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# The Fraternal

May, 1972

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## EDITORIAL

From time to time we produce an issue in which all the articles are focussed on a single theme. Several have said that they find this helpful. In this issue we devote our attention to questions concerning our ministry and its training. The views expressed here (or at any other time) are not necessarily shared by all the officers of the B.M.F. We want the magazine to be a forum where different opinions can be freely expressed, in the hope that this will stimulate constructive discussion in local fraternals.

Our next issue will contain a group of articles on the theme of Christian Worship.

## MINISTRY THE DAY AFTER TOMORROW

The purpose of this article is to hold together a number of inter-dependent issues concerning the future of the ministry. Other articles will develop or comment on some of the aspects which are to be mentioned here. For the sake of lively debate a certain stance is taken in this article in the knowledge that it is not the only or necessarily the best position that could be taken. It has seemed wise to start with ministry as it might be exercised in local situations since among Baptists every argument seems to return to this point. Having suggested some forms of ministry that could be established it is inevitable that attention must be turned to the colleges and the content of courses in them. The point is then made that a college course is best seen as a mere basis for continual training and care and some suggestions are made about what that could mean. Finally attention is turned to the place of the Union in the whole scheme of selection, training settlement and payment. This is the map; now for the exercise.

### Ministries and the Ministry

The word *local* is altering its meaning in our contemporary society. The whole structure of local government is under review because it is no longer possible to keep small communities unconnected to each other. Most areas of the country can be seen as inter-connected communities in a region or sub-region, and meaningful planning for the well-being of all must be seen as a whole. Social services, transport, shopping, commerce, industry, education, housing and recreation all link people in a complex network of human relationships which for some time has been known technically as the *local human zone*. The word *local* therefore now means that area of towns and villages, factories, shops, offices, homes and schools in which the various members of a family live out their lives separately and together.

If we assume that God is active everywhere and all the time there is clear reason to question the prevailing situation in Britain whereby some areas of life are over-stressed and some under-stressed by the churches. There is an abundance of activity and buildings devoted to mission where people live

and comparatively little devoted to mission where people work. Even in residential areas we have not shared carefully. In one area of a major city with a population of 20,480 (1966 Census) there are 13 churches in an area of 3 square miles occupying 7.63 acres of land, 90,000 square feet of building space employing a staff of 33 at a total annual running cost of £46,000. Even within the same city boundary there are housing estates that have churches struggling for money and manpower and every church in a new town or city would be glad of even 10% of this income to help their work. This only illustrates a drastic and general situation.

What is equally serious is that we are, by and large, only producing one kind of ministry for this variety of areas. The scholar-pastor who can preach, teach and counsel his people would be a fair description of nine out of ten Baptist ministers even if some are not much good at all the tasks. We are producing too many ministers who are concerned with individuals with their needs and in their homes and not enough who can minister within and to the increasingly large commercial industrial and communal groupings in our society. The problem is more difficult because these larger areas have been neglected for so long that no-one really knows how to tackle the job and we tend to regard that small group who try with some suspicion and are unwilling to listen to some of the things they try to say to us.

It is a truism to say that our members are within these structures and they exercise ministry there. The fact remains that most of them feel untrained, isolated and unconnected to a total view of ministry. They "bear their witness" as best they can but they do not feel supported in or enabled to do any wider job of ministry.

All this indicates a need to diversify and at the same time to co-ordinate. We must discover and train a wider variety of types of minister. The variety will include shades of academic ability, differences in temperament and outlook and eventual areas of operation. Some will minister to churches, some within and through secular organisations, some in the context of people's homes, others in the context of people's work and leisure. Some will be full-time, some part-time, some spare-time. But they must be co-ordinated both for their own sakes and for the sake of their joint ministry which is to enable the church to do its job. They will need to meet together to study, discuss, contemplate and plan so that their variety enriches the whole and none of them is frustrated by isolation or exhaustion. A pooling of incomes and a sharing of expenses would weld them together meaningfully. Their work must be seen as a whole, be covered adequately and set in its widest context. It is much more likely that given some such arrangements as this the Christian groups and congregations they serve will be better equipped to fulfil a total ministry as part of the whole people of God.

In one sense there is nothing that precludes these teams of ministers being wholly Baptist but of course if they were the total possible area of action is immediately diminished. What our aim should be is teams of ministers, some equipped for

general pastoral work, some specialists, from varying denominations, working together with each other and with the churches in their social setting to discover what it is that God is doing there and then to share it with Him.

### **Theological Education and Ministerial Training**

The first institutions to be affected by all this are the theological colleges. It is important to consider them here because to an extent greater than is often admitted they influence the patterns of ministry in the church. They select their own candidates, prepare and execute the necessary courses and produce ministers who at the beginning of their ministry bear all the marks of alma mater. There is no need to detail what goes on in our colleges but it may be valuable to comment on some general features.

First, there is a lack of variety in the kind of course offered. A college will have its teachers in the main subjects of Old Testament, New Testament, Doctrine and Church History and the bulk of a person's course will be devoted to these subjects in an academic or pseudo-academic way. Whatever time is left will be given to preaching and pastoral training, which can mean anything. It is unusual to find a college of any denomination (although they do exist here and there) where this part of the course is handled with anything like the thoroughness given to academic study. This would not be so serious if there was some planning and interdependence between the colleges; no one of them has the resources to do everything. Such co-ordination, however, does not exist. Consequently the Baptist Handbook for 1971 reveals the following information. There were 164 ministerial students in all our colleges and they had 25 tutors between them. This is an exceptionally good ratio that would have delighted the author of the Robbins report on Higher Education. The breakdown of subjects suggests that 5 taught New Testament, 6 Old Testament, 7 Doctrine and Philosophy, 5 Church History and 1 taught another subject (Evangelism). It would be interesting to know who introduces the students to theories of mission, pastoral counselling, group dynamics, urban renewal, industrial and commercial management and theories and experiments going on in the world church, what numbers of hours are spent in the respective disciplines and so on. On the surface at least all our colleges are trying to do the same kind of job and there are not enough students to warrant the number of staff in any of the so-called main subjects.

Secondly, and probably the cause of this situation, most of our colleges are closely related to universities and ministerial students pursue degree or certificate courses of universities as the main part of their training. Increasingly the dependence of theological colleges on universities is being questioned. A university has the responsibility to provide a course for a degree that will give the basic skill and understanding to a student who wishes either to teach the subject as a pure subject or to pursue his studies at research level. A theological college has neither of these responsibilities; its task is to equip people for ministry in the diverse ways mentioned above.

The present situation is unfair both to the universities and to the colleges. Successive generations of ministerial students have found themselves unable to give the total concentration needed for a university course or contribute to university life because of the demands made on them by other parts of their training, their preaching and so on. Equally they have felt that their professional training has been inadequate and amateurish because of the prior demands made on time and energy by the university course.

It is surely time that a college for training ministers developed its distinctive forms of life and thus made its own contribution to the pool of knowledge and expertise both in the church and in society. If it is thought that a university degree is a desirable requirement for some of our ministers then let them take that course in a university and give themselves to it. If the practicalities of doing this are too difficult then let one or at most two of our colleges devote themselves to giving this part of a person's training. There is much to be said for a person having experience of more than one kind of college in different parts of the country, or for that matter of the world. Above all, let us realise that academic theology can only be regarded as a basic tool for ministerial training and not a substitute for it.

Whatever else happens, our colleges, in as close an association as possible with colleges of other denominations must try, in a co-ordinated way, to lay on a variety of types of course. We should make our style of life more like the Polytechnics and less like the universities. Long and short courses, residential and non-residential courses, evening classes, sandwich courses, correspondence courses are all possible and will cater for the disparate needs that now exist for training the ministry.

Of course it cannot be done if each of our colleges remains a separate empire engaged in a kind of inter-necine strife. But it can be done if our colleges are prepared to select and train their candidates as part of a joint programme of theological education for the church. It would also mean the selection together of members of staff so that the various approaches necessary can be made and are complementary. Situated as they are near existing centres of education our colleges can draw on the teaching resources of those centres for many of the specialist concerns. A case can be made for theological colleges employing more people to direct and co-ordinate training and employing less people overall to do the actual teaching.

### **Continual and In-Service Care of Ministers**

If one puts together what has been said in the preceding sections then a further important and at present neglected area presses for attention, namely what resources and care one gives to ministers on the job. There is no point in bemoaning the present lack of care since the system militates against it. This is no criticism of the superintendents since the task they are expected to do is an impossible one and is not made easier by

the constant demands made upon them by Union and Association committee work. The problem is not limited to the younger ministers; the rate of loss from the accredited list is as great for people in their forties as it is for those in their twenties.

Our present system makes two assumptions. First, that the local gathered congregation of Baptists is (if it is large enough!) a satisfactory context in which someone may fulfil a ministry alone. In his study and pastoral work a minister will be built up sufficiently to maintain his ministry and if he needs ministerial fellowship there is the regular fraternal and the annual ministers' retreat. Secondly, that with his college course behind him and a three year probationary study under his belt each minister has enough mental equipment to keep him aware of and give him understanding of the developments in knowledge relevant to his ministry.

It is to challenge these assumptions that this article has already envisaged teams of ministers in a local area or region. To make the point clearer let us call them *colleges of ministers* who continue to do for each other what their college training did (or perhaps did not do) for them in equipping them for ministry. What exactly would the function of such a college be and why is it so important? For illustration let us take three main functions of study, contemplation and work-sharing.

