A table of contents for the *Christian Brethren Research Fellowship Journal* can be found here:

CBRF Journal No. 30

Leadership in the Churches

Contents

ARTHUR HENDERSON

Leading (and Following)

Prominence in the church

'Whoever wants to be first among you must be your slave — just as the Son of man . . .' (Matt. 20:27). In the secular world 'leadership', 'ministry' and 'authority' — terms recurring in the papers which follow — are all status words, but in the churches we should beware of making the same mistake as the disciples, to aspire for recognition as 'leader', 'minister' or 'the brother (or sister) responsible' because of the social standing it brings rather than the opportunity of humble service it offers. Yet it is clear from the New Testament that individuals were able to help the early church by various forms of ministry and wise and authoritative counsel. Today's need for leaders, ministers, and rulers in the churches with lowliness of mind is no less.

Ministry and leadership

Whereas in common parlance the 'minister' is the one in charge of a church or its services and an expositor of christian belief, in the New Testament 'ministry' takes many forms from domestic service to administration. In a church there are opportunities for each believer to serve others to the best of his natural ability — and beyond through his spiritual endowment. Each can help in different ways and some can help generally, 'ministry' or 'service' being listed in Romans 12:7 as one of the areas for the exercise of gift.

The service each individual gives is not isolated from the service of others. Much co-operation is needed and one may guide another into new avenues of service. This human influence does not displace the guidance and empowering of the Spirit in the exercise of gift in the church. So in the course of ministry one may also be leading others. If we look at an act of conferring benefit on others we can call it 'ministry', whereas if we look at the same act as influencing the service provided by others we can call it 'leading'. In every form of 'ministry' there is a need from time to time for someone to take leads, to exercise leadership.

Authority and leadership

When a particular ministry is recognised by others, the minister begins to carry authority in that he (or she) can influence others as a right. If his influence or guidance is accepted without question, i.e. because of who or what he is rather than because he persuades or demonstrates, then his authority is effective.

Of course authority may be claimed by some and recognised by others but nevertheless rejected or disregarded by those who are expected to submit to it. If the expected response comes only after rational reflection or emotional appeal, the main influence is persuasion, not authority. If later responses are made without question, authority has been re-established. This right to guide or influence people to give an expected response may be confirmed by appointment to an office which is seen as carrying such a right.

Authority may be sought and used in order to lead. So long as it is recognised, the required response may be obtained without a close personal relationship. Thus it is hoped that a public notice ending 'By order, The Clerk of the Council' will get respectful attention and compliance. But when the right to require a response is not admitted or is disregarded, some other means must be used to motivate the potential respondents, e.g. persuasion, demonstration, appeal, threat instead of, or in support of, the authority.

Leaders may use authority to influence others to follow — both authority based on office and authority based on respect for the person — but often their authority has not been established in that it does not exist or it is inadequate. In such a case the establishment of some personal relationship with followers, some of whom may be leaders of others, is required. Such relationships are not established in a moment so we need to look at how relationships, expectations, and beliefs about leading and following have been developed, for these set limits on what a would-be leader can accomplish.

The concept of leadership

Leadership is an ability to get others to change their behaviour with a view to meeting the goals of the leader or his followers. Leaders can influence followers because they have already established some kind of relationship and some expectations of how each party should behave towards the other. They also have imbibed or constructed theories of how influence should be exercised so we shall examine what stimulates or constrains the development of those relationships, expectations, and belief in a church.

Patterns of relationships

Leaders cease to be leaders when others do not follow. Many give leads which are ignored, rejected, or misapplied and are thereby discouraged from repeating the risk of being left out on a limb; thus they do not gain a recognised status as leaders and rarely venture to suggest or to take initiatives. Though those whose leads are followed may give little thought to their relationships with their followers, it is through those relationships that their initiatives become effective and every act and

every attitude stemming from those relationships affects the personal development of both the leaders and their followers. So a domineering style of leadership may produce either dependent followers or dissidents who may eventually rebel, while a supportive style may produce discriminating followers or interdependent co-leaders who may become rivals. In turn the responses of both those who follow and those who decline to do so affect the style and character of the leaders. Dictators are thus confirmed in their despotic rule partly by the adulation of followers and partly by the fears of rivalry and rebellion. Continued acceptance as a leader requires a sensitive understanding by the leader of the minds and hearts of followers so that the leads given are generally perceived, understood, accepted, and applied.

The work of the church requires initiatives to be taken and followed, and the fellowship of the church flows from the relationships of members with one another. As the exercise of leadership is necessary for the work and influences the nature of the fellowship, we do well to examine how we lead and how we follow. As later papers indicate, official or publicly acknowledged differences in patterns of church leadership do not necessarily indicate the actual differences. These real patterns are often harder to recognise than the formal or official patterns and, for those intimately concerned, harder to acknowledge, but they have a greater impact on our work and our fellowship as well as each member's personal development — spiritual, mental, emotional, and perhaps physical. Changes in those real patterns, reflecting almost imperceptibly at times the movement of life within the fellowship, warrant a periodic review in the light of scripture.

Patterns of expectations

Such a review may well reveal to us the extent to which we are bound, not so much by scripture as we think, but by our tendency to reproduce the patterns which we have known and used in our relationships outside the church — in the home, at work, and in the community — expecting others to be as familiar and comfortable with them as we ourselves are. For some, particularly in uncertain and stressful situations, there will be a harking back to patterns known in early development — perhaps to act again as a child towards those who betoken security or represent authority, or perhaps to imitate these parental figures. Most of us will also retain unthinkingly many characteristics of our habitual behaviour as workers — appearing to others as patronising, persuasive, officious, casual, detached, or obsequious — though some might deliberately try to adopt rôles or styles untenable in their working situations. Class attitudes, too, are still powerful in our society, leading to culture clashes within such close fellowships as a marriage or a church, requiring much effort to understand, to expose, and to reconcile. Here small differences

are as potentially dangerous as obvious ones because the parties may not recognise them or easily tolerate them. For instance, conventions regarding whom you may or must kiss, what you may or must wear, how you may or must address others, when you may or must applaud, where you may or must sit may have to be disregarded in a move, say, between Harlem and central New York, but may be disconcerting to many if disregarded by a church member in either place.

So strong is the cultural influence of the community they have known, even where infringement does not lead to persecution, that some Christians have moved themselves from its environment to establish their own separated community. They succeed only in part because they must bring themselves into the new community, having been made what they are largely through the human relationships they have previously known. Nevertheless they may question and examine their imported cultures to discard some aspects and modify or retain others, whereas those who stay in the world without in a spiritual sense being part of it may find it more difficult to work out new ways of relating with fellow Christians whom they meet less frequently. Neither group is likely to abandon all features of the wider culture they have known and no individual should hastily prejudge what others retain from their own experiences. Letting go the security provided by the old patterns of relating is often a stressful process requiring much patience and support within each fellowship as members co-operate in working out new patterns appropriate to their needs.

But the church must beware that the new sub-culture with its own pattern of leading and following does not itself become a prison, all the stronger because it may acquire over time an aura of sanctity. Developed to serve in past circumstances, it may be more constraining in the development of the church and its members than the cultures of the world. In requiring members to act out roles no longer relevant to the current fellowship and distinct from the roles they have learnt or observed outside the church, an outdated church sub-culture may hinder the building of authentic relationships. Rather than relate person to person, members relate through their roles, hiding their personalities behind their actors' masks and eventually warping their own development. The value to a church of, say, a preacher, or organist, or a cleaner is limited if they are recognised and treated solely as office-holders and are expected to use language, music, or materials that are not any longer as effective as they were.

Inappropriate behaviour however is not always easy to recognise. For example, a formal handshake intended as a gesture of acceptance and friendship may indicate to many a desire to retain a social distance or a patronising attitude. A more casual nod, an unexpected hand on the shoulder, or a more personal comment may lead more quickly to a closer relationship. 'Greet all the brothers with a holy kiss' (1 Thess. 5:26 NIV).

Custom makes it three in Poland, two in Czechoslovakia, but it is rather risky to try for one in Britain.

Patterns of belief

In our contemporary cultural patterns of the western world there are some pervasive and persistent beliefs about leadership which have affected our thinking. These beliefs are now being questioned in social and economic organisations as misleading and inhibiting, and therefore their validity for the church should not be assumed uncritically. For this reason they are labelled here as 'myths'.

The first myth is that the world is divided into two classes of people: leaders and followers. Some would go further and suggest that innate rather than developed characteristics are the basis of this distinction. In fact all people are capable of giving leads, though some may receive the impression from others that no one would ever follow any initiative of theirs and therefore they rarely venture to take one. On the other hand, few are capable of taking initiatives in all directions, e.g., in suggesting, in planning, in organising, in demonstrating, in encouraging, in communicating, in reconciling, in assessing. Even if capable of leading in some directions, a leader may be too pre-occupied with leading in others. In this respect the two-parent family has an advantage over the one-parent family, at least until the children become mature enough to take leads reliably.

One important lesson the disciples found hard to learn was to be content with subservient roles in relation to each other, but it was a necessary lesson for future leaders. Perhaps all managing directors and prime ministers need this lesson too, but certainly all church leaders do. All must learn how to be followers in order to lead and when they are leaders they do not cease to be followers. 'Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ' (Eph. 5:21 NIV). At any one time there may be many leaders, each contributing by leading in some ways while following in others.

The second myth is that leadership is a distinct function like pastoring, preaching, arranging music, or preparing a meeting-place. The facts are that each function contributing to the life of the church requires leads from time to time, and there is no function in which collaboration with followers is not possible, not even planning, organising, communicating, and directing. Leadership is not a function but an approach to any function — an innovatory risk-taking approach, dependent for its impact on the responses it generates.

In the church as in many other associations, people are inclined to wait for a leader — minister, elder, man of ideas or of action — to act before they do, but often he cannot give the required time and attention to many of the functions which serve the church, so they fail by default. The

esteem in which he is held by his followers, by establishing a social barrier, may make it more difficult to lead in other areas, such as promoting sympathetic understanding within the fellowship. Difficult but not impossible, for our Lord had time and a touch for little children when the disciples thought he should not (Matt. 10:14, 15), and in so many dealings with individuals such as the rich young ruler and the woman of Samaria he was at pains to adjust their view of himself before or while dealing with their question or plea (Luke 18:19, John 4:7-26). Later the disciples were able to help others similarly (Acts 3:6, 14:15).

The third myth is that, no matter how much responsibility is placed upon others and no matter how much is expected from them, all their contributions must be co-ordinated and directed by the leader, who gains respect and status by his dynamic activity and control of the communication network. In fact the most active or the most dominant leader is not always the most influential, for often his very activity and controlling position prevents his seeing the overall position of the group he leads and the responses of followers spring less from commitment to the leader's objectives than the desire or habit of conforming to his directives. More effective in the long run is the leader who can encourage others to take on responsibility themselves, even the responsibility of co-ordinating their contributions with those of others. As they develop their skills and their courage in leading, his task becomes less one of giving leads than one of ensuring that leads are given and responses made. Thus he will have time and energy freed to consider the overall strategy and development of his group, an overseer who by example teaches others to adopt an overall view.

Whereas in many associations a leader may succeed in getting others to pursue the objectives he or some outside body values, in the church a leader should be helping other members to clarify and pursue their own objectives rather than understanding and following his. In so far as their objectives are consistent with his, he will have gained powerful support through their commitment and they will gain in maturity — spiritual as well as intellectual and social. 'Each should be fully convinced in his own mind' (Rom. 14:5).

The fourth myth is that there is one best style of leadership if only we can find it and adhere to it. We may each create our own ideal, perhaps by combining what we have admired in the styles of those we have judged to be great men, particularly those who, while seeming to have full technical command of the tasks accepted by their followers, have understood and inspired them to devoted and competent responses. Several researchers in recent years have suggested dual-factor theories of leadership, indicating that while some are more task-oriented others are more people-oriented, while some lead instrumentally as a father others lead affectively like a mother, while some are strong in initiation others are strong in consideration. Following these theories some training pro-

grammes have aimed at creating a balance of approach, particularly helping people who have stood out technically to deal more effectively with people who have not the same skill, experience, or inclination. Extending a leader's repertoire of skills can be helpful but the approach leaves out of account the requirements of a situation, such as the technicalities involved, the organisational arrangements including the interests of bodies external to the group, and the personalities and expectations of leader and followers. In one situation an unequivocal demand may be most effective in the short run without loss of goodwill in the long run, but in another situation patient consultation and experiment may be more likely to achieve the group's objectives. The effective leader then diagnoses the requirements of each situation before selecting an appropriate style from his repertoire.

Followers who hold a simple model of what their leader should do may be disconcerted by changes of style which seem to them to display inconsistency, but they can be trained to accept changes provided that they can be confident that they are based on reasonable concern for the group and its objectives and not on the whims of the leader. Even children accept that a parent or teacher is required to behave differently according to circumstances, varying style according to who is involved, what is at stake, and how the tasks of the group are perceived.

As the expectations, capabilities, and commitment of the leader or his followers change, so the leader may risk a change of style. In a family or a church where there is a close fellowship in living, working, learning, and growing, such changes continually require adjustments in relationships. Often there is no problem as leader and followers sense the need for change, but occasionally some want to change faster than others can accept. One-style leadership, whatever its basic ideal, is too inflexible to help.

Our Lord himself varied his style of relating to others as he moved, for example, from the wedding feast at Cana to the temple at Jerusalem (John 4). In asking why he judged the situations to require different initiatives we are led to better understanding of his purposes and the need for guidance in assessing the situations in which we ourselves are placed and for grace to act with wisdom and boldness.

The ensuing papers

The differences in church order examined by Neil Summerton in the first part of his paper reflect to a large extent different views of authority, particularly as to its basis in official appointment or in charismatic ministry. He goes on to examine the nature of offices named in the New Testament, concluding that there is room for variation in official arrangements.

Brian Mills suggests a number of models which approximately repre-

sent styles of government existing today in assemblies of Christian Brethren and other churches. No single model is offered as an ideal arrangement for government and strategic decision-making appropriate for all circumstances, for there is no simple solution to the problems of leadership in today's assemblies. Arguments over whether the problems of today are greater than those of yesterday are futile. We should recognise that they are different in many ways and therefore should be met by serious study, prayer, and enterprise.

While both these contributors recognise that all members of a church share a responsibility for the conduct of its affairs, including the exercise of spiritual gifts to be found among them, John Boyes examines in more detail some of the practical problems of collective responsibility, both in the inner group of acknowledged rulers — the church council or oversight — and in the larger body of the church. The problems of exercising authority and gift in the church are solved neither by searching for an outstanding leader with wide authority nor by searching for unreserved unanimity. In their reaction against one-man ministry, often assumed rather than evident, brethren should not close their minds to other possibilities, including a full-time ministry with some financial support within one church. Neil Summerton examines this possibility in the last part of his paper.

Helpfully Brian Mills reminds us that no model of government or style of leadership will work in the church without awareness of responsibility to God in the choices we make or without spirituality in our service to the church.

The last paper examines preparations a Christian needs in order to lead others. Though it is recognised that there are benefits to be gained by training for various forms of ministry, there is a concentration on training for leadership. Few development programmes do that even where their title includes a reference to leadership. Training for leaders may not include training in leading.

Some examples are given of the cases discussed in small groups at the CBRF seminar in October 1978 on 'Leadership in the churches' as examples of material by which trainees help themselves in thinking through some problems. Brian Mills' paper set the scene for these discussions and John Boyes' paper followed. The remit to both stressed the need for brevity as the participants of the seminar were to make their own contributions through case discussion and questions to a panel. Neil Summerton's paper was written for a consultation of brethren in February 1979 and required a more exhaustive look at ministry as well as leadership.

Further reading

J. ADAIR 1973   *Action-centred leadership*
McGraw-Hill

M. ARGYLE 1967
Penguin

The psychology of interpersonal behaviour

R. R. BLAKE & J. S. MOUTON 1964/78
Gulf Publishing

The new managerial grid

C. L. COOPER (Ed) 1975
Wiley

Theories of group processes

F. E. FIEDLER 1967
McGraw-Hill

A theory of leadership effectiveness

W. J. REDDIN 1970
McGraw-Hill

Managerial effectiveness

P. B. SMITH 1973
Harper & Row

Groups within organizations

E. SYDNEY, M. BROWN & M. ARGYLE 1973
Hutchinson

Skills with people: a guide for managers

NEIL SUMMERTON

Leadership and Ministry in the Church

The Brethren ideals in the wider church context

It may be fairly argued that it is on the subjects of leadership and ministry, particularly in the local church, that the Brethren movement has made one of its most distinctive contributions to the church's theological understanding. Whether that contribution is quite as original or as great as many Brethren people believe is however more debatable: considerable myths are commonly built around no more than a kernel of truth. Brethren tradition would be inclined to draw a sharp contrast between arrangements in other Christian churches and those in the Assemblies. It would tend to depict authority, leadership and ministry in the main branches of historic Christianity — protestant, catholic and orthodox — as being confined exclusively to a small, salaried, office-holding group, usually one or two in each congregation, with a sharp distinction of status and function being drawn between them and the laity. In so far as it is capable of a standard summary, the Brethren ideal would argue that ministry in the church should be exercised by any male member* according to the particular charismatic** gift or gifts which he enjoys; and that authority and leadership should be exercised collectively, either by a group of office-holders (i.e. recognized elders) or the brethren of the congregation as a whole. Moreover, leadership and ministry in the local church should be exercised not by people given financial support for this purpose but by those in secular employment or retired. A supported ministry should, according to the tradition, be confined to missionaries (on the assumption that when a church has been planted they will move on) and itinerant evangelists and Bible teachers; where such financial support is given it should not be through the mechanism of a regular salary but on the faith principle. This pattern, the tradition would argue, is adduced from scripture and some at least would go as far as to regard alternatives as being in error.

The Brethren ideals were, however, by no means unique, either in their own time or in the history of the church as a whole. Though there was a wide difference between the arrangements of the earliest Brethren and those of the established church in the 1830s, the first and second evan-

---

*In the case of women of course the public exercise of gifts associated with authority, leadership, and local ministry is generally permitted only in limited terms, e.g. among women and in foreign missionary work.

