

thought, suggested that reliance upon the momentary activity of the Spirit needed supplementation. Paul had written that there is the same Spirit but that the gifts of the Spirit vary, and they do so for the common good. The spoken ministry is one of these gifts and other forms of ministry were mentioned by Paul as others. Here then the old question of the relation of form and matter, of the external to the internal, was set for Friends, early and contemporary. The important thing is that men shall know and respond to the Spirit. It is to a contemporary discussion of this problem that this issue is primarily given.

J. C. K.

The Paradox of the Quaker Ministry

D. ELTON TRUEBLOOD

Observers of the Quaker movement are often surprised and shocked when reference is made to Quaker ministers. Numerous outsiders have supposed that Quakerism is a purely lay religion, somewhat like Mormonism in this regard, or that it is violently anti-clerical. This, of course, only shows that such people have not engaged in any serious study of Quaker history.¹ There were many persons *called* ministers in the first generation of the Society of Friends in the seventeenth century; there were renowned ministers during the long quietistic period, John Woolman and Elias Hicks being prime examples; and there is today the practice of recognizing special gifts in the ministry in the great majority of contemporary Quaker bodies. For about 75 years the larger body of Friends has accepted, as part of its policy, not only the practice of recording the gifts of ministers, but also a system of pastoral leadership. The Quakers who employ pastors are far more numerous than those who do not. The pastoral system has been adopted not only in many parts of the United States,² but in mission lands, including those supported by Friends who, at home, reject the pastoral system. Perinent illustrations are those of Pemba and of Japan.

The confusion in the public mind about the Quaker ministry is understandable in view of the fact that the Quaker conception of the ministry involves a fundamental paradox. Early

¹ The ministry in the first generation of Friends was extremely powerful and well developed. Full sermons by leading ministers, including George Fox, were recorded and printed.

² 97% of American Friends have or seek to have pastoral leadership. The system of pastors is used in 66% of American Quaker congregations.

This article, in slightly different form, was presented at the 1960 Quaker Yearly Meeting of the Indiana Yearly Meeting when Elton Trueblood retired as clerk.

Friends, while they recognized an unusually effective ministry of their own, criticized and rejected a clerical system in which the promotion of the gospel appeared to be analogous to a secular profession. Men in this profession were called "hiring priests," not chiefly because they were supported financially, but because they seemed to make the ministry more of a job than a calling. They found the clerical life to be the shortest route to preferment, to social prestige, and to political influence.

One might suppose that Fox and his colleagues would have gone the whole way, in opposition to the professionalized clergy, and to have rejected the idea of the ministry entirely, but this is precisely what they did not do. They elected, instead, to stress, at one and the same time, the dual conception that all men and women, in Christ's cause, are ministers, and that some are ministers in an especial sense. The humblest member was therefore expected to be prepared to follow the divine call, whether in the market place or in the meeting house, but a few were recognized as having unusual responsibilities because they had unusual gifts. It is good, in this connection, to read again the ringing words of William Penn when he said, "It is a living ministry that begets a living people; and by a living ministry at first we were reached and turned to the Truth."

After the return of Fox from America, he set up the "Second Day Morning Meeting" for men ministers, in order for them to supervise books and to distribute the ministry. They believed in divine guidance, but they also believed in using their human powers to do some deliberate planning, in order to make their movement more truly alive. They thus established a kind of pastoral system, with the purpose of nourishing the various flocks. Though no salaries were paid, there were family allowances, even in the earliest period, particularly in connection with long journeys like that of Marmaduke Stephenson to America. The support of his family was one of the major concerns in Stephenson's mind when he felt his surprising call which led, ultimately, to his death by hanging on Boston Common.

From the beginning, then, Friends have accepted the paradox of a ministry which is both specialized and universal, holding that the two conceptions, while different, are not mutually contradictory. Much of the glory as well as the tragedy of the

Quaker movement has centered in this paradox. It has been a condition of power, when deeply appreciated, but it has, unfortunately, led to separations when it has not been fully understood or admired. The clear lesson of our history is that, whenever we have relaxed the tension of this paradox by settling for either conception in isolation, we have declined. This needs to be spelled out in some detail.

