

THE MEANING AND PRACTICE  
OF  
ORDINATION  
AMONG BAPTISTS

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A Report submitted to  
the Council of the Baptist Union of  
Great Britain and Ireland.

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## FOREWORD

The following report was discussed by the Council of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland in March, 1957, and again in November, 1957. At the second of these meetings it was agreed that it be "received and its publication authorised with a view to the discussion of the subject by ministers' fraternals, Association committees and interested churches and individuals".

The wording of the above resolution was cautious, for there is general agreement that much further thought and discussion are needed on the question of ordination and the wider doctrines of the Church and Ministry with which it is involved. Indeed, those who prepared the report stated to the Council in November 1957 that these issues require careful and more thoroughgoing study of these doctrines than their terms of reference permitted, and urged that urgent attention be given to the production and publication of studies, based on a detailed consideration of Biblical and historical evidence.

It is hoped that the circulation of this report will help to indicate some of the important issues involved in this one matter of ordination and ensure greater care and seriousness in the arrangements made for Ordination Services in Baptist churches. In these matters Baptists do not and cannot live in isolation from their fellow Christians of other traditions, many of whom are at this time engaged in a like search for spiritual and theological renewal.

ERNEST A. PAYNE.

Baptist Church House,  
*November, 1957.*

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## THE MEANING AND PRACTICE OF ORDINATION AMONG BAPTISTS

### I

#### INTRODUCTION

1. In 1951 the Council of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland set up a Committee on the supply, maintenance and adequate use of those engaged in the full-time pastoral ministry. That Committee included in its report of September, 1953, the following recommendation:—

“That the General Purposes and Finance Committee be requested to set up a Committee to prepare a statement for submission to the Council on ‘The Meaning and Practice of Ordination among Baptists, together with an Order of Service’.”

The Conference of Principals and Tutors of our Theological Colleges had already independently had discussions on this subject.

After the adoption of the report by the Council, the General Purposes and Finance Executive decided, at its meeting on May 18th, 1954, that the following group should be asked to prepare a statement on ordination for its consideration:—

- Rev. J. O. Barrett, M.A. (elected Secretary)  
Rev. L. G. Champion, B.A., B.D., D.Th.  
Rev. C. Hardiman  
Mr. C. B. Jewson, J.P., A.C.A.  
Mr. J. G. Le Quesne, M.A.  
Rev. D. S. Russell, M.A., B.D., B.Litt. (elected Chairman)  
Mr. W. G. Sargeant  
Rev. E. H. Worstead, B.A., B.D., M.Th.

The Group has had nine extended residential meetings and now submits its report.

2. The material which has been studied includes Biblical evidence, Baptist history, Baptist Union statements on ordination, Baptist Missionary Society practice in this country and overseas, present practice among British and overseas Baptists, and the practice of other denominations.

3. In recent years English Baptists have shown a fresh interest in questions touching ordination. It springs in part, we believe, from the revived interest in theological studies which marks our time, especially the fresh attention which is being given to the

doctrine of the Church and the Ministry. In part it is one of the fruits of the Ecumenical Movement, and of the new interest it has engendered in the doctrine and practice of other branches of the Church. It may also be due in part to the fact that, having made their protest against the excesses of the Oxford Movement, Baptists, along with other Free Churchmen, are able today to see these questions of Church order in a new perspective. There is also a moving away from the sometimes excessive individualism of the nineteenth century.

The men who are coming into our ministry today have a deep interest in the meaning of ordination, and in the form of the Services which are held for their ordination and induction.

Whereas in the early period of Baptist life in this country there was practically only one kind of ministry, the pastoral ministry, we have today many varieties of ministry, for example, chaplaincies in the Forces, in hospitals, in factories, and in such movements as the Student Christian Movement. This extension of the sphere of the ministry has itself raised questions and prompted requests for guidance.

There are divergencies of practice regarding both the place and time of Services of Ordination, and these have given rise to new discussion of the significance of ordination.

Such considerations have led the Denomination, through the Baptist Union Council, to set up this Group to study the whole question of ordination.

4. In this Report we begin with a statement on ordination in the New Testament, go on to outline past and present Baptist doctrine and practice regarding ordination, and set out our own findings on its meaning and practice.

We then give our answers to the following important questions:

Who should be ordained?

When should the Service of Ordination be held?

Where should the Service of Ordination take place?

Should ordination be with the laying on of hands?

Finally, we include a suggested form of Service for Ordination and Induction.

## II

### ORDINATION IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

5. The evidence of the New Testament suggests that in the early decades of its life the Christian fellowship possessed neither a clear conception of ordination nor a regulated order for an

Ordination Service. Yet it is certain that in the New Testament Church practices were known which we should call "ordination" and that conceptions about the ministry were emerging. What we have to do therefore is to seek to elucidate these conceptions about the ministry so that we may understand the significance of the few references to "ordination". But conceptions of the ministry do not stand by themselves; they belong to an understanding of the nature and function of the Church. These doctrines are clearly too complex to be examined here in any detail, but certain statements must first be made about the nature of the Church and then about its function.

#### 6. (i) *The nature of the Church*

Two features of the New Testament doctrine of the Church call for special mention here:

(a) The New Testament describes the fellowship in terms which consistently suggest a living organism. The fellowship is not regarded as an organisation of those individual members who have decided to join it. Just as the people of Israel were brought into being by the mercy of God and sustained by Him through the generations, so the New Israel is a corporate body brought into existence by the gracious God and receiving its life from Him. This is the significance of the Pauline metaphor of the body which has many members, whose head is Christ. (The references are: 1 Cor. 12, 12-31; Rom. 12, 4-5; Col. 1, 18, 24-25; Eph. 1, 22: 4, 1-6.) Here is the clear conception of an organism deriving its life from Christ, so that a Christian is one who is incorporated into Christ. He receives the gift of Christ's life, i.e. he is now in the body. The Johannine metaphor of the vine in John 15, 1-11, with its implication that since Christ is the vine all the branches live by His life, similarly suggests the organic nature of the Church. These metaphors find a parallel in the picture of the family so frequently used in the teaching of Jesus to make clear the nature of the Kingdom. Just as a family is not brought into being by the voluntary association of separate individuals, but is the result of creative activity and the imparting of life, so the new family of the Kingdom is the result of a creative act and the imparting of life. Here are three important metaphors, each belonging to a different section of the New Testament evidence, yet all suggesting the nature of the Church in terms of an organism which receives and shares in all its parts a common life.

It is in this sense that the New Testament can refer to the

total fellowship of the disciples. The Church in the totality of its life is the body, the vine, the family. It possesses unity because it shares a common life, just as it breaks one bread (1 Cor. 10, 17). Wherever the fellowship of disciples appears it shows the same pattern of activity and functions, i.e. it manifests its common life.

(b) Those who share this organic life, however, are free, responsible persons. The New Testament holds in balance the two conceptions of the organism and the person. It does not express incorporation into Christ in such a way as to deny the full personal response and responsibility of the individual. Those who belong to the body are those who hear the Word and receive it. Paul is able to address his rebukes and his appeals to the members of the Church just because they are responsible spiritual persons called to make a constantly renewed response to the Lord. The metaphor of the vine in John 15 gives place to the picture of friendship, with its emphatic suggestion that the "branches" of the vine are the living persons in responsive fellowship with Christ. The origin of the new family which characterises the Kingdom (compare Mark 3, 31-35) is in the personal call which came to some individuals by the Sea of Galilee. The nature of the Christian community can thus be expressed only in a double way, as a living organism sustained by a common life and as a fellowship of free, responsible persons. Our Lord's metaphor of the family would seem to be the perfect expression of this double nature.

It is in this sense that the New Testament writers can speak of the Church in a locality or of "the churches". Here are visible communities of people who pursue common activities yet are clearly making individual responses and decisions. They are in living relationship with one another, and these relationships bear the Christian stamp only as the individuals maintain their right relationship with Christ. Each visible and local community possesses its own characteristics, yet all are manifestations of the Church.

We go on now to indicate the function of the Church and this will be found to be an expression of the nature of the Church already outlined.

#### 7. (ii) *The function of the Church*

We are aware of the danger of pressing the evidence of the New Testament into tidy, rigid categories of thought, yet it does

appear to be according to the New Testament evidence that we should regard the function of the Church in two ways.

#### 8. (a) *The Church exists to be the people of God*

Here we have to recognise the continuity of New Testament thought with the testimony of the Old Testament. The people of God is a conception long familiar in Israel. Equally familiar is the assertion that God brought Israel into being, or chose Israel for His own sake. The covenant which God establishes with Israel sets up between the two a relationship—of loving kindness on one side, of obedience on the other—which is the purpose of God. Many passages in the Old Testament insist that where Israel makes response to this relationship God finds delight in it and where the response is wrong God is grieved. This may not be dismissed as anthropomorphism. It is recognition that God has chosen His people whom He loves and with whom He enters into fellowship. The people of Israel exist for the glory of God.

9. This conception, set free from all national and racial limits, is carried over into the Christian Church, so that we may say of the New Israel also that it exists for the glory of God. Fellowship is grounded in the nature of the Divine Being, so that the Church is brought into existence primarily because fellowship is of worth in itself and belongs to the ultimate purpose of God for man.

10. This purpose is fulfilled in the Church as a truly Christian fellowship is realised. The profound and sensitive concern of the leaders of the New Testament Church over the unity of the fellowship derives from their awareness of the place of fellowship in the purpose of God. To give but one illustration, the appeal in Eph. 4, 3 to "keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace" derives from the consciousness that there is "one God and Father of all . . ." and He it is who by His act of reconciliation in Christ has brought into being the new fellowship. The Church exists to be the people of God—"the household of God," Eph. 2, 19—whose primary function is to exhibit in its corporate life the true character of fellowship with God. For this purpose forms of ministry exist in the Church. Eph. 4, 12 insists that the ministry of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers is there for the edifying of the body of Christ, and this process of building the fellowship has to continue "till we all come in the unity of faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man. . . ." Elsewhere Paul is equally emphatic that all forms of

ministry perform their true function only as they edify the Church.

