

The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

Special Issue The Office of Believers

Dear Reader:

This is the second of our special issues for the current volume-year. It is devoted in its entirety to the subject of the Office of Believers. You will find a variety of articles on this subject, chosen out of a large number of possible subjects. We hope you will find these articles instructive and helpful with respect to a subject which has frequently been misunderstood and a reality in the Christian life which has too often been neglected. A word of special thanks to our two guest writers in this issue, Pastor Carl J. Haak and Missionary-Pastor Ronald J. Van Overloop.

HCH

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MEDITATION

Your Sons and Daughters Now Prophecy

Cornelius Hanko

And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: and on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy. Acts 2:17, 18.

"This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel"

"And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, that I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh!"

There had been wonders from heaven and signs from the earth beneath (vs. 19).

A short time previously the sun had turned to darkness at noontime. Wicked men were in the process of crucifying God's Christ. The rulers were

plotting together against God and His Anointed. They had condemned Him and nailed Him to the cross. Yet at the stroke of noontime God had cast a terrifying gloom over the Place of the Skull. During those three hours the world stood condemned, for especially then God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, nevermore to reckon the sins of God's people against them. As our Lord came forth out of the deep agonies of His suffering the darkness fled, and the triumphant voice broke forth: "It is Finished!" All is accomplished. Once more the darkness descended upon the land, the earth quaked, graves were opened, the veil of the temple rent from the top to the bottom. Now the world stood judged and condemned, the devil cast out. Now the saints of all ages stood reconciled to God!

The Captain of our salvation gave Himself unto death and the grave, arose again on the third day, and marched triumphantly into glory, accompanied by the angels, to take His exalted place at the Father's right hand. As Head of His church He receives His due reward; every spiritual blessing is bestowed upon Him to share with His church!

On the Passover He merited life and salvation for His people; on the Harvest Feast He is ready to bestow those gifts of grace upon His church!

All things stood in readiness!

"I will pour out of My Spirit!"

The day of feast of Pentecost had actually come and gone.

Even as the Passover, this important feast had brought many thousands of Jews and proselytes to Jerusalem. It was now the first day of a new week, fifty days after the resurrection. One hundred and twenty devoted followers of Jesus were gathered together still praying for the outpouring of the promised Spirit. In answer to their prayer, the Spirit made His presence known by the sound of a roaring wind, which reached tornado proportions and was likely heard throughout the holy city. Yet, strange to say, the sound was centered in the room where Jesus' disciples were assembled. There was the sound of wind, yet no wind; neither the drapes nor a hair of their heads stirred!

A flame of fire appeared above the assembly, dividing itself into one hundred and twenty flames, each settling above the heads of each one present. Again, this flame had every appearance of fire, yet it was no fire, gave off no heat, but symbolized the power of the Holy Spirit purifying and enlightening the hearts of those in whom the Spirit had come to dwell.

Every one was impelled by the Spirit to give expression to the new experiences within his soul. Meanwhile a crowd was gathering outside, thousands from every part of the city, drawn most likely by the sound of the rushing of a mighty wind, actually brought there by God to witness what God had wrought in His people. The disciples went out, spread through the crowd, and experienced a new power and gift of the Spirit. Each was able to speak to the person he or she approached in his or her own language. When one approached an Arab he spoke Arabian, if he approached a Crete he spoke Cretian to him. But even more amazing than that, each one spoke of the new insight that he had received into the mighty works of God.

Wonderful works they were. Need we ask what those works were? Surely the Spirit had given them a new insight into the recent events, the crucifixion, death, resurrection, and ascension of their Lord! With full confidence they could now say, "Must not the Christ have suffered all these things and thus entered into His glory?"

Some in the audience were amazed. Others tried to silence this new proof of Christ's resurrection with the strongest weapon the devil ever devised, mockery! They accused these followers of Jesus of drunken babbling.

To Peter the Spirit gave the ability to refute these enemies of God.

The prophecy of Joel has been fulfilled!

God has sent forth His Spirit upon all flesh!

The three persons of the Godhead were in perfect agreement when together they sent forth the Spirit. No, rather, Father and Son told the Spirit to go, and the Spirit on its own initiative went to carry out their eternal purpose. He entered into the exalted Christ, and through Christ went forth into the church as represented here by the one hundred and twenty.

God came to dwell in the hearts of mere men, insignificant men of ordinary flesh, unworthy in themselves! Yet these were appointed from all eternity to receive the Spirit. Not as if the Spirit had not worked the work of salvation in the hearts of the saints of the old dispensation. Of course He had. But never before had the Spirit made the hearts of God's saints His special dwelling place. Christ now came to implant His resurrection life in their hearts. From now on they would understand the wonderful works of God far better than ever before, since the types and shadows had faded into reality, the victory of the cross was attained, and now a far more intimate communion with God was established! Now they knew God in the intimacy of their Father, Jesus as their elder Brother, even as

they experienced as never before that they were sons and daughters in God's House!

The Spirit was now sent forth upon *all* flesh. The church was no longer kept within the narrow confines of national Israel, but became universal in the sense that it would spread out to every nation and people of the earth. This is shown to us by the Spirit when He empowers the disciples of Jesus to speak to each man or woman in his or her native tongue. This is also plainly the fulfillment of so many prophecies in the Old Testament, and has become evident through the mission labors of the apostles after Pentecost.

Moreover, the Spirit works in the hearts of thousands of listeners, applying the preached Word, as the Spirit always operates, by bringing to conviction of sin and repentance. It appears as if the troubled hearts of these many converts cannot wait for Peter to finish, but press upon him with the urgent question, "Men and brethren, what must we do?" As a result three thousand were added to the church on that very day!

The Spirit literally poured out blessings, even grace for grace, and that on thousands, which ultimately become a multitude that no man can number!

Abundant fields of grain shall wave
All white for harvesting,
And boundless joy and gladness fill
The city of the King (Psalm 72).

"Yours sons and your daughters shall prophesy!"

Although we tend to limit prophecy to future events, the term, as used in Scripture, implies proclaiming the mighty works of God of the past, and of the present, as well as of the future. This gift is not given to the individual apart from the church, as if anyone may boast that he has received a special revelation from God. This gift is given to the church, and to the individual as member of the church in the communion of saints. The preaching of the Word always remains the chief means of grace, brought by the ambassador that is personally

called of Christ. Christ speaks through His Word to the individual believer, who thereby becomes a prophet in the office of believers. The difference is that in the Old Testament only a few received God's revelation, and others had to inquire about the will of God from them. But now the Spirit dwells and speaks within us in this sense, that we have no need that any should teach us, for we have the unction of the Holy One, and we know all things (I John 2:20).

Young men and old men, masters and servants are all recipients of this gift of the Spirit. From this we do not conclude that a child is capable of partaking of the Lord's Supper or holding an office in the church, or that women may teach in the church. But all are one in the office of believers. "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:27, 28).

Each functions according to his or her capacity. It belongs to the nature of young men to look into the future and see visions with a spiritual eye. It belongs to the nature of the elderly to dream dreams, reflecting on the past. Fathers in and through their calling, mothers in the home, teenagers in the classroom, each one in his own station in life is called to tell the praises of the Lord!

The same can be said of the priestly and royal office of the believer. We are devoted to God in love as His willing servants, manifesting that love among the saints. We resist Satan and sin, diligently contending for the faith once delivered to the saints.

Scripture includes under the fruits of the Spirit such gifts as love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance (Gal. 5:22, 23).

What a marvelous gift! Blessed is that people whose God is Jehovah!

Hearts that overflow with praise! Foretaste of glory!

*Take the time to read and study
the Standard Bearer.
Give a gift of the Standard Bearer today!*

The Office of Believers and Pentecost

Homer C. Hoeksema

The believer is in office!

The expression "office of believers" is not found in Scripture; and it does not occur in our Reformed confessions. And probably when we think of offices in the church, we are inclined to think immediately of the offices of minister, elder, and deacon. Perhaps it even takes a reminder to make us think of the fact that there is such a thing as the office of believers and of the fact that all believers are in office. Whatever may be the reason for this, and whether or not it is due to the fact that there is insufficient knowledge and awareness of it in the church today, it is a fact that believers occupy a three-fold office, that of prophet, priest, and king; moreover, they should be keenly aware of this fact. If they are not, it can only be to the detriment of the church in the midst of the world.

Our Heidelberg Catechism speaks of this in Lord's Day XII, although in this connection it does not use the term *office*, but speaks of anointing. In Q. and A. 32 we read: "But why art thou called a christian? Because I am a member of Christ by faith, and thus am partaker of his anointing; that so I may confess his name, and present myself a living sacrifice of thankfulness to him: and also that with a free and good conscience I may fight against sin and Satan in this life: and afterwards reign with him eternally, over all creatures." You will notice that in the 32nd answer the three aspects of this office are not mentioned by name; their function, or activity, is mentioned. But when you read Q. and A. 32 in connection with Q. and A. 31, it becomes plain that the reference here is to prophet, priest, and king. For according to Q. and A. 31 our Savior is called Christ, i.e., Anointed, "Because he is ordained of God the Father, and anointed with the Holy Ghost, to be our chief Prophet and Teacher . . . our only High Priest . . . and also to be our eternal King . . ." Christians, believers, are partakers of that anointing. Hence, they are prophets, to confess Christ's name; they are priests, to present them-

selves living sacrifices of thankfulness; and they are kings, to fight against sin and Satan in this life, and afterwards to reign with Christ eternally over all creatures.