Whenever we have glorified the specialized ministry to the neglect of the universal ministry, we have weakened our position, by failing to develop the powers of the rank and file. A man as great as William Penn did this, without intent. His sense of responsibility was so urgent that, at the Blue Idol meetinghouse, he would sometimes start speaking on entering the building, without even a perfunctory pause in a seated position. Obviously this kind of leadership harms the more modest members by discouraging vocal participation on their part. In an even sadder way, many pastors, among Friends today, particularly those who have no feeling for Quaker history, assume that they will be inspired to speak fifty-two times in a year, while the bulk of the members will never be thus inspired. In such ways the universal ministry is discouraged and an important phase of the gospel consequently denied.

The danger on the other side is equally great. This is the danger of so stressing the lay aspect of Quakerism that the specialized ministry is not encouraged. In practice this often leads to no ministry or to a ministry so fragmentary and so secularized that the meeting for worship begins to have the mood of a political forum. Recently a sensitive woman explained why she refused any longer to attend a particular meeting. It seemed to her to become a mere discussion, with a striking absence of reverence, of praise, and of prayer. Accordingly, she began to attend a little Protestant church in the country, where at least she could hear scripture, sing ancient hymns of Christian witness, and enter into vocal prayer.

The most common result, where there is no strong emphasis on a specialized ministry, is that the messages given tend to be trivial and merely anecdotal. Many of us groan inwardly when, in such a meeting, we hear the familiar opening sentence, "As I looked out of the car window on the way to meeting . . ." This

highly personalized approach is often superficial and it is superficial because it does not rest on any serious and sustained effort. It is shoddy because it is fundamentally easy. The branches of Friends who have given up recognizing a ministry are more vulnerable to this than are others.

The danger of a purely lay conception, without the encouragement of persons who have opportunity to study, in order to go deeper, is brilliantly expressed by de Tocqueville when he says:

None but minds, singularly free from the ordinary cares of life — minds at once penetrating, subtle, and trained by thinking — can, even with much time and care, sound the depths of these so necessary truths.³

In practice, the pastoral system is, like democracy, the *worst system*, with the exception of all of the others.

I had the great privilege of attending London Yearly Meeting during the historic sessions of 1924, when the practice of recognizing ministers was officially abandoned. The argument presented was that the recognizing of a few would lower the general level of the ministry, because the many would thereby cease to feel responsible. I have visited meetings in Great Britain on six different occasions since that decision was made, and it is my considered conclusion, on the basis of first-hand experience, that the intended improvement did not occur. It is important to know that the life of a religious society can be killed in more than one way. There are scores of local meetings in which, because no individuals feel a strong sense of personal responsibility, there is often nothing of a deeply spiritual nature in the ministry at all. I have often been in meetings wholly devoid of vocal prayer, of reference to Scripture, of Christian teaching.

Of major importance for the health of the entire Quaker movement is a careful consideration of the philosophy of the ministry, but this is something which we have neglected shamefully. The universal ministry is a great idea, one of the major ideas of the New Testament, but the hard truth is that *the universal ministry does not come to flower except when it is nourished deliberately*. We go deeper into the paradox of the

3. Alexis de Tocqueville, "Democracy in America," Part II, 17.

Quaker ministry when we recognize the fact that the nourishment of the universal or lay ministry is the *chief reason* for the development of a special or partially separated ministry. We cannot have an effective universal ministry of housewives and farmers and merchants, simply by announcing it. It is necessary to help *produce* it. The only way in which to produce it is to train a minority for this holy task. We need ministerial leaders, not because we reject lay religion, but because we believe in it so powerfully that we propose to do something about making it genuine.

All who have any close connection with Friends in either Philadelphia Yearly Meeting or London Yearly Meeting know of the violent opposition expressed by their members to the pastoral system. Some go so far as to say openly that those who have pastors are simply not Friends at all, and that, they say, is the end of the matter. They do this, sadly, because they see so clearly that Quakerism is not worth the trouble if it is merely another little Protestant sect, with the same kind of ministerial responsibility found in larger groups of Christians. If we are going to be like the Presbyterians and Methodists, why not, some say, join them and be done with the farce of separateness to no purpose? After all, we should then have a better trained ministry, a better planned order of worship, and a far better financial arrangement.

