

The Doctrine  
of the  
Ministry

THE BAPTIST UNION OF GREAT BRITAIN & IRELAND  
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4 Southampton Row, London, W.C.1.

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# A Report for Discussion

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# The Doctrine of the Ministry

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## PREFACE

Of recent years the Baptist Union has been looked to on a number of occasions for statements on Baptist belief and practice. It has been necessary to contribute to the general discussions on Church Relations in England and also to the consideration of questions of Faith and Order within the wider circle of the World Council of Churches. The Baptist Reply to the Lambeth Appeal (adopted by the Baptist Union Assembly in 1926), the statement on the Baptist Doctrine of the Church (approved by the Baptist Union Council in 1948) and the report on Church Relations in England (approved by the Council in 1953) are examples of what has been done in this field. Together they form an important body of material for an understanding of current Baptist opinion and conviction.<sup>1</sup>

There has also been consideration, under the auspices of the Baptist Union, of a number of other matters about which within the Baptist denomination guidance has been sought. In 1953 the Baptist Union Council decided to set up a group to prepare a statement on "The Meaning and Practice of Ordination among Baptists", together with an Order of Service. In 1957 the Council received this statement and authorised its publication "with a view to the discussion of the subject by ministers' fraternals, Association committees and interested churches and individuals".<sup>2</sup> The group which drew up the statement on Ordination stressed the need for more thoroughgoing studies by Baptists of the Biblical and historical evidence regarding a number of doctrinal matters to which reference had had to be made.

The study of the doctrine of the ministry which follows is a first step towards the fulfilment of the need for a closer examination of certain of the fundamental questions involved. It is primarily a Biblical and theological study, but it also draws on Baptist history and indicates the practical conclusions which the writers draw as a result of their thought and discussion.

This study is the joint work of three individuals, men of wide knowledge and experience, to whom the Council is deeply grateful for

the time and care they have given. They are : Dr. L. G. Champion (Principal of Bristol Baptist College), the Rev. J. O. Barrett, M.A., (General Superintendent of the North-Eastern Area) and Dr. W. M. S. West (Minister of Dagnall Street Church, St. Albans, and formerly tutor of Regent's Park College, Oxford). They have drawn others into their discussions, but this is primarily a statement of what it seems to them is clearly represented in Scripture and in Baptist history. In the closing section, they make clear the direction in which they think their conclusions point so far as immediate practical issues are concerned.

The Baptist Union Council does not regard itself as committed to all that appears in these pages, but is convinced that this study deserves the most careful consideration of ministers and churches. Changes in our present practice will only be salutary if they spring from theological insights. Accordingly, the Council hopes that this booklet will be carefully read, reflected on and discussed. Its four main themes : (1) The relationship of Ministry and Church ; (2) The status and authority of the Ministry ; (3) The methods for the appointment of Ministers and (4) The functions of the Ministry, are of basic importance, often discussed among us and by Christians of other traditions.

"All the Churches," said Richard Baxter, "either rise or fall as the ministry doth rise or fall (not in riches or worldly grandeur) but in knowledge, zeal and ability for their work." But the way ministers are sought out, regarded, trained, appointed and supported is the concern of the whole Christian community.

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<sup>1</sup>The three documents mentioned are printed as appendices to *The Baptist Union: A Short History*, Carey Kingsgate Press, 1959.

<sup>2</sup>It was published by the Carey Kingsgate Press in 1958.

## THE TEACHING OF THE NEW TESTAMENT ABOUT CHRISTIAN MINISTRY

A study of the New Testament teaching about Christian ministry may be pursued along two lines. We may describe the forms of ministry to which the New Testament bears witness, seeking to reach some conclusions about permanent structures of ministry in the Christian church. We may also consider the theological conceptions within which the New Testament teaching about ministry is set, trying by this means to discern the fundamental and abiding nature and function of the ministry in whatever organised patterns it may be exercised. Both lines of study have value.

### Forms of Ministry in the New Testament Period

#### I

It is clear that some form of leadership existed among the disciples from the beginning. The opening chapters of Acts portray a community of disciples in which the apostles exercised leadership ; Acts 1 : 13-15 ; 2 : 41-47 ; 4 : 23, 32 ; etc. It is equally clear that this leadership had begun during the earthly ministry of Jesus.

#### II

This leadership was appointed by Jesus and exists therefore according to His will. The scene described in Mark 3 : 14-19 is a particularly solemn occasion when the Lord chose and appointed twelve disciples to be associated with him in his work. The mission of these twelve, Mark 6 : 7 ff., the Messianic confession and teaching at Caesarea Philippi, Mark 8 : 27 ff., the last supper in Jerusalem, Mark 14 : 12 ff., are incidents confirming the solemn deliberation of the choice recorded in Mark 3. It was to these chosen men, except for Judas, that the risen Lord appeared ; it was to them that the experience of the Holy Spirit

was given; it was upon these men that the burden of leadership fell during the first days of the church. Since the events just mentioned form a continuous sequence, indeed belong together by their inner nature, we may properly say that the leadership thus began and exercised was of the Lord's appointing and according to His will. This theme is prominent in the Fourth Gospel, which emphasizes the "sending" of the apostles by the Lord and links this commission very closely with the sending of the Son by the Father. "As thou hast sent me into the world even so have I sent them also into the world." 17 : 18. Many phrases in chapter 15 could also be cited; they are focused in the saying of verse 16 : "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you that ye should go and bring forth fruit". These sayings belong to the discourses in the upper room, i.e. to the section of the gospel devoted to the teaching of the eleven disciples (Judas goes out before the teaching begins). As God sends His Son into the world, so the Son sends His disciples to bear witness; as the Father loves the Son so the Son loves His disciples; as the Father reveals Himself in the Son, so the Son makes known to the disciples all that He has heard from the Father. The work of these disciples derives from and is determined by the Divine sending of the Son that "the world might be saved".

### III

It is important here to notice that what is according to the Lord's will is a spiritual leadership among the disciples. This must not be equated with any particular forms of leadership. It is noticeable that some of the original twelve do not occupy any place in the records; they are simply names to us. Even the word "apostle" cannot be used exclusively of the twelve, for Paul undoubtedly claimed to be an apostle and the word is used of others, e.g. Barnabas, Acts 14 : 14. There was no attempt in the church to maintain the word "apostle"; it was used of those who having seen the risen Lord were commissioned by Him and so bore authentic witness to Him.

The apostolic church obviously felt free to appoint leaders according to the needs of the work. Acts 6 : 1-6, shows the church exercising this freedom, though by prayer seeking the guidance of the Spirit; then meeting the needs of widows by the appointment of seven gifted members. Again, the church at Antioch feels free, under the same guidance of the Spirit, to appoint two of its teachers, Barnabas and Paul, for special evangelistic work, Acts 13 : 1 ff. Then these two men meet the needs of the churches that they had established by the appointment of "elders", Acts 14 : 23. In the church at Jerusalem there is no attempt to maintain apostolic leadership, for at an early period James, the Lord's brother, becomes the leader; with him appear to be associ-

ated a number of "elders" cf. Acts 11 : 30 ; 15 : 2-6. What is assumed in all the situations described by these references is that the churches need spiritual leadership; what is variable are the titles given to the leaders. Furthermore, no attempt is made to give precise definitions to their functions. In addition to this evidence, we have some lists of forms of ministry, e.g. 1 Cor. 12 : 28 ; Eph. 4 : 11, but these are clearly not exhaustive or authoritative definitions of Christian ministry.

What we can say is that as the years passed by certain words appear in more frequent usage to denote the prevailing modes in which ministry came to be exercised. The three words "bishop", "elder", "deacon", grew in common usage though it cannot be said that the functions attaching to each title were clearly defined, or that dogmatic statements can be made in regard to this early period about the relationship of bishops and elders. What this amounts to is that the apostolic church accepted the necessity for leadership, and the twelve, as those appointed by the Lord, sought the guidance of the Spirit in continuing appointments, and used the titles which were familiar in order to denote the functions of leadership.

The New Testament terms denoting leadership in the church are all taken from the environment in which the church grew. Terms such as "apostle", "teacher", "elder", were well known in Jewish circles; terms such as "bishop", "deacon" were equally well known in the environment of the Hellenistic world. Furthermore, the functions associated with these titles in their respective spheres were by no means unlike the functions within the Christian community for which these words were used. This suggests that we should not regard these titles as necessarily belonging to any permanent forms of the church's life, though the functions which they denote continue to be essential. Just because the Christian church is a fellowship of people, part of its life is earthly and temporal. The church as a human community partakes of the life of the society in which it lives, just as Jesus in His human nature shared the language, the customs, the problems of the Jewish people in the first century. It is not wrong, therefore, for the church to reflect the sociological patterns in which it bears its witness. What is wrong is to confuse these patterns with the essential and unchanging elements in the life and witness of the church.

A study of the organisation of the apostolic church suggests then that some form of spiritual leadership is necessary to the life of the church, that this was according to the Lord's will, and was initiated by His appointing. In the New Testament this spiritual leadership is seen to be exercised in varying ways according to the needs of the church, and to be indicated by titles taken from contemporary society. In order to discover the essential nature and functions of this ministry we have to consider carefully basic theological conceptions.

# The Theological Basis of Ministry

## I

Behind the forms into which the work of ministry may be organised are basic conceptions of the ministry; they belong to and derive from the essential nature of the Christian faith, so that they remain unaltered. But basic conceptions can never be properly considered in isolation. To understand the New Testament teaching about ministry we have to understand the New Testament doctrine of the church, and a full consideration of this doctrine would require a study of the Holy Spirit, of the person and work of Christ, of the will and purpose of God. So large a task is obviously beyond the scope of a report on the ministry. But at least something must be written about the New Testament doctrine of the church, and this will inevitably include some brief consideration of references to the Spirit, to Christ and to God.

## II

The main features of the New Testament doctrine of the church as it relates to the Ministry may be summarised under three phrases which are used in the New Testament about the church. It may be described as the people of God, as the body of Christ, as the community of the Spirit.

## III

We begin with the statement that Jesus brought into being the new people of God, and that He regarded this as the purpose of His work.

The concept of the people of God is, of course, deeply rooted in the Old Testament. The life of the people of God derives from the covenant which God established, it is ordered by the sacred law, it finds its spiritual centre in the Temple worship and sacrifices. With all this Jesus was familiar. He was not concerned to prolong the external forms of Israel's religion, but to give new expression to the spiritual concepts of a people in covenant relationship with God. So He brings into being a new people of God by the new covenant established through His death.