11. Associated with this emphasis on fellowship are references to worship, so that we may say that the Church manifests its existence as for the glory of God by its continued act of worship. In its worship the Church realises its true purpose. Worship in the New Testament sense is primarily "giving thanks always for all things to God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Eph. 5, 20); i.e. it is the Church's response of adoring gratitude to God for His gracious gift and act in Christ. The centre and climax of the Church's worship is therefore the Lord's Supper. This is the constantly renewed proclamation of the Lord's death until He come (1 Cor. 11, 26), and so is supremely the place of thanksgiving and adoration. The Lord's Table is the focal point of the fellowship (John 6, 56; 15, 9-17); it is the place where the Church realises most fully its life as the people of God.

12. (b) *The Church exists to bear witness to the acts of God*

In fellowship and worship the Church is turned towards God in adoration; in witness the Church is turned towards the human society in proclamation and service. This distinction is made for the sake of clarity of thought; in fact these functions are fulfilled together, e.g. the worship of the Church includes both adoration of God and proclamation to men, and the fellowship of the Church is both an experience of love to God and service to men.

13. Here again we may notice the continuity with Israel, with its long tradition of making known the word of the Lord by means of priest, prophet and wise man. The Church as the community of persons who have heard and accepted the Word fulfils the task of proclamation. To cite all the New Testament evidence for the important place which this function of proclamation held in the life of the Church would mean quoting large sections of the New Testament; and it is so obvious that it may be taken for granted. What, however, should be noted here is that this was a function to which Jesus called certain of His disciples. He gave this task of proclamation to the Twelve (Mark 6, 12; Matt. 28, 19, though Luke 10, 1, suggests that others also shared it). The record in Acts 2 suggests that the experience of the Spirit resulted immediately in the task of proclamation by the Twelve, but again it is not long before others, e.g. Stephen, are sharing this work. When Paul later on mentions forms of ministry in the Church in 1 Cor. 12, 28, he suggests that the

primary ministries were those of apostles, prophets, teachers, i.e. of those whose function was that of proclamation.

14. Associated with the proclamation of the Gospel is the act of baptism. We are not here discussing the significance of baptism; we are simply making the point that it belonged to the task of proclamation and seems to have been administered by persons engaged in preaching and teaching. It was not, however, in any way thought of as specifically an apostolic function, e.g. Acts 8, 38; 10, 48; 1 Cor. 1, 14-17.

15. An extension of this function of proclamation is to be found in the practical service of the Christian community. Doing good to all men and especially to the household of faith (Gal. 6, 10), belongs to the total Christian witness to the acts of God in Christ.

This brief discussion on the functions of the Church has already suggested the close association of the ministry with these functions. We now turn to a further examination of the ministry.

16. (iii) *The Ministry*

The functions to which reference has been made in the preceding section are functions of the whole Church. The whole Church fulfils the priestly function of offering to God its sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving (Heb. 13, 15). The whole Church fulfils the prophetic function of proclaiming the Word of God to men. But because the Church is the community of believing people these functions are actually exercised by individuals and that means that some individuals will exercise forms of ministry on behalf of the whole Church.

17. But that statement is only part of the truth. We have to make the further statement that this is according to the Divine will. Just as God brings into being the community of believers so He brings into being those who will exercise ministry in and on behalf of the Church. Paul describes it exactly in 1 Cor. 12, 18 and 28, when he says in regard to the human body that "God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased Him", and then goes on to use the same verb about ministries in the Church: "God hath set some in the Church, first apostles . . ." The assertion that God has brought into being the living organism of the Christian fellowship carries with it the implication that God will impart form to the organism. What is stated by Paul as a theological conviction derived from the nature of the Church can be exemplified in the happenings recorded in the New Testament.

18. Forms of ministry in the Church had their beginning when Jesus chose twelve "that they might be with Him and that He might send them forth to preach" (Mark 3, 14). Out of a larger number of disciples Jesus chose and appointed these twelve men. What is significant here is the emphasis on the initiative of Jesus, which appears again in the emphatic statement of John 15, 16.

19. What the Lord did in the days of His flesh He continues to do through His Spirit in the Church. According to 1 Cor. 12, 4-11, it is the Spirit who distributes in the Church the spiritual gifts by which a member is equipped for some function of ministry. This passage begins noticeably with a mode of thought that points forward to a Trinitarian formulation, i.e. the Spirit's activities are regarded as those of God "who works all in all". A similar conjunction of Trinitarian phrases in Eph. 4, 3-6, leads on to the assertion that Christ "gave gifts unto men", i.e. "He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets. . . ." Again 1 Peter 4, 10-11, suggests that forms of ministry are the gift of God to be used "that God in all things may be glorified".

All this means that God appoints those who will exercise forms of ministry in the Church, just as it is God who brought the Church into being. This conception appears to bear two implications.

20. (a) All forms of ministry thus appointed are to be exercised in the name of Christ. They are not just representative of the Church. In the New Testament there is clearly an authority in the ministry of the Church derived from the divine appointment, as well as an authority in the Church as a whole. This authority of the ministry the whole community is expected to recognise. Thus the church in Jerusalem elected seven men to serve tables and "set them before the apostles", so clearly acknowledging the authority of the apostles in the Church (Acts 6, 6). Paul exercises discipline in the church at Corinth even though he is absent, i.e. he assumes that his authority as an apostle will be acknowledged by the church and he clearly regards a rejection of that authority as a perversion of the Christian attitude. The Pastoral Epistles suggest that Timothy and Titus are to exercise authority in teaching and discipline and that the churches are to acknowledge that they have been appointed for this purpose. Ministry is certainly for the service of the Church; but it is equally ministry in the name of Christ. Apollos and Paul are ministers through whom the Christians in Corinth believed, but they are also "ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God"

(1 Cor. 4, 1), i.e. they are responsible primarily to God from whom they receive this appointment and authority. Christian ministry is to be exercised in and on behalf of the Church, but it is always ministry in the name of Christ.

21. (b) All forms of ministry thus appointed are ministries of the whole Church. Inasmuch as the living organism manifests its life in many localities, so that the New Testament speaks of both the Church and the churches, many ministers will exercise their ministry in a restricted locality, but they could not be said to be local ministers only, any more than the church in Corinth or Rome could be said to be an isolated Christian congregation. The local church is a manifestation in Corinth or Rome of the Body of Christ; thus the ministry exercised in the local church is thereby a ministry of the Church. This does not imply that the New Testament teaches that any man could impose himself on any church. That the local church is a manifestation of the Body of Christ would seem to be an assumption in the New Testament rather than an explicit doctrine, because within the categories of thought in which the minds of the New Testament writers moved any distinction between ministry in a local church and ministry in the total Church would not have occurred. Hence the fact that apostles like Peter, Paul, John, or other ministers associated with them, e.g. Silas, Timothy, John Mark, exercised an itinerant ministry did not thereby separate them from the elders who were appointed in local churches, because all were ministers of Christ in His Body the Church.

22. We must now make further statements about appointment to the ministry. So far the important point has been made that all forms of ministry are of Divine appointment. But how is their validity to be recognised? This was a problem clearly occurring in the New Testament Church, e.g. in Corinth it was necessary to distinguish between those who exercised their gifts by the inspiration of the Spirit of God and those who were led by false spirits (1 Cor. 12, 1-3, cf. 1 John 4, 1-3). Here again an answer can be formulated on the basis of an understanding of the nature of the Church. Three points may be made:

23. (a) The Spirit works within the community, i.e. all who are appointed to ministry will be from those who share the life of the body. This is the assertion that all appointed to ministry will know the basic experiences of the Christian life and will personally have made at baptism confession to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

It is inconceivable that anyone could minister on behalf of the people of God who did not belong to the people of God.

24. (b) The Spirit is holy and therefore operates through those whose lives manifest in some measure the Spirit's holiness. The whole community is called to be holy (1 Peter 1, 15-16, cf. Paul's use of "saints" or "holy ones") and this holy living is to be particularly the characteristic of those who minister on behalf of the fellowship. The New Testament clearly indicates the rejection of those whose lives do not demonstrate this continuing control of the Holy Spirit as not being true ministers of Christ (2 Tim. 3, 1-9; 1 John 2, 18-19).

25. (c) The Spirit distributes the gifts necessary for the work of the ministry (1 Cor. 12, 4). Ministry cannot be exercised unless one possesses the spiritual gift for that form of ministry, and this gift cannot be acquired in any other way than by the operation of the Spirit (Acts 8, 18-24).

26. When the New Testament Church in its developing organisation became aware of its forms of ministry and reflected upon the basic requirements of the ministry, it laid the emphasis upon the three requirements specified above (1 Tim. 3, 1-13; 2 Tim. 2, 1-26; Titus 1, 5-9; 1 Peter 5, 1-5).

27. So far we have been emphasising the operation of the Spirit in the appointment of the ministry, but it must be remembered that God works through human agents. "It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us" characterises the life of the Church. Just because it is a community of free responsible persons all its activities are on the most personal levels. We should expect, therefore, the judgments, decisions and acts of the members of the Church to be a proper part of any appointment to the ministry. An individual cannot claim to minister merely because he believes that he possesses a spiritual gift. Since he belongs to the "body" his conviction will be tested by the fellowship, which must also be convinced by the Spirit and so, as it were, sanction the exercise of the ministry. Any other procedure would show a disregard of the fellowship and an assertion of the individual ego; it would be in fact just that failure to "discern the body" referred to in 1 Cor. 11, 29.

28. Again, this implication from the nature of the Church is exemplified in the practice of the Church. The appointment of one to fill the place of Judas as an apostle (Acts 1, 15-26) is made by a decision and action of the "disciples" who seek in

prayer the will of God. The appointment of the Seven in Acts 6 is clearly a result of a decision by the church. The setting aside of Barnabas and Paul for evangelism among Gentiles (Acts 13, 1-3) suggests the operation of the Spirit by means of a church which "fasted and prayed" concerning the matter. The action of Barnabas and Paul in appointing elders in the Galatian churches (Acts 14, 23) may indicate an exercise of apostolic authority, but can hardly have been done without the consent of the local community.

