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Editorial

Church, Ministry and Mission Fields  
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# Church, Ministry and Mission Fields

By MAYNARD DOROW

The ministry is currently the focus of considerable attention on nearly all Christian fronts.<sup>1</sup> On the American scene this attention has been occasioned in part by the general shortage of clergy. More than this, however, questions are being raised concerning the role of the pastor and the relevance of the ministry as presently conceived for our industrial and urban society.

Similar questions are being agitated in many other parts of the world. Most of the non-Western churches are suffering an acute lack of qualified ministerial candidates. To meet the pressing need for adequate ministry, some Asian churches are experimenting with the use of "voluntary workers," lay Christians who have not had formal theological training, and ultimately such workers to the ministry of Word and sacraments.

Perhaps the most significant result of these trends is the impetus given to Biblical and historical studies of the ministry. These studies are making possible a critical reevaluation of the forms of ministry inherited from an earlier day and demonstrating that the Biblical emphasis on the

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. especially the survey reports of the International Missionary Council covering the training of the ministry in Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America. Continuing the work of the International Missionary Council since 1962, the Division of World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches is making ongoing studies through a "Standing Committee on the Ministry." Cf. also H. Richard Niebuhr and Daniel Day Williams, eds., *The Ministry in Historical Perspectives* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1956).

functional nature of ministry opens the way to flexibility in developing forms of ministry to meet present needs.

Our particular interest in this study is the development of the ministry on mission fields and in the so-called younger churches in the light of the New Testament. What is the New Testament concept of ministry? How shall we apply this concept in developing ministries on the mission frontiers today?

## I

### MINISTRY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

#### *Ministry and the Church*

Ministry in the New Testament always involves serving the purposes of the church. Hence we can never study ministry as an entity in itself but must study ministry in the context of the church.

The church is God's people called out from the world and set apart for God's service through the redeeming work of Jesus Christ. While "church" in the New Testament may refer to God's people in general, more typically it refers to the Christians in a locality (1 Cor. 1:1; Gal. 1:1). The tasks of the church can be described under the headings of edification and witness. The task of edification—the mutual sharing and upbuilding of Christians—devolves upon each Christian as a member of the body of Christ and is implemented by a variety of processes such as worship, conversation, family life, and business associations.

Witness, the other dimension of the church's task, concerns outreach into the

world. The term applies to the Christian's manifesting the faith and life begun in him through Christ. Hence it applies already to the work of edification, but in particular it refers to the winning of men for Christ as the Christian first recommends the Gospel by his life and then speaks it for his neighbor's hearing.

In order to carry out its mission of edification and witness, the church must use its basic resource, the Word of the Gospel, the message that Jesus Christ is Savior and Lord. Speaking this Gospel that it may edify the fellow believer and win the non-believer is the task of every Christian.

Since the church's tasks as described above are the work of ministry, it can be said that ministry belongs to the whole church. Every Christian is entrusted with the Gospel, which serves the purposes of edification and witness. The Christian is a minister of the Gospel to his neighbor. The relation of this ministry to ordained ministers will be brought out below.

#### *Ministry Originates with Christ*

Ministry in the New Testament gets its essential character directly from the person and work of Christ. As the word already implies, the basic feature of "ministry" is service. Although the New Testament has a variety of terms for the act of serving, the characteristic Greek word for "serving" is *διακονία*.<sup>2</sup> Christ is called *διάκονος* only in Rom. 15:8: "For I tell you that Christ became a servant (*διάκονος*) to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness. . . ."

<sup>2</sup> Cf. the opening paragraphs of the article by Hermann Wolfgang Beyer, "διακονέω, διακονία, διάκονος," *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, II (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1935), 81—93.

In Mark 10:45 and parallel passages Christ Himself speaks of His work as *διακονεῖν*: "For the Son of Man also came not to be served (*διακονηθῆναι*) but to serve (*διακονῆσαι*), and to give His life a ransom for many." It is significant that Christ applies "serving" to the giving of His life on the cross. It is not only the three years of His peripatetic ministry but particularly His redemptive death which He speaks of as *διακονεῖν* on behalf of men.<sup>3</sup> Thus Christ comes as Servant, gives Himself in life and death, and so sets the pattern for ministry.

Christ exhibits Himself as the Servant par excellence by fulfilling the role of the "Servant of the Lord." In the latter part of Isaiah there are four passages (42:1-4; 49:1-6; 50:4-9; 52:13—53:12) which are concerned with the "Servant of the Lord." In these so-called "Servant poems" the Servant fulfills His divine mission through suffering and dying for the sins of others and then is raised from death and exalted by God. While there is some disagreement among scholars concerning the original identification of the "Servant," there is no doubt that this Servant's role is ultimately fulfilled by Christ. In Matt. 12:18 the first of the Servant poems is quoted as a prophecy fulfilled in Jesus, and it is almost certainly with reference to this "Servant" that Jesus is called the "Servant (*παῖς*) of God" in Acts 3:13, 26; 4:27, 30. Elsewhere both explicitly and implicitly Jesus is identified with the Suffering Servant of Isaiah.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Cf. St. Paul's expressions, "the *διακονία* of the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:8) and "the *διακονία* of reconciliation." (2 Cor. 5:18)

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Matt. 8:17; 12:18 ff.; Mark 1:11; Luke 9:35; John 12:38; Rom. 4:25; 1 Peter 2:22-25; Rev. 5:6.

