



INCLUSIVE REPRESENTATION

Towards a Doctrine of Christian Ministry

Nigel G. Wright

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INCLUSIVE REPRESENTATION Towards a Doctrine of Christian Ministry

The context out of which this paper arises is very specific. It is an attempt to restate a robust understanding of the nature of the Christian ministry within the communion of churches known as the Baptist Union of Great Britain. This is a more ambitious project than it might at first sound, given the diversity of perspectives to be found within this communion on a wide variety of topics. Certainly it does not attempt to achieve, nor does it expect to command, universal agreement. Rather it seeks to identify a core or consensus that might be affirmed by a variety of positions from which the issue is approached. It is also concerned to identify characteristic structures of thought that might hinder the formation of just such a consensus. I mean by this that this issue, as many others, is often approached from different prior perspectives. In order to safeguard particular truths (we take as cases in point the ministry of the whole congregation of God's people or the servant nature of all ministry within the church) it is deemed necessary to mute or de-emphasize other truths (as for instance the ministries of certain people or the nature of ministry as leadership). This may be understandable, but it is ultimately theologically impoverishing. Inevitably we must hold truths in tension and regard them as interdependent.

A STATE OF CONFUSION

In their understanding of ministry, British Baptists appear to have moved from a position of relative clarity to one of some confusion over a period of some forty years. In the early part of this period three major reports were produced on the subject of ministry, *The Meaning and Practice of Ordination among Baptists* (1957), *The Doctrine of the Ministry* (1961) and *Ministry Tomorrow* (1969). Not surprisingly the reports were concerned with specific contextual issues concerning the recognition, accreditation and deployment of ministers. While manifesting differing judgements on these pragmatic issues they convey the impression of general clarity concerning areas of agreement and disagreement amongst Baptists of the time. People knew what the issues were and where they might depart from each other. In particular *The Doctrine of the Ministry* identifies an historic duality in Baptist understandings corresponding roughly to the General Baptist and Particular Baptist strands of the tradition (Hayden, *Baptist Union Documents 1948-1977*: 29–33). The earliest General Baptists limited the authority of the minister to his (*sic*) own congregation; Particular Baptists were more open to such authority extending beyond his own congregation to other churches. As both streams of Baptist life became more conscious of the wider fellowship of churches understandings changed. Evidence of this is seen in the office of messenger, a translocal ministry (the word 'messenger' was a translation of 'apostle'), which is to be found in its initial form in both groups in the 1650s. Towards the end of that century General Baptists began electing and ordaining messengers with

a larger trust than one church. Among the Particulars Daniel Turner in the 1750s stressed the concern of the churches for each other. This led to the practice of the minister from one church sharing in the ordination of one from another. However this progress towards a greater sense of communion and of the broader mandate of ministers was not uniform. John Gill, although sharing Turner's emphasis on the importance of the ministry, denied that ministers could act ministerially in any other church. This distinction has been an enduring issue ever since with Arthur Dakin's influential book *The Baptist View of the Church and Ministry* (1944) strongly arguing the case for the 'limited' view. It is worth quoting from Dakin:

A Baptist minister is one who is closely related to one Baptist church which has given him an invitation and over which he presides. He is a Baptist minister (with emphasis on the word 'Baptist') partly in virtue of that relationship, and if that relationship were entirely to cease, leaving him with no church over which to preside, he would for the time being cease to be a Baptist minister, just as a deacon ceases to be a Baptist deacon when he gives up the office. There is no sense in which a man can claim to be a Baptist minister when he is not the head of a Baptist church. (Dakin: 45)

Dakin's concern is to define the word 'minister' 'in such a way as to make it clear that it designates an office in the church and not an "order" based on unique endowment' (46). Accordingly, and consistently, college principals and tutors, superintendents, chaplains and padres are all to be denied the title of Baptist minister. As principal of Bristol Baptist College Dakin was of course excluding himself.

It does seem to make a considerable difference whether we view ministers as holding their commission exclusively within local congregations or whether we understand them as ministers of the whole church, although serving in the local. Dakin was at pains to argue that the former view is 'the Baptist view'. However, recent Baptist thinking does not seem to have followed him in this and in itself this may point to a greater sense of the wider communion of churches to which we belong. In their service of ordination ministers are formally recognized as serving 'among churches of the Baptist faith and order', and it is expected that there will be wide representation at the service itself as a symbolic expression of this. Despite this it still seems to be the case that there is a structural fault line within Baptist thinking which is at least reminiscent of the historic duality which we have already noted. The theme of 'duality' will be a keynote in this paper. The problem is, and here I return to the theme of 'relative confusion', that this duality is now less easy to categorize.