Many passages of Scripture could be cited in this connection, but let me quote just two passages which speak literally of this three-fold office of believers. In Revelation 1:5, 6 we read: ". . . Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." And according to Acts 2, we are prophets. For Peter proclaims that on Pentecost is fulfilled the prophecy of Joel: "But this (referring to the events of Pentecost) is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy" (vss. 16-18).

To understand this, we must remember, first of all, that Jesus is *the* Anointed One. He is *the* promised Messiah, *the* Christ. Among all the anointed of the old dispensation, He is *the* Anointed, the fulfillment of them all. He is the One Who is ordained of God and divinely qualified to be God's office-bearer, to function with authority in the Kingdom of God in God's name, as God's servant. Hence, the central idea of Christ's office is that of King-Servant. He is King as Head in the kingdom of heaven. For it is God's eternal purpose to make of all created things in heaven and on earth His Kingdom, in which all in heaven and on earth shall in willing obedience be subject to Him. It is God's purpose to make His Son in human nature the Head and King of that kingdom. And He is the Servant of Jehovah, representing God's cause in the world. All things must be subservient to and subjected to Christ, in order that He may be subject to God, that thus God may be all in all. To that exalted position of the Firstborn of every creature in all the universe

Christ has now attained, having fought the battle against sin and death, and having overcome all the powers of darkness. He has the name above every name. He is King of kings and Lord of lords. God has "made him Lord and Christ."

In that office of Christ we may distinguish three aspects. He is Servant-King with His *mind*, to know God and speak for Him: Prophet. He is Servant-King with His heart and will, to love God, to be consecrated to Him, and to sacrifice Himself to Him: Priest. And He is Servant-King with His power, to do battle against sin and Satan and to reign over all things: King. Thus Christ is our Chief Prophet, our only High Priest, and our eternal King.

In the second place, we are *partakers* of His anointing. This means that through Him believers are ordained and qualified by Christ through His Spirit to be officebearers. In Him they have not only the obligation and calling (the *must*), but the privilege and right (the *may*), the volition (the *will*), and the ability (the *can*) to be and to function as God's friend-servants in the midst of this world, and forever. All this we have, remember, only in and through our Lord Jesus Christ and by faith in Him.

In the third place, even as Christ's office is three-fold, so through our partaking of His anointing by faith we become servants of God in the same three-fold sense. He changes us into true prophets of God, instructing us by His Spirit and Word, delivering us from the darkness of our understanding, enlightening us by His grace, so that we have the true knowledge of God. He does that *now*; but presently that knowledge shall be perfected in heavenly glory, so that we shall see face to face, and know even as we are known. When He does this, then we confess His name and show forth the praises of Him Who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light, and that, too, antithetically, in the midst of a world that is in darkness and that loves the lie. He transforms us into a holy priesthood, so that we become priests of God. For He instills in our hearts the love of God, cleanses us from the defilement of sin, consecrates us to Himself in true holiness — again, here in principle, but perfectly and completely on the plane of heavenly glory, when the entire glorified church shall become the perfect temple of God. When He does this, then we consecrate ourselves to Him and present ourselves as living sacrifices, with all our heart and mind and soul and strength, and that, too, in the midst of a world devoted to the service of the devil and sin. As our eternal King, He constitutes us a *royal* people, a nation of kings under God with Him. He delivers us from our unrighteousness and perversity of will, and gives us a new righteousness, so that we delight to do God's will. He enables us to fight the

fight of faith against sin and Satan; and He makes us partakers, through faith, of His victory, even in the midst of the battle. And while we have not yet entered into the glory of our royal dominion with Christ, and while we are still engaged in a daily struggle against sin and are in tribulation in the midst of the world, so that we even suffer defeat outwardly, He gives us the assurance that we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. And in His day, we shall appear with Him in glory and shall reign forever and ever with Him in the new creation. And when He does so, then we fight with a free and good conscience against sin and Satan, and presently shall enter into the glorious victory of our Lord.

Such is the office of believers!

* * * * *

Now what does all this have to do with Pentecost? Or perhaps we should put the question this way: what does Pentecost have to do with all of this?

The answer is that it was on Pentecost day that all that we have described concerning the office of believers became reality through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of the exalted Christ upon the church. This is pointed to specifically with respect to the office of prophet by the Apostle Peter, according to the passage in Acts 2 which we quoted at the beginning of this discussion. When the Spirit was poured out as the Spirit of the exalted Christ, the prophecy of Joel 2 was fulfilled. The effect was that all God's people became prophets — sons and daughters, old men and young men, servants and handmaidens. And the same was true with respect to the office of priest and king.

This marked a tremendous change in the life of the church. It introduced something which was heretofore unheard of and never before experienced. We are accustomed to the fact that *all* God's people have a three-fold office — perhaps too accustomed sometimes. For that reason, too, we probably do not always appreciate Pentecost as we should. I have often remarked in sermons that for the people of God who actually passed through the transition from the old to the new dispensation it must have been an astounding change to experience.

An entire additional article could easily be devoted to this subject; but permit me to point out a few things.

First of all, it is plain from Scripture that also in the old dispensation it was principally true that God's people were a royal priesthood. We read, for example, in Exodus 19:5, 6: "Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above

all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation." In this connection, it was also true that God's people in the old dispensation were saved even as we, and that the Holy Spirit, Who had been eternally ordained to be the Spirit of redemption, led God's people through the shadows to the hope of the reality that was to come. God's people, therefore, were emphatically saved by *hope*. The reality of atonement and redemption and of all the blessings of salvation had not yet been realized; and God's people could only dimly apprehend these through the shadows and in the light of the promise of the coming Christ.

In close connection with the preceding, in the second place, in the old dispensation this hope and salvation of God's people was inseparably tied to special officebearers; and these special officebearers were indispensable for the people of God in the old dispensation. There were certain men who were prophets; and to know the Lord's Word one

had to take hold of the skirt of a prophet. Certain men were priests; and you could not bring sacrifices and could not know atonement and forgiveness and consecration to God's service without those priests. And the same was true of the office of king: it could only be known and experienced through special, God-anointed kings.

In the third place, all of this was strictly regulated by the law which was imposed upon the promise of Sinai — the law which strictly regulated every phase of the life of God's children. Without that law the people of God could not move in the old dispensation.

But all this was changed at Pentecost. The church is no longer in bondage to the law, but is free. And the church is no longer dependent on any special men, special officebearers, to live its religious life, but only on Christ. All God's people have the Spirit of Christ and His blessings. And all God's people are prophets, priests, and kings. They all have the anointing of the Holy One!

The Reformation and the Office of All Believers

Herman C. Hanko

The Scriptural teaching concerning the office of all believers was one of the crucial doctrines of the Reformation and was held by every Reformer on the continent of Europe and in Great Britain. It is not too much to say that without this central teaching, the Reformation would never have restored the church to the pure teaching of Scripture.

The truth concerning the office of all believers had been denied by the Romish Church. A number of factors accounted for this. While we cannot trace the gradual development of Rome's heresies as they stood related to this subject, foremost stood

Rome's evil teaching concerning the priesthood and the consequent elaborate sacerdotal system which Rome set up and which was at the heart of her whole life as church. Rome taught that the clergy of the Romish Church constituted a priesthood which stood between the individual member of the church and God. This priesthood was, according to Rome, established by God through the direct apostolic succession of ordination. Beginning with the apostle Peter, the first pope of Rome, subsequent popes possessed the same position in the church which Peter occupied. Although this apostolic succession of ordination moved primarily through the popes, it filtered down, so to speak, from the pope to the lower levels of the clergy — including the cardinals, archbishops, bishops, and priests. This divine ordination gave to the entire clergy a unique place in the church, for it put them

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between God and the people so that no contact between God and His people was possible except as mediated by the clergy.

From the one side, God did not dispense grace to His people in any other way than through the church. Every grace, every blessing of salvation, every good gift, was mediated by the clergy itself and the sacramental system of the church. To gain such grace, the individual member had to come to the church, obey the church's laws, rules, and regulations, and submit to the mediation of the clergy. The grace of forgiveness, for example, could come only through the Confessional and the priest's absolution. The grace of the sacraments could come only through the elements themselves: the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper was in fact the body and blood of Christ, changed by the priest. The grace of escaping the fires of purgatory could come only through masses, payment of funds, purchase of indulgences, all of which had to be paid to the church and all of which was distributed by the church. All grace came only through the institute of the church, which institute was, in fact, the clergy.

God's people themselves could, therefore, come to God only through this same clergy. There was really no other way. If you wanted to go to God, you had to go to the church, and the church would go to God for you. The church would stand in your place before God's face and do for you what you could not do yourself.

This was a terrible and brutal doctrine. The office of all believers, as taught in the Scriptures, means that the individual child of God, with the Spirit in his heart, is, in his own right, prophet, priest, and king. This Rome denied. Rome insisted that only those who took part by ordination in apostolic succession, from the pope on down, possessed these offices.

It is not difficult to see how Rome worked this out. The individual member of the church was not a prophet: he could not know the will of God himself. He had to go to the church. The individual member was not a priest: to go into God's sanctuary he needed the mediation of Rome's priesthood. The individual was not king: the church ruled over him with an iron rod prescribing for him in every detail of his life.