**In this paper, the word 'charismatic' is used in its theological meaning. Where the church movement of that name is intended, I have written 'Charismatic'.

gelical awakenings which begat Brethrenism, were distinguished by a burgeoning of charismatic gift and ministry by laymen as distinct from a trained and qualified official ministry: while the great figures of the revivals were typically professional religious leaders, the battalion commanders and n.c.o.'s of the evangelical hosts were typically unordained laymen, unlettered preachers, itinerating in their home districts and exercising a cottage and tent ministry. This feature lasted well down into the nineteenth century, particularly in country areas and particularly in Primitive Methodism.* In all denominations in Britain it endured in some areas of church activity, notably in the Sunday schools and in charity.[1]

In *The pilgrim church*, E. H. Broadbent[2] sought to trace 'Brethren principles' throughout the history of the church. Some of his supposed examples do not stand up to close scrutiny; on the other hand, were he writing now he would have been able to substitute other, sounder material for there was more than a grain of truth in his approach. At many times and places in church history the concepts of charismatic gifts, of lay leadership or at least of the association of a lay and an official ministry on equal terms have come to the fore: Lollardy; the various branches of the Hussite movement; the Waldenses;[3] Anabaptism; the Independents; early Quakerism; and German pietism are just a few examples. Moreover, as the paper will show at many points, the subjects of leadership and ministry are difficult to divorce from the wider issue of church government. The more democratic manifestations of church polity, such as are found in Anabaptism, in the Scottish church, and in English nonconformity imply much about the *status*, if not the spiritual gifts, of the ordinary church member *vis-à-vis* his ministerial leaders. The simple fact is that many Christian groups have subscribed to a greater or lesser extent to the principles of the equality of all believers in status before God; the priesthood of all believers; the consequent absence from the church of distinctions of spiritual class or caste of a hierarchical nature; and the conferment on individuals of charismatic gifts according to God's sovereign grace without respect to formal position in the church.

Nor should we set the Brethren ideals and an ordained ministry in rigid antithesis to each other as if they are the only, mutually exclusive alternatives. At their extremes, the ministerial and charismatic models are very different from each other. But the practical experience of the churches suggests that most have a ministry associated with office (which I term an 'official ministry') and a charismatic ministry, in quantities which vary between denominations, within denominations over time, and between different local churches within a particular denomination. A diagram may help to illustrate the point.

---

*Cf. the expansion of the assemblies in North Devon; and C. H. Spurgeon's early ministry in Cambridgeshire in the 1840's.

Positions of individual congregations
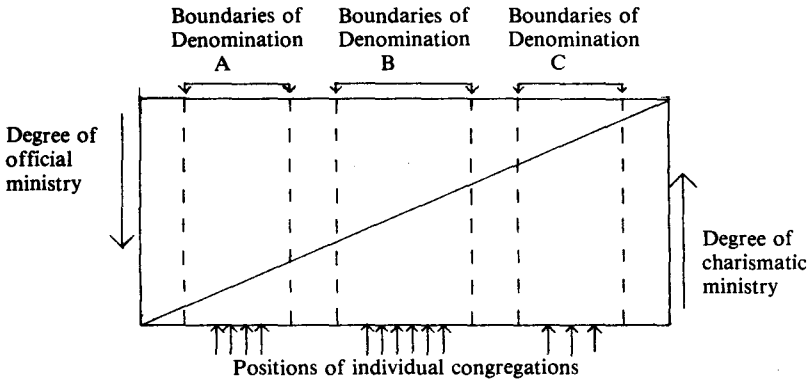
The earliest years of Methodism are a clear example of an offical ministry and a charismatic ministry subsisting side by side in varying degrees between localities and over time. It can be argued, too, that the phenomenon has been present in Brethrenism to a considerable extent: contrast those assemblies which have not had a publicly recognized eldership and have left complete freedom to men to exercise a preaching ministry with those which while not denying a charismatic ministry have also had a recognized eldership keeping control of the preaching arrangements and other aspects of church life.

Over the course of time particular denominations can shift their position on the two continua suggested in the preceding paragraph. In this respect, the Church of England has experienced massive changes over the last two hundred years. Recently the rate of movement has accelerated, but we should not underestimate the rate of change in the character of the Anglican ministry even early in the nineteenth century — in this respect, our Brethren forebears were not good prophets. In both the evangelical and the high church wings of Anglicanism the quality and quantity of the ordained ministry rose rapidly throughout the nineteenth century so that by 1900 it was of a quite different character from 1750. In the evangelical wing at least, the laity was already beginning to be accorded an active role in the church's ministry which could have been thought scandalous and even impossible a hundred years earlier.[4] The logical extension of this improvement in the pastoral ministry is the wider teams found in many Anglican parishes today which include not only vicar and curate but readers (no longer 'lay readers' — a significant change of terminology in itself), deaconesses, parish workers and hospital visitors. Such teams might be regarded as part of the official ministry in the terms of this paper. But since 1900, the doctrine as well as

the practice has changed: now evangelical Anglicans would reject the distinctions implied in the words 'clergy' and 'laity'; would deny any distinction of status or role deriving from the intrinsic character of the official ministry; and would emphasise that the *laos* (people) of God embraces all Christians and that ministry is the responsibility of the whole people because gift is given to individual Christians without respect to status or office.[5] This trend is also discernible among non-evangelical Anglicans, partly through the emphasis since the middle of the 1950's on the theology of the laity.[6] Evangelical Anglicans would, too, explain the New Testament words for elder-bishop and deacon in a way which would command applause from many in the Brethren and, designations apart, would seek to promote the discharge of the roles within individual congregations.[7] The running of many Anglican churches is now in the hands of a body which, by analogy with the term 'queen-in-parliament' might be described as 'incumbent-in-parochial-church-council'; it is often difficult to distinguish the role of this body as being different from the average brethren oversight. (The chief differences are probably that the PCC is elected annually and that women can be — and almost always are — members!)

The nonconformist churches have not been immune from these trends either, though the changes may have been less dramatic. The terminology may have been closer to that followed in the New Testament, but in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the balance of power and influence has shifted in favour of the elders and deacons and even of the church as a body. The installed minister would be viewed both by himself and his congregation as being *primus inter pares* and dependent for his influence as much on his manifestation of gift as on his office.

The speed of change in the last fifteen years in the protestant denominations — and indeed in the other historic churches too — has been accelerated by the Charismatic movement and its child or cousin, the house church movement. Where individuals and congregations have been influenced by these movements, there has, initially at least, been a dramatic swing towards the charismatic side of the two continua suggested above: towards an emphasis on the ministry of the whole body, on collective leadership, leadership by those with particular spiritual gifts (e.g. apostles and prophets), and direct leadership by the Holy Spirit. Indeed, the trends in other churches are such that Brethren assemblies feeling tentatively and in the name of church growth towards a more regular and official ministry must take care that they do not pass Anglican and Charismatic brethren and sisters travelling like comets in the direction from which we have come in some disillusion and despair.

A final point in considering the theory and practice of other denominations is the importance of not allowing ourselves to be misled by mere semantic differences. A sound argument for using terms as close as possible to those of the New Testament is that for many they serve as a job

description and give a lead both to the office-holder and others as to his role and status. It is nevertheless true that someone bearing an unscriptural designation can perform a wholly scriptural role, that for example an Anglican bishop can discharge a role similar to, say, Titus in the New Testament; or that a member of an Anglican parochial church council or a Baptist diaconate may more than adequately discharge the duties of a New Testament bishop. The opposite is of course also true: that an elder in a Brethren assembly may signally fail to meet the requirements of an elder as laid down in the New Testament. As a matter of fact, the character and practice of leadership and ministry varies widely between assemblies. Brian Mills in his paper classifies the main types of arrangement which are to be found. He identifies seven different schemes of congregational government, covering a wide range from anarchy, through four different forms of group leadership (by the brethren; by the brethren and sisters; by elders; and by elders and deacons) to two forms of individual leadership (one formally recognized and the other self-appointed) with both carrying some risk of lapsing into dictatorship. Some combinations of these alternatives are of course possible, as where a regular church meeting is held to allow elders and deacons to consult the membership at large. In addition, Brian Mills identifies the possibility of area leadership, which might in principle, if scarcely in practice, be led by any of the modes suggested above; it is likely that in these conditions leadership would be by a group or an individual. The reader may easily slot his own church into the appropriate place in the model and reflect on the contrast with the alternatives which are practised.

Thus it may be argued not only that the Brethren tradition is rather less distinctive than is often assumed, but within the assemblies themselves there is, if practice is any guide, some uncertainty about what the ideals are and how they should be applied. To this extent, the tradition can be characterised as a myth, ripe for re-appraisal with humility in the light of scripture, present conditions, and the thinking and experience of other Christian groups. A proportion of Brethren churches are already re-appraising their tradition in this way and can be seen tentatively edging their way towards some form of full-time ministry within local churches. There are, however, those within the movement and outside it — chiefly those with experience of the Charismatic fellowships — who counsel caution. They rightly point to the unmistakable phenomenon that, where any marked reformation or revival occurs at the prompting of the Holy Spirit, there is often, perhaps always, a re-appraisal of the scriptural teaching on the nature of the church and its leadership and ministry, and a consequent re-emphasis of the charismatic nature of Christian ministry and of the role which the whole body has in it. Before considering the scriptural and practical merits of some form of full-time ministry, we must therefore look again at biblical teaching on leadership, office, and

charismatic gifts. Leadership and office cannot properly be examined without considering the *relationship* which each has to spiritual gift.

Charismatic ministry and official ministry

As is often the case with questions of importance, to enquire into the relationship between charismatic ministry and official ministry is to plunge ill-armed and ill-trained into one of the current battlegrounds of biblical studies. Scholars from such differing stables as Hans Conzelmann and James Dunn argue strenuously, for example, that what is found in the New Testament is church government and ministry in very rapid evolution: that the church in its earliest days was a virtually leaderless (in the conventional sense), charismatic community, taking its guidance from the Holy Spirit through apostles and prophets; later, within some fifty years of the foundation of the first churches, this God-controlled community had become "in effect subordinate to office, to ritual, to tradition" in the form of an official, proto-Catholic ministry — elders and deacons: Conzelmann contrasts Paul's emphasis on spiritual gifts and his omission of references to elders and deacons in 1 Corinthians with the prominence of these offices in the pastoral epistles (which he regards as non-Pauline).[8]

It is of course one of the occupational hazards of the historian to mistake acorns for oak trees, as Whig historians equated the roles of the medieval and Victorian parliaments! Prophets at least continued to function in the church into the third century and have, it can be argued, continued to emerge ever since, generally in association with revival, for example, in the guise of Wesley, Whitfield and the like, the itinerant preachers and teachers which have distinguished Brethrenism in the English-speaking world, and even in the medieval mendicant orders. In the pastoral epistles, it was in fact to apostles, or at least those appointed by an apostle, that the task of appointing elders and deacons was given. At the end of the first century, well after the Pauline corpus was complete, the Syrian churches which produced the *Didache*, though showing signs of incipient sacerdotalism, gave a large role to 'charismatists' and ostensibly the regulations for treating them were designed to prevent them from abusing the hospitality of the congregations they visited rather than to control their influence and authority.[9]

If the New Testament is taken as a whole, there can be identified operating in parallel,

first, a charismatic ministry of the church as a whole, whether universal or local; this derives from the giving of spiritual gifts to individuals on a widespread basis: '. . . there are varieties of gifts . . . varieties of service . . . varieties of working, but it is the same God who inspires them all in every one. To each . . . To one . . . To another' (1 Cor. 12:4-11); the

remainder of the chapter emphasises the universality of the giving of these individual gifts (see also Romans 12:3-13);

secondly, apostles (and their delegates), preachers and teachers (as Paul describes himself in 2 Tim. 1:11); as has been seen, just a little after the New Testament period a distinct band of itinerant preachers were recognized by the title of 'apostles and prophets'; and,

thirdly, elders and deacons appointed to exercise authority, and to be responsible for the conduct of the local congregation.

Against this background it is relevant to ask whether apostleship, eldership and deaconship are to be regarded as offices, i.e. recognized positions in the church with particular authority, responsibilities, and accountability to God for performance in those capacities. In the case of eldership of course, this question is a *cause célèbre* of dispute in the Brethren movement: it became an issue in Plymouth in the disagreements of the 1840s;[10] a generation ago, G. H. Lang devoted a lengthy passage in *The churches of God* to the question of whether the New Testament ministry was a 'stated' ministry;[11] and the view that an elder is simply someone who is doing the work of an elder is still advanced today in the assemblies. The question is now relevant more widely in the church as the earlier reference to the writings of Dunn and Conzelmann suggests. Moreover, the precise role and status of the apostle and prophet has been brought into particular prominence by one section of the house church movement.

Apostles and prophets

Among the different terms relating to leadership in the church 'apostle' presents the greatest difficulty today, though it did not do so in New Testament times. It is difficult to see Paul's consistent application of the term to himself in introducing his epistles as other than a claim to an office exercised towards the church as a whole. But many theologians of great stature such as Calvin and Warfield have argued, as has Brethren theology in general, that the office of apostle was temporary, applying only to the early days of the church. According to their analysis those who held the office of an apostle were the twelve disciples, Matthias who was chosen to replace Judas Iscariot, and Paul 'as one born out of due time'. Their essential qualification for the office was that they had been eye-witnesses (with the exception of the special case of Paul) of Jesus' public life and ministry and, in particular, of the resurrection; and they had been the recipients of his last great commission to carry the gospel out into the world. In consequence of their task of establishing the church, they laid down regulations for its conduct and with the prophets were responsible for determining and testing its doctrine (see Acts 2:24, and 15:22-29, Ephesians 2:20, and Galatians 1:18-19 and 2:9). But when the task of establishing the corpus of Christian doctrine and ethics was

complete, the need for the role of the apostles as the witnesses to Christ's ministry and resurrection, and the receivers of his commission was superseded, as was the role of the prophet by the second and third century when the canon of scripture was established.

This interpretation remains strongly held today, even by some in the Charismatic movement. It is interesting, for example, that the Rev. Michael Harper, while accepting the apostolic ministry of the church as a whole, argues that 'It is best, surely, to see the apostolic office, in the sense of an authoritative ministry in the church, as being intended only for the early days of the church. In the secondary sense, as messengers or missionaries, the ministry has continued. Indeed it is an important aspect of the total ministry of the church . . .' Subsequently he adduces other, quite different arguments, essentially practical and managerial, to underpin the office of Anglican bishop.[12]

In recent years, however, there has been an increasing willingness to argue for the continuation of the office of apostle beyond the death of the twelve and of Paul. (Clearly, the office of prophet continued at least for a while.) The chief weakness of this position is that it requires the postulation of two grades of apostle:* first, the eye-witnesses of Jesus who enjoyed a unique and unrepeatable authority in establishing the church. (Here those who argue this line are not far from Michael Harper whose qualifying reference to 'authoritative ministry' is important, may refer to a particular aberration in one section of the Charismatic movement, and must be well taken by those with a memory of the recent history of one section of the Brethren movement!) Secondly, there is a continuing cadre of apostles whose special role is to act as a 'messenger', 'emissary' or 'delegate'. As the Rev. David Watson puts it, '. . . the apostles of today are those who travel as representatives or ambassadors of Christ for the purpose of establishing churches or encouraging Christians in their faith.'[13]

James, the Lord's brother — who was obviously qualified as an eye-witness — is described as an apostle (Gal. 1:19 and 2:9) and in 1 Corinthians 15:5 and 7, Paul distinguishes the twelve from 'all the apostles' in a passage which is of course referring explicitly to eye-witnesses. But the term is also applied to those who were not, or probably were not, eye-witnesses. It must be uncertain that Barnabas was an eye-witness and still more uncertain that Silas was (Acts 14:4, 14, 1 Cor. 9:1-6, and 1 Thess. 2:6). The probability is that in Romans 16:7 'apostle' is being used in the technical sense to describe Andronicus and Junias, while in 1 Thessalonians 2:6 Timothy, who simply could not have been an eye-witness, is ranked with Silas as an apostle. Taken with references to Paul's enemies as claiming to be 'apostles of Christ' (2 Cor. 11:13) and

---

*There is some scriptural support for this two-tier model: the term 'apostle' in the New Testament is not confined in application to the twelve and Paul.

the inclusion of apostles in 1 Corinthians 12 in the list of spiritual gifts in a chapter which emphasizes the largesse with which God gives graces to the church, these all suggest that there may have been a continuing place for the office of apostle after the demise of the eye-witnesses.

The role of the apostle was to carry out the great commission to build the church by the proclamation of the message, by teaching and by enjoining Christian practice. It can be argued that it was more than simply the role of an evangelist. It is the role of proclamation, teaching and building up which Paul gives to Timothy, Titus, and Titus's friends (for the last see 2 Cor. 7 and 8, especially 8; 16-23 — in the last verse they are described as 'messengers *(apostoloi)* of the churches'). Paul himself, perhaps in consequence of his status as a primary apostle, claimed authority over the churches (1 Cor. 10:8) and the right to punish disobedience (2 Cor. 10:6). Following the Council of Jerusalem when, disturbingly, it was the apostles and *elders* who made regulations for the church as a whole, it was Paul, Barnabas, Judas Barsabbas and Silas who conveyed them to Antioch (Acts 15:22-35) and Paul, Silas and the newly-apprenticed Timothy who enforced them in the infant churches of south Galatia (Acts 16:4). Most difficult of all for those in the Brethren tradition is the case of Titus who was commissioned by Paul for church building, amendment and regulation in every town of Crete (Tit. 1:5).

The clearest use of the terms 'apostle' and 'prophet' in the New Testament is as spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12:28). Silas possessed both for he is described by Paul as an apostle in 1 Thessalonians 2:6 while Luke says in Acts 15:32 that he was a prophet. But there is too running through the Acts and the epistles a definite thread of formal recognition by the churches for work as an apostle. In 2 Timothy 1:11 Paul describes himself as appointed. He could have had in mind his commissioning directly by Christ at his conversion (see Acts 2:15-18). But he also describes Titus as 'appointed by the churches to travel with us in this gracious work which we are carrying on' (2 Cor. 8:19); and in Acts 11:22, 30, 15:22, 40, and 13:1-3 the churches at Jerusalem and Antioch can be seen commissioning apostles and prophets for specific or more general tasks of intercongregational or missionary activity.

