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A table of contents for *The Baptist Quarterly* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bq_01.php

Ordination among Australian Baptists

*(with special reference to New South Wales)*¹

THAT there is "pervasive uncertainty"² in many denominations today about the nature and task of the Christian ministry is generally acknowledged. Within that general uncertainty there is for Baptists (as others) a particular confusion about the meaning and practice of ordination. In seeking to resolve this uncertainty Biblical teaching and precedent are of fundamental significance for Baptists. The complexities of this evidence are all too familiar. But the history of Baptist practice, and indeed of other traditions, is also important in providing the church with a wider and self-critical perspective from within which responsible pastoral decisions in the present may be made.

Certainly Australian Baptists have recently given considerable attention to the ministry and ordination. The State Baptist Unions of South Australia, Victoria and New South Wales have all produced reports on the ministry and its future.³ The question of the ordination of women has been sharply posed in these States although only in Victoria has it been clearly accepted in principle.⁴ The first woman ordained to the ministry by Australian Baptists was Miss M. Munro in Melbourne, October, 1978. Baptists in N.S.W. decided that the wider question of ordination needed first to be investigated and so the 1976 Assembly called for a report on "practical and other aspects of ordination". That report was adopted at the 1978 Assembly.⁵

In considering these issues it became evident that the history of ordination practice in N.S.W. needed to be traced. Baptists in Australia differ from Baptists in Britain and America, the two countries which most influenced their development, in that ordinations are almost invariably arranged and conducted by the State Union and not by a local church. Ordination and accreditation, whilst theoretically distinguished, have commonly been granted at the one service. This was a striking difference and the question as to why this pattern had developed called for careful analysis.

Presumably the first Baptists in Australia reflected contemporary thought and practice in Britain. Why did the Union after its formation in 1870 so quickly assume the role of ordaining? Was it the result of careful theological reflection or simply a pragmatic solution to local needs with no conscious theological study? A cluster of related issues soon became apparent. Especially important was the question of whether this practice had influenced the understanding of ordination which the churches held. What were the strengths and weaknesses of the procedure?

Comparison with Baptist practice in other countries reveals that others have found points of tension and conflict in their procedures. A leading Southern Baptist, President Duke K. McCall, observed in 1969 that "Baptist confusion about ordination has produced a series of time bombs. Already the life of the churches has been crippled by the first explosions. The worst is yet to come."⁶ British Baptists have not faced such an unnerving analysis but their valuable 1957 report *The Meaning and Practice of Ordination* has stimulated useful thought in the last two decades.

It is hoped that Baptists in these and other places will find some interest in the Australian development. Certainly it is a striking illustration of how a particular context can shape theological thought and church practice.⁷ Whether the Australian experience can offer any guidance for others remains an intriguing question. It is of interest that there are those in Britain who have canvassed the suggestion that a national assembly should be responsible for ordinations.⁸

I

The first ordination service in N.S.W. of which we have knowledge was that of William Hopkins Carey, grandson of the famous Baptist missionary, at Parramatta on 16th April, 1851. Carey was one of a group of young men brought to Australia as candidates for the ministry by the famous Presbyterian leader Dr. John Dunmore Lang in June 1850. Under the sponsorship of the Bathurst Street church Carey had accepted a call to be the first pastor at Parramatta. The Rev. John Ham, pastor at Bathurst Street, presided at the ordination service. After a statement by Carey and an address by Ham, Carey "knelt at the communion table where with the imposition of hands he was solemnly set apart to the pastoral office". (Incidentally the first two deacons were also set apart with laying-on of hands.)⁹

This ordination service was a clear reflection of the British practice familiar to Ham. There were other men in the colony at the time serving in "Baptist" churches who styled themselves "Rev" but who had had no formal training or recognition. Whether those had been in any sense "ordained" by any group is unknown.¹⁰

As has often been demonstrated one of the greatest problems facing Australian churches during the 19th century was the provision of a gifted and adequately trained pastoral leadership.¹¹ This proved to be an immediate and continuing concern of the Baptist Association (1868), subsequently Baptist Union (1870), in N.S.W. Inevitably questions of recognition and ordination were involved. What is notable is how soon, and how completely, the Baptist Union assumed complete responsibility for ordinations in N.S.W.

Several applications to serve churches came directly to the Union, rather than a local church. For example, in May 1870 Mr. C. Amos, a "catechist" in "the Presbyterian body" inquired as to "what spheres were open in the Baptist denomination in which he could exercise the functions of the ministry". As he was not a Baptist church member his "admission" was not considered.¹² In April 1871 a Mr. Fursman,

originally a "minister of the Bible Christian denomination" and then of the Disciples (or Churches of Christ), had recently discovered that "their theological tenets were not in accordance with his own". He sought to "find a location with the Baptist body". Fursman went to the church at West Maitland with some financial aid from the Union, but by the following September the aid was withdrawn and Fursman's name withdrawn from the list of ministers. He sought "damages" from the Union, but with no success.¹³

What is of greater interest is the case of Mr. W. Pidcock who in June 1871 wrote to the Executive "soliciting employment as a minister in some vacant sphere of labour". Here was an application to be recognised made not to a church but to the Union. It was the Union which arranged for him to preach at Bathurst Street on a Wednesday evening. The Committee received a report from a delegation of listeners: ". . . in view of the condition of our churches, (it) recommends him not to entertain any intention of entering the ministry among our churches for the present, but to continue his devotion to other kinds of Christian work".¹⁴ The "condition of the churches" presumably did not mean any willing person could be commended but only those specially gifted.

One related function of the Union through its Executive was the commendation to the Registrar General of those who should be granted licences to conduct marriages. This was to occasion considerable controversy on more than one occasion. During 1872 the Wallsend and Lambton churches asked that "certain brethren" might be "publicly recognised by the Union as duly qualified pastors". As the Union knew very little about the men concerned the churches were asked to wait until the Union had "more conclusive proof of the fitness of these brethren for the pastoral office—painful experiences in the past having enforced deferences to the Divine injunction 'lay hands suddenly on no man'". (Fursman, for example?) However, these two churches allied themselves with Pastor D. Allen of the Castlereagh Street church and they formed the "Particular Baptist" denomination. Allen accordingly recommended them and the Registrar General gave licences. The Union indignantly insisted that *they* were "Particular Baptist" and not "General Baptist" but as they had never specifically designated themselves "Particular" the Registrar General was unconvinced.¹⁵ Doubtless doctrinal issues complicated this instance,¹⁶ but the fledgling Union could ill afford such divisions.

Certainly in the following year (1874) when the Hinton Church asked that "Mr. Lytell" be "ordained" no problems were raised. A deputation from the Union went "to assist in the *ordination or recognition* service", as the Executive minutes describe it.¹⁷ There is no evidence of the Union examining the credentials of Lytell and a monetary grant of £3 per month was voted to Hinton. The problems associated with country pastors being licensed to marry was to create another major controversy in 1887.

Meanwhile the Union's central role in ordination practice was

clearly revealed in the case of R. F. Becher. During the 1875 Annual Session Mr. J. T. Hinton had "called the attention of the Union to Mr. Becher, a gentleman of good education, and with qualifications which made him an acceptable preacher, and *urged the Union to secure his services*. All agreed that it would be wise to do so" (my italics).¹⁸ Becher preached a series of sermons "for the purpose of trying his gifts" before a deputation from the Union during the next half-yearly meetings at Bathurst.¹⁹ Accordingly in August 1876 the Executive meeting resolved to "take steps to ordain Mr. Becher and to commend him to the Church at Grafton".²⁰ R. F. Becher, B.A., was ordained on 5th September 1876 and this was the first ordination held in association with the Annual Assembly. The Lord's Supper was included in the service.²¹ Here was a clear example of the Union's role in ordination, from start to finish.