The formation of a new community is implicit in the good news of the Kingdom of God which He came to proclaim, for if the basis of all teaching about the Kingdom is the reality of God's sovereignty both now and in the future, this carries with it the implication that there will be a realm in which that sovereignty is acknowledged. Jesus understood the new community of His disciples as the realm in which the divine sovereignty is recognised and manifest; hence His frequent emphasis upon forgiveness, brotherliness, the good will in human relationships. This new community, with its visible fellowship, is integral to the good news of the Kingdom.

It is in this way that the controversial passage in Matt. 16 : 17-19 is to be understood. If this is a genuine saying of the Lord's, the word "church" must be understood in terms of the Aramaic word which meant "people of God"; then Jesus is saying that He will establish this new people of God on the basis of the personal acknowledgment of Him as Messiah with the personal commitment to obedient discipleship which that implied. The word then indicates the following sequence of events: activity of the living God in the ministry of Jesus, response to Him of confession and commitment, initiation of the new community of believers, witness of this community in the world.

A similar sequence is uncovered when we examine the phrase "son of man" in which our Lord expressed the significance of His work among men. It seems clear that in this title He was indicating a unique activity of God in His ministry, He was asserting His identification with mankind, He was expressing His conviction that power and glory are realised through suffering, and all this was being set in a corporate context. Son of man is not an isolated figure; His uniqueness is not individualism. He is representative of the people of God. He is foremost among the saints of the most High. In using this title Jesus indicates that His work will initiate a new people of God who will share His ministry as servant of the Lord and thus, too, will share His power and glory. One further aspect of the Ministry of Jesus may be mentioned in order to substantiate the statement that Jesus intended to establish a new people of God. At the supper in Jerusalem Jesus spoke in terms of the covenant, perhaps as Paul and Luke suggest referring to the "new covenant". The covenant conception in the Old Testament has to do, of course, with the people of God, both in regard to their relationships with God, and in regard to human relationships. In linking His death with the Passover, in speaking of it as the "blood of the covenant", and in associating with all this the community of His disciples, Jesus was clearly indicating that a new people of God was being formed. We conclude therefore that the formation of a community consisting of actual persons in a specific relationship to Himself—a visible, definite, human fellowship—was central to the purpose and work of Christ. Much of His teaching concerns the life and activity of this community. Many of His deeds were on their behalf. To them He interpreted His death and appeared in His risen presence. This community derives its life from Him, and belongs to His saving work. Consequently, we may say that the members of the community are related to God as Father through Christ, are related to one another in the love of Christ, are related to the world in service as Christ served. They exist in the Son of Man in all these relationships.

## IV

The phrase "body of Christ" is used frequently by Paul to describe the church. He uses other phrases also, but not so frequently nor in such varied manner as this phrase. We may therefore examine it as expressive of his conception of the church. In this examination, we are aware of the complex discussion of this phrase presented in numerous books and articles, and of the divergent views held about its interpretation. Here we can do no more than state our view that we accept the phrase as a metaphor, i.e. a reference to a physical entity is used to express in symbol truth about spiritual reality.

What we have to ask is: does this conception of the church belong to the conception already discerned in the gospels? Paul uses his metaphor to express three truths about the church:

(a) **THE CHURCH EXISTS UNDER CHRIST AS THE HEAD.** Col. 1: 18; Eph. 1: 22, 23; 4: 15. The church is distinct from Christ and subordinate to Christ. This means that Christ fulfilled His unique work, which is distinct from the function of the church. In this sense the church cannot be regarded as an extension of the incarnation. The incarnation is the initiation of God's saving acts in and through Christ, to which the church bears witness. This witness is fulfilled in obedience to Christ as head. Because the church is subordinate to Christ as its head it cannot control Christ; it must be controlled by Him. The church must not use Christ for its own ends or pretend to keep Him from any life. The church bears witness to Him Who in the freedom of the Spirit comes to whom He will in the way He will.

(b) **THE CHURCH EXISTS IN A COMMON LIFE.** The metaphor of the body suggests that the church is an organism sharing a common life, and not an organisation in which isolated parts are amalgamated. Because Christians are those baptised into Christ and living in Christ, they belong to one another in the common life. It is not being in the church that brings a person into Christ; rather, it is being in Christ that implies that a person is in the church. A believer does not join the church as if it were a voluntary association of individuals. He recognises that being in a new relationship with Christ he is thereby in the community of all who share this relationship, he is in the church. This implies also that every visible community of worshipping and witnessing Christians shares a common life with all other such communities.

(c) **THE CHURCH EXISTS TO SERVE AS CHRIST SERVED.** The metaphor of the body inevitably suggests the incarnation and the ministry of Jesus in the days of His flesh. This ministry was characterised by complete self-giving in service for people, e.g. Luke 22: 27; Mark 10: 45; John 13: 1-17.

Here is the feature that is to characterise the life of the church as Christ's body. The church exists to minister as Christ ministered. Ministry must be understood primarily as what the whole church does in the name and in the Spirit of Christ. Ministry is the church's function in relation to mankind. Paul's metaphor of the body thus makes the same emphasis as the teaching in the gospels, but it expresses more fully the relationship of Christ to His church, the unity of life in the church and the nature of the church's function in the world.

## V

The remaining aspect of the New Testament teaching about the church concerns the Holy Spirit and the church, as the community sustained and guided by the Spirit.

The giving of the Spirit recorded in Acts 2 means that the divine activity and resources which, e.g. the prophets of Israel had known as they fulfilled their tasks in the life of the people, and which had been the source of the unique activity of Jesus—Luke 3: 22, 4: 1, 4: 14—are now made available to all the people of God. The response of faith in Christ, baptism, and receiving of the Holy Spirit—this is the sequence of experiences which all converts know. The church may then be described as the fellowship of the Spirit. The church therefore lives in obedience to the Spirit; it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us is the way by which the life and activity of the church is controlled. The Spirit is manifest in the exercise of personal gifts. "There is one body and one Spirit", but there are different functions to be exercised by those in the one body controlled by the one Spirit; "He gave some to be apostles; and some, prophets, and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers" Eph. 4: 5. "There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit" 1 Cor. 12: 4; hence, there are different functions to be fulfilled in the total witness of the church, 1 Cor. 12: 28-30. These gifts are to be exercised and these functions fulfilled all in obedience to the one Spirit. What is of outstanding importance according to 1 Cor. 13 is that all gifts shall be exercised and all functions fulfilled with the love which is the particular work of the Spirit. Without love, all is useless. The ministry of the church is no ministry if the love which is the gift of the Spirit is absent.

Yet with all this emphasis upon the exercise of gifts it must not be suggested that the Spirit is limited to these functions. The Spirit is free. We must not identify the Spirit with any one mode by which the Spirit operates. The Spirit is always the Spirit of Christ and will never work in any way contrary to the pattern of his life; but this activity of the Spirit cannot be rigidly canalised. The church exists to obey the Spirit, not to control the Spirit.

## VI

It is within the context of this New Testament teaching about the church that we must understand the New Testament conception of ministry. The forms and functions of the varying ministries mentioned in the New Testament belong to the total ministry which the whole church exists to exercise. Here we reach the vital principle that the nature and functions of Christian ministry are determined by the ministry of the whole church. In its ministry the church exists in the two-fold relationship which is manifest in Christ.

The whole church exists in a relationship with God which is that of sinful people who through the grace revealed in Christ receive pardon and peace, so that now they live consciously as children of the Father. In this relationship there are no distinctions whatsoever. The diversity of function in the church does not create any difference in this relationship. The church turned in worship towards the Father is the household of God experiencing the same family life. All who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. Rom. 8 : 14.

The whole church exists in a relationship with the world which is that of redeemed people who bear the obligation of communicating Christ. In the fulfilment of this task there are certainly different functions, but there is also shared responsibility. Those who through Christ know the Father share with Christ the life of service. The priesthood of all believers expresses this double relationship of every member of the church. The believer is a child of God living in "the glorious liberty of the children of God" with the privilege at all times of praying in simple and direct terms "our Father"; yet these very privileges bring obligations of service and responsibilities for mankind. The believer is called to minister, to deny self, to be a witness, to bear the burdens of others. The whole church is called to turn to God in worship, prayer, dependence; the whole church is called to turn to man in love, service, sacrifice. This is the church's primary ministry.

But in a secondary sense we may speak of the ministry, but it must be within this context of the ministry of the whole church which derives from and is controlled by the ministry of Christ. We have seen that from the beginning and by the appointment and will of Christ some among His disciples have been authorised to exercise special functions of leadership. That justifies our speaking of the ministry in this secondary sense.

Here questions arise about the nature, authority and function of this ministry and we must attempt to formulate and answer the questions.

## VII

**What is the relationship of the ministry to the ministering church?**

The ministry exists to enable the whole church to fulfil its ministry. In Eph. 4 : 11, 12, it is stated that God has given forms of ministry to the church "for the perfecting of the saints for their work of ministry", i.e. it is the whole company of saints which is to minister and to make them able and complete for this task apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers are given. In this sense Paul can describe the apostles as "your servants for Jesus' sake". 2 Cor. 4 : 5.

"Ministers" then are in the same relationship to God and men as all members of the church, but they are appointed to tasks of leadership in the church, and this leadership is to be recognised by the church. Paul uses his metaphor of the body to suggest that all parts are equal in honour although the parts have different functions : 1 Cor. 12 : 12 ff. A similar point is made in Rom. 12 : 4-5. All members of the church have functions in the total ministry of the church, and each is to be recognised; some members are given specific functions involving leadership, and this leadership is then to be exercised. But the recognition of leadership does not involve forsaking the relationship of service. Domination over the church is a negation of the teaching of Christ.

Yet again, being servants of the church does not involve being in subjection to the church. Each believer stands or falls to the Lord.

Furthermore, leadership is of the Lord's appointing. In the appointment of its "ministers" the church acts under the guidance of the Spirit. Those who thus exercise leadership in the church are "ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God". 1 Cor. 4 : 1. This does not mean that an individual can take upon himself the responsibility of leadership; according to the New Testament the church is always involved in the recognition of leadership. But the church so recognises where Christ calls and the Spirit guides.

The relationship of the minister to the church is governed therefore both by the nature of the church which is called into being to minister in the name of Christ and by the authority over him of Christ Who has called him to this work.

