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SOLA SCRIPTURA

It is always a dangerous thing to reduce our principles to simple statements. It is essential to clear thinking that we do so: but immediately we do set them out in any form of statement, we run the risk of becoming mere sloganisers. The statement, the definition, each set up further problems of definition and clarification and qualification: our statement is attacked, and we find ourselves rallying to the defence of the statement rather than of the truth which it seeks to express. Both we ourselves and our opponents are forced away from the real positions which we seek to occupy (and oddly enough those positions are sometimes closer than we stop to discern). Instead, we defend and attack side-issues and irrelevancies; we set up doctrinal formulations to guard this flank and that weak spot; and sometimes we end by forgetting the truth which we set out in the first place to maintain.

Perhaps over no issue have evangelicals been more prone to such wanderings during the last century than over that of the authority of Scripture. For in the last analysis there is one inescapable fact: that if we had no Scriptures, we should be forced to invent them! There is nothing which human hands and minds touch which is not altered, inevitably and radically, as the years pass. The course of history moves on, and with it all things change: even the Church itself. The doctrine of development is a bold attempt to grapple with this fact—and yet, in the end, it can be invoked to justify everything: not only catholic doctrine (in the narrower sense), but dissent, too, and non-conformity and ‘Brethrenism’ also.

But at the centre of it all there remain the Writings. Whatever they are, and from wherever they came, they stand with this message for all to read—thus, and thus, it was at the beginning’. They stand, therefore, as the judge of us all—inescapable and inexorable. For, behind the Writings, at that beginning, is the Lord—Jesus Christ—Himself. Nearer to Him, historically, we shall never get. Through them, quietly and persistently, He speaks to those that will listen.

Let us debate and define and argue as we will: nothing but good can result if the product of that discussion is a clearer understanding. But, in all our debating, let us never allow ourselves, or our adversaries, to escape that primary challenge. Here is the solvent to clean away the corrosion of prejudice and selfwill, and to loosen the deposit of the centuries. ‘In the beginning it was not so . . .’

SOSTHENES

NEWS OF THE FELLOWSHIP

Since our last issue there have been considerable developments in the affairs of the Fellowship. The third Annual Meeting was a memorable occasion, with the beautiful Bishop Partridge Hall at Church House filled to hear the excellent addresses and discussion, which are reproduced in this issue of the *Journal*.

Membership. Applications for membership passed the 1,000 mark some time ago: allowing for withdrawals and lapsed members, the current membership is just under 1,000, of which about 20 per cent are overseas. Ladies form only about 4 per cent of the membership—which may add point to a contribution later in this issue. We are grateful for continued and worldwide expressions of interest.

Officers. There have been a number of changes in the officers of the Fellowship, and details of the new council and of the new treasurer appear inside the back cover of the *Journal*. We give our warm thanks to those who have now retired from the council, for their keen support of the Fellowship in the past, and are confident that we can continue to call upon their assistance as need arises. Mr. David Thompson relinquishes the treasurership on becoming the second chairman of the Fellowship: we welcome him, with all his gifts, to this new office, and look forward to fresh advances under his guidance. In respect of the very onerous task which he has passed on, we owe thanks both to himself, for all he has done as treasurer since the Fellowship, and to Mr. Tumblebridge who assumes the burden at a time of continued expansion and of administrative challenge. To the new members of the council we extend a warm welcome: and not least to Dr. Rowdon, who recently gained a London University doctorate for his thesis on *The Origins of the Plymouth Brethren*.

Corresponding members of council. We are grateful to the following members who have agreed to act as corresponding members of council for their respective territories. Local members are encouraged to make contact with them on matters affecting the Fellowship.

Argentina	MR. A. CLIFFORD, Casilla 165, Cordoba.
Australia	MR. L. M. GILLIN, 4 Mark Place, Nunawading, Victoria.
Central Africa	DR. J. K. HOWARD (Zambia—at present on furlough at 27 Hollingsworth Ave., Bexleyheath, Kent.)
South Africa	MR. D. A. GEYER, Flat 74, Dagbreek, Pinelands, Cape Town.
U.S.A.	DR. M. C. PORTER, 234 Carlisle Rd., Bedford, Mass. 01730.

Competition. We are glad to announce the awards of the judges in the first C.B.R.F. competition. The awards for the best papers in each class were: to Mr. Raymond Aitchison of South Africa, for the paper on *The Ministry of the Word* (runner-up, Mr. Paul E. Leonard); and to Dr. D. W. Lyon of Bridge of Allan, for the paper on *Brethren Principles and Practice*. (runner-up, Mr. Kingsley Melling). We shall be in touch with the authors as to publication of their papers.

Survey. This is making progress under the capable direction of Mr. Graham Brown. An appetizer from Mr. Brown's pen appears in this issue of the *Journal*.

The Journal. A series of 'Church Life' issues is planned, each dealing with some important aspect of church life and doctrine. One or two of these subjects have already been taken up by local groups. The editor would be glad to hear from local groups or from individual members who would be willing to sponsor issues in this series: the task involves inviting and collecting contributions, introducing them in a brief foreword, and dealing with the editor on the issue itself.

Social Responsibility. The issue on *Social Responsibility* (No. 11) aroused considerable interest. Members will probably have observed the exceedingly practical efforts to remedy another crying social problem of the present day—that of 'slum' housing conditions—which have been launched by *Shelter*, an organisation under the chairmanship of the Rev. Bruce Kenrick, author of *Come Out the Wilderness* ('Shelter', 40 James St., London, W.1). Members might also be interested to learn of the work of a member of the Fellowship which touches closely on these and related problems—Mr. W. G. Foster (Lansdowne Place Medical Mission, Law St., London, S.E.1), who will send a copy of his last report to any who ask.

THE SCRIPTURE DOCTRINE OF THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD

with special reference to 'A Settled Ministry'

Derek J. Prime

(Note: Scripture quotations are from the Revised Standard Version.)

The New Testament does not provide us with a precise blue-print of church order. The more one considers the varied convictions expressed by different groups of Christians, and the identical scriptures quoted to substantiate differing viewpoints, the more convinced one becomes on this point. It is perhaps only the superficial surveyor of the New Testament who would suggest otherwise. We certainly do not have a complete knowledge of the ministry of the Church as it functioned in New Testament times. It is not out of place to ask the question, 'May not God want to teach us something about church order from this very lack of precise information on points of detail?'

But the lack of complete knowledge does not mean that we are left to ourselves to do what seems right in our own eyes. We may deduce certain facts about the practice of the early Church. We may perceive established and definite principles of church order, including such relating to the ministry of the Word. Our aim on the one hand, therefore, must be to avoid dogmatism where the New Testament is not complete in the evidence it provides, and on the other hand, not to miss the guidance provided by the revealed facts and principles. Our task is to act in accord with the known facts and carefully to apply the revealed principles. We must neither exaggerate nor minimise their evidence.

Our Lord's Ministry

Our Lord's ministry was essentially one of teaching and preaching. Mk. 1: 39 is a verse among many which sums up His ministry: 'And he went throughout all Galilee *preaching* in their synagogues and casting out demons'. Or, as Luke puts it on one occasion, 'On another sabbath, when he entered the synagogue and *taught*, a man was there whose right hand was withered' (Lk. 6: 6). One of the problems in our Lord's ministry was that the miracles of healing attracted people sometimes more than the teaching. Mark records, 'A great multitude from Galilee followed; also from Judea and Jerusalem and Idumea and from beyond the Jordan and from about Tyre and Sidon a great multitude, hearing all that he *did*, came to him' (Mk. 3: 7, 8).

But whenever the gospel writers speak of our Lord's ministry they place the stress on the preaching and teaching. Matthew writes, 'And

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Jesus went about all the cities and villages, *teaching* in their synagogues and *preaching* the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every disease and every infirmity' (Mt. 9: 35). Our Lord saw His task as that of sowing the Word of the kingdom (Mt. 13: 19), and it was to be the task of His disciples also. Through the sowing of that Word, God's harvest would be brought into being (Mt. 13: 23).

People regarded our Lord as 'the Teacher' (Mk. 10: 17), and the early disciples spoke of Him as 'a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people' (Lk. 24: 19). He spoke of Himself as the Good Shepherd (Jn. 10: 11, 14), and He is described as such elsewhere in the New Testament (Heb. 13: 20; 1 Pet. 2: 25; 5: 4). From what He said to Peter (Jn. 21), it is plain that one task of the shepherd is to feed his sheep with the Word of God. Our Lord prayed in Jn. 17: 7, 8: '*Now they know that everything that thou hast given me is from thee; for I have given them the words which thou gavest me, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from thee; and they have believed that thou didst send me*'.

Our Lord gave Himself continually to teaching and preaching, most of all to instructing the apostles, and also the crowds which sought after Him (Mt. 11: 1). Our Lord and the apostles had a common purse (Jn. 13: 29), and there were womenfolk—and doubtless others too—who provided for them out of their means that there might be no hindrance to the fulfilling of the task of preaching and teaching the Word of God (Lk. 8: 3).

The emphasis that our Lord gave in describing the task of the apostles, and of the seventy, was that they were to preach and teach the Word (Mt. 10: 1-23). They were to preach wherever they went (Mt. 10: 7), and they were to move on when people would not receive them and refused to listen to their words (Mt. 10: 14). He did not imply, however, that they were in any sense superior to others through the exercise of their task. There is no evidence that our Lord instituted a ministry, in the sense that we use that word generally today.

The apostles' ministry

The apostles' ministry was one of teaching and preaching above everything else. Our Lord 'appointed twelve, to be with Him, and to be sent out to preach and have authority to cast out demons' (Mk. 3: 14, 15). They were men in training, the men who were to ensure that the ministry of Jesus continued after His Ascension. Our Lord made plain this fact to Peter when He said to him, 'Feed my lambs . . . Tend my sheep . . . Feed my sheep' (Jn. 21: 15, 16, 17). The apostles were taught that humble service of all is the secret of greatness and usefulness (Mk. 9: 35).

The apostles exercised a teaching ministry at Pentecost onwards. The early Christians in Jerusalem 'devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship . . .' (Ac. 2: 42). The apostles were careful to deliver a certain tradition, a specific body of Christian teaching. Paul writes to the Corinthians, 'For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you . . .' (1 Cor. 11: 23). And again, 'For I delivered to you as of first importance

what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures . . . ' (1 Cor. 15: 3). The apostles knew themselves to be committed to bearing 'witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ' (Rev. 1: 2). They knew that for the sake of the gospel they were appointed preachers and apostles and teachers (2 Tim. 1: 11).

In Acts 6 we find the apostles insisting that the ministry of the Word, together with prayer, constituted their main task and demanded their full attention. 'The twelve summoned the body of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. Therefore, brethren, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint to this duty. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word"' (Ac. 6: 2-4).

As we are able to follow the activity of some of the apostles in the New Testament period, we find that they avoided idleness and all appearance of idleness (2 Thess. 3: 7). In some circumstances they did not eat anyone's bread without paying, but with toil and labour worked night and day, that they might not burden any of those whom they served (2 Thess. 3: 8). This practice, however, was not because they did not have the right to expect material help, but rather that they wanted to give an example of industry for imitation (2 Thess. 3: 9). The indications are that in Jerusalem the apostles were supported through the common resources of the Christians.

The local churches

It is difficult for us to know how far we may argue from the practice of both our Lord and of the apostles with regard to the pattern of the ministry of the Word for today, when no guidance or application is given us in the New Testament. We are, however, on much surer ground when we review the apostolic pattern of arrangements for the local churches which were brought into being through their ministry, and also that of others.

The apostles sought to appoint elders in all the churches. The apostles themselves were never the local pastors and teachers in the churches which they saw God found through their ministry. Moreover, in appointing elders they sought to recognise the Holy Spirit's gifts. Paul said to the Ephesian elders, 'Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, *in which the Holy Spirit has made you guardians*' (Ac. 20: 28). The reference in 1 Tim. 4: 14 to the gift Timothy had, given by prophetic utterance when the elders laid their hands upon him, may emphasise this same fact.

The apostles sought to appoint elders, not according to human wisdom and on the basis of human assessment, but on grounds of spiritual gift and spiritual character. Presumably these considerations account for the apostles not appointing elders when a church was first established. On his first missionary journey, for example, Paul did not appoint elders in every church until he revisited the churches (Acts 14: 23). Time needed to elapse, for spiritual character to develop and spiritual gifts to show themselves in men of proved worth.

Teaching and preaching

The teaching and preaching of the Word would seem to have been in the hands of the elders of the local churches. In Acts 20: 17-38 Paul called together the *elders* of the church. He exhorted them to feed the church of God which God had purchased with His own blood (Ac. 20: 28). Likewise, when Peter addressed himself to the scattered Christians of Asia Minor, he had a special word for the elders. 'So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ as well as a partaker of the glory that is to be revealed. Tend the flock of God that is your charge, not by constraint but willingly, not for shameful gain but eagerly, not as domineering over those in your charge but being examples to the flock' (1 Pet. 5: 1-3). Peter regarded himself as 'a fellow-elder', as a fellow under-shepherd; Christ had instructed him to feed both His lambs and sheep (Jn. 21: 15-17). And Peter saw the elders of the churches as having entirely the same function as himself in this respect. To tend the flock is to lead the flock to pasture. The task of the elders is to see that the flock are fed with the Word of God, whether all the elders engage in a teaching ministry or not. Christian leaders are Christian teachers; their leadership is helpful only as they provide the guidance and teaching of the Word of God. The writer to the Hebrews writes revealingly when he urges, 'Remember your leaders, *those who spoke to you the word of God*; consider the outcome of their life, and imitate their faith' (Heb. 13: 7).

The day by day ministry of the Word

The ministry of the Word is to be in the hands of those whose lives are consistent with that Word, and it is here that the careful qualifications for elders are so important. How do we know if a man is spiritually equipped for the ministry of the Word? How are you able to recognise the person who is filled with the Holy Spirit? Paul anticipated questions such as these when he wrote to his assistants, Timothy and Titus, giving instructions for the appointment of elders in the churches.