In 1995 the Doctrine and Worship Committee of the Baptist Union of Great Britain (BUGB) issued a discussion document entitled *Forms of Ministry among Baptists: Towards an Understanding of Spiritual Leadership*. The paper owed much to the thinking of Paul Fiddes who was its main author. It takes as its starting point what it discerns as 'two distinct views about the basis for particular forms of spiritual

leadership in the Church' (19). However, these are not defined along the lines we have already identified but rather around two focal points. The first concerns what the report describes as a 'stable and underlying pattern of office' which is to be discerned both in the New Testament and in church history. Sometimes this pattern of office is seen in terms of bishop, elder (presbyter) and deacon. This three-fold pattern of the Catholic tradition is echoed in the messenger, elder and deacon of the later General Baptists. Other Baptists have understood it as a two-fold office of elder and deacon, with such roles as superintendents understood as extensions of the role of congregational elder or pastor. What is crucial is that such offices belong to the way in which the church is ordered alongside the gifts bestowed upon all members of the church. The language of those early Baptist confessions, which acknowledge that 'a particular church consists of officers and members', reflects this sense of a given order. Since the beginning of Baptist life in Britain offices have been recognized by 'ordination', which word itself reflects the idea of an 'ordinance' created by Christ for the health and good order of the churches (19). Those who are familiar with Baptist church history will recognize this commitment to a 'pattern of office' as part of the story.

The second focal point concerns 'gifts and callings'. Rather than a pattern of office this approach begins its thinking with the gifts and callings bestowed by the Spirit upon the congregation and shapes structures and ministries out of them (21). While valuing 'spiritual leadership' it sits loose to any specific pattern of office or given order. It continues a more recent Baptist suspicion of both the word and practice of 'ordination' (one incidentally that came out of the reaction to Tractarianism) out of anxiety that singling out such forms of ministry might suppress the ministry of the whole people of God. We might add to *Forms of Ministry* some elaborations at this point to make the same point. While valuing the teaching ministry this second approach may be more comfortable with the notion of a teaching elder as part of a team of elders than with that of an ordained office. Although far from identical with the older view we have identified with Dakin, it might be keen to stress the local over against the translocal and to insist that people discover their ministries within particular congregations rather than having 'transferability' between churches. It would certainly see itself as radically distinguished from the one-person ministry (and indeed one-man ministry) which characterized a previous generation of Baptist churches. It may stress a functional view of ministry which sees various ministries as tasks to be done by the appropriately gifted in the congregation rather than an ontological or office-based view more focused on the gift of certain persons for the well-being of the church. Whereas the historic duality remained comfortable with the concept of office and debated whether it had any ministerial validity beyond the local church, the more recent duality is more cautious. While perhaps open to the view that giftings might develop into ministries which in turn might develop dynamically into recognized offices, it would be more hesitant concerning the view that there is what *Forms of Ministry* identifies as an *underlying pattern* of office belonging either to the

being or the well-being of the church universally. It remains more pragmatic and more functional in approach.

I have asserted that we are in a confused state on these issues. It is worth pondering what has happened in the last forty years that may have contributed to this. I identify two strands, which are not unrelated. Over this period Baptist churches have been strongly impacted by *the charismatic movement*. This has helped to bring about a much needed shift towards the participation of the whole people of God in the work of ministry. The renewed emphasis upon the Body of Christ in which we are all members and all gifted has been shaped by what it has rejected, namely the limitation of ministry to a state of ecclesial affairs in which 'the minister has ministered and the congregation has congregated'. It is understandable that the rediscovery of the dynamic and charismatic has been accompanied by a critique of the institutional and the established. New approaches to ministry and questionings of the old were bound to emerge from this ferment. Secondly, in wider cultural terms Western societies have undergone certain *political and social shifts* that have left us less deferential towards authority, markedly more informal in personal behaviour, better educated than ever before and assertive of human equality over against hierarchical concepts and assumptions. While we are more tolerant of difference we believe ourselves to be less patient with suggestions that any might be 'superior' to others. The extent to which this is really the case, of course, is open to discussion and it may be that we have simply substituted hierarchies that we can all identify with others we have not yet learnt to acknowledge. These shifts mean that those who would wish to assert the continuing value of the tradition need to discover the appropriate ways in which to do this without losing the positive gains of the new age in which we are living.