The conclusion to which this analysis points is that there is a continuing and important apostolic (in the secondary meaning of the New Testament) and prophetic work to be carried out among the churches: it has a vital missionary element, but it includes too the tasks of teaching, encouraging good order and discipline, and carrying out other intercongregational tasks. Such individuals will not of course exercise an authoritative ministry in the same sense as the primary apostles. But their ministry ought perhaps to be more formally recognised by the churches than it often is. Ultimately, its influence lies in the humble proclamation

of the word in the power of the Holy Spirit and in the churches' recognition of that proclamation for what it is and in their consequent obedience (see 2 Cor. 10:1-6).

It is comforting to note that in practice throughout most of the church's history, whatever the theory of individual denominations, men have emerged as missionaries, evangelists, teachers, theologians or as statesmen leaders whose influence, whether formally recognised or not, has been wide among congregations rather than confined to only one. The Brethren movement has not lacked its 'leading men', to use Luke's time-honoured phrase in Acts 15:22. But it is worth asking whether emphasis on the autonomy and self-sufficiency of the local congregation has not been carried to such an unbalanced extent that it amounts to an unscriptural particularism which may now be cramping opportunities for gifted men to exercise a wider ministry among Brethren assemblies. Among the practical questions which might be asked are:

(1) Is there sufficient awareness of the importance of this function and, if so, is the absence of this awareness hampering the emergence and development of apostles and prophets for our day?

(2) Are churches as distinct from individuals sufficiently conscious of their obligation to identify and develop gifted individuals not only for missionary work abroad, but also for missionary, teaching and guiding work in this country?

(3) Are churches collectively rather than individually missing opportunities for identifying and supporting individuals to exercise a ministry among them as a whole? What would our reaction be if the church down the road (Brethren or non-Brethren) came and asked whether we were prepared to co-operate in supporting a neighbourhood missionary or someone to exercise a special teaching ministry among the congregations concerned?

(4) Should such a ministry be formally recognized by the churches, and if so, how?

(5) Does the encouragement of such gifts imply a need for training and development and, if so, how best might it be done?

Elders and deacons

If the status of apostleship as an element in the official ministry of the church and its continuation beyond the age of the primitive church can be disputed, there is no such problem about elders and deacons. It is their precise roles, and their relationship to each other and to the church at large, which require carefully to be teased out.

In what follows, the argument is that elder and deacon are recognized offices in the local church with responsibility to God for the development of the congregation as a whole and for the spiritual and other needs of individual church members. As such, their ministry is to be distinguished

from that of the local congregation as a body, though it is not so much different in kind as in intensity, responsibility, role and, perhaps most important, authority towards the congregation and individual members.

The scriptural foundation for this summary is to be found largely in the practice of Paul and his assistants. That elders and deacons are distinct from the local church at large seems clear from Paul's ascription of the letter to the Philippians 'To all the saints . . . with the bishops and deacons,' and from his definition of the qualities of elders and deacons in 1 Timothy 3 which assumes a need to be able to distinguish them from other church members by a process of selection. 1 Timothy 3:10 has the unmistakable air of selection for service in a distinct office: 'Let them also be tested first; and then if they prove themselves blameless let them serve as deacons.' The same verse suggests formal recognition, perhaps even after a period of probation, as does the command to Titus to 'appoint bishops' (Tit. 1:5). The practice of ordination by laying on of hands, though used for all sorts of purposes in the primitive church, signifies at least collective recognition and commissioning for the particular task.

On the method of selection of elders the New Testament is embarrassingly clear for the Brethren tradition! The only references indicate the appointment of elders by apostles or their delegates. There is guidance here for the church planter. Whether there is also a challenge to the traditional Brethren practice of elders' appointing their successors is another question, especially as none of the churches with which Paul and his assistants were dealing had been established more than a few years. The method of self-perpetuation has, so far as I am aware, no explicit support in the New Testament and it can present practical problems: where an existing eldership becomes weakened, unspiritual and ill-fitted for its tasks, there can be no certainty that they will make wise choice of their successors; and where the leadership group is changing rapidly in composition, it can take some time for its members to arrive at satisfactory roles and inter-relationships. In both these cases, advice from the outside might well help so long as those being advised do not find it totally unwelcome. In the apostolic practice of appointing elders, there may be a sanction for those occupying the apostolic and prophetic roles described earlier to be more positive in offering advice where they think that it is needed in a particular local church; since there would be no force behind such advice, except that inherent in the ministry of the person concerned, there would be no threat here to the autonomy of the local church: in the final analysis, the advice would not have to be accepted.

Contrary perhaps to common belief, the New Testament does not offer incontrovertible guidance on how and by whom deacons should be selected. That Timothy was instructed on the qualities required of deacons may imply that Paul expected him to appoint them as well as the

elders. On the other hand, modern commentators are apparently uncertain that the incident in Acts 6:1-6 describes the first selection of deacons: the men chosen are not actually described as such, though their task was table-waiting. Nor can it necessarily be assumed that the words 'pick out' in Acts 6:3 RSV imply a postal ballot! The twelve's words were, however, addressed to 'the body of the disciples' (v.2) and their advice 'pleased the whole multitude, and they chose Stephen . . .' — one can well imagine one of those most difficult of processes, among regenerate as among unregenerate men: a large and perhaps unruly crowd attempting to discover who is both suitable and willing to serve, with those most suitable bound to be looking steadfastly at their boots! It is interesting too that the apostles were content to leave the process of selection to others and subsequently to lay their hands, apparently without further question, on those presented to them when the selection was complete. It is worth asking whether these considerations should be held to be significant now, since, so far as I am aware, those Brethren churches which have deacons as well as elders generally follow neither of the two patterns noted above: it would be normal for the elders, not the church, to choose the deacons.

It is the tradition of a section of Brethrenism which makes it necessary to substantiate carefully that eldership and deaconship were formally recognized offices in the local churches and required some process of selection. But there may in fact be more widespread uncertainty about the qualifications of elders and deacons and their functions. In 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1, Paul was concerned much more with the qualities needed than with anything else, and consequently the requirements are clear — though honoured in the breach with surprising frequency. *Both* offices demand high spiritual qualities, which explains why Timothy was told not to choose hastily (1 Tim. 5:22). The requirements for both offices are in close parallel so that virtually the only differences between the two are that the elder must not be a novice and that, whereas the deacon like the elder must have a sound personal grasp of Christian truth and knowledge of God, the latter must also be 'an apt teacher' (1 Tim. 3:2) and 'be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to confute those who contradict it' (Tit. 1:9). (This may not of course require a *platform* ministry — an assumption too often made in Brethren churches.) Otherwise, they must essentially be humble people who yet command respect in the church, in their public life, in their families and in their marital relationship; who are marked by self-discipline in personality, temper, habits, and in the giving and keeping of confidences; and who have rejected materialism and embraced generosity in the use of their personal possessions. If anything, the balance is towards quality of Christian living, though understanding of the faith, knowledge of God, and managerial competence are also mandatory.

The New Testament does not define the *role* and *function* of elders and

deacons with the same precision as it defines the qualifications. That may in itself be a pointer: that great flexibility is allowed to determine the role and function, the content of the job, and the arrangements for operation, according to the particular and inherently changing circumstances of time and place. It is possible, however, to detect some aspects of the job specification from considering the words used to connote the offices and the background to them.

The connotations of 'elder' and 'bishop'

It is increasingly taken for granted in the church at large, as it has been by biblical scholars since the nineteenth century, that the designation 'elder' *(presbuteros)* describes in the New Testament the same office as the word 'bishop' *(episkopos,* literally 'overseer'). The *locus classicus* of the interchangeable use of the two words is their application to the leaders of the church at Ephesus in Acts 20:17, 28. Both words are in themselves instructive.

Elder

Many societies in different parts of the world and throughout history have associated the exercise of authority, particularly local authority, and the administration of justice with experience and age, and have described those exercising the office as 'elders'. Israel and Judah were no exception, either historically or when the New Testament was written. The use of the word must have had a clear connotation for Christians of Jewish background or having a knowledge of Jewish customs. Elders led Israel in captivity in Egypt (Ex. 3:16) and later, seventy elders were gifted by the Holy Spirit to share the heavy burden of governing and of leading the people to the land of promise. In this context, it is worth noticing two things: first, the nature of Moses' burden: 'Did I conceive all this people? Did I bring them forth, that thou shouldst say to me, "Carry them in your bosom, as a nurse carries the sucking child to the land which thou didst swear to give their fathers?" Where am I to get meat to give all these people? For they weep before me and say, "Give us meat, that we may eat." ' This might be regarded as good a summary as any of the elder's task, and there will be times when the church leader will know exactly what Moses meant and feel acutely the need for others with experience to help him! Secondly, for this task of leadership and government the elders needed the Spirit of the Lord (Num. 11:17, 25, 29): this is only one example of the way in which the Spirit came upon judges and kings with Israelite theocracy so that they could carry out effectively the task of civil government. Further in verse 25 the gift of prophecy accompanies the giving of the Spirit of the Lord for this purpose.

In the Deuteronomic legislation, the elders' task was in municipal government and the cases in which they were required to act were con-

cerned with ensuring the ritual purity of the city where a dead body was found within its boundaries (Deut. 21:2ff.); settling domestic and marital disputes in matters of some delicacy demanding a high degree of wisdom and discernment (Deut. 22:15, 25:7); and recovering murderers from cities of asylum (Deut. 19:12) while at the same time offering asylum to the man who satisfied them that he had killed unintentionally (Josh. 20:4). Later, under the monarchy, elders of Israel emerged as a kind of parliament, accepting the first kings and acting as executives to see that royal instructions were carried out (see, e.g. 1 Kings 21:8). By the time of Christ, the 'elders of the people' shared with the chief priests power in religious matters and had the power of excommunication (cf. John 9:34).

First century Judaism was organized on a congregational pattern, the synagogue; each congregation was governed by a council of elders, presided over by a chairman (ruler — cf. Mark 5:22, Acts 13:15, 18:8) whose duties may have rotated among the members. In the synagogue building, they occupied seats facing the congregation and regulated the worship; in addition, they were empowered to discipline members. It would have been natural for the early church to adopt a similar pattern of government (the layout of the earliest church buildings was similar to that of the synagogues) and for them to see at least some of the duties of elders as being on the same lines as those of elders in the synagogues. That elders in the church were expected to rule can be seen from 1 Timothy 5:17.[14]

Overseer

The word 'overseer' had a wide usage in the classical world, being applied, for example, to magistrates (note the parallel with elders), administrators and even to philosophers when acting as spiritual or moral directors of individuals.[15] But in the New Testament the word is given a distinctive force in the Christian context by its association with the description of the church as the flock of God. In commissioning the elders of Ephesus at Miletus, Paul reminds them that the Holy Spirit has made them guardians or shepherds *(episkopous)* of the flock with a duty to feed it, and protect it particularly from those who would be doctrinal predators upon it (Acts 20:28-31). Similarly, in instructing elders, Peter associated the word 'overseeing' with the requirement that they should tend the flock of God and he goes on to speak of Christ as the chief shepherd who will reward them in due course for faithful work of this kind. The language of both Paul and Peter is sharply reminiscent of Christ's description of his role and functions as the good shepherd in John 10, and all three were of course mining a deep vein in Old Testament descriptions of effective spiritual leadership which find climaxes in Psalm 23 and Ezekiel 34. The chief functions of the true spiritual shepherd (pastor) are described by Christ:

(1) Leadership

One of the shepherd's chief responsibilities in the hills of Palestine was to lead the flock so that they would have plenty of good pasture and water in country which was often barren and inhospitable (cf. Ps. 23:1). The flock was led over long distances for these purposes, and clearly it required of the shepherd knowledge of the country, of the climate and seasons, and good judgement. He had to know where he was going and prove to be right (in contrast to the Pharisees whom Jesus castigated as blind leaders who did not even know they were blind). (See also Matt. 15:14.)

This leadership is too one of example (as Peter also emphasized in 1 Peter 5:3), not of driving as is familiar to us in the west. The shepherd went in front of the sheep who trusted him and followed him. The pastor must therefore show himself in the long run to be worthy of being followed.

(2) Feeding

'. . . he will go in and out and find pasture' (John 10:9). Christian pastors have an obligation to ensure that the local church is satisfactorily taught and, in so far as lies in their power, to ensure that the individual Christian can find a rewarding personal experience of God.

(3) Constant protection

By night the shepherd formed the door of the sheepfold; by day he was constantly on the lookout for prey. Both Christ and Paul stress the need to be alert for, to be able to discern, and to neutralize, those who will disrupt the local congregation, particularly through false teaching (John 10:7-13, Acts 20:29-31).

These are functions performed towards the congregation as a whole. Jesus identified two further functions which related more to the needs of individual members:

(4) Recovery

The shepherd searches for the lost sheep in order to restore it to the flock (John 10:16). This gives the Christian pastor special responsibilities towards the backslider, the lone Christian, and those on the fringes of the flock who need better integration into it.

(5) Rehabilitation

The shepherd gives personal attention to the sick, the damaged and the wounded in order fully to rehabilitate them. James includes physical as well as spiritual healing among the duties of the elder (James 5:14 and 15).

The range of qualities required for proper oversight of the flock is daunting: the ability to inspire confidence and trust; the ability to steer a statesman-like course for the local church; knowledge and understanding of people, times and circumstances; discernment; wisdom; a loving care and concern for others; the ability to handle people sensitively and to counsel wisely and effectively; sound doctrinal foundations; the ability to instruct; and the ability to dispute with Christ's enemies. Two qualities

are however given specific emphasis by Christ: an intimate knowledge of and relationship with the flock as a whole and with individual members (John 10:3-15); and self-sacrifice — the willingness of the elder to lay down his life for the sake of the congregation for which he is responsible as pastor.

There is one obvious deduction: the office of elder cannot satisfactorily be discharged by those who cannot make it their top priority in Christian service, because they are called to, or cannot resist, other opportunities of service — like writing papers perhaps. There is an important point here, because there is a long and honourable tradition in Brethrenism of activity in the wider Christian world, for example, in inter-denominational organisations such as the Gideons, the UCCF, the Scripture Union, and Bible colleges. In addition, in our own times there is a greater recognition of the calling to Christian service in practical life, the trade unions and local community organisations. In more traditional terms, too, the custom of 'going out preaching' and inviting speakers from other churches to our own is relevant. The more time an individual spends away from his home congregation, the less effective is likely to be his work as an elder in that congregation. But the fact is that it is often those with the gifts to contribute in these wider spheres who are the prime material from which the elderships of the local churches should be drawn; and those who remain may often be much less suited to the tasks of eldership. This is not in any way to suggest that no one is called to the wider sphere of service, or that it is unimportant. But because of the obvious relationship of the health and strength of the local church to the well-being of the church at large, it is wrong that the leadership of the local church should be allowed to become stunted by the demands of the wider sphere, as may have happened in the case of some Brethren assemblies. The problem is of the deployment of resources. Is there again a role of guidance to individuals and churches which under the Holy Spirit the apostles and prophets already discussed might be performing since they see a good deal more of the game from their vantage point?

Deacon

The root meaning of the word deacon (*diakonos*, a servant) is illustrated clearly in the apostles' use of the cognates, as recorded in Acts 6:1, 2: 'It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to *serve tables*.' It is used freely in the New Testament in a non-technical sense as well as to denote an office in the local church. Thus Paul describes himself as a deacon (RSV minister) of the gospel (Col. 1:23); the wine waiters at the marriage in Cana are deacons (John 2:5); and Martha busied herself with table waiting according to John 12:2 and Luke 10:38. The notion is of domestic service, the meeting of the practical needs of the household. In Luke 22:26-27, the Lord applied this role to himself when

he taught his disciples that spiritual leadership required the humble atti-
tude of the domestic servant; and on the same occasion he gave a power-
ful demonstration of it when he girded himself with a towel and washed
his disciples' feet (John 13, 3f., especially 12b-17).

If the primary task of the New Testament deacon was to see that the
practical needs of the fellowship were met, what was the detailed content
of this responsibility? It may well have included the host of practical
tasks which are associated with deaconship in some Brethren churches
which have adopted the office: the maintenance of buildings; prepar-
ation of halls; keeping of accounts and counting money; and the man-
agement of transport. But these tasks were of course largely unknown in
the first century church because they were unnecessary. Nor does it seem
quite correct to argue on the basis of Acts 6:1-6 (if this text is relevant)
that they had charge of the finances. Because of its mode of operation,
the first century church did not have to spend large sums, as we do today,
on maintenance, lighting, heating and cleaning. And the important point
about Acts 6:1-6 is not that the seven had charge of the finances, but the
reason why they were given charge of them — the object for which the
money was used. Here, the purpose for which Jesus and the twelve main-
tained a common purse with Judas Iscariot as their treasurer may be rele-
vant. On this argument, the primary function of deacons is the giving of
practical help, especially of a compassionate, charitable kind both within
the household of faith and, by analogy with the twelve in John 12:4 and
13:29, among the poor at large. If this view is correct, it was the executive
work of the deacons which gave the early church its outstanding and
challenging reputation for beneficence both towards its own and the
wider world.

There is support for this interpretation in the views of modern com-
mentators about the precise significance of some of the spiritual gifts in
Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12. ". . . 'service' in Romans 12:7 is under-
stood by some commentators to refer to deacons, and 'he who gives aid'
in Romans 12:8 to refer to the officer in charge of the distribution of
money to the poor . . . the 'helpers' (in 1 Cor. 12:28) are understood to
be deacons by many modern lexicologists . . ."[16] In the conditions of the
first century, at most times since, and still in most places in the world,
this is in itself a task of daunting magnitude and great importance. But
despite fashions in thought today, even within the church, this task
should be subordinate, as the apostles asserted in Acts 6:2, to the
preaching of the word of God because it is consequential upon it: the
quality and quantity of social help given by the church throughout its his-
tory has only been possible because of the work of the gospel in men's
hearts and the leadership and pastoral work of elders. The magnitude of
all these tasks is so great that, while the deacon may, like Stephen and
Philip, show considerable pastoral and apostolic promise and eventually
shift to discharging one or other of those roles, some specialisation of

function within the church is beneficial in order to achieve the best results.