First, an elder must have a good reputation, extending beyond the church to the non-Christian public (1 Tim. 3: 7). Secondly, he must be of blameless character. No one expects the elder to be perfect but people have a right to expect him to be blameless: that is to say, that his life should measure up to the standards set by God in the Word of God for the living of the Christian life. In every area of his life the elder must be above reproach (1 Tim. 3: 2, 12; Tit. 1: 6). Thirdly, his life should be marked by self-control (1 Tim. 3: 2; Tit. 1: 8). Fourthly, he must be a man of spiritual maturity (1 Tim. 3: 6), able to teach (1 Tim. 3: 2) and to ensure that the flock is fed. Fifthly, his home life must be well-ordered. The man who is unable to control his own family cannot expect to be successful in looking after a congregation of God's people (1 Tim. 3: 5). Sixthly, if married, his wife should be one with him in the Christian faith. A wife's spiritual preparedness is as important as her husband's. Seventhly, he should be a man who gives of himself willingly to God's people, someone in whom a pastoral concern for others is clearly seen.

It is interesting, in this context, that having exhorted the elders to tend the flock, Peter goes on to say, 'being examples to the flock' (1 Pet. 5: 3). The ministry of the Word in the local church is not to be separated from the standard of character and conduct required from those who minister it. Paul tested Timothy before ever he entrusted him with serious responsibility. He wrote to the Philippians, 'I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I may be cheered by news of you. I have no one like him, who will be genuinely anxious for your welfare. They all look after their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. But Timothy's worth you know, how as a son with a father he has served with me in the gospel. I hope therefore to send him just as soon as I see how it will go with me . . .' (Phil. 2: 19-23). No wonder Paul could send Timothy with confidence to Ephesus (1 Tim. 1: 3). Paul encouraged Timothy to entrust to other faithful men what he himself had heard from Paul before many witnesses, so that they in turn could teach others also (2 Tim. 2: 2). And, again, the emphasis is upon 'faithful' men—men whose spiritual worth had been proved. To such men is the preaching and teaching of the Word of God entrusted in the local church—and in particular to the duly appointed elders.

Not all teach and preach

Not all elders, however, were expected to teach and preach in the early churches—some ruled without teaching. Paul writes to Timothy, 'Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honour, especially those who labour in preaching and teaching; for the scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it is treading out the grain", and "The labourer deserves his wages"' (1 Tim. 5: 17, 18).

These words imply that all the elders 'ruled'—that is to say, they all exercised spiritual care and oversight of the flock. Some of the elders, however, and no suggestion is given as to the proportion, had the gift of ministry. To use Paul's words, some *laboured* in preaching and teaching. Furthermore, it was possible for elders, in some circumstances, to be paid for their task when their time was devoted to pastoral work, and those who gave themselves wholly to preaching and teaching were to be considered particularly worthy of ample and generous financial support. This interpretation coincides with the clear statement of Gal. 6: 6: 'Let him who is taught the word share all good things with him who teaches'. And in 1 Cor. 9: 3-14 Paul argues for the right to maintenance which those who minister the Word of God have on the basis of the Lord's command.

The task of ruling well is that of *all* the elders. They are the spiritual overseers of the local church. They are over God's people in the Lord, and are to be respected, and esteemed very highly because of their work's sake (1 Thess. 5: 12, 13). They are to admonish the idle, encourage the faint-hearted, help the weak, and be patient with everyone (1 Thess. 5: 14). These tasks elders may do without engaging in the public ministry of preaching and teaching.

Through this latter circumstance has grown up presumably the distinction between those 'overseers' who are called 'ministers' and those called

'elders'. This state of affairs is a great pity for ideas of 'clergy' and 'laity' are not found in the New Testament.

Particular gift

Teaching and preaching are the responsibility, mainly, therefore, of the elders in the churches—that is to say, of those elders who have a particular gift for the ministry of the Word.

The gifts of the elders differ, as do the gifts of all the members. 'Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; he who teaches, in his teaching; he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who contributes in liberality; he who gives aid, with zeal; he who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness' (Rom. 12: 6-8).

Speaking of the gifts of Christ to His Church, Paul writes, 'And his gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, for the equipment of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for building up the body of Christ' (Eph. 4: 11, 12). Apostles and evangelists planted the churches. Prophets—particularly when the New Testament was not available to the early believers—strengthened the churches by bringing particular messages of help and encouragement. The phrase 'pastors and teachers', linked by the same article in the Greek, seems to describe the elders in the local churches who had particular care of the believers through the ministry of the Word. No line is to be drawn between pastors and teachers. The absence of the article before 'teachers' shows that Paul meant 'pastors and teachers' to refer to the same person—in other words, to speak of the ministering elder, in distinction to the ruling elder.

Believers are instructed to perform many kinds of service, both *within* the body and *as* the body of Christ, but the emphasis is seldom upon their ministry of the Word. All Christians are to be ready to speak the Word and to teach it as they have opportunity; but to some is given a special gift of ministry for the good of the whole body. We cannot separate the doctrine of the ministry of the Word from the doctrine of the Church. The Church—and the local church—is to be thought of as a body. Not all the members have the same function, but they all have the same objectives—the glory of the *Head* of the body, and the edifying of the *whole* body.

A pastoral connotation

Pastoral work—by its very nature—must be a settled task. Teaching and preaching always seem to have a pastoral association in the New Testament. Effective teaching and relevant preaching go hand in hand with pastoral care and first-hand knowledge of the people to whom one ministers the Word of God. All of Paul's letters—full of teaching and preaching—arise from pastoral situations. Throughout the New Testament stress is laid upon the necessity of those who teach and preach the Word being examples: a man can be an effective example only when he is living among people and identifying himself with them. Evangelistic

ministry is clearly quite different and does not demand a settled ministry in the same way as the spiritual up-building of God's people does.

It would seem right to conclude that God's provision for the ministry of the Word in the local church is found in teaching elders—that is to say, recognised pastors and teachers—from among the body of ruling elders. This conclusion does not rule out evangelists who may exercise an itinerant ministry, and others whom the Lord may raise up, in His sovereignty, for a special ministry to God's people. But the *regular* pattern for ministry is the elder who is both a pastor and teacher. Such do not exercise a priesthood, however, in any way different from that exercised by the whole company of believers.

The pattern

A local church should have both elders and deacons. The elders should concern themselves with the spiritual oversight of the flock; the deacons should concern themselves with the administration of the local church's affairs to enable the elders to be unhindered by such in their tasks.

The ministry of the Word should be, principally, with the elder or elders who have the gift of ministry—and not all elders should be expected to have this gift. No indication as to the number of ministering elders we are to expect for any given size of church membership is provided in the New Testament. All we know is that 'to each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good' (1 Cor. 12: 7).

The ministry of the Word should be linked with—and indeed should arise from—pastoral care. When the community of Christians is of considerable size, adequate pastoral care demands the setting apart of a ministering elder to give all of his time to the task. Where the community of Christians can support a pastor and teacher—or, for that matter, pastors and teachers—it is clearly to their spiritual advantage to do so.

Ideally, perhaps, such a person should be one of the existing elders, although let it be remembered that the Body is one, and there is no reason therefore, why one part should not help the other. Paul did not hesitate to send Titus and Timothy to parts of the body—to individual churches—where temporary or semi-permanent help was needed.

Persons so appointed should be regarded as elders still, but as the presiding elders or main teaching elders. It is not unreasonable for them to bear the main responsibility for the ministry of the Word in the local church, because their time is given most to the study of the Word and to the care of the flock. But the ministry of the Word, though principally with the presiding ministering elder or elders, must be shared ministry, depending upon the number of elders of gift there are. Encouragement should be given to all elders with gift to exercise their gift in accordance with its extent.

A personal application

It may be helpful to relate how I apply these principles to my own situation. Coming from a non-Christian background, I was converted in my early teens through the ministry of the Word at Lansdowne Evangelical Free Church. I maintained my membership with this particular local

church throughout my time in the army and then afterwards up at university. When I began school-teaching, I worked and lived in the neighbourhood of Lansdowne, and my membership became effective once more. During part of this period the church was without a pastor, and at that time I was called by the church to become an elder. The opportunity came to minister the Word on many occasions within the local church. Almost two years elapsed without the church calling another pastor, until—right ‘out of the blue’—the elders expressed the conviction that I should be set apart in this way. Their conviction was brought before the whole church, and the call was extended to me.

At this time, as already mentioned, I was an elder, and I would stress, I remain an elder. I see my position as that of the presiding elder, and as a ministering elder with major responsibility for ministry, although by no means sole responsibility. The ‘ruling’ is done by the elders corporately, and never by me personally.

Some of the elders have an obvious gift for ministry, and so have other members of the church. When I am absent from Lansdowne, my endeavour is to call upon the elders who have gift to minister, and also other brethren whose gift is recognised by the elders. For example, in our recent Church Anniversary, we called upon three of our brethren to minister—one is an elder, one a deacon, and another a younger man with distinct preaching gift. The elders share with me in conducting the church prayer meeting and in the ministry of the Word associated with it. Each quarter the elders meet for prayer with their particular pastoral group—we divide the membership up into groups geographically according to the number of the elders. I am a member of the elder’s group in whose area I live.

Furthermore, I have an assistant who is accepted by the church as an elder. He preaches once a month on a Sunday, and takes a prayer meeting each month. We place no notice-board outside saying who is preaching on any particular Sunday. Why do people need to know? What motive makes them want to know? We do not give out in the church notices whether my assistant or I will be preaching the following Sunday, so that the emphasis is upon the *ministry* of the Word rather than the *minister*.

We feel it right to give positive encouragement to men in the church to exercise any gift which the Holy Spirit may have given to them. From time to time we have a teaching and preaching class where the ministry of the Word is discussed and mutual stimulus given to better equip ourselves for such a high and holy task. In our Short-term Bible School to begin next week, we have a weekly expository group so that encouragement can be given again to the development of spiritual gift in relation to the ministry of the Word.

Paul’s concern was that ‘the word of the Lord may speed on and triumph’ (2 Thess. 3: 1). Progress in the Acts is always spoken of in terms of the Word of God growing and multiplying. We do well to give attention to the whole question of a settled ministry in relation to the ministry of the Word of God to the end that there may be no hindrance to the Word of the Lord speeding on and triumphing at this present time.

THE EARLY BRETHREN AND THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD

Harold H. Rowdon

Sir Robert Anderson is said to have remarked: 'The Brethren believe in ministry, but not in ministers'. Certainly, the early Brethren believed in the former. For them, ministry of the Word was a sacred function which they were not slow to discharge, both in speech and in print. Other forms of ministry, such as pastoral care, occupied them extensively. These things were essential ingredients in their spiritual life-blood. But they also believed in ministers—and settled ministers at that!

There is considerable evidence to support this assertion. It is fairly generally known that at Plymouth Newton exercised a mainly localised ministry, and that at Bristol Müller and Craik functioned as pastors—they were listed in *Mathew's Directory* among the nonconformist ministers of the city. This pattern—or variations of it—was repeated again and again. Hall at Hereford; Rhind at Ross; Wigram at Rawstorne Street, London; Hargrove at Gower Street, London; Heath at Hackney; P. H. Gosse at Torquay: the list is almost endless! Both friend and foe spoke of the situation in terms which suggest the existence of a settled ministry. Harford-Battersby, when curate at Keswick, may have read something into the situation when he wrote that the Brethren there have 'an admirable minister'¹; but it was none other than Andrew Miller who, in his account of '*The Brethren (Commonly So-called)*', referred to Maunsell as 'the active brother for a long time' at Limerick.²

It is true that some Brethren exercised a partly or even a mainly itinerant ministry. But even Darby, who is said to have abstained from marriage in order to remain free to itinerate,³ sometimes spent considerable periods of time in one place, as for example Lausanne.

What was their thought, as well as their practice, in such matters? How did they view the ministry? How distinctive were their ideas and their practices; and how scriptural were they? What have they to say to us to-day? These are some of the questions with which we will now be concerned.

THE BACKGROUND TO THEIR THINKING

In order to gain a balanced understanding of their positive contribution to evangelical thought on the subject of the ministry, it will be necessary to look briefly at some background factors in the thinking of early Brethren.

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Rejection of Current Conceptions

The first of these is their rejection of current conceptions of the ministry.⁴ The idea has got around that, in its early years, the Brethren movement enjoyed a wholly positive attitude towards existing churches, and that it was only with the development of 'exclusivism' that Christendom was viewed in a critical light. It is of course true that the dominant purpose from the first was to draw together all believing people into a warm spiritual fellowship. But it is also true that, to some extent at the very beginning, and certainly as soon as the infant movement was seen to be a kind of alternative to existing church fellowships, the claims of such churches to be adequate expressions of Christianity was hotly contested. We must remember that it was an immense step for men deeply rooted in the established church, some being ministers, others in training for that vocation, men of breeding and culture, and men deeply concerned for the unity of the Church, to appear to go into schism and to become linked in the public eye with the somewhat despised dissenters. It was not so difficult for men like Chapman, Müller and Craik, who were already dissenters, and it is therefore not surprising that it was the ex-Anglicans who expressed themselves most astringently. What is remarkable is that Groves, formerly a convinced Anglican with deep prejudices against dissent, was able to take so restrained a line—though even he spoke out strongly on occasions.

As far as the ministry is concerned, Brethren rejected both the apostolic and the congregational theories of the ministry as unscriptural and therefore unacceptable. They discerned elements of truth in both positions, but were unable to accept either as it stood. Furthermore, they repudiated the almost universal distinction between clergy and laity; reacted against the virtual monopoly of spiritual functions by clergyman or minister; and introduced into their church life that 'social worship' advocated, and to some extent practised, by evangelicals such as the Haldane brothers and James Harington Evans. Finally, they renounced fixed salaries and the levying of pew-rents that were in fairly common practice.

In ways such as these, the Brethren broke with tradition, and this fact must be borne in mind when considering their positive views of the ministry. Since they had made such a clean break, they felt obliged to avoid anything which would appear like compromise. So they refrained from doing things which they might have felt at liberty to do in other circumstances. Laying on of hands was probably a case in point.