Having distinguished the duality of office and gift it is worth recording at this point that it may well exist within us and not simply between us. This would not be the only point of debate where we find ourselves personally oscillating between different poles rather than firmly fixed in one or the other. Equally, life is full of ironies and it is frequently in churches of the second tendency that alternative models arise centered around the idea of 'leadership'. In more recent history it is out of more charismatically orientated churches (I am not necessarily thinking of Baptist churches here but they have not been immune) that patterns of authoritarian leadership have emerged, perhaps as a way of compensating for or possibly reinventing the 'pattern of office' that they have rejected. These ironies underscore the degree of confusion that exists, the complexities of the debate and the need to agree upon good and healthy models. What is noteworthy in a retrospective reading of *Forms of Ministry* is the way in which the first view described emerges in the report as more clearly and coherently definable, whereas the second is less easily captured in propositions and definitions. In short, as expounded by the report, the second is more woolly. This may simply reflect the instincts and analysis of the chief author of the report. Or it may indicate that the second view is a reaction against the first and is feeling after a more open-ended, less ordered and defined approach to church life. However the subsequent argument of

Forms of Ministry is an attempt to combine the best insights of both approaches (23) and indeed the sub-title shows this: 'Towards an understanding of spiritual leadership'. It attempts that combination by affirming on the one-hand the continuing usefulness of the concept of office understood as *episkope* and *diakonia*, pastoral oversight and pastoral service. On the other it acknowledges that these are dynamic categories and that the boundary between them is a moving one. This should lead to a more flexible and broadly conceived approach to ministerial recognition and accreditation.

Despite this contribution it still appears that we are without an understanding that carries a consensus. This was demonstrated in more recent attempts to modify and redesign the accredited list of ministers of the BUGB. Those charged with this task reported to the Council of the BUGB that since they were unable to agree on a theology of ministry they had given up the attempt and were proceeding on pragmatic rather than theological grounds. What subsequently emerged was a list of accredited ministries working with a theology or theory of accreditation but not of ordination. This is a less than ideal state of affairs. But it remains an open question (at least for me) whether agreement really does elude us or whether, as is often the case, by dint of approaching an issue from different starting points we have simply not yet talked things through to a stage where we are sufficiently clear both where points of disagreement might lie and where agreement might potentially be found. This paper is offered therefore in the belief that this task is worth pursuing and that it must indeed be found along the trajectory suggested in *Forms of Ministry*, that is, a combination of the underlying concerns of both approaches in such a way as to lead to a new agreement of a fundamental core. Since this involves a careful process of listening it becomes important to clear out of the way some of the obstacles to communication.

PERSISTENT STICKING POINTS

All of us find ourselves from time to time talking past people rather than to them. Theological debate can be blocked by the repetition of mantras which give the semblance of meaning but which on further examination darken rather than lighten knowledge. In this section I scrutinize a variety of mantric utterances which appear with some frequency in this debate from both ends of the new duality I have identified and which hinder its progress.

1. *The priesthood of all believers.* Among Baptists this is a concept that has prestige and so to cite it is often regarded as the last word on a particular issue. It affirms that all believers have living access to God through Christ in the Spirit and so have a freedom and an authority of their own. It has functioned therefore as an antidote to forms of priestcraft and control that have discounted the participation of the whole people of God in the life and mind of Christ. For this reason Baptists have avoided using the word 'priest' to describe their leaders. However, to affirm this

shared priesthood does not mean or imply that therefore all are equally to be regarded as *leaders* within the church and that leadership becomes unnecessary. This is the intent with which this doctrine is sometimes cited, not least in the correspondence columns of the *Baptist Times*. Indeed, all may share in the prophethood, priesthood and kingship of Christ and to affirm this is to make massive assertions concerning the nature of the church and to ground the shared nature of authority in the congregation. But Scripture is clear that some, and not all, are called to particular offices and ministries. Ephesians 4:11 ('The gifts he gave were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers to equip the saints for the work of ministry') and 1 Corinthians 12:28 ('And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers ... Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers?') give sufficient indication of this. The priesthood of all by no means excludes the calling of some to particular office and to leadership, since this is the way that those who are so called might make their particular contribution to the well-being of all in the shared priesthood of all believers.

2. *The opposition of service and leadership.* Because Christ so clearly understood his mission as one of servanthood and taught his disciples that they were not above their master, it is often implied and sometimes explicitly stated that ministry should not be understood as leadership, indeed that the concept of leadership is itself in conflict with the idea of ministry, or service. 'Nobody leads. We just serve each other'. There is unease about any suggestion that we need leadership, let alone 'strong leadership'. It may very well be that the protest here is against secular models of the 'strong leader', and given the twentieth century's record in this area such instincts are well founded. Although the Bible freely uses the language of lordship and sovereignty it also subverts the very language that it uses by seeing as Lord the one who gave himself upon the cross. It can hardly be denied that Christ, the pioneer of salvation, gave leadership to his disciples, but in so doing he permanently redefined what spiritual leadership looks like. It does not involve domination and coercion but meekness and self-sacrifice. It can indeed overturn the tables in the temple and confront the religious hypocrites but it achieves its ends ultimately by the way of the cross. What is at stake here is not whether there should be leaders in the church but the content and style of that leadership. Christ-like leadership is not opposed to service, it is a form of service. It serves the church by offering something which is greatly needed, an example that points the way and leads into good pasture (1 Peter 5:1–4), that nurtures and enables the whole people of God in their growth to fullness (Eph. 4:11–16). To deny the nature of Christian ministers as leaders is to ignore the development of a significant part of their work and of the skills they need to acquire. Furthermore, where legitimate leadership is undermined or prevented it opens up the vacuum that permits illegitimate leadership to emerge.