Also the use of the term apostle points to Christ as the source of the New Testament ministry. The word ἀπόστολος designates a man who is sent as ambassador; in content we have a parallel in the Hebrew מַלְאָכִים, who appears in postapostolic literature as one commissioned to represent and to exercise the rights of the sender. Christ Himself is called ἀπόστολος in Heb. 3:1. Hence when Christ appointed and sent out men as "apostles," He was commissioning them to continue His own mission (cf.: "As the Father has sent Me, even so I send you," John 20:21). The mission and ministry of the apostles, and so that of the church, has its origin in Christ.

There is hardly any description of ministry in the New Testament that is not applied to Christ. Above we have seen Him called "deacon," "servant," and "apostle." Elsewhere He is referred to as "slave" (Phil. 2:7), "teacher" (Matt. 23:8; John 13:13), "shepherd" (1 Peter 2:25; Heb. 13:20), and "bishop" (1 Peter 2:25). The prototype of all ministry is Jesus Christ.

This does not exhaust what the New Testament has to say concerning Christ as the originator of the church's ministry. It is perhaps enough to emphasize for us that ministry begins with God and His sending of Christ as Servant to carry out a ministry for men. Christ is both the source and the pattern of ministry.

#### *Ministry Is Service*

When Jesus characterized His own work as that of serving, He also made this the stamp of His followers. Greatness in the community of believers is to be measured in terms of willingness to serve (Matt. 20:

26-28 and parallels). The concept of service, or ministry (διακονία), has a wide range of application in the New Testament. As in classical Greek usage, it may refer to waiting on tables and similar service; for example, Martha serving Jesus (Luke 10:40) or the personal attention given St. Paul by Onesiphorus. (2 Tim. 1:18)

When we turn more specifically to the activity of the church, we again find διακονία used to describe a variety of "ministries." Christians can render διακονία to the church through charismatic gifts bestowed by the Holy Spirit (e.g., Rom. 12:6f.) as well as by sharing this world's goods with the poor (Acts 6:1). The great churchwide gathering of relief for the poor saints of Jerusalem was characterized by St. Paul simply as a διακονία. (Rom. 15:25; 2 Cor. 8; 9)

Διακονία becomes freighted with particular significance as the "ministry of the Word." St. Paul describes the proclamation of the Gospel as the διακονία of the Spirit and of righteousness (2 Cor. 3:8,9) and refers to his charge to preach it as a διακονία given him by God and Christ (2 Cor. 4:1; 1 Tim. 1:12). He has been entrusted with the διακονία of reconciliation, which is no less than the "Word of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5:18, 19). His apostleship is a διακονία (Rom. 11:13) and he himself a διάκονος of the church for the sake of proclaiming the Word (Col. 1:25), a "διάκονος of a new covenant." (2 Cor. 3:6)

These typical illustrations are enough to demonstrate that διακονία applies to the character and activity of Christians in their concerns for others. It describes every kind of service rendered on behalf of the church

and bears particular weight as the *διακονία* of the Word, or Gospel. Hendrik Kraemer says, "In the primitive Church every activity or function which contributed to the upbuilding of the Christian community was brought under the category of *διακονία*."<sup>5</sup>

*Ministry Is God's Gift*

For the sake of this ministry God gives gifts to the church. Often called charisms in the New Testament, these gifts enable Christians to give mutual service in the church. They are gifts of "prophecy," "service," "teaching," "exhortation," "contributing," "giving aid," "acts of mercy" (Rom. 12:6-8), and so forth. These are given to all for the "common good"; they are given in great variety but by "the same Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:4 ff.). They serve the worship of the congregation, the gift of speaking the Word being valued most highly. (1 Cor. 14)

But such gifts of ministry become so closely identified with the ministering believer that the minister himself is called a gift of God. Most noteworthy is the passage in Eph. 4, which is currently receiving much attention in studies in the ministry:

But grace was given to each of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. . . . And His gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, for the equipment of the saints, for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. (Eph. 4:7, 11-14)

<sup>5</sup> Hendrik Kraemer, *A Theology of the Laity* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1958), p. 139.