The opening meeting of the next Annual Assembly (1877) also featured an ordination when T. H. Jaggars was "set apart to the work of an Evangelist". Jaggars had served as a Wesleyan local preacher in the Bega area but had become convinced about believer's baptism. During the charge delivered by Rev. A. Burdett, Jaggars was advised to make the immersion of believers a "pleasing part of your missionary work". He commented, "We have no sympathy with the notion that none but ordained Pastors are qualified to administer that impressive ordinance". Jaggars was given the "right hand of fellowship" and the Lord's Supper was observed.²²

That two consecutive Assemblies had featured ordinations was noted by *The Banner of Truth* (the official denominational journal in N.S.W.) and the hope was expressed that every year, with the help of God, new labourers would be sent forth "that the land of our adoption may become permeated with Gospel principle". Clearly the churches found an ordination at Assembly an encouragement and inspiration.²³

The strongly centralised nature of the N.S.W. Union is illustrated by a paper which Rev. D. Fenwick gave to the 1877 Assembly on "Reorganisation of the Union".²⁴ One of his suggestions was that all ministers admitted to pastoral charge should be accredited by the Union. Fenwick did not want to interfere with the right of churches to select their own pastors but his sole design was "to preserve the churches against the isolated action of men who are altogether incompetent for exercising the Ministerial office". Fenwick was declaring, in effect, that the Union often knew best. His paper is revealing of how at least some city ministers saw the problem:

"The past history of our country Churches constitutes a loud call for vesting such a prerogative as this in the hands of the Baptist Union, for anyone who is acquainted with that history, will at once concede that many of our Churches which are now in a state of inglorious inanition, would have been full and flourishing, but for the pernicious influence of men who were totally unqualified for Ministerial work; and the same evils are just as liable to be

perpetrated in the future, unless the present order of things is changed, and the Churches consent to take the Union into their councils, and receive their Ministerial supply through this accredited channel. It is certainly very discouraging to the Union to see men stepping into our Churches in defiance of its opinion, and after creating all manner of mischief in the Church, eventually bringing it into collision with the Union itself, and then leaving it to sink or swim as best it may. Such a building up and pulling down system as this has been the bane of our existence in the past, and it still continues to present an insuperable barrier in the way of substantial progress for the future. It is a monstrous thing that our country Churches should continue to be subjected to the intriguing conduct of those men, who put the prefix of Revd. before their name, who assume the white necktie, and who put on such airs of piety and arrogant superiority, as unhappily finds but too ready a currency among simple minded and unlettered Christians. To our Churches then I would say, remove this stumbling-block, by giving the Union your confidence, and the wisdom of such action will be amply justified by affording increased facilities for the establishment and preservation of our denominational institutions throughout the length and breadth of the land".

One interesting example of the kind of problems which could be encountered is told by a Hinton elder recalling an incident during the pastorate (1861-67)²⁵ of Rev. Ebenezer Henderson:

"It is worthy of note here that during a part of Mr. Henderson's Ministry, a wolf in sheep's clothing entered the little fold of the Church. A so-called Rev. J. J. Westwood represented himself as a Baptist Bush Missionary, and he played havoc with the then flourishing church at Hinton. Although then but a boy I am stating this incident, as far as my memory admits, as I am not aware of any records being entered in our Church Book of this incident. Mr. Westwood paid a visit to Mr. Henderson, who was quite ignorant of his character and intentions, he allowed him to occupy the pulpit and he preached doctrines which were not in accordance with the rules of the Hinton Baptist Church. However Mr. Henderson very soon detected what was the drift of his procedure, and would not allow him to conduct any more services in the Church. Consequently J. J. Westwood held open air meetings a short distance from the Church, and induced many of the members of the Church to relinquish their attendance at the Church. But there were a faithful few who remained and stood shoulder to shoulder with Mr. Henderson, and gradually but slowly a great many returned to the old church again."

The 1878 Assembly accepted this addition to the constitution of the Union²⁶: "That all Ministers admitted to our Ministry shall be ordained by brethren duly appointed by the Union for that purpose. That ministers coming from other lands shall not be admitted to the

Union without credentials of ministerial efficiency and Christian character, satisfactory to the Union". This did not go as far as Fenwick had wanted but is clear evidence that the Union accepted sole responsibility for ordination. Note the term "our ministry" and that brethren were to be appointed by the Union for the purpose of ordaining.

It was not only during Assembly that ordinations were held. W. R. Harvison was ordained on Tuesday, 18th November 1879, during the anniversary services of Hinton. The 1877 Assembly had been told that Harvison was "diligently studying, with a view of future ministerial services"²⁷ but it is evident that Harvison was at that time serving as an evangelist in the Port Stephens district. At his ordination Harvison commented that "he felt more than ever obliged to devote himself to the Lord Jesus Christ. Not that he was only just now set apart for the work. By God's grace he felt himself consecrated to the work before he entered upon it; but now he felt that he was publicly set apart for the work."²⁸ This statement is typical of Baptists' understanding of ordination: it was a public "recognition" or "setting apart".

A different path to ordination was pursued by David Davis, "the first student trained in this colony for our ministry".²⁹ Davis applied in 1883 and was trained in Camden College (Congregationalist). In December 1886 the Executive agreed that he should be "formally recognised" as a minister. He was subsequently ordained in the Oddfellows' Hall, Woollahra (where the church met) on 3rd February 1887. The record does not mention laying-on of hands but there was an "ordination prayer".³⁰

On the whole, however, things were far from encouraging. Plans for a trained and educated ministry seemed unrealistic. Grandiose plans for an Educational Institute had been drawn up as early as 1871. However, Frederick Hibbard, writing in 1882, lamented:³¹

"The training of young men for the ministry was undertaken with spirit some years ago, but it soon fell through. In looking back on this distant time, we are convinced this failure arose from the monotonous engagements to which the students were committed. A sermon read by a member of the class was followed by criticism, in which the members of the class were expected to join; then followed the remarks of the tutors; thereafter a short lesson in English. Some of the leaders predicted that the interest would wane unless the tutors were prepared to take up such subjects as Church History, Mathematics, Classics, and etc., but these subjects were not undertaken and the scheme soon perished."

Were the Union leaders too ambitious? Clearly there were problems, but would it have been wiser to encourage struggling country churches to gain such pastoral leadership as they could? A comparison with the typical "pioneer" Baptist working-pastor of the American frontier towns is instructive: there were no restricting agencies in

that situation. If a church wanted to ordain a pastor, then they did. Of course that created other problems but it did establish virile churches in the rural areas. But the Australian leaders had a heavy sense of responsibility to provide a trained and educated ministry.