3. *Uncertainty about appropriate terms.* It might seem to follow from the previous point that I advocate a paradigm of ministry as spiritual leadership. Certainly I have struggled to understand what people are reacting against when they criticize leadership language. There has been a considerable vogue for the language of leadership and a corresponding suspicion of it. Indeed the terms 'spiritual leader, or 'pastoral leader' are sometimes used in preference to the term 'minister' which some hold to be an implicit denial that all God's people are ministers. A church I used to belong to actually had on its notice sheet 'Ministers: The whole Congregation. Pastoral Leader: A N Other'. Increasingly it is asserted that baptism is an ordination to ministry. In preference therefore to the term 'minister', the language of leadership has been chosen to designate those who fulfil particular offices. Are there unintended consequences to this? I have indicated my belief that to deny that ministers are leaders is to ignore an inevitable and necessary part of the pastoral office. People need to be equipped to be good leaders and given freedom to fulfil this ministry. This is not to say, however, that the leadership paradigm should dominate our description of ministry. The terms we use also have the effect of defining tasks and expectations. I suspect the choice of the term 'leader' unintentionally skews expectation in a 'managerial' direction. To use the term 'managerial' as if it equated to 'worldly' is both poor theology and unhelpful. Managerial skills are to be valued and prized, and management thinking increasingly values the kinds of person-centered skills that spiritual leadership requires. However, ministers are not primarily managers of organizations, or if they are they should not be. They are listeners to and bearers of the Word of God; they are theologians in residence and pastors of people. In churches where many church members are active participants and actors within corporate culture, the pressure is on ministers to fashion themselves in this same image. While they should be willing to learn and gain they should not be deflected from their primary calling. While acknowledging the crucial skills of leadership the language of 'ministry' remains more appropriate as the dominant paradigm for the task. Neither need it be felt that to call some 'ministers' denies the ministry of all. The NT itself does this in designating some as *diakono*i and we are unlikely to know better than the NT. However, it remains a general term which is differentiated in the NT by other terms such as elder, presbyter, apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher. It is unhelpful therefore if the word is restricted to the role of pastor (a tendency we noted in Dakin) but not allowed of others such as evangelists. It is even more unhelpful if the term pastor is used of what used to be called 'lay-pastors' while ministers are those who are 'properly ordained', as was a more recent suggestion and as is the practice in some Baptist Unions. Rather, there are varieties of service/ministry within which we locate pastors, evangelists and others. In terms of current BUGB accreditation, pastors, youth specialists and evangelists are all ministers.

4. *Hesitation about the traditional term 'ministers of Word and Sacrament'.* The duality to which I have referred has sometimes been characterized as a tension between 'high Baptist' and 'low Baptist' tendencies. *The Doctrine of the Ministry* located the duality in an early difference between General and Particular Baptists, *Forms of Ministry* in the tension between an underlying pattern of ministry and an emphasis on gift and calling. Now it is seen as a conflict between one gravitational pull towards Presbyterianism and another towards Anabaptism in which Presbyterianism represents a high view of ministry with government and sacramental action located in the presbytery and Anabaptism a low view with authority and sacrament rooted in the congregation. As with the other descriptions of duality, we might on further inspecting the varieties of Anabaptism find this one to be less straightforward than it sounds. Undoubtedly some of the tensions in our understanding arise out of hostility towards the term 'minister of Word and Sacrament' which is suspect for several reasons: firstly, it might be held to imply that the administration of the sacraments is the prerogative of the ordained. This is undoubtedly the case in some other parallel traditions. Whereas Methodists and Presbyterians would deny that ministers are in any sense necessary to bring about a transubstantiation of bread and wine, as a matter of discipline and right order presidency of the sacraments belongs to the ordained alone. The logic is that as the life of the church is in part maintained by these ordinances proper and therefore restrictive discipline concerning their correct administration should be exercised. In so far as this position exists among Baptists (and I am not sure to what extent it does) 'low' Baptists would criticize it as tending towards a clerical, priestly domination of the life of the church. By contrast, the teaching of the Word and the sacraments or ordinances belong to the whole church and might properly be administered in principle by any member of the congregation even if in practice it is usually done through a pastor. The report *The Baptist Doctrine of the Church* (1948) captures this well when it affirms: 'It is the Church which preaches the Word and celebrates the sacraments, and it is the Church which, through pastoral oversight, feeds the flock and ministers to the world. It normally does these things through the person of its minister, but not solely through him' (8). Secondly, there is hesitation concerning the word 'sacrament' lest it be understood that grace might automatically be conferred by the operation of the acts themselves. This apart, there is questioning as to whether a 'high view' of the ordinances really belongs to the NT witness or whether it is a construct of the later routinized and ritualized Church. This is an issue we cannot afford (for various reasons!) to go further into at this point. The primary issue concerns the term 'minister of Word and Sacrament'. In a reductionist sense this term could be held simply to distinguish the special ministry of some in the sense that if all are called to minister, some in one way, some in another, there are those who are called to devote themselves to the study and teaching of the Word and the administration of