The error which the Reformers attacked more than any other was the issue of the relation of the believer to the Scriptures. Because Rome denied that the believer is himself a prophet, Rome insisted that the believer could not, of himself, know the Scriptures. Several conclusions followed from this. Rome believed, and from Rome's position this follows with irrefutable logic, that the individual believer ought not to possess the Scriptures him-

self. He was in no position to interpret them, and so it was better that he not have them. Rome therefore forbade the Scriptures to be translated into languages which the individual members could understand, and forbade the people even to possess a Bible of their own. We need only remind ourselves of how Rome fought bitterly, even after the Reformation, to keep the Scriptures out of the hands of God's people, and of how Rome even smeared the blood of Tyndale on her hands because he insisted on providing a Bible for God's people in their own language.

Only the church could interpret the Scriptures; that is, only the clergy, the only ones who possessed the Spirit of Christ by ordination, could know what the Scriptures meant. And all this implied that the church also subjected the Scriptures to its own authority. Only the church had the right to say which books belonged in the canon of Scripture — even if this meant including the Apocrypha. Only the church could add to the Scriptures doctrines which she wanted to add. And the church need give account to no one. Only the church could say what the Scriptures mean; and everyone was obligated, even on pain of death, to submit without question to what the church had said.

Rome denied that God's people occupy an office, the office of believers. Rome denied, therefore, that God's people possess in their hearts the Spirit of Christ, Who anoints them to this holy office. Rome denied that Christ gives His Spirit to every one of those who belong to His church. What a monstrous crime this was. When the institute of the church arrogates to herself powers which Christ has given to all His saints, the church becomes a thief and a spiritual murderer. Such was nevertheless the sad situation in the church prior to the Reformation.

It is not surprising that Luther was the first to attack these terrible doctrines of Rome and restore the office of believers to God's people. The tremendous insight which God gave Luther to see the Biblical teaching on this subject is staggering. Luther developed the ideas of Scripture on this subject early in the Reformation, particularly in his pamphlet, "Address to the German Nobility." He insisted that it was a crime of monumental proportions that the Romish Church had denied God's people the right to hold this office. All God's people possessed the Spirit of Christ and were, therefore, in their own right, prophets and priests and kings. Yet, while Luther surely was the first of the Reformers to see this, nevertheless, on this point, all the Reformers were in agreement. In fact, in this fundamental doctrine the Reformers owed a debt of considerable size to some who, before the Reformation, had already insisted on this truth. Wycliffe in England had emphasized this idea almost two hun-

dred years before the Reformation; Huss had followed him in this doctrine in Bohemia — and had lost his life at the stake because of it; the Waldensians had clung to this, even when their dead bodies were strewn over the Alps by Rome's inquisition. But the Reformers were unanimous in their insistence on this great truth.

It is quite obvious that this had important ramifications for the church of Christ as it was restored to her purity by that great work of God. In restoring the office of all believers to the saints, the Reformers, with one fell swoop, smashed the Romish Church's imposing sacerdotal system into a thousand pieces. The Reformers moved the entire clergy out of the way so that they could no longer stand between the believer and his God. Christ was the only Mediator of God's people, and the all-sufficiency of Christ's work was enough.

That God's people, by the Spirit of Christ in their hearts, were once again restored to their office of priest meant that no longer was the blessed gift of forgiveness of sins to be mediated through an earthly priesthood, but the people of God could go to the throne of grace through their only Mediator Jesus Christ to be assured of pardon and grace to endure. When the office of king was restored to the believer through the great work of the Reformation, the people were freed from the bondage of Rome's tyranny and liberated from the shackles of her endless laws and prescriptions. Perhaps the greatest result of this was that the great truth of Christian liberty was once again set in its proper place in the life of the people of God.

But especially did the Reformers emphasize the office of prophet. The apostle John had written, "But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him" (I John 2:27).

This truth had many implications, especially with respect to the doctrine of Scripture. We cannot go into it all here, but it ought to be clear to any one who has given any thought to this subject that this fundamental truth has brought profound changes to the life of God's child in the world. His most precious possession, God's own Word to him, was restored to him. And it was restored to him in his own language so that he could read it and understand it. All the great truths concerning Scripture are directly related to this truth. The Scripture is clear and understandable to any child of God who reads it, so that he can know what God says, regardless of his age. He needs only the Spirit of Christ, the anointing of the Holy One, to teach him. Only the literal meaning of the Scriptures is the cor-

rect one. One need not go into the labyrinths of Papal exegesis to understand what Scripture teaches and find, through dark and obscure byways, the hidden meaning. What Scripture says, it means. And that meaning is so clear and so profound that the youngest can understand and the oldest can only marvel. Scripture is infallible in every word and inerrant in all its parts. It is God's Word, and it is given by an inspiration that is without error of any kind. And from this it follows that Scripture is absolutely authoritative in all of life. The believer, coming to Scripture as a pupil to sit at the feet of Christ, submits to that authoritative Word and finds in it God's will for him in the whole of his calling and walk.

We cannot conclude this article without warning God's people in the most serious way that once again their office is being threatened. Rome's same old tyranny is reappearing in the church. Only now, instead of a clerical priesthood imposing itself between God and His people, a priesthood of "scholars" is occupying that place. Denying the absolute inerrancy of the Holy Scriptures, these scholars tell us today that the authority of Scripture is limited to what it intends to teach, but not to everything; that the literal meaning of Scripture is not its correct one; that one must be able to understand the genre of Scripture, the circumstances under which it was written, the viewpoint of the men who wrote it, the editorial work which was done in preparing it, and the fruits of archaeological discoveries if we are really to know what Scripture teaches. So the child of God, who has none of this learning, cannot possibly understand what Scripture teaches; he is dependent upon scholars. The anointing of the Spirit which makes him a prophet in his own right is insufficient. The Bible is a closed book to him. His office has no meaning. What a terrible evil. Are we to return to Rome and deny, out of hand, what the Reformers stood for? God forbid.

The office of believers is a precious Reformation heritage. It puts God's people in the throne room of God through Jesus Christ. It gives to him that most precious of all possible gifts, the Scriptures: the Scriptures which teach him the knowledge of God through Christ, Whom to know is everlasting life.

*The Standard Bearer
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Prophets and Perspicuity

Homer C. Hoeksema

All God's people are prophets.

The Spirit Who was poured out on the church on the day of Pentecost is the Spirit of prophecy, Who makes God's people participants in the prophetic anointing of Christ. "Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy!" Hence, under the new covenant, according to Hebrews 8, "they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest," vs. 11. In fact, God's people know all things: "But ye have an unction (anointing) from the Holy One, and ye know all things. I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth." And again: "But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him."

This does not mean, and cannot mean, that believers can, so to speak, strike out on their own and prophesy, apart from the Word of the Scriptures. It does not mean, as false mysticism has it, and as neo-Pentecostalism has it, that believers can know and speak the Word of God *apart from the Scriptures* and can utter new words and new revelations. For remember: the Spirit is the Spirit of Christ. The Spirit says nothing of Himself. Revelation, as far as its content is concerned, is not the work of the Spirit independently of Christ. The Spirit says nothing of Himself. All that the Spirit speaks and teaches He takes out of Christ, John 14:26; John 15:26; John 16:13, 14. And Christ we possess in the Word of the Scriptures. Hence, the Spirit of Christ always leads us to the Word; He never speaks without it. He enlightens the church's understanding of that Word, so that God's people know all things through that Word. In that sense they all know the Lord, from the least to the

greatest; and in that sense they can and do know all things.

What we have written above already implies and presupposes the truth of the perspicuity of Scripture. In fact, the two truths of the perspicuity of Scripture and the prophetic anointing of all believers belong together and are inseparable. They are related as the two sides of the same coin. The perspicuity of Scripture is the objective side; the anointing of believers as prophets is the subjective side. And thus believers, who have the anointing of Christ, can and do know all things, and need not that anyone should teach them. They can go directly to the Scriptures and know the Lord from these Scriptures. And they are able to discern the truth, and that, too, in distinction from the lie.

What is the perspicuity of Scripture?

The term itself is not a Scriptural one; neither do you find the term in our creeds. It is derived from a Latin word which means to "see through" something. If I may coin an expression, it means the *see-through-able-ness* of Scripture. It is that attribute of Holy Scripture according to which the Bible is clear, lucid, intelligible, able to be understood. As far as our creeds are concerned, this truth is clearly implied in the articles on the authority and on the sufficiency of Holy Scripture in our Belgic Confession. And as far as Scripture is concerned, it is taught directly or by implication in many, many passages. Let me cite a few passages. In II Peter 1:19, the word of prophecy is compared with "a light that shineth in a dark place." In II Timothy 3:15 that the Scriptures are so lucid that a child can understand them: for Paul writes to Timothy that "from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation" And, by the way, is that not our experience also, that our children at an early age can and do know the Scriptures? And in Psalm 119:105 we read: "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."

Let me briefly point out some of the chief implications of this truth, without expanding on them:

1) The Bible is a plain book. It is understandable by the people of God, so that they may read it and interpret it for themselves.

2) This implies, of course, the idea of the sufficiency of Scripture, and that, too, all by itself. The Scriptures fully contain the will of God, and whatsoever man ought to believe unto salvation is sufficiently taught therein. Its doctrine is most perfect and complete in all respects.