The focus of attention in this passage is directed to v. 12, which many believe states the purpose of these ministerial gifts: their function is to equip the saints for *their* work of ministry. The larger context of this passage gives strong support for this interpretation. St. Paul's primary concern in vv. 1-16 is the growth and development of the body of Christ "to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (v. 13). This comes about as each member, "speaking the truth in love," contributes toward the growth of the whole" (vv. 15, 16). To this end Paul begins by encouraging his readers to maintain the unity of the Spirit and then moves on to consider the gifts which the ascended Christ has given to each believer (v. 7) and the special gifts to some of them. (V. 11)

It will help to have the Greek text of v. 12 before us: *πρὸς τὸν καταρτισμὸν τῶν ἁγίων εἰς ἔργον διακονίας, εἰς οἰκοδομὴν τοῦ σώματος τοῦ χριστοῦ*. The punctuation in both the RSV and the KJV suggests that the three phrases are parallel and that therefore the gifts listed in v. 11 were given for three coordinate purposes: "for the equipment of the saints," "for the work of the ministry," and "for building up the body of Christ." In that case *διακονία* is carried on only or primarily by those with special gifts. We have seen above, however, that *διακονία* is essentially a function of serving which belongs to all Christians as well as to those especially appointed. The change of prepositions (from *εἰς* to *πρὸς*) may point in this direction but is not decisive. More conclusive is the stress in the whole passage on the activity of all the saints for the welfare of the whole body. Most commenta-

tors agree that here *διακονία* is the ministry of all the saints and that the minister gifts of v. 11 are to equip them for their work.

A passage somewhat parallel to Eph. 4 is found in 1 Cor. 12:27,28:

Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, then healers, helpers, administrators, speakers in various kinds of tongues.

The subject of discussion in this chapter is "spiritual gifts" (*πνευματικά*). The Corinthian Christians had apparently over-evaluated the gift of speaking in tongues, and Paul seeks to bring it into proper perspective. Again he points to the essential oneness of the "varieties of gifts" given by God and emphasizes that these are for the common good. The image of the body drawn out in detail in this chapter suggests that each member, and especially those with particular gifts appointed by God (v. 28), is to serve for the proper functioning of the whole body, in which even the "weaker" parts have an indispensable role. (V. 22)

Thus both these passages make clear that every Christian receives some gift for serving the church and that the particular functions of ministry enumerated are special gifts for serving the whole.

#### *Ministry Is a Function*

Our study of *διακονία* and the passages above point us toward the functional nature of ministry. It would seem that throughout the New Testament the emphasis in regard to ministry is on the function of service within the Christian com-

munity. In both the Ephesian and the Corinthian passages Paul is not concerned with a certain number of ecclesiastical offices exercised by so many separate officials but with functions of the body for its upbuilding.

To emphasize the functional nature of ministry is not to deny that apostles, prophets, etc., did serve in an official capacity. We have noted that Christ appointed apostles to carry on His mission, and throughout his epistles Paul makes it clear that he acted with authority as one called and sent by Christ. That it is God who gives the gift of these official ministers indicates that they are essential to the life of the church and not something the church can dispense with if it chooses.

By way of summary we recall that the church by its very nature calls for a ministry by each Christian in behalf of his brothers and also toward the world. As both the source and pattern of ministry, Christ sent His followers on the path of *διακονία*, a ministry of service in Word and in deed. The ascended Christ continues to provide gifts of ministers who serve the whole church by helping each Christian carry out his ministry. Thus ministry is not concerned primarily or solely with officeholders but with the functioning of God-given gifts for the upbuilding of the church.

For the service that God is getting done through ministers is precisely the service that God is getting done through all His Christians. The "work of the ministry" that Paul makes the target of the pastorate in Ephesians 4 is the ministry in which every Christian engages on behalf of the spiritual life and place of every fellow-Christian in the body of Christ. Martin Luther described the distinction of the pas-

tor among the laymen: "He is a layman who works for the other laymen." He is a minister to ministers.<sup>6</sup>

## II

### THE SACRED MINISTRY IN THE CONFESSIONS

The Lutheran Confessions reflect a doctrine of the sacred ministry in agreement with that of the New Testament, although the later historical setting produces a different emphasis. Like the New Testament, the Confessions have a functional approach to the ministry. They make it clear that the ministry is not determined primarily from the standpoint of the person but from that of the divine institution. And the purpose of this divinely appointed ministry is to serve the upbuilding of the church.

The dominant theme in regard to the sacred ministry in the Confessions is that it is an office of preaching the Gospel and administering the sacraments. Article V of the German Augsburg Confession reads: "To obtain such faith God instituted the office of the preaching ministry (*Predigtamt*), gave the Gospel and the sacraments" (AC V 1).<sup>7</sup> "Such faith" refers to the previous article, which speaks of the redeeming work of Christ through which

<sup>6</sup> Richard R. Caemmerer, "The Ministry Is Ministry," *The Seminarian*, L (May 1959), 33.