The view that one man with his mind and his books is a creative set up for studying needs to be challenged. Without the constant encounter of mind with mind and the regular discipline of listening to other people it is easy for the isolated person to pursue his own lines of interest to the exclusion of other concerns and this will soon be reflected in his ministry. If a minister is to 'enable' the church for mission in a developing society and world he must engage in conversation with that world. He must also at the same time engage in conversation about God and Christ and what results when the various parts of these conversations are brought together is called theology. A college of ministers must engage in this theology-producing conversation and is much more likely to be creative than each person on his own. Exactly what the content of the study might be will depend on the people involved. It can include obvious subjects like Biblical interpretation and sermon preparation but ought also to involve consideration of some recent thinking and writing in the fields of education, political theory, industrial relations, world economics and development, psychology and community care. The possibilities are endless but the gain lies in the regular, disciplined and planned encounter of mind with mind, person with person, with a variety of mental and social types as parties to the encounter.

In the field of prayer and contemplation the gains are likely to be even greater although the path may be more difficult to tread: it takes more effort and confidence before people open-up this area of their experience. The ministerial college may need to break through barriers and hesitations by using highly structured and regularly repeated forms of worship such as

offices and liturgies. This, however, should only be one way of ensuring that the college regularly meditates on what it is doing in its thinking about and involvement in the life of the world and the mission of God. Too great a dependence on the words and forms of the past must be avoided and the college will, in time, develop its own methods and forms though never forgetting that experiment is an essential ingredient of any creative leadership. It is to be doubted whether for most people it is possible to develop one's inner life in isolation and many ministers will confess to sterility in this area of their lives. Bearing in mind that the colleges envisaged are not just made up of Baptists nor of full-time ministers then the sheer wealth of the experience of the whole group is a feature of its life that immediately commends it.

Baptist ministers are not used to having their work organised for them or subsequently scrutinised by others. For this reason fraternal life is not always as open and helpful as it could be. In a college of ministers defence and protective barriers will gradually fall as each becomes part of a thinking, reflecting and acting group. Initially to discuss and organise work with others could be painful, but gradually any resentment gives place to a mixture of gratitude and dependence as one is caught up in a process which is limited neither by the parish boundary nor the denominational horizon. That statement can be taken as the writers word of personal testimony! To detail what action is on the agenda of college meetings is impossible. Modern Mission theory reminds us that these matters are governed in large measure by the social context in which the church is set.

It may be worth referring what is said in this section to what was said in the preceding one. Our theological colleges could assume an important responsibility if they saw themselves as resource bodies for these colleges of ministers. The need for residential week-ends and short intensive courses is immediately obvious for any group that includes part-time and spare-time members. Similarly the need to call in expert advice is likely to occur and theological and pastoral experts may be among them. Instead of preaching at endless numbers of church anniversaries college staff could be available for working on specific needs with such groups. The relationship, however, would not be one way. People in training need experience of several situations and the local groups could provide the setting for part of ministerial training however varied that might need to be. The obvious advantages for people beginning their ministries in such groups need not be stressed.

### **The Union, the Colleges, the Churches**

What has been said so far could appear to be hopelessly unrelated to reality. That would be so were it not for the fact that almost everything stated is being done somewhere or the other. It may not be being done by Baptists in Britain but such a limitation of reference these days is irrelevant. Regional planning for mission is a reality in the church already, groupings of churches and ministers are taking place, areas of ecumenical experiment do exist, church buildings and man-

power are being shared, theological colleges are breaking out of traditional academic and enclosing bonds. It is a sad reflection on us that Baptists are so often not part of what we must now call these mainstream developments and it is equally sad that many of the experiments we do undertake in local situations are only attempted because of economic pressure. Even the report *Ministry Tomorrow* was underpinned more by economic argument than by theology and in the end it will be economic necessity that will force all our theological colleges into some kind of co-ordinated life.

It need not be so and the burden of this article is that it ought not to be so when so many possibilities are open to us and when our tradition should give us such flexibility to experiment locally. Which brings us inevitably (if wearily and reluctantly) to consider what the role of the Baptist Union could be in all this. George Washington once described the Confederation of the Thirteen States as "held together by a rope of sand" and in gloomy moments one is tempted to apply this to our own Union. Without embarking on the tangled and contentious question of centralising influences there are several creative things which the Union could do now.

First, there is the question of disseminating information. An enormous amount of thinking and writing is being done by all kinds of Christian groups and bodies on the related questions of The People of God, the theology of Mission, the Nature and forms of Christian ministry. Too much of this remains unknown to all except those who are doing the thinking and writing. Dare we look to the new Department of Ministry to serve as a resource body for those of us in the churches and the colleges? The written word is one way of communicating and occasional study papers would be welcome both to small groups of ministers and to fraternalists. But encounter is a better way of communicating and a series of short consultations, study weeks and conferences would do a lot to introduce many more of us to this recent thinking. This is an important matter because today's ideas do become tomorrow's actions and with limited time and energy most of us need someone to encourage and make it easy for us to 'plug-in' to this world-church scene. If nothing else such material might prove more stimulating than some of the items seen on the agenda of ministers' conferences and college reunions.

The selection of candidates is a second matter on which the Union could act for all of us. The selection conferences for non-collegiate men have been a welcome development and reports from those sharing in them have been encouraging. This is in marked contrast to reports and experiences which come out of Association recognition committees where, on the basis of half an hour of unskilled interviewing it is assumed that a wise decision can be made. The place of the local church in the initial stages of a person's application is important but the fact that college committees spend so much time on a person's call to the ministry and not just his suitability for that college suggests that these committees have little faith in the present recognition procedures of the Associations.

A three-day residential selection course organised by the Union with skilled participants would not only be a better means of assessment; it would also ensure that the same standards prevailed for all candidates. Whether the colleges can be brought to entrust this same course with the responsibility of helping a man to choose the most appropriate college for him is doubtful. Knowing that a person had been to this course and came to them with full Union approval ought to help the colleges to confine their admission enquiries to a person's ability to profit from the kinds of courses they could offer. If what is said above about the colleges is accepted then there would be a basis for a combined board of all the colleges to do this particular job.

Through the Superintendents and the Home Mission Fund, the Union already has considerable (and generally helpful) influence in ministerial settlement and this is a third area where it could take more initiative. If the ideas in this article about groupings, colleges and regional planning are to get anywhere the Union will need to take the lead. The experience of current experiments both at home and abroad needs to be collated to form a pool of information available to any groups wishing to begin some kind of shared life. Further, there is a need for some controlled experiments to be set up so that we can see just what happens in certain social settings. Established churches could be encouraged now to use some of their finances and manpower to contribute to and share in an experiment in their region. The idea that a small denomination cannot afford to do these things must be challenged. The well-being of the church as a whole would be better served by encouraging and underwriting even a limited number of these experiments than by pouring money into already non-viable and progressively declining situations.

The Union must think increasingly in group terms. There is already a form for group application for Home Mission Fund grants but as one who has tried to administer a group and use this form the writer knows that Union officials do not easily adjust to groups sharing of resources. In preparation for the next twenty years in both old and new areas the Union ought to be looking at and revising its bye-laws to enable easier and greater participation in inter-denominational ministerial teams. This is not a theologically contentious point since reports from both the British Council of Churches and the Evangelical Alliance suggest that in new areas such sharing is bound to increase.

All articles must end somewhere and some will doubtless think it appropriate that this one ends in such an unlikely place as a monograph on the Book of Lamentations. The concluding words of N. K. Gottwald's book read: "the message of Lamentations is one which the modern church needs to hear if Christendom is to understand its own mission as something more inclusive than the cultivation of personal piety while the common life of man perishes in the inferno." Just so.

JOHN MATTHEWS

## DOING THEOLOGY IN A UNIVERSITY CONTEXT

When considering the preparation for ministry today it is natural to want to reconsider the relationship of academic theology as demanded by the universities to the content and pattern of ministerial training. Yet this is not so straight forward as it might seem at first sight, not only because there is no necessary consensus as to what are going to be the patterns of ministry in the immediate future but because there are changes and developments in the universities as in every branch of higher education. It is widely recognised, however, that we are moving into a new phase and it is not impossible to discern something of the shape of what could be developed. There is some wisdom, therefore, in putting forward some thoughts to stimulate debate and to alert us to the situation.

While the early development of denominational theological training was part of an enforced estrangement from public seats of learning, the immediate past has seen colleges become more and more drawn into university life. This was typified by the move of Regent's Park to Oxford but has affected all our colleges in some way. But this was marked in two ways which are now the foci of the need to reassess the situation. Ministerial training almost became equated with taking a degree (or diploma or a pale imitation) with a little extra sandwiched in. This put the ministry at the mercy of the university syllabus which was itself a distortion, equating academic study with the historical and archaeological. Thus theology was Biblical studies, with Church and doctrinal history. The other effect was the equation made between ministry and academic attainment, an over intellectualisation that equated faith with knowledge and exposition with scholarship. Such a situation could be ignored in the days of liberal theology and in the reaction of Biblical theology. But today such a truncated view of theology cannot exist. Nor can such a view of ministry. A new style is emerging that upsets the balance. It is necessary, therefore, to look at both parts of the equation: the universities and the ministry, in order to approach any adequate concepts for today. It is certainly too easy to resolve the problem by dragging the two apart. That is to deny history by reversing the hard won benefits of the past.

### I

Universities, as part of higher education, are being changed almost out of recognition. While there may be some regrets and a legitimate protest about the reckless destruction of past standards and values that ought not to be lost from sight, bar the shouting the change has happened and ought to be accepted gladly. Three facets of this revolution are of direct relevance here which are all linked though appearing, perhaps to be unconnected.

The first is the great variety of institutions that are now part of the university world. There is indeed some confusion

caused by the bi-partite control of higher education and the mushrooming of other colleges offering parallel courses at other levels. Yet it is now true that related to universities in some way or other are most areas of learning or training. This ranges from affiliated colleges catering for special needs, through special faculties or institutes integral to the campus, to whole university colleges concentrating, for example, on science and technology.

