

A SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION
OF THE MARKS OF THE PASTOR
ACCORDING TO CONTEMPORARY BAPTIST THEOLOGY
IN SOUTH AFRICAN AND GERMAN CONTEXTS

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Summary

Baptists regard ecclesiology as the field where they provide a unique contribution to Christian theology and practice. Yet, the Baptist Principles that summarize the distinctive beliefs of Baptists have not much to say about the position and role of the Baptist pastor. Instead, they emphasize the equality of all church members and their individual rights to participate and decide in church matters. This thesis investigates the theology of ministry from contemporary Baptist sources in South African and German contexts. The author takes from his own experience of ministry in both countries, but researches literature also from a wider range of backgrounds.

The first part provides a discussion of Baptist ecclesiology with a view to the topic of ministry. The Baptist Principles are scrutinized with specific focus on the Principles of the priesthood of all believers and of congregational church government. They allow for a variety of interpretations, but on the whole limit the position of the pastor rather than positively describing it. The same is true for the German Baptists' creedal document *Rechenschaft vom Glauben*. The author of this thesis sees his particular contribution to the topic in providing a positive characterization of the Baptist pastor.

He does so in the second part where he presents four pairs of marks of the pastor. "Called and Gifted" describes the divine origin of ministry. Both marks are not exclusive to pastors, but also have a general meaning that includes all church members. "Ordained and Trained" is summarized as a secondary category, which shows the human institutions and prerequisites for ministry. "Leader and Servant" is a seeming contradiction in terms, but has become idiomatic as a combined term to describe the Christian way of leadership, as proclaimed by Jesus. "Preacher and Shepherd" are both synonyms for the pastor. They emphasize different aspects of ministry, but can also be interpreted as contrasting in focus.

In his conclusion, the author relates the marks of the pastor to the Baptist Principles. From there, he formulates challenges for the understanding of pastors in Baptist churches in Germany and in South Africa.

Key terms:

Baptist ecclesiology; Baptist principles; Ministry; Baptist pastor; priesthood of all believers; congregational church government; calling; spiritual gifts; ordination; theological education; leadership; preaching; shepherd; pastoral care; women in ministry; five-fold ministry

A. Introduction

Starting with questions

In November 2004, I looked back on 10 years of being a Baptist pastor. The first five years I served in two Baptist churches in the West of Germany. Then the European Baptist Mission sent us to serve at the Baptist Convention College in Soweto. There, I work as lecturer in Biblical Studies and help in the ministerial formation of women and men. After more than ten years in the ministry, I still have many questions about what it means to be a Baptist pastor. The following stories illustrate some of my questions.

- a) Mr. A comes to the College after many years of leading a Baptist church. He is spiritually mature, and a father figure to some of the younger students. When we address the audience of students, we oftentimes call them “pastors in the making”.

I ask myself: Who is making the pastors? And why could his church members call Mr. A their pastor even before he came for theological training?

- b) When Mr. B graduated from the College, he took a job in the administration of a small company. He was elected into the executive of his Baptist church, but then was called to temporarily moderate another church that had no pastor. In the meantime he also started to lecture at the theological College. As I see him sitting in the church, listening to his pastor preaching, I ask myself:

At which stage would we have rightfully called him a pastor?

- c) In the German Baptist Union the issue of “women in ministry” was hotly debated during the 1980s and 1990s. As a first step, women were

allowed into full-time church ministry; they were not allowed to carry the title “Pastor”, though, but they had to be called “Theological co-workers”. Only recently was the title “Pastor” officially accepted for women.

I ask myself: What difference did it make for Mrs. C. to be accepted as a “Pastor” after having worked as a “Theological co-worker” for years?

- d) I attend the church meeting of my local Baptist church in Germany. I am their pastor, but I am sitting in the pews with the other members. The meeting is chaired by Mr. D who is one of the elders of the church. By profession, he is the director of the human resource department of the local hospital. He occasionally preaches and leads Bible studies, and has been elected as the chairperson of the church executive. He is a gifted leader, and I appreciate his wisdom in facilitating the meetings. When it comes to voting on certain issues in the church meeting, any church member has the same voting rights as he and I.