<sup>7</sup> Quotations from the Lutheran Confessions follow in general the modern English edition, *The Book of Concord*, edited and translated by Theodore G. Tappert in collaboration with Jaroslav Pelikan, Robert H. Fischer, and Arthur Carl Piepkorn (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1959). The confessional writings are abbreviated as follows: Augsburg Confession, AC; Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Ap; Treatise on the Power and the Primacy of the Pope, Tr. The quotations are referred to by Confession, article (where applicable), and paragraph.

we obtain forgiveness of sin and righteousness before God "by grace, for Christ's sake, through faith." It was "in order that we might obtain this faith," says the Latin version, "that the ministry of teaching the Gospel and administering the sacraments was instituted."

This ministry requires that men be called and sent as ministers of the Gospel. "The power of the keys or the power of bishops is a power and command of God to preach the Gospel, to forgive and retain sin (*Sünde*), and to administer and distribute the sacraments" (AC XXVIII 5). "This power belongs by divine right to all who preside over the churches, whether they are called pastors, presbyters, or bishops" (Tr 61). There is only one office of preaching the Gospel and administering the sacraments, though it may be exercised by various ranks among ministers.

A corollary of the Confessional premise that the sacred ministry is the office of preaching the Gospel is that this ministry derives its authority from the Word of God. We may give credence to bishops of the church because they speak "on the basis of another's Word rather than on the basis of their own" (Ap XXVIII 18). Thus "the Word and the sacraments are efficacious even when wicked men administer them." (Ap VII 19)

For they do not represent their own persons but the person of Christ, because of the church's call, as Christ testifies (Luke 10:16), "He who hears you hears me." When they offer the Word of Christ or the sacraments, they do so in Christ's place and stead. (Ap VII 28)

This not only emphasizes that the authority of the ministry rests on God's Word but also bears out its functional character.

Speaking of both civil and spiritual authority in the Confessions, Schlink writes that

the concept of office in the Confessions is a decidedly functional one. The office is not determined from the standpoint of the person but of the divine institution. The words and deeds performed in the office do not receive their quality from the person — for example, from the fact that this person is a member of Christ's kingdom — but only from the action of God, who in his offices too acts even through his enemies. The boundary for the divine action through the civil and the spiritual office is not man as such, but in every case it is the commission given by God with the office.<sup>8</sup>

The Confessions also reflect the New Testament in ascribing the institution of the ministry to Jesus' calling of the apostles. In commissioning the disciples with His own mission, Jesus established the fact that the power of the keys is entrusted not only to the apostles but to the church (Tr 68). As the holder of the power to administer the Gospel, the church retains the right to ordain ministers (Tr 67). Precisely for this reason the Confessional writers taught that "nobody should publicly teach or preach or administer the sacrament in the church without a regular call" (AC XIV). While the church exercises its commission to preach the Gospel through called ministers, the church does not thereby create the ministry or even merely transfer its collective right to certain individuals. Rather the church calls ministers to exercise a ministry which Christ instituted.

<sup>8</sup> Edmund Schlink, *Theology of the Lutheran Confessions*, trans. from the German by Paul F. Koehneke and Herbert J. A. Bouman (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1961), p. 235.

Finally, we may note that the Confessions do not make any form of the ministerial office binding for the church. They recognize the value of the church polity and ecclesiastical hierarchy as constituted at that time but maintain that the only divinely commissioned office, i. e., that of preaching the Gospel, belongs to whoever presides over the churches, regardless of their title (Tr 60 f.). Thus we see that the office of the ministry is primarily a commission to be exercised. In Schlink's words, "The ministry is not an independently existing institution but only a service to the Gospel."<sup>9</sup>

### III

#### THE MINISTRY ON MISSION FIELDS

##### *The Traditional Pattern*

How shall we apply the New Testament concept in forming or re-forming the ministry for today's churches? With this question in mind we sketch briefly the traditional method of developing the ministry on mission fields, examine some notable exceptions to the pattern, and then consider current trends and experiments.

The missionary himself was usually the church's first minister. As the churches grew, the missionary sought to multiply his ministry through the training of national Christians. In general he took the most gifted of his converts, trained them as evangelists, and sent them out as paid agents of the mission to preach and to supervise the new congregations.

Typical of this development was the work in India. In fact, the beginnings of this pattern may be traced to the work of the pioneer missionaries of the Tranquebar mission, Bartholemäus Ziegenbalg (1683

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 202.



to 1719) and Heinrich Plütschau (1677 to 1746), who followed such a course. The indigenous ministry was started in much the same way in China and in Africa. These evangelists and catechists have proved to be a hardy variety of minister, for even today they continue to serve by the thousands, providing the solid backbone of the ministry in much of India and Africa. As the churches developed and the need for ordained ministers was felt, the usual method was to select a number of the well-trying men from among the lay workers and to give them a certain amount of Biblical and pastoral training. They were then set to work under the guidance of the missionaries but in a strictly subordinate position.