The second factor is the growing acceptance that professional and other training can be done within the university alongside the old established professions of medicine, law and the Church. Social work is the great example but education, engineering, architecture or journalism can be instanced. The assumption is made that such activities are also worthy both of research and academic excellence as well as a training programme which is properly set in a university. Moreover with the growth of the social sciences, research has widened and become more open to influence by social demands and potential use, which is all part of technological society. We have, however, an apparent paradox. At the same time as professional training is expanding there are also greater numbers for whom their first degree has no necessary use apart from its educative value. In fact the two are part of the same phenomenon in the context of increased educational opportunity. Specialist training follows basic education, providing an expertise that is best related to a trained mind.

Thirdly, and most obviously relevant, this leads to the developments in theology and the study of religion. Here, too, there has been a split between theology as a first degree, which is not regarded as a professional qualification, and the introduction of courses like the diploma in pastoral studies. It is also a widely known fact that theology in some form or other is a growingly popular option but unrelated to the numbers of ministerial candidates. Again there is the new emphasis pinpointed by the change from faculties of theology to departments of religious studies. The change in both words is important. A department relates to other departments in a wider faculty; religious studies is part of the study of the phenomenon of man in the humanities. Instance too the multiplication of combined degrees. Religious studies, as opposed to theology which tends to imply a given system, opens up the whole field and asks for no necessary prior value judgements. This does not imply the neglect of the traditional disciplines or of Christian theology but that they have to find their places in a world in which shadowy figures in the wings have become very substantial and leading actors. As a result the university has drawn away from the Church. Establishment is not enough. Theological studies are speculative and exploratory and the university has begun to produce a "lay" type of teacher in religion who is independent of orthodox requirements even when he is marked by a dog collar. There is no gainsaying, however, that theology is more exciting and alive in such surroundings without denying the value of confessional loyalties.

## II

The unease about the adequacy of the present pattern of ministerial training reflects the rapidly changing context and approach to ministry. The basic factor is a fundamental cultural shift, expressed in a myriad ways, towards a society that no longer accepts a more or less tacit equation between the Christian way of life and social norms. We live in an open, secularised technopolis. In this new world the gospel has to win its way by its own merit, as well as having to discover its new forms. While this can produce a profound and debilitating puzzlement as to the rôle of the minister in congregation and society, it can also be a liberating factor. There is a greater freedom for prophetic word and action, a fluidity in patterns of ministry, including the growth of special ministries. There are also new skills and resources available, embodied in the new social professions or understanding of community. Such a situation is a challenge that is full of promise and excitement. The question is how to help equip men to take advantage of the opportunities.

Training cannot offer, like the instructions in a do-it-yourself kit, a code of rules or mechanical skills but a preparation for facing a task, discerning the situation and benefiting from experience. It is a matter of discovering the resources available, being able to use them more and more adequately and understanding the relation between the overall aim, the hopes and vision that inspire and the day to day petty slog. Nor should training prepare for a stereotyped work situation. While it may be true that the normal form of ministry will be in a local congregation, even this has infinite variety. Many men, however, will find themselves involved in several types of ministry. In the end every man should be enabled to "do his own thing" as part of the wider endeavour, the total mission of Christ, free to belong and to contribute each in his own way.

This would appear to involve, fundamentally, three things, the first of which can be characterised as "church theology". By this is meant that Christian theology is essentially a dynamic within the household of faith, the articulation and constant re-examination of, on one hand, the great perspectives of faith: God's gracious purposes in creation and salvation, the work of Christ and the place of the Church; and on the other the dialectical relation to the contemporary world which is part of our christian experience. It is essential to learn, in Paul Lehmann's phrase, "to do theology", to listen to and exist in the present age while rooted in the givenness of Christ. Secondly, it is necessary, therefore, to understand the contemporary world, the object, context and content of mission. This means understanding man as he understands himself, whether in his ideological formulations or cultural expressions, or as described by the scientist, sociologist or psychologist. It means looking at society as it is changing and being changed. It means identifying strengths and weaknesses; associating with justice, love and hope as the fingers of God and breaking down the prison walls of the oppressed, naming the name of Christ as the light of the world. Thirdly, there is personal preparation. This requires both an increasing self

awareness and the growth of a valid spirituality and also the appropriation of disciplines and skills that are appropriate for the daily grind and immediate tasks.

## III

In attempting to set alongside each other in this thumb-nail sketch way, the new situation in both the university and training for the ministry it should begin to be apparent that there is no straight forward solution emerging to the inevitable tensions involved. But these tensions are not very different in kind from others found on the campus between purely academic interests and others such as schools of business management. It is however here being suggested that the benefits of close association outweigh the tensions created by any difference over aims or method. Indeed these tensions are part of the nature of the existence of the Church and are thus an integral part of the experience of mission, a proper part of theological college life. For there to be any retreat either by severing connections or by the college or denomination ignoring political involvement in the university world is to default at a vital point.

The university relationship provides, therefore, that exposure to the world of ideas and a challenge to excellence and reasoned justification that can be vital to the quality and vitality of the work of the colleges. It also sets the training activity within the combination of teaching and research that is of the nature of university life, that can see all learning as discovery. Moreover, there are in this setting the resources available for the building up of the complex programme necessary for the new training schemes. Finally, to be part of the university, especially for such small institutions as theological colleges, provides a public guarantee. This is reflected in the willingness to award grants and other monies, which should not be despised as sheer cupidity.

It is, therefore, the self understanding of the theological college that needs to be examined. Of course, there should be, as far as possible, full participation in the scholarly activity of the university, but that need not imply, as is now almost totally assumed, that the colleges are related exclusively to the faculty of theology or that staff are appointed primarily to teach in some branch of the traditional disciplines. Instead more use should be made of the teaching provided. The theological mark of the college should be in what we have designated "church theology". The contribution thus provided for the wider faculty would be in apologetics or dogmatics (as well as in denominational interests such as liturgy or history). At the same time it is reasonable to find college staff involved in some other aspects of the training programme being linked with other departments such as social administration, education or fine arts. This would at once indicate the distinctive nature of the college which is more closely related to its overall task and ensure the seriousness of the training given in co-operation with other teachers. Such a reorganisation could well allow a reduction in the number of staff needed. Certainly it would mean that other criteria were used in judging what were the

qualities desired in making an appointment. It could also open up the possibility of developing new activities both in relation to the university and the church which would add another dimension to the context of ministerial training. As well as trying to provide hostels with a distinctive community there could grow a fruitful interdisciplinary relationship in which the colleges played a leading part.

#### IV

How, then, would preparation for the ministry appear in such a context? It is right and proper that there should be offering for the ministry students with greatly varying ability, educational background, experience and previous preparation. There must be some difficulty here in that colleges will be involved with working at different levels, providing courses suitable to differing requirements. Nevertheless, as far as possible, there should be no segregation. Not only has each much to give, but it is a common preparation for a common calling. Above all it gives opportunity to express the validity of all forms of ministry and to stress the proper and appropriate satisfaction to be derived from them. There is no hierarchy of ministry, only different functions. Nevertheless, it is suggested, that something of a basic pattern is discernible which can provide a common experience (though not by the same method for everyone), a basis for personal growth and specialised expertise. Part of belonging to the common body is to understand and appreciate how each relates to the whole.

For those for whom it is appropriate, but not normally for the postgraduate in the first instance, a degree in religious studies or a combined degree including theology should provide an opportunity to think in depth theologically in relation to the intellectual context of the contemporary world. This would provide a further probationary period and could even be required to be done away from college. Others not doing a degree would find themselves involved in the same sort of courses in their curriculum where their own experience can be drawn on as the basis for reflection, and further exploration be made of secular situations of all kinds.

The diplomas in pastoral studies that are now being offered in some universities are a recognition not only of the need for a more professional training but the willingness for this to be put alongside similar professional courses. This is a development that should be encouraged and not diluted by wholesale reproduction. It would be better to have a number of centres, perhaps offering some specialisation than to have another nightmare jungle. At the moment there seem to be two patterns of diploma. The first offers a year's introduction to ministry in the widest sense, theologically, pastorally, in relation to the social rôle and basic skills. The other seeks to build on the basic pastoral orientation by extending the skills of the student, especially in the area of counselling or social work. Some attention is being given to the development of a two year course to the level of a master's degree.

It ought to be desirable for the basic course to be five or six years, which is true already for those beginning training more or less straight from school and normal in some

denominations. For the non-graduate there ought to be two years basic theology and apologetics before the pastoral course. For the postgraduate the three year course should be a year's intensive theology followed by two years pastoral and specialised study. Thus everyone ought to do the equivalent to the pastoral studies diploma followed by a year's selected study. For some this latter will be a return to academic study; for others more experience in and preparation for general ministry; yet others will want to develop a particular interest or prepare for specialised ministry; or again it can be used to acquire greater expertise in a skill such as casework or community leadership.

At all times, of overwhelming importance, the college provides the context, stimulus and means of co-ordination in the situation. Permeating the whole should be an experience of growing selfawareness in community that can be discovered only as, under guidance, there is opportunity for real encounter and critical self examination. This is required in social work training and should be even more part of theological training. At the same time there will be a great emphasis on direct involvement in many levels of society and opportunities for ministry. But this requires adequate supervision and involvement from staff and the preparation and co-operation of outside supervisors, both ministers and other professionals. Finally, however it is organised, there will have to be a constant programme of "doing theology" related to every level and stage. This may consist of personal tutorials, group study or corporate activity.

Such a description has of necessity to be made in most general terms. Detailed planning must be related to local resources and structures. Nor can it be possible to spell out what it can involve in precise terms because what is necessary is to have the basic orientation correct. This always means that a case is exposed to the double (but contradictory) accusation that it is too vague to be practicable or that it is being done already. In any case there has only been an attempt to examine some of the implications of the limited question as to how the colleges' work relates to a university setting. The conclusion submitted is that such an association is basically correct which implies a need to capitalise on the latent possibilities. The colleges, by and large, have been forced to accept the need to provide hostel accommodation which is often seen as a creative opportunity. But while there is here no suggestion of a wholesale redevelopment this can hide the far reaching effect of the approach set out above. The exigencies of the present are the possibilities for renewal that can transform the situation. It is, however, for the denomination to allow the colleges to respond with vigour and vision. There are signs that this is both desired and possible, given the freedom to pioneer and experiment. It would be disastrous to be content with a policy of patching up or maintaining a tradition for lack of insight. To panic or opt out are signs of little faith. To accept the present as the promise of the future is to believe in the Holy Spirit.