It is tempting to wonder whether, with the advent of the welfare state in some countries, there will inevitably be some cramping of the role of the deacon as suggested above. The evidence is however that there is much which welfare arrangements have not the resources to do or are intrinsically incapable of doing. The invaluable and unique contribution which can be given in this country by what is known as the voluntary sector has recently been recognized by both the Wolfenden Committee and by governments of both parties. Moreover, there is or should be, a personal and distinctive quality about the help given by the church which state arrangements will often find it impossible to match. Some further thought may therefore be desirable to determine what in practice today the diaconal function can and should be, if it is to be consonant with that of the office in New Testament times.

Prayer

'But we will devote ourselves to prayer . . .' said the apostles when they asked the disciples to appoint others to take charge of the daily distribution (Acts 6:4). However foreign it may be to our way of thinking, which tends to regard leadership as an activity, the environment in which leadership is given in the Acts of the Apostles is that of prayer and worship. It was as they *prayed* that they received guidance from God as to what they should *do*; and strength for the task. Peter on the house roof at Joppa and the prophets and teachers at Antioch are two examples (Acts 10:9, 13:2). In all the inevitable press of business which must afflict the church planter and elder, the imperative need for contact with God must not be forgotten, either individually or collectively.

As Paul emphasized in 1 Timothy 3:1 the office of elder is a high calling, and it would not be stretching the teaching of the New Testament to assert that the same is true of the office of deacon. The teaching about the functions of the elder and the deacon is perhaps the most challenging for the practice of Brethren churches. Those who are elders in local churches may well feel more than a twinge of conscience that often it is not the weighty tasks suggested in scripture which take up the time of oversights in assemblies, but the trivia of detailed administration which, however necessary, do too little to meet the true needs of the congregation.

Collective responsibility

It has already been noted that Christianity was born in a Jewish environment where, whatever may have been true of the Roman and Greek worlds, government was organized on oligarchic rather than monarchic lines. The Sanhedrin comprised 71 members, with the chairmanship

undertaken by the high priest. As already noted, the synagogue was ruled by a council of elders. Whether or not for this reason, group responsibility was a prominent pattern in the early church. It was elders whom Paul appointed in every church of south Galatia (Acts 14:23) and 'elders in every town' whom Titus was instructed to appoint (Titus 1:5). In 1 Timothy this eldership is actually described as a board which acted in concert, Paul being one of them, to appoint Timothy to his task (1 Tim. 4:14, 2 Tim. 1:6). Seven men of good repute were chosen by the Hellenist disciples to manage the daily distribution. It was the apostles and elders of the Jerusalem church to whom the church at Antioch sent a deputation (Paul, Barnabas 'and some of the others') to deliberate on the question and it was a deputation which the apostles and elders sent back to Antioch with their instructions (Acts 15:2, 22). Finally, in the letter to the Galatians where Paul is seeking to stress that his gospel to the Gentiles was received directly from God by individual and personal revelation, he is careful to note that his teaching was tested at Jerusalem by 'them . . . (i.e.) those who were of repute' and that it was James, Peter and John who commissioned Paul and Barnabas to take the gospel to the Gentiles (Gal. 2:2, 9).

If the customary arrangement in the early church was a plural apostolate and a plural eldership, there is then a question about the process by which decisions should be made. Is it to be by voting, by consensus, or by unanimity? And is one individual member of the decision-making body to be allowed a *liberum veto* with which he can block any arrangement which does not quite accord with his personal wishes? In many assemblies the last is a critical question since the principle followed is that of unanimity, perhaps under the influence of the lengthy argument made for it in G. H. Lang's primer of Brethren church government, *The churches of God*.[17]

The quality of argument deployed there is in fact patchy. It is obviously the ideal that believers within a local church and indeed more generally should be of 'one heart and soul', to use Luke's description in Acts 4:32 of the early church in Jerusalem, or that they should be under clear conviction of the course of action to take, as the prophets and teachers at Antioch were about the first missionary journey of Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13:1-3). This is, as Lang argued, reflected in the Lord's prayer in John 17:20-21 and in the analogy of the body. Moreover, it ought not to be argued that the ideal is unattainable within a local church: rather, it is characteristic of Christian *koinonia* that the Holy Spirit can weld together the most unlikely material and the most intractable personalities; in itself this is a testimony to the power of the gospel.

Despite all this, however, it was a straw man, 'majority voting', which Lang pilloried as the only alternative to unanimity. Clearly, the reaching of decisions in a community such as a local church by 'bare majority', as C. F. Hogg put it, is undesirable if only because it is impracticable. On

important matters, groups of this character cannot proceed other than by consensus. But it is debatable whether that consensus must also be subject to the veto of a small minority. As C. F. Hogg again put it, 'Majority rule is bad; minority rule is worse.'[18] On this point Lang argued, 'Not the opinion of the majority to be acted upon, for they may be wrong in their judgement; and for the same reason, not that of the minority; but let all wait on God for wisdom, and it shall be given — in God's time — to those who ask in faith.'[19] Put bluntly this was simply inadequate logic: for the issue which often faces local churches is not 'Is it better for us, being at point A, to go to point B or to point C?', but 'Being already at point B, which is favoured by the minority but which most of us are agreed has serious difficulties, ought we not to go to point C?' When this is the nature of the problem, the consensus can quite simply be held to ransom by a small minority which already has what it wants. In these circumstances, it is not easy to see that the principle of unanimity is beneficial to the whole body. Lang recognised this possibility for he saw that the body does not always function in an ideal way. His solution for the problem was drastic, however: if the minority persisted, they should be excommunicated, thus allowing the remainder to proceed in unanimity![20] The argument was justified by praying in aid passages in Matthew 18 and 1 Corinthians 5 which have little or nothing to do with decision-making in the local church, but concern resolving private disputes and disciplining individuals for immoral conduct.

The principle of unanimity was not in fact practised by the apostles themselves, certainly not by Paul. Apparently, he and presumably the majority of the church in Antioch were unyielding in their opposition to Peter and the Jewish minority, as described in Galatians 2. Paul and Barnabas separated with sharp contention and apparently the church did not wait before commending Paul to his second missionary journey. Christians must of course deal with each other with the utmost love at all times: on many issues, this will enable the dissenter to live with the policy of the consensus. On some occasions, it may be that the dissenter feels that he must part company with the consensus: it is better that this should be done graciously on both sides than by the wholly inappropriate procedure of exclusion *de jure* or *de facto*.

The relationship between office and spiritual gifts

It was suggested above that church leaders require a great range of qualities and talents if they are to function effectively. Few, if any, individuals are likely to be endowed with the full range and it follows that the leadership of the local church simply has to be plural and collective in order to meet the New Testament requirements. In the course of the analysis, too, it was inevitable that particular spiritual gifts should be identified as being especially relevant to particular aspects of church

leadership. It may not be unreasonable therefore to discern a systematic relationship between particular aspects of leadership and the spiritual gifts listed in Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 14 and Ephesians 4.

Functions	*Relevant spiritual gifts*
Teaching	prophecy; teaching; exhortation; utterance of wisdom; utterance of knowledge.
Leadership, particularly strategic guidance	apostle; prophecy; administrator (lit. 'steersman'); utterance of wisdom; faith.
Government, regulation and discipline	utterance of wisdom; utterance of knowledge; ability to distinguish between spirits; ?interpretation (cf. 1 Cor. 14).
Pastoral	pastor; utterance of wisdom; utterance of knowledge.
Diaconal	service; contribution; acts of mercy; giving aid; helpers.

Such a model can at best only be tentative: the three principal lists of spiritual gifts overlap, with the possibility that in the different lists different words connote the same gift; moreover, as the scheme shows, particular gifts seem relevant to more than one function of leadership. Most important of all perhaps is the stress in the New Testament on the principle that the spiritual gifts are given to believers on a wide basis, as befits the generosity of God's grace. They cannot be regarded as exclusively associated with particular offices in the church or confined to office holders. The best that can be said is that the possession of a number of spiritual gifts in intensity and in particular combinations may mark out the individual concerned either for a role among the churches at large or for one or other of the two offices in the local church.

Leadership and the ministry of the church

A general survey of leadership and ministry cannot today and in a Brethren context be complete without considering the role of the local church as a whole in leadership and ministry, and the relationship of elders and deacons to that role. The reasons are many: we live in an age which sets great store by democracy, consultation, participation and sexual equality; the Charismatic movement has revived emphasis on the priesthood of all believers and the charismatic ministry of every member of the body; finally, the Brethren tradition was itself created by that emphasis and many assemblies are still governed by the meeting of all church members — this is the mode of government assumed, for example, by G. H. Lang in the book already cited. Among some, particularly the

younger church members, a curiously ambivalent attitude can sometimes be detected. There is on the one hand the desire for participation in, or consultation about, decision-making; often they are equipped spiritually and otherwise to make a constructive contribution. On the other hand, there can be the cry that 'the elders should rule'.

There is a strong case to be made that the New Testament takes a high view of the role of the body as a whole in government as well as in ministry. The church is composed of members who, while differing in spiritual maturity, have equality of standing before God and equality of access to him; all have the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit; all are open to divine guidance; and as has been noted, spiritual gifts are widely given. Moreover, all are enjoined to be humble, especially those who lead and exercise spiritual gifts. Leaders are told they are to be the servants of all, just as the Master was the servant of all. Indeed, there is the example of the Master in the intimate relationship which he had with his disciples and his promotion of them from the status of servants to friends (John 15:13-15). The general tenor of the early chapters of the Acts of the Apostles is of an intimate association between the apostles, prophets, elders, and deacons and their congregations in the affairs of the church. On the immediate question of leadership and government, there was at least one important instance — no less than the council of Jerusalem — when the decision of the apostles and elders enjoyed the acclaim of 'the whole church' before it was conveyed by letter to Antioch. When it arrived, it was the congregation which heard the letter read, just as it had been the congregation which had dispatched the deputation to Jerusalem in the first place (Acts 15:3, 22, 30). The same pattern is followed in the Pauline letters which are normally addressed to whole churches rather than to individuals or just the elders and deacons.

Against this background, it seems impossible to conceive that it is right that the elders and deacons of a church should be remote bodies of men who hand down their decisions from on high to be obeyed without discussion or explanation, who are guilty of what Peter calls 'domineering over those in your charge' (1 Pet. 5:3). Decision-making should take place with an intimate knowledge of the thinking, feelings and needs of the church as a whole and great care ought to be given to how decisions are promulgated. The process of acquiring this intimate knowledge might well include discussion at a formal church meeting if that seems desirable, as well as more informal processes.

None of this is inconsistent with the principle that ultimate authority in the local church lies with the elders: *inter alia*, the duty of the elders is to govern, and authority and office must be distinguished from status. The scriptural model of the relationship between a congregation and their elders and deacons is a familiar one. It is the willing submission of equals to those responsible to God for them: just as the son submits himself to the father; and the wife to her husband; so the church member is

required to submit himself willingly to his elders for the common good. The father is of course worthy to be submitted to; the husband must be worthy of his wife's respect; elders must show themselves worthy of the respect of their congregation.

The organic nature of Christian leadership and ministry

Thus far this paper has sought to analyse leadership and ministry into its component parts as indicated in scripture. But like all essays in systematic analysis, it has run the risk of misrepresenting the true nature of its subject in its totality, of petrifying on cold tablets what is in fact warm and pulsing with life. It is time now to redress the balance. It bears repeating that the New Testament does not offer a blueprint but basic principles on which to found effective methods of leadership and arrangements for ministry. Like the human body which is characterized by great variety without detracting from its essential humanness, the church in the New Testament shows much flexibility in detailed local arrangements. Nor can precise boundaries be drawn by exegesis between the roles and offices of apostle, prophet, elder, teacher, pastor, and deacon. As we shall see in a moment, apostles and prophets were not confined to an itinerant ministry, as the *Didache* suggested they ought to be:[21] they showed a notable tendency to settle down in one place for a period and to play a prominent role in a local church. And exercise of the gift of prophecy was common in the local church as numerous references in the Acts and the epistles show. Nor can sharp lines be drawn between the roles and offices of an official ministry on the one hand, and the ministry of the whole church on the other. Still less is it wise to deny one or the other. Those who try to do so may well fail to catch the true identity of leadership and ministry as depicted in the New Testament and still offered by the Holy Spirit to the churches today.

A settled ministry?

Many may perhaps regard the discussion so far as a prelude only to the key question of these days in many Brethren circles: would it be right and prudent for them to support individuals to minister in particular local churches? To take the question of principle first, the theological issue can be defined in relatively narrow terms, viz. 'Does scripture warrant or prohibit a local church from giving financial support to one or more of their number to exercise a resident ministry in the fellowship?' The problem is not whether all financial support for Christian workers is prohibited. The New Testament obviously accepts some such support, and it has been reflected in the Brethren missionary endeavour and tradition of itinerant preaching at home. Nor is the problem whether financial support should be given to full-time as distinct from part-time workers. It is,

should a *resident* ministry, full-time or part-time, be maintained in churches *at home*?

There is no ambiguity in the New Testament that apostles and apostolic delegates were on occasion supported financially by the churches. In fact, Brethren teaching may have tended to place excessive stress on the point that in at least three infant churches, and possibly therefore as a matter of normal practice, Paul and his companions supported themselves by tent-making — they worked 'night and day . . . not to be a burden to any of you' (Acts 18:3, Acts 20:33 & 34, 1 Cor. 9, 2 Cor. 11:7-11, 2 Cor. 12:14-18, and 2 Thess. 3:7-8). But this arrangement should not be taken as an immutable norm. 1 Corinthians 9:6 & 15-18 may be taken as suggesting that it was normal for Paul and Barnabas to support themselves; but 2 Corinthians 12:13 may, on the other hand, be implying that Paul's support of himself in Corinth was exceptional. Moreover, his main reasons for declining such help had nothing to do with the principle of accepting support: in Thessalonica, he wanted to encourage the believers to work rather than be idle while awaiting the Coming; and in Corinth, he wanted a freehold to preach an unadulterated gospel and to avoid being equated with the false prophets (1 Cor. 16-18, 2 Cor. 11:12-15 and 12:11-13) and at Ephesus, his reason was to put himself in a position to help the poor (Acts 20:35).

In any case, 1 Corinthians 9 is categoric that apostles have a complete right to financial support and the churches have an obligation to maintain them. 1 Corinthians 9:5-6 implies that all the other apostles were given and accepted such support. For his part, Paul stresses that he was waiving his right to support from both the Thessalonians and the Corinthians: 'It was not because we have not that right, but to give you in our conduct an example to imitate' (2 Thess. 3:9). The point is expanded in 1 Corinthians 9:1-18.

Paul sometimes exercised the right. Paradoxically he did so in both Thessalonica and Corinth by accepting help from the Philippian and Macedonian churches respectively (Phil. 4:16, 2 Cor. 11:9). The Philippians continued to support him while he was a prisoner in Rome (Phil. 1:5 and 4:14-20).

Much less certain conclusions can be drawn from the New Testament about whether it was the practice of the churches to maintain elders in a pastoral ministry in individual churches. There is no positive support for it; but nor is there any prohibition. Lack of guidance on the subject is not surprising: the book of Acts and most of the epistles were written only a comparatively short time after the founding of the churches to which they refer. They were written by apostles or their companions to infant churches or to apostolic delegates. There are however one or two clues. 1 Timothy 5:17-18 refers to the reward which should be given to elders who rule well, especially those who labour in teaching and preaching: the payment should be 'double honour', which is the 'grain' and 'wage' of the

Old Testament scriptures quoted in v.18. But it is interesting that the first of these quotations is used by Paul in 1 Corinthians 9:9 in support of the apostles' incontestable right to be maintained by the churches. Secondly, the enrolled widow was certainly supported by the churches (1 Tim. 5:3-16); this assistance was partly a pension for help already given. Thirdly, within a generation or so the Syrian churches were supporting a resident ministry: 'A genuine charismatist, however, who wishes to make his home with you has a right to a livelihood. (Similarly, a genuine teacher is as much entitled to his keep as a manual labourer.)' In referring to elders and deacons, the manual instructed the churches not to choose men eager for money, a point which may be significant because elsewhere the concern is that even a genuine charismatist should not become a burden on the church by staying more than a day or two in it.[22]

There is a further question to be answered, however: how far is it justified to draw a rigid distinction between apostles and their delegates on the one hand and elders with a settled ministry in a local church, on the other? The traditional Brethren position, more honoured in the breach than in the observance, is that missionaries and full-time preachers should be strictly itinerant, so that the growth of an indigenous eldership should not be stunted. But this tends to dismiss the evidence that Paul spent three years in Ephesus and eighteen months plus additional periods at Corinth; and that when he himself was absent, he was careful to send his various assistants to continue the task of church-building as well as evangelism (see 2 Cor. 7-13 *passim*; Phil. 2:19-29, Col. 4:12-13, and 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus). Titus' responsibilities were towards the local churches of Crete as a whole. Timothy's charge was however specifically towards the church in Ephesus (1 Tim. 1:3) and his instructions suggest a settled pastoral and teaching ministry which both he and Paul regarded as his prime responsibility at that time. That ministry, like Titus', aimed at building up the church and ensuring good order and practice rather than a wholly evangelistic ministry. Experience suggests that to be effective such a ministry requires time, attention and continuity, requirements which in themselves seem to make inroads into the principle of itineracy. A change in the character and requirements of ministry as local churches matured seems plausible and it is interesting that history associates the apostle John with one church in his old age and that in later years both he and Peter describe themselves as elders, though perhaps not in the technical sense.