29. Just as the decision and action of the Church are required in the appointment to ministry, so all gifts of ministry are to be exercised under the Spirit for the edification of the Church. What makes all gifts effective is love, and love alone edifies (1 Cor. 8, 1).

30. From this discussion we conclude that according to the New Testament there are three factors of outstanding importance in relation to the ministry:—

1. Its origin in the operation of the Spirit.
2. Its sanction by the Christian community.
3. Its exercise for the edifying of the Body.

In the light of these conceptions we may now consider any New Testament references to what might be called "ordination". We shall then briefly indicate some implications of the New Testament teaching.

#### 31. (iv) *Ordination*

It is hardly to be expected that we should find in the New Testament many illustrations of acts by which members of the Church were set aside for the work of the ministry, for the Christian community was in the initial stages of its growth. Until many churches were established with an organised life questions of the external forms of the Church's life did not emerge.

32. What we do find is evidence that from the earliest days a regular pattern of ministry began to emerge, with the Twelve as its starting-point, but not necessarily its appointing body. This pattern was exhibited in the leadership of the fellowship in its worship and proclamation, including the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper. The terms used for the ministries of the Church were borrowed from the environment, e.g. the use of "elders" to describe the administrative group guiding the life of the synagogue suggested this term as an appropriate designation for those mature members of the Christian community who were appointed to exercise ministerial function. Again, the ministerial



functions could appropriately be expressed by means of the word "episcope" (oversight), so that the one who bore the chief responsibility among the elders could rightly be called "episcopos" or bishop. The terms were not regarded as important. What they signify is that a regular pattern of ministry was emerging to fulfil the two supreme functions of the Church.

33. The New Testament offers some evidence that other forms of ministry tended to appear, and in some localities were highly regarded, e.g. in Corinth "speaking with tongues" seems to have been reckoned as an outstanding ministry of the Spirit. The manner in which Paul dealt with the situation in Corinth reveals that while there is no attempt to restrict the activity of the Spirit, the regular pattern of the ministry is asserted as that which fully bears the marks of the Spirit's operation.

34. This does not mean that a regularised form of service had been developed whereby a ministry began. But it does mean that solemn acts were observed for the sanction of a ministry. The passages in Acts 1, 22 ff.; 6, 1-6; 13, 1-3; 14, 23, 26; 15, 40; 20, 32, indicate acts of prayer by the Church in connection with appointment to forms of ministry. 1 Tim. 4, 14 and 2 Tim. 1, 6, appear to refer to a definite ceremony of ordination. The latter passage describes a personal act by Paul, who laid his hands on Timothy, while the former mentions that the elders laid their hands upon him, perhaps indicating that the latter practice was becoming general towards the end of the first century A.D. In Titus 1, 5, 6, Titus is advised to appoint elders in each town, and the suggestion is that Titus himself must find and appoint these elders.

35. We must now try to estimate some of the implications of this New Testament teaching.

The nature of the Christian community according to the New Testament indicates that the community will possess both adaptability and continuity. This may be illustrated by references both to the past and to the future. The life of the New Israel has continuity with the old Israel. The God who brought His people into being, entering into covenant relations with them, is the God who gives a new covenant and creates a new Israel. Consequently whatever truths of God are proclaimed in Israel by word or by symbol are cherished by Christianity. But the outward forms in which these truths were expressed in Judaism need not be carried over into Christianity, e.g. the sacrificial system of Judaism expressed certain truths, but it does not need the sacrificial system to maintain them through subsequent generations. So in

regard to ministry Christianity can preserve the truth that God calls some from among His people to teach His law, to maintain His worship, to care for the souls of His people, but Christianity need not accept Jewish forms of priesthood and ordination. The continuous life of the people of God is manifest in the Christian community, which is not bound by old forms, but in obedience to the Spirit must adapt itself to fresh modes of proclamation and life.

36. This combination of continuity and adaptability is a permanent feature of the Christian community. The functions of the Christian community remain the same but the forms of ministry by which the functions are fulfilled may change. The Spirit is free. The continuity is in life, not in form. The New Testament does not suggest that the Lord imposed a rigid pattern of ministry upon His Church. It does suggest that its ministry will remain the same in function and purpose, while the form will be adaptable to changing environment.

37. Since the forms of the ministry are not controlled by rigid patterns but are modes of a living organism and of the life of the Spirit, we may expect new patterns of ministry to be called into being. This has happened in Christian history and we expect it to continue to happen. Inasmuch as all forms of ministry which proclaim Christ and edify the fellowship are called into being by the Spirit they all may be recognised as fulfilling a function of the One Body. Those who exercise them are "ministers of Christ" in His Body the Church, and therefore mutual recognition should be offered to the different forms of ministry. This mutual recognition of diversity in the forms of ministry will lead to a strengthening of the Body.

38. This conception of the Church and its ministry enables us to acknowledge that much of the diversity illustrated in the story of the Church derives from the activity of the one Spirit, to avoid the necessity of rejecting those ministries which may bear the marks of the Spirit yet possess other forms and to allow for further freedom and adaptation, recognising both the need for continuity and the validity of experiment.

### III

#### ORDINATION AMONG BAPTISTS

##### 39. (i) *Historical evidence*

English Baptists of the seventeenth century held Ordination Services and regarded them as an important element in church

order. The word "ordination" was at times used for the Service of setting apart of deacons, but in this statement attention is confined to its use in regard to the pastoral office. (The historical data are summed up in Appendix 1.) The call to the pastoral office was given by the local church to a man already set apart as a preacher of the Word. Generally, the pastor was already a member of the local church before his invitation to become its pastor. It was not unusual for the pastoral work to be begun some months before the ordination. The practice suggests that delay was deliberate, perhaps to enable both minister and church to obtain confirmation of the call by the Holy Spirit. Ordination took place at a solemn Service attended by the pastors of nearby churches and the Service included questions regarding the call, together with prayer, sermons and the laying on of hands by the pastors. No unordained persons took part. The appointment was to a specific pastoral charge and was held to be for life. If the pastor removed to another church and was by that church invited to become its pastor, he was re-ordained.

40. During the eighteenth century the practice of the previous century was continued. There is little doubt, however, that the changing pattern of society and the rise of other evangelical groups affected the thinking and polity of Baptist churches. These changes began to emerge towards the end of the eighteenth century and to become of vital importance during the nineteenth century. The Great Awakening in America and the Methodist Revival produced a new spirit within our Baptist life, as is evidenced by the call to prayer issued by Carey and his friends in 1784. It is probable that the Methodist emphasis upon lay preaching and upon a circuit system, together with the changing of pastorates every few years, affected indirectly the thought and practice in Baptist churches. By the beginning of the nineteenth century men began to move more frequently from one church to another. The rise of many new towns through industrialism brought another challenge for the promotion of new churches. In 1804-5 Andrew Fuller recorded that the "practice of dissenting ministers to receive ordination but once is now becoming common" and that re-ordination was in dispute. Many ministers, however, considered ordination "not as a designation to the work of the ministry (of which there are no New Testament examples), but as a solemn appointment to office in a Christian church", yet Fuller admitted that "while re-ordination is unprecedented in the New Testament, so is removal of a pastor from one church to another".

41. From 1792 Baptists became increasingly engaged in the overseas missionary enterprise and this also affected their thinking regarding ordination. In 1804 Fuller attempted to distinguish between missionaries and pastors: the missionary is one sent to a new area where there is no church—he is selected, instructed and commissioned. Churches founded would then elect their own pastors and at such ordinations the missionaries and pastors of nearby churches would be present. This was an ideal pattern which was not followed either on the mission field or at home.

42. The new situation at the end of the eighteenth century demanded a revival of the old order of evangelists. In 1797 the Baptist Missionary Society began a home work section and sent an evangelist to Cornwall. As the nineteenth century progressed there appeared a number of evangelists. Some were sent forth by the churches and others were only loosely attached. Sometimes they were commissioned but they were not ordained. From 1862, for example, the Metropolitan Tabernacle had its own Evangelisation Society and employed full-time evangelists. The growth and spread of Nonconformity during the second half of the nineteenth century was rapid and this led to a further loosening of tradition. Churches became increasingly autonomous and did not always refer to other churches in their call of pastors or in connection with their ordination. During this period there was also a reaction from the Oxford Movement. The use of the title "Reverend", which Baptists had used since the seventeenth century, was now challenged; the laying on of hands was omitted, and then the word ordination dropped out of use. By about 1885 Ordination and Commissioning Services had given place to Welcome Meetings.

43. Towards the end of the nineteenth century Baptists began to express more definitely their fellowship with one another through the Baptist Union, in which the affiliated churches and Associations gathered together to help one another and engage in a common concern for the whole of the Baptist work of the country. An official list of Baptist ministers has been issued for nearly a century and since 1896 there has been a Committee of the Baptist Union concerned with Ministerial Recognition. The original objects of the Committee were:—

1. To prevent the unworthy or unfit entering the ministry.
2. To commend those qualified to the denomination.
3. To secure to those recognised eligibility for funds."

But the right of local churches to choose whom they will as pastors has always been expressly recognised. When, in 1923, the main lines of the present scheme of Ministerial Recognition were adopted, a special statement on ordination was drawn up (see Appendix 2), and this has continued to be printed each year in *The Baptist Handbook*. The most recent statement was approved by the Baptist Union Assembly in 1953 (cf. Appendix 2).

Ministers are now ordained only once. At the taking up of the pastorate of a particular church a Service is usually held which is described as Induction. When a man is taking up his first pastorate the Service or Services are frequently spoken of as Ordination and Induction. Ordination is no longer practised for deacons, though a special Service of commissioning or setting apart is again taking place in a number of churches.

#### 44. (ii) *Present Practice*

##### (a) *Baptist Union*

The Ordination Services of men trained in Baptist Theological Colleges are usually conducted by the college Principal, in association with the General Superintendent, and those of men seeking qualification through the Baptist Union examinations by the General Superintendent. It is usual for the Service of Ordination to take place in the church to which the ordinand has been called, though in recent years choice of the home church has been made by some.

