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AN EARLY CHRISTIAN CONCEPTION OF THE PASTORAL OFFICE

The early Christian people were quick to acknowledge that far more is required of a minister than the ability to preach. There is nothing in the literature of the early centuries to suggest that the importance of preaching and teaching was in any way minimised, but alongside their rightful emphasis on the necessity for good communication there is a deep concern for the pastoral care of the people of God. In this article I would like, largely with the aid of John Chrysostom's example and writing, to describe the pastor's function, as he understood it, then go on to discuss two of the problems faced by Christian ministers in the Early Church and say something in closing about the pastor's ambition.

Although John Chrysostom's ministry belongs to the late fourth and early fifth centuries, he has important things to say to us as Christian ministers in the contemporary world. It will be remembered that John was born at Antioch in Syria in the middle of the fourth century and became the city's leading preacher. After exercising a widely influential pulpit ministry in Antioch for about twelve years, he was appointed, utterly against his will, to the bishopric of Constantinople. A saintly man, he was ill cast for the new responsibility. John found himself surrounded by time-serving, materialistically-minded clerics and courtiers. His outspoken preaching soon came to the ears of those in authority, and some of the women at court, notably the Empress herself, soon took exception to his blunt, unadorned statements about immorality and spiritual indifference. On occasions, John may have been unwise or indiscreet but his own passion for holiness of life and his enthusiasm for the Word of God is, without question, commendable and exemplary. In course of time he was exiled, being made, though a desperately sick man, to tramp day after day without sufficient rest, until in the end he died of physical exhaustion. Throughout his life, John had been a great admirer of the Apostle Paul. In one of his earlier sermons about Paul's ministry, he said something which was to become almost autobiographical.

"They drove him into exile . . . They would not allow him to remain still in one place; but through their plots and their orders of expulsion they drove the physician from pillar to post so that all could hear the message from his mouth . . . so let us give thanks to our God who is so skilful in contriving; . . . and let us pray that we may come to those same good things through the greatness and loving kindness of our Lord Jesus Christ."¹

On any reckoning John was a saint, but in this article we shall examine something of his work as a pastor. We turn first to consider John's understanding of the role of the pastor.

In the course of John's preaching he frequently makes use of a number of vivid metaphors which describe some of the preacher's responsibilities. He is likened to a herald, a schoolmaster, a fisherman and a physician. Similarly, with his love of graphic language and meaningful illustration, John describes the function of the pastor with the aid of some colourful and imaginative word pictures. He believes that no work is more demanding than that of a pastor. He would certainly have agreed with the words written later by Gregory the Great:

"No one ventures to teach any art unless he has learned it after deep thought. With what rashness, then, would the pastoral office be undertaken by the unfit, seeing that the government of souls is the art of arts."²

One of John's contemporaries, Gregory Nazianzen, had described pastoral responsibility in almost identical terms:

"To rule men is the art of arts, and the science of sciences, for man is a being of diverse and manifold character."³

For this reason, only an unthinking fool would take up the responsibility without a clear and compelling sense of call. Several early Christian writers make a special point of emphasising the serious responsibilities involved in the pastoral office. A minister is not merely accountable to God for the management of his own spiritual life; other people have been entrusted to his care. These early Christian ministers took seriously the exhortations of the New Testament such as that found at the close of the Epistle to the Hebrews:

"Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls as men who will have to give account. Let them do this joyfully and not sadly."
(Hebrews 13:17)

The thought that one day they would be answerable to God for the way they had expressed their pastoral concern drove some of them to think deeply about the work of a pastor.

John believes that the pastor must serve the congregation as a *skilled navigator*. In his impressive work, *On the Priesthood*, he offers an explanation as to why, in the first instance, he was horrified at the thought of entering the Christian ministry. He found himself daunted by "the great difficulty of the work", and uses this characteristically thought-provoking illustration to point out that anybody would be afraid of the pastoral office if he thought seriously about the immense responsibility which the work entailed:

"If any one were to bring a merchant-vessel of large tonnage, filled with rowers and weighed down with a costly freight, and were to seat me at the rudder and command me to cross the Aegean or Etruscan Sea, I should have recoiled at his first words. If any one had asked me my reason, I should have replied 'lest I should sink the ship'! . . . 'I know how weak and puny is my own soul; I know the magnitude of that ministry and the great difficulty of the work. More billows vex the soul of the Priest than the gales which trouble the sea.'"⁴

John here reminds us that other people are committed to the care of the Christian minister. The welfare of the ship is, from a human point of view, dependent upon his skilful control. Obviously, this is only one aspect of the truth and if it were the whole story *no* man would have the nerve to set his hand to the task. Yet, although we rely utterly and completely on the grace and wisdom which is most certainly promised, this must never be an excuse for irresponsible actions or unworthy behaviour. Although the biblical writers emphasise that the work is God's and not ours, and can only effectively be undertaken in the strength which He supplies, we must also accept the fact that the biblical revelation lays necessary emphasis in appropriate contexts on human responsibility. In the rich Old Testament prophetic tradition, God's servant is a watchman. The lives of others had been entrusted to his care. In the teaching of the New Testament, the idea of stewardship clearly emerges in the Christian understanding of service. A man of God is called to give an account of his work as a faithful steward. Therefore, every pastor needs to acknowledge the awesome responsibility of his task. To be lighthearted about it or flippant is no less serious than the opposite error of arrogant activism which looks upon God as an occasional helper, useful in times of particular stress, but otherwise not specially

required. The navigator realises that the destiny of others has, from a human point of view, been committed to his skilful care and so he strives to bring the travellers home. The earnest prayers, gracious conversation, rich example and inspiring leadership of a man of God in the pastoral office can be used to steer a 'ship' in the right direction and guide it away from the rocks and quicksands which are most certainly there, but which the skilled navigator can avoid.

But the metaphor of the pastor as navigator suggests that all the members are merely passengers. Truth to tell, most ministers regret the fact that a fair number certainly are! John has another portrait to remind us that it is the pastor's responsibility to keep the local company of Christian people, or the Body of Christ, effectively fit. The minister is portrayed as an *expert trainer*. If the body is to be healthy and thus useful in the world, there must be a servant of God who has accepted this responsibility of training:

"For the Church is Christ's own Body, according to the blessed Paul; and he who is entrusted with the task of developing it into health and beauty should look round at every point . . . and in short he should make it worthy, so far as lies within human power, of the pure and blessed Head which it possesses. If those who are eager for the condition of body befitting an athlete need physicians and trainers and careful diet and continual exercise. . . how shall they who have received the task of attending to this Body which has to contend not against flesh and blood, but against the unseen powers, be able to guard it spotless and sound, unless they far exceed human wisdom and understand all treatment needful for the soul?"⁵

Therefore, the pastor needs to know which elements in the life of the church provide it with good nourishing food, essential exercise, fresh air and revitalising leisure. What skill is needed here. Some men appear to fail because they drive people too hard and Christian responsibility becomes utterly exhausting. The congregation is constantly exhorted to do more and more, and the members are frequently rebuked because they have failed to attain to the expected ideal. Other pastors can fail because they do not demand enough of the Body of Christ in its local expression. It becomes lazy, lethargic, lacking in power and essential vigour. The expert trainer knows how to bring the body and its energies to maximum potential without producing utter weariness and demoralising collapse.