But the New Testament recognizes too that a danger of given financial support to Christian workers is that the system will attract the idle whose motive is to take advantage of those who support them. Paul warned against this danger explicitly in 2 Timothy 3:1-9 and elsewhere he suggests that the motive of false apostles and prophets can be personal gain. The early patristic writings indicate that this soon became a considerable

problem in the church; it has continued to afflict it at a number of stages in history.

The prudential and practical arguments against financial support for a settled ministry in a local church are more cogent than the doctrinal argument which is to say the least, tenuous. The church at large has a good deal of experience with the arrangement and this suggests that it can present some significant problems.

First, there is the danger of idleness just mentioned. The more notable examples in history, like the clerk of *The Canterbury tales* and the Anglican clergyman of the eighteenth century, were perhaps those who lacked genuine Christian experience in times when the vocation was not unattractive in social and material terms. But anyone with an acquaintance with evangelical denominations and foreign missions will know that a more discreet form of idleness can be found among full-time workers there too.

This difficulty is very often avoided, but there can secondly be a danger that financial dependence neutralizes prophetic ministry; that the individual receiving financial support feels unable to speak fearlessly under the Holy Spirit against the sins and other shortcomings of those who pay his emoluments. This was exactly the difficulty which Paul sought to avoid by making his tents in Corinth. In former times, the Anglican minister — but not perhaps his curate — had no such constraint because of his parson's freehold: he could be turned out of his living only in the most exceptional circumstances, an arrangement which had of course its negative as well as positive sides.[23] In the nonconformist denominations, where the norm has been that the congregation themselves furnish their pastor's stipend in large part, the constraints can be real. They are not unknown either in the Brethren: the preacher who says what an assembly does not want to hear may well find that he is not invited again. No such financial pressure afflicts the person who has secular employment — though he should not underestimate the subtle pressures which are imposed by the desire to be well esteemed by fellow Christians.

Turning from the paid worker to the congregation which he or she serves, we must recognize the danger that his or her presence can encourage idleness on the part of those among whom he or she works, especially if they support the person ('We pay him to do the work'), and can stunt the development of spiritual gifts in the congregation at large and hamper the ministry of the whole church. In the past, there have been ample instances of this phenomenon both in Anglicanism and the nonconformist denominations where it is fair to say that until recently a one-man ministry often prevailed. It is this risk which chiefly concerns those with associations with the Charismatic movement as they watch some Brethren churches moving towards maintaining a resident ministry. Michael Harper and David Watson rightly warn against the danger that a

professional ministry will emerge to the detriment of the principle of the charismatic ministry of the whole people of God. Time and again, Anglican congregations have borne witness to the benefits of an extended interregnum to show the ordinary church member what he or she can do through the working of the Holy Spirit. And there is historically a clearly discernible, oft-repeated phenomenon by which the charismatic ministry of the whole church, born of a spiritual awakening, slowly wanes to give way to an official ministry. One of the causes is a withering of spiritual commitment on the part of the congregation and a growing willingness to leave such matter to representative professionals: this is a form of incipient sacerdotalism. There is, moreover, a further problem that such a professional ministry can become remote from the concerns and problems which press in on the ordinary believer in a secularized world, that the latter feels that the full-time man or woman does not have to live in the real world with which he has to grapple daily and therefore that they cannot effectively minister to his need or those of his unbelieving friends.

Professionalisation in this sense would be contrary to scripture. It would also be imprudent. Those churches with an experience of a full-time ministry note the practical limitations which it can place on church growth, particularly in an urban society. Research in the Anglican church indicates that 'In parishes of over 2,000 the single-clergy model church levels off at an average congregation of 175 regardless of parish population.' One full-time assistant adds about a further 90 and a third worker an extra 80 or so.[24] Since these figures are of Christmas communicants, the effective membership in Brethren terms would be rather smaller and the full-time worker's ability to perform even some of the roles outlined earlier in this paper to more than a comparatively small fraction of these numbers would be severely limited. David Watson is right: even a team of full-time workers cannot do the job envisaged in the New Testament without extensive support from other elders, deacons, and church members as a whole.[25]

It would be a tragedy if Brethren churches were to fall into these traps in moving towards the maintenance of full-time workers in local churches. But real as the difficulties are, they are no more than dangers against which to be warned, temptations to be avoided. There are in fact good practical reasons in favour of supporting full-time workers. In the past, Brethren assemblies have often relied for leadership and pastoral work on commercial and professional men who could organize their lives in order to give much time to the needs of the local church. Social organization makes that much more difficult now: the well-to-do are no longer a leisured class; professional men and civil servants customarily work much longer hours than was the case even before the second world war; there are in some parts of the country many fewer small businessmen in the assemblies who can put their resources, for example, their secretaries, at the disposal of the church. Perhaps the only development from which

the assemblies have been able to benefit has been the growth of teaching posts — and, contrary to general belief, they are not sinecures. At the same time, rising expectations have affected the church as much as other spheres: Christians read the New Testament and they see a dynamic mission, a quality of pastoral care and a common life which many Brethren churches seem to lack; and they ask why their elders are not delivering the goods. Many elders feel the answer is that there is too little time and their gifts are spread too thinly over too many responsibilities. The problem facing Brethrenism is not that the support of a full-time ministry is likely to stunt the growth of congregations around the 200 mark; it is that the lack of such a ministry is likely to result in the total dispersion of congregations to places where it is thought that proper pastoral care and teaching will be given.

It does not follow that the full-time worker will necessarily be idle; that the congregation will sit back and leave it to the professional; that they will idolize him, or despise him; that his ministry will be wanting in conviction or courage; that the ministry of the wider congregation will be stunted. These dangers exist. But if it must be so, then the New Testament is at best highly misleading on the question of the way in which local churches then functioned. There we see full-time or part-time apostles and prophets maintained by the churches and exercising a teaching and pastoral ministry for long periods in one church in co-operation with active elders and deacons, and supported by spiritual gifts widely distributed among, and exercised by, the local church as a whole. Possible pitfalls ought not to deter us from arrangements which are accepted by the scriptures. The practical experience of many local churches in our own times is that the paid worker's function is to identify, to draw out, to encourage, to develop and to organize the deployment of the charismatic gifts of the congregation as a whole, so that the church gradually begins to operate in the way that the New Testament suggests. The paid worker is not of course the only ingredient required to achieve that end but, as a matter of observed fact, it is commonly a necessary ingredient.

To revert to the explanatory model introduced near the beginning of this paper, the New Testament pattern is of churches rich in official ministry, some of it maintained at the expense of the churches, but also rich in the ministry of the whole church. Both ministries must of course be charismatic in their very nature if they are to achieve anything of lasting value. Whether full-time workers in local churches would be a benefit to Brethren churches would in the final analysis depend on the attitude and personal commitment of the congregations as a whole.

References

1. See A. D. Gilbert, *Religion and society in industrial England: church, chapel and*

social change, 1740-1914, London: Longman, 1976, pp.20-22 & 54-59; and Ian Bradley, *The call to seriousness: the evangelical impact on the Victorians*, London: Jonathan Cape, 1976, pp.41-52. *Cf.* the expansion of the Assemblies in north Devon and C. H. Spurgeon's early ministry in Cambridgeshire (*C. H. Spurgeon: The early years 1834-1859*, London: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1962, pp.182-191; and H. H. Rowdon, *The origins of the Brethren 1825-1850*, London: Pickering and Inglis, 1967, pp.147-153).

2. E. H. Broadbent, *The pilgrim church*, London: Pickering and Inglis, paperback 1974.
3. On the later medieval period there is much of interest on this subject in Norman Cohn, *The pursuit of the millenium: revolutionary millenarianism and mystical anarchists of the middle ages*, London: Paladin, 1970.
4. Gilbert, *op. cit.* pp.125-138 and 167.
5. See J. R. W. Stott, *One People: Clergy and laity in God's church*, London: Falcon, 1968; David Watson, *I believe in the church*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1978, pp.245-252; Michael Harper, *Let my people grow: ministry and leadership in the church*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1977, pp.22-23. In many Anglican churches, worship and prayer are now often led by persons who are not members of the ministerial team.
6. John Adair, *The becoming church*, London: SPCK, 1977, *passim*, especially pp.54-75.
7. See *Bishops in the church: The addresses given at the 132nd Islington clerical conference, January 1966*, London: The Church Book Room Press, 1966, especially J. R. W. Stott, 'The New Testament concept of *episkope*', pp.9-16 and R. E. Nixon 'Bishops and Orders' pp.32-34.
8. Hans Conzelmann, *History of primitive Christianity* (trans. John E. Steely), London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1973, especially pp.73 & 100 and J. D. G. Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit*, London: SCM Press, 1975, p.349.
9. *Early Christian writings: The apostolic fathers* (trans. Maxwell Staniforth), London: Penguin Books, 1968, pp.227-235, especially 234.
10. Rowdon, *op. cit.* pp.243-5; F. Roy Coad, *A history of the Brethren movement: its origins, its worldwide development and its significance for the present day*, Exeter: The Paternoster Press, 2nd (paperback) edition 1976, pp.137-40.
11. G. H. Lang, *The churches of God: a treatise for the times*, London: The Paternoster Press, 1959, pp.81-91.
12. Harper, *op. cit.* pp.49-51; 81-83; 184-193; & 198-201.
13. Watson, *op. cit.* p.258.
14. For the influence of the synagogue on the practice of the early church, see Ralph Martin, *Worship in the early church*, London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, new ed. 1974. See also the articles on 'elder', 'presbyter' and 'synagogue' in *The new Bible dictionary*, London: Inter-Varsity Press, 1962.
15. *Ibid.* article on 'bishop'.
16. D. Bridge and D. Phypers, *Spiritual gifts and the church*, London: Inter-Varsity Press, 1973, p.146.
17. Lang, *op. cit.* pp.98-116.
18. Quoted in *ibid.* p.112 and footnote.
19. *Ibid.* p.106.
20. *Ibid.* p.115.
21. *Early Christian writings*, p.233.
22. *Ibid.* p.234.
23. For those now entering livings, this arrangement has been discontinued.
24. Adair, *op. cit.* pp.106-108.
25. Watson, *op. cit.* pp.245-297.

BRIAN MILLS

Leadership in the Churches

To lead or not to lead — An examination of styles of leadership in our churches today

There is a leadership crisis within our assemblies — so runs a commonly heard statement. What is the nature of the leadership crisis? Are we still suffering from a lack of late middle-aged men because of the effects of the second world war? If so, have we looked at the younger middle-aged men that have grown up in the post-war period of accelerating change? Do we still retain a belief that eldership is commensurate with advanced age? Or that office-holding without proper functioning is adequate? Are there those in positions of leadership for the wrong reasons? Is there a lack of pastoral care — and who should do it anyway? Are we giving the wrong type of teaching for the needs of the people living in today's world? Are the leaders more concerned with maintenance than mission, with buildings more than Bibles, with fabric more than faith, with finding something wrong rather than doing something right, with secondary issues rather than primary functions?

A letter in *The Harvester* (February 1977) runs:

> 'A nation, organisation or society, ship's company or regiment, is always and only as good as its leadership. This must also apply to a local church. Brethren assemblies more than any other group of churches suffer in very many cases from enfeebled leadership. We have those, who as men and brethren in the Lord may be delightful to know, but as elders and leaders of a local church are quite unsuitable. If ever there was a time when the Lord's people need inspired, informed, imaginative and energetic leadership it is now. We are confronted by materialism, permissiveness, doctrinal confusion, insipid Christianity and very determined powers of darkness. We need powerful leadership.'

Lest we think that leadership within our churches, to be successful, must produce well-run activities, let us heed this warning from a missionary.

> 'What if our assembly seems to be lively and thriving? Be sure that this liveliness is the life of God and not just a well organised man-enthused system. A crowd attracts a crowd and it is possible for a period of time to have a work that is growing in numbers, activities and enthusiasm but which is not Spirit-generated. If this growth is from God, there will be growing humility, love for one another despite difference of view, the burying of long-standing hatchets, the dealing with stubborn points in our personalities as well as the outward manifestation of power in our witness.'

Leadership today

In society generally the complaint is frequently heard that there are few 'notable leaders' — men who are strong, courageous, exemplary in character, wise and positive, and inspiring to others. As the ills in society are usually reflected in the Church, it would hardly be surprising if there were a shortage of such leadership in our churches. And yet this ought not to be, if our leadership is truly Spirit-led, Spirit-filled and Spirit-endowed.

If there is a lack of leadership in the assemblies what are the causative factors, what is its nature, what lessons are there in other church groups for us, and how can it be remedied?

With the general decline in assembly membership, there has been a corresponding drop in the number of people with obvious leadership capabilities.

(a) There has been a *'brain drain'*. Some complain that the 'great men of the book' of yesteryear have no counterpart in our churches today, and suggest that because of this, the quality of leadership throughout the Brethren movement has suffered. Others point to the lack of solid Bible study and dedicated service which was a hallmark of everyone in the past. Not only has there been a clear lessening of personal and corporate Bible study, there has also been a drain of some of our best potential leaders away from assemblies into other church groups.

An obvious reason why so many other denominational groups have ex-assembly men in their full-time ministry is that they have been unable to find any outlet for their obvious gifts and training within the fellowships in which they have been reared because of the lack of opportunity or demand for a full-time ministry of a teaching or pastoral kind. Others have too little or no encouragement to exercise their abilities, if known, for the corporate benefit of the fellowship to which they belong; if showing zeal or initiative, they are instead positively discouraged or allowed to find opportunities elsewhere. Some would say that they have had insufficient grounding in 'assembly principles', whilst others would argue that it has been the enforcement of those 'principles' that has actually driven some away. There may have been an element of doubt on the part of some elder, not so well educated, leaders, about their younger better educated men; suspicion that education *per se* does not reflect spirituality (which it doesn't) and therefore is not a criterion in choosing leadership; suspicion that perhaps the younger ones know more than their elders in many realms and if encouraged might constitute a threat to their leadership.

Perhaps another reason for the departure of men with gift is that during their periods of training they come into contact with Christians of differing backgrounds whom, they discover, have as much, if not more, life than they, and sometimes more light. Their personal knowledge of God from a position of reasoned commitment, and their zeal for the

advance of his kingdom is so different from what has been known and experienced in some assemblies.

(b) There has been a growing *shortage of people regarded as suitable* for leadership office. Unlike other denominations, very few present leaders within assemblies have had any form of training for such responsibility — indeed in some instances those leaders have little understanding of the responsibility that is theirs. Some are born leaders, some are trained leaders and some have leadership thrust upon them! In some of our smaller assemblies those who find themselves in positions of leadership through sheer necessity have no desire to be in such a role, so is it any wonder if, through feeling trapped by circumstances they exercise their necessary duties with something less than enthusiasm? In other assemblies in recent years younger men have acceded to the office of elder, who although having natural qualities that make them an obvious choice have had no training or help from any source to fit them for such office and on their own admission have little Bible knowledge or spiritual awareness. Although willingness to serve the assembly may not be in question, many confessedly have no idea what their function should be, except to follow the example of those already in office. The average assembly has a membership of 50 people, only a third of whom will be men. Thus the field from which potential office-holders are to be chosen is very limited.

(c) Our churches are populated by an increasingly *mobile population*. The average family moves every five to eight years. Elders and leaders, by virtue sometimes of their church responsibility, tend to move less. But by not moving and therefore by not being informed enough, do they not tend to become more set in their local church ways, resistant to change, unaware of practice elsewhere, more parochial and perhaps denominational? Elders and leaders who do move, however, can create some instability within the fellowship with which they were or will be associated; a lack of continuity occurs where leadership movement is more noticeable. There are today so many varieties of Brethren assemblies that people who do move do not easily settle into a new one which might be radically different from any they have been used to.

(d) There are a variety of *functional deficiencies* in leadership which illustrate the kind of crisis which contributes to the decline of a church — quantitatively and qualitatively. In nearly forty per cent of all assemblies the structured leadership meets at intervals of more than a month — such laxity can produce paralysis in decision-making and in responding to need. Most of the leadership given relates firstly to *activities* — their proper functioning, manning — but seldom to a realistic questioning of the effect, efficiency or necessity of such activities. Secondly to *maintenance* — the thousand and one jobs to do with the material and financial needs of the building and its use — without asking if a single church member could be trusted to serve as facilities supervisor, for

example. Thirdly to *issues* — discussion and sometimes prolonged deliberation about matters of doctrine, morality and certain practices from a desire to decide what is allowable for their church, without taking into consideration the personal and spiritual needs of the people involved. Leadership works through relationships with followers. But too little, if any, time is devoted to building and cementing those relationships, to preventive as well as curative counselling and care, to identifying gifts and abilities and to encouraging those gifts to be utilised for the common good.

(e) There is an acute *lack of spiritual leadership and pastoral care.* Some suggest that with increasing demands being made on our elders by their secular responsibilities (more time is needed for extensive travel, evening work commitments, etc.) they have no time for the study they would like to do and for the pastoral care they ought to give (although that does not seem to be the case in some other churches). Others have important and far-reaching responsibilities in other Christian works or in fulfilling a spare-time preaching ministry in churches other than their own local one, so that they have little time to be elders in the fullest sense of the word in their own fellowships. Because of this many fellowships are inadequately led and fed. The warnings of Ezekiel 34 must be taken to heart. The lack of such spiritual and caring leadership is a direct contributory cause of the exodus of people to other fellowships where their spiritual needs are met.

(f) There is a general *lack of vision,* enterprise, or strategic thinking about the assembly's function. Most are concerned with survival rather than expansion. The smaller an assembly the more acutely this is felt. Little thought is given about the role of the church in the community, the distinctive contribution that the church as God's community can make, the need for evangelism, and how the needs of the fellowship can best be catered for. There is little sense of direction and very little idea of aims and objectives; goal-setting, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is almost unknown.

Most of the identified leadership lacks — and there are probably more — reflect on a deficient expression of spiritual life and of the spiritual gifts listed in scripture. When seen in their context and understood from the original operation of those gifts in the early church, it becomes apparent that our fellowships are a long way from the vibrant, active, spiritual communities (problems and all) of the first century A.D. (cf. Michael Griffiths in *Where do we go from here?*).