I ask myself: Who is leading the church? What does it mean to be a pastor or a church leader in a Baptist church?

- e) Mr. E came for theological training when he was already close to retirement age. Even after graduation, he has to confess that he is not a gifted preacher. He then passed the ordination exam and was ordained by the denomination. His home church did not have a pastor, but did not call him to be their pastor. Mr. E was appointed as an elder in the church; on Sundays, he listens to the minister, Rev. F, who is younger than Mr. E’s last-born child, but was called by the church as their “senior pastor”.

I ask myself: Is Mr. E a pastor after all? What role does theological training and ordination play in the making of Baptist pastors?

Motivating the work

The last question is one that leads more generally to the topic of this thesis. The above mentioned are just a few examples of the realities of ministry in Baptist churches. Many questions go much deeper than just into debating the use of certain titles. It seems that Baptists have numerous unresolved issues in the field of ministry. These can lead to serious conflict within churches, between pastors and members, and sometimes paralyse whole congregations. That is why I have decided to take up the topic for my thesis. I felt the need to explore the Baptist theology as to what it really says about the pastor and the ministry. It seemed that a lack of clarity in this regard has caused many unnecessary and fruitless debates. The leadership task in the church is much too important to allow such conflict to hinder it. My motivation for this investigation is to get more clarity for the ministry in Baptist churches. Progress in that regard would surely strengthen the testimony of the church in the world.

Limiting the research

During the first stage of the investigation, I discovered that it could address a broad range of related issues such as personality and power struggle, as well as historical, cultural, social and structural dimensions. There is a need to limit the scope of the investigation.

First, I decided to look only at the Baptist churches in the two countries in which I have served. Even though the Baptist world is relatively small, the differences within it are still considerable. The Baptists' emphasis on the local church, and their distaste for hierarchy, has given rise to diverse styles of church life and theology. I am therefore limiting this investigation to the South African and German contexts. It must be stated that these contexts in themselves offer a variety of traditions: in South Africa we find at least five Baptist bodies, separated mostly along the lines of racial demarcations of the apartheid era. My research has focused on the Baptist Convention of South

Africa (BCSA), in which I am working. There are some references to documents from the Baptist Union, but none to the other Baptist groups. In Germany the “Bund Evangelisch-Freikirchlicher Gemeinden” (BEFG; “*Federation of Evangelical Free Churches*”) is the umbrella body for Baptists. It includes other groupings like the Brethren congregations, and in recent times various other Baptist groups have formed outside the BEFG. My investigation concentrates on the Baptist theology of and within the BEFG.

One of my objectives was to find out, how Baptist churches understand the ministry of their pastors. I was hoping to hear the opinion of the pastors, the lay leaders and the members on the topic. But it soon emerged that this kind of empirical study would have created an inordinate amount of work with only dubious benefit. I decided to focus on the Baptist theology as it is represented in publications from the two countries. If I had followed my cherished idea of investigating the church realities or the self-perception of the pastors, it could easily have turned into a project beyond my reach in this thesis.

I then limited the scope to contemporary Baptist theology, as I have no intention of researching the historical debates and developments. Being aware of the formative role of history in all human endeavours, I cannot disregard the history of Baptist theology. For the sake of limitation, I declare the subject of this investigation to be the present state of Baptist theology, not denying that it has developed through histories in contexts. The documents on which I have focused my research, are therefore all from the second half of the twentieth century, reflecting theological opinions that are currently valid and influential.

Formulating the title

Having defined the scope of my investigation, I struggled to formulate the exact matter of it: the “role” or the “position” of the pastor seemed to restrict the study too much to the functional aspects of ministry. With the intention of broadening the matter, I considered looking at the “identity” of the pastor.

However, I found the term to be loaded, and as I had decided to drop the empirical research from my thesis, I felt that “identity” could not be derived from theological statements only. “Definitions” of the pastor would have been a workable topic, if only I had found them in the literature. One of my findings, though, was that the literature shows a notable lack of definitions. At times, the Baptist theology seems to be deliberately vague when it speaks about the pastor. The German Baptists’ creedal document “Rechenschaft vom Glauben” (“*Account of faith*”) even avoids naming any of the offices in the church.