Such ordinations, however, were slow in coming. The missionaries felt that candidates for the ordained ministry should approximate their own training before applying for ordination. At one point a controversy developed among India missionaries as to whether "it was wise to ordain men without English degrees or some equivalent form of ministerial training." This matter was resolved by a decision to ordain increasing numbers of lay workers; by 1851, however, there were only 23 national pastors associated with all Protestant societies in India, as against 493 catechists.<sup>10</sup> Also in Africa there were few nationals ordained to the ministry before the 19th century, and the earliest of these were ordained only after long residence and training in a European country.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Charles W. Ranson, *The Christian Minister in India: His Vocation and Training* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1946), pp. 43 ff.

<sup>11</sup> Stephen Neill, *Survey of the Training of the Ministry in Africa*, Part I (London: International Missionary Council, 1950), p. 9.

Ordinarily the first candidates for ordination were trained individually or in small groups by the missionary. Later the mission schools provided recruits from among the young men, and gradually a Bible school or theological college was formed.

In retrospect some weaknesses in this pattern become apparent. First we see that the work was too missionary-centered. The missionary trained the catechist and supported him, and he dutifully carried out the missionary's instructions. Too often the catechist who was later ordained retained the same servile attitude toward the missionary. The result was a certain stifling of the life of the church. The training of ordained ministers reflected the same outlook. It was assumed that ministers should be full-time paid workers who had received some measure of theological training.

One of the aims in the training of "leaders" has been to produce indigenous ministers who would be able to take equal place with the foreign missionaries, in those fields of labour which the missionaries were already occupying. But this meant, inevitably, that their training was planned as nearly as possible to resemble that which the missionaries had undergone in their own country, that is to say, it was European or American in conception, and not Indian, African or Chinese.<sup>12</sup>

There was thus a failure to consider adequately the demands of local conditions and the needs of the emerging church, with the result that theological education did not always make a normal adjustment to its environment.

A more basic weakness was the miscon-

<sup>12</sup> Stephen Neill, "African Theological Survey," *International Review of Missions*, XXXIX (1950), 207.

ception of church and ministry fostered by this approach. Churches placed under the tutelage of a catechist paid and directed by the missionary learned to accept dependence on others for their ministry. Their first concept of the ordained minister, the missionary himself, was that of an administrator who rides the circuit to supervise the work of the lay workers and to administer the sacraments. Even the development of an indigenous ordained ministry did little to change the pattern, since the national minister tended to inherit the administrative task of the missionary as the churches grew in number. This pattern prevails in large measure today in much of Asia and Africa, where an ordained pastor may be nominally in charge of 20 or 40 or more congregations, with each local group served by a lay evangelist or catechist.

Such a situation can hardly convey the Scriptural doctrine that the church in any place is wholly the church and that every church is intended to have the ministry of Word and sacraments in its midst. It has been in part the concern for an adequate ministry of the sacraments which has prompted a rethinking of the traditional pattern and led to new developments.

*Early Departures from the  
Traditional Pattern*

Throughout the early part of modern mission history the pattern of ministerial development described above could be said to be almost universal. Within the last 100 years, however, a number of significant departures from the traditional method have greatly influenced mission policies.

Perhaps the most widely known is the so-called "Nevius method," proposed by

John L. Nevius of the Northern Presbyterian Mission in Shantung, China.<sup>13</sup> Convinced that the traditional method of church planting was wrong, Nevius set forth the principle that from the beginning new churches should be self-propagating, self-governing, and self-supporting. Basic to this approach was the use of natural local leaders. He proposed that the natural leaders, who in the past had been uprooted and employed as paid agents, would be far more useful if left in their original homes and employments. In this way each local group could be self-governing from the start under its own unpaid leadership. The hope was that as the churches grew in strength they would in time be able to appoint their own pastor.

The Nevius methods were used most successfully in Korea. In 1890 Nevius was invited to Korea by a group of young missionaries who were just beginning their work. They asked him to instruct them in the mission methods with which they had become acquainted through his series of articles in the *Chinese Recorder*. It is the opinion of many observers that the application of these methods with emphasis on the three "selfs" and Bible teaching was largely responsible for the remarkable growth of the Protestant church in Korea, especially the Presbyterian group.

Of greater current interest than the Nevius methods are the ideas of Roland Allen, an English clergyman who served with the North China Mission of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel

<sup>13</sup> For a detailed account of the Nevius methods and their use in Korea, cf. the article by Wi Jo Kang, "The Nevius Methods," *CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY*, XXXIV (June 1963), 335—342.

at the turn of the century. Using the work of St. Paul as his example, Allen followed a train of thought similar to that of Nevius. He pointed out that the early church quickly appointed local men as presbyters and bishops to assume responsibility for young congregations. If there was financial support, it came from the local church. With spiritual authority thus exercised properly by local leaders, Allen felt that growth would be spontaneous and not dependent on the missionaries.