PAUL H. BALLARD

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### 'MINISTERIAL TRAINING' and 'THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION'

God is active in the world. The philosophers may warn us to watch our language, but we find it meaningful to talk to one another in this way. We may not all agree about what he is doing. Different emphases in the church imply different or partial understanding of God's activity, but we all agree he is doing something.

Building on this agreement, and for the sake of what follows, let us venture two definitions: that the church's task or mission is to co-operate in what God is doing; and that the task of the separated or ordained ministry is to enable the church to carry out its mission.

If this is so, then it becomes of vital importance to know as much as possible about what God is doing. The minister needs to know in order to help the people to know and to act accordingly. The people who don't know or—since all such knowledge is tentative—make no effort to know, will lose their sense of direction. The activity of the church will become arbitrary. Its way in the world will be without guide or chart or compass.

The minister therefore will talk a great deal about God and will encourage others to join in the conversation. Which brings us to a third definition since theology is precisely that: 'God-talk', though perhaps that is not quite precise enough. We cannot talk about God until he reveals himself to us or takes action. Theology is more accurately defined as talking about God's activity. It is with this activity that the church is to co-operate, and it is to enable the church to do just that that the ministry is set aside.

The missionary question: 'What should the church be doing?' and the theological question about God's activity are now seen to be closely allied, the one informing the other. The image of theology needs to be changed.

Writing in the *Guardian* newspaper soon after the 1970 General Election, Roy Hattersley referred to the increasing distaste for 'theological' arguments in politics. He is not the only journalist to have used the word in this way. He was obviously not referring to arguments about God or about religion and politics. He was contrasting the theological with the pragmatic; political doctrines which are theoretical and

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up-in-the-air with the down-to-earth pragmatism that gets on with the job. If he misused the word theology, Hattersley had a fair understanding of its reputation as an academic exercise which is of little use once you get on the ground. In fact theology has very practical consequences. What you decide God is doing determines what you must do or, if you are a minister, what you will enable the church to do.

It is now clear why, once we begin to discuss 'ministerial training' the topic of 'theological education' looms very large, and why we have seen fit to train our ministers in a theological college. The minister is not defined exhaustively as the theologian; but the theological enterprise, his conversation about God's activity, will be his indispensable navigational equipment. It is not enough however to insist on its importance. People must be motivated to share our conviction, and that will mean a conscious effort to show them why theology is important and at an early stage in their training. They need at the start some such ground plan as we have outlined but enlivened with more detail and colour so that they have some awareness of how integral is the business of theology to all their hopes for the mission of the church and their own contribution as ministers.

Theological education is not the whole of ministerial training. Other aspects can be argued for at a different, almost common-sense, level. The minister is a communicator with news to announce, messages to deliver, and ideas to share. The more skilfully he communicates the more of an enabler he is likely to be. He will be trained in many aspects of the art, including public speaking, visual aids, the use of contemporary media, and maybe more important than the rest, the methods of adult education. The minister is also firmly in the field of personnel. He is enabling people, and if he is to help and not hinder he must understand what makes them tick and how they operate as individuals and in groups. Behavioural studies, including personal growth and development, general psychology, group structures and dynamics, will have a firm place in his training.

Communication however rapidly becomes 'preaching' or 'evangelism' or 'proclamation', and personnel work becomes pastoral care, because it is not just how you say it that matters, but what you have to say, and it is not just how to engage with people helpfully but the purpose of the engagement. Once you ask 'What am I to say?' and 'What am I encouraging others to be and to do?' we are back to theology since our proclamation is about God's activity, and our dealings with others aim ultimately at involving them in it. The words of the church point men to God's activity, announcing the Kingdom and its active ruler. The deeds of the church align themselves with the deeds of God.

If theological education is not the whole of ministerial training, it deserves a place of a quite different kind from many other aspects of training which in some cases rightly claim and in others clamour for our attention.

This insistence on the dominant role of theology in the training of the minister may appear somewhat archaic and un-

satisfactory to those who envisage a more progressive approach, though one suspects that true radicalism has less to do with adding on than with a revised understanding of what is already there. A good deal is heard, and probably always has been, about more practical work and more relevant courses, a far cry from this apparent obsession with theology. This request might be for one of several different things.

It could refer to techniques and training of the 'how-to-do-it' variety. In some seminaries this aspect of training has been sadly misnamed as 'practical theology'. It includes a wide range of topics, from methods of evangelism and counselling skills to church administration. It is hard to object to it on principle. A minister who knows how to do his job well will be of more help to the church than the good natured amateur, and is likely to have more confidence in himself. It should not be assumed that the required skills will always be the same if the minister is to enable the church to meet the demands of an historical situation. At the present time, for example, a case could be made out for acquiring the techniques of community development and of initiating effective change in institutions, including the church itself.

The objection to this emphasis on practical training only comes when it is not kept firmly in its place and is almost allowed to take control. An example which comes to mind is the contemporary interest in multi-media worship, which has a great deal to commend it, but one suspects that the interesting techniques of the media are not always subservient to the message! The communicator has not agonised over what should be said and subsequently asked how best he could now 'say' it. The techniques become an end-game, played for its own sake, and the communicator little more than a technician. The media has replaced the message, and if the media is itself the message in any sense, then the message it conveys is that technology is of far more interest than theology. Form has taken over from content. It is this tendency of a concern with the practical to trivialise that must be resisted, lest men know how to do it but not what they are doing it for, and know how to say it but have very little to say. Given that resistance, there is everything to commend a thorough training in the appropriate skills.

The request for more practical and relevant forms of training may however reflect the current tendency to question anything the relevance of which is not immediately obvious. Nobody questions the need for relevance as such. All education implies selection and the decision as to what to put in should be firmly controlled by the end in view. The content of the course should be related to the tasks of mission and ministry. It is these, rather than academic criteria for example, which should provide the principle of selection. Again, nobody questions the need for training to be seen to be relevant, if for no other reason than the motivation of those who are being trained! There is much to be said for making a course 'add up' in the student's mind at the beginning rather than at the end, by helping him to see a vision of the church and its ministry, and why, in the light of that, he is being asked to

spend the next few years in a particular way. Yet again, no one questions the need to work out some ideas in practice and to ask 'does it work?' so that during training the intellectual disciplines are made to inform experience and experience gives a sharper edge to reflection.

What should be questioned is the tendency to equate 'relevance' with what is regarded as immediately useful. What appears to be useful in the comparatively sheltered and idealistic atmosphere of a training college may quickly prove to be unworkable once outside in the actual ministerial situation. The man who has little more than his collection of good ideas is quickly bankrupt. He can only repeat other people's answers. He has no resources out of which to create his own. "One should wisely show himself a reservoir rather than a canal. A canal spreads water abroad as it receives it. A reservoir waits until it is filled before overflowing and communicating its superabundance without loss to itself". (Bernard of Clairvaux).

These remarks about techniques on the one hand and 'usefulness' on the other, whilst allowing that they represent legitimate claims in ministerial training, support the view that that part of training which we refer to as theological education remains in a class by itself. The insight it seeks to create into the activity of God underpins everything else.

So far we can hope for a large measure of agreement, but it is gained at the expense of saying nothing at all about the content of theology or its methods, about what we in fact say about God's activity and how we decide what to say. Here we are more likely to disagree, and in a short article I have no time to do much more than go my own way, which is not to suggest that I do not think there is room for any other way, or that I find disagreement unwelcome.

Whatever view is taken of the content and methods of theology, all could still agree that it is this above all else which gives direction to the church and to the ministry which enables the church to engage in mission. The theological question is in this sense an intensely practical question. Again, whatever view is taken of the content and methods of theology, all could still agree that the theological enterprise must take pride of place in ministerial training and is more significant than technical training and more lastingly useful than anything which is applicable in any immediate and over simple way. But some views of the content and methods of theology will give rise to a plea for more relevance in a third sense, additional to those concerning techniques and usefulness to which we have already referred. There is still a sense of distance between theology and the actual world in which God's mission is carried out. Theology remains self-contained, theoretical and difficult to apply in practice. "What has all that got to do with me?". It has an artificial rather than an integral relationship with the world in which we actually play our part.

This more profound (and those who take the view would add 'proper') unrelatedness arises when theology is regarded as a more or less completed body of knowledge which remains essentially unchanged by present circumstances. It is simply

there, and we arrive at what has to be said about God's activity by reading it off from the recognised sources. Theological education in its turn becomes a matter of passing on this established body of information and of learning what is already known. A clear example of such an approach is the now passing fashion of Biblical theology which apparently assumed that once you had systematised the Bible's views on this aspect of Christian truth, and within its own terms of reference, you had said all there was to be said. The content was fixed. It was valid irrespective of the present situation. Small wonder that it appeared to live in, or create a world of its own, rather than make creative contact with this one. Paying attention to scripture is always liable to be as creative as it is necessary, unlike the closed Biblical theology which sometimes results. Other examples of a closed theology can be found in the traditional creeds and doctrinal systems of the church when they are regarded as authoritative for today.

Even where the underlying view of theology is not as rigid, the way it is taught can leave that impression. Much of what goes for theology in ministerial training takes the form of information to be passed on whether it is knowledge of the Bible or of the history of doctrine or of what contemporary writers have managed to build into their theological systems. Most of this is necessary as long as it is understood to be equipping the student for the job and not the job itself. We need to know how Christians have talked about God's activity from Biblical times to the present day, the mistakes they have made which need not be repeated, and the fruitful avenues they have opened up. Even more we need to contemplate the reality of which they attempted to speak, all this by way of preparation for the task in hand. The task however is not to repeat their God-talk but to engage in our own. Theology ultimately is not something to be learned but something to be done. If theological education supplies the equipment but fails to teach men to use it, it has stopped short of its goal.