Tensions within the Movement

The tensions within the movement constitute the second background factor which must be taken into account in any evaluation of Brethren ideas and practice of the ministry.

For example, the breach of confidence between Newton and Darby, which can be traced back to 1833, which created a personal crisis about 1841, and which lay behind the open rupture of 1845, had its effect on ideas of the ministry. True, there were other reasons for Newton's empha-

sis on the need for recognition of the standing and functions of settled teachers in a local church, as there were for Darby's insistence on the need to preserve—if not to extend—freedom for any who felt 'led' to minister. But it is at least arguable that these opposing emphases were accentuated as a result of the controversy between the two men. Thus Newton's emphasis was strengthened by his determination that only those who held his views on dispensational matters should teach at Plymouth, and that of Darby arose in part at least from his concern to preserve opportunity for what he regarded as sound doctrine to be given by visiting brethren. There is ample evidence to show that Newton did not renounce *in toto* the open form of worship (that is, during his 'Brethren' years), and that Darby realised that there must be limits to this openness. But the conflict between the two men caused them to emphasise opposing aspects of the same matter. The distorting effect of this background factor is seen in a remark of Sir Alexander Campbell, a supporter of Darby in the time of crisis. In answer to the question whether he believed that there should be 'godly order' in the Church, Campbell replied: 'My course for the last ten years would be a sufficient reply; but I believe, that *at the present time*, a careful and discriminating answer is needed'.⁵

Again, the tensions between the more 'exclusive' attitude which was shared by both Darby and Newton, and the more 'open' outlook of men like Groves, Müller and Craik, should not be overlooked. Incidentally, we should observe that the lines of demarcation have been partly blurred by the quite extraordinary influence of J. N. Darby. Thus, some of those who have from time to time dissociated themselves from 'exclusive' Brethren and consorted with 'open' Brethren, have retained some aspects of Darby's teaching. I speak not only of prophetic matters but also of ecclesiastical. Yet there was a world of difference between the two points of view. For example, Darby and Newton argued that, in the present 'ruined' condition of the Church as a visible entity, any attempt to restore the outward forms prescribed in the New Testament is not only doomed to failure but also in itself a mark of apostasy. Men like Müller and Craik, on the other hand, felt no such inhibitions. Indeed, at one point, Müller and Craik went into retreat for a fortnight in order to hammer out from the Scriptures the form which church life at Bethesda, Bristol, should take.

Sole Authority of Scripture

This brings us to a third background factor which is of the utmost importance—the insistence by Brethren of all shades of opinion on the supreme, and indeed the sole authority of Scripture.

This insistence is so obvious as to need illustration rather than proof. Groves looked upon Scripture, as opposed to tradition, as the only sure guide in all matters relating to the ministry.⁶ The title of Beverley's book, *An Examination of the Scriptures on the Subject of Ministry* shows where he looked for direction. And it was undoubtedly the conviction that Scripture is a sufficient as well as the sole guide, rather than the intention of drawing up a rigid system to be put into action, that caused one contributor to *The Christian Witness* to draw up a comprehensive list of 'Church Canons', using the words of Scripture alone.

Although all Brethren were agreed on this point, they did not all arrive at the same conclusions on the subject of ministry. Other factors may have entered in, but the chief reason for this seems to be that they differed on some important matters of Biblical interpretation. Darby, and those who thought with him on this, claimed to find evidence in Scripture—as well as in church history—which caused them to regard New Testament instructions regarding the outward form of church life as relevant to the Church only in its ‘unfallen’ condition. They did not conclude that the New Testament had nothing to say to the Church in the nineteenth century regarding its corporate life. For instance, they believed that spiritual gifts would continue to be given—though not the full range, since some were appropriate to the Church only in its pristine glory. With regard to the ministry, it was held that gifts were to be expected, but office was in abeyance. So, as the second half of that statement indicates, it was held that some of the clear instructions of the New Testament were not to be followed, since they were no longer relevant. They had been intended for the Church in her unfallen state, and they fulfilled their function in the canon of Scripture in the nineteenth century by serving as a standing condemnation of the apostasy of the visible church.

‘Open’ Brethren saw things rather differently. Though they shared to a very considerable extent the diagnosis of contemporary ecclesiastical malaise made by their brethren, they did not share all of their conclusions. This was largely because they acted on the principle that the Scriptures which were able to make them ‘wise unto salvation’ were intended to teach them how they ought to behave in the house of God (I Tim. 3: 15). So they were reluctant to write off New Testament practice and precept in ecclesiastical matters. Not that they imagined that the New Testament provided a detailed blue-print for nineteenth century church life. But it was their desire that their practice should be in harmony with the principles enshrined in New Testament teaching and history.⁷

Victorian Attitudes

One thing more must be said at this point—even though it is said in parenthesis. I should not be surprised if it were not of some significance that the Brethren movement developed in Victorian England. This may have inclined Brethren to argue that elders must necessarily be elders in age, rather than raise questions about the youth of Timothy! It may also have led them to emphasise verses such as ‘Let your women keep silence in the churches’ (I Cor. 14: 34) rather than the one containing the words ‘every woman that prayeth or prophesieth’ (I Cor. 11: 5)! And it may have affected them in other ways also.

THEIR VIEW OF THE MINISTRY

With all this in mind, we may proceed to deal with the Brethren theory and practice of the ministry. In doing so, we shall draw mainly upon those Brethren who contributed most to the development of a positive attitude, except to substantiate positions held generally by them all.

Need for Ministry

It is abundantly clear that they fully realised the need for ministry. After a short, but significant dallying with the idea, they rejected the notion that the whole range of spiritual gifts bestowed in New Testament times were to be expected in their day.⁸ But they took it, almost for granted, that those gifts necessary for the 'edification' of the Church would continue to be given; and they were encouraged in this belief by the fact that spiritually gifted men were raised up in their midst.

Training for Ministry

A little more must be said about training for the work of ministry, especially as this is a matter in which I personally am involved! At the outset, we must remember that the views of Brethren were highly coloured by their knowledge and personal experience of contemporary training for the ministry. As far as the established church was concerned, the universities were virtually the sole theological colleges of the day. Next to no specifically theological or pastoral training was provided; the required testimonials were given with astonishing readiness—it was something of a scandal at Oxford when Newton was there; and the examination of ordinands was often farcical. Furthermore, the universities were very largely the preserve of the wealthy and privileged classes. Dissenting colleges were sometimes better—but not necessarily so.

It is hardly surprising, then, to find Borlase, for example, inveighing against a church which required her ministers to be of good birth and means, to have talent and learning, and to have spent a period of study in a place fraught with temptation.⁹ To the former dissenting minister, Dorman, it was the emphasis on intellect as 'the supreme object of admiration' that was so wrong.¹⁰ Brethren did not always make it clear that what they were really objecting to was the *substitution* of such things for spiritual qualities. Thus Groves argued from I Cor. 1 that 'no stress is to be laid on human wisdom, talent, eloquence, wealth, rank'.¹¹ The operative word was probably 'stress' rather than 'no'. This is certainly the case with Craik, who clearly reveals that the Brethren were reacting. He admitted that 'ardent feelings' together with 'defective knowledge' were dangerous, but continued, 'there has ever been the still commoner danger lest men should enter upon the work of the Christian ministry on the strength of a course of education, supposed to be a necessary preparation for so high a service'. But he quickly regained his balance and summed up the whole matter by concluding: 'First let there be the higher qualifications of simple faith, and conscious dependence upon the strength that cometh from above; and then let all the helps connected with mental attainments and diligent study of the Scriptures, be rendered available for the furtherance of the Gospel'.¹² Thus Craik brought a necessary emphasis into equilibrium. The fact that so many of the early Brethren were themselves highly trained men is significant, yet not decisively so, since it is open to a trained man to repudiate his training.

Call to Ministry

Having taken issue with the major current theories of the ministry—the apostolic and the congregational—the Brethren were compelled to formulate an alternative. They did this by taking one aspect of the matter, that was in practice relegated to the periphery in other systems, and making it central. Sometimes this was done almost to the exclusion of other considerations, but bearing in mind the fact that this was done in reaction against contrary views, it may properly be regarded as *central* to Brethren thought on the subject, rather than the sum total of it.

We may take as our text this extract from Groves's *On the Liberty of Ministry*¹³: 'In fact neither here [I Cor. 12] nor in the 14th chapter, nor in Eph. iv. 4-14, is any idea of human appointment, but simply the Lord's appointment, and every man's duty is to minister according to the ability God giveth'. In other words, the call to ministry comes not from man (whether patron or congregation) but from the Lord, by virtue of the bestowal of the requisite spiritual gifts. Groves went so far as to say that the machinery by which appointments were made is 'of little matter', provided the man appointed is 'a man of God, fitted by the Spirit for the office'.¹⁴ In similar vein, Craik argued that in the early days of the Church, 'the fact of positive appointment was evidently regarded as secondary to the possession of gifts for service'.¹⁵ It was this emphasis on the *central* importance of the possession of the requisite spiritual gifts that is so characteristic of the Brethren position. Our teachers, as well as our doctrine, Groves averred, must be God-given.¹⁶

It was felt that this inward call of Christ would be known first of all by the one to whom it had been given. It was this appointment by Christ, which would be accompanied by the granting of the requisite spiritual gifts, and this alone, which made a man a minister of Christ. But if a man were to come into relation with a particular 'flock' as a 'bishop', then he must have at least 'the goodwill and consent' of that flock.¹⁷ Thus, on the one hand, a minister must be assured that he is called of God, and on the other, the church must decide whether or no to accept him.¹⁸

But by what criteria is this decision to be reached? Groves deduced two very simple scriptural tests: namely, the character and the doctrine of the man in question.¹⁹ He pointed out that Paul did not question Apollos as to his ministerial status, but judged him by his character;²⁰ and that the apostle himself was willing to be judged by his teaching and labours.²¹ No machinery was suggested by which this recognition might be given or withheld, and it is at this point that a clean break was made with congregational practice.

Brethren in general had a rooted objection to the practice of voting in the church. In part, this may have been due to antipathy to the democratic principle. Both Darby and Newton made no bones of their dislike of it.²² In justification of their hostility to it, Brethren often drew attention to the disputes to which it so frequently gave rise.²³ But they also felt unable to accept that it was a scriptural practice. They did admit that deacons were chosen by the church, as at Jerusalem (Acts 6), but they

rejected the argument that spiritual ministers (i.e. elders) were so chosen.²⁴ In fact, they probably felt that no machinery was needed! Groves considered that the possibility of a man presuming in error that he had been called to the work of the ministry would be slight, if the financial rewards of his ministry were likely to be small and his social status unchanged! So, no-one except a palpably false teacher was likely to put himself forward in error, and consequently the church would normally receive with gratitude such ministers as were raised up within it.²⁵

It was not denied that Paul and Barnabas had appointed elders to minister in the churches that they had founded, but it was asserted that they had not passed on to others the right of appointing. They had acted, not as apostles, but as missionaries or evangelists. From this the deduction was made that any who were used of God to found churches might do the same—but only they.

So, while elements from current views of the ministry were incorporated, and indeed, the Brethren view of the call to ministry drew very heavily on that held by congregational churches, yet the centre of gravity was moved. It was moved from appointment by authority on the one hand and congregational election on the other, to the inward call of Christ, known by the minister, and recognised by the church to which he ministers through the quality of his life and teaching.

Ordination and Setting Apart

The Brethren reacted rather strongly against current ideas of ordination and setting apart to the work of the ministry. Groves asserted that the Biblical term—or rather, the five Greek words translated ‘ordain’ in the New Testament—did not require laying on of hands, did not signify that a man could not exercise spiritual functions until ordained, and did not mean that a man was then brought into a situation which he was to retain for ever after.²⁶ Groves again provides a convenient summary, fairly characteristic of Brethren views, of the practice of laying on of hands. It was the Jewish form of commendation, to which corresponds our prayer-meeting (just as the kiss of peace was the equivalent of our hand-shake); it is not exclusively connected with entry to the work of the ministry, since Paul and Barnabas had been engaged in that work for years before hands were laid on them (Acts 13.3), and it may be repeated (Acts 14.26; 15.40); it may be done by inferiors to superiors (Acts 13.3); and it never conveys authority, though in some cases it does convey power, as in imparting the Holy Spirit and in commending to the Lord’s care.²⁷ The case of Paul who had received the Holy Spirit by the laying on of hands by a layman, prior to his baptism, was often used as an argument against the High Church position.²⁸ With regard to the imparting of the Holy Spirit, the position taken was that this was a prerogative of the Apostles which had not been handed on. The claim to convey the Holy Spirit in such a way to-day was therefore regarded as void, though Beverley shrewdly pointed out that it does rest upon the right principle—viz. *‘that the Holy Spirit is the Author of ministry in the Christian Church’*.²⁸ Dissenting ordination rites were dismissed as mere imitation of the

practice of the Apostles. Beverley argued that if the Church had the power the rite should be used, but since she does not possess the power the rite should not be used.³⁰ Not all were as forthright as this, and there are hints that some would not have objected to the practice of the laying on of hands if it were possible to dissociate the act from the idea of the transference of divine grace from one individual to another.³¹

Here, as always, the thing that mattered to the Brethren was not so much the outward form as the inward reality. Since the former was valueless apart from the latter, it was largely immaterial—unless it conveyed the wrong impression. So, Brethren seem to have reasoned that if a man is conscious of the divine call and the divine enabling he may pursue his calling provided he enjoys the confidence of those to whom he ministers. If formal setting apart gives rise to misunderstanding it may be dispensed with.

Financial Support

In their views on the support of ministers, Brethren were once again reacting against a current conception which they regarded as a misconception. This was the idea that the ministry is a kind of profession, conferring social status and carrying a fixed salary. Though this applied more particularly to the Anglican ministry, it was also to some extent true of ministry among the dissenters. But, however shocked they were, it is an exaggeration to say that they would have none of it. The important thing to notice is the shift of emphasis.