John further maintains that the pastor's role is like that of an *experienced soldier* who has skill and artistry in all forms of warfare. The devil is active and never gives up. At any point he can produce some new form of attack. The pastor is alert to the possibility of an absolutely different kind of offensive and he knows where to place his troops and how to use his own limited energies to the best possible advantage. John puts it like this:

"Our preparation for battle is not against a single attack. This warfare assumes manifold forms and is composed of diverse enemies; for all do not use the same arms, nor have they trained themselves to attack us in one manner. And he who is undertaking to engage in warfare with all, must know the arts of all; he must be at the same time an archer and slinger; cavalry officer and infantry officer; private soldier and general; foot soldier and horse-soldier; marine and engineer. In ordinary battles each man takes the work assigned to him and so repels the attacks of the enemy. In our warfare this is not so, but unless he who is to win the victory understands all the forms of the art, the devil knows how to introduce his own agents at each spot which is neglected, and to plunder the sheep; but he is baffled when he sees the shepherd well equipped with knowledge, and able to meet his plots. Wherefore we must arm ourselves at every point."⁶

John believes that in order to meet this situation, the pastor must be versatile, adaptable and resilient. Just because one kind of approach has been used successfully in one generation or in one particular church, that in no sense means that this is the answer for every possible circumstance. Indeed, success in one realm can be used by the devil to introduce an absolutely new kind of danger. He hates it when a local church prospers and will quickly see to it that a new problem arises so that valuable energies have to be diverted to a menacing flank elsewhere. Changing the imagery a little, John says:

"Why need I enumerate the heresies of the devil? Unless the shepherd has skill enough to banish them all, the wolf can enter by any one of them and devour most of the sheep."⁷

In case one is in danger of imagining that John's imagery regarding the pastoral office is cold or remote when he is demanding the skills of a helmsman, P.T. instructor and military tactician, let me hasten to mention another metaphor which expresses his concern in both compassionate and realistic terms. The pastor is like an *affectionate father*. His congregation is not like a series of troops eager to engage in the next offensive. Would to God that they were! Truth to tell, they are desperately human and, like the pastor, have their failings. Far from vigorous engagement in Christian warfare, they become preoccupied with their own concerns and pathetically introspective in their attitudes. The pastor can easily be discouraged, especially if he finds himself surrounded by a number of Christians whose concept of discipleship is too effortless. In these sad circumstances members can find themselves preoccupied with unworthy pursuits and even the minister can be the target for criticism and, says John, even slander. He believes that the minister must expect criticism and what he describes as "unseasonable abuse" should never create "excessive fear and dread" in the pastor's mind, nor should he meet it with "entire indifference". John insists that there will always be people who will believe the worst things about a man and who are "accustomed to hear and speak without making enquiry" and who "give hasty utterance to whatever occurs to them without any effort to attain the truth". Obviously, a minister must deal graciously and honestly with his accusers "however unreasonable they may be". But what if, despite every effort, the critics cannot be persuaded?

"... then we must despise their tales; for if a person be easily cast down by such mishaps he will never be able to bring any noble or admirable scheme to birth. For despondency and constant cares have the terrible effect of numbing the soul and reducing it to utter impotence. The Bishop should be in the same relation towards those whom he rules as a father towards very young children; and as we are not disturbed by their insults or blows or tears, and do not think much of their laughter and approval, so with these, we should not be much uplifted by their praise nor much dejected by their censure, when these are uttered out of season."⁸

The father does not cease to love his children because for a while they appear to have lost their love for him. How precarious, if not devastating, our fellowship with God would be if He dealt with us as we are sometimes in danger of acting towards others. John insists that the congregation must be loved, even at times when some of them appear most unlovable. True love is not changeable. It does not vacillate nor fall victim to petulant moodiness. The true pastor has such a care for souls that he loves whatever the nature of the people's response. He does not love in order that other people will love him, but in order that he may do the work of God more perfectly and demonstrate, however inadequately, the unchanging love of God.

Perhaps enough has been said to underline John's conviction that a great deal is expected of a pastor. To use his words, there are many billows to vex his soul. What particular areas are specially perilous? How does John give expression to his own views regarding the difficulties of the pastoral office? I limit myself to two specific areas where John believed it was necessary for the early Christian minister to be specially alert — materialism and favouritism.

It is an astonishing thing, but even within the New Testament literature ministers are warned about the danger of materialism. Peter urges the elders to tend the flock of God "not for shameful gain, but eagerly". The pastoral Epistles have similar warnings: "If anyone aspires to the office of bishop", he must certainly not be a "lover of money". Similarly, the deacons must not be "greedy for gain". The warning recurs in the writings of the Apostolic Fathers. Polycarp, the old Bishop of Smyrna, is distressed that the presbyter, Valens, has been lured away from pastoral responsibility by the love of money. In the third century, Cyprian is grieved that large numbers of North African clergy now have a sickening lust for things rather than an expulsive love for God. The ravages of Decian persecution had exposed the sad fact that they were some clergy in Carthage at least who were pastors because of what they got out of it. Their ministerial responsibilities brought them into intimate contact with many different kinds of people and they could use these opportunities for their own selfish advantages:

"Very many bishops who ought to furnish both exhortation and example to others, despising their divine charge, became agents in secular business, forsook their throne, deserted their people, wandered about over foreign provinces, hunted the markets for gainful merchandise, while brethren were starving in the church. They sought to possess money in hoards, they seized estates by crafty deceits, they increased their gains by multiplying usuries".

It was bad enough that such attitudes were found amongst the membership of North African congregations. It was particularly distressing when it was found in the ministry:

"Each one was desirous of increasing his estate; and forgetful of what believers had either done before in the times of the apostles, or always ought to do, they, with the insatiable ardour of covetousness, devoted themselves to the increase of their property. Among the priests there was no devotedness of religion; among the ministers there was no sound faith."⁹

The Letters of Jerome expose similar greed and covetousness in the lives of his ministerial contemporaries. Some clergy even appear to have expected a fee in return for the occasional pastoral call:

"Even the clergy, who should have afforded guidance and merited respect, kiss the brows of their patronesses. They extend a hand, so that you might suppose they wished to bestow a blessing upon them — did you not know that they are accepting a fee for their visit!"¹⁰

It appears that in Jerome's day pastoral visitation confronted the Christian minister with unusual materialistic temptations. Jerome has an entertaining description of the minister's activity during his afternoon calls:

"I shall describe briefly and concisely one of them, who is the leader in this art, that knowing the master you may the more easily recognize the pupils. He arises in haste with the sun. The order of his calls is arranged for him. He seeks short cuts. The old gentleman arrives unseasonably and practically forces his way into the bedchambers

of his sleeping parishioners. If he catches sight of a cushion, an attractive piece of cloth, or some piece of household bric-a-brac, he praises it, marvels at it, strokes it, and laments that he is without things like that. He doesn't so much succeed in having it presented to him: he extorts it from the owner."¹¹

It is quite astonishing how the lust for possessions appears to have taken hold of both fourth and fifth century clergy. Basil of Caesarea writes to a number of responsible church leaders in 370 because it has been reported to him that some of them are taking money from candidates for ordination:

"... I beg you, abandon this way to revenue... do not pollute your hands with such earnings, and so make yourselves unworthy to perform the holy mysteries."¹²

In the last few months of his life, during the distressing period of his exile, Chrysostom wrote a brief but fascinating work entitled *A Treatise to Prove that No One can Harm the Man Who Does Not Injure Himself*. He has some serious things to say to those who make a god of money. Even though he is cut off from his congregation, the imperial authorities cannot quench his pastoral zeal and compassionate concern for the believers at Constantinople and elsewhere. Riches, he says, "nourish the most dangerous passion in our nature... swelling the empty bubbles of ambition". In his treatment of this subject, John contrasts two vastly different New Testament characters, Paul and Judas, one without this world's money, the other left in charge of it; one concerned about the spiritual riches he might impart to his contemporaries and the other lustful for earthly riches he might acquire for himself. Of Paul, he says:

"Did he not experience innumerable storms of trial? And in what respect was he injured by them? Was he not crowned with victory all the more in consequence — because he suffered hunger, because he was consumed with cold and nakedness, because he was often tortured with the scourge, because he was stoned, because he was cast into the sea?... Yet Judas also was one of the twelve, and he too was called of Christ; but neither his being of the twelve nor his call profited him, because he had not a mind exposed to virtue. But Paul although struggling with hunger, and at a loss to procure necessary food, and daily undergoing such great sufferings pursued with great zeal the road which leads to Heaven: Whereas Judas although he had... often heard discourses concerning poverty and spent so long a time in the company of Christ Himself, and was entrusted with the money of the poor... even then did not become any better, although he had been favoured with such great condescension... Christ knew that he was covetous, and destined to perish on account of his love of money."¹³

It may well be asserted that the clerical preoccupation with money in the early Christian period is certainly not characteristic of our own time, but most of us in the ministry would not choose casually to dismiss the warning. We are not in this work for material gain and most ministers will have people in their congregations whose assets far surpass their own. In moments of physical tiredness or spiritual frustration, envy can steal into a man's soul and cause him to forget the only wealth which is of lasting worth. No man will overcome the temptation unless he deliberately count his possessions rather than list his deprivations. There may be many an occasion when we are denied what this world describes as riches, but to us has been entrusted the resources of an unchanging gospel, the fellowship of God's people, the encouragement of good friends, the joy of abundantly worthwhile service, the effects of which outlive this life and determine a man's eternal destiny. Money is of little worth when set alongside assets such as these.