There is more than one reason why theology is not a body of more or less static information. Perhaps the most significant is the way in which our talk about God's activity is affected by the situation in which we do the talking. When for example we enquire as to what God did in Jesus of Nazareth there is continuity in that Christians of all ages appeal to the same events as the unique point of entry into an understanding of God's activity. But once we move beyond historical and textual considerations to ask about the significance of those events, the answers will be conditioned by the pressures under which we speak, the conceptual maps on which we now move, and all the other peculiarities of our particular vantage point. This is true of every attempt at God-talk, from the most ancient to the more recent, which is why their talk can never be entirely ours. To the extent to which we do not share Paul's world and his universe of discourse—and again it is not all discontinuity—we cannot share Paul's theology.

To take another example, when we enquire as to what God is doing now, there is continuity in that he is faithful and his activity is always consistent with his character as revealed in

Jesus. His manner and purpose will always be Christlike. There is discontinuity however in that what he does now is not the same as what he did then. It is radically affected by the situation in which he acts. He can only act in terms of that situation and do what is appropriate in the circumstances.

On both counts God-talk is affected by the context in which we do the talking but without becoming merely relative to it, because it constantly appeals to the story about Jesus and the long theological tradition to which it has given rise. God-talk cannot therefore repeat what has been said nor merely translate it into a modern idiom. It must prepare its own speech. How it is prepared or how theology is to be done needs a good deal of exploration which we cannot enter into here. What is clear is that the would-be theologian, eager to discover the nature of God's activity, and eager to enable the church to co-operate in what God is doing, must learn to live on the frontier between the Christian tradition and the contemporary world. The hard core of his training will teach him to pay rigorous attention to both, but above all to find words to speak as he lives between the two. Such theology will not be a slave to contemporary man but it will not be alien or unrelated in an unnecessary way, so that if he stumbles at least he does so over the true rock of offence.

If this is too intellectual an account of the matter, without succumbing to the anti-intellectualism which shows some signs of becoming fashionable, one may add that of course the intellect is but one aspect of the total person with whom any type of education should be concerned. The aim is not merely a theological mind but a theological animal. The man whose whole personality has been formed by the Christian tradition, through devotion, worship, action and community, as well as by study, and who is open to and aware of the world around him through learning and experience, is likely to make an admirable if not an academic 'theologian'. In his own person will be found the integrity required for that talk about God's activity which not only informs the church's task but is relevant or related to our present concerns in the profoundest sense.

It seemed to me less important to discuss in this article the practical implications for ministerial training, than the general understanding on which it is based, besides which there are other considerations to be taken into account. In any case, what is appropriate and possible in one place is not equally so in another. We do however need to question the concept of a theological college as traditionally understood. We must certainly challenge its monopoly. We need an imaginative search for alternative institutions, where theology could be king and servant, and people motivated to engage in it, where the frontier is in the foreground and not easily lost sight of in the middle distance, where there is an integral relationship between theology and mission, learning and experience, involvement and reflection, where techniques could be acquired and technology kept in its place, and where a theological style could be formative for a person as a whole.

I have in mind for example not a quasi-academic community but one that is actively engaged in mission in an

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actual situation. It would include both lay and ordained men and women, those well versed in the disciplines of the contemporary world and those schooled in the history of Christian thought and devotion. It would be immersed in the Liturgy on the one hand, but equally immersed in secular realities on the other. In these and other ways it would live consciously on the frontier and there do its theology without divorcing it from active commitment. The primary aim of such a community would be to share in the mission of God in that place, but because of its special expertise it could be a workshop with a useful if incidental contribution to make to the life of the wider church. In addition it would take into its integrated way of life those who are training to be ministers of the church. Having previously obtained the tools it is in some such setting that they might best learn how to use them. Here disparate parts could begin to form a whole. Here they could learn by doing. Here they might best be prepared to play a sustained and creative role in the life of the people of God.

M. H. TAYLOR

### **TRAINING FOR THE MINISTRY: AND FOR OTHER MINISTRIES TOO**

When in 1968 Cheshunt College, Cambridge, moved into the buildings of Westminster College and began joint working, many interesting prospects opened up. Cheshunt, founded in 1768 by the redoubtable Selina, Countess of Huntingdon, had become primarily (though never exclusively) a Congregational college, while Westminster was and is the college of the Presbyterian Church of England. The intimate co-operation of the two, intended to lead by stages to complete unification of their work, is a microcosm of the union which the two churches themselves will achieve in 1972.

This ecumenical venture enabled the Cheshunt buildings to be sold and a considerable sum of money released for the expansion of the joint colleges' activities—a very practical result of ecumenical effort. In October 1969 I was appointed to the staff of the joint colleges with the title of Director of Field Studies and Lay Training. My duties are very varied. A good deal of my time is naturally taken up with college responsibilities, and it is interesting to carry these out in a college of two denominations. Administratively Westminster and Cheshunt remain for the present separate entities, and co-operative working has been a form of education not only for students but for staff too. Fortunately good personal relations and a spirit of give and take have made things not too difficult.

One of the departments of training with which I am particularly concerned, which was inaugurated by my predecessor on the Cheshunt staff, John Geyer (who had the terser and more traditional title of Tutor), is the field study undertaken by final-year students. For a time the group of students in their last year went together to view some form of community activity; in one year, for example, the Scunthorpe Industrial Mission, the work of Coventry Cathedral, and the life and activity of Harlow New Town. The disadvantage seemed to

me to be the somewhat passive nature of these visits, so I have now substituted individual assignments I negotiate individually after discussion with each student of his particular interests, and I have found public bodies and voluntary societies so far willing and eager to help.

The Cambridge theological colleges have just set up a course for a Certificate in Pastoral Theology, of which I have been appointed part-time director, with the approval of the Governors of Cheshunt College. It is proposed to incorporate field study along similar lines. The field study so far done by Westminster and Cheshunt students, and that which will be done by the certificate candidates, is placed in the vacation, so that academic courses are not disrupted.

In both cases a substantial report is expected from the student, in which he is asked not merely for an account of what he has done, but for a theological assessment of it. Naturally he is helped to make this assessment; for example, I have so far issued to each of our students a set of questions to bear in mind while working, such as, 'How has my understanding of the Gospel been affected by this experience?' 'What parts of the college course have helped me to prepare for it?' 'How would I set about commending Christianity to the people I have met?' 'What is the experience of these people of the Christian Church?'

My appointment has also made it possible to introduce new forms of activity. One of these, which I believe to have proved its worth from the start, is the offer of a term in college to Congregational ministers (Congregational only for the moment, since this is strictly a Cheshunt responsibility) for a refresher course, shaped to meet individual needs, after 15 or 20 years' pastoral service.

Similar in design is the offer of a term for non-collegiate candidates for the Congregational ministry—men and women who are studying for the ministry while in other occupations, but who find it possible (which not all do) to take a term's leave of absence. The possibility of full-time study, and individual supervision, is proving to be of great value to those who have otherwise to struggle with unfamiliar material in their spare time, with the guidance only of local ministers in *their* spare time.

Both these schemes are expensive, since the problem of maintenance has to be faced, and at present only two places are available each term for both categories together, with the last-mentioned having a prior claim. But even with such small numbers involved, I find this a rewarding field of activity.

More problematic was the inauguration of Lay Training work. My question 'What is Lay Training?' provoked the response: 'We are appointing you to tell us'. So my first task was reflection on this question, and discussions with those who might be expected to know the answer.

It quickly became apparent that the phrase (which is not a good or attractive one in itself) could mean several different things. It could mean taking key figures from the churches to a specially designed centre and providing a high-level course

on some issue of contemporary importance. It could mean, at the other extreme, basic teaching of the Christian faith to the local church member. Obviously there are any number of other variants. Some of those I consulted believed that the greatest need was for training of the leaders of the local church in the special responsibilities committed to them; others saw my appointment as an opportunity to break away from past traditions and guide churches in facing up to the challenges of contemporary society. One possibility which seemed likely to develop without special planning was that I should be invited to speak about Lay Training to various bodies and councils within the church structure—and to write articles about it for periodicals.

Some theoretical possibilities seemed on further consideration to be excluded. It was obviously undesirable that I should try on my own to duplicate the kind of work being done by well-established institutions such as William Temple College, St. George's House, Windsor, or the Luton Industrial Mission, especially as some such institutions have experienced recruiting difficulties. I am not among those who believe that the local church has had its day: on the contrary I believe that if we were starting the Church from scratch to-day, we should attempt to create something like our pattern of local church life. On the other hand it seemed wrong to visit local churches simply to do what local churches exist to do as a normal part of their life. After all sermons and Church Meetings are methods of Lay Training too.

In practice I have followed somewhat pragmatic lines, taking up opportunities as they have presented themselves, while trying not to do myself what others could obviously do more effectively. One method has been the single-day conference for a group of local churches. In each case enquiries have been made beforehand from people on the spot as to what theme and approach would be most useful, and in each case there has been a preference for starting from the issues of the contemporary world and trying to think theologically about them, rather than more traditional approaches from the Bible or doctrine. We do try to end up by examining the teaching of Bible and Church on these issues—though often this is where it gets difficult. One conference happily concluded that we must read the newspapers in the light of our faith, but this is much easier said than done.

The conditions of my appointment make it possible to take over from the locality nearly all the routine work involved, which is important if the development of Lay Training is not to appear as one more demand on overworked local leaders. For example, when I was asked to conduct anniversary services at a Congregational church in Cheshire, I accepted the invitation on condition that I could hold a conference on the Sunday afternoon for about 20 other churches within reach. The local church was asked to provide accommodation (heated—it was November!) and a sandwich tea. From college I was able to send a letter to each of the churches with an invitation, and later a second letter with the programme and some questions for preliminary thought. The host church was released from

The missionaries of

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all obligation to pay me any fee or expenses, since all the cost was borne by the college. Later all those who participated, and also the churches which did not respond, received a report of the conference.