They did point to Paul's refusal to accept wages. But Groves, for example, went so far as to underline the fact that the labourer is worthy of his hire, and continued: 'If also a pastor be worth having, he is worth paying, and wherever there is much spiritual work to be done, it is bad economy to let much of his valuable time be employed in mere labouring for his earthly sustenance'. However, he concluded on this note: 'these considerations are not such as *he* is to urge on *them*, but which *they* are to urge on *him*; and I would have the minister of Christ infinitely above a thought about it'.³² It was the striking of bargains, the looking to men with all that follows from the element of truth in the saying, 'He who pays the piper calls the tune'—as well as the tendency to encourage clericalism—which caused Brethren ministers to look to the Lord to supply their temporal needs through the free-will gifts of His people. Though they renounced fixed salaries, they did not renounce the scriptural principle that the labourer is worthy of his hire.

The Work of the Ministry

But what was understood by the term 'ministry'? What precisely was the work of the ministry to which a man might be called, for which he might prepare himself, and in which he might be supported by those to whom he ministered?

Early Brethren gave careful study to the scriptural idea of ministry. In general, they came to the conclusion that it comprehends 'any service of the saints to God and His Church'.³³ They did not regard it as a tech-

nical term for a particular form of service rendered by a special class of persons. The work of the ministry was taken to include pastoral care, ministry of the Word, and rule in the church.³⁴ Beverley saw it as specially linked with the fostering of love (Eph. 4.1-4 and I Cor. 13), and the edifying of the Body of Christ (Eph. 4.16 and Col. 3.15).³⁵ In short, ministry was seen as the exercise of spiritual gifts, the nature of the ministry deriving from the nature of the gift or gifts.

The strongest exception was taken to the practice of confining the celebration of 'sacraments' to specified ministers. Groves did allow that if any of the 'bishops' were present, he should preside at the Lord's Supper, but in the absence of such, any 'saint' might do so.³⁶ Indeed, he argued from I Corinthians, and in particular the exhortation to 'tarry one for another', that there was no recognised administrator at Corinth. He argued similarly in the case of baptism.

Settled Ministry

We come at last to the question of what is sometimes called 'settled ministry'. In connection with this, we shall ask two questions: 'itinerant or settled?' and 'one or many?'

There is abundant evidence to show that, in the cause of evangelism, Brethren were tireless travellers. While still Baptist ministers at Teignmouth and Shaldon, Müller and Craik used to travel widely in order to preach the gospel. From Plymouth, brethren used to travel on horseback to distant places for the same purpose. The practice was repeated at Hereford, to which place Capt. Hall removed from Plymouth in 1837. Similar methods of evangelisation were doubtless used elsewhere.

But it is equally clear that, once a church had been established, it was regarded as basically self-sufficient—in the best and Christian sense of that term. It was confidently expected that within it would be raised up those gifted to care for the flock and to engage in evangelistic ministry. We may see this illustrated in the life and work of that little-known evangelist, Robert Gribble. Gribble worked in the villages and hamlets of North Devon and later West Somerset. His method was to settle in a suitable centre, from which he would travel round to neighbouring villages. As soon as tiny churches were formed and men gifted for spiritual leadership emerged, he would move to another centre and repeat the process.³⁷ It was clearly the aim for such churches as he established to be self-sufficient as far as ministry, both pastoral and evangelistic, was concerned. This seems to have been common practice. At Barnstaple, Chapman ministered the Word regularly, and evangelistic preaching was normally undertaken by local men—often by the same man on a more or less regular basis.³⁸ The Minute Books of the Assemblies at Hereford and at Orchard Street, London, show that Brother X would ask for the use of the Room on Sunday nights for a specified period of gospel preaching. This accorded with Brethren theory. Groves, for example, specifically speaks of the 'minister of Christ' presenting himself before the church 'as moved by the Holy Ghost to take on any ministry in her'.³⁹

This is not to say that outside help was not received and appreciated.

Brethren saw the Church in its universal, as well as its local, aspect, and tried to give effect to this in respect to the ministry. Men like Darby drew a distinction, strikingly similar to that drawn by the German church historian, Adolf von Harnack, between those with spiritual gifts responsible for exercising them in the context of the universal church, and those appointed to local charges. Since Darby came to hold the view that appointment to office is not now God's will, he was left with the first category only, and came to regard any kind of settled ministry as little more than a temporary localisation of gift given for the edification of the Church as a whole. As already insisted, however, 'open' Brethren did not fully share this view. Nevertheless, they were well aware that the Church has a 'universal' as well as a 'local' manifestation. As a result, they made room for 'external' as well as 'internal' ministry. Indeed, as I hope to show in a forthcoming issue of *The Witness* (December, 1966), they welcomed ministry, not only from other Brethren (with a capital B), but also from brethren (with a small b)! One cannot help surmising that it has been the development of modern means of transport, as well as fear of neo-clericalism, that has led to ministry by visiting preachers becoming the norm.

We may sum up our answer to the question 'itinerant or settled?' in this way. Whereas the 'exclusive' tradition tended to emphasise itinerant ministry at the expense of settled ministry, the 'open' tradition emphasised settled ministry without excluding itinerant ministry.

Our second question concerning settled ministry is 'one or many?'. Here, no doubt—to use the modern phrase—is the 'crunch'. For it is on this question, more than any other, that Brethren stand virtually alone. We must therefore give it our careful attention.

Tregelles had passed out of the orbit of the Brethren movement when he wrote: 'An individual may stand alone in pastoral care and teaching; in other places, several may be associated'.⁴⁰ But the quotation will serve as a text! At Barnstaple, Chapman was at first a lone figure in the ministry. But it seems true to say that he regarded this situation as temporary, and he certainly looked for the emergence of others who would share with him the pastoral, teaching and evangelistic ministry for which he was so richly gifted. He was, in his own eyes at least, no more than 'one elder among several at Grosvenor Street'.⁴¹ At Bristol, Müller and Craik formed their famous partnership of two. But they were at pains to show that they did not regard themselves as exclusive pastors of the church of Bethesda. This may be seen from the lengthy letter addressed 'To the Saints in Christ Jesus assembling at Bethesda Chapel, Bristol' which they issued to the local press on 7 July, 1841.⁴² In the course of this letter they enumerated their reasons for removing the boxes which had been put in the chapel to receive gifts for their support. They stated: 1. The placing of their names on the boxes 'has the appearance of elevating ourselves above all the other brethren, and of *assuming office* to ourselves, instead of just seeking to fill the place which the Holy Ghost may have given us in the body'. 2. Others may be called to exercise spiritual leadership, and it may be difficult for them to be '*fully* recognised by the saints generally as occupying, equally

with ourselves, the place in which the Lord may set them'. 3. Others do, in fact, undertake spiritual leadership in the church, though not in a full-time capacity. 4. The boxes cause some to regard Müller and Craik as 'ministers' whose duty it is to do all the pastoral visitation needed. This they explicitly disavow.

With a single voice, Brethren declared themselves unable to find in the practice or precept of the New Testament any support for confining the regular ministry of a local church to a limited number of men, whether one or several. Instead, they found support along two lines for a plurality of ministers. In the first place, they pointed to the fact that elder-bishops always functioned in groups.⁴³ Secondly, they showed that spiritual gifts were distributed widely among the members of the Church (Romans 12 and I Cor. 12 being among the proof passages), and argued vigorously that there should be 'liberty of ministry' for their exercise.⁴⁴ These two lines of argument are not all that easy to keep parallel, since recognition of a body of elders may impinge on liberty of ministry. It was part of the ecclesiastical achievement of Müller and Craik that, to some extent at least, they avoided this danger. So, E. K. Groves, the eccentric son of A. N. Groves, could claim that the ministry of Müller and Craik did not impinge on the freedom of others to exercise 'a like privilege'.⁴⁵

The blending of authority and freedom is ever a delicate matter, and never more so than in the spiritual realm. The phrase 'stated ministry' as opposed to 'exclusive ministry' was one attempt to formulate the Brethren synthesis. This phrase, which seems to have been coined by one, Edward Foley (of whom we could wish to know more), was used by some to indicate their position. This was, that in any given local church there should be a group of spiritually gifted men whose ministry should be recognised and accepted by the church. But this would not be taken to exclude other spiritually gifted persons from playing a part in the corporate life and worship of the church and of emerging as spiritual leaders.⁴⁶

In fine, on this question of settled ministry, the practice and doctrine of the early Brethren come down on the side of a ministry which, while not excluding external help, depends mainly on the exercise of the spiritual gifts found within the confines of the local church fellowship. In a given situation, as a temporary or emergency measure, such as the early days of a new church or the revitalising of an established one, ministry is not to be withheld because it can be exercised only in isolation or in a partnership of two. But this is not to be regarded as the norm, and anything that would give this impression is to be eschewed. For ministry is the service, not of one, or of a few—not even of the many—but of all who are conscious of being spiritually gifted, and who are prepared to use their gifts for the common good and the glory of God. Some may do so in a full-time capacity and be supported by those to whom they minister; others may serve in their 'spare time': all are ministers. This does not mean that the Brethren exchanged a 'one-man ministry' for an 'any-man ministry'. A man's ministry must be in accordance with his spiritual gifts. Some have one gift, some another, and some may have more than one. It requires spiritual discernment on the part of individuals and churches for these to be discerned, encouraged, used to the full, and appreciated.

BRETHREN AND THE MINISTRY TO-DAY

What can we learn from our expedition into the past, that will be of value to us in our present situation? I suggest that three points of great importance emerge in connection with our practice of ministry.

1. There is a place for the exercise of spiritual gifts in the context of a local church by individuals who are conscious of a divine call thereto, and whose call is recognised by their brethren.
2. Such ministry may be full-time, and those who exercise it may be supported financially by those who profit from it.
3. Care must be taken lest such ministry should in any way impede the ministry of others, whether they be fellow-elders with recognised gifts of ministry, others in the church with such gifts, or those whose gifts are not yet apparent.

It behoves local churches to take these matters to heart. A series of questions should be asked, and answered with scrupulous honesty.

1. Is the church being tended and fed, and is the ministry of the gospel effective?
2. If so, is this being done in the right way? For it is possible to do the right thing in the wrong way, with serious consequences for the future. So we must ask ourselves subsidiary questions, such as: is too much reliance being placed on help from other churches? (or, alternatively, too little?); and, is too much reliance being placed on one man or a few men within the church?

If the answers to such questions are unsatisfactory, we must ask further questions.

3. Are the men available, but either too lazy or too preoccupied with personal affairs or Christian activities external to the local church? If this is so, steps should be taken by prayer and teaching on the subject to remedy the situation.

If the shortcomings are due to a genuine shortage, or even absence of spiritually gifted men, then the church is in a critical situation which it should face up to and meet with appropriate measures. These may include:

- i. Definite and persistent prayer to God.
- ii. Self-examination by each member of the church and the stirring up of spiritual gift (more on this in a moment).
- iii. Seeking outside help. We do this on an occasional basis for evangelistic preaching and general ministry of the Word. Is there any reason why this should not be done on a more permanent basis? A hint as to the way in which it could be done is given in the centenary pamphlet ([E. T. Davies], *Bethesda Church*, p. 19). This says: 'This church has never given an invitation to anyone to labour amongst us, but it is known that the door is open for any accredited servants of Christ called of God to come among us and labour in the Word and doctrine as the Lord may direct'. Surely this is also the principle on which our missionaries operate overseas.

One can imagine some of the ways in which this might work out. For example, a group of small churches might welcome a gifted expositor into their midst. A church in a large housing estate where there is an ear for the gospel could be an invaluable base for an evangelist. A flourishing church in an extensive area of spiritual need could utilise a team of men—evangelist, youth-leader, expositor, pastor, or any combination of these. Some men, like Robert Chapman, might be gifted as evangelist, pastor and Bible teacher; others might be ‘specialists’. There must be flexibility, and spiritual commonsense, and each—like missionaries overseas—must aim to ‘work himself out of his job’.

And now, what about the individual Christian? What questions should he ask? I suggest three.

1. What gifts have I been given, or, what is my function in the church?
2. Are God’s gifts to me being developed and, if necessary, trained?
3. Are they being used? It may be that I am the weak link in the chain, and that my local church is suffering because of my neglect or misuse of the spiritual gifts that have been given me.

1. Letter of 29 January 1850. *Memoir*, p. 66.
2. P. 26.
3. G. H. Lang, *The Disciple*, Vol. 1, no. 2, October, 1953, p. 16.
4. Full documentation for this paragraph and the next will appear in Appendix 1 of my forthcoming book on the origins of the Brethren.
5. *To the Saints meeting for Worship in Ebrington Street, Plymouth*. 3 (my italics).
6. *Liberty of Ministry*, pp. 1-9.
7. Cf. H. Craik, *New Testament Church Order*, pp. 3ff.
8. On this, see in particular, [G. V. Wigram?], ‘The Verity of the Revival of the Apostolic Church in Newman-Street and Elsewhere’, *Christian Witness*, II (1835). 154-187.
9. *Christian Witness*, I (1834). 350, 351.
10. *Principles of Truth*, pp. 91-93.
11. *Liberty of Ministry*, p. 8.
12. *New Testament Church Order*, pp. 21, 22.
13. P. 30.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 72.
15. *New Testament Church Order*, p. 54.
16. *Liberty of Ministry*, pp. 46, 47.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 30.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 10; cf. H. Craik, *New Testament Church Order*, p. 54; Müller’s *Narrative*, I. 276ff.
19. *Liberty of Ministry*, p. 37.
20. *Ibid.*, pp. 38, 39.
21. *Ibid.*, pp. 14-17.
22. J. N. Darby, *Collected Writings*, XXXII. 506-511; B. W. Newton. *Letter to Sibthorp*, pp. 8, 9n.
23. E.g. R. M. Beverley, *Examination*, pp. 76ff.
24. W. H. Dorman, *Principles of Truth*, pp. 76-83; R. M. Beverley, *Examination*, p. 54n; R. Howard, *Church Principles*, p. 42; E. K. Groves, *Bethesda Family Matters*, p. 74; *et alia*.