The lust for possessions is certainly not every man's worry, but there are few pastors who will lightly brush aside the dangers of favouritism. Some people are nice to know and liking them is a natural response to their friendly disposition, but all people do not fall into this category. The good pastor knows that there is something basically wrong about spending an inordinate amount of time with utterly likeable people and hardly any at all with those who are unhelpful, unresponsive and unfriendly. Such people have to be won by love and it is a costly commodity. A minister like John in fourth century Antioch knew that there were people in the congregation who were only too well aware of the fact that the pastor might be spending more time with one person than with another. There is an entertaining passage in John's *On the Priesthood* which expounds the pastoral difficulty with keen sensitivity and not a little humour. Writing about the minister he says:

"By the very way in which they address a person, they incur such a load of criticism, that they are often overweighted by the burden of despondency. Why! they have to render account for the merest glance. Most people subject their casual doings to a minute examination, measuring the loudness of their tones, the expression of their face and the degree of their laugh. 'He smiles affably,' says one 'on so and so, and addresses him with a bright face and hearty voice; but he was less pleasant with me and indeed quite casual.' If, when many are seated together, he do not turn his eyes in every direction, while conversing, the rest say that his action is positively insulting. What man then who is not unusally strong could suffice against so many accusers? . . ."14

John insists that the pastor must guard against favouritism in the allocation of his visiting time:

"Come . . . let me reveal to you another pretext for blame. If the bishop do not, every day, pay a round of visits more extensive than ordinary loungers, causes of offence arise which baffle description. Not only the sick but also the healthy wish to be visited, not so much because their piety prompts them, as because most of them pretend to honour and distinction. And should he ever happen to visit one of the richer and more powerful men more frequently, prompted by some special need, with a view to the common welfare of the Church, immediately he wins the reputation of flattery and subservience."15

Every minister knows only too well that if he is to help people in their need, then there are bound to be occasions when he will spend more time with this person than that but, here again, we do not lightly dismiss John's observation. What is the answer to the problem? Chrysostom has a practical turn of mind and is always at pains to discover a helpful spiritual solution. John says there will always be people who will criticise us and a good minister must come to terms with that. T.M. Bamber used to say that there is a sense in which a minister must be prepared to function as a kind of moral scapegoat in the congregation. If they are tearing the pastor to shreds, they are probably leaving someone else in peace and that person may not be able to absorb criticism and unpleasantness. We need to train ourselves to handle the most negative criticisms graciously, firmly and yet creatively, and on most occasions have to let it die within us. It is the hardest thing not to retaliate or pass it on, or seek to justify yourself, or endeavour to obtain at least some pity, but the spiritual man regards it almost as a necessary though painful part of his ministerial work. John says that the criticism of others is only a threat if a minister lacks a sensitive and alert conscience. He says that the minister

"should have no accusers; or if this is impossible, he should face their charges; but if this is not easy either, as many take pleasure in vain and random accusations, he must bear the annoyance of these complaints. He who is justly charged can easily endure the charge; for since there is no accuser more bitter than his own conscience, therefore when we are first convicted by that severe standard, we have no difficulty in

bearing the greater attacks from without."¹⁶

III

We turn now, in conclusion, to consider the pastor's ambition. Time and again in the course of his ministry John Chrysostom made the realistic comment that every minister needs to be constantly on his guard lest he be "overcome by the glory of applause". Several times a week John's huge congregations gathered in the church at Antioch to listen to his persuasive oratory. The church was so crowded that on occasions he warned them about the danger of pickpockets! At times the congregation would be so uplifted and inspired by his preaching that they would burst into rapturous applause, but he knew only too well that popularity is the preacher's greatest peril. He knew of people in Antioch who were "not accustomed to listen to a preacher for profit but for pleasure, and act like critics of a play or a concert".¹⁷ John says:

"He who is carried away with a desire for praise provides such fare as shall please his hearers, when he might have been improving their character, and pays this price for the tumult of applause."¹⁸

Pastors, as well as preachers, are in danger of "seeking applause". The only way to escape from this perilous snare is to desire more than all else the approval of God. A man is not likely to develop an appetite for flattery or popularity if his greatest ambition is to please God. John says that the minister must do all his work

"so as to please God, and let this desire be his sole rule and plan . . . not applause or praise. Should he, after this, receive approval from men, let him not reject their praise. but if his hearers do not render this, let him neither seek it nor sorrow for it. It will be a sufficient consolation for his toil, far exceeding all else, if his conscience tells him that he is modelling and ordering his teaching with a view to please God."¹⁹

Although we are separated from this outstanding early Christian preacher and pastor by a period of over fifteen hundred years, it is good to remember that John Chrysostom mentioned our own country in one of his sermons. He knew that the Gospel had reached Britain and in his exposition of the story of the woman with an alabaster box of ointment, John comments that, whilst countless kings and generals and all their noble exploits have "sunk into silence", that story of adoring service is constantly repeated in a score of different lands:

"Yet that a woman who was a harlot poured out oil in the house of some leper, in the presence of ten men, this all men celebrate throughout the world; and so great a time has passed, and yet the memory of that which was done has not faded away, but alike Persians and Indians, Scythians and Thracians, and Samaritans, and the race of the Moors, and they that dwell in the British Islands, spread abroad that which was done secretly in a house by a woman that had been a harlot."²⁰

John rejoiced that in his lifetime the word of Jesus had been gloriously fulfilled: "Wherever this Gospel is preached in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her". Possibly that woman's beautiful deed was not only the early Christian preacher's theme but also the early Christian pastor's example. She did it not for the applause of men, but for the glory of Christ, and the pastor's work must be motivated by this same overriding ambition. When the Apostle Peter wrote to the first century churches, he reminded them that "whoever renders service" must do it in "the strength which God supplies; in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To Him belong glory and dominion for ever and ever".

RAYMOND BROWN

FOOTNOTES

1. Chrysostom's Seventh Panegyric on St. Paul, cf. Neill, Stephen, *Chrysostom and his Message*, London 1962, 78f
2. Gregory the Great, *Pastoral Care*, Ancient Christian Writers, Vol. II, 21.
3. Gregory Nazianzen, *Orations*, 2.16.
4. John Chrysostom, *On the Priesthood*, sections 208, 210-211.
5. *ibid.* sections 390-391.
6. *ibid.* sections 399-402.
7. *ibid.* section 402.
8. *ibid.* sections 462-463.
9. Cyprian, *On the Lapsed*, 6.
10. *Letters of Jerome* 1-22, Ancient Christian Writers, Vol. 147-148.
11. *ibid.* 162-163.
12. Basil, *Letters* (LIII), Loeb Classical Library, Vol I, 339-341.
13. *John Chrysostom's Works*, Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Vol. IX, 277-279.
14. John Chrysostom, *On the Priesthood*, sections 330-331.
15. *ibid.* section 329
16. *ibid.* sections 331-332.
17. *ibid.* section 452.
18. *ibid.* section 456.
19. *ibid.* sections 482-483.
20. *Homilies on St. Matthew*, Hom. 80.

Membership Secretary.

From this issue of 'The Fraternal' (April 1978) please send all subscriptions and applications for membership etc. to my successor, Rev. David Piggott (address page 1). I have been pleased to have been able to serve the brothers for the past 7½ years and wish my successor every blessing.