The assumption on which this approach is based is that the colleges exist for the service of the local churches, and that their facilities should be made available to help those churches to do their work.

The report which is sent afterwards is an important part of the procedure, since it provides a reminder of what was done and also suggests lines which may be followed up.

A more specific issue which is arising at the present time concerns the leadership of the local church. This has come to the fore largely through shortage of ministers, but if this provides the occasion, the underlying motive for giving serious thought to it is theological. It does not seem to accord with the New Testament, and it certainly does not accord with the traditions of the English Free Churches, to commit responsibility for leadership entirely to the ordained ministry. The discussion (at times quite warm) between Congregationalists and Presbyterians over the nature of the offices of the elder and the deacon has focussed new attention on the nature of the leadership which lay people can give. My experience of the training of lay leaders is so far minimal, but I believe that this is a matter to which we shall have to give increasing attention.

Another prospect now opening up is co-operation with the Extra-Mural Board of Cambridge University. Obviously there is nothing very new about this kind of work; Baptists will know, for example, of the activities of Paul Ballard in South Wales. But it is in large measure a new departure for us, and an example of that co-operation with secular bodies which may become increasingly important in the years ahead.

These are specimens of the work in which I have been engaged or which is now planned. Clearly it is a somewhat hit-and-miss procedure at present, but my appointment is a recognition by the Congregational Church and by one of its colleges of the need to develop the work of Lay Training. The Congregational College at Manchester is also branching out into this work.

The opportunity may develop soon for making this work more systematic, though I am among those who suspect that the Church has suffered more from over-organisation than from the untidiness which is so obvious to unfriendly critics.

One incentive in this direction will be the formation of the United Reformed Church, when it comes into being. The whole of the work of the Church will need to be replanned, if only because Congregationalists and Presbyterians differ in their methods in a surprising number of ways. This compulsory rethinking is perhaps in itself a strong argument in favour of union. It is to be hoped that each of the 12 provinces of the new church will have a structure (or, what may be better, a single person) responsible for Lay Training work.

Secondly, there is clearly an obligation on all of us to make our work as ecumenical as possible, and it is with this in mind

that we are holding at Cheshunt this autumn a consultation on Lay Training (though we are avoiding the title) at which a wide range of denominations will be represented.

What we have done so far has been on a very small scale, and even the plans are hardly revolutionary. But through the facilities and resources which the coming together of Westminster and Cheshunt have made available we have been able to widen the scope of college service to the churches, and move towards a stage where the theological college is regarded as the centre of general educational work in its region, and not a seminary for the training of the ordained ministry alone. A move into new spheres of activity is surely a more positive response to the declining number of ministerial candidates than the mere closing of colleges.

The Free Churches have always taken the education of the ministry fairly seriously; surely it is time now to take the education of Church Members with a like seriousness? After all, we have a great many more members than ministers, but the time and money we devote to serious programmes of lay education does not compare with what we spend on ministerial.

STEPHEN MAYOR

## THE MINISTRY OF ELDERS

### 1. The Origins of Eldership

The title "Elder" comes down to us "from a period when age was considered an indispensable condition of leadership in the Community" (Encyclopaedia Britannica) and its first usage is lost in antiquity. In many ancient civilisations authority was vested in those whose age or experience fitted them to rule and in many cases such leaders took a title equivalent to our English word "elder".

The children of Israel are known to have had elders from the time of the Egyptian captivity (Exodus 3. 16). From the establishment of God's covenant with them at Sinai their number appears to have been fixed at seventy (Exodus 24. 1) and it was upon these seventy elders that the Spirit came to enable them to share with Moses responsibility for the welfare of the people. (Numbers 11. 25).

During the occupation of the promised land, throughout the monarchy, the exile and the return from captivity, the elders of Israel continued to exercise considerable influence.

By New Testament times, however, the elders had lost their civil authority. Seventy-one of their numbers constituted the Sanhedrin, the supreme authority in Jewish religious matters, and in each local synagogue a local council of elders (seven in number in even the smallest community according to the Mishna) presided over by the ruler of the Synagogue, were responsible for its pastoral care and discipline.

### 2. The Place of Elders in the New Testament Churches

The New Testament does not provide us with any fixed and final pattern of ministry as the period it describes was one of rapid growth with the formation of local churches in widely different places. There is no reason to assume that the churches formed among Gentile converts necessarily followed the exact pattern of the church in Jerusalem.

It is clear, however, that the concept of eldership was widely adopted throughout the early churches. Elders had a prominent place in the Jerusalem church and played a leading role in the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15. 4, 6, 22, 23). But when Paul and Barnabas had preached the Gospel and made converts in Galatia, they (on their return journey) were careful "to appoint elders in every church" (Acts 14. 23). Later, Paul enjoined Titus "to appoint elders in every town" (Titus 1. 5).

These elders, as is clear from the address Paul gave to those from Ephesus at Miletus, were responsible for the spiritual oversight of their congregation and for this reason were called *episkopoi* (Acts 20. 28). This duty is seen in Peter's charge to his fellow elders (1 Peter 5. 1-2) to be the pastoral care of "the flock of God".

Certain elders were "preaching elders" as is clear from Paul's instructions to Timothy (1 Timothy 5. 17) and James, in his letter, refers to the elders' Ministry of visiting and praying for the sick (James 5. 14-15).

The New Testament churches were under the oversight of elders, though never, it appears, under a single elder or overseer, and they were responsible for the spiritual welfare of each believer.

### 3. Some Modern Schemes for Pastoral Caring

It must be admitted that in most Baptist churches served by a settled Minister the pastoral work is the single-handed responsibility of the Minister. He is expected to undertake it in all its aspects and no-one else's ministry is as readily acceptable. It must also be admitted that in most churches of a reasonable size, the Minister finds the task impossible for any one man's time and strength. When an emergency arises "the church officers" i.e. the Minister, Secretary and Treasurer, may act together as an ad hoc pastoral committee, but in a church of reasonable size they are hardly likely to be the people who have time to work regularly together as an eldership.

In some churches, the deacons have been asked to assist with the pastoral work of the church. Schemes of dividing up the membership, alphabetically, geographically or according to where members normally sit in church, have been adopted. Special Deacons' Meetings for spiritual welfare and pastoral concern have also been tried in order to avoid such matters being rushed items at the end of the Deacons' Agenda. Such well intentioned schemes often founder because persons gifted and suitable as deacons are not necessarily the right folk for visitation and pastoral counselling, and it is by no means certain that they will have time to be effective both as deacons and elders.

In churches where there is no Minister, certain members make themselves responsible to visit the sick, but in spite of such laudable individual efforts, the general attitude is to concentrate on keeping the doors open and the pulpit filled, and, with notable exceptions, little systematic pastoral work is undertaken.

Look-out committees and Church Visitors can do valuable work in spotting absentees and caring for the sick, but so often they report their reception in the oft-repeated rebuke: "When

is the Minister coming?" and so their efforts place an even greater burden on their already overburdened Minister. So often in our Churches pastoral work has been casual and inefficient, occasional and not sustained. Clearly there must be some better way, and this is in

### 4. The Revival of the Ministry of Elders Today

In *The Pattern of the Church* (Lutterworth Press, 1963) the two requirements of the local church's ministry are described as follows: (p. 137).

"Here are two main requirements; one has to do with the fabric of the church and the day to day organisation and administration of the church's work, the other has to do with the pastoral care of the membership and the various organisations and societies . . . as well as with interviewing of applicants for membership and the disciplining of members . . . those with gifts for these two specific forms of service are likely to emerge as the leaders of the community . . . Those with special responsibility for administration will be called deacons, and those with special responsibility in pastoral care will be called elders . . ."

A number of churches, large and smaller, have revived the ministry of elders of recent years, though it is clear that this is a revival of a much earlier practice and that it is no new idea. This can be seen in Thomas Helwys' declaration of faith dated 1611 which stated: "That the Officers of every church or congregation are either *Elders*, who by their office do especially lead the flock concerning their souls . . . or *Deacons*, men and women who by their office relieve the necessities of the poor and impotent brethren concerning their bodies".

It is readily granted by those who have revived the office of Elder that in effect it has never ceased in that pastors have continued throughout to be inducted to the pastoral charge of local churches, but it is strongly argued that it is not a task to be undertaken single-handed; (the New Testament never speaks of a single elder); that it is tragic when the pastoral work ceases during an interregnum, and that in churches served regularly by our faithful lay-preachers pastoral caring can be sadly lacking.

### 5. The Role of Local Church Elders in Ministry Tomorrow

*Ministry Tomorrow*, the Report of the Commission on the Ministry (1970) forecasts a gradual decrease in the number of fulltime ministers. To maintain the ministry of the Word and Sacrament it is proposed that "supplementary" ministers be trained and recognised. Such ministers, it is understood, would be required to support themselves by their secular occupation or profession. There will, therefore, be little time and energy left for pastoral work if the supplementary minister is free only at the weekend; it is also doubtful whether the fulltime men will be able to exercise pastoral care over the whole community of a church of 300 members. Hence, the appointment of local church elders will be essential.

It must also be apparent that many of the 683 churches listed as having under 40 members will not be able to, or will not be willing to group with other churches to form a

## WEST HAM CENTRAL MISSION

409 Barking Road, Plaistow, London, E13 8AL

My dear Brother Minister,

I spend quite a fair amount of my time dealing with the propaganda work of the Mission. We are engaged in a programme which demands an income over and above our normal receipts by some £20,000 a year, and I have to keep our name and our work before the churches.

It is somewhat of a disappointment to be told after the end of a visit to a church, "We had no idea that your work was so extensive" and I must confess that when people say this to me I groan deeply within myself and wonder what I have been up to, or not been up to!