Except in cases where the Ordination Service takes place in the home church of the ordinand, Ordination and Induction Services are generally held on the same day, frequently the former in the afternoon and the latter in the evening. Ordination and induction are often included in the one Service.

##### 45. (b) *Baptist Missionary Society*

The General Committee of the Society accepted on 23rd April, 1953, the following recommendations submitted by a special Sub-Committee on the ordination of ministerial candidates for missionary service:

“Whilst fully maintaining their belief in the priesthood of all believers, the Sub-Committee recommend that there should normally be, in the case of ministerial candidates, an Act of Ordination, either separately or included in the Service of Commissioning, such Act of Ordination being for the Ministry of the Word and Sacraments, and for the exercise of pastoral functions at home and overseas.”

It was also recommended that the Service of Commissioning should take place at the end of the period of training and before leaving for service in the field.

The recommendations contained no reference to the laying on of hands.

The Baptist Missionary Society Sub-Committee added that in preparing their report they had deliberately not attempted to define ordination. They had instead sought to base their work upon generally existing practice in the denomination, which, however, they realised was not uniform, and had gone on to consider what would be the most desirable practice for the future in the light both of the situation in this country and of that in the churches overseas.

They recognised that in the past the practice had been different. Many theologically trained missionaries, some of whom are still active, were sent overseas without any ceremony other than the Valedictory Service.

The Sub-Committee suggested that, though its recommendations might now be generally followed, there was a possibility that the churches overseas might desire themselves to hold the Service of Ordination.

Ordination Services appear to be held for members of indigenous churches who are set apart for ministerial work in all fields in which the Baptist Missionary Society operates. In parts of India ordination takes place only after three years' probation.

##### 46. (c) *Baptists in other countries*

Information concerning ordination among Baptists in countries overseas reveals a wide variety of practice. In the vast majority of cases a Service of Ordination is held (normally for those entering “the pastoral office”), although there are diversities of practice in respect of both time and place.

Usually such a Service is held at the close of a man's college training (e.g. in the Southern Baptist Convention, the American Baptist Convention, the Baptist Union of South Africa, the Baptist Union of Queensland, etc.), although in a few cases a period of probation is required first (e.g. in Germany where the Ordination Service is held after a man has had three years in the ministry; at that point he becomes an “acknowledged pastor”). In some countries the Service is held in a man's home church (e.g. in the Southern Baptist Convention); in others in the church to which he is to minister (e.g. in Germany); and in others at the Assembly of the Union or similar body (e.g. the Baptist

Union of South Africa, the Baptist Union of Queensland, the Baptist Union of New South Wales).

The one who presides at the Ordination Service may be simply any ordained minister in good standing invited so to do by the ordinand (e.g. in Germany), or someone specifically appointed by the church in which the Service is to be held (e.g. in the Southern Baptist Convention), or, where it is held at the Assembly, the President of the Union or some other person appointed by the Union (e.g. the Baptist Union of South Africa, etc.).

In the vast majority of cases "laying on of hands" is practised, sometimes by the ministers present (e.g. in the American Baptist Convention) and at other times by ministers and "laymen" (e.g. in the Southern Baptist Convention, the Baptist Union of New South Wales).

The practice of ordination and the preparation for it are taken very seriously in most countries, but the great diversities of practice indicate considerable varieties of interpretation.

#### IV

##### THE MEANING OF ORDINATION

47. The following form of words is offered as a definition of ordination. The subsequent paragraphs are an elaboration of this definition in which suggestions are made concerning some of its implications.

Ordination is the act, wherein the Church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, publicly recognises and confirms that a Christian believer has been gifted, called and set apart by God for the work of the ministry and in the name of Christ commissions him for this work.

48. (i) The Call of God is fundamental.

Consideration of ordination must begin with the recognition that Christian ministry depends upon the call of God and is His gift in Christ to the Church (Ephesians 4, 11-12).

It is given by Christ and derives its sanction from Him who is Himself the Head of the Church. No man can take upon himself any such task except at the imperative and irresistible call of God (Gal. 1, 1). This fact is basic to our understanding of the ministry and to our interpretation of ordination (see par. 20).

49. (ii) Ordination is an act of the Church.

The work of the ministry is not personal service rendered by the individual in his own right, nor is a minister a free lance

"prophet" exercising his ministry in a private capacity. He is a leader within a fellowship, viz. the Church (Acts 14, 23; 15, 22; Romans 16, 1; 1 Cor. 12, 18, 28, etc.). He speaks in the name of God; but in so doing he speaks within the witness of the Church and in its name; and so his work of ministry must be an act of Christ and of the Church. Ordination signifies the setting apart of the minister for this work both by Christ and the Church.

In view of the responsibility which the Church undertakes in thus commissioning a man to the work of the ministry it is clearly right that the man concerned should be properly tested before this commissioning takes place. (See further par. 58.)

50. (iii) What is meant here by the Church?

In the section on the New Testament (par. 21) it is stated that the New Testament speaks of both the Church and the churches and that the local church is a manifestation in Corinth or Rome of the Body of Christ. Among Baptists it has been customary for the word "Church" in regard to ordination to be interpreted as meaning the local church in which a man is to exercise his ministry. We accept this interpretation, but it is our conviction that the New Testament teaching, as well as much Baptist practice in previous centuries, would suggest the view that the local church is not an isolated unit, but shares in a fellowship in which the churches are members one of another, and that therefore the local church must act in the closest fellowship with all the churches of its denomination through their representatives. Hence it seems to us proper that at the Service of Ordination there should be represented the Baptist Union, the Association, the College and neighbouring Baptist churches. The whole Baptist community is thus acting through its members, the arrangements for the Service of Ordination being the responsibility of the local church.

It is also true that the Church is now divided into separate communions, and in this situation each denomination has developed its own practice of ordination. Although it is difficult to speak simply of an act of the Church or a ministry of the Church it is desirable that an Act of Ordination should include members of other denominations as a witness to the inherent unity of the Body of Christ.

51. (iv) By the work of the ministry we mean what is frequently called "the ministry of the Word and Sacraments".

This work is more fully described in the New Testament section (par. 10-11, 14-16) where it is suggested that ministerial function implies leadership of the Church's worship, the administration of

the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, the proclamation of the Gospel and the teaching of the faith, the work of pastoral care and Christian service. This work may or may not be the minister's sole activity; but it will be his primary activity to which he devotes most of his time.

52. This ministry will normally be exercised within a local church, but it need not be confined to the local church. A man may exercise ministerial functions within the total life of the Church in other spheres of service, e.g. Superintendencies, Colleges, Chaplaincies, etc. We are not prepared to make a specific list of such spheres of service, but we would emphasise the point that only service which demands that a man shall exercise some of the ministerial functions mentioned in par. 51 may be regarded as within the scope of ordination.

Most of these spheres of service fall within a man's denomination, but the development of inter-denominational spheres of service is characteristic of our day. We believe that any ministerial function in these spheres of service is within the scope of ordination and in this connection we note that among the British Free Churches there is a widespread mutual recognition of one another's ministries.

53. (v) How does the Church "recognise, confirm and commission"?

A church, in quest of a minister, after certain enquiries and consultations, invites a man to conduct public worship on one or two occasions; thereafter the members meet together in the Church Meeting and, after individual and corporate prayer in which the guidance of the Holy Spirit is sought, they invite the man to be their minister. In so proceeding the church is recognising and confirming "that a Christian believer has been gifted, called and set apart by God for the work of the ministry", and by committing to him the pastoral oversight it "commissions him for this work". Ordination is thus implied in these acts and in the man's response to them. The elements of ordination are already present in the process of divine call, recognition, confirmation and commissioning by the church.

Whilst it is true that the elements of ordination are already present in this process, nevertheless it is most fittingly expressed in a particular Act designed to recognise the fact of God's call to the ministry, to confirm that call, to commission His servant, to invoke the help of the Holy Spirit and to ask God's blessing on his work. In such a Service ordination receives its natural

and most impressive expression. (See paragraph 62 for suggested Order of Service.)

54. (vi) What is conferred by ordination?

It is not possible to define precisely what is conferred by ordination, but three things are clear. First, the Service of Ordination is an occasion of blessing to all who share it, and especially to the person ordained in response to the prayer of the congregation. Secondly, the local church being assembled, together with representatives of the wider fellowship, publicly acknowledges the person ordained as being one called of God to the work of the ministry the exercise of which is recognised throughout the churches (see par. 20). Thirdly, this acknowledgment and recognition give him the right to be regarded both by other Christian communions and by secular authorities as one set apart for the work of Christian ministry.

These statements do not imply that ordination confers upon a man a status which belongs to him of right for life. The recognition is in regard to the exercise of ministerial functions in the Church, and comes to an end when a man no longer exercises those functions as his primary activity (cf. par. 23-26, 37, 38, 51).

55. (vii) The relation between ordination and induction.

In the course of time the word ordination has changed its meaning within our denomination (see Appendix I). Whereas formerly "ordination" related to the induction of a pastor to his pastoral office in a particular local church, today the word is used to refer rather to the public acceptance by the ordinand of a ministry of the Word and Sacraments (which phrase is used to include generally pastoral functions) and approval of that acceptance by the churches of our faith and order represented by the gathered congregation. The term "induction", which is of fairly recent innovation, applies to the specific induction to a particular local sphere of service (which may not necessarily be in a local church). In considering the relationship between ordination and induction we intend by our definition of ordination to imply that before any public Service of Ordination can take place there should be an acceptance of a specific realm of ministerial activity. This in turn would seem to imply what is in fact the common custom, whereby both the Act of Ordination and of Induction occur at the same time, but this does not appear to us in principle to be essential. As long as the ordinand has already accepted a specific sphere of service there should be no objection to the Services of Ordination and Induction being

separated by a short space of time. Ordination is not, however, complete until induction has taken place.