Don Page

WEST HAM CENTRAL MISSION
409 Barking Road, Plaistow, London, E13 8AL

My dear Brother Minister,

I imagine that most of you who read this will know by now that we have called (and he has accepted) the Rev. Trevor Davis, M.A., of Leavesden Road Baptist Church, Watford, to be my successor as the Superintendent of the West Ham Central Mission. Mr. Davis will come to us in September of this year and will take over gradually, but not later than Saturday, 28th October, when I am to be farewelled and he is to be welcomed in the same series of meetings. If you are within striking distance and would like to join us, please put a note in your diary. I hope I need not tell anybody how delighted I am that Mr. Davis has found it right to accept the invitation. He comes with all kinds of gifts and abilities which seem to me tailor made for the job here at the Mission. I have a much lighter heart now that I know he is to come to us and I invite you to pray for him and Mrs. Davis, and his two daughters as they prepare to move into the East End of London.

Mr. Davis will come to a hive of activity. The builders are doing a fine job of work and we are hoping that we shall be able to welcome our first batch of residents into the new flats and flatlets early in 1979. The negotiations for the satellite housing in connection with the work at Greenwoods still drags on but we hope that by the time you read this letter we shall have clinched the deal. All the other work of the Mission goes on unimpeded and we are very grateful to our friends in the Churches who by their generosity and by their prayers make it possible for us to do this work.

We have very good reports from the Churches and organisations of the current film strip which you can have with a tape or manuscript. If you would like to book a copy, please give us alternative dates.

May God's blessing be on all your own fine work,
Yours very sincerely,
STANLEY TURL
Superintendent of the Mission

CELEBRATING PENTECOST

Pentecost is not like Christmas, Easter or Ascension. Once for all Jesus was born, killed, raised and exalted. A different sort of thing happened to the disciples at Jerusalem when the day of Pentecost was fully come. Whatever it was, it happened again to Samaritans, when Peter and John went to confirm their conversion; and again to Romans in Caesarea, with such close similarity to the first occasion, that Peter, an eyewitness all three times, made a point of saying so.

The thing overflows Scripture. Down the centuries, to whole churches and to groups of believers, at or long after conversion, there has come an experience of such self-authenticating dynamism and grace, that men have been obliged to say, 'There it is again'. Or, even more blessedly, '*Here* it is again.' Pentecost is essentially repeatable.

At Christmas, Easter and Ascension the Church celebrates **WHAT GOD HAS DONE**. At Whitsuntide she celebrates — or should — **WHAT GOD IS LIABLE TO DO**.

I have much sympathy with churchmen who find themselves more easy in mind over Ascension than over Pentecost; Pentecost disturbs, with the thought of God's surprisingness.

Pentecost is awkward also, as Advent is awkward, a season when we are not quite sure whether we are coming or going. Pentecost, pointing like Advent to a God-prepared event in the past, invites us to a festival here and now, and challenges us to be ready for what might at any time happen.

Still, a risk of confusion is a small price to pay for breadth of opportunity. As in Advent, so at Pentecost, almost anything can be preached about, sharpened by its relevance to the season in hand. At this point those brothers who still suspect the Christian calendar of being a *limiting* discipline may parenthetically be invited to think again.

Two more prefatory thoughts. Not only does the separation of the spring bank holiday from the church Whitsun restore our week-enders to the feast-day congregation. Also the new numbering of Sundays 'after Pentecost' instead of 'after Trinity' is an open invitation to go on about Pentecost for a bit longer.

To chart the ground for preaching, and for the tone of worship so far as we can influence it, a lectionary may be useful. For our present purpose neither the Liturgical Commission's Calendar & Lessons nor the current Anglican Lectionary has a close enough focus. It is part of their excellence that they do not. So I must fend for ourselves. Try this.

1. LOOKING BACK A LONG WAY

- (a) *Action* Gen.1:1-5 God's wind ruffles the dark deep.
Num.11:16-30 The Spirit on Moses shared with 70 helpers.
Jud.3:7-11 etc. The Spirit of the Lord makes heroes
1Sam.16:1-13 etc. . . . and kings
Ezek.11:1-21 . . . and prophets.
- (b) *Promise* Psa.51:1-12 (by implication) to the penitent.
Isa.61:1-7 to the ideal Israel and Messiah.
Joel.2:28-32 of course.

2. LOOKING BACK TO JESUS

- (a) *His Experience* Mk.1:9-12//Mtt.3:7-4:1//Lk.3:3-22. . .4:1-2 — Call and Testing.
Jn.1:29-34 John's witness.
Lk.10:16-24 Sharing and rejoicing.

- (b) *His Promise* Lk.24:36-53 The promised gift of God.
 Ac.1:1-9 Power of the Spirit.
 Jn.16:4b-15 The Helper to keep believers in touch with Jesus.

3. LOOKING BACK TO PENTECOST

- Ac.2:1-18 . . . 38-40 Jerusalem
 Ac.8:4-17 Samaria
 Ac.10:34-48 Caesarea
 Ac.11:1-18 and 15:6-11 Peter: 'As on us at the beginning'.

4. LOOKING AROUND A BIT (for instance)

Old Testament: Psa.23 (NB v.5 not 'running over' quantitative, but qualitative 'exhilarating' a/c Briggs in ICC; Latin has 'inebrians'.)

Epistle: Eph.5:15-20 — 'not drunk with wine . . . but filled with the Spirit'.

Gospel: Jn.2:1-11 — Water into wine.

Whether you want to use champagne at the holy table that morning or take a sideswipe at the demon drink, here is a veritable winepress of thought about the Holy Spirit as life-transforming power.

5. LOOKING OUT FOR OURSELVES

(a) *The Essential: No Spirit no Church*

Ac. 8:4-17 In this first attempt to organise orthodoxy, the apostles visited Samaria to see whether a successful campaign had resulted in a real church.

Ac.18:24-19:7 Paul's delicate relationship with Apollos turned on his concern for the wholeness of the Gospel, complete with the vital spark of the Spirit. Hence the Ephesian Pentecost of 19:5-7.

(b) *Caution: There is more to the Spirit than excitement and tongues*

1Cor. 12 passim Wherever we stand in relation to the charismatic movement,
 13 " here is pasture we can and must graze together. Paul was glad
 14:1-18 to be more charismatic than them all (1Cor.14:18), but he was
 anxious above all to fix on the essential, not the secondary
 gifts, however marvellous. Spirit is explosive, but it does not
 spend all its time exploding; nor is exploding necessarily the
 most useful thing it does.

(c) *Spiritual bread and butter*

1Cor.12:1 to One does not necessarily have to *choose between* the Spirit's
 14:18 fire and the Spirit's fruit, but if and when he does have to,
 Gal.6:13-23 Paul's choice is emphatically for the fruit.

(d) *Counter-caution: No Spirit no Christians*

Rev.1:4 to For every pastor scratching his head about a charismatic group,
 3:22 there is one tearing his hair about their opposite: people who
 love listening to 'that gentle voice we hear, soft as the breath of
 even', but seem to behave as though He were singing a lullaby.
 Hear what the Spirit says to the churches about us whose fire
 is out, and who doze luke-warm.

- Eph.5:1-13 'Wake up, sleeper' (5:14b). You'll need care with the context. Anyone as dozy as we fear probably doesn't even *sin* as vividly as the epistle suggests.
- Rev.3:20 is for preacher and people both to hear: the voice of the Spirit of the Christ who forever has to knock on the *Christian* door. Pentecost of fire or of fruit depends on how we respond.

Trust a Baptist to begin talking about worship by discussing the business of lectern and pulpit. But wouldn't you? And anyway there are a lot sillier places to start.

Starting here, we can better assess the widely variable aptness and otherwise of our 'Holy Spirit' hymns, for instance. Not that you will always want hymns that emphasise the same point as the sermon: you may need them to right the balance.

As in other sections of the Hymn Book there are good, strong hymns, and there are the rest. Better a Whit Sunday or Pentecost-tide service with one or two good hymns that say what you want said about the Spirit, than an order with every hymn assiduously chosen from between 222 and 240 with due regard for congregational favourites.

There are favourites of my own – I've already snidely quoted one: 'Our blest Redeemer, e'er He breathed' – which need a long cool look before uncommented use. Some strangely soothing things have been written about a Person of the Godhead who does very much more than comfort us.

Basically, the good hymns are either about the fire: 'Creator Spirit', 'Awake, O Lord' (always remembering that it's not the Lord who needs to awake), and 'Come down, O Love divine'. Or they are about the fruit: 'Gracious Spirit, Holy Ghost' or 'Gracious Spirit, dwell with me'. When it's fruit you're after, go for a hymn which has made up its mind what it wants. 'Spirit divine, attend our prayers' hasn't.