Since I have heard this argument many times, I am bound to say that, if the assumption is correct that our pastoral system in the main body of Friends is merely a poor reflection of what the stronger Christian bodies intend, the critics are right. But it is the assumption that we need to examine as carefully as possible. Is it a fact that Friends pastors are simply poorly prepared Protestant clergy, accepting a leadership in which the ministry of the regular members is denied or trivialized? Yes, in some areas this is a fact. I can name meetings in both Indiana and Western Yearly Meetings in which the Friends pastor has no notion at all of a unique function and is, in fact, a conventional clergyman. He is a member of the local ministerial association, he allows himself to be called "Reverend," he speaks every Sunday, he leads the prayer meeting, he becomes the official prayerer on ceremonial occasions, he does all the visiting that is done

in the congregation, and, worst of all, this does not disturb him in the slightest. He supposes that this is the way it should be. Ofter he has come from another tradition, and is so ignorant of Quaker history as not to know that for the first two hundred years of Quaker life *there was not one pastor*. Sometimes he does not even realize that he represents something very close to that which George Fox and his early associates denounced.

Having faced this situation honestly, we need to go on and say that the pastoral system, though it may be altered, cannot be and ought not to be abandoned. Apart from it, thousands of living Quakers would not be Quakers at all today. Most of the congregations of the Middle West which refused to inaugurate pastoral leadership ultimately died. This is the hard fact, and we cannot argue with history. It is also important to point out that there is an extremely beneficent kind of leadership of which the violent critics of the pastoral system are often entirely ignorant. In practice the Quaker pastor is, in many instances, a modest man who lives on much less than he could earn by giving his full time to some secular occupation and he is frequently forced, for financial reasons, to engage in part time work in industry. He never feels like a clergyman, accepts no title, and expects no deference. He does not dress in any clerical garb and he is known principally by his first name. He works steadily and unobtrusively to educate the young, to keep the Sunday School as strong as possible, and to encourage the gifts of others. Frequently he teaches an adult class and seeks to raise the level of Christian reading in the homes of the members. He is self-effacing because he feels called to build up the life of the group, knowing that, unless someone does it, consciously, it will not be done at all. He believes that the greatest ministry is that of the dedicated group.

It ought to be recognized, also, that in both London and Philadelphia Yearly Meetings, in which there is such criticism of the pastoral system, there are people in some local congregations who, without definite appointment, are carrying on pastoral work which is similar to that just described. Sometimes there is a man or woman, with sufficient means to have freedom from secular employment, who accepts the call to constant nourishment of the powers, the gifts, and the spiritual depths of

others. That Rufus Jones performed such a service at Haverford for many years is known to all who ever attended meeting when he was present. The fact that he earned his living as Professor of Philosophy did not make him any less of a pastoral minister.

Though the division between pastoral and non-pastoral Friends seems too great and often so sorrowful, the truth is that there is far more unity of aim as between the moderates on both sides of the dividing line than there is between the contrasting factions within each group. The extremes are indeed very far apart, but, fortunately, there are many who are not extreme. The more successful meetings of Philadelphia and of Indiana Yearly Meetings have much more in common than either has with its particular fringe group. The fringe group in Philadelphia Yearly Meeting is the secularized society which has nothing but contempt for evangelical faith, while the fringe group in Indiana Yearly Meeting is the Fundamentalist congregation which has drifted so far from basic Quakerism that it does not even know what a silent meeting is.

One way out of our present dangers, difficulties, and divisions lies in the rediscovery and consequent embodiment of a conception of the ministry which is truly unique among religious movements. We do not need to seek a foreign way, but only to understand the way inherent in basic Quakerism. Always our hope lies in a "third way," a way which avoids the heresies of the right as well as the heresies of the left.

The mistake we made seventy-five years ago, when we started a system of pastoral leadership, was not the mistake of providing better ministerial care. That was obviously needed. The meetings were dying for lack of intelligent concern for the spiritual welfare of the members. My evidence for this is more than hearsay, because of what my mother, who is still living, has told me of the struggle which occurred in the time when she was a girl. I know, from this source, that the first pastors brought immense relief, that they represented to the young people of two generations ago a victory over the dead hand of tradition which was terribly stultifying, and that the coming of pastors ended the exodus of Quaker young persons into other denominations.