The steward is required to be faithful both to the task to which he has been appointed and to the Lord who appoints him. Thus the minister will be under obligation at times to rebuke and reprove the church, 2 Tim. 4 : 2, to instruct and counsel the church, so expressing the mind of the Lord for the church. But all this will be done in a spirit of love to enable the church to fulfil its ministry.



## VIII

**What is the authority of the minister in the ministering church ?**

Perhaps a preposition is important. The minister's authority is not over the church. It is not magisterial authority but ministerial authority, i.e. authority in the church. The authority is of two kinds :

(a) THERE IS THE AUTHORITY OF THE SPIRIT AS A BELIEVER IS LED OF THE SPIRIT AND SPEAKS BY THE SPIRIT. Such an authority all other believers are called upon to recognise and accept. Already in the New Testament are indications that the church realised the problem of distinguishing what is truly of the Spirit. It is evident that only those activities and attitudes which are congruous with the pattern of the life of Christ may be regarded as of the Spirit. Hence Paul's emphasis upon love, joy, peace, etc., as the fruit of the Spirit, Gal. 5 : 22, rather than upon abnormal forms of behaviour such as speaking with tongues. The teaching of sound doctrine, i.e. doctrine which accords with the earthly ministry of Jesus, is also a mark of the Spirit, 1 John 4 : 2, John 14 : 26, 15 : 16-17. A minister may be so conscious of uttering the mind of the Lord that he may claim authority for his message or his judgment ; yet even then the message or the judgment is to be tested by those who are to receive it, cf. 1 Cor. 14 : 29-37, 1 Thess. 5 : 19-21, 1 John 4 : 1. The minister does not claim that authority is inherent in himself or in his office apart from the operation of the Spirit in his life and work. He and the church seek to acknowledge the authentic authority of the Spirit.

(b) THERE IS THE AUTHORITY WHICH THE CHURCH ACKNOWLEDGES IN THOSE WHOM IT HAS APPOINTED AS LEADERS. The New Testament is emphatic about the spiritual qualities of such men. They are to be mature in faith, stable in moral life, with lives that evidence their inner faith, cf. 1 Tim. 3 : 1 ff., 2 Tim. 2 : 1-16, 4 : 1-8, Titus 1 : 7-9, 1 Peter 5 : 1-4. What the church recognises therefore are those spiritual qualities and gifts fitting a believer for the task of leadership and the place of leadership to which the church has appointed that member. This recognition belongs to the mutual acknowledgment of differing gifts necessary for orderliness in the life of the church. Those appointed to teach, guide, care for the church are to fulfil these functions in the expectation that the church will receive their ministry, i.e. acknowledge their authority.

Thus in regard to authority the New Testament teaches that both minister and church have obligations, and only as the obligations are accepted is the authority properly exercised and recognised. The minister is under obligation to discern humbly and carefully what is the mind of the Lord and the guiding of the Spirit, so that in all his leadership he

will guide the church in its total ministry. The church is under obligation to test the leadership according to the pattern of Christ, to receive it and thus to engage more fully in its task of ministry. This mutual recognition that the authority is of Christ, that it does not belong to man or office, and that it is to be recognised for the sake of Christ's ministry among men is necessary for the true life of the church.

## IX

**How is the minister appointed ?**

This theme is dealt with in the report on ordination submitted to the Baptist Union Council in 1957. The report stated 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."

The report suggests that "The judgments, decisions and acts of the members of the church are a proper part of any appointment to the ministry" and it quotes Acts 1 : 15-26, 6 : 1-6, 13 : 1-3, 14 : 23, as evidence for this statement. Furthermore, other passages in the New Testament indicate that solemn acts were observed for the sanction of a ministry, and the following passages, in addition to those given above, may be cited : Acts 15 : 40, 20 : 32, 1 Timothy 4 : 14, 2 Timothy 1 : 6, Titus 1 : 5-6.

The position of the report is that in the New Testament there is evidence for the statement that "the decision and action of the church are required in the appointment to ministry".

## X

**What is the function of the minister in the ministering church ?**

The functions are never exactly defined in the New Testament. We have seen that Jesus appointed twelve disciples to communicate the gospel by word and deed. This remained the chief work of ministers in the church. This is to say that the functions of the minister are determined by the nature of Christ's ministry. He proclaimed, acted and lived the eternal realities of God's sovereign and merciful rule, and He did all this in love to men. So the minister in the New Testament proclaims the acts of God's mercy culminating in Christ, works and lives in personal obedience to God and does all this in his care for people.

His function is thus determined by the objective realities of God's saving acts. This primary function must obviously be extended as the Christian community develops. The established and ordered life of a community calls for administration, for leadership in the specific corporate acts of the community. Hence we may well believe that the minister normally led the church's worship, presided at the Lord's Table and administered baptism.

But on these points the New Testament offers no clear guidance. The evidence of 1. Cor. suggests that a number of members could share in the worship. There are no precise instructions about the Lord's Supper and baptism in regard to the person to administer these sacraments. The principle of the New Testament would appear to be that all these functions should be fulfilled by those mature in the faith, spiritually gifted for the work and appointed thereto by the church. These functions may be exercised within the church—or churches—of one locality or among all the churches.

## XI

In concluding this account of the New Testament teaching about the ministry, we summarise the theme set forth in the Epistle to the Ephesians, for this letter suggests a conception of the ministry within the context of the purpose of God revealed in Christ and worked out through the church. In this letter we have the most integrated conception of the ministry to be found in the New Testament. We offer this brief summary as being the justification for the approach and argument of this whole section. The main theme of Ephesians is that of reconciliation. The thought begins with the purpose of God which is described as a plan for the fulness of time, namely "to unite all things in Him". This mystery of God's will has been made known in Christ. What was purpose became activity in Christ. He is the gift of God, i.e. in Him God chooses to act on behalf of mankind which is estranged and alienated from God. Through Christ therefore we are saved from this alienation, this state of "being dead in our trespasses"; we are reconciled to God. Christ is our peace.

But God's work of reconciliation which thus transforms the relationship between Himself and sinful man, also transforms the relationships among men. Christ is our peace in the sense that He breaks down dividing walls of partition, so bringing together what was separated. Through Him all men have access by one Spirit to the Father.

This community of the reconciled is the church, the body of which Christ is the head, the household of God. All who share the life of the community are responsible "for maintaining the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace". They are to walk "in love as Christ loved

us and gave Himself for us". God's work of reconciliation performed through Christ continues therefore in and through the church; for the sake of this ministry of reconciliation God gives to the church gifts of leadership. He gives some to be apostles, some to be prophets, etc., so that the church may be built up "in love", i.e. so that the unity of the church as the community of the reconciled may be maintained and the service of the church in "making known the manifold wisdom of God" might be increased. The nature, function and place in the church of these ministries are thus clearly determined by God's act of reconciliation in Christ, and God's purpose of reconciliation thus initiated and now being worked out through the church. Then the church becomes God's instrument of reconciliation. An appeal is made to all members of the church to be "worthy of their vocation". This vocation is to life in Christ exhibited in relationships of love. "Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another as God in Christ forgave you". So all the spheres of human relationships become extensions of the community of the reconciled. For the Christian, the experience of God's reconciliation in Christ governs relationships between husband and wife, between parents and children, between masters and servants. Here is a doctrine of church and ministry worked out in terms of God's purpose for all time, of God's saving acts in Christ, of the work of the Spirit in the fellowship of believers. It is in this context that we have to discern the abiding nature, structure and functions of Christian ministry.

## THE MINISTRY IN BAPTIST HISTORY

### Introduction

In the consideration of the development of any doctrine in Baptist history, it is necessary to recall that in the seventeenth century two distinct streams of Baptist witness emerged, namely the General Baptists and the Particular Baptists. They had different origins and they had some different emphases. The importance of recalling this will be especially evident in the first section of what follows, as will be the danger of forgetting it. For it is possible to appeal to the seventeenth century General Baptists on a point of doctrine and to find one emphasis and then to appeal to the Particular Baptists and find quite another. It also has to be borne in mind that, although the influence of the General Baptists tended to fade in the eighteenth century, the remaining Particular Baptists were by no means agreed amongst themselves on the working out of every doctrine, and their thinking about the ministry was no exception. All this is not to say that our task is an impossible one, only that we cannot expect to find unanimity on every point. There is, indeed, agreement on some aspects of the ministry, but on the fundamental point of the relationship of ministry and church there has never been complete clarity and agreement amongst English Baptists. Therefore we are not able, from Baptist History, to produce a fully worked out and all-embracing doctrine of the ministry that enables us to say "here is what Baptists have always and in every place believed about the ministry".

It is obvious that within the compass of our report we cannot give a complete account of what the Baptists of the past have said about the ministry. The task of this section must be to select representative figures and points within Baptist History to show the steps by which we have arrived at the point of present Baptist thinking about the ministry—and no one of us would claim that it is yet a point of complete agreement.

In the latter pages of the New Testament section of this report the ministry has been considered under four headings, and we shall continue to follow this pattern in what follows.

## I The Relationship of Ministry and Church

Clearly any doctrine of the ministry will depend upon a doctrine of the church. If, within the doctrine of the church, two groups have somewhat different emphases, then it is likely that there will be different emphases within the doctrine of the ministry held by each, at least so far as the ministry's relationship to the fellowship of the church is concerned. So it was with the first General and Particular Baptists. We need to recall their different origins. The General Baptists came into being in Holland in 1609 under the leadership of John Smyth and Thomas Helwys. These men and their followers had moved from Puritanism to Brownist-Separatism and finally became Baptist Separatists. They inherited much of their doctrine from the Brownists and certainly this included some of their thinking about the doctrine of the church and ministry. The lineage of the Particular Baptists on the other hand is from Puritanism to the Independent Puritanism of the so-called Jacob-Lathrop-Jessey church founded in Southwark in 1616 out of which the Baptists separated sometime in the 1630s. This is a different line from the General Baptists, for the Jacob-Lathrop-Jessey church existed for some time alongside the Brownist-Separatism and distinct from it.

Both the General Baptists and the Particular Baptists were agreed about the need for the ministry in the church. A declaration of faith made in 1611 stemming probably from Helwys states: "That the officers of every church or congregation are either Elders, who by their office do especially lead the flock concerning their souls . . . or Deacons, men and women who by their office relieve the necessities of the poor and impotent brethren concerning their bodies". The 1644 Confession of the Particular Baptists reads thus: "Every church has power given them from Christ for their better well being, to choose to themselves meet persons into the office of Pastors, Teachers, Elders, Deacons . . ."