A deep and lovely hymn with more fire than at first appears is 'Spirit of God, descend'. Just for once, savour our communion with ancient saints, and sing 226 to Veni Creator.

Remember to bring in 'Praise for Today'. So far 'Filled with Spirit's power' is my only real Pentecost find there, but there's time.

The great classic prayers from the past ought to be a help in our celebration. I expect it's my fault, not theirs, but I have to confess disappointment here. The Roman and Anglican collect for the day of Pentecost is: 'O God who as at this time didst teach the hearts of thy faithful people, by sending to them the light of thy faithful people, by sending to them the light of thy Holy Spirit: grant us by the same Spirit to have a right judgment in all things . . .'. Use it for solidarity with history and our ecumenical present, but oh dear. The Spirit is in a true and sublime sense Upholder of the establishment, but that prayer sounds as though He were nothing else.

It's the same with all those fearfully *defensive* collects; there are a great bunch, like: 'Grant, we beseech thee, O merciful God: that thy Church being gathered together in the Holy Spirit, may be disturbed by no assaults of the enemy.' I mean Amen, but . . .

Added to modern editions of the Monastic Diurnal is one from an American order which sends me further: 'Grant, we beseech thee, . . . that thy Church, being gathered together in unity by thy Holy Spirit, may manifest thy power among all peoples, to the glory of thy name . . .'

Given the flavour of witness to which history and temperament seems to call our denomination, we shall probably want to try and recapture imaginatively the excite-

ment, the disturbance, even alarm, of the first Days of Pentecost. This for our own sake, our people's sake, and for the sake of folk still being evangelised. When the day comes, even if God withholds visible flame and audible tongues, it should lift us perceptibly and leave us afterwards a bit whacked.

As I said at the beginning, we are celebrating not so much what God did as what He is **LIABLE TO DO**. This is the day not so much of the firm foundation, more of the inflammable roof . . . the wise and wilful wind that blows from the living God (Jn.3:8) – (another great Whitsun text).

Here is how we prayed last Whit Sunday.

PENTECOST MORNING

Lord God we thank You

that when Jesus was taken from the sight and touch of mortal men
those who believed were not left comfortless.

We thank You that they were granted
a continuing awareness of his presence,
and the certainty of your power around them and within.

We thank You for the story of this day:
how the Spirit came

to faithful, prayerful, hopeful disciples.

They said He was like a rushing wind that filled the house;
they said He was like tongues of living flame lighting them up one by one;
and people outside were amazed at the difference He made.

When they spoke about Jesus Christ
their words were bold, forceful, and completely understood
by everyone, even foreigners.

At their first preaching, three thousand believed;
the Church grew, persecution and scattering only made it grow faster.

*
We thank You

for all that has been transformed, and all that has been made possible
through your Holy Spirit in the Church.

He has prompted and empowered your people's preaching,
their teaching, their thinking, and their practical kindness.

He has renewed their courage when the way was hard,
and the going was dangerous.

Time and again, He has stirred a sleepy Church,
purged a sinful Church,
reinvigorated a tired and timid Church.

We believe He is working in your Church these days,
and we thank You, though with fear.

For it could be
our quiet that He will disturb,
our compromises He will challenge,
our sins He will judge.

After all,
the day we remember and celebrate was a day of
disturbance.

*

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To the Readers of the "Fraternal"

Dear Friends,

"Straight between them ran the pathway,
Never grew the grass upon it";

Hiawatha: Longfellow

I have been accused of quoting from Shakespeare too often. There are two reasons for that habit of mine – I am a devotee of Shakespeare and I do not usually need to consult a book of quotations. Of course I welcome the evidence, implicit in the accusation, that these letters are read.

However, I think on this occasion it is as well to break fresh ground and I have gone back to the first epic poem, within my experience, of another poet. When I was in the Remove form of my grammar school we read Hiawatha in my first term.

I still have the copy well used and worn after fifty-five years of service. It was the Dent issue which carried an introductory quote from Milton "A good book is the precious life blood of a master spirit". What a splendid threshold to literature!

I do not know, or really care, if Longfellow is fashionable these days. What I do know is that those lines describing the direct nature of friendship between Hiawatha and his friends Kwasind and Chibiabos illustrate a quality of communication worth seeking.

Over many years my staff and I have endeavoured to foster a straight path of friendship and communication with our churches and personal Insured. The track between us is, in most cases, clear and direct. Never hesitate to write to us on insurance matters. We shall do all we can to assist.

If this "Fraternal" reaches you before the Assembly then please accept this invitation to come and see us and to find out something of how we work.

Yours sincerely,
C.J.L. COLVIN
General Manager

Yet we have no alternative
but to pray the Church's constant prayer
and ask for the Spirit to be poured out.
Give us the courage to bear what it may cost
if your kingdom is to come
and your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

PENTECOST EVENING

Lord, what was it like
on the evening of the Day of Pentecost?
Was there a warm glow of achievement?
Of course the apostles gave You the credit for the three thousand converts:
without your Holy Spirit they'd not have spoken out as they did
— not even Peter;
without your Holy Spirit at work in the listening crowd,
there would not have been the response.
Still, it had been the apostles who witnessed,
Peter's voice that preached the sermon,
and, thanks to You, it had worked.
So was there glory for them that evening
after the last convert had been counselled and gone home
radiant with the joy of sins forgiven?
— a sigh which said, 'The day Thou gavest, Lord, has ended',
'Glory to Thee, my God, this night?'

*

Or perhaps it was not like that at all. Perhaps the apostles were
very tired, and, being tired, a little jaded.
Perhaps in the upper room where fire had, so to speak, burned and
wind had, so to speak, blown, there was a feeling of
anticlimax.

Doubt even. Was the morning's enthusiasm too hot to last?
Would it all be a flash in the pan? True, in their ecstasy they
had not been drunk; but could they, perhaps, have caught the sun?
For it was early summer.

There was sure to be trouble for the new Church. The authorities
could not ignore the disturbance in the street: outdoor orators
persuading residents and tourists alike to believe in a man
who — rightly or wrongly — had been executed as a criminal.

Was there pride, was there doubt, was there fear, Lord?

*

Whichever it was, they needed You
to come in through closed doors as You had before Ascension,
and say, 'Be of good cheer'.
One thing we know, Lord: You came.
That was the meaning of Pentecost: in your Spirit You had come
to the believers,

and would never leave them.
However You did it, Lord, You blessed them,
that tired evening of Pentecost.
Before they slept, they knew You were with them,
giving your grace, your peace, your courage.
*

So come to us, Lord, now.
Meet us in this hour.
Meet us in the words and in the silence,
in worship and in sacrament;
meet us at the table and be recognised in the breaking of bread.
Prompt and answer our prayer,
for we pray in your name.

Jamie Wallace

THE HOW AND WHERE OF ORDINATION

Ordination continues to perplex us.

Baptists used to ask if Ministers need be ordained at all. Now another kind of question troubles us. Who should ordain our Ministers? Where and when will ordination take place? Does it effect anything? Is it for life? Is a man ordained to the ministry of a congregation, a denomination or the church as a whole?

To some of these, the 1957 Report entitled 'The Meaning and Practice of Ordination among Baptists' gave clear enough answers. It was perhaps a weakness of this useful Report that it offered no sufficient and preliminary theological view of Ordination to lend some cogency to its conclusions.

It may well be timely to consider these matters afresh. A useful starting-point is the question, "What has Jesus Christ to do with Ordination?" Theology becomes Christology in Christian hands. Two answers at least to this question present themselves. Jesus Christ is source and end of ordination. Expressed in prepositions, this is to say that Ordination is BY Christ and FOR Christ.

I. CHRIST'S PART IN ORDINATION

1. Ordination is BY Christ. At a service of ordination it is Jesus Christ who sets apart, who gives a man or woman to the people of God for ministry (Ephesians 2, v.11ff.). It is in effect the Lord who lays his hand on the ordinand's head. Who charges him to do the work of a Minister. Of course there are no theophanies. Christ will not appear in order to accomplish this although He is present in the Spirit. In fact He ordains by means of the church and its representatives. But it is nonetheless He who, in the event of ordination, is giving a man or woman to the ministry and setting him apart.