The tension at this point was considerable. A major clash between the Union leaders and some country churches in the late 1880s illustrates this tension between the Union's high standards and the local realities. The constitutional alteration of 1878, as noted above, was to cause difficulties. Problems were raised at both the 1885 and 1886 Assemblies when pastors of churches could not be *ex-officio* admitted as members of the Union unless their credentials had been accepted. One Newcastle delegate stormed out of the 1886 Assembly meetings when the Rev. Seth Jones was not immediately "recognised".³²

That same year Hinton called a Mr. Stark to be its pastor. He was a "Paedobaptist layman" who agreed to be baptized when the Secretary of the Union pointed out that otherwise there could be problems. Stark evidently said he was willing to come to Sydney to discuss what he needed to do in terms of study and other requirements, but in the meanwhile his church asked that he be recommended for a marriage licence. If the Union could not recommend him as a "minister" then could he be licensed as an "evangelist"? There was precedent in that three "evangelists" had been commended for marriage licences.³³

The application received widespread publicity in that the editor of *The New South Wales Baptist*, Mr. P. Proctor, was a member of the Executive Committee and published extensive *verbatim* reports in his columns. The Rev. D. Fenwick, not surprisingly in view of his known emphases, moved "that the application be not entertained". More charitably the meeting decided that further investigations should be made. Proctor had proposed that he should be licensed as an evangelist and commended for a marriage licence but this had not been supported. Clearly the editor felt strongly about the principles involved and believed that the Executive was being too narrow in its interpretation of the Constitution and quite unrealistic in terms of the needs of country churches. Proctor wrote leading articles on the theme and pursued it in many issues of the magazine, December 1886, January, March, May, June and July 1887. His arguments were uncompromising:

"Country Baptists must mainly provide for themselves. If a few of them gather together and choose some one to teach them, it will be absurd in the Executive to be too particular as to the educational qualifications of the instructor. If these churches desire to be connected with the Union, the Executive must not set up a high educational standard. Educated men cannot be supported by these small communities. The moral support of the Union must be given to whatever gatherings of these people are possible; of course character being assumed in the teacher. Wherever there seems to be a sufficiently numerous gathering of

Baptist families capable of giving a fair support to an efficient man, there of course it should be the aim of the Executive to secure the establishment of a cause."³⁴

"If the church is not ashamed of its minister on educational grounds, the Union need not be. The Union may do well to point out causes of disqualification, but the church's voice must be that which decides, and unless disqualification touches character, the Union ought to give its assent, at least where it has no pecuniary responsibility. . . . Whilst we encourage all education efforts to bring our men up to the standard of ministerial efficiency, it is not the function of Baptists, among all people, to practically refuse the right of a church to elect whomsoever it chooses to its pastorate. If we are to spread our principles throughout the land, we must be prepared to recognise and encourage all classes of ministerial workers."³⁵

"Half . . . of our licensed preachers outside the metropolitan area have not passed, and could not pass, a scholastic test. Yet it is found that they are doing good work. Most of them were licensed for Evangelistic agency, and when they settled down to pastorates, their licenses were continued by the Union; and very properly so. But immediately other men of equal attainments present themselves for similar work, the educational bar under the constitution is set up. We think this is a mistake. In small country places, it is likely that the few Baptists wishing for an independent organization will have to be content with men of defective scholastic education, and if people and preacher are content, the Baptist Union may well give its sanction, and forthwith give the necessary license. If the minister does not pass the educational standard set up by the Constitution, then he should be licensed as a lay minister."³⁶

James White sought to defend the Executive's action, largely on the grounds that the Executive by the constitution of the Union could only consider applications for licence from those duly recognised, that is "ordained"³⁷ by the Union. Proctor retorted that the Union used non-Union members in the training of its pastors! Again, the Union had given "marriage privilege" to other "evangelists".³⁸

In the midst of this controversy the Rev. Charles Padley from Queensland applied for registration to conduct marriages and naturally enough the Union Executive refused, until he had applied for admission to "the *ministry of the Union*", which is a revealing phrase.³⁹

Proctor fought a steady battle. He rebuked the Executive consistently for a failure to identify with the realities of the country churches' problems. He moved a notice of motion which would empower the Executive to register any "baptized Christian of reported moral character" if twelve adults who regularly met as Baptists asked for such a licence to be granted. The person did not need to be a member of the Union.⁴⁰ However, the editor failed in his objectives. He defended his right to attack the Executive, since it was like a

Baptist "parliament" and the freedom of the press to attack parliament had long since been recognised. When White argued that if anything the Assembly was the "parliament" and the Executive were like a "Cabinet" Proctor replied that even the Cabinet should be criticised.⁴¹ His position, as a member of the Executive, must have become intolerable. He resigned at the August 1887 meeting and a formal motion expressing disapproval of his remarks in the *Baptist* was passed.⁴² Not surprisingly Proctor was not reappointed editor of the *Baptist* at the next Assembly. His notice of motion about "marriage registration rules" lapsed.

This controversy has been traced in some detail because it illustrates perfectly the problem facing the churches. The Executive felt they had a responsibility to maintain high ministerial standards. When Padley's application was being considered one speaker opposed it, saying that if the Union gave permission such men "might go roaming about the country and come to Sydney, get into the churches, even Bathurst Street church (sic!) and discredit the denomination".⁴³ Whilst this was probably spoken facetiously, when Proctor published it in the denominational journal it was scarcely calculated to promote fraternal country-city relationships!

What is of interest to our present review is the fact that ordination had become inextricably linked with educational requirements and accreditation. In the midst of the "Proctor" controversy, at the half yearly meetings in May 1887 the Rev. Charles Bright, of Bathurst Street, had given an address on "The Present Needs of the Baptist denomination in N.S.W."⁴⁴ He specified one need as involving ministerial settlements and removals. A court of appeals which could advise on ministerial moves and settlements was proposed. At present, he claimed, vacant churches "are often the prey of the first adventurer that comes upon the scene". He commended the constitutional rule insisting that the representatives of the Union should insist on "character and efficiency", and added, "If aught can be done to give a status to our ministry that shall induce men of talent to enter it—that shall lift it above the fatal uncertainty that is too often incident to a minister's life—that shall keep out of it drones, imbeciles, and moral delinquents, one of the greatest needs will have been met, and one of the surest steps taken to secure the well-being and prosperity of the Church".

Some improvement was imminent as numbers of men began applying for the ministry during the 1890s. The Victorian College had commenced in 1891 and some N.S.W. men began their studies there. Indeed at the 1897 Assembly a "Public recognition" service for five men who had passed their examinations was an encouragement to the Union.⁴⁵ Two of the five incidentally were A. J. Waldock and P. C. Nall. The latter was designated for missionary service with the Victorian Baptist Missionary Society, and it was in Melbourne on 28th October 1897, that Nall was ordained, with the laying-on of hands. Dr. Brown has commented⁴⁶: "The imposition of hands was

used as an appropriate symbol of the commission entrusted by Victorian Baptists to this man who was to become an apostle to the Garos, and of their solidarity with him in this work".

II

Some comment needs to be made on how Baptists in Victoria were acting in regard to ordination, especially since N.S.W. men were to be so closely influenced by Victorians in their training and because it affords an interesting contrast with the N.S.W. patterns. Dr. B. S. Brown's outline is the basis of our review.⁴⁷

The early problems and practices were similar to N.S.W. Evidently the first ordination service (without laying-on of hands) arranged by the Baptist Association was on 15th October 1888 (Samuel Pitman). More interest attaches to the ordination, the "first for some years", of J. C. Martin in July 1895. Martin was a recent graduate of the Baptist College of Victoria. The service was held in the Bacchus Marsh Church. Here is the account in *The Southern Baptist* (a fortnightly journal published jointly from 1895 to 1912 by the Victorian, South Australian and Tasmanian Unions).

"The Senior Deacon took the chair, and the junior deacon read the Scriptures and engaged in prayer. The secretary read the call of the Church, the acceptance by Mr. Martin, and a resolution of the Church electing Messrs. Chapman and Whitley elders of the Church for this purpose only. Mr. Chapman requested a statement from Mr. Martin, to include an indication of the doctrines he held, and his reasons for devoting himself to the ministry of the gospel. This being delivered, the deacons and elders on behalf of the Church expressed themselves satisfied. The Ordination, setting the new pastor in his order or rank, was then performed by the four elders and deacons of the Church giving to Mr. Martin the right hand of fellowship as minister of the Church. The ordination prayer was offered by Mr. Whitley, the charge to the new pastor was delivered by Mr. Chapman, and the charge to the church by Mr. Whitley. The Rev. J. C. Martin then presided at the administration of the Lord's Supper to the Church, with a few friends specially invited."⁴⁸

Obviously the emphasis here was on the local church as the ordaining authority, Samuel Chapman (pastor of Collins Street) and W. T. Whitley (College Principal) being elected "elders of the Church for this purpose only". As editor of *The Southern Baptist* Whitley commented, lest there be any misunderstanding about the competence of the local church to ordain, in future "it would be wiser for any minister present ostentatiously to quit the platform and leave the ordinary deacons alone to act for the church at the crucial moment." Could there be a more obvious demonstration of the difference between the practice of the two states in 1895 than this?