56. We have considered whether, in the light of our statement (p. 8) that "the Lord's Table is the focal point of the fellowship . . . the place where the Church realises most fully its life as the people of God", ordination should always be in the setting of the Communion Service. Our conclusion is that it would be wrong to press for this as the invariable practice, but that if ordination takes place at a time when the church is normally holding its Communion Service it will be natural and fitting to link the two Services.

## V

### THE PRACTICE OF ORDINATION

57. (i) Who should be ordained?

The simple answer to this question can be given in the words of our definition of ordination. It is for those who are "gifted, called and set apart by God for the work of the ministry". Confirmation of a man's sense of call is normally sought from his own home church, his College Committee, his local Association, or the denomination in which he seeks to exercise his ministry, as well as by the conviction of the local church or other body by which he is to be commissioned. The test will be on a number of grounds—on his Christian experience, his moral standing and character, his gifts for preaching and pastoral work and on his readiness both to learn and to teach.

The devotion of such men to the work of the ministry will be demonstrated in their willingness to pursue such training as may be required by the denomination, and then in their strong intention to continue in the ministry.

The foregoing statements refer to men and women without distinction of sex.

The language used might be interpreted so as to apply to deaconesses, but we have in fact regarded the whole question of the status of deaconesses as lying outside the scope of this Report (see Appendix 4).

The questions raised by the entry of ministers of other communions into the Baptist ministry are many and complicated; although it is the practice among Baptists not to require re-ordination, we feel that so large a subject is outside the scope of our Report.

58. (ii) When should the Service of Ordination take place?

At present missionary ordinands are ordained at the conclusion of their training and before proceeding to the field, and ordinands for the home ministry at the time when they begin their first pastorate. We have considered whether or not the Service could be at the conclusion of the probationary period. Our considered view is that, in regard to the collegiate candidate, it should be held on entrance to his first sphere of ministerial service after the satisfactory completion of his College course; in regard to the non-collegiate candidate it should be held at the time when the ordinand's name has been placed on the List of Probationers, because he has then completed a time of testing and preparation which may be considered equivalent to that undertaken by a collegiate candidate.

59. (iii) Where should the Ordination Service take place?

In our view the Ordination Service should take place within the fellowship of the local church and in the presence of those indicated in paragraph 50. In the case of a man not taking up pastoral charge, the work to which he is being commissioned should be represented. The place where the Service is to be held may depend upon individual circumstances (e.g. whether a man is called to serve abroad or to chaplaincy work, etc.). Where the man is entering upon the work of the pastorate it seems commendable that the place should be in the church to which he is called, for the following reasons:

(a) The call of this church is the concluding verification of the man's inner call to the work of the ministry. As such it is of especial importance, and occasions the Ordination Service.

(b) The Service is a commissioning and dedication, and so marks a beginning. The ordinand's service will now find its focus in the church which has called him and entrusts to him the care of itself in spiritual things. His ministry will not be centred in his home church, but in the church to which he has been called.

(c) The opportunity of dedication given to the church in which the new ministry is beginning is valuable. The ordinand is offering himself and the service of his life to the ministry of the Church in response to the Call of Christ. The church should be invited to unite itself with him in this self-offering.

With missionary ordinands, while there would seem to be a strong case for ordination taking place in the field, and being closely associated with the worshipping community among whom

the ordinand is to minister, we recognise that the wide diversity of circumstance in the different fields may make it more expedient at present to hold the ordination in this country.

While it is the practice of some Baptists overseas to hold Ordination Services at the Annual Assembly of their churches for which there may be special reasons, connected in some countries with the geographical location of the churches, and while we believe that a Service of Recognition at the Annual Assembly in London is important as a denominational accrediting, it seems to us that the right place for an Ordination Service is in normal circumstances the local church.

**60. (iv) Who should participate in the Ordination Service?**

In paragraph 50 we state our opinion that there should be present at the Ordination Service representatives of the Baptist Union, of the Association, of the College and of neighbouring Baptist Churches. It appears to us fitting therefore that the conduct of the Service should be in the hands of some or all of the following persons: the College Principal, the Area Superintendent or an officer of the Association, the minister of the ordinand's home church or some other senior minister in good standing. In addition to these ministers the ordinand himself and a representative of the work to which he has been called will participate in the Service. Our suggested Order of Service indicates what share in the Service each of these persons is likely to have.

**61. (v) Should ordination be with the laying on of hands?**

The evidence given in Appendix 3 makes it clear that the imposition of hands in association with ordination may be supported by Scriptural passages and by frequent custom among Baptists during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, though there is no suggestion in this evidence that the practice can be regarded as an essential element of a Service of Ordination.

To some Baptists, the imposition of hands is justified both on account of the evidence already mentioned and as an impressive symbolic act widely used in the Christian Church, expressing the solemnity with which the Church through its representatives declares that Christ has chosen and ordained His servant; with this attitude the majority of the group would agree. Other Baptists judge that in Christian history the imposition of hands has been associated with doctrines of the ministry and of grace that Baptists do not accept and therefore this practice should not be used at Services of Ordination among Baptists.

When the imposition of hands is practised, it is suggested that

the act should be a corporate one in which those persons mentioned in paragraph 60 should share. A corporate imposition of hands is justified both by Scripture and by Baptist history; it well expresses the truth that those who are engaged in the act stand as representatives of the Church so that, in fact, it is the whole Church which thus by prayer and the imposition of hands seeks the blessing of God upon the minister-elect and declares him to be ordained to the Christian ministry.

It is now the frequent practice among Baptists to ask a layman to share in the corporate imposition of hands. It is doubtful whether this practice can be supported by reference to Scripture and it was not known among Baptists in previous centuries; but it may be accepted on the ground that the declaration of ordination and the commission to the work of the ministry is an act of the whole Church and not of any section of the Church.

## VI

### A SERVICE OF ORDINATION [AND INDUCTION]

**62.** *This suggested Order of Service is based upon the common practice among English Baptists and includes both ordination and induction at the local church to which the minister-elect has been called. If, however, a separate Service of Induction is to be held, the references to induction, which are marked by square brackets, may be omitted.*

*According to normal Baptist practice the occasion of ordination and induction usually includes more than one gathering, but it is suggested that the whole occasion should be regarded as a unity to which each part makes its contribution.*

*The afternoon gathering will be the Service of Ordination and Induction, and this may include a Charge to the Minister. The fellowship of the tea-table will provide the opportunity for words of welcome. The evening gathering will be the time for the Charge to the Minister, if not already given, and for the Charge to the Church or for addresses setting forth the responsibilities and privileges of Church and Ministry.*

CALL TO WORSHIP.

BRIEF PRAYER OF INVOCATION.

HYMN (worship and praise).

SCRIPTURE (e.g. Isa. 6, 1-8; Isa. 61, 1-6; Mark 3, 7-15; John 15, 1-17; 2 Cor. 4; Eph. 4, 1-16; 1 Peter 5, 1-4).

PRAYERS (thanksgiving; confession; dedication; the Lord's Prayer).

HYMN (the Holy Spirit).

THE PRESIDING MINISTER *may then briefly explain the Service thus (or in his own words):*

We are gathered together in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to recognise the ordination of A. B. to the work of the Christian ministry. Ordination to the ministry rests upon the call of God to His servant made evident by personal character and the exercise of spiritual gifts, and is proved and acknowledged by the Church. Wherefore A. B. shall first declare that he believes himself to be called of God to this sacred task and then the church (*or the Christian organisation in whose service the minister-elect is to work*) shall declare that under the guidance of the Holy Spirit the members have agreed to call him to this service.

STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER-ELECT.

STATEMENT BY A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE LOCAL CHURCH (*or Christian organisation*).

HYMN (personal dedication).

A SERMON *may be preached setting forth the nature and significance of ordination and the ministry or constituting a Charge to the Minister. (If the sermon is a Charge to the Minister it may more suitably be placed immediately before the closing hymn.)*

THE PRESIDING MINISTER AND THE MINISTER-ELECT *shall stand in the presence of the congregation (who also may be asked to stand) and the following questions (or the alternative questions on page 30) shall be put:*

A. B., the ministry to which you are being ordained is a sacred office which you can fulfil only in humble dependence upon God, in sincerity of purpose and holiness of life. In the name of Christ and of His Church we call upon you therefore to make your solemn response to these questions:

Do you believe in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit and do you confess anew the Lord Jesus Christ as your Saviour and Lord?

I do.

Do you accept the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the supreme guide for faith and life?

I do.

Are zeal for the glory of God, love to the Lord Jesus Christ and a desire for the salvation of men, so far as you know your

own heart, your true motives and chief inducements to enter the Christian ministry?

They are.

Do you promise to preach the Word of God, to maintain the worship of the Church, to fulfil the pastoral office, to seek the unity and peace of the Church and to do all this in a spirit of brotherhood towards all the followers of the Lord?

I do.

Do you engage in the strength of the Lord Jesus Christ to live a godly life, to discharge the duties of the ministry faithfully, diligently and cheerfully, and in all things to seek the advancement of Christ's Kingdom?

I do.

God our heavenly Father, who has called you to this holy calling, enlighten you by His Spirit, strengthen you by His hand, and so direct you in your ministry that you may walk in the same faithfully and fruitfully to the praise of His Holy Name, and the furthering of the Kingdom of His Son Jesus Christ.

THE MINISTER-ELECT *may then kneel in the presence of the standing congregation.*

PRAYER (*silent prayer may be followed by an audible prayer that the minister-elect may be enabled by the Holy Spirit worthily to fulfil his office.*)

*Where the laying on of hands is to be observed the hands of the appointed persons should now be laid on the head of the minister-elect.*

THE PRESIDING MINISTER *may then say:*

In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and on behalf of the Church (with prayer and the laying on of hands) we declare you, A. B., to be ordained to the work of the Christian ministry.

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you; the Lord lift upon you His countenance and give you peace.

*A Bible may then be presented to the new minister who stands to receive it:*

Receive this Bible of which you are appointed to be an interpreter; may its word be the guide of your public proclamation and the inspiration of your inner life.