Nevertheless, I press on and I am writing to ask for your help. We have a good story to tell and I would like it to be told in your church in some way. Let me spell out one or two ways in which it can be done, for your consideration.

1. **BY DEPUTATION.** We are glad to send a deputation speaker to churches within striking distance if we can fit it in with the normal pattern of our work. We have no special deputation staff but if we can fit in an engagement we will gladly do so. I myself would be delighted to be invited to take a Sunday in your Church, or even a week end. I am fully booked for 1972 but my 1973 diary has plenty of spare week ends at the moment, and you may like to consider that I could come to your church on one of them. I can come on the Sunday as a deputation speaker and talk about the Mission, and most churches prefer me to do it this way. On the other hand I can fit in to a special Sunday, such as Church Anniversary, and talk to your people about the Mission on a Saturday night, if you still hold such meetings.

2. **BY USE OF THE FILMSTRIP.** We have a very good filmstrip which has been enthusiastically received in all kinds of churches up and down the country. We have 25 copies available, and we send out the filmstrip without charge, although of course, we like to have a collection or a donation. There is a duplicated manuscript to go with the filmstrip, or alternatively there is a taped recording of the manuscript, which I have made for those people who can provide a tape recorder. Incidentally, there is a special manuscript for Sunday Schools to meet their particular needs. If we could get this filmstrip into all our churches, then the battle of propaganda would be almost won, and I would ask you to be kind enough to commend the filmstrip to the leaders of your organisations. When you or your people write, I should be grateful if they would let us have alternative dates as the demand at certain periods is extremely heavy.

Let me finish on a note of thanksgiving. Our financial year ends in March each year, and in the year ending March 1972 we had the largest income in the history of the Mission, with a most welcome increase of gifts from our friends in the churches, for which we thank God, and we also thank His people.

May God's blessing be on you and your loved ones, and on your ministry.

Yours very sincerely,

STANLEY TURL  
Superintendent of the West Ham Central Mission

financially viable unit. Already they are too small to qualify for pastoral oversight under the Home Mission Fund, and must rely upon the valued services of Lay Preachers for their Sunday ministry. We, like St. Paul, ought not to be able to rest until local elders are appointed to take responsibility for the spiritual wellbeing of their members. It would clearly be a tragedy if the result of *Ministry Tomorrow* was a decrease of pastoral caring, and one scriptural and practical way of avoiding this eventuality would be to encourage, on a much wider scale than hitherto, the revival of local church elders.

### 6. The Appointment and Ministry of Elders

#### (a) Duties and Responsibilities

A typical extract from a Baptist church's rules concerning the duties of elders reads "The Elders, with the Pastor, are responsible for the spiritual oversight of the Church and the care of its members". A helpful extract on the same subject from the Society of Friends' publication *Church Government* states that elders are "to cherish an interest in the spiritual welfare of all their fellow members, to exercise a watchful care and affectionate oversight, and especially to show sympathy with younger members, that they may be drawn to a living experimental faith in Christ". A manual of Church Doctrine published by the Church of Scotland expresses the duties of an elder in this way, p. 101. "They are to assist in seeking the fruit of the Word sown among the people by the ministry, and to assist in the discipline of communicants and in visiting the sick."

If elders are to fulfil their ministry as suggested in the foregoing extracts and have adequate time for the prayer which must undergird such a ministry, they would need to be set free from all other church responsibilities.

It is granted that in a small fellowship it may be possible for a local church elder to function as a deacon or church officer at the same time, but there seems much to support the separation of an elder to his sole responsibility.

#### (b) Gifts and qualities

Baptist Churches with experience of local church elders urge that an elder must be seen to be an elder before he is appointed as an elder and they look upon the appointment as "an act of recognition by the Church Meeting of one who has already given evidence of possessing both pastoral gifts and a pastoral heart". At the same time it is clear that anyone so appointed must have the confidence of the Church and be a man of blameless character. (1 Tim. 3. 1-7). Furthermore, he should not be a new convert but a man of some Christian experience with a good reputation outside the Church.

It must be made clear that although an elder should be someone of experience possessing the confidence of the members, he need not necessarily be elderly. And, indeed, if he were, he might be quite unable to sustain the burden of regular pastoral work. The office of elder is therefore to be distinguished from the practice of bestowing the title "elder"—as a synonym for life-deacon, when the time arrives for an elderly deacon to be put out to "pastoral grass"!

### (c) *Selection and appointment*

This may be taken to be the responsibility of the local church or churches concerned. The Particular Baptist Confession of 1644 declares: 'Each church has power given them from Christ for their better wellbeing, to choose to themselves meet persons into the office of Pastors, Teachers, Elders, Deacons . . .'

However, in exercising this privilege it would be wise to allow the Minister, and any existing elders, to put forward the names, rather than to allow open nominations. If the election of an elder is the recognition of one who is already exercising the pastoral gift of an elder, it follows that the number of elders will be determined by the number of such people who are raised up in the local church at any particular time. When the said person consents to let his name go forward, his name should be presented to the Church on a ballot paper requiring only a simple "yes" or no", it having been previously agreed what percentage of support is necessary to enable the future elder to do his task with the confidence of his fellow church members. The period of service should also be previously agreed; though a few of our churches, like some sections of the Presbyterian Church, think it should be for life.

### (d) *Recognition and acceptance*

Following the appointment of local church elders it is important that they should be recognised and received by the local congregation during its Sunday worship or even at a specially convened weeknight service. The scriptural precedent set and recorded in Acts 14. 23 indicates a dignified occasion including the laying-on of hands. The fact remains, however, that even if the members stand at such a service to indicate their acceptance of their new elder(s) it may require some period of re-education before they are prepared to accept their oversight and receive the ministry of anyone but the Minister.

### **7. The Elders' Relationship with the Deacons**

As has been suggested, it may take some time before church members forget the long-standing tradition of expecting the Minister to do all the pastoral work and are ready to accept their elders and the new pattern of pastoral work. It is also clear that it will require patience and tolerance on both sides to establish a happy working relationship between the elders and the deacons. It is strongly urged by those who have contributed a progress report on the working of elders in the local church that it is essential to maintain the closest possible liaison between elders and deacons, and for them to arrive at a mutual recognition of their respective responsibilities and their difference of office. This may involve deacons relinquishing some of their former responsibilities in matters of membership, etc. It will therefore require Christian tolerance all round, trust on the part of the deacons and patient understanding on the part of the elders.

It is not easy to draw a hard and fast line between their respective duties, but experience has proved that it has been possible to achieve a satisfactory working arrangement. For this reason it would be unwise at the commencement of such a scheme to attempt to define every detail of their separate

responsibilities, in, for example, a set of new rules until in practice a division of labour appropriate to the particular local church and its needs is discovered and accepted.

### **8. The Authority of Elders in the Local Church**

The office of elder in a local Baptist Church should not carry the authoritarian overtones sometimes associated with elders in the Scottish kirk, and such an appointment does not alter and need not endanger, the fundamental Baptist principle of congregational church government.

The one, absolute authority in the Church, local and universal, is the Risen Lord Jesus, and He has promised to be present with each successive generation of His disciples and to guide them by His Spirit as they set themselves to understand and apply His laws. It is because of this fact alone that we make our claim; "Every local community thus constituted is regarded by us as both enabled and responsible for self-government through His indwelling Spirit" (Baptist reply to the Lambeth Appeal, 1926).

Our churches are accustomed when calling a minister to give him authority and responsibility to be their pastor, to lead the worship, to preach and teach, to visit and evangelise. In a word, he is given freedom to exercise his ministry as the Spirit of God may lead him.

Any elders appointed would need a similar authority and freedom so that they might carry out their ministry of the pastoral caring of members and church organisations without constant reference to the Church Meeting.

In carrying out their ministry elders would, of course, bring to the Church Meeting any applications for membership and baptism, and recommendations concerning the church roll and possible removal of names, with the exception of confidential information not suitable for general dissemination.

### **9. The Desirability of Training for both Deacons and Elders**

It is sufficient to quote again from *The Pattern of the Church* (p. 138) where it is suggested that one reason why church members do not take readily to pastoral work undertaken by one of their fellow church members as compared with the Minister is that subconsciously they are feeling "that the one has training and is shown to have recognised qualifications and the other has not".

The writer goes on to suggest: "It is important, therefore, that deacons and elders should be required to undergo training during the initial period of their ministry, and that from time to time they should make themselves available for instruction on new ideas and methods. Instead of having all our theological colleges concentrating on training for ministry of Word and Sacraments, there may even be a case for certain colleges devoting themselves to courses of a quite different kind for men and women called upon to serve the church in this way".

If this is a counsel of perfection, and impossible of attainment, it would be highly desirable to implement as soon as possible a subsequent suggestion made on p. 150 of the same book, namely: "(Associations) should . . . accept responsibility for the training of the various ministries within the local

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church, especially those of deacon and elder". Such training for elders could include amongst practical pastoralia, pastoral counselling and a knowledge of the service and facilities offered by Social Security.

### 10. The Place of Elders in Tomorrow's Church

I have sought to make out a case for the reconsideration and revival of the New Testament office of elder, but this does not mean that I think it is essential to reproduce the actual title "elder". Some will be happy with it, as with that of "pastor" and "deacons". A possible suggestion would be to call them Church Counsellors. However, let no-one be put off a consideration of the essential pastoral ministry of elders by a rejection of the name. To sum up:

(i) *In Churches served by a Minister*, the elders would work in partnership and form a pastoral team, meeting the Minister each week. This would be a permanent solution to relieve the burden of undischarged pastoral work which weighs heavily on many conscientious ministers.

(ii) *In Churches served by Lay Preachers*, whether in villages or in down-town situations, the elders would provide on-the-spot pastoral caring and nothing else could make such a valuable contribution to the continuance and future revival of such fellowships than that.