“What is the place of the pastor in Baptist theology?” came as a more neutral question. I was hoping to come to a clearer positioning of the pastor in the theological landscape. However, it became clear, that the literature does not offer specific locations, but rather describes different qualities and forms of ministry in Baptist churches. It mentions characteristic features of the pastor’s relationship with God and the church, or specific elements of the pastor’s qualification and designation. I considered putting my research under the title “Descriptions of the Pastor in Baptist Theology”.

Then I remembered the theology lectures where I learnt about the *nota ecclesiae*, the characteristic marks of the church. I felt that this term would be very useful for my topic, if I could transfer it to the ministry. Like the German translation “Kennzeichen”, the English term “marks” renders the meaning of characteristics, key words or descriptors. I decided to apply it in the sense of “nota pastoris” as translated in “marks of the pastor”.

From the beginning, this research was categorized in the Department of Systematic Theology. As I engaged in it, I found myself indeed systematically analysing the matter at hand from a theological point of view.

After all these explanations and insights into the genesis of this paper, I can confidently present its title as follows:

“A Systematic Theological Investigation of the Marks of the Pastor According to Contemporary Baptist Theology in South African and German Contexts”.

Explaining the outline

Whereas their descriptions of the pastor are sometimes vague or disparate, even contradictory, the Baptists’ understanding of the church is clearly defined. I found it necessary to analyse the ecclesiology of the Baptists as a framework for their descriptions of ministry. Part B of this thesis will provide a general overview of Baptist understandings of the church by presenting the so-called “Baptist Principles”. Two of the principles have deep repercussions on the understanding of ministry in Baptist churches: The “priesthood of all believers” and the “Congregational Church Government” will therefore be discussed in detail. On the German side, the above-mentioned document *Rechenschaft vom Glauben* summarizes Baptist theology with a significant emphasis on the church. It will be scrutinized in a separate chapter in Part B. The final chapter in this part opens, rather than closes the topic of Baptist ecclesiology. Several contemporary issues have shifted the emphasis of the ecclesiological debate away from the classical topics. I will mention some of these, especially as they appear in the theological discussion in Germany and South Africa.

As I have mentioned above, I understand the Baptist ecclesiology as the framework, in which the picture of the Baptist pastor must be seen. The literature that I researched sometimes gives the impression that Baptists have a clear framework of ecclesiology, but only a vague picture of the pastor in it. One of my objectives in this thesis is to add focus to the picture – describing more clearly what the pastor in a Baptist church can and must be like. I hope to give positive descriptions instead of the limitations that are offered in the Baptist Principles. That is why I position Part C as the main part of the thesis.

In the relevant chapters, I have dealt with the marks of the pastor in pairs. The marks in each pair belong together as they both refer to a certain category of describing the pastor and the ministry in the church. Similarly, the pair always represents a duality or tension within that category. The two terms could be seen as opposite or exclusive to each other.

In each chapter, I close the presentation by connecting the two terms, investigating how they relate. The terms are all taken from the literature and will be explained from it. Some of them open a whole field of other terms, which are used in Baptist theology to describe the pastor. One of my preliminary lists consisted of ten pairs of terms. I then reduced it to the four in the final version, as I find most of the other terms explaining these basic four pairs. The descriptions that were not covered in the four pairs are presented in the last chapter of Part C as “Further issues to be considered”.

Summarizing and presenting the Baptist understanding of the pastor in these eight terms might be regarded as my specific contribution to the topic. I have not found this or any comparable list in the literature. In fact, the literature shows a lack of positive descriptions. In my thesis I hope to overcome the defensive or negligent attitude I found in the Baptist literature when it comes to presenting the pastor. Therefore Part C must be recognised as the central innovative part of my thesis.

Part D looks back on the journey of my research, summarizing the findings briefly. Relating the suggested “marks of the pastor” to the framework of Baptist theology, I evaluate the two Baptist Principles of the “priesthood of all believers” and “Congregational Church Government”. With regard to the two countries that provide the contexts for this research, I conclude with some challenges for the respective situations of Baptist pastors and churches in Germany and in South Africa.