Though the reasons for the pastoral system were good, a gigantic mistake was made. The mistake was that a fundamentally alien system was taken over, almost intact, from other Christian bodies. The result of this borrowing was that recognized Quaker ministers began to perform duties almost identical with those of conventional Protestant clergymen. Often they had less professional education and such poor remuneration that they had to support themselves on the side, but the *functions* seemed to be the same. The one striking exception was that the function did not include the celebration of the Eucharist, or the performance of water baptism, but even these were adopted in some parts of northern Ohio and southern Michigan, as they are to this day. It is true that there never was a ceremony of ordination, but "recording" for many seemed to be almost the equivalent of holy orders. The main point was that the Quaker pastor became the responsible head of a congregation⁴, representing it officially on public occasions, conducting weddings and funerals, visiting the sick, and preaching constantly. The natural result was that, in many communities, the rank and file of the members ceased to feel any need of doing these things. They had the immense relief which comes from knowing that some other person is responsible. They, accordingly, could go about their regular business with easy consciences.

What was needed seventy-five years ago was a change, but not the change that was instituted. Now we may be ready for another change, a change as great as that made by our grandparents, yet a change in a very different direction. We shall, whether we live in the East or the West, be ready for a change, provided we face our situation with humility and with honesty. The fact is that, in neither of our conventional systems, have we a right to be proud. We are not really doing well anywhere. We are losing in members, in proportion to national population, and many congregations are static, even when there are hosts of new people in residence. Both the pastoral and the non-pastoral systems are partial failures and the basic paradox is that the degree of failure, in both systems, arises from the same rea-

4. It was disastrous to give up a system in which some conducted the meetings as elders while others spoke as ministers. Pastors immediately performed both functions.

son. Both, in their conventional form, suppose that the two classifications of layman and clergyman exhaust the possibilities in the Christian society. The only way in which we shall overcome our lamentable division is by a clear recognition that there is a third order. If we had really known this in the nineteenth century the present sad division would not have occurred.

There would seem to be two contributions to Christendom from Quaker experience which are truly unique. The first of these is the meeting for worship *on the basis of holy obedience*. This was not to be found anywhere in the experience of Christians, either Roman Catholics or Protestants, until it was developed in the bold experiment of Friends in the north of England in the middle of the seventeenth century. For people to come together, not to express their own opinions and not to go through a ritual, but to settle down into reverent waiting, out of which comes messages surprising even to the speakers, is one of the most creative experiences which devout men and women can enjoy. It can truly be what Howard Brinton has called "Creative Worship" in which the gathered whole is much more than the sum of its parts, and it may also be what Violet Hodgkin called "The Way of Wonder." The wonder lies not merely in the silence, though this can be healing, and it does not lie in the speaking or praying, though they may be more stimulating than ordinary preaching; it lies primarily in the effort of a group to be truly *obedient together*. This is something so good that we must, if we can, keep it real and thus contribute it to the total Christian community. Some other groups have already adopted this way of worship on some occasions, and for this we are glad. Certainly, this unique experiment must always be kept among all branches of Friends. It is a shameful thing if we go so far into the ways of the world that any who call themselves Friends can be ignorant of this creative way. At the same time we must admit that other ways are good, too.

The other unique contribution of Quakers, and one which we have partially neglected, is a particular conception of the ministry. This is a ministry which has nothing to do with status or honor and in which the entire function is a loving, modest concern for the nourishment of the Divine Seed in each human heart. The good clergymen, in the established churches, un-

doubtedly perform this noble function, but part of their effectiveness is cancelled by the addition of factors of status, and it was these factors which so incensed George Fox. To this day many clergymen are almost forced into a position of artificiality. They are expected to be the officially religious men, always praying at banquets, always giving the address of welcome and being accorded an ambiguous honor in return. Thousands of lay people refuse to call clergymen simply by their names, without some honorific title. When asked why this is, they reply that to fail to use a title would be lacking in respect. No doubt this is why Christ said His followers were not to use such titles. He saw the danger and warned almost fruitlessly against it.

The true pastoral leader, as Friends in our strongest periods have shown, is not a person of exalted status and certainly not the "head" of the meeting. He is always at work, encouraging this one, teaching that one, walking with another. He may speak on public occasions, but often his leadership is not obvious at all. He will not do anything if he can get another to do it, not because he is lazy, but because the doing will develop the other person, and it is development of others that is always his goal. He will speak if he needs to do so, but he knows that speaking is only one of many tasks which spiritual nourishment requires. He may teach more than he preaches, and he will not be afraid to be silent or to sit within the congregation rather than face it, if he believes this will facilitate the general sense of responsibility. He will have the best education which he can get, but he will not make capital of his degrees or expect that they be used by people who address him. He will resist endlessly being called "Reverend" and will not, in any way, show by dress any distinction between himself and others. He will work very hard, but primarily as a catalytic agent. He will be especially pleased if his work, though effective, is unnoticed.