(iii) *In Ministry Tomorrow* when the plans suggested in that report are implemented for the grouping of churches and the employment of men who can support themselves in secular occupations as "Supplementary" ministers, it will be vitally necessary to appoint elders to undertake the pastoral caring of each separate fellowship. Men who will be ready and able to undertake whatever pastoral caring became apparent Sunday by Sunday, as early as possible during the following week. Paul and Barnabas were not content until elders were appointed in every church (Acts 14. 23). Can we today possibly be happy with a lower standard? EDMUND HEDDLE

### THE DISTINCTIVE ROLE OF THE MINISTER IN PASTORAL COUNSELLING

There are a number of roles that each of us can play in life; some like husband or son or father are fairly universal and the rules for playing them are widely understood in any class or society. In addition to those roles which belong to the family there are those which tie us into a wider society: the most characteristic of these are those which we derive from our occupation. As we are seen to be a tinker or tailor so others have certain expectations of us which it is necessary for us to fulfil if we are going to be regarded by them as having any credibility at all. Like many other roles that of clergyman is compounded of a number of fairly distinct subsidiary roles and it is in so far as he meets people's expectation within them and as they are compatible one with the other that a minister remains credible.

One of the roles which the minister has played is that of counsellor or healer. There is a close link between salvation and healing and although the doctor in our society has become

the approved healer the minister is, via the pastoral counselling movement, becoming more clearly associated with healing again. For various reasons which will be discussed below I believe that there is an enormous range in the effectiveness of ministers as far as healing is concerned which ranges from the destructive to the most therapeutic. Our way into an understanding of these issues can be through an understanding of the interaction of the various roles which a minister can play.

The role that we play in life is not something which we can arbitrarily decide for ourselves. We cannot just decide to be something or the other and so become, for as there are two other prerequisites, the preparation or training and the endorsement by others in the role. This applies to such homely roles as husband or father and certainly to the roles played by the minister. Society is at pains to protect itself from those who, despite the absence of preparation and confirmation, claim a certain role; either the Law or, if sufficiently inappropriate, Psychiatry, act on behalf of society in order to ensure that this does not continue to happen.

Amongst the many roles which the minister plays are preacher, priest, teacher, leader and counsellor. Each of these in its own way is distinctive and only to some extent do they overlap. It is fairly clear that clergymen differ in their talents for filling these roles and, in addition, these roles may be severely limited by the training received and the expectations held for the minister, in particular by his flock. We shall be seeing below that these roles can at times be in conflict one with the other and, in particular, that success in one role may so determine the expectations of people for the minister that it makes another role almost impossible. Further, it may be that the very characteristics of success in one role mitigate against the development of those characteristics which are known to be those of the effective counsellor.

Although many ministers are already effective counsellors without perhaps recognising that this is what they are, I feel there is sometimes a rather naive belief on first learning about pastoral counselling that 'doing a bit of counselling' is a good thing and can be done by anyone just by the doing. (A rather grotesque misunderstanding of pastoral counselling was shown by a veterinary surgeon who wrote to me asking for a reprint of an article I had written called "Psychological disorder and the training for pastoral care").

There is now an impressive amount of information about those characteristics of the counsellor which are associated with positive and healthy changes in the client. Unfortunately the reverse is also true in that if these characteristics are absent or the opposite are present then counselling may not just be ineffective, but may be harmful. This frightening idea has profound implications both for the church as well as other counselling situations. It raises many questions such as should we actively dissuade those who lack these characteristics from counselling? Similarly, how do we deal with the minister who is convinced he is helpful when all the evidence is to the contrary? The situation is not quite as desperate as is suggested by these questions as many who do become effective coun-

sellors are drawn into this kind of activity because they already have the requisite characteristics and those who are keen to become effective can take appropriate steps to equip themselves in such a way as to see that they are developed.

The first and perhaps the most important characteristic is genuineness. By genuineness I mean that the counsellor is able to be himself in a consistent, open, predictable way which does not allow him to shelter behind the facade of a 'professional' role. This genuineness enables the client to begin to trust in another person and to find in the relationship a positively motivating context in which he can explore himself and the changes he must make.

It may be easier to recognise genuineness by looking at the reverse. We could say this occurred when the minister was inconsistent and phoney, taking refuge behind a professional facade. This might be exemplified by a minister attempting to meet a client's problem by offering the orthodox prescription which lacks the conviction of the minister's total identification with the notion. That is to say he offers what both he and the client could have said a minister might have said to any person presenting that particular problem. The important point to recognise is that it could be any minister dealing with any patient quite independent of the real people who are seeking or giving the advice. It is as if the minister is saying: "I, your minister, am saying this", or, "As your minister I say this", rather than "I, who happen to be your minister, say this", or, even better still, "I say this".

Instead of being himself, the minister can employ a number of strategies in order to avoid a person to person confrontation. The minister can strive to emulate the psychiatrist by adopting clinical-like manoeuvres of filing cabinets, folders, appointments, notes and histories. The message then becomes "Despite the fact that I am your minister as your therapist I say . . ." This is not meant to deny the reality of the ministerial role, but rather that it is possible for the role itself to prevent a real meeting of persons.

The minister need not import a role in order to find a refuge because he can bring his preacher's or teacher's or priest's role into the counselling situation. These can effectively mitigate against genuineness as the minister strives to be a counsellor: in the first instance the 'hywl' and exhortation and in the second the exposition gets in the way of that intimate relationship which is essential for effective counselling. The separateness and remoteness of the priest make his contact with a client fairly tenuous.

The second characteristic is nonpossessive warmth. This is that characteristic which enables the counsellor to indicate his interest in and commitment to his client and his unconditional acceptance of the client as a real person; while leaving the client a free agent unconfined of emotional strings which come from the minister's own needs. The unconditional acceptance of the other person does not mean that the counsellor approves of all the behaviour, however outrageous, of the client, but while holding him to have a responsibility for his behaviour does not reject him as a person because of it. Perhaps another

way of putting this would be to say that the minister offers the kind of love which leaves the client free. It is the non-possessive warmth which enables the client to accept those reflections which he gets from the counsellor which shows him what he is.

Possessive warmth is the opposite of this characteristic. It finds its expression in the kind of relationship in which the counsellor's continued interest and respect are conditional upon the conformity and agreement of the client. If the client sees the minister as a potentially helpful person then, rather than risk being without help, he conforms to the constraints. In the pastoral situation in order for the client to remain a centre of concern he must accept membership of the counsellor's flock, subscribe to his way, take his salvation. Some who are popularly called charismatic use their charisma in the counselling situation in the same way as they do in the pulpit and just as in the preaching situation there is no effective meeting of persons so there is none in the study because of the possessive warmth which gets in the way.

Lastly there is Accurate empathy. This is the ability of the counsellor to perceive the thoughts and feelings of the client and to communicate with him that he has understood. In order to do this the counsellor must be open to those subtle minute clues which we all give to others about the way in which we see ourselves and our world. Many of these clues are non-verbal—for example: a hesitation in speech, trembling, sweating, unnecessary rearrangement of clothes, etc. Having recognised what the client is trying to say he has then to use the words which the client himself is able to comprehend and indeed what he has been trying to say.

It is clear that Inaccurate empathy is the characteristic of the counsellor who either does not perceive or who fails to communicate. There seem to be three aspects of inaccurate empathy. Firstly there is the failure of the counsellor to interpret aright the verbal and nonverbal messages which the client is giving him. Secondly, and this may in part account for the previous aspect, the preconceptions which the counsellor might have on behalf of the client to the extent that his own thoughts blind him to the real message. Lastly, this is again linked to the previous two aspects and also to other roles he might play, there is the language with which he as minister construes his view of the world. The language of theology is highly conceptualised and when used as part of a set of speculative theories it gives an individual little purchase on those affairs of life which are likely to take him to a minister for counselling. Words like salvation, sin, redemption, justification and sanctification have little relevance for a bereaved middle aged man who turns to a minister for help, unless they are already firmly part of his world view. This the minister would need to discover rather than assume. I am not arguing that they would not become part of the discourse, but rather they are not part until the minister is able in an empathetic way to use them knowing that they are acceptable and appropriate. Unless he is careful the language he uses can be a bolster to the facade rather than an intimation of the real person.

It would be quite wrong to leave the impression that the minister, unless he is a very special person, should not attempt to counsel those who come to him or that pastoral counselling was a new technique recently introduced to the minister's armamentarium. The minister, as we noted earlier, is what he is because of the expectations of others. Although many may not expect him to be a counsellor in the current sense of the word they do see in him a resource point of real value to them. This is for the minister a kind of investment on which he may draw but which he squanders to the peril of the community. This asset enables him to exploit and develop the characteristics which we have been talking about and with time a process of education will occur in which the community will come to expect more precisely the kind of help which is available through counselling.

We have been talking about the role of the minister in pastoral counselling and we have been using the ideas which are currently available. This should not blind us to the fact that for centuries ministers have been pastoral counsellors. Perhaps one of the most engaging accounts which illustrates this is that of the minister which appears in "The Deserted Village" by Oliver Goldsmith. It is possible to see in this account many of the things we have been discussing. The attitude and expectations of his flock are made quite clear when we read of those who 'claimed kindred there and had his claims allowed'.

That he regarded a talking relationship as important is revealed by:

"The broken soldier kindly bade to stay,  
Sat by his fire and talked the night away"

and that in certain circumstances his ministrations were effective we can gather from:

"... At his control,

Despair and anguish fled the struggling soul".

The three characteristics of the effective counsellor we find described in:

"Unpracticed he to fawn, or seek for power,  
By doctrines fashioned to the varying hour;  
And as a bird each fond endearment tries,  
To tempt its new fledged offspring to the skies";

and

"He watched and wept, he prayed and felt for all".

There is one marked difference which the minister has from the psychiatrist and it is one which the psychiatrist envies, namely, the community to which the minister belongs. The minister's community is far more enduring than the psychiatrist's; it is committed to forgiving and caring and it gives, as it were, the minister his right to counsel in a way which supports him and those he counsels.

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