However, in the following May (1896) another graduate of the College was ordained during the autumnal session of the Union, when the right hand of fellowship was given to E. A. Kirkwood. The sense

that the Union should more actively participate in ordinations was clearly deepening. One correspondent wrote about the problems of commencing work in Perth in 1895 to *The Southern Baptist*⁴⁹:

"It is very much to be regretted that the Baptist Association is not vested with power to prevent a man forming a Church on any basis he chooses, styling himself Reverend, and appointing himself pastor, as it does not necessarily follow that every Christian is adapted for and possessed of the necessary qualifications for the high calling and responsible position".

The editor added a footnote admitting that "perhaps it would be a good plan for Associations and Unions to ordain, but in Victoria we are only as far as recognising, or declining to recognise, a minister ordained by the local congregation".⁵⁰

Once the College began producing graduates it is obvious that more thought was given, in both states, to the meaning and practice of ordination. Principal W. T. Whitley published an article on ordination in *The Southern Baptist* early in 1895, just after the first group of students had graduated from the College. Whitley believed that ordination was like the Roman ceremony whereby a magistrate was installed in his office, "a formal and public inauguration of a man to an office to which he has already been elected". In the New Testament it was evident that whenever an apostle or apostolic delegation was absent the local church "managed its own ordination or installation as well as the election". In no case did a local church invite members from other churches to ordain. Whilst Whitley recognised that the New Testament ceremony included imposition of hands contemporary scholars were divided as to the propriety of retaining the practice. It was "scriptural and impressive" but it was open to misunderstanding of a sacerdotal kind.

Whitley also held that ordination was to a particular office. When not in that position he is not a minister. Each church should choose its own pastor and no interference in their local concerns should be allowed, especially "let them beware of permitting any ministers to usurp a sort of exclusive right of ordaining a new minister". However, Whitley did concede that it might save time "for some trusted body to commend a new worker to the churches at large". In other words the Union could commend a man as suitable but only the local church should ordain when he had been chosen as a pastor. It was not desirable for a church to ordain a man "without allotting him some definite work of preaching in which he is responsible to and paid by the church".⁵¹

Later in the same year *The Southern Baptist* published a symposium on ordination. A paper given by the Rev. R. Woolcock at the S.A. Baptist Union meetings in September 1895 was published. Woolcock made a plea for the laying-on of hands. In their anxiety to avoid ritualism, he claimed, Baptists were in danger of running to the other extreme by dimming the sacred character of the ministry and lowering its influence. Apostolic precedent required that ordination should be

accompanied by prayer and fasting and laying-on of hands. Whilst no miraculous powers were imparted the rite implied that the man was appointed to ministerial service "with both the authority and benediction of the church" resting upon him. Silas Mead, the influential pastor of the Flinders Street (Adelaide) Church, moved a motion, "that we affirm both our churches and ministers are free to follow the scriptural practice of the laying-on of hands in an ordination service as they may choose". However, the motion finally passed at S.A. was that the Union "while leaving perfect liberty to all its members" declined "to practise or countenance the ordination of ministers by laying-on of hands".⁵² Not surprisingly at a meeting in 1897 of inter-colonial Baptists in Melbourne a "uniformity of practice in the admission of ministers" was one topic raised.⁵³

In Victoria the problems could not be avoided. Many untrained men were used to staff the numerous preaching stations. The Credentials Committee brought the following proposals which were adopted at the 1899 Assembly⁵⁴:

1. An ordination service is desirable in the case of one who is called to the pastoral office for the first time, provided he has been commended to the confidence of the churches by the Executive Committee.
2. The ordination service should be arranged for by the church to which he has been invited to the office of Pastor.
3. Such ordination service may fitly include a statement by the Pastor-elect as also a charge to him and a charge to the church by representatives appointed by the Executive Committee".

Ordination was no longer the exclusive prerogative of the local church.

The Victorian developments may be briefly outlined. In 1912 the second clause of 1899 was altered to read that the service "*may* be arranged for by the Union" and when in 1927 the by-laws were altered it was simply that any person duly commended "*shall* be ordained at a public service to be arranged by the Union". The Union was now exclusively responsible for the ordination of ministers. The step from the need for the Union to give careful accreditation or recognition to the Union actually ordaining was slowly but surely taken.

This step though taken much later, is an exact replica of what had happened earlier in N.S.W.

III

At this point a reminder of the views of C. H. Spurgeon on ordination practices might be illuminating. Many Baptists in Australia were nervous about misunderstandings concerning ordination generally, and in particular the laying-on of hands. One undoubted factor in this was the influence, by both personal example and forthright teaching, of Spurgeon. That Spurgeon was greatly venerated in Australia needs no detailed illustration. One expressive example will suffice. Charles Lane raised with the N.S.W. Executive in 1887 the possibility of bringing Spurgeon out to visit Australia. His proposal

had been branded as "Utopian, and not worthy of serious consideration". In asking for his vision to be reconsidered Lane expressed his hopes of what could happen if only Spurgeon came to Australia⁵⁵:

"It would be the finest advertisement we could have; it would arouse a good deal of latent enthusiasm among our people; it would lead to an avowal of Baptist principles from many who now are too half-hearted to avow themselves at all; it would lead to the attachment to our churches of men of wealth and influence who now are a little ashamed of the backward position we occupy; and it would create a perfect furore throughout the colonies."

Whatever that letter reveals about Baptist motives it clearly illustrates how highly Spurgeon was regarded! Spurgeon received editorial commendation for his stand in the famous Downgrade controversy and the *Sydney Morning Herald* was rebuked for saying that Spurgeon had "left the Baptists" because of the controversy. He had left the Baptist Union but that was not the same thing.

Spurgeon had very pronounced views on most issues and certainly about ordination. He himself was never ordained, nor had "even that imitation of it called a recognition" and confessed he could not discover what "peculiar loss he had sustained thereby"⁵⁶:

"There is good reason for asking, concerning many practices—Are these Scriptural, or are they only traditions of the fathers? A little Ritualism in one generation may develop into downright Popery in a few years; therefore it is well to take these things as they arise, and crush them in the bud . . . We have a stern fight before us against Ritualistic Popery, and it is well to clear our decks of all lumber, and go into the controversy with clean hands . . .

"Confining myself to one branch of the subject, I ask,—*Whence comes the whole paraphernalia of 'ordination' as observed among some Dissenters?* Since there is no special gift to bestow, why in any case the laying-on of empty hands? Since we cannot pretend to that mystic succession so much vaunted by Ritualists, why are men styled 'regularly-ordained ministers'? . . . I do not object to a recognition of the choice of the church by its neighbours and their ministers; on the contrary, I believe it to be a fraternal act, sanctioned by the very spirit of Christianity; but where it is supposed to be essential, is regarded as a ceremony, and is thought to be *the* crowning feature of the settlement, I demur. 'The Reverend Theophilus Robinson offered up *the ordination prayer*', has a Babylonish sound in my ears, and it is not much improved when it takes the form of '*the recognition prayer*'. Is there, then, a ritual? Are we as much bound by an unwritten extempore liturgy as others by the Book of Common Prayer? . . . I see germs of evil in the usual parlance, and therefore meet it with a *Quo warranto?* Is not the Divine Call the real ordination to preach, and the call of the church the only ordi-

nation to the pastorate?"