When we come to consider the relationship of the minister to the church there is a difference of emphasis between the two groups. Helwys is quite clear "That the officers of every church or congregation are tied by office only to that particular congregation whereof they are chosen". The trend amongst the first General Baptists was to emphasise the independence of each individual congregation with its own ministry, the sphere of service of which was strictly limited to that one congregation. This thinking comes, in part, at least, from the theology of the church and ministry of the Brownists which centred upon the covenant. Each congregation was bound to God and to one another by the covenant. The person to be admitted to an office in the ministry had first to

be a member of that covenant, i.e. of the church in which he was to minister. Thus his authority was only over those members of that covenant church. On the other hand this covenant conception did produce in General Baptist thought a strong conviction of the "ministerial" responsibility of the whole congregation. Smyth wrote: "The brethren jointly have all power both of the kingdom and priesthood immediately from Christ . . . and that by virtue of the covenant God maketh with them". "When the church wanteth an Eldership, it hath nevertheless power to preach, pray, sing psalms, etc. . ."

A minister's authority was strictly limited to one congregation only. The ministry was not, however, an absolute necessity for the existence of the church.

The Particular Baptists would no doubt agree with the latter part of this statement, but although they used the covenant idea they did not at first work it out to the final conclusion in individual churches as did the General Baptists. The Particular Baptist emphasis tended in this respect, at the beginning, to point away from the more extreme independency of the other group. "And although the particular congregations be distinct and several bodies, every one a compact and knit city in itself; yet are they all to walk by one and the same rule, and by all means convenient to have the counsel and help one of another in all needful affairs of the church as members of one body in the common faith under Christ their only head". (1644 Confession.) If this is taken seriously it must reflect a rather different attitude not only to other congregations but also to their ministers. The Particular Baptists also do recognise clearly the ministry of the whole congregation: "And all his (Christ's) servants are called thither, to present their bodies and souls, and to bring their gifts God hath given them. So being come, they are here by himself bestowed in their several order, peculiar place, due use, being fitly compact and knit together, according to the effectual working of every part to the edification of itself in love". (1644 Confession.)

Thus we have the picture of the first Baptists agreeing on the responsibility of the whole church to minister, agreeing that nevertheless good order requires elected officers in the congregation, but with the General Baptists specifically limiting the authority of the minister only to his own congregation, whilst the Particular Baptists tended to make a less limited emphasis. This latter difference is important as echoes of it exist to-day.

It is evident, however, that the extreme independent emphasis of the first General Baptists was modified as the seventeenth century progressed. In 1651 the Confession of 30 Congregations states: "That if any controversy should so fall out, that the case cannot easily be determined by that Society or church wherein it is first presented, that then use be made of some other society which they are in fellowship with, for their assistance therein".

If we compare the General Baptists' Confession of 1678 with the Particular Baptists' Confession of the previous year we find in the articles on the ministry considerable similarity. "The visible church of Christ being completely gathered and organised according to the mind of Christ, consists of officers and members." This is the General Baptists' Confession. That of the Particular Baptists is almost word for word the same. Both Confessions contain explicit definitions of the visible catholic church made up of believers and congregations of believers throughout the whole world. The General Baptists' Confession reads: "Nevertheless, we believe the visible church of Christ on earth is made up of several distinct congregations which make up that one catholic church, or mystical body of Christ". These two Confessions owe much to the Savoy Declaration of Faith, which in turn leans on the famous Westminster Confession. Suffering had driven the dissenters together and it is in this context that the Confessions of 1677 and 1678 were produced. There was a desire to emphasise points of agreement with the Presbyterians and Independents and this must be borne in mind when quoting from these Confessions. Nevertheless, it is evident that as the two streams of Baptist thought developed there was a growing consciousness of a fellowship wider than the local church. So far as such an idea reflects itself in conception of the ministry, it is seen, interestingly enough, by the end of the seventeenth century more clearly in the General Baptists than amongst their Particular brethren. This change of emphasis illustrates clearly the danger of appealing only to one period within Baptist History to support any modern point of view claimed as "Baptist".

The first evidence of this developing thought is in the office of Messenger. This term was used as early as the 1650's by both groups of Baptists to denote anyone who was commissioned by one church to preach the Gospel and form new churches or who was sent by one church to another to settle a dispute or discuss matters of common concern. Here was a growing recognition of the responsibility of one church for another. As the century progressed, however, the office of Messenger became more clearly defined amongst the General Baptists. It became a recognised order of the ministry. A Messenger was a person elected by a group of congregations and ordained, normally by one already a Messenger, to a larger trust than one church. His responsibility was that of evangelism and of the oversight of churches in different places that were in need of help. Whilst there are a few instances of Particular Baptist churches appointing a Messenger there was not a generally accepted view that he represented a definite order of ministry. This was, partly at least, because they still held more rigidly to the idea that each congregation was "a compact and knit city in itself".

Secondly, we may note the way in which neighbouring churches began to associate together. *The Baptist Handbook* of to-day indicates that four Associations were formed between 1640 and 1655 and another

in 1690. Some of the Confessions of Faith that have come down to us are the products of the Association life. These Confessions, in turn, would help to bind the groups of churches closer together. There seems no doubt that, as the seventeenth century progressed, the Baptists moved out of any extreme independency they may have had towards a broader connectionalism. There were probably two motives for this move. First, that they felt an isolated independency to be a denial of the wider fellowship of the church. Secondly, the pressure of political events in the country demanded more united action and support. Yet, although this early development of Association life arose from the mixed motives of theological convictions and expediency, there is no doubt that it was the former which was the more important. We may note, too, that the move towards the encouragement of Association life was, on the whole, more enthusiastically taken up by the General Baptists than by their Particular brethren.

Thirdly, we find, again most clearly amongst the General Baptists, the development of a General Assembly. Thomas Grantham, a leading General Baptist, writing in 1678, describes the theory lying behind the General Assembly, and makes it plain that its decisions are not binding even upon the churches whose representatives are present. It is clear, however, that the Assembly itself thought otherwise and a Minute passed at the 1696 Assembly states: "The question being put whether an Assembly agreement may be reced (i.e. resiled, departed) from by any church without the consent or approbation of an Assembly; it was agreed to be an irregular act". Again: "The case of Independency being moved. It was agreed unto that it was very dangerous and detrimental to the churches".

Now although these matters have to do with a conception of the church, it is clear that it must reflect itself in the thinking concerning the ministry and, as we have seen, the General Baptists held in esteem the office of Messenger. In the light of these facts it is perhaps not surprising to read in the works of the Messenger, Thomas Grantham, at the end of his section on Assemblies in *Christianismus Primitivus*: "and when it shall please God to put into the hearts of the Rulers of the Nations to permit a Free and General Assembly of the differing Professors of Christianity for the finding out of the truth, we trust that some of the baptised churches will (if permitted) readily make their appearance with others to help on that needful work".

Thus we may say that, by the end of the seventeenth century, the General Baptists had moved a long way from their more limited conception of the church and ministry whilst the Particular Baptists, although never being quite as extreme in their independent view of the church and ministry as the first General Baptists, moved more slowly in the direction of a broader concept. But the future—certainly in the eighteenth century—belongs to the Particular Baptists.

During the eighteenth century we can find different emphases on the church and ministry appearing in Particular Baptist thought. In 1758 Daniel Turner's *Compendium of Social Religion* was published. The whole tenor of his work is the wideness of the fellowship of the church and the concern each church should have for another. A concern shown, for example, by a minister from one church sharing in the ordination service in another. Turner starts from the idea of the fundamental unity of the whole church and in that context he sets his thinking about not only particular congregations and the whole but also the ministry and the whole. Two quotations will suffice to illustrate this: "notwithstanding the independency of particular churches, it is often times necessary or at least prudent for them, in order to the promoting the common interest of religion, their own mutual comfort, purity, and edification, to hold special correspondence, and the communion of saints with each other, and unite their counsels by the social meetings of receptive elders and messengers . . ." "Though the minister of a particular church is under some peculiar obligations to instruct and guide them; yet, as he is a minister of *the church in general* (italics ours) (so far as is consistent with his duty to that particular church) he may occasionally preach and administer the sacraments and assist at ordinations elsewhere." Turner calls for congregations of Christians and their ministers not to look inwards to themselves in isolation, but outward to the wider fellowship whom they are to serve and together with whom they are to minister. Somewhat different was the conception of John Gill, who, although he would share Turner's views on the importance of the ministry seems to turn the local church and its minister in upon itself. A man must be a member of the church to which he is to minister. When he is a pastor he may not act ministerially in any other church. His chief work is to care for the church committed to him and the inference seems to be that there his responsibility ends. Gill was a hyper-Calvinist and such a conception of the minister's task would result in more extreme independency and isolationism.

Other factors were at work to support Turner's ideas against those of Gill. An important one was the further strengthening of Association life. A development which inevitably helped to broaden the view of the church fellowship and to foster thinking concerning a ministry beyond the local church. Another influence in the same direction was the preaching and teaching of Andrew Fuller. He had, from the earliest days of his ministry, the broad understanding of church and ministry. At his ordination as was then quite usual, other ministers were present representing the wider fellowship; when he was called to Kettering the question as to whether he should accept or not was referred for advice to several local ministers and churches. Fuller's emphasis in writing and preaching was away from the narrow inward looking hyper-Calvinism and outward to the church and people even beyond the seas. It was

out of such an atmosphere that William Carey came with his tremendous enthusiasm for missionary work. The founding of the Baptist Missionary Society in 1792 was not only representative of this emphasis, it also began to draw Baptists closer together for action. It showed that a wider group than the local church could act 'ministerially'. This had always been recognised by many people, in theory, now it was coming visibly into practice. By the early days of the nineteenth century the Baptists were becoming more and more conscious of their togetherness. By this time other efforts to act collectively either had been or were being initiated: we may note the Particular Baptist Fund, founded as early as 1717, the Baptist Education Society in London (1804) and the Baptist Building Fund (1824) to name but three examples.

Agitation began in the *Baptist Magazine* for the formation of a Baptist Union, and as is now well known, out of a meeting held in 1812, a meeting specially convened but convened on the occasion when ministers were in London for the missionary meetings, there came the Baptist Union.