Here is a noble and difficult ideal. What is important to see is that it is radically different from the ordinary Christian conception of the ministry, yet it is a ministry. It is not at all the same as saying that all members have equal responsibility and that mere lay religion is consequently sufficient. The fact is that people cannot have equal responsibility because they do not have equal powers and, what is more important, they do not

have equal concern. This unique ideal which is equidistant from "no ministry" on one side and from "status ministry" on the other is really the ideal embedded in the New Testament. The classic statement is that of Ephesians 4:11,12, where we are told that God has given some men the gift and consequent responsibility of being "pastors and teachers" and that their function is the perfecting of the members for *their* work in the ministry. A pastor, then, in biblical terms, is a humble person who has a special ability in performing that kind of ministry which helps other people to perform *their* ministry, whatever it may be. When we realize that early Friends were trying very hard to recover the vitality of New Testament Christianity, we are not surprised that they tried to produce a kind of ministry which was equally distinct from both clergy and laity.

One of the finest embodiments of the paradoxical Quaker ideal of the ministry was that of the career of Neave Brayshaw. For many years Neave Brayshaw performed wonders among English Friends, particularly among young men. To share with him in the New Year's Conference at Woodbrooke was a really moving and unforgettable experience. Always Neave was nourishing some tender plant. He would walk with his "laddies" and talk about their faith or their doubts. He did this, not primarily on Sundays, but every day of the year and many who are now leaders of London Yearly Meeting remember this service with gratitude. He was, of course, not called a pastor, but he was doing *pastoral* work. His support, incidentally, came from a Quaker Trust Fund. He represented, almost perfectly, the ideal we are needing so desperately to recover.

The clearest statement of the early Quaker ideal is that provided by Robert Barclay in the *Apology*. After stressing the notion that all Christians must be in the ministry and maintaining that the current distinction between clergy and laity is one which the New Testament does not make, he went on to state that there is needed, in addition to the general ministry, a particular ministry. Barclay's great words in Book X, article 26 are:

We do believe and affirm that some are more particularly called to the work of the ministry, and therefore are fitted of the Lord for that purpose; whose work is more constantly and particularly to instruct, exhort, admonish, oversee, and watch over their brethren; and that . . . there is something more

incumbent upon them in that respect than upon every common believer.

If Barclay's clear teaching had been followed with any seriousness the crisis in Quakerism, out of which the pastoral system emerged, would never have occurred. The question was not, as some have supposed, whether people with particular responsibility should be paid or not. Barclay received no money, because he needed none, but that did not make his ministry any more spiritual. What is significant is not the means of support, but the fact that some men ought to be liberated from purely economic tasks. Barclay was liberated because he inherited an estate from his father, Colonel David Barclay. The pastor of Knightstown or Wilmington is liberated because the members contribute a house and a modest salary. Uncle Samuel Trueblood, of Blue River, was liberated because he owned a good farm. Obviously these are mere details, and we only confuse the issue when we try to make them central. What is central is loyalty to a holy task, and the task is the spiritual nourishment, without which the redemptive society ceases to be redemptive.

There is reason to believe that we are now ready for a bold new chapter in Quaker history. We have caught a glimpse of a dream of what a true Christian ministry really is, and the dream has begun to possess us. If it does possess us it will make us real Quakers again, because it will shake us to our foundations. We are considering the start of a new kind of educational venture, the first real school of the Quaker ministry in over three hundred years of our history. We have reason to believe that such a school may receive a warm welcome, not only among Friends, but also among many other of our fellow Christians who have been vaguely dissatisfied with the conventional alternatives. but have not fully realized that a potential third order exists. We may receive a particularly warm welcome from those pastors who are deeply disturbed by the role of busy promoter which they now seem practically forced to play, but from which they see no escape. Because the present conventional system is not really succeeding, people may be willing to give a fair hearing to some genuine alternative.

We are undertaking, not some minor step, but one of great proportions. The new ministry which is one of function rather

than status, is not to be the private possession of those called members of the Society of Friends. It must, eventually, belong to all, for it is basic to the total Christian ideal. The ideal was etched by Christ Himself when he girded Himself with a towel and portrayed the ministry of humility. "I have," He said, "given you an example." This is our standard, a standard which we never fully reach, but one which never lets us rest. It is the prime inspiration of the Quaker ministry.