officebearer does not serve or minister that Gospel, he has no authority whatsoever.

Because the officebearers may only be servants of Christ, and all their actions are determined by His Word, the obedience called for by Scripture is always a Scripturally critical obedience and not simply a submission. Paul admonishes us not to *"despise prophesying,"* but he immediately adds *"test everything; hold fast what is good"* (cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:20, 21).

"The elders who rule well are worthy of double honour" (cf. 1 Timothy 5:17). The congregation must remember the leaders *"who spoke to you the word of God"* (Hebrews 13:7). The congregation must constantly test the service of the officebearers, i.e. test it with the *magna carta* of the office: the Word of Christ. The office has the oversight of the congregation, but the congregation in turn oversees the office. For only Christ may rule in the Church. That is also why the discussions about the work of officebearers ought to have a place in the relationship between officebearers and members of the congregation. Officebearers who do not want to hear any criticism, refuse to acknowledge the fact that the congregation has the Word and is taught by God as well. This implies that the congregation can and may take part in discussing the work of the officebearers.

The constant prayers of the congregation are indispensable to all of this. It must strike us how often the apostle Paul requests the prayers of the saints (cf. Ephesians 6:19; 1 Thessalonians 5:25). Ministers, elders and deacons can only do their work well, when they are carried by the prayers of the congregation.

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- ¹ cf. A.F.N. Lekkerkerker, *Oorsprong en functie van het ambt*, ('s-Gravenhage, 1971); W. W. Jonker, *Als een riet in de wind... Gedachten naar aanleiding van de huidige discussie rondom het ambt*, (Kampen, 1970).
- ² "With 'offices' we mean the generally recognized functions within a Christian church community which differ from other functions in that they represent and interpret Christ's salvation and in that way they authoritatively keep the church to His mercy and intentions."; cf. also G. Dekker, *Het ambt: van boven of van beneden?*, (Baarn, 1979), p. 39: "Officebearers are then people, who on behalf of us and mandated by us, remind us that our own identity must be preserved."
- ³ I have borrowed this from J. P. Versteeg, *Kijk op de kerk. De structuur van de gemeente volgens het Nieuwe Testament*, (Kampen, 1985), p. 20.
- ⁴ On charismata in the New Testament see U. Brockhaus, *Charisma und Amt. Die paulinische Charismenlehre auf dem Hintergrund der frühchristlichen Gemeindefunktionen*, (Wuppertal, 1972), p. 128. cf. also H. Greeven, *Die Geistesgaben bei Paulus*, in: *Wort und Dients, Jahrbuch der Theologischen Schule Bethel als Festschrift für W. Brandt*, 6. Vol., 1959, p. 114. cf. also C. Trimp, *De gemeente en haar liturgie, Een leesboek voor kergangers*, (Kampen, 1983), p. 29. cf. also J. van Bruggen, *Ambten in de apostolische kerk, Een exegetisch mozaïek*, (Kampen, 1984, p.144 f.
- ⁵ cf. M. H. Bolkestein, *Zielszorg in het Nieuwe Testament*, (The Hague, 1964), p. 94.
- ⁶ cf. *Wat is er aan de hand met het ambt?*, p. 40.
- ⁷ cf. J. P. Versteeg, *Geest, ambt en uitzicht*, p. 72.
- ⁸ cf. J. P. Versteeg, op. cit., p. 72.
- ⁹ cf. Herman Ridderbos, *De kerk 'als instituut'*, in *Bewerken en bewaren. Studies aangeboden aan prof. dr. K. Runia*, (Kampen, 1982), p. 51 f.
- ¹⁰ The Greek for appoint is *cheirotomeo*. It was primarily used for voting in the Athenian legislative assembly and literally means "to stretch forth the hands." Whether the word still has that meaning in Acts 14:23 is debatable. It can also mean "appoint"; cf. *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, IX, (Stuttgart, 1970), p. 427.; F. W. Grosheide, *De Handelingen der Apostelen*, (Kampen, 1942), p. 470 f.
- ¹¹ L. Wierenga, 'Paulus kon niet preken.' Enkele opmerkingen naar aanleiding van "'Bediening' in de apostolische kerk," *Radix*, XIV #4, p. 249 f., loses sight of that.
- ¹² I understand by ecclesiastical office, the charisma recognized by both congregation and consistory, that by means of a public ordination in Christ's name is enlisted for the specific task of upbuilding the congregation.
- ¹³ In the general synod of Arnhem (1930) incorrectly called the election "an act of general governing authority." The counter proposal which I, together with Dr. K. Deddens, made to General Synod Groningen-Zuid (1978) in connection with the so-called women's voting right, describes the election as follows: "this election guided by the consistory is a communal act of both the consistory and the congregation, in which members of the congregation do not participate in the ruling of the church, *but in which the consistory involves the congregation* who, by virtue of her maturity reached at Pentecost, continually looks for the gifts necessary for the office." (Acta van de Nederland, samengekomen to Groningen-Zuid op Dinsdag 11 April, 1978, Haarlem, p. 149). Italics mine, A.N.H.
- ¹⁴ cf. J. P. Versteeg, op. cit., p. 73.
- ¹⁵ I follow J. P. Versteeg, op. cit., p. 73.
- ¹⁶ cf. J. H. Roberts, *Die opbouw van de kerk volgens die Efesebrief*, (Groningen 1963), p.139 f.
- ¹⁷ cf. U. Brockhaus, op. cit., p. 7. ff. ; Herman Ridderbos, *Paulus, Ontwerp van zijn theologie*, (Kampen, 1966), p. 490 f.
- ¹⁸ cf. H. Freiherr von Campenhausen, *Kirchliches Amt and geistliche Vollmacht in den ersten drei Jahrhunderten*, (Ubingen, 1963), p. 59 f. ; E. Käsenmann, *Exegetische Versuche and Besinnungen*, I. (Groningen, 1960), p. 128 f.
- ¹⁹ J. P. Versteeg, *Kijk op de kerk*, p. 28.
- ²⁰ cf. *The elders of Jerusalem*, in J. Van Bruggen, op. cit., p. 46, 47.
- ²¹ C. Trimp, *Inleiding in de ambtelijke vakken*, (Kampen, 1978), p. 46, 47.
- ²² Calvin speaks about three kinds of offices which Scripture recommends, and points out that the early church organized all offices in three ranks (*ordines*). (*Institute* IV, 4,1).
- ²³ Quoted by A. F. N. Lekkerkerker, op. cit., p. 18.
- ²⁴ For the office of doctor with Calvin see, W. F. Dankbaar, *Hervormers en Humanisten*, (Amsterdam, 1978), p. 153.
- ²⁵ In. van 't Spijker, *De ambten bij Martin Bucer*, (Kampen, 1987), remarks concerning Bucer: "It is incorrect to think that he only recognized four offices, that of preacher, elder, doctor and deacon. Bucer indeed mentions them. However, the number is irrelevant. There have to be as many as is necessary for the congregations and according to such a specialization that meets this need" (p. 439). Calvin distinguishes "temporary" and "permanent" offices in the Apostolic church. The temporary ones are those of the apostle, prophet and evangelist. He, however, says with respect to the temporary offices, "and now and again (God) revives them as the needs of the time demand." (*Institutes*, IV, 3, 4).