25. A. N. Groves, *Liberty of Ministry*, pp. 10, 66, 72, 73; G. H. Lang, *A. N. Groves*, p. 149.
26. *Liberty of Ministry*, p. 18; cf. R. M. Beverley, *Examination*, pp. 49-54.
27. *Liberty of Ministry*, p. 23.
28. E.g. R. M. Beverley, *Examination*, pp. 54ff.
29. *Examination*, p. 59.
30. *Ibid.*, pp. 61, 62.
31. If memory serves me right, Darby somewhere makes this point explicitly.
32. *Liberty of Ministry*, p. 51; cf. E. K. Groves, *Bethesda Family Matters*, pp. 77, 103.
33. R. M. Beverley, *Examination*, p. 36.
34. *Ibid.*, pp. 70ff.
35. *Ibid.*, pp. 63ff.
36. *Liberty of Ministry*, p. 73.
37. R. Gribble, *Recollections*, *passim*.
38. F. Holmes, *Brother Indeed*, p. 52.
39. *Liberty of Ministry*, p. 10.
40. *Pastoral Relations*, p. 21.
41. F. Holmes, *Brother Indeed*, p. 73.
42. Müller's *Narrative*, I. 409-411.
43. A. N. Groves, *Liberty of Ministry*, p. 67; W. H. Dorman, *Principles of Truth*, p. 84.
44. [J. N. Darby], 'Christian Liberty of Teaching and Preaching the Lord Jesus', *Christian Witness*, I (1834). 162ff.; *et alia*.
45. *Bethesda Family Matters*, p. 18.
46. For a full discussion of 'stated ministry' see C. Hargrove, 'Some Thoughts on Ministry in connection with Gift, and without it', in J. Hargrove (ed.), *Notes on the Book of Genesis, with some Essays and Addresses by the late Rev. Charles Hargrove*, III. 125-176.

THE DISCUSSION AND A SUMMING UP

To open the discussion, the Rev. Andrew R. Anderson, a member of the Fellowship who was brought up among Brethren, but is now the minister of the Evangelical Free Church at Rainham, Kent, gave a forthright and lively account of the reasons which led to him taking up the work in which he is now engaged. During the course of this address he emphasised the over-riding importance of a continuous teaching ministry, exercised by one known to his church, and himself knowing the church personally. He also emphasised what seemed to him to be a confusion in much Brethren thinking on this subject: there was an obsession with the preaching ministry, which led to taking truths which were concerned with the whole range of gifts within the church, as a whole, and applying them to one gift in isolation. Nevertheless, much of the controversy was not a doctrinal issue at all, as against fellow evangelicals, but rather a practical one.

The discussion took up the responsibilities of elders in the matter of teaching, mentioning the need for utter frankness and willingness to accept criticism of one another, the need for a proper control of ministry to eliminate the unscriptural practice of 'any-man ministry', and (through one contributor) asking for a phased retirement of elders as age restricted them. The importance of the emphasis on a shared ministry was raised on one or two occasions, and one speaker in particular stressed both the rarity of a gift which could sustain a teaching ministry by one individual over a long period, and also the very real danger of professionalism where the recognition of the plurality of gift was muted.

There were some pertinent comments on the addresses. One participant laid his finger upon the unconscious (but illogical) leap, from the minister as one elder among others, to the minister as presiding elder, which he detected in Mr. Prime's address. Another asked for a clearer distinction between the 'priest' and the 'prophet'—the settled and the *ad hoc* gift. Another suggested that the addresses and discussion had unduly restricted the term 'ministry', ignoring its basic meaning of 'service': in that respect Brethren were often far too 'settled' for their own good!

The discussion finished by pleas from several speakers for some practical guidance. Where do we go from here?

That note is as good as any to form a starting point for any summing up. The most striking thing about the contributions from Mr. Prime and Mr. Anderson was the way in which they emphasised how *close* we are to others: as Mr. Anderson rightly pointed out, the differences from other evangelical bodies are essentially of practice rather than doctrine. All accept the two basic points: that the Biblical revelation is absolutely authoritative in this matter, and that Biblical precepts are as practical today as they ever have been.

Why then the differences in practice? Dr. Rowdon showed the conflicting and contradictory currents which make up the Brethren tradition. Many of our inhibitions arise out of contemporary circumstances of the early Brethren, which have largely disappeared today. The *reasons* for the practices might have disappeared, while the practices themselves survive (like the grin of the Cheshire cat in *Alice*). Yet it is important to notice that the early Brethren eschewed various practices, not as being in themselves wrong, but because they carried with them the taint of misunderstanding or of compromise: the practice of the laying on of hands was a significant example. We must remember that not all elements of their historical situation have gone for good: the element of protest in our practices (or our abstinence from other practices) might well remain as valid today as ever, and as valuable as ever to the life of the whole Church.

But these distinctive features of Brethren practice serve to emphasise an important factor. We must look for our own pattern of ministry: we cannot find one satisfactorily by simply copying the practices of our friends, however close to ourselves in doctrine. Two matters which arose during the discussion emphasise this. One participant mentioned the danger of professionalism—and it is certain that any person who has been reared in Brethren circles immediately becomes conscious of this factor when he begins to mix with Christians from other traditions. His personal outlook on the ministry of the word, and upon his fellows who are engaged full-time in that ministry, is fundamentally different from that of any person who has known only a professional ministry—so much so, that it is probable that any attempt to create a full time ministry within Brethren at all like the pattern of traditional churches is foredoomed to failure, even if all the parties are agreed upon its desirability. A servant of God who wishes to exercise a settled full-time ministry in an assembly today must face the fact that he is embarking upon an unknown pathway, requiring very special qualities of personality, and a completely open mind. The second factor was raised by Mr. Anderson during his address, when he remarked with a certain disapproval on the emphasis within assemblies upon the Lord's Supper, which he suggested brought a related tendency to undervalue the preaching of the Word. But this is an emphasis which few Brethren are likely to wish to see altered: the weekly centrality of the communion is calculated to give birth to a personal spirituality which cannot be otherwise gained, and to serve as an important corrective to unduly theoretical faith. In *The Reformers and Their Stepchildren* Leonard Verduin states that: 'In sacramental churches preaching atrophies; in preaching churches the sacraments are secondary. Attempts have been made to combine the two "means of grace", but one or the other is always *primus inter pares*. No church has been able to achieve in practice the equality to which it in theory holds'. (p. 136 note). This pessimistic assessment is not likely to dissuade Brethren from feeling that their own *modus vivendi* is worth persisting in.

What then are the practical implications? Mr. Rowdon made some valuable suggestions at the end of his address, and some others are added here.

1. First and foremost, elders must take seriously their duty to ensure a regular and systematic teaching ministry within the local church.
2. Much more specialisation of gift is called for: and this involves both a perceptive analysis of the constituents of the range of gifts, and their recognition by Christians in each other.
3. In some way or other, means *must* be found by which the possessors of gifts are recognised and made plain to the church—and this extends *not* only to ‘preaching’ gifts, but to the whole range of helps. It is essential that all should know the function of themselves and others.
4. The value and importance of local settled service must be recognised more practically than by mere lip-service.
5. The gifts for the whole church must be recognised as well as the local gifts—the ‘strategic’ as well as the ‘tactical’.
6. This very range of service requires that within each church there should also arise the gift of the co-ordinator: the man who will probably exercise no gift other than that of linking all the others.

F. ROY COAD.

A FOOTNOTE

We are grateful to a member for this report on a local conference at Parkstone, Dorset, on the subject of

The Provision of a Teaching Ministry

(Notes by Mr. H. A. Smith, C.B.E.)

A conference of brethren from the south and west was held to consider the important subject of the 'ministry of the Word' with particular reference to New Testament teaching on the matter, and the responsibilities of elders.

The guest speaker was Mr. Ward Gasque, a graduate from the U.S.A. who is at present doing post-graduate study at Manchester University under Professor F. F. Bruce. After each session there was time for questions and discussion. A great deal of what Mr. Gasque told us of the need in North America could be echoed in relation to the state of assemblies in this country. He described the pattern of assembly life in the United States and Canada, and underlined the following main trends as he sees the changing situation at the present time.

Conditions in North America

1. There is widespread concern lest the Bible teaching provided in the assemblies should be inadequate for the building up of the body of Christ, and for the proper equipment of God's people in these days. This concern is issuing in a greater emphasis upon systematic and solid bible ministry, of which in the past there has been a great lack.

2. There is also a growing desire in the assemblies for a more effective and less wasteful use of the Lord's gifts to His people, particularly as to whole-time workers. A very large proportion of these would welcome a more settled ministry, instead of the itinerant kind. Where such gifted men are led to help assemblies in a more definite and consecutive way, and not merely as occasional visitors, God is blessing His work, and enriching His people.

3. Much is being done in what is known as pioneer work. The churches have recognised that there is a vast mission field at home, and they are concerned to bring the gospel to these people. This work takes the form of long-term visitations, sustained evangelism, and bible-teaching by experienced whole-time workers. As in N.T. times, the end in view is the planting of new churches as God blesses His word. (In Britain our new housing estates may well present opportunities for work of a similar nature.)

In the U.S. there is a body known as the 'Stewards Foundation' which is a consultative body, available to give advice on the design and construction of new buildings, and to lend money. This is not the only body so

to do. Great stress is placed upon providing adequate buildings, which usually commence with accommodation for youth work, out of which the new church will grow.

4. There is growing concern in connection with the need to give to the rising generation sound and systematic bible teaching. Following the lead of the Emmaus courses, other schools are providing such training in these days of rising educational standards for the young, and the not-so-young. Approximately 54 per cent of those who finish school go on to further education, and of those who graduate a high proportion proceed to post-graduate study.

5. Evangelistic outreach, the problem of making contact with the unconverted, is receiving increasing attention. The approach of a growing number of churches is informal and friendly; making full use of opportunities in the domestic and social spheres; e.g., coffee mornings for the ladies, youth activities, and group discussions in the home.

6. It is coming to be recognised that a great responsibility rests upon Christian leaders to ensure that the succession referred to in 2 Tim. 2: 2, is provided for; in order that, as the Holy Spirit enables, the Truth may be faithfully transmitted from one generation to another.

Where the Lord has endowed His servants with the opportunity and capacity for scholarship at the higher levels, these gifts should receive every encouragement, and opportunity for development and fulfilment. This may mean, for a few, advanced studies at post-graduate level in order that faithful men may be able 'to teach others also', whether whole-time workers or part time; i.e. as 'pastori pastorum'—teachers of teachers.

In the second session of the conference Mr. Gasque presented a challenging analysis of the situation which faces many assemblies to-day due to failure to provide an adequate ministry of the word, and to feed the flock of God in the local church. Conditions vary widely, but Mr. Gasque was concerned to put forward constructive suggestions in reply to the question—"What is the remedy?" It is clear that the value of such proposals depends upon local circumstances, and that all, or none, may be relevant to a given case.

There are, nevertheless, lines of action which have already proved fruitful in America. It is suggested that elders

1. (a) Discourage ministry, none of which is of a consecutive character, or
- (b) none of which is by members of the local church, and by persons who may know little or nothing of the spiritual needs of those they address.

2. Provide ministry from all scripture, so that an all-round understanding of the total scheme of revelation will produce the 'man of God perfect (all-round) thoroughly furnished unto all good works'.

3. Be alert to the long-term needs of the churches, and able to recognise, therefore, early promise among those whom the Spirit of God

is gifting to be either whole or part time ministers of the word. These people should be encouraged to stir up the gift that is in them, and to undertake such study as will fit them worthily to answer the call of God. Just as the Lord can and does give discernment in the choice of missionary servants, is it not equally important that they exercise their responsibility in this field also?

Mr. Gasque pointed out that in order to provide a consecutive ministry in America a settled ministry is being used, which however is not by any means an exclusive ministry. He gave several good reasons in support. Where there is not sufficient gift in the local church it has been possible in some areas for two or more churches to invite a worker to give his whole time, and so help the local elders in their ministry of the word. This naturally raised the question of assembly responsibility for the adequate maintenance of the worker. Reference was made to the Accountant's letter in the June *Witness*.

Mr. Gasque pointed out that if but ten people tithed their income the result would be adequate to support one man *at their standard of living*.

Reflections of some of the Conveners

It seems to us that much of the import of the Pastoral Epistles has been overlooked in our churches. Some aspects of this are listed below.

1. That, in the nature of the case, teaching, to be teaching, must have in it an element of consecutiveness and continuity.

2. That upon the elders rests the duty of supplying this.

3. That ministry in a given area, as against an itinerant one, is needed to achieve this end.

4. That this is envisaged in 1 Tim. 5: 17, 18, where teaching elders are to be adequately remunerated.

5. That it follows that, not merely in an itinerant manner, but *locally*, the N.T. envisages men wholly given up to this ministry. Acts 6: 4; 1Tim. 4: 13-16. (note 'wholly', v. 15.)

6. That men such as Timothy and Titus seemed to have a ministry covering a number of churches, in some such manner as is suggested above. 1 Tim. 1: 3, 4; 2 Tim. 2: 2; Titus 1: 5.

With reference to a settled ministry there are current considerations:—

1. Those who are itinerant ministers would warmly welcome it, and with it the opportunity to be more with their families. It could be that the current system may have contributed to cases of family breakdown.

2. Such arrangements existed at the commencement of the movement in assemblies at Plymouth, Bristol and Beresford Chapel, London among others. It existed till very near our own day in Bristol, and Barnstaple. The present arrangements on the Blackdown Hills are of this nature.

3. We should have a real concern regarding those young men among us who feel the call of God to a settled teaching ministry, and who in

consequence are spending their time taking the necessary studies to fit themselves for this.

To sum up:—

1. The Lord, as Head of His church, gives the gift of 'teacher' to some persons, not all.

2. These are identifiable, should be publicly acknowledged, and opportunity given for the exercising of their gift. 1 Cor. 15: 15, 16.

3. These men were acknowledged by

(a) a form of laying on of hands,

(b) being regarded as set apart for their work. Acts 13: 3; 1 Tim. 4: 14; 2 Tim. 1: 6.