3) This does not mean that the Bible does not contain many elements which are difficult to understand and explain. Nor does it mean that diligent searching and study of the Scriptures is not necessary. Nor, as we shall see, does it mean that the believer can understand the Scriptures without the guidance of the Spirit. But it does mean that "whatsoever man ought to believe unto salvation" is so clearly taught that any child of God, though he be quite ordinary and even unlearned, can understand Holy Scripture.

4) This also implies that the Word of God is to be taken in its obvious meaning and in its historical sense. The divine author of the Scriptures is the Faithful and True One, and He intended to be understood when He addressed His Word to His church. This rule of interpretation is of the utmost importance. If it is not followed, you can make the Scriptures mean almost anything at all; and you can effectively take the Scriptures away from and out of reach of the ordinary child of God.

The implications of this truth are immense, and believers must never allow this truth of the perspicuity of Scripture to be forgotten and buried. This is important to our day especially. When I read the wild theories and alleged interpretations of higher criticism of various kinds — higher criticism which has flooded the seminaries and churches of our land with its outlandish and outrageous "interpretations" — then there is one conclusion which strikes me. It is this: if this is the way we must interpret Scripture, then no one, except the learned intelligentsia, who are thoroughly versed in all the intricacies of the various methods of criticism, can understand and interpret the Word of God or have any certainty that when he has interpreted it, he has the correct understanding. To me, this is from a practical, spiritual point of view, the great danger and the fatal flaw of higher criticism.

Now the power and ability to read and to understand the perspicuous Scriptures lies in the prophetic anointing of all believers. This, we must remember, is not a matter of mere intellectual understanding; but it is a *spiritual* gift. We need not elaborate here on the anointing as such: we have already discussed this. But let me briefly call attention to the characteristics of this anointing in con-

nection with the passage quoted from I John 2:

1) This anointing is the anointing of the Holy One, i.e., Christ. He is here called the Holy One to emphasize the thought that the believers' anointing is a *holy* anointing. It comes from the Holy One, and it is therefore such that believers partake of His holiness. By this anointing believers become separate from the effects of sin, and especially in this connection from the darkness of the lie.

2) This anointing is abiding (it "abideth in you") and constant. It can never be lost. Once anointed is always anointed. One who is anointed cannot turn away from the truth and deny Christ, cannot first be of Christ and of the church and later go out from the church and be of Antichrist. Besides, this anointing is constant. It is not thus, that the Spirit comes now and then. He constantly dwells in believers. He never leaves them. They always partake of Christ's anointing. Otherwise there would be no guarantee for God's people against the deception and temptation of the lie.

3) This anointing is *true*. How could it be otherwise? For it is the anointing of Him Who is the Truth, John 14:6. It always leads the anointed into the truth, therefore. And it "is no lie," John adds. Hence, it never deceives and causes one to walk in error and in the lie.

4) Hence, this anointing is trustworthy. It never fails. For what is true, and is not a lie, is to be trusted and depended upon. God's people must not depend on self, on learned men, on so-called experts, nor on the wisdom of synods and councils, but on the anointing of the Holy One.

5) The fruit of this anointing is that believers: a) know all things; b) know the truth, and that no lie is of the truth; c) need not that any man teach you, because this anointing teacheth you of all things.

All of this does not mean that believers despise the pastors and teachers which God gives His church. These are indeed gifts of God for the upbuilding of the saints and for the edifying of the body of Christ. But it does mean that believers are not wholly dependent upon an institution of men for the knowledge of the Lord, and for the proper functioning of their spiritual life. They have the unction of the Holy One, and they need not that anyone teach them. And if pastors and teachers become corrupt and heretical and a certain institution of the church becomes deformed due to the corruption of the truth, believers are in a position to know and to discern this and to judge. And they are even in a position in their office of believers to separate themselves from the false church and to institute the true church anew. This is the sacred right of reformation which believers must never give up!

The Office of Believers — and Church Membership

Gise J. Van Baren

Once upon a time (children's stories and perhaps "parables" should begin that way) there was a man who was a carpenter — a very good one at that. From his youth he had been developing his talents. He spent unending hours practicing and seeking to perfect this art. He lived in a ramshackle, old house (badly in need of repair), but he did not have the time to take care of that. He anticipated a call from the king who was building his palace. After all, the king would want the best in his realm to work on that wonderful project! Nor could this carpenter accept the request for his services of those living about him — he must be ready, if the king calls, to go immediately. He knew that his abilities could be best used in the service of his king — but he waited in vain for the king's call to serve in the king's carpentry crew at the palace. After many years, the carpenter died. His house had virtually fallen apart. The neighbors no longer knew of his talents since he had never used them on their behalf. To the end of his life, the carpenter regretted the fact that he had not been able to use his talents in the area for which he deemed himself perfectly qualified — and therefore he had not used these talents properly at all.

Does the story sound all too familiar? How many are not eager and willing to use their time and abilities in some grand project of the King of kings — and while waiting for the opportunity to arrive, fail to do those necessary and required tasks He has laid upon us in our daily lives?

This issue of the *Standard Bearer* treats of the office of believers. Other articles have set forth the idea of this office. Suffice it to say here that this office is the fruit of Christ's anointing. The *Heidelberg Catechism* states, "I am a member of Christ by faith, and thus am partaker of His anointing . . ." (Q. 32). This means that those united to Christ can

prophesy ("But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things" — I John 2:20.) The gift of prophecy is not limited to the minister; it is a gift given to each Christian by virtue of his union to Christ. There is, too, the gift of holiness and, then, service. Many Scriptural passages point to the calling of saints to be holy — and to serve God in all things. Finally, there is the gift to rule — not only as elders in the church, but as those who would direct their time, possessions, and very being in the service of their Lord.

The office of believers is one to be used diligently and faithfully in the church. One need not wait first for some call to serve as minister, elder, or deacon. That particular call may never come — and in the case of women, we believe Scripture clearly indicates, will never come. But each has the office of believers — to be used and never neglected. Each child of God is partaker of Christ's anointing — in order that he may serve God in the body of Jesus Christ as that is seen here on the earth.

The office of believers exists exactly in order that the church may flourish in this earth. He who refuses faithfully to use this office, has neglected the command of his King.

But how can this office be used? Apart from serving in the various offices within the church, what can one do? Is it not true that the laity are not that important within the church?

Nothing can be further from the truth. The office of believers is expressed in fellowship and communion. This is seen in society meetings, in evening fellowship, in daily contacts. In societies particularly, there is the opportunity to profit mutually in sharing one's understanding of the Word of God. True, this requires more than faithful attendance at society — necessary though attendance itself is. It requires, yea, demands, careful study of the passage of Scripture. One can not simply rely on what he recalls about the passage from the time he

was in school and catechism. He must compare Scripture with Scripture; he reads and studies that which others write on the passage. He considers possible questions which can be raised on the passage — and possible answers which he can give. Thus, with an interchange of ideas and thoughts, the knowledge of Scripture increases. Also, the application of these Scriptural truths is made there for the spiritual profit of all present.

But this office is used not only in society meetings. There are ever so many opportunities to exercise this office in its threefold aspect within the church. There is frequently the need to comfort and assure fellow saints. When death comes, when God takes from another his or her lifelong mate, the encouragement of the saints is needed. That encouragement is needed not only in the funeral home, but also in the months which follow.

When sickness comes, sometimes fatal sickness, the saints rally around such an individual and his family who face the affliction, to comfort and encourage with good words from Scripture and with prayer. Nothing lifts up the afflicted more than when they hear from God's Word itself concerning the Presence of God with His people.

When problems arise, saints find ways to help each other and direct each other through the time of trial.

When sin is seen, saints warn and admonish from Holy Scripture. They do not rejoice in the sin, nor gossip about it. Rather, they follow the Scriptural norm of seeking the repentance of the sinner. They do not ignore sin or pretend that it is not there. Rather, for the sake of the one sinning, every effort is put forth to lead to true repentance.

When occasions of joy are present, then the saints together also rejoice. Oh, how God also directs that His people may know the blessings of salvation. Such is seen especially as the children are baptized, as the young people make public confession of their faith, as the youth are joined in holy marriage.

This office of believer is, above all, exercised as these saints gather together each Sabbath to worship God in His house of prayer under the preaching of the Word. It is their joy, for these few moments, to search Scripture, to consider its meaning, to hear the truths of the Word expounded to them. It is their pleasure to study together that Word and consider its application to life.

With all of this, there is the fact that in this office the believer has the opportunity, daily, to come to God in prayer. Earnestly, he brings before Father's throne all of the needs and cares of God's people. He prays concerning the afflicted; he speaks to God

of the needs of the church; the needs of the Christian schools; the needs of his own family. As priest, he makes continual supplication to God for Jesus' sake.

Even outside of the church, in contact with others about him, the Christian shows by word and deed his own blessed relationship with God his Father. His interest in the kingdom of heaven, his concern for the children of God, his faithfulness in his work — all show him to be indeed a citizen of the heavenly kingdom. How wonderful it is also when God gives those opportunities to speak to others of the wonder of God's salvation. There is nothing more beautiful than to be able to speak of that Sovereignty of our God and the riches of His grace and mercy.