*[If the Service includes induction, the Area Superintendent or another senior minister in good standing may then address the members of the church thus:*



Do you, the members of the church, acknowledge and receive A. B. as a minister in the Church of Christ and as pastor of this church and congregation, promising him all due honour and support as he fulfils his ministry among you?

*The congregation will respond with the words—*We do.

*The Area Superintendent may then say:*

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, in the name of this church and in the name of the churches of our Baptist faith and order we declare you to be inducted as minister of this church and pastor of this congregation in token whereof we now give you the right hand of fellowship. The Lord preserve your going out and your coming in from this time forth and even for evermore; in all your ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct your paths.]

*All may sit and the presiding minister may read Ephesians 3, 14-21, or may offer a brief prayer for the Church.*

HYMN (Christian fellowship and service).

BENEDICTION.

*The following questions may be used in place of those given in the Order of Service.*

A. B., the ministry to which you are being ordained is a sacred office which you can fulfil only in humble dependence upon God, in sincerity of purpose and holiness of life. We solemnly charge you therefore to give heed to these words of our Lord and of His Apostles concerning the ministry and to declare your acceptance of the same:

Jesus said: "Go ye therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you; and lo, I am with you alway even unto the end of the world."

Will you take this as your commission relying always on the presence of Christ for guidance and strength?

I will.

"I charge thee in the sight of God and of Jesus Christ who shall judge the quick and the dead, and by His appearing and kingdom; preach the word, be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching."

Will you be diligent in your study of Scripture, in your proclamation of the Word of God and in your teaching of the Christian faith?

I will.

"I exhort that supplications, prayers, intercessions and thanksgivings be made for all men, that we may lead a quiet life in all godliness and gravity."

Will you be constant in public and private prayer, maintaining carefully the worship of the Church and the observance of Believers' Baptism and the Lord's Supper?

I will.

"Tend the flock of God, exercising the oversight thereof not of constraint but willingly . . . nor yet for base gain but with a cheerful mind, not as lording it over the charge allotted to you, but making yourself an example to the flock."

Will you care for the members of the flock, tending them and leading them in the spirit of the Good Shepherd?

I will.

"Be thou an example of the believers in word, in conversation, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity."

Will you always endeavour to live a godly life, fulfilling your high calling with wisdom, diligence and love?

I will.

## APPENDIX I

### *Baptists and Ordination*

There are frequent references to ordination in the early Baptist Confessions, of which the following are examples.

"Every Church hath power given them from Christ, for their better well-being, to choose to themselves meet persons into the office of elders or deacons, being qualified according to the word . . . as those which Christ hath appointed in His Testament, for the feeding, governing, serving and building up of His Church, and that none have power to impose on them either these or any other." (Particular Baptist London Confession, 1644.)

The Confession of the thirty Baptist Congregations which joined together in 1651 declares that "fasting and prayer ought to be used, and laying on of hands, for the ordaining of servants or officers to attend about the service of God" (McGlothlin: *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, pp. 105-108).

"The way appointed by Christ for the calling of any person fitted and gifted by the Holy Spirit into the office of Bishop (i.e. pastor) or Elder in a Church is that he be chosen thereunto by the common suffrage of the Church itself and solemnly set apart by Fasting and Prayer with imposition of hands of the Eldership of the Church if there be any before constituted therein." (Second London Confession, 1677.)

The fullest General Baptist statement on the subject in the early period is that of 1678, in which the officers of the Church are listed as (1) bishops or messengers; (2) elders or pastors; (3) deacons or overseers of the poor. "Bishops" are to be chosen "by the common suffrage of the Church and solemnly set apart by fasting and prayer, with imposition of hands, by the bishops of the same function, ordinarily, and those bishops so ordained have the government of those churches that had suffrage in their election . . . and the particular pastor, or elder, in like manner is to be chosen by the common suffrage of the particular congregation and ordained by the bishop or messenger God hath placed in the church he hath charge of . . ." (McGlothlin, op. cit., pp. 146-7). The Particular Baptists marked appointment both to the pastoral office and the diaconate "with imposition of hands of the Eldership of the Church, if there be any before constituted therein" (1689 Confession, McGlothlin, op. cit., p. 266).

The Confessions are corroborated by the minutes of the

Assemblies of both the General and Particular Baptists. For example, in 1689 the Particular Baptist Assembly refers to "ordained ministers". Also, it was agreed, "churches must provide an able ministry for the preaching of the word, also to set apart to office and in a solemn manner ordain such as are duly qualified for the same". From an Assembly in London in September 1689, attended by the members of over one hundred churches, a circular was sent out stating, "We cannot but bewail that great evil and neglect of duty in many churches concerning the ministry, in that some, though they have brethren competently qualified for the office of pastors and deacons, yet omit that sacred ordinance of ordination whereby they are rendered incapable of preaching and administering the ordinances of the gospel so regularly and with that authority which otherwise they might do". Similarly, the Western Assembly of 1693 decided that "no private brother (however gifted) if not solemnly called to ministerial office and separated thereto ought to administer the ordinance of baptism and the Last Supper. . . . A brother called to the office of elder by the suffrage of the church may administer all ordinances though he be not immediately ordained by the laying on of the hands of the elders". The General Baptists in 1689 agreed that "distinct officers must have their distinct ordinances and the church has no way to delegate an office or power Ministerial but by Ordination".

The evidence of the continuation in the eighteenth century of this view of ordination may be derived from old Minute books, Assembly proceedings and the writings of Baptists. For example, in 1701 the General Baptist Assembly held that "the ordination of Elders by Elders is of Divine institution". It is evident that ordination was the usual practice and that it was customary for as many neighbouring pastors as possible to join in Ordination Services. Further, it seems to be accepted without question that the Ordination of Elders was to be performed by Elders. In 1749 the General Baptist Assembly agreed, at the request of the church at Sudbury, that as there were no local Elders available "some Messengers do go down as soon as they can in order to ordain an Elder among them". Among the church records, it may be noted that the church at Stevington, for example, refers regularly to ordination from 1691 to 1832, at one of which (in 1806), twenty-three ministers took part.

The writings of the eighteenth century are well documented in Dr. E. A. Payne's *The Fellowship of Believers*, and we would draw particular attention to the quotations from Daniel Turner

(p. 47) and Dr. John Gill who in volume III of his *Body of Practical Divinity* (1770) urged that for a man to go to a pastoral office there must be a call and he must be a member of the church to which he is to be ordained as pastor. Similarly, Andrew Fuller records that in 1774 he was called to be pastor and in May 1775 he was ordained, the ordination being conducted by the Rev. Robert Hall of Arnesby. A number of other ministers attended. Further, when he removed to Kettering he was again ordained, in 1783, as pastor of that church.

The rise of the Baptist Missionary Society in 1792 was an important development, although its significance in the matter of ordination was not fully appreciated. In 1795 two missionaries were set aside for a Mission to Sierra Leone with prayers and the laying on of hands. Andrew Fuller in 1804 took up some of these issues, urging that missionaries should be commissioned in this country and ordained on the mission field by the churches who called them into the pastoral office. In this country the regular practice of ordination appears to have faded about the middle of the century. For example, at Oxford in 1806 Chater and Robinson were ordained by the laying on of hands. In 1830 a German named Tauchnitz, of Leipzig, was solemnly set apart as an evangelist and "Joseph Ivimey offered the ordination prayer accompanied with imposition of hands". A similar Service took place in 1840, when G. W. Lehmann, of Berlin, the associate of Oncken, came to England for ordination. It is well known that C. H. Spurgeon rejected the idea of ordination when it was suggested to him in 1854 at New Park Street, and it may be surmised that about that time we begin to see a reaction to the Oxford Movement. On the other hand, Rogers, the first Principal of Spurgeon's College, insisted on giving what he deliberately called an ordination address, and in the *Sword and Trowel* from 1865 there are occasional references to Services held "in connection with the Ordination of . . . when the former Pastor of the Church or a nearby Pastor asked the question usual upon such occasions and offered the ordination prayer". There is no reference to laying on of hands. By 1880 references to ordination have become infrequent and it was not until after the First World War that they come into prominence. Since that time ordination has gradually become the regular practice with or without the laying on of hands.

## APPENDIX 2

### *Official Baptist Statements relating to Ordination (1896-1953)*

Modern English Baptist official statements on ordination (which have often been issued in relation to statements made by other bodies, or by conferences connected with inter-church discussions) are summarised below:—

1896. Passed by the Annual Assembly of the Baptist Union:

That, in any measures which may be taken to attain the object contemplated, great care should be exercised to safeguard the right of the churches to appoint their own pastors and not to discourage any man who has received from the Lord the gifts and call which qualify for the work of a pastor and teacher; that the object of any rules or regulations which may be adopted should be (a) to prevent the unworthy or the unfit from entering our ministry, (b) to assist those whom God has called and qualified for service in the pastorate by commending them to the churches of the denomination, and (c) to secure to such pastors, among other privileges, eligibility to participate in the benefits of the Funds of the Union—and that, while gratefully acknowledging the varied and great services which many brethren, who had not had the advantage of a collegiate training, have rendered to the churches and to the Kingdom of our Lord, it should be regarded as highly desirable that any man "seeking entrance to our ministry" should receive thorough and effective training in one of our Colleges or at some other seat of learning.

1923. Adopted by the Annual Assembly of the Baptist Union:—

1. Affirming the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers and the obligation resting upon them to fulfil their vocation according to the gift bestowed upon them:

By the *Ministry* we mean an office within the Church of Christ (not a sacerdotal order) conferred through the call of the Holy Spirit and attested by a particular or local Church.

By *Ordination* we mean the act of the Church by which it delegates to a person ministerial functions which no man can properly take upon himself.

2. Inasmuch as the setting apart to the ministry is a matter deeply affecting the welfare of the Church:—

(i) An ordination should take place in the Church to which the person is called.

(ii) In order to witness to the unity of the Church, and to safeguard the entrance into the ministry, it is desirable that the ordination should receive the concurrence and approval of the County Association or of its Committee.