Now this growing together is of great importance for our study. For, as we have seen, the New Testament thought upon church and ministry is derived from the idea of the whole ministry in the whole church. Extreme independency of the local church is not to be found. Any conception of the wider fellowship of the church must carry with it similar thinking about the ministry. So as the nineteenth century progressed we find ministers amongst the Baptists accepting full-time service with the B.M.S., and in the colleges and eventually in the Union, without thereby ceasing to be ministers. This is visible recognition of Turner's point of view. In addition, the Baptist Union, in its capacity as the union of Baptists was called upon to accept some sort of responsibility for the ministry, not only to try to ensure a minimum standard but also to have a concern for the financial situation of the minister and for his settlement in churches. It was not a remote organisation at work, but the Baptist denomination at home seeking to express its consciousness of being a manifestation of the church. As so often happens, the Union has developed as an organisation before any theology of its existence has been set down. This has clearly a bearing upon the ministry amongst Baptists and we shall return to this in the concluding section of our report.

All this did not mean the sacrifice of the autonomy of the local church in regard to certain matters. During the nineteenth century this was guarded jealously by the churches and this emphasis continued into the present century. During the first half of the twentieth century the Baptist Union developed its concern for the ministry in many ways, whilst, at the same time, the traditional belief in the autonomy of the local church—notably in regard to the ministry—remained. This situation raised questions as to the relationship of the ministry to the local

church. Some argued that the settlement of a minister in the local church was a matter for that church only; that if the Baptist Union representative was consulted it was a matter of courtesy, and that when the General Superintendent's advice was given, the church had freedom to follow it or to ignore it. Others said that the settlement of a minister in any church was a matter of general concern, and that naturally churches ought to seek the advice of the representative of the wider fellowship and normally seek to follow it. This difference of opinion was probably more than one of emphasis, for behind it lay a different conception of the minister's relationship to the church. Was a minister only a minister of the local church in which he served, or of a wider fellowship? This question has, as we have seen, been asked often in Baptist history. No thorough-going theological solution has yet been generally accepted. The Statement of Baptist Doctrine approved by the Baptist Union Council in 1948 said: "Many among us hold that since the ministry is the gift of God to the church and the call to exercise the function of a minister comes from Him, a man who is so called is not only a minister of a local Baptist church but also a minister of the whole church of Jesus Christ". The question remains with us still.

## II Status and Authority of the Ministry

On this matter the classic Baptist Confessions of Faith speak with one voice. The ministry is a gift of God to His church and its authority is the authority of Christ Himself through His church. This fundamental point is well illustrated in the General Baptist confession of 1678. "The visible church of Christ, being completely organised according to the mind of Christ, consists of officers and members; and the officers, appointed by Christ to be chosen by His church . . ." This is a crystallisation of earlier General Baptist thinking on this matter. Smyth had made clear his belief that "Christ hath set in His outward church two sorts of ministers." With this basic belief on the ministry it is not surprising to find the reminder in the Confessions that it is the duty of the church to "give them all due respect". (General Baptist Somerset Confession of 1691) "That the authority of Christ in an orderly ministry in His church, is to be submitted unto". (Confession of Faith of Particular Baptists in Somerset, 1656). The earliest Particular Baptist Confession (1644) makes clear that their point of view was the same. "Every church has power given them from Christ for their better well being to choose to themselves meet persons into the office of Pastors, Teachers, Elders, Deacons . . . as those which Christ has appointed in his Testament . . ." Such quotations could be multiplied many times over. There was no doubt in the minds of the early Baptists where lay ultimate ministerial authority. A minister was of divine appointment.

John Smyth certainly discusses at some length as to how far the authority in fact rests finally with the church as against the ministry. He says: "When the church hath chosen and ordained herself Elders, the church leaseth none of her former powers, but still retaineth it entire to herself to use when occasion serveth... The presbytery hath no power but what the church hath given unto it: which the church upon just cause can take away... The church hath some power which the presbytery alone hath not, viz. power of election and communication." This sort of thinking might be taken to mean some sort of subordination of the ministry to the church. Such an interpretation appears to fail to consider the early Baptist teaching as a whole. It must be remembered that these words are taken from Smyth's *Differences of the Churches of the Separation* in which he is arguing for the "congregational" church order and against the "presbyterian". Further, the power of the kingdom and the priesthood which the brethren have, they have "immediately from Christ". The whole of the doctrine of these early Baptists cried out against the misinterpretation of the "congregational" order which makes the minister a kind of "employee" of the church meeting. They recognise the minister, whom they have elected, as a gift from God, and having the call of Christ to the work. As such they respected him as of divine appointment.

It does not appear that the theoretical Baptist position on this matter has changed during the subsequent centuries. Daniel Turner writes: "That there be some, one or more in every particular church, invested with official power, is necessary, and on divine appointment". So far as the minister's authority goes, Turner says: "As every minister of Christ properly receives his office from Christ himself, at least as to the essentials of it: so he cannot be, *ipso facto*, deprived of it by mere human authority..." Turner goes on to say that in cases of doctrinal error or immorality then the church, as the guardians of the honour of Christ, must prohibit the exercise of the culprit's ministry. There is no reason to doubt that Turner's point of view reflects that of the eighteenth century Baptists.

We have noted that, in the following century, with the formation of the Baptist Union, the work of the ministry came much into its concern, and in 1896/7 Ministerial Recognition became a department of the Union. Those who appeared on the Union's list of ministers were subject to scrutiny as to suitability and qualifications. As to how far the subsequent growth of the Baptist Union's List of Accredited Ministers adds to the authority and status of those upon it, must be left for discussion to our final section, for it turns upon the answer to the question as to the definition of the Baptist Union. Here we note only that this new factor, which developed at the end of the nineteenth century has led to a differentiation between ministers of Baptist churches according to whether they are on or off the list.

From time to time since John Smyth, Baptists have been involved in discussion and even controversy over the doctrine of the ministry. In such times they have naturally tended to emphasise the conception of the church as the priesthood of all believers and the consequent idea that Baptists have no separated order of ministry. (Compare, for example, the Baptists' reply in 1926 to the 1920 Lambeth Appeal). Whilst this is true, we feel it right to point out that such an emphasis in no way alters the original exalted conception of the ministry held by our forefathers. Similarly, although Baptists have always honoured the work of lay preachers, such a respect for their work does not detract from the conception of the ministry. Such a lay ministry is implied in the 1677 Particular Baptist Confession in that "the work of preaching the Word is not so peculiarly confined to them (the ministers): but that others also gifted, and fitted by the Holy Spirit for it, and approved, and called by the church, may and ought to perform it."

Finally, we would point out how the 1948 Statement on Baptist doctrine illustrates that the fundamental Baptist belief on the minister's authority has remained unchanged. "The minister's authority to exercise his office comes from the call of God in his personal experience..." After speaking of the testing of the call and training the Statement continues: "He... is then invited to exercise his gift in a particular sphere. His authority, therefore, is from Christ through the believing community".

### III The Methods for the Appointment of Ministers

The recently published Report on Ordination dealt in some measure with the historical evidence on this subject. As with the previous section so with this, the earliest Baptists spoke with one voice. There were three stages in the appointment of ministers. First, election by the church, "that he be chosen by the common suffrage of the church" (General Baptists' Confession 1678); secondly, approbation of the church, "that these officers are to be chosen... by election and approbation of that church or congregation whereof they are members, (General Baptist Confession 1611); thirdly, ordination by the Elders, i.e. the ministers "if there be any before constituted therein"; if there are none then Smyth suggests "men of best gifts appointed by the church". In a remarkable section of his work *Principles and Inferences concerning the Visible Church* (1607) Smyth gives detailed instructions as to the appointment of a minister, and although this is technically a pre-Baptist source, it is unlikely that either stream of seventeenth century Baptist witness would disagree. Typical instructions are: "Election is by most voices of the members of the church in full communion". "Approbation is the examining and the finding the

officer elect to be according to the rules of his office." In approbation every member is bound to object what he can especially those that deny their voices in support. "If the things objected be frivolous the election is approved . . . and they that dissented are to consent to the rest so that the whole church may agree in one person". Ordination is the dedication of the officer thus approved to his office. "There are three parts to Ordination, the power which the church commits to the minister; prayer made by the whole church for the minister that he may faithfully serve; a charge given unto the minister to look to his office in all parts of it." It did not occur to Smyth or his fellows that Ordination could be performed in any way except by the laying on of hands with prayer. The laying on of hands he says is "first to point out the officer in time of prayer made for him, as if it should be said: this is the man. Secondly, to signify and to assure the officer to be ordained that the Lord by the church giveth him power to administer". It is perhaps worth noting that the 1678 General Baptist Confession says that the Pastor or Elder is to be ordained by "a Bishop or Messenger God hath placed in the church he hath charge of".

The early Baptists when they sought to define the type of man fit for the ministry leaned heavily on the descriptions given in the Pastoral Epistles. A typical description is: "It is required that the church judge those men found in the faith, that their lives and conversations be unblameable, that those which are without, cannot have any just cause or occasion to speak reproachfully of them, that they be not covetous of filthy lucre, neither self willed, but loving and patient towards all men, apt to teach, and to do good works answerable to their abilities". (General Baptist Confession 1651). A group of General Baptist churches in 1691 wrote into their Confession after the description of the needful character of a minister: "We do believe that the learning of the languages, to wit, Hebrew, Greek, Latin, etc. is no qualification so absolutely necessary to the being of a minister, or Elder, but that a person may very possibly be sufficiently qualified for that office without it; though we readily grant that the learning of the languages may be useful in its place, as a servant to help, etc., but to make it a qualification, absolutely necessary to the being of a minister, we dare not". Clearly the matter of ministerial education was a live topic at that time and this is illustrated by the contents of Edward Terrill's famous will dated 1679. From this time on, Baptists, or some of them, were concerned not only for the character of the man called to the ministry but also for his education.

In the eighteenth century we find Daniel Turner echoing much of this thought. Ministers must be called to their work by the grace and providence of God, and the election and approbation of the church. They are to be ordained, or solemnly set apart and appointed to their work, usually by the assistance of other officers, of chief power and authority in the churches. The normal method of doing this is by the imposition of

hands. By this time, of course, as we have seen, there was a growing consciousness of the wider fellowship beyond the local church. Turner would agree that ministers from other churches should share in an ordination in a local church. This was common practice. He also speaks of ministerial moves. A minister "may even move to any other congregation, when he believes in his conscience he has a call of providence to do so, though not upon every trifling occasion;—and that without re-ordination". This is further evidence of a recognition that ordination was to a ministry wider than one local church.