From this we may draw the following inference. It will be presumption on our part to speak or act as if the church or its officers possessed some independent power to ordain. The church never ordains on its own account. The church ordains only 'in Christ's stead'.

I have heard it suggested that the Superintendent Minister should invariably preside at Ordination because, unlike the College Principal, he is an officer of the Baptist Union which accredits and supports the ministry. Doubtless the Superintendent will ordain at times. But never simply on account of his weight of office or glory of ecclesiastical connection. It is not our view that Christ has entrusted his church with ministries which she preserves and imparts. Rather is it our view that Christ entrusts his church with

Ministers whom she recognises and accepts. It was for this reason that T.W. Manson wrote, "What difference then does it make whether a minister is ordained by a bishop or a presbytery or a congregation? So far as his qualification to minister is concerned, none whatever. If he has been called and equipped by Christ, all the bishops, presbyteries, and congregational meetings in the world cannot make him any more a minister than he already is." (1)

Another inference to be drawn is this. The Church will have one overriding concern about an ordination service; Since her part is to ordain in Christ's stead and to give recognition to His gift, her overriding concern will be to ensure as best she can that any man or woman who is ordained is in truth a man or woman whom Christ wills to ordain and will ordain. For this reason, the testing of a man's call to the ministry is an essential aspect of ordination.

Let it be noticed that our own denomination devotes years to the testing of the call. The candidate's own sense of call, while essential, is open to mistake and error. The call is therefore tested by Home Church, by Association Committee, by college interview or residential selection conference, and all the way through a period of training. Nor does it end there. The call is finally confirmed by the invitation to a pastorate which in due time comes to the ordinand. We do not ordain unless this is in sight.

With all this in mind, we may ask again the question, 'Who should officiate at a service of ordination?' It would appear appropriate that ordination be done by those who represent the church's process of testing and discernment. A representative of the Minister's home church may well participate. A representative of the enquiries made by the wider church community, whether at Area or College level, may also fittingly participate. And so may a representative of the church to which the ordinand is invited. If we ask the further question, "Who should preside at the ordination?", it may be sufficient at this point to answer, "Whoever best guarantees that the testing has been truly done and this is, to our best knowledge, a man or woman whom Christ will ordain".

It may be said in the by-going that it is against this background of thought that the importance of the Accredited List is best seen. This List is the sign that Baptists take their responsibilities in ordination seriously. Those listed here have been proved and tested as to their calling and equipping by Christ for the ministry.

Sometimes Superintendents face a practical quandary over ordination. They are occasionally invited to officiate at the ordination of a Minister who has not been trained within our denominational framework (if at all) and who evinces no intention of meeting our accreditation requirements. What should the Superintendent do or not do in this case? One thing seems clear to me. No-one should ordain another if his knowledge of the ordinand's call is slight or if he has reason to believe that it was insufficiently tested.

2. Ordination is not only BY Christ. It is also FOR Christ. In ordination Jesus Christ not only gives men and women to the church. He gives them for a specific task, which cannot be left out of the reckoning. This task also is best defined in terms of Jesus Christ Himself. It is Jesus Christ who is the primary Minister in and to the church. It is He who builds and upbuilds the church in its life and mission. Again there is no theophany, no personal appearance on His part. In the way that Christ ordains by means of the church, so Christ ministers by means of the word and sacrament which human ministers serve. An ordinand is set apart for this latter purpose. He enables Jesus Christ to minister both in the church and the world through the word and the sacraments.

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We might simply have said that men and women are ordained to be ministers of the word and sacraments. This might imply, however, that their main concern was with a book or a rite or a tradition. It is not so. They have to do with the ongoing ministry of Christ. They facilitate His ministry, as through word and sacraments He feeds His flock and establishes His kingdom.

We ministers are therefore ministers of a very subordinate order. If we keep in mind the fact that the Holy Spirit is also involved, making Christ present through word and sacrament, we realise how humble is the part we play. It makes the laying-on of hands an appropriate sign of our ordination. In the Old Testament, it is a lay-ordination which is thus accomplished. Hands are laid only upon the Levites. (2)

This is the point when we may fittingly complete our earlier discussion as to who should preside at an ordination service. We have already suggested that it should be someone who can guarantee that the ordinand's call is supported by the discernment and testing of the church. The College Principal commonly presides at Ordinations. He is well suited to be the guarantor of the ordinand's call. Having known him through several years of training, he has had more opportunity than most to assess this. In addition he can vouch for the fact that the ordinand has seriously prepared himself for the task entrusted to him. If we are ordained not only by Christ but for Christ; if we are ordained for the solemn responsibility of enabling Christ to minister today, our preparation for that task has its importance. To this also the College Principal bears witness.

II. APPLYING PRINCIPLES TO PRACTICE

In the light of these two considerations that ordination is BY Christ and FOR Christ, we may now attempt some answers to other practical problems.

1. Is ordination for life? After ordination are we permanently a Minister?

In so far as Ordination is an act of Jesus Christ, it would appear rash on our part to set limits to its duration. On the other hand, it is also ordination FOR Christ. We are set apart for a purpose. This may not be disregarded. Even the purpose of the ministry can be frustrated for unforeseen reasons. And clearly, some ministers withdraw from the purpose implicit in their ordination.

Some communions allow the 'By Christ' of ordination to have precedence over the 'For Christ'. Belief in our ordination by Christ leads to theories of special graces and holy and indelible orders, which have the practical effect of making our ordination by Christ overshadow our ordination for Christ and His work. Orders become irreversible whatever the subsequent course of events. "Just as Christ has united the Church inseparably with himself, and as God calls all the faithful to life-long discipleship, so the gifts and calling of God to the ministers are irrevocable." (3)

We are not committed, however, to a belief in such things as indelible orders. At the same time we dare not judge that some of our colleagues were not ordained by Christ Himself since they no longer exercise a Ministry. Surely we are free to conclude that in some cases it was not with a view to a life-time of ministerial service that Christ ordained them, but for a limited period only.

I do not believe that we can utterly ignore the fact that ordination is to a specific task within the life and mission of the church. Nor can the Accredited List.

None of this, of course, is intended to restrict the Christian Ministry to the conventional pastoral setting. A Minister may work among youth only, or through counselling,

or in industrial or hospital chaplaincies. He will not deviate, however, from the task for which he was set apart by Christ.

2. Where should Ordination take place?

Some are ordained in the church where they will serve as Minister. Others are ordained in their home church. If we emphasise that Jesus Christ ordains us to the ministry, it may seem fitting enough to hold the Ordination Service in the place where the first intimations of Christ's call were received. If, on the other hand, we emphasise the fact that we are ordained to enable Christ to be the Minister of the church, it will seem appropriate to hold an Ordination Service in the local church where the ordinand will carry this purpose into effect.

I suggest that we declare the place of ordination an optional matter. We should however ensure that the presence and involvement of representatives both of the home church and the calling church give recognition to Christ's call and purpose.

3. When should Ordination take place?

There are those who advocate a policy of delay. They suggest that ordination should be held in reserve until the period of probation has been served.

This might appear to be an extension of an argument advanced above. We have already argued that the church's chief concern at an Ordination Service is to ensure that the ordinand is truly a man or woman whom Christ wills to ordain. In accordance with this, the essential preliminary to ordination is the careful testing of the call. Is not the last stage in our testing process the probationary period? Will the logic of the argument lead us, therefore, to ordain at this point, possibly at a united service of ordination during an annual assembly?

Two considerations militate against this suggestion.

a) As a matter of fact, the period of probation increasingly belies its name. Seldom is a Minister rejected at the conclusion of this period. The 'probation' therefore is more in name and form than fact. The probationary period has become a transitional time when ministers are helped to adapt to the work of the ministry. As such it has come to serve for training much more than for testing.

b) The consideration that tells decisively against the postponement of ordination is the fact that we are ordained to the ministry of word and sacrament as previously defined above. This ministry begins when the Probationary Period begins and not when it ends. It is surely right therefore to set the minister apart for this before rather than after the time of probation.