the visible words which we call the sacraments or ordinances. In a wider sense those who are called to bear the Word, proclaiming and teaching it, must also have as part of their responsibility the duty of making sure that baptism and the Lord's Supper are indeed properly celebrated. As given, normative and norming practices, they cannot be allowed to become sloppy or marginal to the life of the church. Potentially, any believer might administer them with the church's permission (Paul did not baptize all the converts in Corinth), but pastors and teachers have the responsibility to see them administered in a well-disciplined and wholesome way, even if they rarely or never preside. While I accept this responsibility as part of the task, my own preference in order to avoid any suggestion of clericalism is to speak of 'ministers of the Gospel'. Even so the use of the term 'Word and Sacrament' is sometimes helpful as a way of distinguishing the particular ministry of the presbyter or pastor-teacher.

5. *Distaste for hierarchy.* It is common to hear Baptists say that they do not believe in hierarchy and even to distinguish themselves from hierarchical church traditions. It is undoubtedly true that Baptists do their ecclesiology from the bottom up rather than the top down. They believe that the church exists where two or three come together in Christ's name and that the validity or competence of a local church does not depend on its relationship to an hierarchical structure whether this be Anglican bishop or Restorationist apostle. We perhaps are apt to miss the fact that those who are in what we regard as 'hierarchical' structures self-define their communions not as a 'rule of priests' but as a network of beneficial relationships, including episcopal ministries. For this reason alone we need to be more careful with our language lest we be found misrepresenting others. But rejection of hierarchy and the belief that 'nobody is any better than anybody else' might also be hindering us from coming to terms with the reality of our own church-life. All groups beyond a certain size create hierarchies, however flat and unobtrusive these may be, to manage their own affairs and activities. Authority is accorded to certain persons to act legitimately and with permission on behalf of the group and to have certain responsibilities towards that group. We cannot avoid therefore an element of superordination and subordination and neither should we try to. We should rather establish healthy and accountable ways of managing power. A simple example of this would be a committee meeting presided over by a moderator or chairperson. For the purposes of the committee the moderator has authority to preside over the meeting. That authority is circumscribed by certain rules, written and unwritten, and could be taken away by the group itself if needed. But while it is operating the constructive committee member submits to the authority of the moderator and acknowledges that person's discretion and freedom to make judgements with which he or she may disagree. There is nothing demeaning about this in principle. This illustration of the workings of power and authority might be extended *mutatis mutandis* to larger groups and to organizational structures. It

cannot be said to be non-hierarchical but it is a certain, flexible and accountable kind of hierarchy. In the church, congregations elect people to be 'over them' in this kind of way and it is no surprise that the NT writers not infrequently use the language of superordination and even of 'rule'. We should not be embarrassed by this, nor should we avoid using the language, since if we do so we might find that we are simply depriving ourselves of necessary language and that we have exchanged legitimate rule for the illegitimate. But as we do so it is always understood 'in Christ', and as his own kingly rule has both subverted and renewed the language itself.