Qualifying the Sources

One of the main decisions during my research was to restrict my sources to written documents. At the outset, I had hoped to base the investigation on empirical data. Knowing that Baptists in general do not trust creeds and formulated theology, I thought the only appropriate path to investigating their theology was to conduct interviews. In order to provide valid results, pastors and laypersons had to be interviewed separately. This approach led me to develop questionnaires for these two groups. At that point, it became clear that this kind of study would involve so much preparatory work, methodological sophistication and logistical effort, that it would have exceeded the restrictions of my doctoral thesis.

At the same time, my research brought forth a considerable amount of Baptist literature on the topic. The range of opinions and the variety of arguments discussed, clearly suggested that this investigation could be based on written sources only. I took the decision to limit myself to what I found in these published documents and a few unpublished papers.

The research was started with a comparative approach in mind. I decided to take South Africa and Germany as the two different contexts that should be compared with regard to their theology and practice of ministry. It became increasingly clear, that a comparison in this rigid sense would not be appropriate. As stated before, both countries offer a variety of Baptist contexts within themselves. The differences between the two countries carry significance for the research and will be presented as they appear. Nevertheless the thesis was structured according to topics, not according to the countries and contexts.

I also decided to broaden the general investigation to contributions from Baptists outside Germany and South Africa. I included publications from the Baptist World Alliance, which might represent a widely accepted consensus of

Baptists, as well as some contributions from British Baptists. The latter could be seen as influential voices for both continental European and South African Baptist theology, as they are historically related to both. It remains to be discussed to what extent the findings of this investigation represent a broader spectrum of the Baptist theologies worldwide. It must be admitted that the North American Baptists are so much more diverse that they could not be included in this research.

Within the German and South African contexts, I carefully considered sources for investigation that represent a significant or influential position within the Baptist churches. Most of the authors can be qualified as national leaders or theological educators in the two countries.

Revealing the author

Even though I started the investigation with a draft outline of my thesis in mind, I refrained from approaching the literature from strictly predetermined categories. This open-minded approach to research allowed me to discover new categories and different emphases from the documents, while still confirming the overall plan of my work.

I am aware that the person of the researcher has a significant impact on the results of the research. In this case, it should be noted that the author of this thesis is a white, married German man. I am a Baptist pastor, actively involved in the theological training of South African Baptist pastors. I need not deny my strong connection with both German and South African Baptists, as well as some specific perceptions on their respective strengths and weaknesses.

I thank God that He has made me His child and called me into the ministry of the Gospel. I have no intention of hiding my identification with my colleagues in ministry. Indeed this thesis is an attempt to help them and help the churches

accept and define their roles, positions and marks of ministry more intentionally and clearly.

I regard myself as having overcome some of the sinful and wrong attitudes of sexism and racism that have denigrated the Gospel of Jesus Christ so terribly. However, I must confess that I struggle to find proper inclusive language when speaking about God and His people. I will therefore always use the masculine pronoun for God, and I have decided also to use masculine pronouns for the pastor throughout my presentation. I understand that this decision might cause uneasiness and even serious reservation in some readers, but I have not yet found any terminology that is more inclusive and at the same time usable and appropriate.

I sincerely believe that God is calling - and has always called - women and men to the ministry of the Gospel. It is for them mainly that this research has been done. It is my prayer that their ministry will be strengthened and encouraged, not only through the academic discussion that a paper like this has to present, but more so through the power of the Holy Spirit of God who is the author of all life.

B. Baptist Understandings of the Church

1. An Overview of the Baptist Principles

Baptist consensus?

One of the main characteristics of Baptists is “the traditional autonomy and interdependence of Baptist churches and member bodies” (About Us 2006). As the local church is autonomous in the expression of its church life and even of its faith, it is difficult to make general statements about the Baptists. The “Study and Research Division” of the Baptist World Alliance discusses this difficulty of defining what Baptists believe in its publication *We Baptists*. Baptists do not have a central body, a fixed formulation of beliefs or a central historic person to refer to for unity. However, the document comes to the conclusion: “It is possible to summarize what Baptists believe today” (We Baptists: 20). This confidence is based on the perception that while “there is considerable diversity among Baptists as to the details [...] there is remarkable agreement about Baptist distinctives” (We Baptists: 20-21).