4. What is the scope of our ministry? Are we ordained to a congregation, a denomination or to the worldwide church of Jesus Christ?

Most communions assert that their ministers belong to the world church as to the local church. For Baptists, ordination is certainly to ministry in a local church. It is here that Jesus Christ enriches his people in worship for mission. We are ordained to make possible that work in this place. The local church, however, in Baptist theory, is nothing less than the expression in one neighbourhood of the whole church. From which it might be inferred that if we are ordained as a minister of the local church, we shall be ipso facto a minister of the whole church.

Whether this inference is legitimate or not, limits must not be imposed on the ministry of those whom Christ the Head of the Church ordains to facilitate His own ongoing ministry. A sober note of realism intrudes at this point, however. Because of the divided

nature of the church, it is impossible to bring to realisation the claim we all make to be true ministers of the whole church. Some Christians simply will not have us as ministers, protest as we will the Christological character of our ordination!

Now we may ask about the Denomination. Where does it fit in to the ecclesiastical jigsaw? For me, the Denomination bestows that wider reference which any ministry which is the gift of Christ must surely possess. I cannot subscribe to the view that the Baptist Union is no more than a promoter of fellowship between local churches. I plainly observe a Baptist community which acts together in mutual support and common mission. It is this discernible community which gives to my ministry the wider reference implicit in my ordination at the hands of the Head of the Church. In a divided Christendom, this body of people, in all their brokenness, 'stand in' for the church universal.

In theory then, I am a Minister of the one great church of Jesus Christ. In practice, I am a Minister to the Baptists and to all Christians with the wit and the enlightenment to recognise my ministry!

Donald M. MacKenzie

References

- (1) T.W. Manson "The Church's Ministry" Hodder & Stoughton 1948 p.97
- (2) cf. T.F. Torrance "Conflict and Agreement in the Church, Vol.2" Lutterworth 1960 pp.32ff.
- (3) "Agreement on the Doctrine of the Ministry" The 1973 Anglican/Roman Catholic Statement para 15.

AN URGENT WORD TO ALL MINISTERS. The Baptist Ministers' Fellowship would remind you that the Baptist Union has set up a Denominational Enquiry Group to consider the pattern and causes of numerical decline in our denomination, the nature and causes of spiritual decline, and possible means of stimulating numerical and spiritual growth.

The views of ministers on these matters are most urgently sought. Fraternal and individual ministers are invited to comment in time for one of the following dates (when the Group meets again): 11 April, 5 May, 13 June. Please give this matter your urgent attention, and write to the Secretary of the Group, *the Rev. Gordon F. Glover, c/o The Baptist Union, 4 Southampton Row, London, WC1B 4AB.*

The Enquiry Group is depending upon us for "grist for its mill"; so the watchword should be, "From as many as possible, and the sooner the better!"

RENDER UNTO HEALEY . . .

None of us looks forward to paying Income Tax but we recognise that payment is inevitable within the structure of today's society. Having said this, the acknowledged maxim is that ideally you should so arrange your affairs that you pay no more and no less than the minimum legal liability.

Ministers of Religion are almost in a category of their own when it comes to taxation, and indeed have been an acknowledged exception of National Insurance contributions. Like all residents in the U.K., each year a minister has to complete an Income Tax Return declaring his taxable income in the preceding year, and his claim for allowances in the ensuing year. The latter is well covered by Revenue notes, but what precisely is "taxable income?" Basically it consists of all income, benefits and emoluments arising from an employment, office or benefice with a deduction for all expenses wholly, necessarily and exclusively incurred in the performance of his duty as a Minister.

Let us examine each of these items in detail:

- (1) Income
 - (a) Clearly this covers the gross stipend which should include the employee's share of National Insurance if paid by the church; but not superannuation if the latter is also excluded from the expenses.
 - (b) Show any Chaplaincy fees separately on the Tax Return. These are normally paid by a local authority, under deduction of tax.
 - (c) Occasional Fees should be noted in your diary as received, and declared in total. These would cover fees for weddings, funerals, pulpit supplies, honoraria, etc.
- (2) Expenditure
 - (a) If you occupy a manse owned by the church, the church normally agrees to meet the costs of lighting and heating by way of an allowance. Therefore keep a careful record of your payments for fuel, gas and electricity, which feature as a charge, but ensure that the allowance is brought into credit under paragraph (3) below.
 - (b) If you occupy your own house, you can only claim a lesser sum for study accommodation. This basically covers the additional cost arising by virtue of having a study at home, i.e. a proportionate cost of rent, rates, lighting and heating, which cannot exceed one quarter. (If you own your own home, there is a danger that if you claim too generously under this heading you will prejudice a future capital gain exemption on sale.)
 - (c) You may also pay your wife for assistance with your work — typing letters, sermons, maintenance of a filing system for visitation, etc. Not unreasonably, the Revenue will not allow payment for merely answering the door and telephone, acting as host or supporting church activities which is done in the capacity of housewife or church member, but you may claim for actual payments at a similar rate that you would expect to pay an outsider for doing clerical or secretarial work. If you can justify a payment of £5 per week — perhaps for 3 to 4 hours regular work — this would save the family purse £1.75 per week. (Obviously there is no point in making such a claim if your wife has other employment and is herself paying income tax.)

- (d) Motor & Travelling is a recognised expense. Keep a careful record of your total outgoings under this heading including road tax, insurance, repairs, maintenance, petrol and oil, then disallow an appropriate proportion relating to private usage. This will obviously vary according to circumstances and is generally dealt with on an annual mileage basis.
- (e) You can also claim for depreciation of your car at 25% per annum on the cost in the first year and on the written down value in subsequent years, less again an adjustment for private use. (This can occasionally give the basis for a subsequent tax charge. If your car has a written down value of £750 and you sell for £1,000 you will be assessed on the balancing charge of £250 less the private proportion, but this is not unreasonable if you have previously obtained relief.)
- (f) Obviously claim for telephone, postage and stationery.
- (g) The Revenue will generally allow for church hospitality on a modest scale. Entertaining is not a permitted expense but supplying coffee, tea and biscuits to meetings at the manse is usually deductible. This covers Deacons' meetings, Baptismal classes, Youth and other groups which may meet at the manse.
- (h) The cost of essential reading matter is usually acknowledged as an expense — not the careful acquisition of a personal and private library, but certainly renewal of books and regular Christian papers and journals.
- (i) Sundry expenses cover a multitude of sins. The following come to mind. Renewal and dry cleaning of clerical gowns (not initial acquisition), renewal and laundering of dog collars, maintenance of typewriter, payment of pulpit supplies, etc. Again keep a record of all payments made which relate to your ministry.

(3) Reimbursement

You must then deduct from your expenses any contributions received during the year toward these expenses. This normally includes contributions received toward Lighting & Heating, Motor & Travelling, Telephone and Sundry Expenses. (Please note that if this figure exceeds your expenses in aggregate, you will be assessed to tax on the benefit, which can happen if the church is generous with an expense allowance.)

(4) Residue

The residue becomes your net taxable income against which you claim your normal allowances. The figures can be presented in an acceptable formula as follows:—

INCOME	—	1	(a)	Gross Stipend	2,200
		1	(c)	Occasional Fees	115
					2,315

EXPENSES — 2	(a)	Lighting & Heating	237	
	(b)	Study Accommodation	—	
	(c)	Salary — Wife	286	
	(d)	Motor & Travelling (say 75%)	373	
	(e)	Capital Allowances (say 75%)	135	
	(f)	Telephone, Postage & Stationery	62	
	(g)	Hospitality	52	
	(h)	Books & Journals	29	
	(i)	Sundry Expenses	<u>35</u>	
			1,209	
3		Less: Received	<u>545</u>	<u>664</u>
4		NET TAXABLE INCOME		<u><u>£1,651</u></u>

Keith J. Johnson, F.C.A.

JOHN OLIVER BARRETT

1901–1978

It is not easy to speak about one who has been a close and faithful friend and counsellor for over fifty years. And we are still conscious not only of our loss through the death of John Barrett, but of the long ordeal that shadowed his last years. But I know that I am the voice-piece of a great company — Baptists and many beyond any denominational borders — when I try to express something of the respect, the gratitude and the affection felt for a person with an unusual combination of gifts, a character of sterling worth and a most lovable personality.