Leadership patterns

It is said that we in the assemblies adhere to the New Testament pattern of church government. *What is that pattern?* I am told that there are nine discernible authority structures within the early church. Which one are

we supposed to adhere to? Is it the Ephesian pattern, where elders were responsible for overseeing and feeding the flock? (Acts 20:28) Is it the pattern in Lystra, Iconium and Antioch where Paul and Barnabas 'ordained elders in every church' (i.e. leadership chosen by itinerant preachers, albeit apostles in this case)? Is it the pattern in Jerusalem where the apostles, realising their limitations to do everything, asked the church to appoint seven men of God — generally known as deacons — to assist them? Is it the pattern at Corinth, where Paul stayed as the resident Bible teacher for eighteen months? Perhaps we need to turn away from a generally accepted view that the pattern adhered to in your local church for decades is the biblical norm and ask, 'Is there a norm?' If there is, let us find afresh what the scriptures have to teach us, and then boldly seek to interpret our understanding of those norms in our own local setting. If there are variables, then let us stop 'knocking' other churches because they may have a different system of government and style of leadership, or criticising those assemblies which have before God sought to adjust to the changing needs of their fellowship and location.

When we look at the assembly scene today we find a wide variety in styles of leadership.

(a) There are local churches where there is an *absence of leadership*. The male members would say that 'the Holy Spirit leads us'. One has to ask seriously — does He? If He does, where are the evidences? In many churches where this statement is made there is lack of life, activity, leadership, care, cohesion, and growth. Little gets done by anyone. Nobody is responsible for anything. A flock that is unled is unfed.

(b) In others, the 'running' of the affairs is ostensibly in the hands of a *'brethren meeting'*. This is probably the nearest we get to a communist-type system of 'government for the workers, by the workers and through the workers!' All are equally involved in decision-making and discussion, although these meetings tend to deal with business affairs only. Pastoral problems are seldom raised since family loyalties would be involved. Decision-making in such an environment tends to be painful if induced, sometimes disruptive or divisive. Or it tends to be the view of the minority which prevails — that is a negative view against a certain course of action; out of a sometimes misguided sense of charity to the opposing minority, nothing is done by the majority. So the power of the veto pre-dominates in arriving at an undivided decision.

A variation on this would be the quarterly church meeting where all members of the church, male and female, have — in theory — equal say in what happens.

(c) Then there are churches, and we each probably can quote our own example, where a *one-man rule* is maintained in a dictatorial fashion, although the public view would vehemently be opposed to clerisy. The intransigence of such a person has sometimes contributed to division, or occurred as a result of division. Occasionally, there exists a throw-back

to the Victorian era when the local Christian landowner or factory owner built the chapel for his employees so it was natural to expect his position in employment to be the same in church affairs. Today the same kind of regard for the prominent businessman can be found.

Because of the unstructured system of church government, assemblies particularly are vulnerable to the power-conscious strong natural leader who seeks to take control. Unfortunately some people find it congenial to be in such a fellowship and develop or reinforce a dependency syndrome that puts man in the place of God. The Taylor party's former leader, and the Diotrephes of John's second letter, are classic examples. To such Peter's exhortation comes: 'not as arrogant, dictatorial and overbearing, domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock' (1 Peter 5:3).

(d) A number of brethren churches today, as through the history of the movement, have a *part-time or full-time minister.* His role and function varies according to local need, but generally his ministry would be that of pastor/evangelist/teacher. His main ministry is with the single local church, or in a few cases, with a group of churches. Seldom is his leadership given as 'the father' of all — more often it is as 'the servant' of all. In most instances he would be recognised as one among a plurality of elders. But his function would be specifically to lead the church in one of the aspects mentioned above, and to 'equip the saints for the work of the ministry, for building up the body of Christ'. Those churches with an established worker of this kind are generally healthy, showing signs of growth, and stable. In some cases the full-time worker has been God's instrument for bringing the church into being, so he has something of what might be termed 'an apostolic interest' in its development. Full-time single-church ministry has been practised for decades in the mission fields of the world, is well established in America and Canada and has undoubtedly been a major contributory factor in the strength of those assemblies in Britain who have had a history of such (as in Barnstaple, Bristol, the Blackdown Hills and elsewhere).

(e) By far the majority of assemblies have recognised elders or *oversight.* In structure nearly all are self-perpetuating oligarchies. But the way in which they function varies enormously. Members of oversights generally see themselves in a supervisory role; this would probably be a better description of the activities engaged in by some so-called elders, whose function is frequently limited to business matters. Their concern is with fabric, finance, and following precept. Perhaps it is because this supervisory role has been accepted as the norm by so many for so long that strong leadership or pastoral care is insufficiently exercised. Theirs is a diaconate-type function; a short, often limited, strictly controlled or hastily called meeting that is more reminiscent of a company board meeting or a shop stewards' committee than the spiritually aware, biblically-based gathering that it ought to be. Some elders corporately

'rule with a rod of iron'. To those in fellowship it seems that they are remote from the flock and their needs; they make public pronouncements which sometimes cause more problems than they solve. In other cases elders are elderly, or over-worked or over-active; or they may be unused to leadership responsibility in any other realm, so find it difficult to cope with the responsibility that it brings. The sheer pressure of their responsibility inevitably means that the inner life of waiting and meditating on God is neglected. Such is the danger, of course, with any who hold onerous responsibilities in any work of God. To neglect the inner life results in a neglect of the corporate life. It must be said that in some cases elders hold on to office beyond the age when they can cope adequately; to have retired gracefully would have meant that they were available for counsel to all, and from the wealth of their communion with God could have contributed immeasurably to the health of the assembly. Others hold to position for the power it supposedly gives or for the status-symbol that in their view goes with the office. Whatever the reason for holding office, let us who are elders ask God to sanctify us so that we shall not be elders in name only, but also function as he wants, for his church and to his glory.

The vast majority probably take their responsibility seriously, as much as they know how. They spend long hours in doing a variety of things, visiting many people for counselling (generally of a curative kind, rather than preventive), attending many weekly meetings, writing numerous letters, and delivering sermons. But with the kind of leadership crisis which we face, we have to ask whether they could function more efficiently for the growth, quantitatively and qualitatively, of the church and for the glory of God.

(f) Increasingly, a style of leadership most prevalent in assemblies today involves *elders and deacons,* although there is a great deal of variety in determining the choice and function of a deacon, and difference in determining the qualifications. In essence, however, where the two offices exist the responsibility is generally clearly defined between spiritual and practical. For some elders it has been a way of involving younger men in some of the practical responsibilities, perhaps as preparation for eventual eldership. Most have had teething problems in introducing a diaconate; some through it have created what they sought to avoid — a body whose expertise and gift has constituted an imagined threat to an eldership whose shared gifts may not be so conspicuous. In other cases it has been a means of recognising within the church those who already function in a leadership capacity, such as Sunday school superintendent, youth leader, women's meeting leader.

(g) To people whose view of the strict autonomy of the local church is sacrosanct, the idea of *area leadership* may seem to be anathema. Some point to the dangers of imposed leadership as illustrated in certain areas by expressions of 'needed truth' teaching. But it depends on your con-

cept of leadership as to how this is handled. In certain types of assemblies and areas of the country where leadership is viewed as that of direction and not navigation, there would be dangers in any co-operation. But where the sense of tolerant fellowship and area identity is manifest, there can be immense value in sharing common burdens and ways of working at area level. In north Devon for example, there has since the time of Robert Chapman been a 'preaching plan' in operation, rather like the system adopted by the Methodist lay preachers. In the Blackdown Hills the assemblies are closely linked in all the work that takes place in that farming community. In the Aldershot/Camberley/Woking area elders from nearly all the local assemblies (open and not so open) have met three or four times a year to pray, share burdens, investigate methods of church growth, invite specialists in various fields to share their vision, and discuss controversial issues current in their church life and practice. In no case need the sense of autonomy feel threatened. For the last ten years or so the Counties Regional Fellowship structure has brought together assemblies on a county basis to co-operate in evangelism with the county evangelist, and in few cases that co-operation has extended to embrace other interests. The value of area meetings for church leaders provides the opportunity to look objectively and biblically at certain problems with others, away from the environment where emotions get aroused and personalities become involved. We learn by sharing; we can change our rather parochial and isolationist view by sharing; our vision of God and his church is expanded by sharing in this manner. Common enterprises, better organised if on a shared basis, and perhaps more valuable for the church, can be initiated, with mutual trust and co-operation.

Leadership in other churches

Just as in our assemblies there are many varieties of leadership in practice, so in other churches — though more ambitious innovations characterise some. Let us share a little of some of the more recent changes.

(a) *Plurality of elders:* In all denominations the 'amazing' discovery is being made that the New Testament teaches shared eldership. So today many churches have introduced a system where the minister is one of the elders, or under the elders. The elders have functional responsibilities — teaching elders, pastoral elders, evangelistic elders, etc. In some cases the eldership is large and arises out of a growing congregation and its needs. In such cases leadership is arising from function, rather than a 'gift of leadership' being identified and encouraged. The old adage, 'A man's gift makes room for him', applies in many cases.

(b) *Task leaders:* In other cases the leadership consists of those with the responsibility for leading the functions of the church (e.g. women's work, children's activities, youth fellowship, visitation programme). The

value in this approach is the sense of co-ordination that is possible, the elimination of overlapping, the integration of purpose and aim, the inter-relationship that can be established. Many of our churches are so activity-orientated that each activity can become an end in itself, and can almost create a church within a church. Any church can readily introduce a task leaders' meeting at regular intervals, providing the leadership (in whatever form it exists) is prepared to respond to suggestions and burdens emanating from those doing the work.

(c) *House group leaders:* Undoubtedly the most exciting development today is the multiplication of house groups in churches which have adopted some form of house group system. Every growing church in the United Kingdom has a house group system working. Only a few assemblies, to my knowledge, have adopted some form of this system, but those that have can see the benefits. Mid-week meeting attendances have risen from 25% of the membership to 75%. All members of the family and the church (young and old, married and single, children and adults) benefit. Most housegroups commence as a means of improving corporate fellowship *(koinonia),* and develop into becoming a most important means of providing teaching and pastoral care at the level on which it is required. So it is adapted according to the needs that exist in each housegroup. Some have a recognised elder as leader; some are organised on a geographical or street basis; in a few cases they exist for certain homogeneous needs, in which case they may initially be more evangelistic than pastoral.

In some churches the pastoral/teaching housegroup has become a most fruitful means of evangelism. As individuals talk about 'the group' to neighbours, they start to come. A number of churches have had to re-structure and choose new leaders to cope with the ever-increasing numbers who want to come. The leaders therefore emerge from the established housegroups. Spiritual and leadership qualities must be prominently in evidence.

If we accept that no set pattern of leadership exists in the New Testament, then we have to ask 'Is the leadership pattern currently in force in our local church the best for the area, the congregation and the type of leadership available?' If not, then perhaps it is time to examine afresh what the scriptures can teach us, and be prepared to adapt method to suit need. There may be no set pattern, but surely the principle of elders leading and feeding the flock of God is of paramount importance. It is his flock, we are his under-shepherds; we must then, in his name, and with his mind lead and feed. If that leadership is not adequately being given, if the flock are not getting fed by current means and at the set times, then we must adapt our leadership pattern to ensure that they do get fed and led.

Qualities of leadership

What should we look for in a leader? A successful businessman? A man with a string of qualifications in the academic field? Someone who has no evidence of educational attainment? Someone who is old in years, faithful in the meetings and ought not to be passed over? Someone who is young and inexperienced, but who can be trained? If we are primarily looking at these criteria then our leadership will inevitably not be for the good of the flock and the glory of God. Of course some of these criteria may need to be weighed and considered, but the prime need undoubtedly is for 'men full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom' (Acts 6:3), 'full of faith and the Holy Ghost' (Acts 6:5). 'The Holy Spirit has made you over-seers' (Acts 20:28), 'as God's steward . . . must be blameless . . . he must hold firm to the sure word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to confute those who contradict it' (Titus 1:7, 9). The list of social requirements is comprehensively given in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1, but the spiritual must be paramount.

In his book *'Let my people grow'*, Michael Harper distinguishes between office and function. We tend to be too 'office-conscious'. Our position or responsibility determines our attitudes and actions. In the New Testament the terms pastor and teacher do not seem to have been applied to definite offices. Harper pleads for us to see 'five spheres of ministry rather than five "offices" to which men are appointed or ordained . . . rather like the Olympic symbol, all inter-related to each other.' The local church needs a combination of all these callings (referring to the gifts to the church in Ephesians 4), and they should especially be seen in Christian leadership. 'The pooling of the gifts of a body of people who present great variety in terms of age, income, back-ground, culture, race and education, is the work of master craftsmen. It is the creation by God's grace of a single work of art. When ministry fails there is division, a spirit of competitiveness, pride and prejudice, jealousy and private interests — all too common, alas, in our churches. But when the Spirit is in command and the ministry is functioning properly, then a bunch of individuals is set free from their individualism, united into a body, and liberated to function as individuals in a team of people.'

There is a great deal to be done by all leaders in identifying gifts — natural and spiritual — recognising their existence, encouraging them to be put to use for the corporate benefit of the church as the body of Christ . . . 'to equip the saints for the work of the ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain . . .' (Eph. 4:12, 13). All includes every member of the local church — strong and weak, male and female, young and old, marrieds and singles. 'The whole body joined and knit together by every joint with which it is supplied, when each part is working properly, makes bodily growth and upbuilds itself in love.' (Eph. 4:16) Every word in that sentence is vitally important in the wholesome func-

tion of church leadership. That is their prime responsibility — to encourage every member of the body to function normally. Have we ever sat down and made a list — even a card index — of graces, gifts, and abilities (charismata — spiritual gifts, and domata — natural gifts) of each church member, and then purposefully tried to ensure that they were functioning in an inter-related fashion for the benefit of the whole church?

In his excellent book on *Pastoral care,* R. E. O. White identifies the following qualities as being essential for spiritual leadership, and in each case there are ample illustrations from the scriptures.

(a) *Energy:* This is the quality we call boldness or zeal when it works well, and impetuosity or fanaticism when it works badly. There can be no leadership without energy, dedication and drive. (Consider the life of Peter.) 'The leader who is content to keep things quietly ticking over, to conserve the past and postpone the future is in a rut. Instead of finding initiative, we find inertia.'

(b) *Judgement:* James is quoted as the classic example. 'If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God.' (Jas. 1:5) It was his wise judgement at Jerusalem that gave direction and made leadership safe to follow. Steadfast and wise counsel, careful decisions that bear lasting fruit, a deep reflection on the things of God and a far-seeing understanding of people — these win trust and confidence.

(c) *Ability to get the best out of people:* It requires a deep respect for others' opinions and outlook, warm-hearted encouragement and support, readiness to stand back that others might progress. All spiritual gifts are bestowed not to enhance the possessor but to enrich and edify others. Barnabas is cited — the son of encouragement. He showed 'genuine appreciation of others' qualities and gifts'.

(d) *Clear thinking:* Paul showed that he was well-informed, apt to teach, skilful, and patient in helping others to see what he had seen. A clear-thinking man is usually the 'visionary' — he keeps ahead in thought and action. He sees the issues, the work, the programme, the coming changes, the possibilities. 'He is pressing toward some new mark, knows when to break new ground, without waiting for unanimity. But he also knows when to wait and not drive, when to withdraw and not dominate.'

(e) *Ability to unify a group:* The task of a shepherd is to gather, not to scatter. What is known to be true and Christ-like will be followed. This kind of quality will value fellowship above controversy, the unity of the Spirit above pride of knowledge, appreciate the many-sided nature of truth without losing conviction or blurring vital distinctions. John's first epistle illustrates these qualities.

(f) *Example:* This is the least dispensable of leadership qualities. The man who would lead the average Christian must live above the average level. The price of leadership is to be a little more conscientious than most, more scrupulous about doubtful things, more hard-working and

generous, a little more holy in conduct (1 Peter 1:15). 'Set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity' (1 Tim. 4:12).

We have not discussed many organisational aspects of leadership, such as decision-making, keeping confidences, delegating and organising, goal-setting, a balanced diet, and care for all (including the leaders!) but one vital necessity of leadership must be dealt with.

Leadership from God

Our leadership has value for the church only if it is related to God. It is to him that all leaders have to answer — not only for their own manner of life, but for the way they have discharged the responsibility he has given them. We can never view the church as our church, our youth fellowship, our flock, ours, ours, ours. It is God's. We are to tend 'the flock of God', to care for the 'church of God'.

Leaders themselves must be led and fed. King David's shepherd psalm illustrates this. He was one of the greatest kings of Israel, yet he knew that fellowship and deep communion with God which was the source of his greatness. 'He leads me besides still waters . . . He restores my soul . . . He leads me in paths of righteousness' (Psalm 23:2, 3). Righteousness is the very character of God. We need his righteousness not only imputed to us as a doctrinal fact, but present in us as a living demonstrable reality. In Psalm 25 he prays, 'Show me thy ways, teach me thy paths, lead me in thy truth'. We need constantly to depend on God and allow his will to be done in us before it can be done through us.

Moses was the leader of the people out of Egypt and in the wilderness — but the scripture says, 'God led the people about' (Ex. 13:18), the cloud and fire being the evidence of his presence with them. He leads us by the right way today by his blessed Holy Spirit, if we are prepared to submit to his controlling presence. If you are led by the Spirit you are not under law and if we live by the Spirit let us also walk by the Spirit', says Paul (Gal. 5:18, 25) and then he starts to interpret practically what that walk should include, and by inference he is particularly thinking of leaders. 'O, lead me to the rock that is higher than I . . . I will abide in thy tabernacle for ever; I will trust in the covert of thy wings' (Psalm 61:2, 4).

We can be strong leaders, as we allow him to lead us, as we submit to his authority ourselves, as we ask him to renew a right spirit within us, as we humble ourselves, admit our faults, pray for his correction, cleansing and infilling, as we submit to one another in the fear of God, as we serve those among whom we have leadership responsibility, instead of lording it over them. Let us in true humility take the washbowl and towel. We must be prepared for God's healing work in our lives lest the flock of God is left in the wilderness.