Indeed a research of Baptist theological statements reveals that most of them explicitly refer to what they call “Baptist Principles” or “Baptist distinctives”. In 1987, the Baptist Union of South Africa has endorsed a “Statement of Baptist Principles”, which is since printed in each volume of the annual *South African Baptist Handbook* as an annexure, immediately after “A Statement of Belief” and the “Constitution and By-Laws of the Baptist Union of Southern Africa”. The presentation of the German Baptists (Wer wir sind 2006) puts the Baptist Principles before its own statements, and introduces them with the phrase:

“Was Baptistengemeinden weltweit verbindet”

“What unites Baptist churches worldwide”

Nevertheless, the German Baptists seem to give little regard to the Baptist Principles. Their self-presentation, *Der Bund Evangelisch-Freikirchlicher Gemeinden. Eine Selbstdarstellung (The Union of Evangelical Free Churches. A Self-presentation)*, from 1992 does not mention the Principles, but gives a broader theological profile where the distinctives appear spread within a longer discourse. The most recent publication, *Offene Türen (Open Doors)*, does not refer to the Principles at all, but rather uses the *Leitbild (Vision)* that was developed at the beginning of the twenty-first century. The German Baptists have a history of working on their own theological position and not simply reworking statements from the Anglophone Baptist world.

There is one noteworthy difference between the lists on this German presentation and the one officially approved and published by the South African Baptist Union: Whereas the German list starts with the belief in the Bible, the South African one has left out this principle. Still, they both present six Principles, as the Germans do not have the separation of church and state in their list.

For an explanation of this difference, I need to point out some observations: The South African Baptist Union document has included a sentence on the Bible in the Preamble:

“We as Baptists share many areas of faith with other members of the professing Christian Church. These include a belief in one God [...] and in the Bible as the inspired Word of God, and as the final authority in all matters of faith and practice.”

(Handbook 1995/96: 315)

This corresponds exactly to the first in the list of the Principles on the German list. The Germans have included the separation of church and state in their sixth principle, the one on religious liberty. The presentation in the Baptist Union of Southern Africa documents has caused severe criticism from their counterpart in South Africa, the Baptist Convention. BCSA speakers

specifically criticize the wording and understanding of the Principle on the separation of state and church. I will discuss the topic further below.

It has become clear from these short introductory remarks that the Baptist Principles form a relatively broad consensus among Baptists. At the same time, their validity and relevance is questioned in details and in general. Although beyond the scope of this project, further research could be devoted to finding out where and how the Baptist Principles were formulated and adopted, and how they are adapted in different contexts in the Baptist world. As I present them in the following, I am aware that they do not have the status of an unquestionable doctrine, but represent a relatively well-accepted summary of what Baptists agree upon. One of the purposes of this thesis is to look again at the understanding and the limitations of these principles, particularly with regard to the ministry in the church.

“Baptist distinctives”

It is worth noting that the consensus of Baptists is described as “distinctives”. The intention of formulating the “distinctives” can be seen in a need to explain what makes Baptists different from other churches. The historical background of the Baptist churches has to be understood as a representing a movement out of the existing churches. Theology in such movements is often apologetic at first. Only at a later stage, when the movement is established as a recognized church, can it return to confessing the beliefs it shares with other parts of the body of Christ.

The “Statement on Baptist Principles” by the Baptist Union of South Africa has incorporated this confession of unity in its preamble:

“We as Baptists share many areas of our faith with other members of the professing Christian Church [...] There are however areas of principle and practice where we as Baptists make distinctive emphases arising out of our understanding

of the Scriptures. It is to clarify these that the following statement is made.”