6. *Concern about ordination.* The final sticking point I identify concerns ordination. I have indicated that Baptists have consistently ordained their ministers but that in the nineteenth century there developed some suspicion of the practice among Baptists as part of their reaction to Tractarianism. Elements of this suspicion continue with some present-day pastors declining to be ordained, some of them preferring to be 'commissioned'. A commissioning might be thought of as an appropriate way of marking the beginning of a particular phase of ministry or task within it. Ordination would normally be understood as being set apart for a permanent, or at least enduring, office within the church. Because of its inferred associations with priesthood, with the conferring of a sacramental power upon the one ordained and the suggestion that this marks a transition from the laity to the clergy, into a priestly caste separated in some ontological way from the rest of the people of God, some reject the practice and the terminology. However, none of these associations need be perceived as being necessarily implied in the term 'ordination'. Just as Baptists might celebrate communion (and even call it the eucharist) without thereby signing up to the doctrine of transubstantiation or practise baptism without embracing baptismal regeneration, so ordination can mean what our own theological reasoning leads it to mean. As the church ordains so it affirms and recognizes the call of God, according to individuals an authority to teach and to oversee God's people, an authority which it believes God has already bestowed upon them as evidenced by their gifting, calling and holiness of life. Ordination does not as such alter who and what a person is, other than in the highly significant fact that it may change the way they think about themselves, or the way in which they may be perceived by others. This is an act of legitimation, of authorization so that ordained persons might know themselves to be formally commissioned as representatives of the people of God both within and beyond the congregation and the communion which has assented to that ordination. It could not be claimed that this is a necessary act such that a person could not be a minister without it, or such that the ordination 'takes' at a certain point in the ceremony as after the ordination prayer or the laying on of hands. The minister who served without it would be as much a minister as anybody else. But it is a fitting and appropriate act which expresses in one moment what it has taken many

moments to discern and to prepare for. It is tempting to say that a person so ordained is no different ontologically after the moment than before, neither do they become able to do any one thing that was previously inaccessible to them. This would be true if by 'ontological change' we mean that from outside, that is in the act of being ordained by a bishop, something is introduced to that person's life that remains an indelible and ineradicable part of their being – something is 'done' to them. However, in that the ordained person is set aside for ministry with the prayers of God's people, those prayers must count for something, unless we believe that prayer in general counts for nothing. An enduement of the Spirit for ministry is surely our firm expectation and this must indeed mean a change. The act affirms that they are commissioned to represent God's people in an enduring way and with a degree of authority that is not shared by all. It should make a difference to the ordained person's sense of responsibility to live a disciplined and godly life that is particularly open to hearing and receiving the word of God for the people of God. *Forms of Ministry* called this (somewhat controversially at the time but the claim is not really controversial) a 'way of being' or 'order of life' (31). The NT uses other language that we might also find strange. It talks of Paul and Barnabas being 'set apart... for the work to which I have called them' (Acts 13:2). If we distance ourselves from the idea that people have something 'done' to them, we ought nonetheless to look for a significant change in the sense that persons as an act of response to their call and ordination orientate themselves radically toward God for the fulfilment of that call and ordination. This cannot be 'indelible' since a person might choose to retract it and no longer to live in this way, but a 'way of being' it surely is.

WORKING WITH DUALITY

Having now identified and picked my way through these sticking points I need to gather the fragments and do something with them. In much that has been said there has been the sense that Baptists are wrestling with a duality. The exact nature of this duality has shifted. It began in my exposition as a duality of sphere, whether Baptist ministers are limited in their ministries to their churches or have a wider acceptance. It became a duality between the perception of an underlying pattern of ministry that is a given and the more immediate perception of the dynamic gifting and calling of God. It then moved to 'high' and 'low' views of ministry in what were perceived to be Presbyterian or Anabaptist tendencies. It could also be characterized as 'ontological' or 'functional' in nature with the emphasis falling either upon the fact that certain persons are given to the church, and the church does well to receive them and gather round them, or upon the work that needs to be done in the congregation that some are more or less gifted to fulfil. Yet a further duality would be between a 'classical' model with a high value accorded to 'given' ministries and a 'communal' model with the primacy being given to the congregation which needs to be variously served. Although

the analysis changes there are sufficient underlying trends here for us to recognize the validity in both ends of the duality and to insist that it is in the combination of insights, most of which would be conceded by those working at the other end of the tension, that we shall discover the way forward.

To establish this point further, it is striking that both tendencies are able to appeal directly to the teaching of Jesus. The point can be made by referring to two passages in Matthew. In chapter 10 Jesus appoints, authorizes and sends out the 12. They are integral to his mission and they go out as if they were Christ himself, so that he can say (40) 'Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me'. There is huge prestige attached to these words. To be sent out as Christ's representatives is to be as Christ himself. To receive these representatives is to receive Christ and through Christ to receive God himself. If we then picture the forward movement of the Christian mission with the word being carried in a great apostolic thrust of sending and receiving, we give to those whom Christ calls and sends great standing: to receive them is to receive God and to receive blessing out of all proportion to our deserts. This is a high view of ministry, both of the being sent and of the receiving. Contrast this with 23:8 'But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are students (brothers). And call no one your father on earth, for you have one Father – the one in heaven. Nor are you to be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Messiah. The greatest among you will be your servant'. Here is teaching that undermines hierarchy and patriarchy and excessive concern with position, prestige and prelacy and puts us all on the same level. All is swallowed up in a passion for God that overwhelms everything else. If we could succeed in combining these passages we might not be far from the kingdom of God. The point is that the duality is rooted in Christ and that no solution will be adequate that fails to maintain the full tension.