When in 1854 Spurgeon went to New Park Street he had listed his objections to ordination quite succinctly⁵⁷:

"I object to ordinations and recognitions, as such, (1) Because I am a minister, and will never receive authority and commission from man; nor do I like that which has the shadow of such a thing about it. I detest the dogma of apostolic succession, and dislike the revival of the doctrine by delegating power from minister to minister.

"(2) I believe in the glorious principle of Independency. Every church has a right to choose its own minister; and if so, certainly it needs no assistance from others in appointing him to the office . . . It seems to me that other ministers have no more to do with me, as your minister, than the crown of France has with the crown of Britain . . .

"(3) If there be no authority inferred, what is the meaning of the ceremony? 'It is customary.' Granted;—but we are not all Ecclesiastical Conservatives; and, moreover, I know several instances where there has been none . . .

"Furthermore, I have seldom heard of an ordination service in which there was not something objectionable. There are dinners, and toasts, and things in that line. There is foolish and needless advice, or, if wise advice, unfit for public mention . . ."

But for Spurgeon, so widely accepted and whose gifts were of a memorable character to hold this view was one thing: for many lesser ordinary mortals public recognition was more important. That Spurgeon was reacting strongly to the "Ritualism" of the Oxford Movement needs no elaboration.

IV

Not surprisingly when C. J. Tinsley returned to Sydney from the Pastors' College (Spurgeon's College) he was granted "full ministerial status" but was not ordained with the laying-on of hands. He did have an induction service on 6th February 1902 and was given a charge by the Rev. Fred Hibberd.⁵⁸

In 1894 the NSW Union By-laws had been carefully revised and various proposals relative to ordination are of interest. The first proposal was that "students admitted to the ministry shall be ordained by brethren duly appointed for that purpose", that was simply, the existing terminology and practice.⁵⁹ But the eventual motion adopted was that accepted candidates would be "publicly set apart by brethren duly appointed for that purpose".⁶⁰ The word ordination was rejected. The accounts in succeeding years speak consistently of a "Public Recognition" service. To give one report typical in the terms used. At the Assembly of 1904⁶¹:

"A letter was received from Mr. G. P. Berbour stating that Mr. Hockey had passed all examinations, and was now fitted to receive full ministerial status if the Assembly so desired. Rev. F. Hibberd moved and Rev. C. Palmer seconded, that Mr. Hockey be

received into the Union as a fully-accredited minister. Carried unanimously. The President then gave the right hand of fellowship to Mr. Hockey”.

During the 1906 Assembly a notice of motion by E. Mona Jones was presented⁶²: “That it is desirable that each student who has passed successfully his final examination and qualifies himself to full ministerial status in the Union have a public ordination and recognition service in the church of which he has charge”. The motion was passed, with the significant deletion of the word “ordination”, so that only a “public recognition” was commended.⁶³ What is of interest, and the records do not indicate, is whether the objection was to the word “ordination” or to the service being in the local church rather than at the Assembly.

Further discussion followed. In November 1906 the question was raised as to whether the Executive Committee had power “to grant full ministerial status” or whether it was rather the Assembly.⁶⁴ The denominational legal advisor, Mr. Dobbin, reported that “there was nothing in the Constitution governing this point” and that therefore the Executive’s practice was not unconstitutional. The Executive agreed “that the matters might remain as at present until the question should be specifically raised”.⁶⁵

In April 1907 Mr. John Cooper from Carlton asked that the title of “Reverend” as applied to our ministers be discussed in the next half-yearly meeting but the Executive “resolved that this is not advisable”.⁶⁶

The following Assembly (1908) was told that the Executive Committee “felt that something of a more spiritual character should take the place of, or precede the usual social welcome” and recommended that an induction service should be held. Waverley and Petersham had recently accepted the suggestion and “applied to the Union for the selection of suitable brethren for such services”.⁶⁷

The first Australasian Baptist Congress was held in Sydney during September 1908. The Rev. Alexander Gordon, MA, then of Armadale, Vic., and later the first Principal of the NSW College, read a paper on “Uniform Ministerial Standards”:

“In every other calling this principle is admitted. If a profession be worth following, it is worth preparing for. And training always tells. The difference between the expert and the non-expert cannot be hid. It breaks through at every point. It commands confidence”.⁶⁸

Gordon commented that each State and New Zealand had their own standards and methods of recognition. He pleaded that a statement of ministerial standard be adopted and sent to each State Union, even though the independency of each Union was clearly acknowledged. This was duly done, although the standard set was possibly somewhat ambitious, in that it involved four university courses “or its equivalent”. A three years course in theology included Hebrew and Sociology as optional subjects.⁶⁹

With the establishment of the Baptist College in New South Wales in 1916 fresh impetus to ordination practice was given. Incidentally, the appointment of Alexander Gordon as Principal led to a change in the By-Laws: ministers duly commended upon accepting the pastorate of one of the association Churches "or the position of Principal of the College" shall be granted full status.⁷⁰ For the first time, ministerial status to other than a pastor was admitted.

Gordon's views on ordination and his general approval of contemporary NSW practice emerge from two ordination charges which he delivered. Preaching at a morning service during the 1916 Assembly Gordon declared⁷¹:

"Nobody can make a minister. The Union acts wisely. It lays stress on certain previous facts. Believing a candidate's testimony, it trains him so that he may give 'the best for the highest', and then sets him apart. But the essential lies in the previous facts. In the Old Testament, every prophet had a personal call . . . Not otherwise is it now . . . He has summoned you. So my brethren, we have met this morning, and the formal business begins, to separate you. Solemnly, in the quiet freshness of the day we set you apart. Henceforth, in a special sense, you are not your own".

Two points may be noted here. One is that Gordon believed ordination was a "setting apart"; the other is that Gordon makes no mention of the individual's call being confirmed by his home church.

Gordon also preached at an ordination service in Bathurst Street Church on 12th February 1918 when six men were ordained. Each spoke for two minutes. Included among them was G. H. Morling, BA. Gordon began his sermon⁷²:

"According to the general interpretation of Baptist principles, an Ordination Service conveys no authority, confers no privilege—contributes nothing. It is simply the recognition of facts already present. This may be correct, but scripture expresses more. The laying on of hands signified most certainly the primal fact of the candidate being solemnly set apart for a specific work, and being recognised by the Church. This evening then, marks an epoch in your life. We have met in the name of the Lord to set you apart to the Christian ministry. We are here as representatives of the Baptist Union. It is the Union which acts. It recognises certain facts. It accepted your profession of having received the summons from the Lord of the Harvest, in whom alone rests supreme authority. It believed that like Isaiah, you had heard the great question, 'Whom shall I send?' and given the great answer, 'Here am I; send me.' Firmly convinced that no-one has truly apprehended the Call, who does not aspire to give his best self—his powers tuned to the highest—to the work, the union gave you a College and University training. It does not share the fatal blunder that such training is hostile to the continued indwelling power of the Holy Spirit, or the blaze of fire on the altar of the heart. And now the time has come to send you forth. You have responded

well. As Principal, I bear witness to your earnestness and zeal. I have confidence in you."

Does his mention of laying on of hands suggest it was done, or was it simply his own comment on apostolic practice? (It would seem that laying-on was not practised, to judge from later development.) Clearly Gordon stresses ordination as a recognition and the right of the Union to set them apart.