In contrast to Nevius, Allen advocated ordaining the local leaders.

It is quite clear, and all experience proves it, that small groups cannot support stipendiary clergy. . . . The only possible way is to ordain voluntary clergy, and thus to establish the church with all the full life and rites and privileges of a properly constituted church. If we did that . . . men would speedily learn what the church is. There would be no groups in which marriages could not be solemnized, children baptized, the dead buried with proper Christian ceremony, and the Lord's Supper duly administered.<sup>14</sup>

Although they aroused considerable opposition in his day, the writings of Roland Allen are currently being read with avid interest though not uncritically. Bishop Neill points out that St. Paul's missionary methods were determined at least in part by the presence of the liberal Jews of the dispersion and those Gentiles who had come under the influence of the synagog and hence were particularly responsive to the Gospel. Account has to be taken of such differences, and it is therefore in error

<sup>14</sup> Roland Allen, *The Ministry of the Spirit: Selected Writings of Roland Allen*, ed. David M. Paton (London: World Dominion Press, 1960), p. 162.

merely to set up "the imitation of St. Paul" as a principle of missionary strategy.<sup>15</sup>

Another significant experiment was that established among the primitive Papuans of New Guinea by the Neuendettelsau and the Rhenish mission in the latter part of the 19th century. Under the leadership of Christian Keysser, the missionaries worked out a method of "tribal conversion." Basic to this method was the understanding that the Papuan did not think or act as an individual but always thought of himself as a member of the community. Consequently the Christians thought of themselves as God's clan, and the individual was bound to serve the whole clan with his particular gifts. Although it required much training, the elders of the tribe became also the spiritual elders and bore the burden of pastoral work in the villages.

Thus with little formal organization the Christian groups in New Guinea developed into independent congregations. Missionary work to the neighboring areas was regarded as the responsibility of the Christian community, which sent out and supported evangelists. In the early days leadership was provided by the elders and by the school teachers, who also served as preachers. Additional training for pastors was undertaken only with the approach of World War II, when it became likely that the missionaries would have to leave.<sup>16</sup>

In each case described above it is evident that the development of the ministry was part of a larger pattern for establishing an

<sup>15</sup> Stephen Neill, *The Unfinished Task* (London: Edinburgh House Press, 1957), p. 125.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. G. F. Vicedom, *Church and People in New Guinea* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1961).

indigenous church. The aim was to plant a church that would stand on its own and continue to grow with a minimum of outside assistance and control. This required the appointing of leaders for each new group of Christians as it formed. This was made possible by using the natural leaders of the community rather than by importing a paid leadership. It should be noted, however, that this method was worked out in rural and economically undeveloped areas and may not have been directly adaptable to more sophisticated areas.

### *The Present Problem*

The methods described above dealt primarily with developing a ministry for newly planted churches. The major concern at the present time is providing an adequate ministry for churches already well established and growing. The problem is highlighted by an almost universal shortage of ordained ministers. But the search for solutions to this problem has led to deeper inquiries about the nature of the ministry and of the church and to some new experiments in adapting God's ever-present gift of the ministry to new situations. Already in 1952 the International Missionary Council, meeting at Willingen, Germany, expressed great concern over the paucity of suitable men available for the ministry.

The proposal for a part-time *ordained* ministry should be considered in this connexion. This proposal raises many fundamental issues; in fact, it touches on the basic question of the nature and function of the Christian ministry and the churches' traditional conception of this office. The prevailing assumption that a full-time, paid ministry is the norm needs to be reconsidered. Is it fundamental to the nature

of the Christian ministry or is it an uncritical transplantation to another soil of what was appropriate to a different environment? Amongst other gains, the development of a part-time ministry would bring the sacraments within reach of many remote congregations who are at present denied them except on rare occasions. It would also enable a newly-planted church the more effectively to extend its witness. The proposal calls for study and experiment.<sup>17</sup>

A few statistics from various fields will illustrate the crippling lack of clergy. The ordained pastor in Africa normally serves a Christian constituency of 1,000 to 5,000, usually scattered in dozens of small groups over many miles which can be covered only by walking. One large mission in the Belgian Congo reported 18 pastors for 75,000 communicant members and slightly fewer than 1,000 places of worship. A large church body in the Cameroun has 74 pastors for a total of 120,000 believers. In that body each pastor commonly serves one to four central churches, each of which has 10 to 12 annexes.<sup>18</sup> Only a few years ago the Church of South India was reported to have 8,000 congregations and only 800 ordained pastors. These pastors are of course assisted by the lay catechists, who carry on the day-by-day ministry of preaching, teaching, and pastoral care. The ordained pastor is able to make only an occasional visit to each congregation, acting as an itinerant supervisor and purveyor of the sacraments.

<sup>17</sup> Norman Goodall, ed., *Missions Under the Cross* (London: Edinburgh House Press, 1953), pp. 197 f.