There is, however, one important factor in this century and that is the way in which the pattern of ministerial calling worked itself out. It was the man's own church that called him to the ministry or at least which put a man's ability to the test. If a man showed ability in prayer and discussion he would be further encouraged by his church and would be called to preach at a church meeting. After further preaching at subsequent church meetings there was a time of prayer for divine guidance. At the next church meeting the matter would be discussed and the vote taken as to whether a call was to be issued. As a result a call was or was not given. On a Sunday or convenient day soon after there was often a special exhortation to the newly called minister. From then on the minister would enter on his ministry of preaching, but not until he received an invitation to a church would he be ordained. The space elapsing between the call by the home church and ordination might be several years.

With the development of Baptist organisation in the nineteenth century there came but little change in the method of appointing ministers, but the use of college trained men developed greatly. More and more men went into the Baptist colleges all of which, except for Bristol, were founded in this century. Thus although the churches continued to call men into the ministry as in the previous century, they would send them into college rather than straight out into the ministry. Not all men were college trained, but the emphasis of the calling of the man into the ministry began to be replaced by the idea of sending him into college. It seems that with this development there has come a gradual fading of the church's responsibility for calling men into the ministry and a growth of the idea that the church is simply to test and approve a call that the man has in his own heart. A correspondence in the *Baptist Magazine* on the shortage of ministers laments the growing failure of churches and ministers to fulfil the old function. A further trend in this century was the fairly widespread abandonment of the practice of the laying on of hands in ordination. This was largely a defensive measure against possible misunderstanding by the people of this custom. This was the century of the growth of the Anglo-Catholic movement and as these extremists pushed the doctrine nearer to Rome so it seems Baptists in reaction gave up some of the customs and emphases of their forefathers.



The more recent history of Ministerial Appointment has been dealt with in the Ordination Report and will be developed in our final section to this present report.

## IV Functions of the Ministry

The early Baptist Confessions do not often use the term "minister". They describe the church officers with terms more nearly representing their function, for example, Messenger, Elder, Pastor and Deacon.

The General Baptists in 1611 began with two sorts of officers, Elders and Deacons, and these latter could be either men or women. By 1678 the General Baptists had three sorts of officers, Bishops or Messengers, Elders or Pastors, and Deacons or Overseers. The first edition of the Particular Baptist Confession of 1644 gives four types of officers, Pastors, Teachers, Elders and Deacons. This fourfold ordering was in line with Calvinistic tradition. It is unlikely that it was put seriously into practice amongst the Baptists, however, as subsequent editions of this Confession omit Pastors and Teachers. The 1677 Particular Baptist Confession has only two sorts of officers, Bishops or Elders and Deacons.

We have already spoken of the work of the Messenger as being fundamentally that of evangelism in the sense of planting new churches and with that came the responsibility of guiding these churches through their early days. In addition the Messenger would sometimes be called in to give advice and counsel to one or more of the churches who had originally appointed him. We should perhaps point out again that the term Messenger was also often used both by General Baptists and Particular Baptists to represent an individual appointed by one congregation either to represent them at some gathering of churches or to carry their greetings or advice to another congregation. This latter use of the term does not have any significance for our study, but it must always be borne in mind when reading and interpreting early Baptist documents.

The General Baptist Elder or Pastor and the Bishop or Elder of the Particular Baptist fulfilled the functions normally associated today with the minister. Their task was to "feed the flock" (General Baptist Confession 1611). In more detail this meant to "attend the service of Christ in his church, in the Ministry of the Word and Prayer, with watching for their souls, as they that must give an account to him." (Particular Baptist Confession 1677). Amongst both the General Baptists and the Particular Baptists the functions of the Deacons, who were always ordained, were based upon Acts 6, namely "to relieve the necessity of the poor and impotent brethren concerning their bodies". (General Baptist Confession 1611).

Daniel Turner in the eighteenth century in his *Compendium of Social Religion* echoes the early Confessions, though by his time the administra-

tion of sacraments was explicitly added to the duties of the Bishop, Elder or Pastor, and the Deacons are "to take the care and management of the secular affairs of the church, that the Bishop or Pastor may be more at leisure to attend the spiritual". Turner also makes explicit the responsibility of the Bishop, Pastor or Elder to preside over and even to rule the flock. He makes clear, however, that to preside means to act as director and moderator in the affairs of the church, whilst to rule means not so much the making of new laws but "an orderly and right execution of those already made by Christ himself". Thus to obey a minister is not to submit to his dictates, but to have a conscientious and reverent regard for the laws of Christ as interpreted by the minister.

From earliest times there has been, amongst Baptists, a recognition that those in pastoral charge (i.e. Bishop, Pastor or Elder) should be supported financially. The 1651 General Baptist Confession suggests that the maintenance of the ministers "ought to be the free and charitable benevolence or the cheerful contribution of those who acknowledge themselves members of the same fellowship". This echoes the Particular Baptist Confession of 1644: "the due maintenance of the officers aforesaid should be the free and voluntary communication of the church". On the other hand there was a recognition "that the servants of God, or the Ministers of the Gospel ought to be content with necessary food and raiment and to labour with their hands that they may not be overchargeable". (General Baptist Confession 1651). The outcome in practice, amongst the Baptists was that there were from fairly early on some congregations which could afford to have what to-day would be called "a full-time minister" but the majority would be served by men who were, at the same time following a trade. In fact, Dr. Whitley goes so far as to say of the period between 1640 and 1660 that the Baptists "had no paid ministry released from the discipline of ordinary life". As the Baptist life developed in the eighteenth and nineteenth century more and more churches, of course, became able to support their own ministers until by the end of the nineteenth the pattern as we know it to-day had emerged. It is interesting to note, however, that Baptist ministers have often shown themselves concerned for educational work. John Collett Ryland of Northampton had his school in the mid-eighteenth century as did William Newman of Bow at the beginning of the nineteenth. Whether either of these men kept their school primarily because of financial necessity is very much open to question. The probability is that they recognised a need and their ability and responsibility to meet it.

Other factors concerning ministerial functions became operative in the nineteenth century. With the founding of the Baptist Missionary Society and its developing organisation a full-time paid secretary, John Dyer, was appointed in 1817. Dyer was recruited from the pastorate and was the first of a distinguished line of secretaries. It does not seem that any one suggested that when ministers served in this capacity they ceased

to be ministers. This situation, of course, was just not foreseen by the early Baptists in their Confessions when they laid down ministerial functions. Similarly, a minister who heard the call to go abroad in the service of the Missionary Society remained a minister. As the growth of the wider Baptist fellowship developed so, along with it, went wider interpretations of the function of the minister. It was quite natural and not contrary to the classic Baptist definitions. Eventually, too, in 1877 there came the appointment of the Rev. S. H. Booth as full-time secretary of the Baptist Union. In short, whilst a minister remained in the service of the Baptist fellowship whether in a local church or in a wider group he remained a minister.

## BAPTIST DOCTRINE AND PRACTICE TO-DAY

In the New Testament section four themes about the nature and function of ministry were developed: these were then examined in terms of historical development. We continue to use these four themes in our consideration of present doctrine and practice. What we have to do is to evaluate positively Baptist doctrine and practice, to consider critically our present structures of organisation, and to suggest the doctrinal emphases needing to be made with the changes in organisation required for their more adequate expression. This will be done in regard to:—

- (a) The relationship of Ministry and Church.
- (b) The status and authority of Ministers.
- (c) The methods for the appointment of Ministers.
- (d) The functions proper to the Ministry.

It must be recognised that there are inescapable factors in the present situation which did not exist in former times; they complicate the problems, at times they create them. Three factors may be mentioned:

- (i) Denominational organisations.
- (ii) The growth of world-wide associations, both of the denomination, e.g. Baptist World Alliance, and between the denominations, e.g. World Council of Churches.
- (iii) The variety of activities to-day in which Ministers engage.

## A. The Relationship of Ministry and Church

The New Testament understands ministry in terms of the ministry of Christ exercised through a ministering church. This emphasis is retained among Baptists in the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers, which asserts that all believers may approach God through Christ in prayer, that the community of believers is responsible for intercessory prayer for mankind, and that this involves the obligation to care for and to serve all people. With this doctrine of the priesthood of all believers, Baptists generally have accepted a duly appointed and properly equipped spiritual leadership as integral to the life of the church.

The New Testament emphasizes the basic spiritual qualities needed for this spiritual leadership in the church, and Baptists on the whole have retained this emphasis, insisting upon a sense of vocation, the evidence of Christian character, and the possession of suitable personal gifts as essential qualifications for the work of the Ministry.

But in our view three aspects of the doctrine of ministry have not been given such clear expression :

- (i) Since spiritual leadership is integral to the life of the church, the local churches are responsible for discerning those called and gifted for leadership.
- (ii) When such leaders are duly prepared and appointed, the churches are responsible for receiving this leadership with the willingness to follow it.
- (iii) Since all churches in Christ belong together in the work of ministry, they are to care for one another so that all may fulfil their ministry as adequately as possible.

Question : *Do we need to emphasize these aspects of the doctrine of ministry, and to find more adequate ways in which to express them ?*

This understanding of ministry leads to the conclusion that the whole community of our churches is responsible for maintaining the ministry denoted by the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers, together with the spiritual leadership which is essential to that ministry. When this is applied to the present situation of Baptist churches we have to understand the phrase "whole community of our churches" in terms of the Baptist Union, for this Union of Associations and churches is in fact the organised fellowship in which our churches are able to care for one another, to accept mutual responsibilities and to take common decisions for the strengthening of all the ministry which the churches exercise in

the name of Christ. Whenever we use the phrase "whole community" we mean, therefore, the fellowship of Baptist churches in the Baptist Union. We prefer this phrase "whole community" which suggests the oneness of the churches in Christ bringing mutual obligations in their care for one another and their ministry for Christ, rather than "Baptist Union" which suggests organisation. But it should be kept clearly in mind that the "whole community" we write about is the fellowship of churches in the Baptist Union.

If this report were concerned primarily with the doctrine of the church, we should wish to write more about the place of Baptist organisations in a concept of the church. The section on the New Testament has shown that in Apostolic days the word "church" could be applied both to the universal fellowship and to the local fellowship ; probably this distinction did not exist in the thought of the New Testament writers. We believe therefore that the development in Baptist thought, illustrated in the historical section, which placed increasing emphasis upon the total fellowship of local churches, has been according to New Testament teaching. This means that the Baptist Union and the Baptist Missionary Society as expressions of a larger corporate life and responsibility among Baptists have a proper place in a doctrine of the church. It does not mean, however, that structures of organisation are unalterable. The organisation of the local church, of the Association, of the Baptist Union and the Baptist Missionary Society must always be subject to the changing situations of Christian witness, and to growing insight into the nature of the church and its ministry. The unchanging pattern for the life of the church is given in Jesus Christ. The whole fellowship of His disciples constitutes His body, the church. This fellowship found expression in many ways, and we believe that the fellowship of the local church, the fellowship of the Baptist Union on the national level, and the fellowship of the Baptist World Alliance at world level are three proper and mutually responsible modes of expression. But the organisation in which these patterns of fellowship are given visible form must always be subject to scrutiny.