AUTHORITY TO MINISTER

My modest proposal for negotiating this duality involves choosing a lens through which to view it. The point from which we start in our discussions of ministry may determine that at which we arrive. As an example, those who begin historically by rooting their theology in the sending of the twelve and those who continue that apostolic tradition are already asserting a chronological and historical priority of the ministry. Preachers preach and their word gathers a congregation as a derivative of their preaching. A chronological priority is thus easily translated into a theological priority which is concerned with the right standing of those who are sent to preach and the right content of their message and their sacramental practice. Ministry has priority therefore over congregation. By contrast those who begin congregationally, stressing the dynamic work of the Spirit in gifting and calling members of the body translate this into a theological priority of the congregation over the ministry. We have in this the distinction between the classical and the communal models of ministry.

To negotiate this tension my proposal involves adopting the lens of *authority*, by which I mean not power but a *weight of testimony*. Those whose testimony is weighty are people of authority. All authority in heaven and earth is given to Christ since he is the true witness. Christ is present in the Word that is preached by those whom he sends and in the reception and propagation of the Word which is believed in the congregation. We have authority when our testimony is weighty and it is weighty to the extent that we bear the Word of God. Bearing the Word of God is the essence of ministry and is its defining core. Those who are called, gifted and sent by God to be bearers of his Word and who do so in the Spirit of Christ have an authority to minister that Word in his name. Equally, believing congregations which gather with Christ in the midst and under his lordship derive from his presence by the Spirit an authority to minister that Word to each other and to the world. *The weight of testimony is at its greatest when both forms of authority come together, when some minister for the sake of the ministry of all and all minister alongside the some.* In fact both forms of authority exist in mutual dependence. Although to be distinguished, they are not to be separated. In historical terms Christ sent out apostles who proclaimed the Word through which congregations were gathered. Here is the classical model. From those congregations others were gifted, raised up, tested, called and then sent to continue the process. Here is the communal model. Out of this dynamic the growth of the church has proceeded to the ends of the earth. Those who take a classical view of ministry would tend to stress the priority of the ministry before the church on the basis that the apostles pre-existed the church and were instruments of its coming into being through their preaching. This is why in Catholic traditions discussion of the church often becomes a discussion of the ministry. Those who stress a communal approach view the apostolic band as the church in embryo out of which the apostles emerged and point to the fact that all subsequent ministries have emerged from the church by the Spirit. This gives the church priority over its ministry. In reality this is no more resolvable than whether men have priority over women or women over men. As Paul says: 'In the Lord woman is not independent of man or man independent of woman. For just as woman came from man, so man comes through woman; but all things come from God' (1 Cor. 11:11–12). Those who are called to bear the Word need to be tested and confirmed in their ministry by the reception and recognition of churches or by a communion of churches if they are to avoid being self-appointed and unaccountable. Those churches which are isolated and self-sufficient need to open themselves to receive from the wider church those whom God is calling and sending as bearers of the Word for their benefit. To exist without this openness is to exist eccentrically. This does not mean that a church needs the presence of a minister to be a church, only that its authority, the weight of its testimony, will be lacking if it does not open itself to receive those whom God calls to bear the Word. In the same way ministers who do not mingle the Word they teach and proclaim with that which they find in the congregation are diminished in authority. The testimony of the church is most weighty when neither of these models is given theological priority over the other but both are

affirmed, celebrated and maintained simultaneously.

INCLUSIVE REPRESENTATION

On the basis of this proposal I am now in a position to explain the title with which I am working. Baptists would wish, I think, to reject the belief that ministers hold certain unique prerogatives, that is, that they alone can perform sacramental actions to the exclusion of anybody else. In principle, performing baptisms and presiding at the Lord's Supper may be undertaken by any believer provided they do this within the oversight and discipline of the local church. To deny this would be to fail to recognize the authority and the competence of the local Christian community which should itself be seen as preacher of the Word, celebrator of the sacraments and feeder of the flock. Ministers may enhance, deepen and enrich this but not deny it. The understanding of ministry I advocate here may therefore be called 'inclusive' in the sense that the functions of ministers do not in principle exclude those of others and indeed that all members of the church are also representatives of it. On the other hand ministers should be seen as distinctively representative in a number of ways.