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- ²⁶ J. van Bruggen remarks in connection with the term *presbuterion*: "In the oldest Christian idiom, the term is frequently used for the assembly of the local 'elders' or 'presbyters.' The use of this term in 1 Timothy 4:14 indicates that there has been a clear-cut group of specially appointed people in each city from the beginning: they, as elders of the congregation, together formed a senate or council." (op. cit., p. 95).
- ²⁷ J. van Bruggen, op. cit., p.102, gives further argumentation.
- ²⁸ c.f. J. P. Versteeg, "Nieuwtestamentisch profiel van de ouderling", in: D. Koole en W. H. Velema, *Uit liefde tot Christus en Zijn gemeente. Een handreiking aan de ouderling*, (Kampen, 1982), p. 51.
- ²⁹ A. N. Hendriks, *Met het oog op de gemeente. Populairtheologische bijdragen*, (Haarlem, 1987), p. 83, 84.
- ³⁰ cf. J. Kamphuis, *Altijd met goed accoord*, (Amsterdam, 1973), p. 136.
- ³¹ C. Trimp, "Geen halve maatregelen," *De Reformatie*, Vol. 64, pp. 967-968, gives suggestions for lightening the task of the minister. Especially the suggestion of the "elder freed of duties" deserves our attention. I remind you of the "full-timers" among the elders in the Apostolic church (cf. 1 Timothy 5:17).
- ³² cf. L. Wierenga, "Paulus en de dwaze Galaten," *Radix*, XIV, #1, p. 40.
- ³³ L. Wierenga, *'Paulus kon niet preken'*, p. 262.
- ³⁴ L. Wierenga, op. cit., p. 255.
- ³⁵ Herman Ridderbos, *Heilsgeschiedenis en Heilige Schrift*, (Kampen, 1955), p.136.; J. T. Bakker, *Kerugma en Prediking*, (Kampen, 1957), p. 20.
- ³⁶ cf. J. van Bruggen, op. cit., p. 34.; Herman Ridderbos, *Paulus*, p. 503 f.
- ³⁷ cf. C. Trimp, *De volmacht tot bediening der verzoening*, (Groningen, 1970), p. 38.; J. T. Bakker, op. cit., p. 16, 17.
- ³⁸ J. T. Bakker, op. cit., p. 18.
- ³⁹ For Luther see, Vilmos Vajta, *Die Theologie des Gottesdienstes bei Luther*, (1959), p. 134. For Calvin see, W. Krusche, *Das Wirken Des Heiligen Geistes nach Calvin*, (Göttingen, 1957), p. 220.; C. Veenhof, *Calvijn en de prediking*, in: J. van Genderen, *Zicht op Calvijn*, (Amsterdam, 1965), p. 47 f.
- ⁴⁰ cf. H. M. Legrand, *Onuitwisbaar merkteken en theologie van het ambt*, *Concilium*, VIII, #4, p. 59 f. ; E. Schillebeeckx, 'merkteken', in: *Theologisch Woordenboek*, II, ed. H. Brink, (Roermond-Maaseik, 1957), p. 2145. ; See also C. Trimp, *Ministerium. Een introductie in de reformatische leer van het ambt*, (Groningen, 1982) p. 46.
- ⁴¹ Bucer says: "All authority ... rests on the Word and Spirit of God." Calvin says over against Rome: "This, then, is the difference. Our opponents locate the authority of the church outside God's Word; but we insist that it be attached to the Word, and do not allow it to be separated from it." (*Institutes*, IV, 8, 13).
- ⁴² *Institutes*, IV, 8, 2.
- ⁴³ cf. K. Runia, "De dienstknechtsgestalte van het ambt," in: *De Dienstknechtsgestalte van Christus. Studies aangeboden aan prof. dr. H. H. Ridderbos*, (Kampen, 1978), p. 194. ; A. A. van Ruler, *Bijzonder en algemeen ambt*, (Nijkerk) n.d. p. 76.
- ⁴⁴ W. D. Jonker, op. cit., p. 12,13.