From this necessary digression about the place of religious organisation generally, and the Baptist Union particularly, in the doctrine of the church, we return to our statement that the whole community of our churches, i.e. within the Baptist Union, is responsible for maintaining the ministry denoted by the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers, together with the spiritual leadership essential to that ministry. The following conclusions may be reached from this position :

- (a) THE WHOLE COMMUNITY IN FULFILMENT OF ITS RESPONSIBILITY FOR MAINTAINING THE TOTAL MINISTRY OF THE CHURCHES HAS IN OUR JUDGMENT A THREEFOLD OBLIGATION.

(i) It has the obligation of preparing adequate spiritual leadership, i.e. of ensuring that there are proper means for the training and guiding of those spiritually gifted to be leaders. This obligation was recognised in the 17th century when Bristol College was founded, and was reaffirmed throughout the nineteenth century when the other Baptist Colleges were established. These colleges, established on the whole before the organisation of the Baptist Union was well developed, have worked in close co-operation with the Baptist Union and the Baptist Union has given its support to the colleges. But it cannot be said that the whole community of the churches has given adequate support, i.e. has fulfilled its obligation. We need to develop in all our churches a much stronger awareness of this obligation for the provision of spiritual leadership. The Baptist Union has also sought to fulfil its obligation through the examination for ministers to whom collegiate training is not possible.

Question : *How can the whole community of the churches fulfil its obligation to provide adequate preparation for the ministry ?*

Further, the arrangements for a period of probation during the first three years of a ministry may be regarded as a fulfilment of the obligation. We do not think, however, that the conception implied in the word "probation" or the word itself, is altogether congruous with the doctrine of the ministry which we are setting forth. One who is called of God, gifted and trained for the work of the ministry, appointed thereto by the church, is in fact a minister, and should be accepted by the churches as a minister. It may well be wise for the whole community which has sanctioned the beginning of a ministry to confirm its sanction when, after three years, the minister has proved the reality of his Call and gifts in the service of the churches. In giving the final sanction the whole community would "recognise" a minister as one truly called, trained and fitted for the tasks of spiritual leadership.

The position we are advocating rests upon a distinction between the series of experiences and activities by which a Christian becomes a minister, and the acceptance of a name on the Accredited List of the Baptist Union. The latter procedure is desirable for at least two reasons :

First, that all Christian communities may know that this man has fulfilled the conditions laid down by the Baptist Union, so that the Baptist Union is prepared to acknowledge him on the basis of factual information and responsible judgments as a fit and worthy minister in Baptist churches.

Second, that all the privileges of material help, administration and personal guidance which belong to the Baptist Union may be available to those who in receiving them are prepared to give in loyalty and service to the Baptist Union.

The placing of his name on the Accredited List of the Baptist Union does not make a man a Christian minister. It is a form of organisation devised to assist churches in choosing ministers who will uphold the Baptist witness, and to help ministers in the many ways in which help is needed. Since the List possesses this importance it seems right that although a minister's name is placed on the List when he begins his ministry, this decision should be ratified after three years when the Baptist Union is able to speak of the man on the basis of knowledge about his life and work as a minister.

(ii) It has the obligation of providing adequate material support of those who exercise a ministry. The Baptist Union has endeavoured to fulfil this obligation through the Home Work Fund, and through its establishment of the Superannuation Fund. We have to recognise the growing sense of responsibility for these efforts among most of the churches, though it is still true that adequate material support for the ministry is not being provided. We believe that this adequate support will be given only as all our church members fully recognise and accept the principles of Christian stewardship.

Questions : *Is the present system of ministerial stipends a proper expression of the fellowship of churches in Christ ?*

*Should the whole community be responsible for giving to all its ministers a basic stipend ?*

(iii) It has the obligation of arranging means by which spiritual leaders who need or desire counsel, guidance or assistance may receive it. The Baptist Union has endeavoured to fulfil the obligation by the establishment of the Superintendency and the provision of "Senior Friends" for probationer ministers.

(b) THE LOCAL CHURCH AS A MEMBER OF THE WHOLE COMMUNITY HAS A TWO-FOLD OBLIGATION IN REGARD TO THE MINISTRY :

(i) It is under obligation to accept as altogether adequate the spiritual leadership thus provided. In practical terms this means that churches in fellowship with the Baptist Union would eventually accept the accredited ministry of the Baptist Union and find its ministers from those thus accredited.

Question : *Does this imply a fresh consideration of our system of Accreditation ?*

(ii) It is under obligation to act as a member of the whole community in the appointment of a minister for itself. This means full consultation with representatives of the whole community, a readiness to accept the counsel thus sought, and a desire to act for the good of the whole community as well as of itself.

We emphasize these two obligations because they derive from the fellowship of the local church in the whole community of churches. But in its personal relationship with its own minister the local church has additional obligations, e.g. it is responsible for making proper provision for his material needs either from its own resources or with the help of the Home Work Fund; it is responsible for accepting with discerning response the spiritual leadership given by its minister; it is responsible for recognising his true status in the church and for enabling him to fulfil his proper function. (The status and function of Ministers are themes dealt with in subsequent sections.)

(C) THE MINISTER AS A SPIRITUAL LEADER IN A MINISTERING CHURCH IS RESPONSIBLE IN TWO WAYS :

(i) He is responsible for promoting the witness, fellowship and work of the whole community: his function as a minister in a local church will be outlined later; in addition to the local and personal responsibilities which these functions bring, we would emphasize that as minister he is associated both with the local church, and with the whole community. In practical terms this means that it should be the concern of every minister whose church is a member of the Baptist Union to promote the fellowship and work of the Baptist Union and the Baptist Missionary Society; it should be an equal concern to avoid whatever would damage this fellowship, or divert loyalty from it. This responsibility of the minister for the work of the whole community relates also to the Association, which is a more restricted expression of the oneness of the churches in Christ.

(ii) He is responsible for guiding the life of the local church so that it lives as a member of the whole community. The minister fulfils this responsibility by teaching the church to pray for the whole community, and to share in its counsels, plans, and varied work. Moreover, as a minister of Jesus Christ he is responsible for guiding the life of the local church so that it may be aware of its place in the total fellowship of Christ's people.

Our doctrine of the church and ministry means, therefore, that churches and ministers are involved in a nexus of relationships bringing them responsibilities and obligations; this is part of the cost of sharing in the total ministry of the Church. We believe these responsibilities and obligations have found expression in the Baptist Union, but we are conscious of a need among both ministers and churches for a clearer recognition and fuller acceptance of their obligation, and for a more adequate expression of them in the life of the Union.

In all our discussions we have been using the word "minister" in the masculine gender. This has been a matter of convenience. We wish

to make clear our position that distinctions of sex do not pertain to the work of the ministry, and that all that we have written applies to women as much as to men. We believe that the Pauline injunctions about the position of women in the church applied to the situation in Corinth during the first century; we do not think that these injunctions should be understood as permanent principles for the ordering of the life of the church in all subsequent ages. Accepting the position that in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, male nor female, we do not find anything in our doctrine of the ministry which would suggest the exclusion of women; on the contrary, since their position in modern society has proved the contribution which they can make to every realm of human experience and activity, we believe that the work of the ministry should be open equally to women as to men.

It is clear that the position of Deaconesses in our churches must be considered in this context. Ministry is a total activity of the whole church in which each member shares according to experience and gift. Deaconesses undoubtedly share this ministry, and exercise a spiritual leadership in it. This fact is more important than names and titles. But we have to acknowledge that some deaconesses are fulfilling the functions of ministers as we have defined these functions; there is, therefore, in our judgment, no justification for differences in remuneration, in training or in status for such deaconesses.

Questions: *Should such women be encouraged to receive a full theological training, and to be ordained to the work of the ministry?*

*If the Deaconess Order continues in addition to women ordained to the ministry, must there not be further consideration of the function and training of deaconesses?*

## B. The Status and Authority of Ministry

Our doctrine of the ministry leads us to the affirmation that the minister is one called of God to be a minister of Christ, tested, approved and commissioned by the whole community, sharing the ministry of the church in a manner and in a locality to which he has been called by a fellowship of believers, and of which commendation has been given by the whole community. This affirmation indicates the status of the minister in the local church as in the whole community of churches. His spiritual status before God is no different from that of all believers; all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, yet all are saved by grace through faith. Nevertheless, the church receives the minister as one called by God, gifted by the Spirit, approved by the whole community, appointed for leadership. It has been pointed out above that a local church has responsibility for acknowledging this status of the minister in its midst.

WHAT HAS BEEN WRITTEN ABOUT THE NATURE AND STATUS OF THE MINISTRY SUGGESTS THAT A MINISTER BEARS A THREEFOLD AUTHORITY IN THE CHURCH :

(i) He bears authority as one called of God and equipped with His Spirit. He may rightly dare to speak and act in God's Name, and the church will expect him so to do. Such activity, of course, must conform to the revelation God has given in Jesus Christ; when it does, the church must acknowledge such authority with discernment and obedience.

(ii) He bears authority as one appointed by the church for the fulfilment of the functions which are mentioned in a later section. He may rightly expect the church to grant him freedom for the fulfilment of those functions, and, in so far as he fulfils them in a proper manner, to acknowledge his leadership and to receive his ministry.

(iii) He bears authority as one appointed to preach the gospel. In doing this he shares in the witness of the universal church to the saving acts of God in Jesus Christ as they are recorded in Scripture. Every message and every messenger faithful to the testimony of Scripture bears the authority of Scripture. This ministry of the Word is to be received by the church with the responsive hearing of faith.

These statements make it clear that we are not thinking about an authority residing in a man or in an office. The minister cannot possess or use his authority. He bears an authority which has been placed upon him, and he bears it truly only as he endeavours to accept corresponding responsibilities. These may be expressed in the following statements :

(i) Bearing authority as one called of God, he is responsible for living a personal life which exemplifies his calling. He is to be holy as the God Who calls is holy.