4. Existing responsible leaders, in this case Timothy, were regarded as having the duty of selecting upon the ground of (a) reliability (faithful men) and (b) competence (able to teach), and see to it that these men were adequately prepared for their task. 2 Tim. 2: 2.

5. Nothing has hindered the development of gift in the church of God so much as the system of a one-man ministry. It seems to us that a biblical mean between a one-man ministry, and an any-man ministry is needed.

6. Teaching needs to be other than amateurish, see 1 Tim. 4: 13-16 again. It demands time, study, patience, reading, labour and meditation to arrive at the ability to expound the sacred oracles. The end result should be ability to be generally understood. A solid background understanding of what lies behind the text is indispensable.

Paul's instructions to Timothy seem to imply a more responsible work of selection and training than is given to the ministry among us.

It may have been forgotten that the more prominent leaders of the early brethren were already trained scholars and theologians, and many were men of means, who were thereby able to 'wait on their ministry'.

Much more could be done in local areas to select and to train for the future those whom God is calling to His service.

Mr. Joseph adds the following:—

A. I feel that one of the most important tasks for elders, is to recognise and encourage the smallest stirrings of gift in the young, because as far as my knowledge goes there is lamentable failure in this, in some churches, and in others a total absence of such encouragement.

B. On the part of young people there seems to be a reluctance to pay the price of solid systematic study. The reasons?

1. Lack of teaching as to its need by senior men.

2. Lack of opportunity to exercise gift.

3. A living for 'this life', with all that that means, a disinclination to get priorities right when career and income may suffer.

CORRESPONDENCE

DIVORCE AND THE CHRISTIAN

MR. K. N. S. COUNTER (618 Oxford St., Winnipeg 9, Canada) writes:—

I found Mr. Light's letter on this subject most interesting, especially as his arguments are so refreshingly free from presuppositions as to what can and cannot be done to solve problems.

There has been widespread argument in various legal systems in favour of divorce where a marriage has broken down. This is not of course the equivalent of divorce by consent, since it would enable one spouse (in Finland, even the spouse causing the breakdown may do so) to petition without the agreement of the other.

For myself, I cannot feel happy about the idea of divorce by consent, even where so-called safeguards are introduced. Admittedly, it has been accepted in one form or another in Belgium, Luxembourg, Japan, China, Mexico and the Scandinavian countries. But in many of these the formalities are so cumbersome that the 'consent' tends to disappear from the primary place. Perhaps the introduction of family courts would in fact tend to reduce the rate of divorce; if so, it may be that those who argue against easier divorce would have some of their arguments proved correct.

As the Royal Commission on Marriage and Divorce said of the breakdown view, 'it sets the court an impossible task. To determine whether or not a marriage has completely broken down is really not a triable issue'. Is the question *necessarily* answered if both partners *think* the marriage is effectually at an end? And if we are not going to allow divorce where both think the marriage is at an end, can we if they only *wish* it were? Or is the difference of substance?

Perhaps others could comment from more direct knowledge than I on the various private members' bills which have been introduced to effect supposed reforms.

I should perhaps briefly add one comment, I believe it to be the only view of the matter that a Christian can take, that he should support the present English law relating to nullity in its broad precept: that where there is no true marriage and can be none (for example, through wilful refusal to consummate) the Court is doing no more than declaring an already existing state of affairs when it declares the marriage a nullity.

TOWARDS RENEWAL

MR. G. H. KING (72 D'Arcy Gardens, Kenton, Middx.) writes:—

I should like to make a few comments upon Dr. J. K. Howard's article in CBRF xii, entitled *Towards Renewal*.

Dr. Howard states that, 'the authority of Scripture rests in its ability to speak to mankind in all conditions of life and at all periods of human

history'. Authority is here identified with an ability. I find this position unsatisfactory, first because the evidence for the particular ability spoken of is extraordinarily difficult to evaluate. Has the Bible spoken to mankind in all conditions of life and at all periods of human history? I am not sure that there is an easy answer to that question, but Dr. Howard assumes the affirmative and his view of the authority of the Bible rests upon it.

Secondly, this is not the Bible's view of its own authority. The authority of the prophetic writings did not rest upon the 'hearing response' of the people. The authority of their message was in no way diminished if the people refused to hear. Authority did not rest on ability to speak. Rather the authority of the Bible rests upon a Christ-validated claim to Divine origin. The authority of the Bible stems from Christ who sealed it with his own unique authority. The ability of Scripture is marvellous, but not in itself a sufficient guarantee of its authority.

More significant is Dr. Howard's attitude to the inspiration of Scripture which he says lie, 'not in the use of words but rather in the ideas which underlie these words'. He complains that a close adherence to the doctrines of verbal and plenary inspiration has led to 'a superstitious reverence for words'. At the back of these statements lies Dr. Howard's attitude to the significance of words, which, he says, 'are merely the cloaks for ideas'.

First, I should have thought that words were not merely 'cloaks for ideas' but essential to and definitive of ideas in as far as they are not merely private. For ideas to be meaningful they must be susceptible of communication, they must be public, they must be verbalised. Words are definitive of ideas in ordinary human communication. Secondly, God has purposefully chosen to reveal Himself in words. This is what is meant by the inspiration of Scripture. It is a specific theological concept built upon the teaching of Scripture which states that God is the origin of the words of Scripture. When we open the Bible we are reading God-breathed words. It is the task of systematic theology to state clearly the ideas behind the words. But Calvin's Institutes are not inspired. They point rather to the words of Scripture by which even Calvin is to be tested! For this is the miracle of Scripture, that God has given to us inspired words, If Dr. Howard wishes to point to the importance of the ideas they express, then he must find a word other than inspiration. Divine words are not merely 'cloaks', but powerful, life-giving communications from the Lord. We *ought* to have a reverence for the words of Scripture—not superstitious, of course, but obedient.

CHRISTIAN MISSIONS TODAY

MR. H. L. ELLISON (Moorlands Bible College, Holcombe, Dawlish, Devon) writes:—

It is admirable that CBRF should give us something on Christian Missions, and that that something should be up to date. But surely CBRF exists for something more than keeping us up to date; it is also to create a sense of balance.

I find it very hard to understand that in such a number there is no mention of any kind of the Christian message to the Jews. If Rom. 9 to 11 has any meaning at all, it is that the Jew holds a key position vis-à-vis the Church's proclamation.

It could, of course, be claimed that there was no suitable article available—was anyone asked to write one?—but in the Bibliography I find excellent works mentioned on Communism, Islam, Heathendom, Hinduism, Buddhism and Animism, also Roman Catholicism, but apart from one book giving a general introduction to non-Christian religions there is no mention of Judaism.

This is no biased grouse. It is a notorious fact that while there have been outstanding missionaries from the Assemblies among the Jews, there has been very little support as such for this work, and it is very rare for it to feature at the major missionary conferences, etc.

THE ANNUAL MEETING

MR. PETER JONES (52b Grange Park, Ealing, London, W.5) writes:—

The public meeting following the A.G.M. was most interesting and the discussion in particular very encouraging. It was manifest that there is a growing awareness of the desirability of consistent, consecutive, planned teaching and preaching. Indeed the impression was conveyed that this is taking place to a far greater extent than my observation has heretofore led me to believe. It still seems the aim in most places known to me personally to have almost as many preachers during the year as possible.

Sometimes it has been said, and more often implied, that it would somehow be wrong to ask any local brother to preach more often than someone from miles away. I wonder why. If the Holy Spirit has placed brethren who are gifted as preachers in a neighbourhood and church, should their gifts not be exercised largely in that same neighbourhood and church? It seems to be in accord with Scripture.

I believe that history as well as present-day experience shows that there are definite results from efforts rendered locally more often than from casual and fleeting visits to many places. In relation to the message of the Gospel which we seek to proclaim and our knowledge of it, the observable results from the present system of diffuse effort are ludicrously small. There may be many contributory factors to this state of affairs but is not one of them that we do not sufficiently apply the minds God has given us to the employment of the gifts entrusted to us?

Some places admittedly have little or no preaching gift amongst local brethren and, if the customary preaching services are to be held, such places must depend on help from elsewhere. Even so, is the best answer to have 26 or 52 different preachers in the course of the year? Several disadvantages of the practice could be advanced.

Those who believe that the better way is that of a more consecutive ministry can help to promote it by being very selective in the invitations we issue and those we accept. If the latter procedure were adopted and the appropriate explanation lovingly given by a number of able speakers

who now go almost anywhere they are asked and consequently spread their effort very thinly, we might quickly see a change in the general practice—to the great benefit of the church which Christ is building.

LOCAL GROUPS

MR. KINGSLEY MELLING (Tudorville, Bottom-oth-Moor, Chorley Old Rd., Bolton, Lancs.) writes:—

The first meeting of the CBRF members in the Manchester and South Lancashire area was held in the house of Mr. Robert Dent at Cheadle on Friday, May 20th.

Mr. Ward Gasque explained the purpose of the meeting—to discuss Dr. Short's pamphlet *The Ministry of the Word*. The discussion proved to be very profitable indeed and revealed a deep concern among those present about the problem of the teaching ministry in the Assemblies represented. The meeting also provided an excellent opportunity for members to meet each other since a number of them were previously unknown to each other. I am the Secretary of this Group and should be glad to hear from members.

MR. GRAHAM SPENCER (Gatesgarth, Rockland Road, Downend, Bristol) would be glad to make contact with local members with a view to forming a local group to discuss topics raised in the *Journal*.

ESSAYS AND REVIEWS

FROM THE MONITORS—SIX MONTHS OF 'THE HUMANIST'

'We are not ignorant of his devices', Paul told the Corinthians, as he viewed Satan's attempts to wreck the young church. At first Satan had introduced gross moral evil to corrupt them; that had been dealt with, and the disciplined member lamented his fault before an unbending and possibly self-righteous church. 'Comfort him . . . forgive him . . . love him' urges Paul; or Satan, whom you overcame at his first assault, will win by these new tactics and sow complacency, harshness and legalism among you.

It occurs to me that Satan is as versatile as ever. At one stage he drives Christians to isolationism—a pietism that saves their own souls and withdraws from the world. When they finally hear the Lord's word 'as Thou hast sent me, so send I them into the world . . .' the infernal strategist rearranges his forces. If these Christians must be involved, let it be vicariously. They can read all about terrible social evils and efforts to combat these on the part of a few extremists, in *The Cross and the Switchblade*, *The Needle*, *the Pill and the Saviour*, etc.—it may shock them so much that they can't stand any more involvement. With luck they'll never actually *go* and *try* to help. Anyway, they're unlikely to meet a junkie—'pot clubs' don't open till after most of them are respectably tucked up in bed.

This emphasis draws attention to the grossest and worst effects of godless living. Satan isn't pleased with this advertisement for his kingdom. His rebellion against God is deeper than merely trying to damn half a million addicts. He wants to show a rival to God's kingdom, to show truth of his boast 'ye shall be as gods'. Many 'decent godless people' deplore drug traffic, promiscuity, sub-liminal advertising and other gross assaults on human personality. But they believe that man can sort things out with his own reason and careful research, plus goodwill all round. The church, they feel, has failed. The living Christ they seem never to have met.

We may not meet junkies, but these people we do meet. Our ministry of Christ to them will be the more worthy of our Lord and the more suitable to them if we can understand their disillusionments, see their hopes, the youthful religious contacts that have warped so many. We may then find some point of mutual respect, some ground whereon we can start to correct the twisted view of what Christ means, and how the life of God flows in the souls of men. Christians read Christian magazines, Communists read Communist, Humanists read Humanist publications and the occasional best-seller (such as *Honest to God*). All too often we shout at each other from inside heavily guarded citadels.

The reviews which follow have piled up over the months—hence their piecemeal and fragmentary nature. They may however, introduce to us the thinking agnostic community—a community as divided in its way as the Christian church, experiencing many of the concerns and sorrows for the suffering world which the Christian feels; knowing, often, the inner tension between ‘what I would’ and ‘what I do’, but not sharing with Paul in the ‘victory through Christ Jesus’. The Humanist Association is a small, highly articulate minority, but the views expressed are characteristic of a much wider group who are ‘without hope and without God in the world’—as much as any junkie—but in a charming, sophisticated and cultured way. Here is a mission field. If God rouses you to passionate concern for the addict, the deprived and the outcast, go and work today in that part of his vineyard, arming yourself with His strength and all the training and expert advice you can get. But for myself and many readers of CBRF the place of work is less dramatic. It is the daily round among ‘decent godless folk’. As we gain an idea of how Christ and His disciples look to their eyes, we may be able by His help to find the right words and thought forms, and above all the right attitude of heart with which to bridge the chasm they see between them and an intelligent committal to Him.

May, 1966

The editor is not impressed by the Archbishop-Pope meeting. ‘All this talk of reunion is a sign of weakness rather than strength on both sides. Nobody can really say what constitutes an Anglican—except that it is pretty certain that few clergymen, if any, who solemnly assent to the Thirty-nine Articles really believe them . . . If the rebel Catholics have their way the Roman church will gradually drift into the same muddle’.

Ecumenicists are also warned not to draw too much hope from the semi-religious nature of some Humanist writing (e.g. Sir Julian Huxley). ‘This is music in the ears of those Churchmen eager to substitute dialogue for debate, not without hope that the spirit of ecumenism will draw Humanists into the accommodating fold’.

Meyrick Carre reviews Alister Hardy’s *The Living Stream*, which ‘put forward reasons for believing that there is a powerful agent in evolution that cannot be explained in mechanistic terms’. The reviewer finds Sir Alister a ‘biological heretic’ and repudiates the (very anaemic) new ‘natural theology’ built upon his thesis. The article might be of interest to those interested in ‘science-faith’ discussions.

There is an excellent factual article about ‘The mixed-race child and adoption’.