Indeed this is illustrated by two requests involving G. H. Morling. He wrote to the executive expressing the desire of the Dungog Church, where he was pastor, that his ordination should take place there. The Secretary of the Union was instructed to state that the executive had determined the date and place of ordination and "pointing out that an Induction Service in Dungog would be fitting".⁷³ The Ashfield Church also wanted to convey a greeting at the ordination service "in respect of G. H. Morling" but not unreasonably it was decided: "This was deemed impracticable as it would interfere with the programme and affect the nature of the meeting".⁷⁴ Thus neither the "sending" church (Ashfield) nor the "receiving" church (Dungog) was involved in the ordination service, it was regarded as an exclusively Union service. By this time, as is evident, ordination services were held either in conjunction with the Assembly or early in the next year after Graduation.

One amusing sidelight may be recorded. Donovan F. Mitchell was supposed to be ordained during the 1918 Assembly but he failed to appear. The Principal explained that "he had specially urged Mr. Mitchell's presence but that he would have had to come from Wentworth Falls where he was on his honeymoon!" The Secretary was directed to express their displeasure at Mitchell's conduct, but made arrangements for his ordination at Hornsby on 28th November.⁷⁵

However Mitchell regarded the matter, ordination services grew in significance for others. Reports characteristically spoke of solemn and impressive services. But some Baptists wanted the service to be even more significant. Various factors must have had some influence. For example, *The Australian Baptist* of 17th October 1922 duly recorded the decision of the Sydney Presbytery when a former Baptist minister had been called to a Presbyterian Church. "The clerk . . . said he understood the minister had originally been trained for the Baptist ministry, and if he had been ordained he felt they must accept that ordination. Another minister, however, said he understood there had not been any laying-on of hands in the case of the Baptist ordination, and he took the point that the ordination could not therefore be recognised by the Presbyterian Church".⁷⁶

Baptists in England were re-thinking the kind of practices which Spurgeon, and the anti-Ritualism spirit generally, had so strongly influenced them to adopt. On 17th March 1925 *The Australian Baptist* featured on its front page an article on "The Pastoral office among the Baptists" by the English Baptist minister Gilbert Laws. He lamented that "some influence not easy to trace" had come into the Baptist

practice of ordination "since the solemn and dignified ordinations presided over by, say, Dr. Gill or Andrew Fuller". He then expounded what ordination should mean:

"Our service of ordination should express the fact of the pastor's dedication henceforth to an unworldly and consecrated life for the sake of Christ and the Church. It should express the call of the Church to service in that particular sphere, the committal of the chair and pulpit to the pastor-elect, and his investment with the ruling and teaching functions which inhere in the office. It should express the welcoming approbation of his brethren in office before him. And, inasmuch as the ordination is a denominational act as well as a congregational one, and carries consequences transcending the local church, and is not repeated when the pastor accepts another call, the service should express denominational concurrence in some suitable way. Associations might be asked to appoint brethren to take part with local pastors in the ordination. Why has the ancient practice of the laying-on of hands been disused? Scripture precedent indicates it and authorises it, and our fathers used it; but we have given it up, presumably through fear of sacerdotal implications".

NSW Baptists were committed to ordination by the Union and not the local church. But what about the practice of laying-on of hands, to which the Sydney Presbyterians and Gilbert Laws had both pointed? The Executive on 6th October 1925 asked the Ministers' Fraternal "to draw up a form of ordination service".⁷⁷ On 14th December 1926 Principal Morling presented the following report, which was adopted by the Executive:

"The Ministers' Fraternal after exhaustive discussion decided with but three dissentients to recommend that the Scriptural practice of the laying-on of hands be adopted at Ordination services safeguarded by a carefully worded statement. It also recommended the following procedure:—

1. That the Executive appoints an Ordaining Council of five ministers who shall arrange and carry out the Ordination Service.
2. That this Ordaining Council shall meet with candidates, and if necessary satisfy themselves as to their fitness for the ministry, doctrinally and otherwise. (A list of questions provided).
3. That the Ordaining Council also shall arrange an Induction service in the Church of the Candidate, on the Sunday following the ordination. It also recommends that an Induction service be arranged in the case of Ministers transferring to new pastorate.
4. That the order of service, (as read by the mover,) include a statement to be read by the chairman which will safeguard the practice of laying-on of hands from any possible misunderstanding".⁷⁸

Unfortunately the text of the statement on the practice of laying-on of hands was not recorded. But it is evident that from this time Baptists in NSW have consistently practised the laying-on of hands in

ordination. Necessary warnings against ritualistic interpretations were still thought necessary.

But a steady flow of graduating students, an agreed form of ordination service and detailed procedures for accrediting had not solved all the problems. The 1917 Assembly was advised that some way should be found to employ some men in the churches without involving the question of ordination and ministerial status. As a result the By-Laws were amended and three categories of men were devised: (1) ministers in full standing; (2) student ministers; and (3) "Home Missionaries, being men of approved character and ability, to serve the Churches employed by the Home Mission Society but who have not qualified for status as ministers".⁷⁹ The *Year Book* for 1918-19 listed several Home Missionaries.⁸⁰

In special circumstances men were admitted to "full ministerial status" (to use the official term). For example, John G. Ridley was admitted in 1934 on the following grounds: he was unable to undertake a College course owing to injuries received during the War, his general educational standards were of a high standard, and he had rendered outstanding service as an evangelist for fifteen years.⁸¹

In 1935 an "Investigation Commission" reported on several aspects of Union life including the "constitutional recognition of ministers". A number of churches were being served by honorary pastors, in fact out of fifteen churches in Newcastle only four were served by "fully accredited" Baptist ministers.⁸² The Commission, with Rev. A. Jolly as Chairman, insisted: "Brethren, we have a Baptist witness to proclaim and maintain, therefore the Baptist ministry demands a distinctive type of training. We cannot afford to abandon, nay we have a solemn responsibility to foster in every way, the golden traditions of our most glorious Baptist heritage".⁸³

No change in the existing structures was made at that time, but in 1941 the By-Laws were amended so that now, instead of three, there were four categories of men recognised by the Union. These now were: (1) ministers in full standing; (2) "Pastors, being men of approved character and ability to serve the churches who have been accorded that status by the Union"; (3) Student Pastors; (4) "Home Missionaries, being men employed by the Home Mission Committee, who have not been accorded status by the Union as minister in full standing, Pastor or Student Pastor".⁸⁴ Of course these were the difficult days of World War II but by this stage ordination had in practice become a matter of granting status, to distinguish ordinands from others who none the less were "recognised" as pastors.

The intervening years have seen repeated attempts by the Union to grapple with these and related issues. For example, the 1946 Assembly received a motion: "That names of ministers relinquishing their pastorate to enter secular employment and granted leave of absences shall not be included in the published list of ministers after a period of two years from the time of resignation from their pastorate and that their names shall only be restored with the approval of the Union".⁸⁵

It was then recognised that this raised the issue "as to whether upon ordination a minister becomes a minister of the Union, and as from what a minister can be granted leave of absence". Union By-Laws did not cover the matter properly. However, at the following Assembly (1947) By-Laws were amended so that there was to be a register in the four categories and "any person who engaged in secular employment continuously for two years" shall be removed from the list. The Union "shall determine whether any particular employment is secular or not".⁸⁶ Both these By-Laws were observed until 1957 when the four-fold classification was removed, and one list of "accredited ministers" was established. The removal of a name was softened to read that a name may (not shall) be removed after two years' secular employment.⁸⁷

V

The last two decades have evidenced vigorous discussion about various aspects of ordination among Australian Baptists.⁸⁸ As a conclusion to our present survey a few significant features of this discussion may be noted.