(ii) Bearing authority as one appointed by the church, he is responsible for fulfilling the functions committed to him in such a manner as to

build up the church for its ministry in the world. His authority is for the sake of the church and its witness to Christ.

(iii) Bearing authority as one who proclaims within the witness of Scripture God's saving acts, he is responsible for a right understanding and interpretation of Scripture. He has the responsibility of reading, reflecting, responding to the Spirit of truth in such a way that he rightly divides the Word of truth.

Bearing authority is thus a responsibility before God and man; where responsibility is ignored authority is an empty word. Where a minister is faithfully fulfilling his task and accepting these responsibilities the church should acknowledge the authority which he bears. But it should be added that all authority, whether it is given to the minister or to the church, is under Christ. Jesus Christ is Lord, and all authority in heaven and on earth belongs to Him. His servants bear authority only that they may do His will by His Spirit.

The kind of status and authority which derives from our doctrine of church and ministry has been acknowledged by Baptist churches in the course of their history, but we believe that at the present time there is need for a clearer recognition of it. We would point out, however, that the problem is not one of organisation. It is a problem whose solution lies in spiritual insight and maturity among both ministers and churches. We do not believe that any forms of organisation can be devised to deal with a situation in which a minister claims or asserts authority where no true authority exists, or in which a church is blind to a genuine authority, or deliberately rejects it. Such a situation presents a spiritual problem. What can be done, and needs to be done, is to make known in the whole community the real nature of church and ministry so that ministers and churches will understand more clearly the nature of the ministers' status and authority, and will understand with the humility and obedience that implies acceptance.

So far we have written of status and authority within the community which, recognising the calling and gifts, appoints one to minister, i.e. the status and authority which may be given to a Baptist minister in the fellowship of Baptist churches. When Christian denominations accord one another mutual recognition as members of the body of Christ, this status and authority may be widely accepted, but by its nature it cannot be claimed.

## C. Methods for the Appointment of Ministers

The essential conditions whereby a Christian may dare to serve as a minister have been defined as the Call of God, the work of the Spirit, and exercise of gifts, the appointing or commending by the church. This definition makes clear that the process by which a Christian community, e.g. the Baptist Union approves and commends its ministers must not be confused or identified with the spiritual events and processes which constitute a believer's sense of call to the work of the ministry, yet it is also true that for the orderly maintenance of fellowship and for the fruitful and comprehensive communication of the gospel careful methods of appointment are desirable.

Our doctrine of the ministry requires that in the recognition and guiding of these spiritual events and processes, both the local church and the whole community of churches have a place. These obligations may be defined thus :—

(i) The local church has the obligation of discerning those who are being called, of encouraging and guiding them, and of creating opportunities for the exercise of gifts. A study of Baptist history shows that some churches have taken this obligation seriously. Our judgment of the present time is that this obligation is not widely accepted. We believe that our churches should have it laid upon them so that each church may give constant attention to the possibility of one of its members being called of God to the ministry. Churches should do much more to encourage and guide those so called, and to lead them into opportunities for the exercise of their gifts, and for the development of their mental and spiritual capacities.

(ii) The whole community has the obligation of testing, training and recognising a Christian so called and gifted. For Baptist churches, this means that the Baptist Union is concerned with the testing, training and recognising of ministers. One who is thus recognised may expect to be received in all the churches as a minister, or to be able to minister in the name of the whole community.

*Question : Is the practical implication of these statements that some consideration should be given to procedures such as we now outline?*

When a Christian feels called of God to the work of the ministry, and is being encouraged and commended by his church, he should be in association at once with the whole community, i.e. with the Union. He should make known to the Union his sense of vocation, and his desire to be trained for the work of the ministry. He could indicate the College at which he wished to be trained, or he could give reasons for wishing

to study for the Baptist Union examinations. The Union would guide the applicant, or associate him with those able to guide him, and he should accept this guidance. He would enter a College by acceptance of his application by the College authorities, and with the approval of the Union. At the end of his training, and upon the submission of proper evidence, he would be recognised by the Union as a minister, this recognition to be fully and finally confirmed at the end of three years in the work of the ministry. After accepting a call to a particular sphere of ministerial work, and after this initial recognition by the Union, he should be commissioned for the work at a service of Ordination and Induction. The most suitable place for this service is in the church in which the minister will exercise his ministry, or, if his ministry is of another kind, in some church associated with it. What is of primary importance is that there should be present at the service the representatives of the sphere in which the ministry will be exercised, and the representatives of the whole community, which has recognised him as a minister. These procedures in regard to training and commissioning would need to be formulated in greater detail, but we offer them as a practical means whereby, in the appointing of ministers, proper place is given to the local church in which a minister was nurtured, to the local church in which he begins to exercise his ministry, and to the whole community of churches in the Union.

This may be added about the relationship of Ordination and probation. We have already suggested that before Ordination takes place the whole community should recognise one who is called, gifted and trained as a minister. It seems clear that when this recognition is given, and the minister is about to begin his work, Ordination should take place. The fact that during the first three years the minister may forsake his ministry for some other form of employment, or may prove unworthy in character or conduct, so that the recognition of the whole community cannot be confirmed but must be withdrawn, does not create a reason for placing Ordination after the end of a probationary period. The facts mentioned expose either the fallibility of human judgment, or the sinfulness of human nature, and there is nothing in our doctrine of church and ministry to prevent us from acknowledging that both these factors exist in the Christian fellowship. Recognising them we believe that Ordination should take place when a man begins his ministry. The final recognition after three years of ministry does not make the Ordination more complete ; it is the confirmation of a human judgment so that the churches may have some confidence that ministers recognised by the Union will exercise their gifts stedfastly and properly in the work of the ministry.

## D. The Functions Proper to Ministry

In the New Testament and historical sections of this report it has been made clear that spiritual leadership in a ministering church implies specific functions. These functions may be defined as preaching and teaching the Gospel, leading the worship of the church and administering Baptism and the Lord's Supper, caring for individuals and for the fellowship.

Our doctrine of church and ministry prevents us from regarding these functions as belonging exclusively to ministers in the church. Each of these functions can be fulfilled by any member of the church who is mentally and morally fitted for that function, is spiritually gifted for it, and is called to fulfil it by the church. But normally, the minister, as the one appointed by the church for just these functions, will discharge them, and the church will expect him to do so.

Question : *Does the growing complexity of church life with its multiplicity of meetings, committees and outside activities call for a fresh recognition of the essential tasks of ministry along the following lines and for a clear acknowledgment that since these tasks are vital to the total ministry of the church, they must be fulfilled ?*

Once again we note a two-fold obligation which needs to be accepted more widely and more seriously :

(i) All members of the church are responsible for the ministry of the church, and for sharing in it according to personal ability and experience. There are many tasks in the total ministry of the church which members of the church can perform, often more effectively than the minister. We may mention as illustrations such different tasks as personal evangelism at work or among neighbours, leadership in youth organisations, administration of finance or care of buildings. Because members of the church do not always recognise clearly their personal responsibility for sharing in the whole ministry of the church, ministers at times try to fulfil so many functions in order to maintain the life of the church that their work in doing essential functions is impaired. All members of the church are under obligation to serve the church so that the minister may be able to fulfil with all his powers his real function as a minister. We would refer again to the important teaching in Ephesians 4 : 11-12, that God has given different kinds of ministries to the church "for the perfecting of the saints for their work of ministry". The minister fulfils his true function when he is encouraging and guiding all the members of the church to share actively in the ministry of the church to the world about them. This corporate self giving according to personal experience and

ability is the true ministry of the church ; where all members accept their obligations, the ministry of the church is greatly enriched.

(ii) The minister is under obligation to recognise his true function, and to order his life and activity in such a manner as to enable him to fulfil these functions. This often means training the members of the church to take their share in the total ministry of the church, and then giving them freedom thus to serve. It means, too, that the minister must give careful consideration to the many demands that may be made upon him outside the fellowship of his church. He may find ways of serving the town in which he lives, or of sharing in its public organisations, which enable him to commend the Gospel and to strengthen the witness of the church. Such activities are proper for a minister. But always a minister is under obligation to discern those activities which do not belong to his function as a minister, and to avoid them ; he is under obligation also to limit his activities in such a way that he is able to fulfil entirely his function as a minister of the church. A doctrine of the ministry suggests specific functions which the minister must fulfil. The situation in which ministers are working to-day makes it needful for both churches and ministers to recognise these functions, and to accept the obligations mentioned above.

In this third section of our report we have tried to indicate some of the practical implications of our doctrine of the ministry. We have not drawn up detailed schemes, for that task does not fall within our mandate, but it is clear to us at this stage that the time is ripe to call the attention of the churches to their obligations to :

1. Discern and call suitably gifted members to the ministry.
2. Accept the leadership of the ministers they call to work among them.
3. Provide and care for their ministers adequately.
4. Make their decisions as members of the total fellowship in which they share.

So far as our ministers are concerned, we hope they may have the opportunity to consider and discuss the important statements we have made about :

The minister's responsibility to the church.

His authority.

His functions.



With regard to the Union :

1. We have discussed the procedure by which ministers are listed and trained, and have suggested new procedure.
2. We have made a judgment about the fulfilling of the Union's obligation to provide adequate material support for ministers, and trust that urgent consideration will be given to our judgment and to the steps we have suggested as necessary to make it possible for the obligation to be met.

In concluding this report, the members of the commission remind its readers that a report is not a book. We are aware that some matters are stated briefly, although they could be discussed at considerable length ; that other statements could lead to many paragraphs about their background and context ; that no references are made to the very considerable literature on the doctrine of the ministry. All these matters would have been dealt with in a book. But a report necessitates limitation. Within those limits an attempt has been made to present a doctrine of the ministry firmly based in Scripture, and clearly represented in Baptist history. The practical issues which emerge, in our judgment, from this theological statement are raised in the questions which appear in section III of the report, and in the summary offered. It is hoped that the questions and the summary will not be separated at any time from the rest of the report. The importance of the report lies in its attempt to present a coherent Baptist doctrine of the ministry. We trust that careful consideration of the doctrine presented will lead to a useful exploration of the implications suggested in questions and summary, as well as of other implications that may arise in the course of discussions.

In our view, fresh forms of organisation may have to be developed in answer to our present needs as a denomination ; there is need, too, for the clarifying of spiritual insights and the accepting of the spiritual obligations by which alone some problems may be answered. We hope that our statement will offer some guidance to those who will consider what practical steps should be taken so that all this work may culminate in changes beneficial to the life and witness of our churches.

L. G. Champion

J. O. Barrett

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