Firstly, they are representatives of Christ in that they have been called and sent by Christ. Although they function within and out from congregations, and indeed may only fruitfully exercise spiritual authority where this is willingly accorded, they are more than functionaries of the congregation required to do its bidding. They may be servants of the church, but the church is not their master. They are directly accountable to God (Heb. 13:17) as well as accountable within the congregation. In principle therefore a minister may find her or himself set over against a congregation for the sake of the Word that they bear. This needs to be balanced of course with the opposite fact that in principle a congregation, which is itself the pillar and bulwark of the truth (1 Tim. 3:15), may set itself over against a minister if she or he wanders from the truth. The apostolic tradition is not carried on through ministers alone but through the whole life of the whole people of God.

Secondly, they are representatives of the wider church within the context of a local manifestation of the church. In their commitment to the presence of Christ in the local church, Baptist Christians have constantly underestimated the degree to which Christ is present in the whole church. If it is believed that Christ is present where two or three come together and on this basis a local church becomes competent to act in his name, it must also be true that as we come together from varying churches in translocal synods Christ is present to enable those wider assemblies to be church. 'Being church' when we assemble is of course different from being 'a Church'. As Christ bestows ministers and ministries upon the church it is upon the whole church that he does so. For this reason those who are recognized as being called to minister are more than simply ministers of one congregation, they belong to the whole church. It is for this reason that they are tested and recognized in a wider sphere and instructed in the theological tradition of the church of God, in order that in the local they may represent

the wider church and bring its wisdom to bear. An important text here would be 2 Timothy 2:1–2. At the same time, by virtue of their recognition by the local church, ministers are empowered to represent that congregation in the counsels and concerns of the whole church.

Under this heading it is appropriate to return to the idea that part of Christ's gift to the church is what *Forms of Ministry* called 'an underlying pattern of office' to be discerned in the church as a whole. If this is the case, and I believe it is, what I have described as the 'authority' of local churches is maximized as they link into and benefit from this underlying pattern. The exact structure of this pattern is contested. Traditionally a three-fold pattern of office such as bishop, presbyter, deacon is discerned, or a two-fold pattern of elder (presbyter) and deacon. Other offices are seen as variations on these themes. In more recent history a four or five-fold pattern has had its advocates on the basis of the apostle, prophet, evangelist, and pastor/teacher (or pastor and teacher) of Ephesians 4:11–13. I remain persuaded that more reflection on these patterns would be of value, particularly concerning that continuing pattern of ministry that might be represented by the worlds 'apostle' and 'prophet', provided that we allow it to remain a flexible and porous pattern and avoid making it a stylized and ritualized form. That there are pastor/teachers and evangelists is not the last word about the shape of ministry as we exercise it.

Thirdly, ministers represent local churches to themselves. Ministers are sent in Christ's name and represent him as they bear the Word. They also represent the wider church in the local church and vice versa. Once received by a local community, however, and recognized in an office of oversight by the whole congregation they acquire the freedom to embody that congregation to itself because they now act in a representative capacity. They are empowered to speak to the church and from the church with an authority that exceeds that of other members. It is for this reason that although they do not exclusively administer the sacraments, they may consistently do so. As they preside from time to time at the representative events of the faith community they nurture the faith of the whole. A recent Mennonite publication goes so far as to use the image of incarnation at this point (J.A. Esau, ed.: *Understanding Ministerial Leadership*: 24). As ministers minister to their people they incarnate the love and the authority of both Christ and of the whole congregation, making present in bodily form the God who is with us and the Body of Christ in which we participate.

STATUS AND STANDING

I began by stating my intention to offer a robust doctrine of ministry and I believe I have done that, at least in outline. At the same time I hope I have not done so in such a way as to undermine the vision of the ministry of all God's people. These two realities are linked. The ministry of all will not be realized in its fullness without our recognition of the gifts that Christ has given to some, gifts which are in reality people being and doing particular things for the sake of the whole. There is a beneficial spiral

of mutual interaction here. One sticking point I did not earlier identify concerns the rightful suspicion of any artificial and self-serving preoccupation with 'status'. Concern for status in ministry is bound to undermine our affirmation of the whole church by becoming overly conscious of the few. Sympathizing as I do with these instincts and sensing them to be well-rooted in the teaching of the Servant King, I nonetheless wish to stress the importance of God's chosen ministers being people of *standing* among us. If we accord them little standing, lest they begin to desire status, then we hinder the very ministries that we need. Status is what we seek for ourselves. Standing is what others give to us, most of all when we do not seek it. It is appropriate to honour those whom God calls and sends and as we do so to set them free to do God's work.

NIGEL G. WRIGHT *Principal, Spurgeon's College, and Vice-President, Baptist Union of Great Britain*

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