(i) As to the *meaning of ordination* Australian Baptists are in substantial agreement with other Baptists. The British 1957 definition may be paralleled by Australian definitions.⁸⁹ Variations in practice do not seem to have led to a different concept of ordination. The 1977 report to the NSW Assembly suggested these elements are consistently included in Baptist definitions.⁹⁰

"(1) The call of God to an individual is a basic requirement for ordination. (2) The church recognises the gifts and call which God has given to an individual. (3) The church sets apart the gifted person to undertake those tasks to which the church, under God, has called that person. In that sense, the individual has authority to undertake the tasks of the ministry. (4) In general, Baptists have practised the laying-on of hands, accompanied by prayer, in ordination".

On the meaning of the *laying-on of hands*, however, there has been some vagueness among Australian Baptists. That it does not denote any sacerdotal conferring of grace has been consistently emphasised.⁹¹ In his presidential address to the 1968 NSW Assembly Mr. F. E. Peffer commented positively on how he regarded laying-on of hands⁹²:

"The Church's act in setting a man apart for his holy calling is not purely nor primarily a human decision and a human act. It is an act of God accomplished through His Church, and it is this fact which makes the laying-on of hands so significant. The laying-on of hands is the sign of the Church's confidence that grace sufficient for the task is always given".

The NSW Assembly in 1970 authorised that in the rubric of the ordination service laying-on of hands should be described as "the New Testament symbol of setting apart for the Lord's service and recognition of His call".⁹³ In the important (although disappointing) statement on ordination issued in 1968 by representatives of the teachers at

the Theological Colleges (the only doctrinal statement ever issued by this group) the imposition of hands was described as "the natural symbol of fellowship and solidarity in . . . ordination".⁹⁴ Most recently the 1977 report to the NSW Assembly commended the oft-cited words of Augustine concerning laying-on of hands, "What is it more than a prayer offered over a man?"⁹⁵

What has been generally agreed however is that the apostolic precedent should be adopted. Indeed, one striking feature of these two decades has been an anxiety to ensure that the ordination service is as dignified as possible. In both NSW and Victoria during the 1950s reactions against an unwanted familiarity by some earlier participants led to prescribed orders of service being adopted with careful directions as to procedure.⁹⁶ The service has usually been a highlight of the State Assembly meetings. In Victoria and South Australia communion services are associated with the ordination. NSW conducts a week-long "School", or "retreat" for those about to be ordained.

(ii) One theological difficulty for Australian Baptists, not always clearly seen, is the *role of the Union in ordaining*. The development of this practice has been traced. Clearly it was designed to guard the standards and the status of those recognised as ministers. Although Australians have refused to describe a State Union as a Baptist "Church" their definitions of ordination consistently refer to the central role of the "Church" in recognising and confirming gifts. Yet the decisive role has been played not by a local church (as in Britain or America) but by the Union. There have been those who have argued that the local church should ordain and that the Union should only accredit, as in Britain. There have been those who wanted to call the Union a "Church".⁹⁷ Australian Baptists in their official statements have, however, consistently defended the practice of the Union ordaining. The fullest defence of the existing practice was made in a statement presented to the 1956 NSW Assembly.⁹⁸ As to the place of ordination this report did not support ordination in the "sending" Church. The example of Paul and Barnabas in Acts 13 was suggestive for our practice with missionary candidates but not for the home ministry. The ordination service is directed more to the future of the candidate than his past, and it was felt to be "more fitting" that it "should be carried out in the churches where he will exercise his ministry". Thus the practice of a denominational rather than a local church ordination was supported. Authority for ordination should be in the Union, it was argued, "because the ministry belongs not only to the individual Church but to the whole fellowship of churches who are represented in the Union. The control of ordination by the Union not only maintains ministerial standards but is in keeping with Baptist principles . . . If local churches ordained a distinction would have to be made between ordination and accreditation and we would have the situation, embarrassing both to the Union and those personally involved, of men being ordained, but not accredited by the Union". Ordination as "the act of the Fellowship of the churches" is most fittingly con-

ducted when the representatives of all the churches are present, that is, at an Assembly.

The question was reconsidered at the 1965 Assembly and again the existing procedure was confirmed.⁹⁹ In the 1977 report the practice of the Union controlling ordinations was defended, although the practice of ordaining at a local church rather than at the Assembly was encouraged "provided that the ordination service can be genuinely representative of the wider fellowship of the churches."¹⁰⁰ Three observations may be made about the Australian procedure. First, this practice has avoided the extremes, seen especially in America, of large numbers of untrained and generally unrecognised people being ordained and the resultant lowering of ordination's significance. Secondly, the practice has tended to diminish the responsibility of the local church in seeking out and recognising those whom God has called and gifted. Whilst the local church has always been seen as basic in commending a candidate, in practice much of the initiative has been left to the candidate himself. The 1977 report recommended to the NSW Assembly that greater encouragement and help be given to the local churches in this matter.¹⁰¹ Thirdly, the Australian practice has tended to equate ordination and accreditation. In theory they have been distinguished. In practice they continue to be granted simultaneously. However, in NSW recently two men were ordained by the Union and not accredited as they left immediately to serve in special ministries outside NSW.¹⁰² (Normally, ordained missionaries are also accredited.) In both instances it might not unfairly be commented that ordination was a matter of status felt to be beneficial for their future tasks. At least this departure from the norm has offered a clear distinction between ordination and accreditation.

(iii) This leads to another question of concern for contemporary Australian Baptists: *who should be ordained and/or accredited?* Four separate issues have been involved.

In earliest times only pastors were ordained. But the development of other forms of ministry (theological teaching, chaplaincy, etc.) has been recognised by ordination. A report presented to the NSW Assembly in 1969 thought that not defining "other forms" of ministry was helpful and allowed for maximum flexibility.¹⁰³ More recently, the 1977 report argued that some form of definition is desirable, otherwise one might, for example, ordain a Union accountant. It suggested that ordination should be to the "ministry of the Word", but not exclusively to that of a local pastoral ministry. Those so ordained would be involved (at least from time to time) in preaching, teaching, or in a form of pastoral care in which the Word of God was related to need. This would, in fact, cover the situation of all those so far ordained by the Union.¹⁰⁴

The question of "full-time" or "part-time" has been resolved in that, at least in NSW, the Union has ordained men to "part-time" or "worker-pastor" situations.

The question of the amount of theological education required for

ordination has been a continuing problem for Baptists in Australia. Occasionally years of experience have been held to replace a formal course but, in general, training has been seen to be necessary for ordination. Greater flexibility in courses offered for older men is being developed in the Colleges. Certainly any notion that ordination should be a kind of reward for "those who have borne the burden and heat of the day", to use a phrase employed at the 1971 Assembly in NSW, has been rejected.

Finally, the question of the ordination of women remains a divisive issue for Australian Baptists. This is doubtless of surprise to Baptists in many other countries who have long since resolved this issue. Full reports on the issue have been prepared in NSW, Victoria and South Australia.¹⁰⁵ As yet, only Victoria have accepted the practice. Others may follow in the near future but the strength of conservative, even of fundamentalist, opposition to the practice should not be underestimated.

This current controversial issue is an appropriate note with which to conclude our review. It may simply be observed that in this, as in much of the earlier debates over ordination questions, the local context is as important a factor as any theological principle. Whether Australian Baptists are sufficiently mature to resolve their conflicts in a creative way remains to be seen.

NOTES

¹ This is a revised version of a paper given as the Third Annual Lecture of the Baptist Historical Society of NSW in Sydney on 21st April 1977. I wish to thank Rev. R. W. Leckie for supplying me with some helpful references.

² R. C. Johnson (ed.), *The Church and its Changing Ministry* (Philadelphia, 1961), p. 1.