But are we functioning in this great office to the best of our ability? There seems so much which prevents one from serving in that office properly. We are distracted. We have television — with hours spent in front of it weekly. But possibly we find we have not enough time to attend societies, or, if we attend, no time to prepare ourselves for that. We have sports: the high school variety to professional sports. This might consume vast amounts of our time. But we have little time for church activities, for visiting the sick or comforting the mourners. We live in the age of "labor-saving devices," but we have precious little time to serve as we ought in the office of believers. Or, is it not so with you?

Often we would minimize our own gifts and abilities to serve in this office. We all know other saints of God who are so very capable. These know how to teach, how to comfort, how to warn. These are the ones who can speak so fluently in society and contribute so intelligently. But we are unable to do so — or so we tell ourselves. We deplore our own lack of ability — and think that there is nothing we can contribute. But that is a sad and sinful attitude — for are we not all partakers of Christ's anointing?

Some do think they have talents which ought to qualify them to serve in the office of deacon, elder, or minister. These may be women to whom these special offices are forbidden in Scripture; or these may be men who seem never to be called to serve in one of the special offices. So one quickly concludes that he is not allowed to use his talents to their full. He might deplore the lack of opportunity. But such ignore that God gives to each many opportunities to function in the church of God. Let none ignore the obvious tasks and calling while awaiting the reception of what he considers to be the higher call.

Consider your office, man or woman of God. God has called you from darkness to His marvelous

light. He has changed the very course of our life. He has given you the anointing of His Son. You are prophets, priests, and kings of the living God. A more wonderful position there is not. A higher calling there can not be. In fulfilling the daily tasks to the best of our ability, in doing those things which our Father in heaven requires of us, we are using our office properly.

Let us, then, not waste our time nor our talents

while forever waiting for some higher or more noble work to do. The labor is here and now. "Occupy," said Jesus, "til I come." Many things are not being done; much in this office is not being carried out. Where such is true, let us repent. And by the grace of our God, let us consciously, actively use this office within the church to His glory and the spiritual benefit of His church.

The Office of Believers and Bible Study

Ronald J. Van Overloop

One of the vital issues of the Reformation was the priesthood of all believers. The Reformation abolished the idea that only a select group of men may function as priests. It pointed out that Scripture calls all of the members of the church "priests" (I Peter 2:9) and that each has priestly tasks (Hebrews 13:15, 16).

One of the principal duties of priests was to know and to teach the Word of God to the people (Malachi 2:7). In the old dispensation the people had to find the knowledge of God from the mouth of the priest. Now, with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, every child of God knows and speaks the Word of God and is able to teach others. The Word is written in our hearts, so every believer knows God, from the least to the greatest (Hebrews 8:10, 11 and I John 2:27).

The danger is great that the believer does not use his office. This danger is present in the worship services when the believers do not enter into what is preached with understanding, do not respond to it, and do not make it their own. This danger is also present in the home of believers when the Bible is neglected or abused. Abuse of the Bible is probably more serious than the neglect of it. It is dangerous to use verses out of their context. It is just as dangerous to hold doctrinal positions without being able to give a Biblical defense.

Next to praying there is nothing so important in practical religion as Bible reading. God mercifully gave us a book which is "able to make us wise unto salvation through faith which is in Jesus Christ." Through that one book the believer learns what to believe, what to be, and what to do; he learns how to live and die with comfort.

It has been rightly said, "Happy is he who possesses the Bible; happiest is he who reads and obeys the Bible."

What do you do with the Bible? Do you read it? Do you read and obey it? "How readest thou?" (Luke 10:26b).

Why should the Bible be read and obeyed?

First, Scripture should be read because the knowledge of the things found in the Bible is absolutely necessary to a man's salvation. One can get to heaven without money, learning, or health, but knowledge of the Bible is necessary.

How glorious is God's plan of salvation. How satisfying to the soul is the knowledge of the way by which our sins are forgiven. How comforting are the accounts the Bible gives of the great Mediator, the man Christ Jesus: His incarnation, suffering, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension. How precious are the promises the Bible contains for those who love God. How encouraging are the examples the Bible gives of the good people, who were of like passions as we are. How instructive are the examples the Bible gives of the wicked.

Secondly, the Bible should be read and obeyed, if only because of how it originated and Who is its author. The Bible was "given by inspiration of God." It is not a collection of thoughts of various imperfect men. It is the very mind of the King of kings. All other books, however good and useful they may be, are more or less defective. The Bible is absolutely perfect, being entirely the Word of God.

Therefore, it is no light matter what you are doing with this Book.

Thirdly, the Bible should be read because it is the only food that can sustain the heart which has the new principle of the life of Christ, given by the Holy Spirit. A newborn babe desires its mother's milk. It does not have to be taught to desire it. So the life of Christ delights in the Word of God day and night (Psalm 1:2).

This is so true that it can be said of one who despises Bible reading, that he is not born again, even if he is zealous for the ceremonies of the church. The signal evidence of the Spirit's presence within a believer is that the Word is precious to him. "I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food." "How sweet are thy words unto my taste! Yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" (Job 23:12; Psalm 119:103).

It is very important whether you know anything of this sweetness of the Word.

The knowledge gained from Bible reading has many benefits.

Applied by the Holy Spirit, the Bible is the instrument which converts souls to God (Psalm 19:7). Also through faith it is able to instruct in righteousness and to furnish the child of God unto all good works (II Timothy 3:16). This is a tremendous potential lying at the fingertips of every believer. The man who has the Bible and the Holy Spirit has an infallible guide. He needs no priest or church for him to know the truth. What are you doing with such a powerful tool? Are you using these talents well, so it can be said that you are being faithful over few things and will be made ruler over many things?

Another benefit is that the Bible is the only tool by which all questions of doctrine and practice can be tried. God has mercifully provided an unerring standard for our poor, fallen understandings. The world is full of difficulties on points of doctrine, with some errors so very close to the truth. The world is equally full of difficulties on points of practice. There are questions about vocations, about amusements, about the various relationships in society, about the duties of parenting, etc. The Bible must be made the rule for doctrine and con-

duct. It is the only correct compass to guide the believer through the storms of this life.

Do you know the Scriptures well enough to be able to defend your doctrinal position? As important as doctrine is, it is not sufficient to know only the doctrine. Do you free yourself from the charge of abusing the Scriptures because, in defending your position, you do not use only one passage, but a number of them, thus giving the current teaching of Scripture?

To those willing to read the Bible, here is some advice.

1. Make use of your Bible. All the resolving to read it does absolutely no good. Read it!

2. Be careful how you read it. Do not just let the words pass before your eyes. Read it with the earnest desire to understand it. It does no good if it is not understood. The believer must read the Bible concentrating on understanding what he reads, as if digging for golden nuggets of truth.

3. Read the Bible with childlike faith and humility. Believe implicitly what you read, and do not stand in judgment over it.

4. Read the Bible in the spirit of obedience and self-application. It is not to be read for curiosity or speculation.

5. Read the Bible daily. We put on our clothes daily and eat our food daily. So we should read the Scriptures. A great type of the Word of God in the old dispensation was the manna the children of Israel received in the wilderness. They had to gather it fresh every morning. That is probably the best time for our daily reading of the Scriptures.

6. Read all of the Bible and read it in an orderly way. Skipping here and there, from this interesting piece of history or to that short psalm, profits but little. Paul told Timothy that ALL Scripture is profitable.

7. Most importantly, read the Bible with Christ Jesus continually in view. He and His life are its primary objects. When you see Him and yourself you will be the most benefited.

Many believers love and believe the Bible, but they read it only a little. They are likely to get little comfort from it in time of need. They will not be established in the truth. They are likely also to make mistakes in life and practice. And they can easily be carried away for a while by some false wind.

The Bible must be read, but not a little. It must be read a great deal. "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly" (Colossians 3:16).

The benefits of daily reading the Scriptures with

an earnest, childlike faith come slowly, but surely. No dramatic changes are evident immediately. But impressions are left upon the heart, of which we might not be aware. Sin becomes more and more disgusting and Christ more and more precious.

Resolve to read the Bible more. Resolve to honor it more in your families. Meditate upon it more and talk more about it. And resolve to live by it more and more.

The Ministry of the Word

Robert D. Decker

Ministers of the gospel do not make much money. Generally speaking, at least this is true in our denomination, ministers do not accumulate a great deal of earthly wealth. Do not misunderstand, our ministers are provided with all they need. They are provided with good houses and a salary and other benefits which are sufficient to "free them from worldly cares and avocations." But, if one wishes to make a great deal of money and amass to himself earthly riches, he ought not enter the ministry of the Word. The rewards a minister receives are far greater, much more worthwhile, of much more value than mere money. A faithful minister has the assurance that God is well pleased with his labors in the midst of the church. Can anything be more valuable than this? A faithful minister has the joy of seeing the fruit of the preaching of the Word in the hearts and lives of God's children. How can one measure the joy and satisfaction a minister feels when God uses him with all his human weaknesses and sins to build His church? To bring the encouragement and promises of God's Word to the sick, to instruct the lambs of the flock, to bring the comfort of the gospel to those who mourn, to baptize the infants of the covenant, to preach the Word and administer the Lord's Supper, to witness the confession of faith of the youth of the church, all these and more provide rewards for God's faithful ministers which cannot be measured in mere earthly terms. Not only so but the faithful minister is promised that when the Chief Shepherd appears he shall receive the crown of glory. (Cf. I Peter 5:1-4.)