Further reading

R. E. O. WHITE   *A guide to pastoral care*
Pickering & Inglis
A. W. TOZER   *That incredible Christian*
S.T.L.
J. OSWALD SANDERS   *Spiritual leadership*
Lakeland

JOHN BOYES

Corporate Leadership in the Oversight

This contribution deals with some neglected aspects of leadership skills which are called for — or have to be acquired — in the behaviour of elders as fellow-workers and supportive colleagues in oversight.

The conventional wisdom about the meaning of leadership is taken from secular and sacred history — the larger-than-life, charismatic leader who towers above his contemporaries, enjoys great personal renown and leads in the grand style. This 'great man' theory of leadership with little acknowledgement of followership has undoubtedly obscured our recognition of other graces of relationship. Our Lord himself, as he struggled with the ineptitudes of his own disciples as they argued about preferment, warns us:

> ". . you know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant . . ." (Mark 10:42, 43 NIV)

> ". . the kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves . ." (Luke 22:25, 26 NIV)

The Apostle Peter counsels his fellow elders:

> ". . not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock . ." (1 Peter 5:3, 4 NIV)

The whole tenor of scripture teaching regarding leadership in the Body of Christ is opposed to any practice of tyranny, despotism, power seeking, gratifying prestige or any imposition contrary to the mind of Christ. Yet, the facts are that, in the short history of our own movement of churches, these unhappy marks have been only too evident over the years. What then goes wrong? Do we acquire or choose unsuitable candidates for leadership responsibility, despite their public gifts?

We are committed from scripture principles — now being rediscovered in many places — to a pattern of pluralistic leadership of equals before God, holding together and guiding the local Body of Christ as the organs authorised by the Holy Spirit so to undertake ". . for the edifying of the body" (Eph. 4:12). It is the overseeing group which is 'multi-gifted' for this purpose collectively and not the separate individuals. We have often lost sight of this corporate function in the midst of the personal gifts for the ministry also bestowed on its members, and on others not in oversight.

The working out of these collaborative gifts comes to the present-day local church not in the form of an O.T. patriarchate nor, even, a N.T. apostolate nor, least of all, as an institutional hierarchy, inherited and tolerated by many today. Our privilege and opportunity — indeed there is little else left for us distinctively in church governance — is to demonstrate the effective operation of shared authority in our fellowships. For this, we need to learn, or recognise again, new skills of leadership not always apparent amongst us.

New words and ways in leadership

In his recent book on 'Morale', John W. Gardner argues that leaders have always been generalists; that is, they have been exposed to experiences that broaden their horizons, lift them out of their specialities and introduce them to other worlds and other views. This calls for temperamental qualities which are not universally endowed — our Lord's disciples and the apostolic band showed ample signs of difference between them in these respects. The mere bringing together of capable individuals does not inevitably produce an effective working group. Much unlearning and divesting of behaviours is often needed to allow the members to grow together into maturity.

For instance, the very words which we sometimes use to describe leadership behaviour reveal our underlying assumptions and attitudes towards followers. Directing, commanding and instructing modes may well have a place in limited situations calling for decision in crisis, but if these become regular patterns of behaviour, then we belong to the 'authoritarian' end of the leadership spectrum. We are given to 'telling' others what it is they have to do and 'selling' ideas to be adopted by them as their own.

There are other options of leadership style which the elder must consider and acquire if he can. His experience of work in other settings and his lifestyle background may prove hazardous to any likelihood of change to more appropriate models of behaviour for Christian leadership. For example, admiration for the 'cut and dried' regime of military leadership by those who derive comfort and security in being told what to do has certainly stunted growth into Christian maturity and the corresponding civilian model of bureaucracy imposes great limitations on the body-life of the church. Likewise, problems imported into oversights by 'captains of industry', 'board directors' and other professionally trained elders make life difficult for the others. In these work situations, many have learned not to "esteem others better than themselves" and will find tribulation in acquiring ease in a 'team-centred' leadership group. We have all to learn that 'authority' is God-given but people-recognised; it cannot be imposed as in the secular models, but acceptance comes as we learn to mediate the leader role in grace and love.

The needed approach is to cultivate a shift from the 'authoritarian' end of leadership style towards the 'consultative' and 'participative' end. That is to say, we involve others and share in decision making with them. Only in this way will we get commitment and 'owning' of policy decision. The vocabulary of behaviour also changes with the move from aggressive instructing words towards enabling and facilitating words. We speak about helping, caring, guiding, counselling — the true concerns of the overseer *(episkopos)* who leads but does not drive his flock. Indeed, in the descriptive passages (1 Tim. 3 and Tit. 1) of the 'good office' of a bishop, the apostle includes many qualities which make this case. He speaks of the overseer as one who is ". . temperate . . prudent . . uncontentious . . not self-willed . . not quick-tempered . . just . ." and so identifies a pattern of behaviour which is not very evident in our secular models of leadership.

There are many other desirable traits to be sought after in the character of the elder. He must be a 'harmoniser' bringing others together in exploring their differences and in seeking reconciliation. He has to learn how to compromise effectively, yielding status in conflict situations in interests wider than his own. On the other hand, he has to resist the temptation to want his own way by trying to dominate his colleagues or manipulate those less resistant to his will. Alternatively, he may 'withdraw' from the discomforts of participative sharing with others and so deprive the oversight of his contribution. Many have problems of *identity,* that is, "Who am I in this role and who are they?" and of *control,* that is, "What can I get away with in this situation and is that enough for my needs?" These issues, amongst others, reveal a confusion between individual and group goals which only the Lord's 'light yoke' of learning will solve.

Becoming members one of another

Learning to grow together as an effective working group has occupied the research studies of many bodies concerned with interpersonal skills in the management of all kinds of organisations. But the oversight of a local church is a uniquely prototypic group not to be found outside of its scriptural definition as a body of elders responsible to one Head who is present in the spirit and whose guidance is sought by prayer and supplication. This arrangement of relationships is, understandably, not usually recognised in secular studies; nevertheless, we can learn much from the insights available to us from many sources and be thankful for them in the Lord's provision for our growth in grace.

The oversight should be a good example of successful *team* behaviour, that is, the members are supportive and complementary to each other and not in competition. To achieve effectiveness in this way, a mature group will demonstrate the following characteristics, amongst others:

    (i)   a clear understanding and mutual agreement on its primary and secondary tasks, and how to achieve them;

    (ii)   an openness of communication between the members, in which all the necessary facts, ideas and feelings are 'put on the table', so that each can freely 'level' with one another in the Lord's work;

    (iii) a high development of mutual personal confidence between the members so that sharing without danger and disadvantage can become possible in an 'authentic' and 'valid' relationship;

    (iv) a tolerance of a wide range of individual behaviour which makes effective use of all member resources without individual domination;

    (v)   a working towards consensus decision without creating imposed, minority-crushing processes;

    (vi) a capacity to review and modify its behaviour objectively to meet changing circumstances.

These criteria are not easy to realise and create discomfort for many oversights who have allowed themselves no renewal or transfusion to revive their activities over the years. There is often an agreed complacency to 'leave things as they are', to suppress dissent and to ignore danger signs in their work. This syndrome has been called *'groupthink'* and manifests itself in a series of major symptoms which we may well recognise:

    (i)   an illusion of invulnerability, that, as we hold the truth, albeit in earthen vessels, our decisions will be secure;

    (ii)   discounting warnings and ignoring needs for re-consideration of past and present policy;

    (iii) pressures against any member who expresses strong arguments against the group stereotypes — e.g. "we have always done it this way" — implying disloyalty to the leadership;

    (iv) individual's self-censorship of his doubts, misgivings or counter-arguments, minimising these against the apparent group consensus — e.g. "well, maybe they are right after all";

    (v)   shared illusion of unanimity about the majority view on decision; does silence mean consent?

    (vi) emergence of self-appointed mindguards who 'protect' a group against adverse information which might shatter its complacency — e.g. "Mr. X might not like us to do that".

A number of practical measures to offset the 'groupthink' tendencies of close-knit groups have been proposed and can usefully be employed in building the oversight team:

    (a) seeking for a genuine, non-directive leadership with open value judgements, avoiding steering decisions towards a chairman's favoured views;

(b) passing the role of group leader as 'navigator' around the members and providing a 'critical evaluator' or 'devil's advocate' to stimulate the examination of assumptions and to encourage constructive criticism;

(c) dividing into two or more groups, separately working on the same topic, reducing the promotional effect of one elder's 'hobby horse';

(d) inviting one or more qualified colleagues to sit in on discussions from time to time and to challenge the 'in-group' opinions and assumptions;

(e) holding 'second chance' meetings on important issues to reconsider major decisions, thus avoiding premature enthusiasm taking over from more sufficient corporate judgement.

These processes replace conformity pressures, 'win-at-all-cost' attitudes, individual eccentricities, poor implementation of decisions and many other negative outcomes of bad group strategies. The 'leader' cannot create these relationships by himself; they are a function of group development. But an oversight which makes good decisions, innovates successfully and carries out its plans effectively is worth a great deal of time and energy investment in its growth. Defensive and protective behaviour is minimised and only significant differences need to be worked through. Control processes of superiorities, ego-defences, 'checks and balances' become unnecessary. True delegation and accountability will grow in the Lord's service.

"Fitly framed together"

The organisational structure of the local church as part of the Body of Christ also needs corporate study. Once again, the conventional model of an enterprise represented as a 'genealogical tree' or as a 'pyramid' with their hierarchical levels of command and direction does not do justice to the 'body-life' of a fellowship of believers. These are *'mechanistic'* approaches to organisation needs and, even in the large bureaucracies which are the main exponents of this form, the model fails to represent the true state of affairs between the members. It denies the interpersonal nature of living organisations which our churches must certainly seek to be.

We look for a structure which will meet the needs of all the body-members to offer worship and service in fellowship together. This calls for the effective involvement of everyone in an integrated pattern of activity and support ". . fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies according to the proper working of each individual part . ." (Eph. 4:16). Any representation of this 'body' model is bound to be *'organismic'* in nature and cellular in structure, with the Lord in the centre with whom all members are in touch, so that the metabolism of the whole body remains healthy, growing and effective in moving towards the stature of its Head.

In the midst of this life activity is the oversight with its unmistakable responsibilities for the innovation of activities, for setting up linked work groups and being wholly in touch with the members and their aspirations. They are not on top, like some Olympian pantheon, nor yet on the periphery, with only marginal awareness of the reality of church life, but right in the middle of all the action which it is their concern to encourage and guide in loving service to the members of the local body. Their corporate skills will be tested in creating an effective structure which will meet today's needs in our churches. For instance, a system of *communication* which works will be a priority — how do members learn of their leadership's plans? Do they ever see the oversight minutes or read a bulletin of information for discussion? How well organised are church members into their own work groups and are they given adequate resources to discharge their tasks? Do they know what and who are in other projects? These are some of the earlier issues involved in letting others know what they are entitled to learn in our fellowships. And what of *decision-making*? Who makes decisions in the chuch and at what levels? Do the elders know how to *delegate* authority and responsibility correctly to other church members — and then leave them alone to get on with it? These processes occupy a vast amount of research and practice in the secular world and it would seem that in these skills ". . the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light" (Luke 18:8) in application. Whereas most of us are accustomed to making up our minds on an individual basis, the oversight has to learn how to take decisions collectively and to 'own' their judgements as a body. This is new ground for many elders and suitable training and preparation for this shared pattern of behaviour for those, both in office and in prospect, is a ministry which is badly undertaken at present. We look to the day when some requirement of corporate management skill will be a ground of choice for office and we would encourage Bible college study organisers to include substantial amounts of training in these aspects, even at the expense of some of the traditional subject matter. Otherwise, there is little testing of a young person's leadership insights and capacities, no matter how useful a teacher and preacher he may turn out to be.

New Wineskins for Church Leadership

In his book *New wineskins*, Howard Snyder adds as his sub-title "changing the man-made structures of the Church" and he goes on to show how so much of our assumed activity stems from artefacts of the past, born of a more limited outlook and of little further value to the church's life and work — ". . no one puts new wine into old wineskins, for the new wine bursts the old skins, ruining the skins and spilling the wine. New wine must be put into new wineskins" (Luke 5:37-38 Living Bible). If we are to contain and succour the new people and things of the

spirit, then we will respond to the challenge of unlearning and relearning many collegiate skills — planning objectives, setting targets, organising action and measuring results — we shall constantly be seeking out men and women of talent who can respond to the Spirit's call in new ways, yet ". . we have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us" (2 Cor. 4:7).

Further reading

C.B.R.F. Journal No. 14   *A Settled Ministry*
January 1967
L. CUNDY (Ed.) 1977   *Obeying Christ in a Changing*
Collins   *World: 2: The People of God*
H. L. ELLISON 1964, 1979²   *The Household Church*
Paternoster
G. A. GETZ 1974   *Sharpening the Focus of the*
Moody Press: Chicago   *Church*
C. B. HANDY 1976   *Understanding Organisations*
Penguin
M. HARPER 1977   *Let my People Grow*
Hodder & Stoughton
HIGH LEIGH CONFERENCE 1955   *A New Testament Church*
K. K. KILINSKI & J. C. WOFFORD *Organisation and Leadership*
1973 Zondervan: Grand Rapids   *in the Local Church*
D. MCGREGOR 1967   *The Professional Manager*
McGraw Hill
E. H. SCHEIN 1969   *Process Consultation: its role in*
Addison-Wesley: Mass.   *organisation development*
H. A. SNYDER 1978   *New Wineskins: changing the man-*
Marshall, Morgan & Scott   *made structures of the church*
R. C. STEDMAN 1977   *Body Life: the church comes alive*
Regal: Glendale
D. WATSON 1978   *I believe in the Church*
Hodder & Stoughton
J. WILLIAMS 1975   *Living Churches*
Paternoster

ARTHUR HENDERSON

Learning the Skills of Leadership

Provision

At a discussion during a missionary conference dealing with contemporary problems of missionaries, a point was strongly made that in most countries of the world the expatriate missionary must encourage indigenous Christians to take responsibility for overseeing the life of the churches in the place of the missionary who has been accustomed to leading in practically all aspects of church life over many years. While that change of role was difficult enough for those who began to lead instead of to follow with the experienced missionary still around, the change of role for the missionary was even more difficult — to make useful contributions without intervening in the many aspects of the work and fellowship for which he had long felt responsible and which he had nurtured over many years. Whereas many expatriate business managers may simply be posted elsewhere when their national successors take over, the missionary may rightly feel the church and especially the new leaders need his continued support and service.

The veteran missionary who introduced the problem was asked if training would help missionaries, as it helps many others, to make one of the most difficult adjustments in human relationships, from being controller of a developing organisation to responding to others' directives and tendering advice only when sought. The answer given was that the Holy Spirit would give the needed grace. While it is wonderfully true that the servant of Christ often learns from his experience lessons about relationships more deeply and satisfactorily than those who do not hold Christian values, e.g. in regard to humility and loving service, was this a sufficient answer to a general problem acknowledged by the missionaries who had worked in other countries? Some may not need a school to teach them, but they are ready to learn from reading and observation and comments of respected friends. If there are ways of thinking about and doing these tasks which can be described, assessed, and communicated, why should they not be learnt from others? This should in no way limit their amazement at the mysterious way in which the Spirit works through their circumstances and in their souls to bring home to them the need and opportunity for these tasks. Among those who might be used to help are those with knowledge and experience of training in human relations.

Content

If it is accepted that training can help to discover and to develop a gift of

leadership, how is it to be done? First, it should be recognised that training which enhances understanding and skill in any function places the trainee in a good position to take leads in that function. So any training programme directed towards the appreciation of some aspect of church life and its active application is preparing him for leadership. If young Christians in the more affluent societies interrupt their secular studies or careers by a year or two at Bible colleges or if Christians in developing countries leave their farms for a few weeks of study or evangelistic activity, they should be more able and ready to serve their churches when they return. If the training is not too narrowly conceived around one aspect of Christian life and thought nor divorced from other aspects, and if it has not supplanted the trainee's dependence on God for guidance, the process of learning will have benefits whatever functions he subsequently undertakes in the church.

It is this kind of expertise which several missionary societies and other groups are offering under the heading of 'leadership training'. While they may be meeting the most urgent needs of the individuals and churches which they serve, this heading is misleading for whatever contribution is made to leadership is indirect. What they are doing is helping church members to be more effective in selected functions — as members rather than leaders, though they may select the most influential or the most promising in each church for this training. Whatever the concern of the church member — to evangelise children, to visit the sick, or to counsel married couples or those intending to marry — he (or she) can be helped to understand what is involved and how he might proceed and to develop strategies and skills to work effectively as well as heartily unto the Lord. Every member should be contributing to the work and fellowship of the church in some function, for every member has some spiritual and natural gifts and every member can be helped to improve his contribution. The whole church should be a learning community but not afraid to use or endorse outside help and opportunities where these are available.

Training — or simply providing opportunities and encouragement to learn — may not only enhance understanding and skill of some functions but may also help to confirm — or cast a doubt — that there is a spiritual gift for selected kinds of ministry. Gifts — natural and spiritual — are not easily identified until they have been practised for some time. First attempts at teaching, preaching, or counselling, for instance, are often seen to be failures and the beginners must often go through traumatic experiences before they gain much confidence in tackling their tasks.

How can we identify gift in ourselves or others? If we drew up a questionnaire asking questions about each of the gifts listed in the New Testament, and if we tried to check with ticks and crosses those gifts which we respectively have or have not, we all would have some difficulties in deciding how to mark our answers and some would be able to

put ticks where once they would have placed crosses. And if we had to label each gift as natural or spiritual we might find the task even harder. How often is spiritual gift anything more than a latent natural gift which is drawn out and developed by the Spirit? Certainly the elements of many named gifts are to be found among unbelievers though they may not be devoted to the same purposes or marked with the same graciousness. The recognition of spiritual gift does not usually come as a blinding flash either to the gifted or to those who invite them to teach a class of children or to preach the gospel or to speak in a newly acquired language. It usually means a growing interest, an awareness of need, painstaking work, and some painful or embarrassing experiences. Some never discover the gift because the risk of trying is too great and no encouragement or support is given. Others recognise a gift from God and are thankful for it but their apparent self-confidence seems to preclude any help from others. Much gift may remain dormant or underdeveloped unless the assembly offers discerning help — challenge to try and support to persevere.