<sup>18</sup> M. Searle Bates et al., *Survey of the Training of the Ministry in Africa*, Part II (London: International Missionary Council, 1954), p. 36.

The present concern for the ministry goes beyond the mere fact that there are not enough men to serve churches growing in numbers and rising in educational level. The question is raised whether the present pattern of ministry is not depriving the churches of some of the riches of God's gift. The preaching of the Word and administration of the sacraments are central to the life of the church, and the Christian minister is to be the steward of these "mysteries of God" in the midst of the congregation. Yet the ordained minister is commonly seen as the administrative—and usually absent—head of a certain organizational structure. The question is also raised whether the form of the ministry has not been determined largely by economic considerations and educational standards rather than by the primacy of the Word.

It is pointed out that our inherited pattern of the ministry was developed under conditions altogether different from those we face today. The form of our ministry grew out of medieval Christendom, a society in some sense Christian. The churches of Asia and Africa, like the church of the New Testament, are set within radically non-Christian societies. A veteran India missionary writes: "It may well be that a pattern of ministry developed with Western Christendom needs drastic overhauling before it can be adequate for the work of the Church in Asia today."<sup>19</sup>

Even apart from the lack of clergy a new interest in lay and part-time workers is being aroused. In many places it is simply a fact that small congregations living in a rural economy would be unable to sup-

port a full-time and salaried clergy even if it were available. It is recognized that a larger role for the Christian who does not have full formal training would give the church a greater flexibility in meeting the new situations created by rapidly changing societies. Such a Christian is being called on not only to bear faithful witness in his vocation but also to offer his services as a "voluntary worker" to exercise the ministry of Word and sacraments.

This brings us back to the question raised at the Willingen conference: ordaining part-time ministers, that is, ordaining secularly employed and perhaps nontheologically trained people to the ministry of the Word *and* sacraments. It has been pointed out that the Reformation abolished the conception of the priesthood as a ministry limited only to saying masses, without authority to preach except by special license. Thus it reunited the Word and sacraments in a true understanding of the Christian ministry. It is partly with the aim of again reuniting Word and sacraments that many people are concerned with developing a local ordained ministry.

#### *Current Experiments*

Recent experiments with voluntary clergy in the Church of South India have stirred widespread interest. Much of the life of the village churches in India has been centered in the village schoolmaster, who often is also the catechist in charge of church services. Increased government control has threatened the system. This and other factors have led to strenuous efforts to train voluntary workers to provide leadership in the congregations.

In one area it was decided to ordain

<sup>19</sup> Michael Hollis, *Paternalism and the Church* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), pp. 97 f.

voluntary workers as ministers with full authority to administer the sacraments. Being proven men who were unanimously accepted by their congregations, the first candidates included a "head-cooly," a tanner, two vendors, a woodcutter, and a retired elementary teacher. They were given a period of in-service training under the direction of the full-time minister in charge of the area. They have continued to live and earn their living in their home villages. In the area where these men work the number of village congregations has quadrupled in a period of 12 years. Their ministry has reportedly been effective for the reason that they are fully part of the congregations in which they minister, not separated from them by a social and economic gulf. It is emphasized that this whole development would have been impossible apart from the fact that the work was integrated within the life of the church with its regular ministry of full-time trained presbyters and bishops.<sup>20</sup>

A similar practice under quite different conditions has been initiated in the Anglican Church in Hong Kong, where 13 men have been ordained under a special canon of the Chinese Church allowing the ordination of men who would remain in their secular employments. In contrast to the situation in India these are largely educated men: 10 of the 13 were university graduates, eight of them schoolmasters. This auxiliary clergy has enabled new small congregations to have the full sacramental life of the church from the beginning and to have adequate nurture until a full-time pastor became available. The intellectual

ability of these men has enabled them to provide a ministry of outstanding importance.<sup>21</sup>

The Anglicans in Korea took similar action under another set of circumstances. They were confronted with the problem of few priests and small, scattered congregations which were generally without the sacraments. Most of these churches had a simple local ministry of the Word, exercised by men of exemplary character but with little education and receiving no remuneration. A few outstanding men were ordained, thus opening up the possibility of providing for the spiritual needs of each rural congregation without laying heavy financial burdens on very poor people or overtaxing the few professional clergy.<sup>22</sup> Similar efforts to establish part-time voluntary ordained workers in local congregations, backed up and assisted by full-time and more highly trained ministers, are being made in Thailand, Dutch New Guinea, the Philippines, and elsewhere.

The significant feature of these experiments is not the mere fact of multilevel ministry but that each level is fully the ministry. The village-level worker, though remaining in his usual employment, is ordained to the ministry of Word and sacraments so that his congregation has the ministry fully in its midst. He is the pastor, not merely an assistant to the itinerant and professional minister. A voluntary ordained ministry as advocated by Roland Allen two generations ago is coming into being. Some of the advantages of such a part-time ministry are immediately ap-

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>22</sup> John B. Whelan, "The Anglican Church in Korea," *International Review of Missions*, XLIX (1960), 157—166.