The apostle Paul admonishes Timothy, a minister of the Word, "Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And in the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (II Timothy 2:1, 2). The Apostle is nearing the end of his life. He is concerned that his spiritual son, Timothy, a young minister, remember what he had been taught, the gospel of God's sovereign grace in Christ Jesus. The truth of the gospel must be preserved by Timothy. And, that truth must be committed or passed on to faithful men. These faithful men are future ministers of the gospel. These must have the ability to teach others the truth of Holy Scripture. This is highly necessary, for only in this way are the elect gathered out of the nations, the church is preserved and defended until Christ returns, and God's name is praised.

This is what our churches need too. We need faithful men who are able to teach others. These faithful men must come from the generation of the young men in our churches. The future well-being of our churches depends on this. This does not affect merely the young men of the churches, but all of us. The simple fact is that our churches need students for the ministry. Our calling is to pray that God will give us faithful men who are able to teach others.

Faithful men must possess certain spiritual gifts. Among these is the gift of what may be called genuine piety or spirituality. These must be men full of faith. It is true that there are hypocrites in the ministry. These never last. Sooner or later they are exposed. God even uses false prophets like Balaam

to bless His people. These, however, are the exception, not the rule. Ministers must be pious, spiritual, godly men. They must be men saved by grace through faith, God's gift, men in whose hearts is the love of God in Jesus Christ. Men, they must be, who love God, and God's people and cause.

Humility is another of the spiritual gifts a minister must have. There is no room for pride in the ministry. Self-seeking, pride, selfishness, the seeking of the praise of men, all these are abominable sins among God's people, especially among ministers. If one wants the praise of men, honor, fame he must not seek the ministry. Faithful men are humble men. As were the Apostles, they are slaves of God and of His church. Faithful men are men of much prayer, for they know that all that they have and are is of God. Faithful men know they cannot preach one sermon or do anything at all apart from God's grace. Without ceasing they pray for God's grace to enable them faithfully to teach others.

Sympathetic understanding is a third spiritual gift of faithful men. Jesus, our great, merciful High Priest is touched with the feelings of our infirmities and was tempted in all points like as we, yet without sin (Hebrews 4:15). The servants of Christ must be as Jesus was. They must know God's people, know their needs, joys, struggles, sorrows, and afflictions. Faithful men must feel with God's people, understand them so as to be able to bring God's Word to their needs. Ministers must weep with those who weep and rejoice with those who rejoice.

Faithful men must also be men of spiritual courage. The Apostle admonished the church at Ephesus to pray for all the saints and for him that he might have boldness to make known the mystery of the gospel (Ephesians 6:18, 19). This must be the prayer of every faithful minister. He needs boldness to preach the TRUTH of God's Word. The Gospel declares that we are sinners who cannot do any good at all, that our salvation is all by the grace of God in Christ. To do this takes boldness or courage. Ministers stand in the front line of the battle of faith. This is why Paul tells Timothy that he must endure hardness as a good soldier of Christ. Again, this takes courage.

In addition, the minister needs certain natural gifts. He needs the ability to study. A faithful man must be able to teach others by means of the preaching of the Word. He needs the ability to read and study the Scriptures and all that goes with this. A broad background in history, philosophy, literature, and the original languages of the Bible are needed by one aspiring to the ministry. A minister must have the ability to explain God's Word to God's people. It takes many hours of hard, prayer-

ful work to make an edifying sermon. The bulk of the minister's time must be spent in his study with the Bible and his books.

The minister also needs the gift of public speaking. His chief task is to preach the Word twice on the Lord's Day and to teach the children and youth of the church in catechism. The seminary provides courses on how to make a sermon and how to deliver a sermon and how to teach catechism, but a man needs that gift from God. The seminary courses can only help a student develop that gift and use it properly and for the edification of the church.

There is great need in our churches for faithful men who are able to teach others. It is certainly true that all of God's people are anointed with the anointing of Christ. All are in Christ and by His grace prophets, priests, and kings. The means by which God enables His people to speak His praises, consecrate themselves in His service, and rule over the works of His hands is chiefly the preaching of the Word. God saves His church by means of preaching. Scripture teaches in I Corinthians 1 that it pleases God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. Romans 1 tells us that the gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation. Romans 10 says that we cannot believe on Christ, call upon His name, and be saved unless we hear Christ by means of a preacher who is sent.

There is also a practical side to this great need. Among our ministers and professors, two are in their sixties, four in their fifties and the rest are in their forties or younger. Bearing in mind that it takes eight years of education after high school to prepare for the ministry, someone beginning next fall would graduate from the seminary in 1994. By that time two, perhaps five, of the ministers would be retired. All of our retired ministers would be well into their eighties or in heaven. Any of the others could be gone through death, illness, or discipline.

The need is great indeed! Young men in the churches ought to examine themselves to determine whether or not they have the necessary gifts for the ministry of the Word. If they do, they ought prayerfully to consider whether or not the Lord calls them to pursue the ministry of the Word. Parents ought to discuss these matters with their sons. So should teachers in our Christian schools. Pastors ought to hold this need before their congregations and especially before the young men of the congregations. All of us must pray earnestly that God will raise up faithful men from our congregations who are able to teach others in our churches. God hears those prayers and He will provide for His praying people!

Make no mistake about it, the ministry of the Word is hard work. In the light of the last hour in which we are called to live as prophets, priests, and kings in Christ, it will become harder. This ought

never be underestimated. The work is hard, very hard. The rewards and joys of the work are greater by far!

We and Our Elders

Barrett L. Gritters

The relation between believers in the church and the elders is often incorrectly viewed as similar to that between citizens of the United States and their State or Congressional Representatives. Ours (USA) is a government "of the people, by the people, and for the people" in which (according to our constitution) the power rests in the people who are governed. That is, the power rests in the people themselves. Because this kind of representative government is part of our country's heritage, some get the notion that the church runs that way too. In the church of Christ, though, believers are not the basis of authority.

Reformed churches differ from most Presbyterian churches in their views of church government. One of these differences is exhibited in the relation between believers and elders in the church. This difference in viewpoint touches on the positive purpose of this article.

A distinctive character of Presbyterianism is the teaching that "ecclesiastical power is given to the people, and is by them conferred on the Elders, so that the latter exercise this power in the name of the people, and consequently are subject to the people." That is, believers hold in themselves ecclesiastical right to rule by virtue of their general priesthood, or office of believer. Believers then confer this right (or power) on the particular men whom they elect to serve as elders in the church. (See Heyns' *Handbook for Elders and Deacons* [1928] p. 16. Heyns quotes Charles Hodge from his *Church Polity* and the PCUSA "Form of Church Govern-

ment" to support this. If this presentation is not correct, though, I would welcome some of our Presbyterian brethren to give us their insight.) This view seems to do justice to the reformational principle of the priesthood of all believers; that is, that we are all "prophets, priests, and kings." Both Presbyterians and Reformed people of God believe in this important principle. How it is applied is the question.

The Reformed system of church government teaches that the right to rule the church does not come from the believers themselves. They too hold a kingly office; but this kingly office means that they "with a free and good conscience . . . fight against sin and Satan . . . and afterwards reign with him eternally, over all creatures" (Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 12). Although believers take part in the election of elders, the right to rule the church is a *special* authority and power given by Christ, different from what all believers have in common.

Thus, the relation between believers and the office of elder is not that believers give the office-bearers their authority to rule. The question remains, then: "What is the proper relation between you and your elders?" In answer to that, the following points give us some direction:

1. *Respect and remember.* First of all, we should realize that there is a brother/sister relation between us and our elders. They too are sheep of the flock of God, and need to experience our love and prayers in their difficult labors. But we may never fail to see that elders, in their office, carry the authority of Christ. They are bishops ("overscers": Titus 1:7, I Timothy 3:1, etc.), and as bishops have

been given a place of rule in the church. We must view them as overseers over the flock of God, which He purchased with His own blood, and willingly place ourselves under their rule. When believers view their "fellow elder-saints" as those clothed with the authority of Christ and sent by Christ for their good, nothing but good can result. Thus, when another church member is an elder, I not only love and respect him as a brother in the Lord, but am called to reverence him because of his office and have the duty to submit to his authority as one appointed by Christ Himself.

2. *Choosing our officebearers.* Male, confessing believers have opportunity as well as responsibility to help in the election of officebearers in the church. Here again is where their office of believer is manifested. When the consistory presents a slate of nominations for approbation, church members must do much more than consider who is the most personable of the lot, or take part in a sort of popularity contest. They must not base their vote on who friends or relatives are voting for. Theirs is the duty to exercise sanctified wisdom and spend time with the Scripture (concerning the necessary qualifications) and time in prayer (about whom the Lord would have in the office of elder).

Too often members come to meetings asking to have their minds refreshed concerning who is on nomination. Or if that is not the case, then there may be come quick consideration of the list of nominees and hasty writing of the names, only to find that he has forgotten who he voted for when the elections are finished. The point that must be made is that too often we are guilty of not putting enough prayerful consideration into the voting for officebearers. As believers we have the right and duty (but no less the ability) to vote with spiritual regard. God uses this means to place in the office the man whom He chooses.