Assuredly he would not want this to be other than an occasion at which we remind ourselves of what he stood for and what he lived by. He said that, when he told Howard Williams that, if we came together like this, we should sing Joseph Addison's great paean of praise.

It has seemed to me, as during the past fortnight I have tried to decide what else he might want me to say, that his life — prolonged well beyond three score years and ten — can be divided into three parts, very different in character, but each of them issuing, thanks to the grace and mercy of God, in victory. There was first the nearly thirty years that took a London boy, born with very few material advantages, to Oxford. Secondly, there were his thirty years or so of exacting service as a Baptist minister. Thirdly, there were the past fifteen years, when quite other temptations and difficulties had to be faced. Let me say a little about each of these three periods in John's life, in each of which he triumphed (and that is surely not too strong a word).

He was born in Watford into what used to be called a working-class home, one shadowed by winter unemployment in days when there were none of the present aids and safeguards. He left school at 14 during some of the darkest days of the first World

War and found employment in a chocolate factory, working long hours for 6/- a week. But by spending his scanty leisure learning shorthand and typing, he became a booking-clerk on the railway. And when the family moved to Holloway, John was transferred to the Superintendent's office at Euston.

From the little artisan-dwelling in Grovedale Road, that I came to know a few years later, John found his way to Upper Holloway Baptist church and there — as he once said to me — “Miss Eva Wood and S.G.M. converted me.” Miss Eva Wood with her remarkable Young Men's Bible Class and the Rev. Sydney Morris, then at the height of his powers after service as an Army chaplain, Sydney Morris, who quickly discerned the unusual quality in the young man and coveted him for the Christian ministry! There were formidable obstacles to overcome, for his mother and his sadly spent little father depended on John's earnings. How he got to Rawdon College is a remarkable story, which it requires great boldness to interpret as mere chance. Suffice it now to say that support was provided for his parents and John was free to grasp the exciting new opportunities that Rawdon offered. It was during those years that he and I became acquainted and embarked on a close comradeship that led to meetings and correspondence that went on until a few days before his death.

He secured a Leeds B.A. and was grateful to all his tutors, most grateful, he used to say, to H.C. Rowse, who introduced him to great literature. By 1927 there was talk of further study and the Baptist Union Scholarship, and on a memorable day in June, 1928 he came to the city of spires for the first time and I showed him round. By then we had succeeded in linking together the students of the nine Baptist colleges in a Baptist Student's Union, a rather daring venture for two young men, but that's another story. In 1929 we were together on a trip to Germany. But what stands out surely is the determination and application which carried John to Oxford. Oxford, he once wrote to me, “wrought a revolution in me . . . did a wonderful thing for me — it opened my eyes to the Catholic nature of the Christian faith.” Best of all, it also gave him his wife.

And then the second chapter in this threefold tale. Thirty crowded years of service under public gaze, nine years in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, ten years in Kettering and thirteen years as General Superintendent of the North-Eastern Area.

He was at Westgate Road church, Newcastle during the years of industrial depression, when the poverty was grim and terrible, when one in three of the population was unemployed, the years of hunger marches, the abdication of Edward VIII and the growing menace from Hitler's Germany. John set himself to change a church which had been regarded as rather exclusive and aristocratic into a spiritual home for ordinary folk. He enjoyed the stimulus of the Newcastle Theological Society and laid the foundation of friendship with men alike Alan Richardson and Leslie Hunter.

The decade at Fuller church, Kettering covered the second World War and the slow recovery of society afterwards. The Baptist Missionary Society moved its headquarters to Kettering during the war and this hastened the denominational recognition that was coming to John. Demands were made upon him outside his immediate pastoral duties. He became a member of the Baptist Union Council and secretary of a Commission discussing the complexities of our polity at a time when there was much unrest and uncertainty in the ministry. The B.B.C. found him to be an effective leader of broadcast services. But his main work was in Kettering and he secured an unusual hold on both the church and the community. “The demands of a pastoral ministry,” he told me in 1944, “have a cleansing influence on one's life, and bring one also in touch

with so much that is fine and wholesome in human nature", but a few years later he felt "almost overwhelmed . . . by the misery and sorrow of the world." He rejoiced in the "complete theological liberty" he enjoyed in Kettering — those were his words. He began to use his pen and published a little volume on the *Book of Revelation*. But it was obvious he was destined for yet wider responsibilities. What they were to be was uncertain.

The answer came in 1949. He was appointed to succeed the Rev. Henry Bonser as General Superintendent of an area which includes the Northern Association and the Yorkshire Association — from the Scottish border to the valley of the Don. It meant the care of over 160 churches and their ministers, ceaseless journeying and counselling, representing the Baptist Union there and on frequent visits to the Scottish Baptist Union, work for yet another trying Commission, membership for a time of the British Council of Churches, further demands by the B.B.C., regular articles in the *British Weekly* under the pen-name Richard Fishwick.

The success he achieved was not easily won or superficial. The Christian ministry is a difficult and costly vocation, costly in many different ways. Particularly in Yorkshire John had to win his way. Though trained at Rawdon, he was a Londoner. Many thought him reserved and basically they were right. But in 1956, halfway through his years as General Superintendent, the ministers made clear their confidence and gratitude. Then unexpectedly and shatteringly in April, 1962 he was struck down.

Struck down, but far from destroyed. Back in London after a few months he measured himself against the disappointments and the inevitable restrictions. For some years he continued to give valuable help to the Baptist Ministers Fellowship, in the work of which he had assisted Sydney Morris. He maintained his interest in denominational affairs and kept his friendships in repair. He enjoyed watching cricket at Lord's and the Oval. He went on reading widely and with discrimination. Above all he found solace and inspiration in music. "What has happened to me in this respect," he told me in 1965, "can be compared with what happened to Keats on first looking into Chapman's Homer."

"Then felt I like some watcher of the skies

When a new planet swims into his ken."

"How thankful I am," he said to me once, "my interests are so varied."

Once in his Kettering days John was asked to give the address at a School Commemoration service. He chose as text "You, therefore, must be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect," adopting "completeness" rather than "perfection" as his theme and pleading for all-roundness of life. In an article which appeared after he had been taken ill, he said that the Church and contemporary man lived in two different worlds, two cultures, to use the phraseology of C.P. Snow, and he pleaded for a new comprehensiveness in the understanding and presentation of the Gospel.

At about the time of his school address he said to me: "I have found in my faith in the Sovereignty of God, and in my assurance of the ultimate victory of His purpose complete freedom from undue solicitude about His work. I think it is a combination of the difficulties I have had to contend with and a realisation of the power of sin in human affairs, which has led to my present convictions, plus perhaps the influence of Brother Lawrence." But such faith was to be searchingly tested. He remained sure, with William Cowper, that "blind unbelief is sure to err and scan God's work in vain". But he had what he described to me as "post-stroke doubts", kept at bay, he said, by the memory

of an experience in his Westgate Road days, by the B.B.C. morning service and by the ministry of Howard Williams.

In the Kettering days he once told me that he was moving towards belief in a personal devil. We never discussed the matter again. If there is a personal spirit of evil and if John was selected for attack in the hope that he could be overthrown and made to repudiate his faith, then the attempt failed. On the other hand, if – following the Book of Job – we think that the Almighty judged John Barrett worthy to be tested as to the ultimate sincerity and validity of his faith, then he passed that most exacting test. "He still has a twinkle in his eye," said a young nurse to me at the Roehampton Hospital a few days before his death.

John's favourite poet was Keats. I do not know whether he dwelt on Keats's lines about death.

"How strange it is that man on earth should roam
And lead a life of woe, but not forsake
His rugged path; nor dare he view alone
His future doom which is but to awake."

John kept to his rugged path and he was not alone, for Gladys, his companion for forty-five years nobly cared for and supported him, and he had children and grandchildren to delight in. He was surely not alone at the last, for this final victory, like the others, must be counted a supernatural one.

E.A. Payne

Memorial & Thanksgiving Service
Bloomsbury,
11 February, 1978