³ Baptist Union of NSW *Year Book 1973-74*, pp. 65-76; *Victorian Baptist Witness*, 5th October 1973, pp. 11-18; South Australian Baptist Union "Report on the Ministry", 1973, duplicated report. For a comparison of the reports by the present writer, cf. *Australian Baptist*, 13th March 1974, pp. 5f.

⁴ *Australian Baptist*, 20th April 1977, p. 2.

⁵ *Year Book 1977-78*, pp. 42-64.

⁶ "Personal Perspectives on Ordination", *Southwestern Journal of Theology*, xi (1969), 109.

⁷ In what follows special attention is given to Baptists in NSW. Some references are given to Victoria and South Australia. There are no significant variations, so far as I am aware, in the other State Unions.

⁸ See especially A. Gilmore (ed.), *The Pattern of the Church* (London, 1963), pp. 152f.

⁹ A. C. Prior, *Some Fell on Good Ground* (Sydney, 1966), pp. 52, 76.

¹⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 73.

¹¹ Cf. *ibid.*, ch. 19; B. S. Brown, *Members One of Another* (Melbourne, 1962), ch. 11; J. D. Bollen, "English-Australian Baptist Relations 1830-1860", *Baptist Quarterly*, xxv (1974), 290-305.

¹² Baptist Union of NSW Executive Minute Book (hereinafter *E.M.B.*), 13th May 1870.

¹³ *E.M.B.*, 10th April, 12th June, 2nd September 1871.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 28th June, 7th July, 25th July 1871.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, printed annual report 1873, inserted in *E.M.B.*

¹⁶ Cf. *Letters and Other Writings of the late Pastor Daniel Allen . . . with Memoir by F. Beedell* (Sydney, 1901), p. 143.

¹⁷ *E.M.B.*, 4th September 1874.

- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 7th September 1875.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*, Annual Session Report 1876.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*, 4th August 1876.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*, Annual Session Report 1876.
- ²² *Banner of Truth* as attached to E.M.B.
- ²³ *Ibid.*
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*, 7th November 1877, pp. 14f.
- ²⁵ Ms. "History of Hinton Church" (by D. Todd) pages unnumbered. (In BHS of NSW archives.)
- ²⁶ E.M.B., Annual Session Report 1878.
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*, Annual Session Report 1877.
- ²⁸ *Banner of Truth*, 3rd December 1879, pp. 35f.
- ²⁹ *New South Wales Baptist*, 4th March 1887, p. 49.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 57; cf. E.M.B., 31st July 1883, 14th December 1886; A. C. Prior, *op. cit.*, pp. 229f.
- ³¹ *Banner of Truth*, 29th November 1882, p. 18. Cf. A. C. Prior, *op. cit.*, p. 229.
- ³² *New South Wales Baptist*, October 1886, p. 155.
- ³³ *Ibid.*, 3rd June 1887, p. 93.
- ³⁴ *Ibid.*, 1st January 1887, p. 31.
- ³⁵ *Ibid.*, 4th March 1887, p. 55.
- ³⁶ *Ibid.*, 2nd July 1887, p. 114.
- ³⁸ *Idem.*
- ³⁹ *Ibid.*, 2nd May 1887, p. 74.
- ⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 2nd July 1887, p. 114.
- ⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 3rd June 1887, p. 93.
- ⁴² E.M.B., 9th August 1887.
- ⁴³ *New South Wales Baptist*, 2nd May 1887, p. 74.
- ⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 3rd June 1887, p. 88.
- ⁴⁵ *The Baptist*, 8th October 1897, p. 133.
- ⁴⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 154.
- ⁴⁷ *Op. cit.*, ch. 20.
- ⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 152f.
- ⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 154.
- ⁵⁰ *Idem.*
- ⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 154-6.
- ⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 156.
- ⁵³ *The Baptist*, 3rd December 1897, 2nd June 1898. Cf. A. C. Prior, *op. cit.* p. 212.
- ⁵⁴ B. S. Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 175.
- ⁵⁵ *New South Wales Baptist*, 2nd April 1887, p. 68.
- ⁵⁶ C. H. Spurgeon, *Autobiography* (London, 1897), p. 355.
- ⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 356f.
- ⁵⁸ E.M.B., 7th January 1902; *The Baptist*, 1st March, p. 6.
- ⁵⁹ E.M.B., 19th September 1894.
- ⁶⁰ *Ibid.*,
- ⁶¹ *The Baptist*, 1st December 1904, p. 13.
- ⁶² E.M.B., 13th September 1906.
- ⁶³ *Ibid.*, 14th September 1906.
- ⁶⁴ E.M.B., 6th November, 1906.
- ⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 4th December 1906.
- ⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 4th December, 1906.
- ⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 9th April 1907. *Year Book 1907/8*, p. 34.
- ⁶⁷ *Year Book 1908/9*, p. 38.
- ⁶⁸ J. A. Packer (ed.), *First Australasian Baptist Congress . . . Official Volume of Proceedings* (Sydney, 1909), p. 108.
- ⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 161.
- ⁷⁰ *Year Book 1916/17*, p. 24.
- ⁷¹ *Australian Baptist*, 7th November 1916, p. 1.
- ⁷² *Ibid.*, 5th March 1918, p. 2.

- ⁷³ *E.M.B.*, 4th December 1917.
⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 5th February 1918.
⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 3rd September, 5th November 1918.
⁷⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 4.
⁷⁷ *E.M.B.*, 6th October 1925.
⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 14th December 1926.
⁷⁹ *Year Book 1917/18*, pp. 25, 107.
⁸⁰ *Year Book 1918/19*, p. 97.
⁸¹ *Year Book 1934/35*, p. 17.
⁸² *Year Book 1935/36*, p. 31.
⁸³ *Idem.*
⁸⁴ *Year Book 1941/42*, p. 37.
⁸⁵ *Year Book 1946/47*, p. 152.
⁸⁶ *Year Book 1947/48*, p. 54.
⁸⁷ *Year Book 1957/58*, pp. 206-9.
⁸⁸ For details of various reports see *Year Book 1977/78*, pp. 58-64. In 1978 both the Victorian and NSW Assemblies considered full reports on ordination.
⁸⁹ *The Meaning and Practice of Ordination* (London, 1957), p. 22. For Australian definitions see *Year Book 1977/78*, pp. 61-64.
⁹⁰ *Op. cit.*, pp. 48f.
⁹¹ Baptist Union of NSW Home Work Council, *Towards Better Churches* (Sydney, 1964), pp. 14-17.
⁹² *Year Book 1958/59*, p. 18.
⁹³ *Year Book 1970/71*, p. 49.
⁹⁴ *Australian Baptist*, 28th February 1968, p.1.
⁹⁵ *Year Book 1977/78*, p. 5; cf. Augustine, *De Baptismo*, 3. 16. 21.
⁹⁶ B. S. Brown, *op. cit.*, pp. 158-160; *Year Book 1957/58*, pp. 206-209.
⁹⁷ Most notably Rev. A. C. Prior, editor of *The Australian Baptist* (1949-61); cf. his presidential address to the Baptist Union of NSW, *Year Book 1955-56*, p. 12.
⁹⁸ *Year Book 1956-57*, p. 67.
⁹⁹ *Year Book 1965-66*, p. 105.
¹⁰⁰ *Year Book 1977-78*, p. 53.
¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 53-55.
¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 31.
¹⁰³ *Year Book 1969-70*, p. 38.
¹⁰⁴ *Year Book 1977-78*, p. 50.
¹⁰⁵ *Year Book 1976-77*, pp. 74-84; Baptist Union of Victoria, *A Report on the Ordination of Women . . .* (1977). South Australian report was not published.

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