Nigel Bruce reviews with remarkable candour Prof. Halmos’s *The Faith of Counsellors*. This review shows an awareness of weaknesses which Humanists are said rarely to face. ‘The counsellors may claim to be tackling human problems in a scientific way, says Prof. H., but in practice they are bolstering up their science with a hitherto unsubstantiated faith in humanity . . . They are treating clients as individuals worthy of respect,

capable of will-power, gifted with reason. But may not an increase in knowledge show . . . that all the workings of the individual person . . . are explicable in terms of physiology and biochemistry . . . capable of being influenced by physiological and biochemical stimuli far more effectively than by personal counselling . . .?' As this tide of mechanistic explanation rises, we are face to face with 'the appalling issue of *Brave New World* and *1984*. Notice that if this is to become a major threat to the Humanist position as the social sciences advance, Humanists will find themselves fighting on the same side as the better type of Christian. The Humanist's belief in the value of the individual is as fundamental to his outlook as it is to that of the genuine Christian . . . Shall we discover that, as Christians often tell us, Humanism still contains a large element of Christian idealism for which there is no scientific support'. This is a most welcome and humble admission of the difficulties which face Humanists who are genuinely concerned for social welfare and personal relationships of trust and confidence (as used by counsellors to retrieve social maladjustment). The reviewer sums up that Prof. Halmos 'raises questions which affect all Humanists and which we should do well to discuss until we feel sure that we can defend ourselves against that most insulting accusation—that we are behaving irrationally'.

E. G. Macfarlane pleads that Humanism should be agnostic instead of avowedly atheistic, in a 'tolerant' article.

The correspondence columns show the usual division of those who like their Humanism militant, and those who 'don't want to be beastly to the Christians'. With a little change of terminology it could look like an evangelical magazine's correspondence on ecumenism.

June, 1966

Congratulates the National Secular Society on its centenary but notes 'It is a paradox that would have astounded Victorian Freethinkers that the campaign for secular education has lost ground despite the widespread decline of religion'. It is noted that the Rational Press Association and the NSS offer different approaches but both play a part in 'exposing the ever more ingenious disguises of superstition'.

H. J. Blackham defends his participation in talks with Roman Catholics. 'If Humanists genuinely want an open society and the concentration of all resources on the major problems and tasks of human existence and development, and if Christians increasingly show that they are genuinely prepared to lend their own inspiration to this enterprise, more constructive relations are unavoidable . . . The deep divergencies remain . . . but the exigencies of the human situation . . . require that there be dialogue and collaboration'.

Elspeth Huxley writes on Factory Farming (an extract from her book *Brave New Victuals*).

Kit Mouat provides a swingeing enquiry into the 'fear of punishment as a means of moral training' illustrated by verses from *Divine Songs for Children* 'written by the sickly theologian Isaac Watts'. She has no

difficulty in showing that even so worthy and well-loved a writer wrote much that would be offensive in present day Sunday Schools. In fact, if all I knew of Watts's work was what this article quotes, I should have a poor opinion of him. She goes on to argue that 'training by fear' is still with us and urges us to 'teach young people to base their behaviour on respect for their own and other people's human dignity rather than on fear of divine or human vengeance'. This supposed antithesis underlies much Humanist apologetic. Does our ethical teaching give them the impression that our gospel is based only on fear? What about 2 Cor. 5: 14, 15?

Neil Warren reviews Erikson's *Insight and Responsibility* which is highly critical of Freud's pessimism, though in favour of Freud's attempts to deal with ethics on a scientific basis. 'He neatly points out how Freud's model had no place for the judicious observer, the curious man—who constructed the model: how Freud "took for granted" science, morality, and himself'.

A review of *Studies in Christian Existentialism* (J. Macquarrie) admits the 'argument is extremely subtle and ingenious but what is it in the end but playing with the word "Being"? Despite the denial that God is an "entity" that is how he is inevitably regarded when there is talk of "encounter" or "confrontation".' So the new vocabulary makes things no easier for at least one non-Christian.

July, 1966

The editorial, commenting on the centenary of H. G. Wells, wonders whether 'if he could have retained the full strength of his mind and lived longer, his faith in man's power to make this world a better place would have been restored'. Christian apologists who quote Wells as having 'seen the light' at the end of his days, might bear this alternative viewpoint in mind!

Hector Hawton finds the 'ballyhoo over Billy Graham' a 'bore' and suspects the Archbishop of Canterbury feels the same. 'No fraternal kiss for Billy though he paid an oblique compliment to the Pope when he said that he had much more in common with Roman Catholics than such radical Protestants as the bishop of Woolwich'. It is admitted that the dramatic effects are lacking, but 'all the tricks of high pressure salesmanship are used to make us whiter than white'.

Colin Wilson reviews Eric Berne's *Games People Play* and gives an interesting analysis of trends in existentialist thinking (which he criticises as 'too negative' by comparison with the 'positive existentialism' Wilson himself has attempted to create). The review would be of interest to anyone following this development and has one or two passages which deal well with human capacity to transcend physical description—I don't know why capacity to receive divine revelation is excluded, but it might be a question to start dialogue.

A sixth-former's view of RI tells Humanists what a farce compulsory RI is, and might tell Christians of the need for informed teachers who can

give an intelligent account of Christian faith, and direct discussion constructively. There are some such, I am sure, but the writer of this article hasn't met them yet.

They banned the crossbow is the imaginative title of an article by Lawrence Hills who is concerned that 'scientific progress is not matched by moral advance'.

Derek Wright (a psychologist on the staff of Leicester University) reviews H. J. Blackham's recent book *Religion in a Modern Society*. The reviewer hopes that Humanists who read this book will 'persuade their Christian friends (alas, it will have to be only the intelligent ones!) to read it also'. This is because he believes that 'religion will be with us for a long time, and if we are committed to the open society we have no alternative but to seek agreement with Christians on it'. The review shows two welcome features of this school of humanist thought: (a) the necessity for dialogue—slanging each other from entrenched positions only foments bitterness. Can believers enter such dialogue, firm but courteous, instructed but open to argument? (b) Humanists are not watered down Christians (i.e. Christians without some metaphysical appendage called 'Christ', as some of the wilder new theologians seem to suggest). Blackham and his reviewer are both convinced that 'the crucial impediment to agreement with Christians is their commitment to an absolute'. Unfortunately they consistently see the Christian commitment as militating against social responsibility—can we make clear that our commitment to Christ leads us to care more deeply for individual rights and social stability than even humanist premises?

Immediately afterwards, alas, David Tribe follows with a polemical contribution to the discussion whether Humanism should be atheist or agnostic. He is clearly on the side of atheism defined as 'a statement that there is no evidence for theism'. Dialogue on this basis is going to be difficult.

The correspondence columns take the BHA to task for most things—for thinking that 'happiness is good and suffering bad' (eudaemonism paves the way to mediocrity)—for suggesting that all social ills stem from religious belief and being too selective in approaching empirical evidence. One contributor was 'the only Humanist among a group of Christians' and wants to follow up questions raised, including 'why haven't we evolved morally?'. It looks as if some dialogue at least has been taking place.

August, 1966

The editorial comments favourably on the appearance of *What I believe* (Allen and Unwin) which is a symposium of statements of belief by various well-known people, including Humanists, Christians and others. The editor is pleased that such plain statement of the Humanist case has been made: e.g. John Bratby 'For me there is no after life, no re-incarnation, no observant deity in charge, no greater master of my affairs than myself'. The issue includes the article (?condensed) which

Prof. Ayer submitted to this book. This is a masterpiece of clear statement and should certainly be consulted for 'quotes' rather than the more heated bits that sometimes get into sermons!

Ayer states: 'I do not think it makes sense to ask for an explanation of the existence of the characteristics of the world as a whole. In this sense, it is a matter of brute fact that the universe exhibits the patterns which it does. This means that I do not believe in God'. . . . 'But then what meaning can life have?': he realises the point of the objection and can offer only 'Life has the meaning that we succeed in giving it'. 'In my own view, love and friendships, the pursuit of knowledge, and the creation and enjoyment of works of art are goods in themselves and the fundamental principles of morality are those of freedom, justice and happiness'. Throughout, this is a statement of personal commitment 'I think . . .' and finally, 'Even granting the record of man's inhumanity to man, and his proved capacity for self-destruction, I still have more faith in his intelligence and good will. In this sense, I am a Humanist'. It is good to see the need of personal faith stressed, even if we wish it was faith in something less disappointing.

Daniel Salem joins those who want Humanists to 'do something', and is in favour of a Humanist political party.

Correspondence is divided again over the dialogue with Roman Catholics. Some Humanists seem as suspicious of the Roman 'change of heart' as many evangelicals! Another has found some clergy whose 'humanity would shame many Humanists' and adds 'whatever we do to Christianity I hope we don't entirely destroy this'.

September, 1966

The editorial defends the multiplicity of organisations with agnostic rationalist bases, on the ground that this is inevitable with groups who sponsor the 'open society'. There is a frank admitting, however, that not only the Christian community is 'by schism rent asunder' though in an open society it's hard to have 'heresy'.

Beatle John Lennon comes in for surprising commendation. This is for his statement 'We're more popular than Jesus now . . . Jesus was alright but his disciples were thick and ordinary. It's them twisting it ruins it for me'. The editor comments that 'in rather different language much the same has been said in this journal . . . the modern teenager on both sides of the Atlantic knows in his heart that John Lennon is right'.

Ronald Hepburn reviews Prof. Flew's *God and Philosophy* and again shows the Humanist's estimate of the new theologians. 'Quite properly, Flew investigates the claims not of Tillichian and Woolwichian Christianity, but of traditional Christian belief, according to which God is a transcendent personal being'. One doesn't expect Flew or Hepburn to agree with us, but it may be encouraging that they know which target to attack.

Colin Wilson (who has contributed to several recent issues, to the dismay of one correspondent who considers him 'a strange bedfellow for rationalists') writes about H. G. Wells. He appears to join recent attempts

to rehabilitate the novelist as a prophet of the emergent new man. The disillusion of Wells's later days and writing is regarded as senility, not 'seeing the light'.

A review of *The Theology of Rudolf Bultmann* contains the good, if not quite fair, quote: 'rationalist critic might be forgiven for supposing that demythologising is the same as debunking', and also the factual inaccuracy 'Like St. Paul, Bultmann professes to have no interest in the mind of the historical Jesus'. This inaccuracy has cropped up once or twice recently—I can only suppose it arises from a wrong exegesis of 2 Cor. 5: 16 based on one view of AV text. Another good reason for RSV, NEB (and sound exegesis)! Correspondents trying to help the plea from the recent correspondent involved in discussion with Christians yield little comfort. 'Why hasn't man evolved morally?' He has, say two correspondents. He probably hasn't, and may not, which will be too bad, says a third.

Another correspondent wants a revival of Lao Tse. 'The Western world is too aggressive and needs a dose of quietism to sober it up. We should be active but not strident, believing but not doctrinaire, for "the way that can be put in words is not the Ultimate Way".' With a few minor alterations, this quote could have come from a very different publication!

October, 1966

The editor comments on verbal battles between two prominent humanists: 'That two distinguished humanists should differ on the priorities that should be assigned to our aims is a reflection of trends that have been present for a long time'. He goes on to defend the RPA against charges of devoting too much space to religious controversy. '. . . every newspaper editor knows that whatever may be the case in the intellectual stratosphere ordinary people at ground level are far from bored with religion, even though they may not go to church'. The RPA's primary aim is to encourage rational thinking. 'Religion is therefore an obvious target to attack, but by no means the only one'.

At the other end, a correspondent remarks 'Humanists have only one thing in common: they reject the Christian religion and all forms of supernatural belief. But such rejection does not necessarily bring with it basic agreement on any positive belief or principle'. Why should it? Did anyone expect it would? According to E. H. Hutten (Reviewing *What I believe* [Allen and Unwin]), some Humanists at least have no such hope. He notes that 'Boothby and the psychologist Glover agree that only through a painful process of self-discovery can we hope to learn how to keep our destructive instincts under control and reduce the power of death. To be rational means to try to improve the balance in favour of life. Where is here the shallow optimism, the belief in progress, of which the religious writers in this volume accuse the humanists?'. We might be forgiven, however, for thinking sometimes that Humanists view Christian superstition as the *only* bar to progress. It is good to see this recognition of the true human predicament.

P. Alan comes to a similar conclusion at the end of an article on *Teenagers and Sex Ethics*—‘Ultimately we are faced with the straight political issue. It is impossible to discuss social morality without raising the question of what sort of society is itself “right”. And on this there is no unanimity in our society’. Before Christians gloat too hard over Mr. Alan’s predicament we might take to heart his earlier comment ‘had not Christianity already failed?’ Even where the authority of the Bible is nominally held, agreement on how it should be applied to society or the individual is markedly lacking. And Mr. Alan appears to have moved in even less stable ‘Christian’ circles—he mentions the Bishop of Woolwich’s comment (out of context) ‘the moral teaching of Jesus . . . as a code . . . is entirely inadequate:’ rehashes the anti-feminist interpretation of 1 Cor. 7, and relates the deplorably inadequate sex instruction he received from parents and clerics. The need for the patient, careful explanation of the Christian faith and its demands on the disciple seems more important than ever. Here are intelligent people who have little understanding of what life in Christ is, and the fault may not be entirely theirs.

Not all are waiting to be instructed, however. David Tribe contributes a typically forthright article condemning the Christian-Humanist pamphlet on Moral Education. Any evangelical who deplored the pamphlet as selling the faith, may bear in mind that Mr. Tribe sees it as disaster for humanists and a complete betrayal. In the primary schools, he holds, ‘worship and RI . . . were by their very nature indoctrinating and incapable of an “open” approach, and moral education must be separated from religion’. Mr. Tribe’s article should be consulted by anyone concerned with the present discussion on the position of school worship and RI. Obviously if his aim is the complete abolition of both, no report will satisfy him, but he has some shrewd observations on how this particular report may work out in practice.

Thomas More and Erasmus get a look in via a recently published book reviewed by Robin Odell. They both ‘shared their final allegiance between man and God. They believed that man owed his existence to God but saw no reason why this prevented him from being man and behaving as a free, reasoning, and dignified being’. They are commended for the latter idea, and excused for dragging God in since they had to be ‘within the orbit of the Church’. Gen. 1 and Ps. 8 state both parts equally and finely. How can we convey this clearly and convincingly to our Humanist friends?

CHARLES MARTIN.