3. *Prophetic exercise.* In connection with the government of the church, the confessing believer (who is a member in good standing in the church) also has an obligation to approve the names which the consistory has placed on nomination. For at least two weeks prior to election, the names of the nominees are announced in the bulletin for the express purpose that confessing believers exercise their prophetic office. That the announcement of the nominees becomes a mere formality in the church is a real danger. A believer who knows something that he thinks might disqualify a nominee from serving in the office must bring that information to the consistory. He must. Before God his duty is to speak to the consistory. His objection must be serious, but nothing may be hid that would bring grief to the church of Christ.

Ultimately the consistory must make the deci-

sion to remove or retain the name, but the brother must not let that stop him from bringing what he sees as a serious objection to any name. The consistory may have much reason to thank the brother for helping them make a crucial decision. If the consistory cannot convince the objector that his reasons are not valid, the objecting brother may appeal the consistory's decision to classis.

4. *Protest and Appeal.* The right of protest and appeal is a right of every confessing believer, male or female. Because of his office of believer, one who is grieved by a decision of the elders may, as in the case above with nominations for officebearer, bring to the consistory a written objection of a decision that has been made. If a carefully formulated protest shows the consistory that the decision is contrary to the Scripture, the confessions, or the Church Order, they must graciously and thankfully rescind the decision they made and give thanks to God for the office of believers. Again, if the consistory is not convinced that they have erred, and therefore do not change, the protestor has the right to appeal that case to classis and synod.

Much more could be said about this procedure. What needs to be said here is that this exercise of protest and appeal must be a spiritual exercise of the office. The right of protest is a concrete expression of the office we all hold. Used properly it can be a blessing to the church.

5. *Preparing for office.* Reformed churches have emphasized preparation for the office of minister — and rightfully so. But this has not been done on a widespread basis for elders and deacons. (Part of the reason is that we do not know whom the Lord will call.) An emphasis is placed on ministers' preparation because of the lifetime call, the bulk of the work, and the nature of preaching. But neglecting preparation for office of elder is not proper. Also this office (as well as the office of deacon) is difficult and critically important for the life of the congregation.

Our churches are becoming larger. Needed are more and well-qualified elders in the church. Because there is not unlimited money to build new churches, and an additional pastor in each church is not always desirable, we need more and well-qualified elders to help with the work, especially in larger congregations.

A partial solution may be found in I Timothy 3:1. "This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work." Implied here is that a man desires to serve in the church as an officebearer and servant of Christ. With a view to that, he can prepare himself for work in that office. It is not necessary that a man wait until he is elected to the office before he begins to prepare for

the work. If a man desires the office, he ought before the face of God to begin preparing himself. Even if the Lord never calls him to the office, the study will be a great spiritual benefit for him. (As an aside, consideration might even be given to much earlier elections so that the officebearers can have time to prepare properly for the work before installation.)

How does one prepare? If a man truly desires to be a servant in the church, he must busy himself with the Word of God, taking into account especially the spiritual principles needed for that office. He can prepare for and take an active part in Bible society; he can volunteer to teach Sunday School. An aptitude to teach is an important qualification of elders. An opportune place to begin is in the home

God has given you. Be a godly example of leadership in your family, instructing your children, for "if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?" (1 Tim. 3:5).

The office of elder is given as a gift to us by the Lord of the church so that we can experience His rule over us. May we, in whatever relation to the office we find ourselves, thank our Father for His care over us through the elders. He gave them to us "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God . . ." (Ephesians 4:12, 13).

The Office of Believer and Christian Giving

Carl J. Haak

Mercy — how we love that word!

"The Lord is merciful . . ."; "But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him . . ."; "Remember, O Lord, thy tender mercies and thy lovingkindnesses . . ."

God's mercy looks at us as we are miserable and wretched in our sins and it is His tender pity and loving compassion towards us whereby He does us good. "God be merciful to ME the sinner, . . . this man went down to his house justified."

Sharing the anointing of Christ, we are made to be merciful. "And be ye kind one to another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." One concrete way the believer shows this grace of mercy is by giving to the causes presented to us by our deacons.

* * * * *

Let us consider this in the light of Deuteronomy 15:7-11. (Will you please look this up now in your Bible?)

God gives us direction *how* we are to give: *bountifully* and *willingly*. We should give bountifully, that is, sufficiently to supply the needs the deacons have called upon us to support. If the causes go lacking we have not given bountifully, even though we may attempt to justify ourselves with saying, "I have done my part." Observe how this duty is insisted upon us. It is repeated over and over again, and enjoined in the strongest terms: vs. 7, "Thou shalt not harden thy heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother"; vs. 8, "But thou shalt open thy hand wide unto him"; vs. 10, "Thou shalt surely give him"; vs. 11, "I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thy hand wide unto thy brother and to thy needy." When the collection plate is passed in divine worship services, God calls us to give bountifully, that is, sufficient unto the needs.

The Word of God anticipates and warns against

objections. "Beware that there be not a thought in thy wicked heart, saying, The seventh year, the year of release is at hand; and thy eye be evil against thy poor brother, and thou givest him naught, and he cry unto the Lord against thee, and it be sin unto thee." The matter concerning the seventh year of release was that God had given Israel a law, that if any man had lent anything to his neighbors, and if the latter had not been able to repay it, then on the seventh year he was to release his neighbor of the debt and not exact it of him. God warns the children of Israel not to withhold giving because they anticipated that they would not be repaid. The wickedness of their hearts would reason that they would lose their loan, because the law would require them to release their debtor. Therefore they would be hesitant to supply the wants of the needy. "Thou shalt be willing to lend, expecting nothing again."

When we make objections against our calling of Christian giving, God speaks of it as a manifestation of the wickedness of our hearts. "Beware that there be not a thought in thy wicked heart." The warning is very strict. God does not say, "Beware that you do not actually refuse to give," but, "Beware that you do not have one objecting thought against it." God warns against the beginnings of uncharitableness in the heart, and against anything which tends to hold us back in our giving.

Although this applies to all our giving, the offerings for the poor are especially the way in which the Christian shows mercy, and thus functions in the office of all believers. God says to us that we shall never be in want for objects of benevolence. "For the poor shall never cease out of thy land" (vs. 11). Christ has said the same to us in Matthew 26:11: "The poor have ye always with you." This cuts off the excuse that we can find nobody to give to, none who are in need. God shall so order His providence, that His people everywhere, and in all ages, will have occasion for the exercise of the virtue of mercy in giving for the poor.

It is our duty to give bountifully. It is commanded twice in the text, "Thou shalt open thy hand wide unto thy poor brother." Merely to give something is not sufficient; it answers not to the rule, nor comes up to the holy command of God. What we give, considering our brothers' wants and our abilities, ought properly to be called a *liberal* gift. This is explained in verse 8: "Thou shalt open thy hand wide unto him, and shall surely lend him sufficient for his want, in that which he needeth." By lending, the text means giving, as in Luke 6:35: "Do good and lend, hoping for nothing again." The poor are to receive what is sufficient for their needs. There ought to be none in the church who live in pinching want. When we give sparingly, it is not

revelation of charity, but of covetousness. "Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort you brethren, that they would go before unto you, and make up beforehand your bounty, whereof ye had notice before, that the same might be ready, as a matter of bounty, and not as of covetousness" (II Cor. 9:5).

We are to do this freely, without grudging. It is not at all pleasing in the sight of God if when we extend the hand to drop our gift in the plate, we are grieved in our hearts, and it hurts to give what we give. "Thou shalt surely give, and thy heart shall not be grieved." God looks at the heart, and the hand is not accepted without it. "Every man according as he hath purposed in his heart, so let him give, not grudgingly, or of necessity; for God loveth a cheerful giver" (II Cor. 9:7).

* * * * *

The exercise of the office of all believers in Christian giving is a great duty and calling. It is not only a commendable thing for a man to be kind to the poor and generous to the Kingdom causes, but it is our sacred calling, as much as it is to pray, or to attend public worship. It is mentioned in the Bible as one of the more essential duties of true religion acceptable to God. "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (Micah 6:8). To love mercy is one of the three things which sums true religion. So also is it mentioned by James as one of the two things in which true religion consists: "Pure religion and undefiled before God the Father is this; to visit the fatherless and the widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world." Christ tells us that it is one of the weightier matters of the law. "Ye have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith" (Matt. 22:23). Again, "I desired mercy, and not sacrifice" (Hosea 6:6). The Scripture again and again teaches us that the display of mercy in giving of what the Lord has given to us to the needs of the Body of Christ, is an essential and weighty matter of our office of believer.

The willingness we will have to support the causes presented by our deaconates only originates in a sincere understanding of the mercy of God towards us. Consider how greatly God has loved us, what He has given to us, when we were so unworthy. Christ loved and pitied us, when we were poor and laid out His own life for us and shed His blood for us without grudging. He emptied Himself for us vile wretches, in order to make us rich, and to clothe us with kingly robes, when we were naked. He brought us to feast at His own table when we were totally without. He raised us from the dunghill and made us inherit the throne of glory. "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,

that although he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich" (II Cor. 8:9).

Considering all these things, what a horror it would be that we cannot support the needs of the church without grumbling or inward regret. How unsuitable it is for those who live only by the kindness and mercy of God to be unkind and unmerciful. The uncharitable giver, the one who holds back his hand from the offering because his money goes for other things first and he fears he will not have enough for himself, this one knows not experientially the mercy of God.