<sup>20</sup> *A Tent-Making Ministry* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, Division of World Mission and Evangelism, n. d.), p. 13.

parent. Not only does it help overcome the lack of ordained workers and bring a regular ministry of Word *and* sacraments to otherwise neglected congregations, but it has also helped to restore the ministry to its proper place in the congregation. It also means that opportunities for growth need not be neglected for lack of funds to employ workers and that churches can be flexible in meeting new and changing situations. While this arrangement poses certain problems, such as relationships between full-time and part-time ministers or the danger of lowering standards of what constitutes an adequate preaching and teaching ministry, these problems are practical and administrative. Nowhere has a *theological* objection been raised against ordaining part-time voluntary workers to the ministry.

It should be noted that part-time ministry is not limited to the areas of the younger churches. The Orthodox Church in Greece maintains part-time village priests who may receive a small stipend but normally also work as farmers or tradesmen. In Latin America, where multiple employment is widely accepted as perfectly normal, the theologically trained Protestant minister may often combine his church work with school teaching, the legal profession, business, or even politics. Well known are the so-called "worker priests" of the Roman Catholic Church in France, but others are exercising a similar type of ministry in various churches in Europe, Japan, and the United States.

It is interesting to take note of an article written by J. A. T. Robinson in 1952 in which he predicted that the future pattern of the ministry would be largely non-professional, i. e., a priesthood consisting of

a great proportion of men working in secular jobs at every level. A relatively small but highly trained leadership would lead the regiment from behind, supplying direction, inspiration, and ammunition. The day-to-day responsibility of the non-professional ministers would be the "house church" in the street block, the factory, the office or school, and, we may add, the village. They would be trained without being taken out of the jobs and the milieu in which they are.<sup>23</sup> With many variations such a pattern is taking shape in various parts of the world today as the attempt is made to find gifts of ministry adequate to present needs and changing conditions.

Here a word of caution is in order. Recent experiments in ordaining nontheologically trained people are not meant to suggest that Asia and Africa do not need highly trained ministers. The emphasis on developing an indigenous ministry in the young churches has led some to the false conclusion that in these societies ministers can represent the least common denominator. However, for ministry to be indigenous means to seek God's gifts appropriate to the church in that society.

To illustrate, the Protestant churches in Korea are perhaps unique in the whole of present-day Christendom in producing a sizable surplus of seminary graduates. Yet on the one hand the educational level of the clergy has not kept pace with the rising level of education, particularly in the cities, and on the other hand small rural congregations are often unable to salary a professional clergy. To remain truly indigenous and functional, Korea's ministry needs

<sup>23</sup> John A. T. Robinson, "The Theological College in a Changing World," *Theology*, LV (June 1952), 202—207.

to be more highly trained for the cities and perhaps to take some new form for the farm villages. Where it is feasible to use nontheologically trained people for the ministry of Word and sacraments, so much the more is it necessary to have the complement of highly trained ministers.

### Conclusion

The New Testament delineates ministry as the gift of God, who sent His Son in the form of a servant. Christ commissioned His disciples to serve after the pattern of His own self-giving, and He gives varieties of gifts for the sake of this ministry. Ministers themselves are such gifts, designed to serve the church by helping each Christian to carry out his ministry.

The Lutheran Confessions reflect the Biblical doctrine that ministry is basically functional in nature, not concerned with positions or rank but with the functioning of these gifts for the upbuilding of the church through preaching the Gospel and administering the sacraments.

If efforts at forming the ministry on mission fields can be taken as indicative, the Western churches have not fully grasped or at least not fully applied the functional nature of ministry. In attempting to develop a ministry patterned after their own training and experience, the early missionaries showed a preoccupation with a particular form of the ministry. Theologically trained and full-time salaried ministers were so universally accepted as normative that no other form of ministry was tried except in isolated instances. The distortion resulting from the combination of local catechist and circuit-riding ordained minister suggests that some other type of ministry ought to have been considered.

Recent study and experiment have contributed to a breakthrough in thinking about the ministry. Ministry can take great variety in form—professional or part-time, salaried or self-employed, seminary trained or schooled in Christian experience only—and still function as a valid ministry of Word and sacraments in the church.

We stand on good Biblical ground in recognizing that the form of ministry is determined by the fulfilling of its purpose: that it provide an adequate exercise of the office of preaching the Gospel and administering the sacraments.

Thus in developing a ministry anywhere, we may well begin with asking, What is the need? and: What form of ministry will best meet that need? Uninhibited by old patterns and time-worn assumptions, we can look for new varieties of ministerial gifts to serve the church in the dynamic and often revolutionary societies of today.

Seoul, Korea

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