AN ENQUIRY ON THE MINISTRY OF WOMEN

Members will recollect that remarks on this subject in a previous issue of the *Journal* led to a lively correspondence. This caused Dr. Stanley Hoyte (Dungate Manor, Reigate Heath, Surrey) to make some enquiries of his own, and he sent to us a long report on the result. With the publication of the Anglican report, the subject is again a topical one.

Those who know Dr. Hoyte know that his concern over this subject is related to much deeper issues than to the silence or otherwise of women within the church, of itself. Bluntly, he believes that the attitude of men towards women which is engendered by traditional teaching and practices (and that not only among Brethren), is responsible for much downright tyranny and inhumanity in private life on the part of the insensitive and thoughtless among us: and he has some sad case histories to quote in support of his beliefs.

We therefore publish below an abbreviated version of his report. The editor does not wish to re-open the columns to the usual indeterminate (and sometimes violent) correspondence which often follows the raising of this subject. He believes, however, that the subject is one of very urgent importance, and it would be interesting to have a sample of a wider range of opinion than is reflected in the (very surprising) result of Dr. Hoyte's limited enquiry. Members are therefore asked to send to the editor, within one month of receipt of this issue, a postcard indicating, with regard to the alternative propositions which Dr. Hoyte puts forward at the end of his report, whether their own views support alternative 'A' or alternative 'B', or are undecided. The result will be published in a later issue. PLEASE do not add further comment!

DR. STANLEY HOYTE writes:—

Being concerned with regard to our customs concerning women in church services, I recently wrote to some thirty elder brethren who are known beyond their own Assembly, most of whom were reputed to be comparatively open for discussion. *Two* did not answer my letter, but of those who replied a number expressed no objection to women praying at Prayer Meetings; several in fact indicated that this was the practice in their own Assembly. *Seven* came out clearly in favour of complete liberty for women to take part at all our meetings. *Three* firmly upheld the traditional practice of keeping women silent at all our meetings. *Eighteen* gave indefinite answers, and usually excused themselves from further correspondence. There was a certain reluctance to debate the matter, varying from pure indifference to active opposition to any discussion at all. The elders of the Assembly which I attend wrote to me not to press my views either in public or in private, adding 'We, as elders, consider it your duty to submit to us in this matter'. I have submitted to them in this locality, but fortunately they did not forbid me to write to the *Journal* of the Research Fellowship.

I was disturbed at some of the arguments put forward in support of

the traditional practices, and give below some quotations from letters, with my own comments.

'This has never been a live issue with me'

Why should it be? The writer was fortunate enough to have been born a man, and this question only concerns women and their possible contribution to the life of the church. Why take an interest in it?

'In the church women must be silent and content with the lower place to which God has been pleased to assign them'

That, it seems to me, is the real belief of many in our assemblies, though few would be willing to express it so plainly. They hold that God has made two sorts of church-members, men, who are superior, and women who are inferior. To the male members has been committed the responsibility of expounding truth, of leading in prayer, of reading aloud from the scriptures, and of deciding all assembly matters. Women have no voice (quite literally) in church affairs. It is nice to be a man. Outside the church men and women have to take their place more or less according to their abilities, but inside the church, taught by Jesus Christ, men enjoy a permanently superior status. Simply to be a man entitles one to have thoughts, to have views, and to express them freely, but women must be silent. Free speech is not for them.

'Our assemblies are in need of many things, but one of them is not to be plunged into division over a secondary matter. Statesmen consider larger issues'.

'More important than discovering the rights of the case is the matter of Christian Unity. It would be different if it were a matter of vital doctrine, but this, after all, is not vital doctrine'.

'I trust you will have the grace to shut the door on any private view. But if you find that intolerable or irksome it would be better that you seek out a gathering of the Lord's people where your views are shared'.

There must be many millions of Christian women in the world. Is the question of their silence so small a matter that it is not even big enough to be discussed by our leaders? Is not the pleading of the importance of unity strange when a chief objection among us to the present movement toward unity amongst other churches is that they are seeking unity at the expense of truth? Is the appearance of unity to be maintained by suppressing discussion, by leaving awkward questions unanswered, and by inviting those who do not fall in with these ways to leave and go elsewhere?

'The great spiritual architect of those days was the apostle Paul'.

'Paul spoke as he did because it was his task to declare the guiding principles of the churches. This our Lord never did'.

'With regard to your astonishment that I said the Lord did not declare the guiding principles of the churches—I would have thought this self-evident, not requiring any demonstration'.

'The Lord gave His teaching in germinal form and this was developed by the apostles'.

Have not Christians always thought that Jesus Christ brought the

Church into existence and that he laid down its guiding principles? Paul taught these principles, but he did not originate them. They had been embodied in the life of numerous local churches before he began to write his epistles. Paul unfolded what was already there. Where in the records of the life and work of our Lord is the germ of keeping women silent in the presence of men? It is surely contrary to all that our Lord was towards women and taught about them.

'It is not teaching in general but teaching men that is prohibited'.

Is it? The words are quite general, and we have imported the word 'men' in an attempt to make sense of an apparently unreasonable idea—for in the nature of things every member of the church is teaching every other member and cannot avoid it.

The verses quoted as justifying this strange belief are readily capable of being understood to mean something quite sensible and ordinary. For instance, 'teaching' as practised by our Lord and the apostles involved standing, or more commonly sitting, in some public place and entering into controversy with unbelieving men, and this often led to angry argument, insult and violence. All would agree that in Paul's day it would have been unsuitable for women to do this. The New English Bible, which is probably nearer to the original than the Authorised reads 'I do not permit a woman to be a teacher'. I would seriously urge that Paul was not issuing a general command that could not possibly be obeyed, but saying that he was against a woman behaving like 'a teacher' and sitting in a public place arguing with heathen men.

The worst thing about our practices is that they grossly misrepresent the attitude of our Lord towards women, and the painful thing is that not one of the many to whom I wrote mentioned this consideration. Those who insist that our practices are right, do so on the ground that they are being loyal to the Word of God. Surely this is a mistake. They are not being loyal to the Word of God, but to their own interpretation of a few verses of scripture. The Word of God is a Person, and they are not being loyal to Him. They sometimes sing 'Beyond the sacred page I seek Thee, Lord', but in this matter they stop short at the sacred page, and dread what they might find if they went beyond to our Lord Himself and His attitude towards women.

At the close of a talk with one of our elders about this matter it dawned upon him what freedom for women might possibly lead to, and rising to his feet in incredulity he exclaimed in tones of horror 'Do you mean to say that you would allow a woman to break the bread?' Yes, I would accept such an action as perfectly appropriate. When we take The Lord's Supper we do so on the ground that we are all sinners whether men or women, and none of us have any rights at all, we are all recipients of His mercy. We take the tokens from His hands, and it is of no consequence whether the plate and the cup are handed to us by a man or by a woman.

Summary

I wrote out in effect the following propositions and asked some thirty of our leaders to declare which set they believed.

- A. I believe that when we meet to take The Lord's Supper God has forbidden women
 - 1. To suggest hymns.
 - 2. To read aloud from the scriptures.
 - 3. To lead in prayer.
 - 4. To address the congregation.

- B. I believe that when we meet to take The Lord's Supper it is God's will that women should be free
 - 1. To suggest hymns.
 - 2. To read aloud from the scriptures.
 - 3. To lead in prayer.
 - 4. To address the congregation.

Three of the thirty declared that they steadfastly believed the first set of convictions. Seven firmly upheld the alternative set. Eighteen excused themselves from giving a definite answer. In God's name I now appeal to members of the Research Fellowship to make up their minds and believe one thing or the other and to say so. The whole world is sick. This is no time for timidity.

BRETHREN VIEWS ON INTER-CHURCH CO-OPERATION: A SMALL SCALE SURVEY

Introduction

At the National Assembly of Evangelicals held in October, 1965, about 500 delegates answered a questionnaire giving their views on such subjects as their voting practices, their daily newspaper fare, their attitude towards ecumenical affairs, racial problems etc. The results of this poll of 500 Evangelical church leaders have been very fully reported in the December 1965 edition of *Crusade* and the *Winter Broadsheet* of the Evangelical Alliance. Lack of space and certain sampling inadequacies did not permit a separate analysis of the answers given by the 30 delegates who listed their denomination as 'Brethren'. However, separate tabulations were made and the editor of *Crusade* has allowed us to use them in preparation of this note.

A sample of 30 is too small to give anything but indications of the attitudes of a group, and we must beware too of thinking of this group of 'Brethren' leaders as being representative of all similarly entitled. They may be different simply because they were at such a gathering. The independence of so many 'open Brethren' goes counter to any such association with other evangelicals. Secondly they filled in the form, which many others would not, and thirdly they described their denomination as 'Brethren', again something which many Brethren would not do.

The questions covered in the survey were far-ranging and answers to them were voluntary, but most people answered most questions.

This note examines those questions which covered attitudes to ecumenical movements and co-operation with other Christians in certain enterprises and specifically compares the answers of the '30 Brethren' with all those answering.

The World Council of Churches

Question 6 asked what was the attitude of the respondent to the World Council of Churches.

Answers ranged from 'Enthusiastic Support' through 'Indifferent' or 'Uncommitted' to 'Outright opposition'. The table below indicates that on the whole 'Brethren' tended to be opposed to the organisation.

TABLE I

What is Your Attitude to The World Council of Churches?

<i>Attitude</i>	<i>Brethren (Nos)</i>	<i>All (Nos)</i>	<i>All (Nos)</i>
Enthusiastic Support	—	7	1
Qualified Support	2	144	30
Indifferent or Uncommitted	6	70	15
Qualified Opposition	19	165	34
Outright Opposition	3	97	20
TOTAL	30	483	100

While most brethren indicated qualified opposition to the organisation, only two supported it. Opinion of the total group was more widely spread. Nearly one-third indicated support while a fifth were strongly opposed.

Denominational Unity

The next question was on denominational unity and asked which, if any, of a list of elements would the respondent consider either essential or desirable in any proposed union of denominations in Britain.

The table below compares the answers of Brethren with all answering.

TABLE II

<i>Element</i>	<i>Brethren</i>		<i>All</i>	
	<i>Essential</i>	<i>Desirable</i>	<i>Essential</i>	<i>Desirable</i>
Episcopal government	—	1	11	95
Presbyterian government	2	3	12	49
Full Intercommunion with other Christian Churches	9	7	158	131
Independency	7	4	107	70
Clear-cut evangelical doctrinal basis	22	5	342	83
Believers Baptism	13	6	129	106
The ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper	19	7	348	52
Acceptance of Historic Creeds	9	7	181	77

The interest here lies not so much in the differences between Brethren and others; with a large block of C. of E. respondents one expects to see a good number who think that episcopal government is important and one hardly expects brethren to support it enthusiastically—but in those elements which are traditionally 'Brethren beliefs', such as believers baptism. All Brethren answering the question thought that an evangelical basis was necessary for such a church. What is perhaps more interesting is that only about half thought that believers baptism was essential in such a church, while a further half dozen thought it would be desirable.

There was pretty unanimous insistence on the sacraments of the Lord's Supper and baptism (not specified what type). On matters of church government only 11, or under half, specified that independency should be maintained, which is odd when one considers that this is one of the fundamental tenets, if not the basic one, for 'open' brethren.

Accepting that these elders are unlikely to be typical of the average assembly leader, it nevertheless indicates a willingness to come to terms with what must be a real choice in the event of an ecumenical union of churches which are basically anti-evangelical.

Contacts with Roman Catholics

Question 13 asked if the respondent considered there should be friendly relationships with local R.C. priests and lay-people. Brethren

split three-quarters in favour and one-quarter against, a similar result to all questioned.

When probed further to see in what area contacts might be established, most of those who were in favour of links, suggested that joint Bible study and joint representations on moral or social matters could usefully be carried out together. Fewer thought that prayer and social welfare work might be engaged in jointly—though it still amounted to half the sample. Joint worship was a non-starter for the vast majority.

This evidence of a willingness to join with R.C.'s is somewhat surprising, since, from personal observation, Brethren have never been enthusiastic about linking with R.C.'s in any formal enterprise, and I suspect that informal contacts were meant in these answers. Certainly, to my knowledge, very few formal links with R.C.'s have been attempted along the lines indicated here, and certainly overseas and in many assemblies the view still obtains that the Church of Rome is the bitter foe of evangelical christendom and the Pope is anti-christ.

Billy Graham and Mass Evangelism

Everyone supported the 1966 crusade—three-quarters wholeheartedly, and amongst those who qualified their support most offered the explanation that they didn't like new Christians being sent back to 'dead' churches. These proportions square pretty well with the total sample.

It seems that many traditional Brethren attitudes, and notably the suspicion of other groups, are on the way to being broken down, and the opinions of this group show that there is probably a fair amount of support for wider and more formal contacts with many other Christians.

GRAHAM BROWN.

NOTES AND ENQUIRIES

Graphic Guide to Philippians

Mr. Dennett has introduced us to this further product of his researches. It includes: a fresh translation of the Epistle and of Acts 16 into simple language using only the thousand most useful and simple words (other than special Bible terms, which are explained); translators' and readers' notes; a glossary-concordance; and an article on translation work which also includes an analysis of the linguistic features of Philippians 1. The work is planned specially with the missionary translator and newly literate in view, but would also be helpful to bible class leaders and teachers.

30 pp. quarto (duplicated) in stiff covers, and obtainable from Mr. H. Dennett, 34 Abbey Road, Sompting, Lancing, Sussex. A most interesting production to the careful Bible student.

Request for Information

Mr. J. Roderick Davies, Conselheiro Lafaiete, Minas, Brazil, would like to hear from any member who could dispose of number 1, 5 and 6 of the *CBRF Journal*, or from any who could lend him these numbers for a period of six months.

A Contemporary

We have received the first issue of a new French language periodical issued in connection with Swiss assemblies, and devoted to Bible study. Entitled *Promesses*, it is warmly commended. Copies available gratis from: 'Promesses', Case postale 419, CH—2501, Biel/Bienne, Switzerland (please send international reply paid voucher).