Christ by His redemption has made us members one of another. Therefore we ought to be united and serve one another's good. "Bear ye one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ." Let us apply these things to ourselves and inquire in our hearts whether in these things we are walking in a way which is pleasing to God and worthy of our Lord Whose anointing we share. Have you given cheerfully until the need is supplied? Have we done it grudgingly and with grief of heart? Do the causes of the Kingdom and the poor cry out to God due to our falling behind in wholehearted giving?

God tells us that what we have done in our giving we have done unto Him, and what we have denied we have denied unto Him. "He that hath pity on the poor lendeth to the Lord" (Prov. 19:17). God in

His infinite mercy has bound Himself to the poor in the church and His heart loves the causes of His kingdom. When we deny them, we rob Him. (See Malachi ch. 3.)

To give to the poor in the manner prescribed to us by our Lord is a difficult duty, and it is very contrary to corrupt nature. Man is naturally governed by the principle of self-love. Part of the blessed liberty in Christ is the ability worked in us of grace to walk not according to some, but according to all the commandments of God. If this seems hard and difficult to you, let not that be the objection against doing it. Also in this area of the redeemed life of grace the way to walk is the narrow way.

But we ought not to look upon it as loss. If we believe the Scriptures, when a man charitably gives, the giver has the greatest advantage by it, even greater than the receiver. "I have showed you all things, how that so laboring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive,'" (Acts 20:35; see also Prov. 14:21, Ecc. 9:1, Prov. 19:17).

The spiritual principle is simple but oh so true. Experiencing God's mercy we are made to be merciful. In the way of being merciful we receive the approval of our Lord and are blessed. May the Lord cause us to function and to grow in the office of believer by giving to the causes of the kingdom and the needy.

Book Review

EVANGELICAL ETHICS, ISSUES FACING THE CHURCH TODAY, by John Jefferson Davis; Puritan and Reformed Publishing, 1985; 299 pp., \$13.95. (Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko)

The blurb on the cover of this book explains its contents.

The Christian today is confronted with ethical questions of unprecedented magnitude. Are nuclear weapons justifiable? Does world population growth make the widespread use of contraceptives imperative? What attitude should Christians have toward homosexuality? How should we respond to the prac-

tices of abortion, infanticide, euthanasia? Is civil disobedience ever an option for believers? What does the Bible say about artificial insemination, or about sterilization?

Never before have such issues pressed upon the church with the urgency they do now. To equip believers to respond to the ethical challenges of our time, John Jefferson Davis has written this highly informative and thoroughly biblical volume — an excellent resource for the student, the pastor, and the concerned layperson.

On the whole, the author succeeds well in giving

guidance to God's people on what are surely difficult ethical questions with which the world confronts the church. Of particular value in the book is a great deal of resource material on what the church in the past has said about many of the issues raised, and on what current legislation in this country and abroad has been passed on various matters of ethical concern. While the law is in a state of flux at present, this book brings one up to date on what current law has to say.

As I was reading the book, one thought especially occurred to me. The author does not, in my opinion, always present all the relevant Biblical data on an issue. I do not want to sound too harsh in this criticism, for some of the issues raised and discussed in the book have no easy answers — the Bible does not present us with a clear-cut "Yes" or "No" in many instances; and the book reflects carefulness in dealing with these difficult problems. But the Bible does present broad principles oftentimes in the context of which many of today's problems have to be faced; and the author does not always, in my judgment, deal with these principles.

Perhaps an illustration or two will make this clear. In his treatment of the use of contraceptives, the author does not deal sufficiently with the teachings of the Bible concerning the believer's attitude towards children; i.e., that children of believers are children of the covenant. The whole matter of bringing forth covenant seed must be considered in this problem. The same is true to some extent when the author treats such matters as *in vitro* conception, surrogate motherhood, artificial insemination, etc. It seems to me that these matters

have to be treated within the broad principles of Scripture which define the marriage relation, the physical union of husband and wife, the love which prevails in the whole marital relation, etc. I do not want to suggest with these criticisms, however, that the author fails in treating these matters from a Biblical perspective. He does this, and often does it well.

One element of the book is to be deplored: the author, under certain limited circumstances and within certain well-defined perimeters, supports revolution against constituted authority. He cites especially the examples of the judges in proof of his position, but fails to take into account the difference between our day and the Old Testament theocracy, and the relation between the New Testament Christian and the State. I do not agree with the author at all in his conclusions in this matter, and warn God's people that the New Testament absolutely forbids revolution, and that those who engage in it, for whatever reason, bring down the wrath of God upon them.

The book is highly recommended. We urge our readers who are interested in these important ethical questions, which touch upon their own life, to get this book and make it part of their necessary reading. God's people must be informed on these matters, for sooner or later the church will be confronted with these questions in concrete form. This book gives valuable guidance through a very dense thicket.

The author is professor of Theology at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in South Hamilton, Massachusetts.

News From Our Churches

David Harbach

February 28, 1986

The new address of Rev. Joostens and his family is: Ocean Pines, Apt. B202, P.O. Box 238, Montego Bay, Jamaica, West Indies. Rev. Bruinsma has written the congregation of First Church, Grand

Rapids, Michigan, to acquaint them with the Beeston Springs Church that joined the Protestant Reformed Churches of Jamaica three and one-half years ago. This church is without a minister, although an enthusiastic man, Elder Tomlinson,

who desires to become a minister, serves the congregation of about twenty to twenty-five people. On Wednesday afternoons Rev. Bruinsma spends time teaching him doctrine, liturgy, and the mechanics of sermon making. This congregation learns the tunes to the *Psalter* very quickly, which is evidence of the talents God has given them. Although there are only three married couples who attend the worship services, there are about six young women and two young men who also attend.

Rev. Haak's farewell sermon to Southeast Church, Michigan, was February 23. Southwest Church, Michigan, held a welcome dinner for Rev. Kamps and his family and an annual potluck dinner on the night of February 21.

Rev. Woudenberg was on classical appointment to the Wyckoff, New Jersey congregation for the last Sunday in February and the first Sunday in March.

The Program Committee of Hope Church, Michigan, has available, on a loan basis, cassette tapes of Psalms, Proverbs, and the complete New Testament as read from the King James Version of the Bible. Contact Mr. Jacob Kuiper if you are interested.

Hot off the press! The Evangelism Committee of South Holland Church, Illinois, has published a new pamphlet titled, "A Defense of Calvinism as the Gospel." This gem can be obtained by writing to the committee at the church's address. Through contact with this same committee, a Reformed book publisher, The Trinity Foundation, has given several books for South Holland's Church Library. Most of these books are by the Presbyterian theologian, Gordon H. Clark, including commentaries on Ephesians and the Pastoral Epistles. One of the books, *Scripture Twisting in the Seminaries*, concerns the present movement to ordain women deacons, in which the author concludes: "The office of deacon is an office which involves the exercise of ecclesiastical authority. In the Pauline churches it was closed to women. It therefore must be closed to women in our churches . . . with . . . John Knox, the Scottish Kirk, and all Christendom, we believe that the position of . . . refusing to ordain women is solidly Biblical . . ."

David Harbach is a teacher at Adams St. Prot. Ref. Christian School, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Rev. George Hutton, of the Bible Presbyterian Church of Larne, North Ireland, will, D.V., preach in South Holland, March 2; speak at a public meeting on "The History of Scotch - Irish Presbyterianism," March 3, in the same church; speak at a denominational Officebearers Conference on "The Presbyterian Principle of Purity of Worship," March 4; address the societies of Hudsonville Church, Michigan, March 13; lecture on "The Difference Between Presbyterianism and the Reformed Faith," March 14, in First Church, Grand Rapids; and preach in the morning at Hudsonville Church, March 16.

Rev. Bekkering will give the Spring Lecture in Dutton Christian Reformed Church, May 1.

The theme for the Young People's Convention this summer is "Being Reformed in 1986: Heritage and Calling." The text will be II Thessalonians 2:15: "Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught."

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On March 6, 1986, our parents and grand-parents, MR. AND MRS. DINGMAN SCHEELE celebrated their 45th wedding anniversary. We are thankful to God for the blessings of God-fearing parents and the benefits of a Christian up-bringing. We pray that God may richly bless them in the years to come.

Bernie and Rena Worst

Gary, Darrel and Juliane

Maurice and Cheryl Scheele

Kristi, Lori and Michelle

Dennis Scheele

Lynden, Washington

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

Hope Protestant Reformed Christian School Board wishes to express its deepest Christian sympathy to Mr. Gerald Vanden Berg in the recent death of his wife, RUTHANN VANDEN BERG. As the recent past President of our Board, as a board, we wish to say with the Psalmist in Psalm 143:7 & 8 — "Hear me speedily O Lord: my spirit faileth: hide not thy face from me, lest I be like unto them that go down into the pit. Cause me to hear thy loving kindness in the morning: for in thee do I trust: cause me to know the way wherein I should walk; for I lift up my soul unto thee."

May you and your family take comfort in these words.

R. Van Baren, Pres.

J. Schipper, Sec'y.

NOTICE!!!

The Hull Protestant Reformed Christian School is in need of a teacher-administrator for Grades 7 and 8 and for a teacher for the Kindergarten and the 1st Grade for the 1986-87 School Year. Teachers interested in applying for these positions please write to the Hull Protestant Reformed Christian School, 218 2nd Street, Hull, IA 51239, or phone Ron Koole, (712) 439-1060 or Glenn Kooiker, (712) 324-2973.