- (iii) In regard to anyone called to the exercise of the ministry in spheres other than that of the pastorate of a Church, ordination should take place in the presence of those by whom the person has been called.
- (iv) It is recommended that the ordination or any subsequent induction service should include the observance of the Lord's Supper.

1926. In reply to the Lambeth Appeal of 1920 authorised by the Baptist Union Assembly of 1926 it was affirmed:—

We hold the priesthood of all believers and therefore have no separated order of priests. The ministry is the gift of the Spirit of the Church and is an office involving both the inward call of God and the Commission of the Church. . . . We hold that the individual Church is competent to confer it.

1930. Reply of the Baptist Union to the Report of the World Conference on Faith and Order at Lausanne. (B.U. Council Report).

### III. The Nature of the Church.

We cannot agree that the ministry, as commonly understood, is essential to the existence of a true Christian Church, though we believe a ministry is necessary for its highest effectiveness. We think of the function of the ministry in terms of leadership rather than of government and discipline. We believe that, while we should frankly discuss our differences, at this time it may be a gain to emphasise our agreement on the permanent and essential marks of the Church. . . .

### V. The Ministry of the Church.

Under III above, we have already referred to our view of the ministry as not being essential to the very existence of a Church.

We do not confine the administration of Sacraments to ordained ministers, nor stipulate for the laying on of hands.

In our thought, the declaration in the Report that the administration of the Sacraments is to be made effective through faith is inconsistent with the practice of administering Baptism to others than believers.

We agree that every communion which has been successful in the task of evangelising has a contribution to make to the organisation of any larger fellowship, and that no one theory of the ministry need be everywhere accepted. We disagree from the theory set forth in the statement made on behalf of the Orthodox Churches. The second paragraph under 2 concerning Western Christendom represents generally our views, though we do not hold that any particular form of Church government was meant to be inflexible. We have sought to adapt our organisation to the varying needs of times and places, and we are ready to attend

closely and sympathetically to the matters involved with a view to greater goodwill and increased efficiency in carrying out the Divine purpose.

1937. The Second World Conference on Faith and Order, Edinburgh (in which Baptists shared) (Bell, 3rd Series, p. 267) affirmed:—

1. The Ministry was instituted by Jesus Christ and is a gift of God to the Church.
2. It presupposes a royal priesthood of all Christians.
3. Ordination to the ministry according to the New Testament teaching is by prayer and the laying on of hands.
4. It is essential to a United Church that it should have a ministry universally recognised.

“It must be acknowledged, however, that even in connexion with these statements, different interpretations are to be reckoned with.

“For example, while all would agree that the ministry owes its origin to Jesus Christ and is God's gift to the Church, there are differences of judgment regarding the sense in which we may say that the ministry was ‘instituted’ by our Lord.

“Again, those who agree in accepting the laying on of hands as the form of ordination differ on the meaning to be attached to the rite, or on the question by whom it should be administered.”

1938. Reply of B.U. Council to the Federal Council of Evangelical Free Churches on documents for consideration of the Churches by a joint committee of Anglicans and Free Churchmen (B.U. Report 1939, App. IV, p. 56).

It is in accordance with the will of God and in the true interest of the Church that individual Christians, men or women, having suitable gifts should be solemnly set apart by the Church as its ministers; in many cases this is done by the Apostolic practice of prayer and the laying on of hands by the recognised representatives of the Church. . . . Such ordination does not confer a priesthood other than that already possessed by all believers. . . . They regard as fully valid the ministry of any Christian man or woman whom the Christian community may invite to preach, to administer the sacraments or to discharge any other ministerial duty.

1939. Statement of B.U. Council on the Report of Second World Conference on Faith and Order, Edinburgh. (B.U. Report 1939, App. VI, pp. 61-2).

## II

- (3) We note that many of our fellow-Christians equally with ourselves reject the view of the ministry commonly called sacerdotal. We realise, however, that those conceptions are by some of our fellow-

Christians considered to be of vital importance, and we observe that they were much insisted on at the Conference. The Report reflects the difficulties felt by all at this point. For ourselves we wish to say plainly that we do not look at the Ministry of the Church as a sacrificing priesthood, finding no basis in the New Testament for the conception involved in that definition.

Nevertheless we value most highly an ordered and devoted Ministry, and regard a divine call to that high office as the greatest honour that can be conferred on man. Not less than others do we believe that the Ascended Lord still bestows gifts on His Church in the form of "Pastors and Teachers, for the perfecting of the saints unto the work of ministering, unto the upbuilding of the Body of Christ."

1948. A Statement approved by the Baptist Union Council on *The Baptist Doctrine of the Church.*

#### The Ministry

4. A properly ordered Baptist Church will have its duly appointed officers. These will include the minister (or pastor), elders, deacons, Sunday school teachers and other church workers. The Baptist conception of the ministry is governed by the principle that it is a ministry of a church and not only a ministry of an individual. It is the church which preaches the Word and celebrates the sacraments, and it is the church which, through pastoral oversight, feeds the flock and ministers to the world. It normally does these things through the person of its minister, but not solely through him. Any member of the church may be authorised by it, on occasion, to exercise the functions of the ministry, in accordance with the principle of the priesthood of all believers, to preach the Word, to administer baptism, to preside at the Lord's table, to visit, and comfort or rebuke members of the fellowship.

Baptists, however, have had from the beginning an exalted conception of the office of the Christian minister and have taken care to call men to serve as pastors. The minister's authority to exercise his office comes from the call of God in his personal experience, but this call is tested and approved by the church of which he is a member and (as is increasingly the rule) by the representatives of a large group of churches. He receives intellectual and spiritual training and is then invited to exercise his gift in a particular sphere. His authority, therefore, is from Christ through the believing community. It is not derived from a chain of bishops held to be lineally descended from the Apostles, and we gratefully affirm that to our non-episcopal communities, as to those episcopally governed, the gifts of the Spirit and the power of God are freely given.

Many among us hold that since the ministry is the gift of God to the Church and the call to exercise the functions of a minister comes from Him, a man who is so called is not only the minister of

a local Baptist church but also a minister of the whole Church of Jesus Christ.

Ordination takes place when a man has satisfactorily completed his college training and has been called to the pastorate of a local church, appointed to chaplaincy service or accepted for service abroad by the Committee of the Baptist Missionary Society.

The ordination service is presided over by either the Principal of his college, a General Superintendent or a senior minister and is shared in by other ministers and lay representatives of the church. Though there is no prescribed or set form of service, it invariably includes either a personal statement of faith or answers to a series of questions regarding the faith. From the seventeenth century onwards, ordination took place with the laying on of hands: in the nineteenth century this custom fell into disuse, but is now again increasingly practised.

1953. Adopted by the Annual Assembly of the Baptist Union.

Whereas for many years the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland has, acting through the Council, prepared lists of Ministers and Probationers accredited by the Union in accordance with a scheme of Ministerial Recognition, and whereas it is desirable that the purposes of the Scheme should be restated:

Resolved as follows:—

1. The purposes of the Scheme are
  - (a) To encourage candidates for the Baptist Ministry to fit themselves for their vocation by means of suitable courses of study and training, to be undertaken whenever possible in a Baptist College recognised by the Baptist Union.
  - (b) To accord to those Ministers who have so fitted themselves and whose qualifications are approved, the recognition of the Baptist Union, and to commend them to the Churches.
  - (c) To encourage Ministers by all possible means to magnify the Ministry and to lay upon themselves the disciplinary ideals of their calling.
  - (d) To take action in cases of conduct unbecoming to the Ministry.
  - (e) To facilitate Ministerial settlement.
  - (f) To meet the requirements of Denominational Schemes, Funds and Trusts.
2. There shall be prepared and maintained a list of
  - (a) Baptist Ministers in the British Isles who are for the time being accredited for the purposes of the Scheme.
  - (b) Probationer Baptist Ministers in the British Isles.
3. All Persons who become or remain Ministers or Probationers accredited by the Union are required to accept the Declaration of Principle as contained in the Constitution of the Union.

4. (a) The Council is empowered to administer the Scheme and may from time to time make Bye-Laws consistent with the purposes aforesaid.

(b) No such Bye-Laws nor any amendment or repeal thereof shall take effect unless approved by the Council on a resolution carried by the votes of at least two-thirds of the members present at a meeting of the Council.

The Union acknowledges that there are others whose names do not appear on the above-mentioned Accredited Lists who are Ministers of Baptist Churches and may rightly be designated Baptist Ministers.

## APPENDIX 3

### *The Laying on of Hands*

The New Testament contains several references to the imposition of hands, and in most of them the same verb is used to denote the act. This, however, does not mean that the act was always the same or that it always possessed the same significance; it was, in fact, clearly used for different purposes which may be classified in the following manner:—

#### 1. *For purposes of healing*

In Mark 5, 23 (Matt. 9, 18) is the request that Jesus would lay His hands upon the daughter of Jairus; when Jesus enters the house He “took her by the hand” (Mark 5, 41; Matt. 9, 25; Luke 8, 54) and so effected the healing. But on other occasions Jesus performed His healing act by placing His hands on the sufferer (cf. Mark 6, 5; 7, 32; 8, 23; Luke 4, 40; 13, 13). At other times we are simply told that Jesus touched the sufferer (cf. Mark 1, 41; 7, 33; 8, 22–26; Matt. 9, 29; 20, 34); and at times it is suggested that sufferers touched Jesus (Mark 5, 27). Acts 28, 8 suggests that the disciples of Jesus also used the imposition of hands for healing, though other references (Acts 3, 7; 5, 15; 9, 41; 19, 11) suggest simply some kind of physical contact between the healer and the sufferer.

#### 2. *In an act of blessing*

The only reference of this nature is Mark 10, 16, according to which Jesus blessed the children by placing His hands upon them. Matthew emphasises this act (Matt. 19, 13, 15), whereas Luke omits it altogether (Luke 18, 15–17), stating merely that children were brought to Jesus “that He might touch them”. In Luke 24, 50, we are told that Jesus blessed His disciples by lifting up His hands, the traditional gesture of priestly blessing.