While much gift is stimulated by those who share a local spiritual fellowship, for further development we may have to turn to outsiders who are similarly exercised or who have experience either with the particular gift which needs development or in helping others to acquire insights and skills. The sympathetic understanding of believers may encourage the acquisition of a foreign language, for example, but more practical help must come from experts or native speakers who may be unbelievers. Linguistic gift or any other should not be weakened but enhanced by good training or personal development programmes.

Now let us turn back from training in general to training in leadership. For this it is not sufficient to improve functional insights and skills, i.e. those directed to the tasks of the church, but there must be also a development of understanding of people and skill in dealing with them. This is needed for good following as well as good leading. Help is offered, for instance, to the young people from over thirty nations who must work together on the Operation Mobilisation ships. Though offered primarily to deal with current problems, it must have a very valuable contribution to make to their future work where they will have opportunities for leading.

There is a great danger in giving training in various useful functions and techniques and calling it leadership training without dealing adequately with human relationships, including insights into the trainee's own feelings and behaviour. In groups outside the church it is frequently found that the very knowledge of, and competence in, functional tasks blinds would-be leaders to their failures in human relations, either because they fail to diagnose the situation, especially feelings towards the task, the organisation, or the claimant to authority, or because they fail to maintain the goodwill and confidence of others in their leadership. In

the church we may reasonably expect love to overcome many of these common difficulties but it does not remove them. To deny them or ignore them is to perpetuate them and so to make difficulties for the future. For example, if my concern for others leads me to take a patronising approach towards them and I never realise that they feel humiliated as a consequence, I may continue in this attitude not only towards those who humbly accept my behaviour but also towards others whom it provokes to resentment. To allow me to remain unaware of others' perception of this approach would be to discourage others from taking leads. What I need is not only some understanding of how people in general relate, but more especially an awareness of my own self in relation to particular people around me and an ability to work constructively and continuously with them in building better ongoing relationships. Perhaps more than in any other form of training, the learner is laying himself on the line, risking both his reputation and his self-esteem, but the intrinsic satisfaction and the extrinsic achievement can compensate overwhelmingly for the pain.

Methods

How can this understanding of people and this skill in dealing with others be developed? First, we should recognise that many people become wiser and abler in this area without embracing the Christian faith. Nevertheless it is reasonable to expect Christians who attempt to develop their interpersonal competence to learn more readily than others because they start with a genuine concern for their fellows and a realistic assessment of human nature as having high potential but low tendencies. This expectation is not always met because Christians may be more concerned to maintain their religious reputations and self-confidence than to risk a more open style of relating to others, even in training experiments. The characterisation of religious people in fiction and satirical humour as rigid and uptight is not without justification; they have, of course, more concern to defend dogma and to uphold morals than others and fear being caught out and dragged down by providers of human relations training who hold humanist values or tolerate a looser morality. There is surely a middle way between the uptightness which denies the complexity of human interchange and the licence which denies moral responsibility.

Some Christians may gain by training with others who do not share their faith, though the clash of values and behavioural standards may be greater in this area than in other areas of training because it is concerned with human nature, morality, and motivation — not someone else's but their own. Nevertheless the clash can be constructive and permit a declaration and strengthening of Christian values in the encounter. Other Christians, however, may learn more profitably by meeting together,

even as members of the same church. Though 'family groups' of trainees, drawn from and returning to the same background situation, have greater fears of offending one another, they find it easier to transfer learning to daily practice because they have been through the same training experience together and are constantly reminded of it by one another's presence. On the other hand 'stranger groups', drawn from different, if similar, background situations are separated from one another after training, though they may keep in touch to give one another support in their respective spheres; but, while their training is more difficult to apply, they are usually willing to take more risks and so learn deeper lessons.

Just as one cannot learn to live a holy life simply by listening to others and reading what they have written (despite the revolutionary impact of such devotional works as open the mind and heart to the Spirit), so one cannot learn to be effective in reaching one's objectives through dealings with others from lectures or handouts. That does not mean that information and viewpoints are not helpful in relationship training, but it does mean that they are not sufficient. Their usefulness depends on how the listener or reader has been prepared to receive what is spoken or written. He comes to training with patterns of thought, opinion, and prejudice developed from his own experiences and hearsay. Many of his ideas have been picked up from the media in a selective, often distorted, fashion, so his assessment of the lecture or handout may be radically different from those made by other listeners or readers. Much of the information about human relations is therefore best left until after other training experiences have developed an interest in receiving it, i.e. until he has ears to hear.

There is still a widespread assumption that adults learn chiefly by listening to lengthy explanations and harangues. Many students have already been conditioned to accept this method when they arrive at college from school and resent any challenge to think for themselves. This attitude is reinforced if they discover that their graduation with an entrance ticket to other social groups is dependent not on understanding but on learning the terminology and tales of the examiner. Many others, however, find attendance at lectures is so boring that they either treat it as a ritual to be endured in order to secure their prized ticket or absent themselves as much as possible in order to turn to other occupations, including more rewarding ways of learning.

Yet, as this chapter is being written, a mature entrant to one of the fighting forces, in describing an officer training course, spoke of the boring, often irrelevant, presentations made by one-way communication after an exciting five-day pioneering exercise in which the trainees themselves had organised an expedition to an isolated retreat. With this widespread deference to the lecture in our educational and training system, it is then not such a matter of astonishment that brochures advertising

Christian leadership training seem to give this method prominence. Perhaps if they did not do so, no trainees would be forthcoming. If those who feel a need for training believe that lectures — or sermons — develop people, then this is an easy low-risk method of being developed. In other walks of life where the propagandist does not have a captive or captivated audience, he has almost abandoned the long speech. Only when the politician, for instance, addresses his supporters or an interested informed public can he now talk at length, for otherwise the panel chairman or the listener will cut him off.

In the field of human relationships as distinct from learning other aspects or forms of ministry there is very limited use for the lecture or for a paper such as this — perhaps initially to demonstrate what it is possible to learn and then to whet the appetite for exploration by other means. Essential is an exercise or interchange which will expose characteristics of perception, belief, and behaviour for examination by the trainees themselves, giving them opportunity to assess what kind of information they want and to experiment with changes.

One feature of learning methods which is critical in leadership training is the extent to which trainees are given or permitted to take responsibility for the learning, including control of the learning situation. At one end of the responsibility continuum is the lecture presented to an unseen or unresponsive audience which might be willing to attend or to switch on, and at the other there is the project devised and undertaken by trainees themselves with a trainer or other resource personnel available on appointment. In between we can place questions to the lecturer, discussion on general or theoretical issues, discussions of specific cases, role-play where the trainees enter into other people's situations, exercises involving interaction or self-examination, guided projects requiring practical applications to specific problems, and self-examination or group examination of the trainees' own behaviour and feelings. The precise order in which we place these methods on the continuum of participation and control depends on how they are used and the interpersonal style developed between trainer and trainees over time, for openness of communication is not to be measured by the number of words each party speaks to the other, but rather by the feeling that whatever is said or indicated will be accepted and respected. Some openness of style is required as trainers move along the continuum to share more responsibility and control with the trainees, because usually the issues to be faced become more specific and more personal. This the trainee finds challenging — sometimes daunting, when the risk of pain seems to outweigh the prospect of exciting discovery — and he needs to feel as a rule that some support is available from other trainees or his trainer operating, as it were, a dual driving system or at least a safety net. Because leading involves risk — that judgements of what is required and how others will respond are sound — and because the leader stands alone, the trainee

m ist learn to accept responsibility and to take control with little support. For this reason the training methods are as important as the training content: the medium is the message.

Setting

There has in recent years been a developing interest in on-the-job training for adults after an earlier upsurge in separated training centres and country residences. Going away from the situation in which one has been living and working has advantages — easier organisation for a large group, specialist help, emotional detachment from the familiar situation, intense involvement in learning, interchange with other learners, and a controlled environment providing both challenge and support. But, as with astronauts, the looser the ties with the old situation, the greater is the re-entry problem. Application of the new learning — whether concepts, insights, awareness, or skills — to the old situation is difficult because it is very different from the experience of training and there are few people around who have sufficient understanding of what the learning experience was. Instead of giving the needed support, those who have stayed in the old situation will often feel threatened by perceived or imagined changes in the returning trainee. Even more than in the detached training setting the trainee needs challenge and support during the process of applying his learning, if it is to have any permanent impact. Few practitioners have sufficient resources in themselves to develop to their full potential, though in the church we have evidence of work within us which exceeds our requests and even our imagination (Eph. 3:20). God brings both the challenge and the support we need for development — in love and in leadership — but we should not be surprised if he gives them through human agency, particularly through fellow believers.

Such support is especially needed, at hand if not always in use, when practical training reaches a stage where learning is inseparable from the performance of a needed task. If learning is the primary objective, the task is called a 'project', whereas if achievement is the primary objective, the learning is labelled 'on-the-job'. In both cases there is a need for a de-briefing during or after the task to recall the experience and to clarify the learning. This can be done by writing a private diary, but for most this is not as effective as talking or writing to an adviser, an interviewer, or an official listener or correspondent, for learning is usually a social process. The helper does not need to be more experienced or have greater know-ledge or higher status than the learner: he just needs sympathy or empathy and the desire to understand. It is even more encouraging if the learner and helper can at times reverse roles, that is in an elementary way to be co-counsellors. Those who take time to develop relationships of this kind with a brother or a sister find it very rewarding and stimulating.

Moreover it can enrich the whole of the fellowship of a church, for it is truly a carrying of each other's burdens (Gal. 6:2). The process of helping one another to learn should not stop when a recognised training programme has formally ended. We need continuous help in learning when and how to lead and when and how to follow. The church should be a learning community: this is a very important aspect of continuing in fellowship (Act 2:42).

Further reading

J. ADAIR 1968/74   *Training for leadership*
Macdonald & Jane's
C. L. COOPER (Ed) 1976   *Developing social skills in*
Macmillan   *managers*
F. E. FIEDLER 1976   *Improving leadership effectiveness:*
Wiley   *the leader match concept*
N. RACKHAM, P. HONEY &   *Developing interactive skills*
P. COLBERT
Wellens Publishing
W. J. REDDIN &   *Effective situational diagnosis*
R. STUART-KOTZE 1974
Organizational Effectiveness Ltd
C. R. ROGERS 1973   *Encounter groups*
Penguin
B. TAYLOR & G. L. LIPPITT 1975   *Management development and*
McGraw-Hill   *training handbook*

Appendix

Case studies on leadership

The three cases and questions which follow were prepared for small group study at the one-day seminar on *Leadership in the churches* held at the London Bible College on 21st October 1978. The discussions followed the presentation of Brian Mills' paper and preceded John Boyes' paper and a panel discussion of general issues. Other cases dealt with the problems of individual church members which required pastoral care and counsel. Through discussion participants of the seminar were encouraged to identify the issues which their individual experiences and studies had shown to be significant and to re-examine their own values and priorities in the light of viewpoints which differed from theirs to greater or lesser extent in concept or expression. In this way, it was hoped, the challenge to abstract thought presented in the papers would be complemented by a challenge to attitudes and actions.

(1) Frustrated leadership
(2) 'What mean ye by this service . . .?'
(3) Evangelism and growth

(1) Frustrated leadership

Fred Smith, youngest son of the leading elder in Bankside assembly, professed faith in Christ in the Sunday School, was baptised and came into fellowship at the age of twelve. A somewhat shy teenager, he nevertheless made occasional contributions to open worship, was a regular attender at all the meetings, and taught a Sunday school class. It was in the youth club and summer camps that he was in his element. He proceeded from school to the Linden Bible College where he studied for three years, gaining a degree in theology and developing a promising preaching gift. His pastoral concern for his fellow students was outstanding. While at college, Fred felt a call to devote himself full time to some form of Christian ministry, but became disillusioned with the concept of itinerant ministry, partly because he became engaged to a fellow student, but partly because he doubted its effectiveness. Returning to his home church, he shared his concern with the elders (who had never initiated any discussion of his spiritual development and who had not received training themselves). Fred felt that his approach was not treated seriously, though he was presented with the following reasons why his ministry would not be acceptable on a full-time basis:

(a) It is not scriptural for a man's ministry to be exercised exclusively in one church.

(b) The church could not afford to support him, since it had a re-building scheme on hand which still required £10,000.

(c) The elders ensured that the platform was occupied, and were quite capable of caring for the spiritual needs of church members.

(d) An evangelistic campaign, planned for next year, would absorb all their energies.

(e) In any case, he was too young and inexperienced.

Fred got a temporary job, married and started a family, joined an independent church, and three years later took up the pastorate of a church where his ministry was highly successful.

Questions to discuss

1. Is every form of full-time ministry in a local church ruled out by scripture? If not, what are its advantages and disadvantages?
2. How valid are reasons (b)-(d) put forward by the elders?
3. At what stage is a man (or woman) ready to assume leadership roles?
4. Can you detect other reasons why the elders were unsympathetic to Fred?
5. What ways can you suggest whereby Fred's gifts could have been utilised in Bankside assembly (i) if it were the only assembly in the area? (ii) if there were other assemblies nearby?

(2) "What mean ye by this service . . .?"

The Brethren assembly in Hopeville, a small home counties town, was established some seventy years ago mainly as a protest by a group of evangelical believers who found it difficult to 'hear the gospel pro-claimed' in the contemporary churches of those days. They had not gathered especially under the 'church principles' followed by most fellowships of Brethren persuasion but soon adopted a system of open worship and shared leadership, which suited their inclinations and their 'sense of release' from the historical institutions of churchmanship avail-able to them.

Since then, this local body has grown apace, if not spectacularly, largely by the accession of family members into the fellowship and, to a more limited extent, by the gathering in of souls converted to a new life in Christ. They have continued to be faithful to God's Word as they have understood it and have regularly and consistently provided the service and activities conventionally undertaken in a witness and a fellowship of believers.

Despite this faithfulness and stable responsibility towards the tasks of a local church, there has been only a modest sense of 'success' and growth in this pattern of life. As the years have rolled by into the present

and the generations have changed — but replaced by very similarly minded people — the impetus has imperceptibly decreased into the present static condition.

Moreover, the original grounds of establishment for a separate testimony, i.e. the need for a witness faithful to the gospel and the scriptures, no longer obtains in this town. God has sent His servants, true believers and biblically sound, to minister to other congregations of local churches, amongst whom there has always been a handful of faithful Christians. Furthermore, the Lord has manifestly blessed some of these churches by his Spirit, in their growth, renewal and enthusiasm for the word of God. Indeed, they have now markedly surpassed the assembly in their outreach and attractiveness to unbelievers, and in the warmth of their fellowship in which God 'adds daily to the church'.

The assembly is warmly invited to share in their evangelism and fellowship. The Brethren believers are welcomed for their reputation as Bible students, bringing a certain sobriety and *gravitas* to the enthusiasm of others! Some of the assembly folk spend time attending special services, house groups, societies, etc. associated with these causes. Indeed, a number of the young folk have succumbed and now take part in other youth fellowships as a regular thing.

Some believers have wondered about a merger with other evangelical Christians, others are embedded in 'church principles' and cannot move, but all are concerned about the viable future of their assembly.

Questions to discuss

1. What has gone wrong with the leadership of this assembly over the years?
2. If a merger is considered, what essential condition of testimony would you wish to preserve?
3. What kind of assembly life, if any, do you wish to lead into the 21st century?

(3) Evangelism and growth

An assembly in a Victorian suburban area of a large city has known better days. When it was built, it regularly had congregations of over five hundred people and was a community church, in that it drew its congregation mainly from the immediate neighbourhood. But times have changed, and so has the area. A large influx of immigrants of West Indian, Indian and Pakistani origin has brought changes to every social service in the area, and to the church. The cost of housing has been a deterrent to younger people settling in the area, and in any case the older-type housing and the fall of educational and living standards has hardly been an attractive proposition to those setting up home. So the church has declined considerably since the second world war. One person has

predicted that at the present rate of decline the assembly will have to close within twenty years. And yet it still seems, outwardly, reasonably healthy.

Its membership is over seventy in numbers, and mostly in age too. It has maintained an involved missionary interest both in overseas and home missions. Attempts have been made from time to time to reach out into the community, but the lack of immigrant membership within the church has made their task doubly difficult. They maintain a regular out-reach in three institutions in the area — a hospital and two old people's homes. They have a small Sunday school of over twenty in number, run mostly by retired people, but do not seem able to hold children once they reach teenage years, and can rarely get their parents to come. More than half the children are from immigrant families. A mid-week club is better attended, and more immigrant children come then, being unable to do so on Sundays.

The assembly membership includes one West Indian family, a middle-aged businessman and his family, most of whom find their fellowship more with other evangelical churches in the area where there are more young people, and a young married couple who feel at present that they should stay in the area out of a sense of loyalty to the fellowship where they grew up. Most of the remainder are of retirement age. Seventy-five per cent of the assembly do not live in the immediate area — they are scattered within a five-mile radius and some have to pass other assemblies or evangelical causes to get to the meetings.

Understandably the elders (all except one are of retirement age) are concerned to know what they should do. It has been suggested to them that they consider the following possibilities:

(a) As the membership is mostly of retired status, they should do more to contact other retired people in the locality, since that constitutes the majority of the white population.

(b) As few aged people are able to travel to mid-week meetings at the 'hall', they should consider organising area home meetings under the leadership of an elder for the purposes of fellowship, teaching and pastoral care.

(c) As there is such a need amongst the immigrant population, they should consider inviting a returning missionary from overseas to settle in their area and support him and his family to work full-time as from their assembly.

Questions to discuss

1. As an oversight, how would you respond to these suggestions?
2. Have you any alternative solution to suggest?
3. Is it worth attempting to do anything, or should the predicted inevitable be allowed to happen?