#### 3. *As a means of the gift of the Holy Spirit*

The Samaritans received the Spirit when the apostles Peter and John laid their hands on them (Acts 8, 17–19); the twelve people in Ephesus who had been baptised in John’s movement received the Spirit when Paul laid his hands on them (Acts 19, 6). Paul himself seems to have received the Spirit through the act of Ananias in laying hands on him, but this reference may equally be to the restoration of his sight (Acts 9, 12, 17). It should also be noted that the communication of the Spirit was not restricted

to the imposition of hands; frequent references suggest a direct mediation of the Spirit without human agency. Associated with this are a few references to the imposition of hands at baptism (Acts 9, 18; 19, 6; Hebrews 6, 2).

4. *In regard to a special office or function*

The appointment of the Seven in Acts 6, 1-6 for the duty of administering relief was performed with prayer and the imposition of hands. The appointment of Barnabas and Paul to evangelistic work was made with fasting and prayer and the imposition of hands (Acts 13, 1-3). In the Pastoral Epistles Timothy is said to have received a gift when hands were laid upon him (1 Tim. 4, 14; 2 Tim. 1, 6), and the natural interpretation would refer this to ministerial work. 1 Tim. 5, 22 might also be an injunction against a hasty appointment of others to office in the Church.

This classification makes clear that broadly speaking the imposition of hands in the New Testament period was associated with two functions. First, it was associated with the communication of healing and blessing; second, it was associated with the imparting of the Spirit or a spiritual gift fitting the recipient for a special function in the Church. The evidence suggests that Jesus used imposition of hands only for healing and blessing; there is no suggestion in the Gospels that He appointed His disciples by laying on of hands. The reason for this is suggested later. There is no indication in the New Testament that these usages were at all new; we have, therefore, to examine their significance in both the Old Testament and contemporary Judaism.

An examination of the Old Testament references to the imposition of hands shows that three distinct words were used, of which two denote a placing of the hands lightly and one suggests a pressure of the hands. These words then refer to different acts.

The placing of the hands lightly upon a person was an act of blessing (Gen. 48, 14 ff.); though blessing could also be given by the lifting up of the hands (Lev. 9, 22). Manual touch was also associated with healing (2 Kings 13, 21; 2 Kings 4, 34; 1 Kings 17, 21). These manual acts suggest some idea of a transference or communication of power.

The leaning of the hands with pressure is the act performed at the ordination of Joshua by Moses (Num. 27, 18, 23; Deut. 34, 9); this act invests Joshua with the authority of Moses by communicating the spirit of wisdom, i.e. Joshua stands in the place of Moses. Again in Num. 8, 10, we are told that the people of Israel leaned their hands on the Levites so that then the Levites

could represent the people before God (Num. 8, 16). Certain offerings also were accompanied by the imposition of hands, e.g. the scapegoat (Lev. 16, 21), the burnt offering (Lev. 1, 4), the peace offering (Lev. 3, 8). The common feature in all these acts where the pressure of hands is used is that of the impartation of personality. That upon which the hands were laid becomes a substitute, e.g. Joshua stands in the place of Moses, the Levites stand in the place of the firstborn of the people. The act indicates the pouring of one's personality into another being, the creation of a representative or substitute.

Within Judaism of the New Testament period both these forms of the imposition of hands are to be found. Blessings were given by Rabbis or by parents by a gentle placing of the hands on the head, though the priestly blessing was given with uplifted hands. Manual acts in healing were widespread in the Hellenistic world. The imposition of hands with pressure, however, was restricted in its use to sacrifice and ordination. When sacrifices ceased with the destruction of the Temple the regulations associated with them also came to an end. With regard to Rabbinic ordination, the custom whereby an individual Rabbi ordained his students with the imposition of hands was continued until late in the second century A.D., but then ordination became a corporate act, while by the middle of the third century A.D. imposition of hands was abandoned. It should be noted that in the Rabbinic period many kinds of representation were developed but these appointments were not made with imposition of hands. The idea of Rabbinic ordination appears still to retain the idea of a communication of personality, i.e. the personality and authority of the teacher are conveyed to the student.

This brief survey of the background indicates that imposition of hands accompanying ordination was a special act bearing its own significance. The question then arises whether the New Testament passages suggest that the disciples were adopting the practice and whether they accepted also this significance. It may be remarked here that this background suggests a reason for the absence of this type of imposition of hands from the ministry of Jesus. In view of the uniqueness of His Person and work there could be no question of the imparting of His personality.

It is perhaps significant that whereas the imposition of hands in Judaism was a custom increasingly restricted so that eventually it ceased, the Christians used it in the appointment of the Seven (Acts 6), i.e. at the beginning of the organising of the Christian

fellowship, and then spasmodically on special occasions. This appointment of the Seven in Acts 6 seems to have features akin to the appointment of Joshua in Num. 27, 18 ff. as well as to the appointment of the Levites in Num. 8, 10. The act was a corporate one in which the whole church elected seven men, set them before the Apostles, and so they were appointed with prayer and the imposition of hands. This act may have been performed by the Apostles but the sentence could as easily be understood of the people. In any case the act was corporate and it made the Seven representatives of the whole church. Also in Acts 13, 3, the imposition of hands was done by the leaders of the church, and Barnabas and Paul were clearly the representatives of the church. They were already accepted teachers in the church so that this was not an initial ordination; the act signified that they were to carry out a specific mission on behalf of the whole church.

The two passages in the Pastoral Epistles, 1 Tim. 4, 14; 2 Tim. 1, 6, present some difficulties. The former passage suggests that Timothy possesses a gift (charisma) and presumably on that account exercises his ministry, and the gift came to him through the imposition of the hands of the elders. The phrase which is here translated "of the elders" is a neuter singular word and could mean the presbyterate, so that the reference could be to a proper act of ordination. The meaning then is that Timothy is to pursue with all diligence the ministry to which he was appointed by prophetic utterance and by a due and proper ordination. The mode in which the ordination may have been carried out is then suggested in 2 Tim. 1, 6 which states that Paul laid his hands on Timothy. Paul acts for the presbyterate which is representative of the whole church so that by this imposition of hands he communicates the authority to minister. In 1 Tim. 5, 20 Timothy is enjoined not to lay hands on anyone hastily and the suggestion seems to be that he should observe the developing procedure, viz. emphasis on character and personal gift, approval by the church, etc., before he proceeds to an act of ordination.

The significant fact in all this is that early Christian leaders began to use a custom which was declining in Judaism, and the scanty evidence would suggest that its use tended to increase in the Church. The old meaning whereby the imposition of hands made one a substitute for another or for a group seems to have been retained though there is no hint of any impersonal or magical ideas in this conception. Further reference may be made to D. Daube's *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism*

(pp. 225-47), to which we are indebted for much of the above information.

In the period following the first century A.D. there is a development in two directions:—

(1) The corporate nature of the imposition of hands tends to decrease so that the act becomes increasingly an individual act. Appointment to ministry depends more upon the ordaining act of the bishop than upon the election of the people, which steadily became a formality.

(2) The laying on of hands is regarded as the act in which authority is conveyed. No longer is it a representative act in which the life of the group is communicated to the individual so that in his activities he is an extension of the group; on the contrary what is now conveyed is authority over the people and this is communicated by one who himself possesses the authority.

It will be seen from Appendix 1 that references to the laying on of hands are frequent in the early Baptist Confessions. An explicit reference is found in the minutes of the Western Association in 1704 where, under the title "Laying on of hands", it is stated, "Some Churches not only pleaded strenuously for this practice as an apostolic and primitive custom but also contended for the necessity of laying on of hands of Pastors upon Deacons when elected to that office, as well as upon persons who had been baptised, introducing them into the Church by this rite which answered, as they contended, to the ancient practice of confirmation". The Assembly agreed that "the ordination of persons to the office of an elder, or that of a deacon, by the imposition of the hands of the eldership is an ordination of Jesus Christ still in force". The Records of the Broadmead Church, Bristol, refer regularly to ordination "by the laying on of the hands". Dr. H. W. Robinson in the *Baptist Historical Quarterly*, Vol. II (p. 107), drew attention to the record of the ordination of J. Skepp in 1714 in which, after Skepp had declared his willingness to become pastor, "Br. Lampert and Br. Skinner stood and spread the hands over his head and signified thereby to the spectators that this Church did by them in this figure of the stretching forth of the hand over the head of Br. Skepp signify their joint choice and present installation of him into office and then called upon God in prayer" (cf. article by Dr. E. A. Payne in *Baptist Quarterly*, Jan. 1954). The references already given in Appendix 1 draw attention to the fact that ordination with the laying on of hands was a regular practice into the middle of the nineteenth century.



## APPENDIX 4

### *Baptist Deaconesses*

In 1919 the Baptist Union assumed responsibility for the work which had been carried on by the Baptist Deaconess Home and Mission, and decided to enlarge its scope. It was agreed to found a college in London, and "to call out and train Baptist women who were qualified and ready to devote themselves to some specialised form of ministry in the Church, and more particularly to the work of deaconesses among the poor, to missionary work, and in positions of leadership in the Church, Institute, Sunday School, and Christian social work."

A Special Committee was set up by the Baptist Union Council to survey the organisation and the function of the Order and the College, and its findings were presented to the Council in March, 1941. Attention was drawn to the variety of work the deaconess was called upon to do. "We do not aim at training Women Ministers, but some deaconesses have been virtually put in the position of Ministers and given the responsibility of organising and maintaining churches. Others act as assistants to Ministers, with special responsibility for the conduct of Women's Meetings, for Sunday School work and the care of young women and children."

Bye-Laws were drawn up and approved by the Baptist Union Council in 1948, setting forth rules governing the relationship of deaconesses to the Baptist Union on the one hand and to the churches on the other, and dealing with recognition, settlement and sustenance.

At the settlement of a deaconess in a church a Service of Induction and Recognition is usually held.

The fact that deaconesses are increasingly doing the work normally undertaken by a minister raises questions about their status and the training necessary for them, and we would call the attention of the Denomination to these matters.