(Handbook 1995/96: 315)

I conclude that it should not be allowed to call the Baptist Principles a creed, because they explicitly do not want to present the whole body of doctrines or beliefs of the Baptist church, but to focus solely on those areas, where they differ from other churches. Where the Baptists do not present a distinctive understanding in their principles, they claim to share the beliefs of other Christians. It remains unclear what that means in cases where the other Christians have diverse theologies, as for example on the topic of ministry.

The ecumenical debates on “Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry” (BEM) have been richly documented over the last several decades. Ministry is one of the fields where consensus is most difficult to discern. Even though the Baptist Principles do not explicitly mention the word “ministry”, it must be expected that they have something to say on the topic. I will now present the list of Baptist Principles with short comments on what they may contribute to my topic.

The Bible

As mentioned above, the German Baptists start their list with their confession of belief in the Bible. They do not insist on a specific understanding of its inspiration. Rather they refer back to the Reformation theology that speaks of *sola scriptura*:

“ ‘Allein die Schrift’ [...] Nichts darf neben die Heilige Schrift treten [...] Weder Bekenntnisschrift noch Tradition können neben der Bibel einen verpflichtenden [...] Anspruch an uns stellen.”

“ ‘The Scripture alone’ [...] Nothing can stand next to the Holy Scripture [...] Neither creed nor tradition can have a binding authority over us.”

(Der Bund 1992: 111)

The theological argumentation continues by pointing to Jesus Christ as the incarnate Word of God, and to the Holy Spirit as the interpreter of the Bible. Here, and in the following paragraph, an egalitarian concept is expressed to an extent that it undermines the role of the theologian:

“Darum ist die Bibel für alle Menschen bestimmt und nicht den theologisch Gebildeten vorbehalten.”

“Therefore the Bible is meant for all human beings and not reserved for the theologically educated.”

(Der Bund 1992: 112)

The remedy against individualistic and elitist reading and interpretation of the Bible is seen in the sharing and discussions in a Bible study group – a typically Baptist emphasis on the role of the congregation. The contribution of the pastor to the interpretation of the Bible is tolerated rather than appreciated in the following clause:

“Natürlich nehmen wir auch den Dienst der theologisch gebildeten Schwestern und Brüder an”

“Of course, we also accept the ministry of the theologically educated sisters and brothers”

(Der Bund 1992: 112-113)

This turns out to be a standard position in German Baptist literature: The Bible belongs to the congregation – the pastor has no higher authority in interpreting it than the members. Brandt has coined the term “Vollmachtsgemeinschaft” (“*community of authority*”) to counter the tendency of a clerical domination in the interpretation of the Bible. When he proclaims the freedom and competency of the church members, he also reminds them of the responsibility to invest in the Bible study.

However, Brandt mostly sees the danger on the side of the pastor to claim too much authority in the field of Bible interpretation. By doing so, the pastor would make the members dependent, and even manipulate them. The following Principles about the church and the individual reflect this further.

The Church

“The CHURCH as the whole company of those who have been redeemed by Jesus Christ and regenerated by the Holy Spirit. The local church, being a manifestation of the universal church, is a community of believers in a particular place where the Word of God is preached and ordinances of the Lord’s Supper are observed. It is fully autonomous, except insofar as it binds itself through voluntary association.”

(Handbook 1995/96: 315)

This Principle is often summarized as “regenerate church membership”. Baptists emphasize frequently that they differ from those churches that take newborn children into membership by infant baptism. The term “nominal Christians” is used to describe church members who never practice their membership, but also do not see a need to resign from it.

Referring to the Gospel of John, chapter 3, Baptists preach the need to “be born again” (regeneration), and make that experience a prerequisite for church membership. This becomes the basis for an understanding of ministry that includes all members. There is a famous Baptist statements that claims: “every member a missionary”. From the personal experience of faith stems the urge for every Christian to become a messenger of the Gospel.

The implications of this principle for the Baptist understanding of ministry are stated variously in the literature:

“In such a congregation members are equally responsible.”

(Turner 1987: 16)

“For Baptists the church membership roll is [...] the ‘ministry roll’ of the church.”

(Beasley-Murray 1992: 87)

Ministry is very often connected with membership in Baptist theology. Beasley-Murray even names it the “doctrine of every-member ministry [...]

based on the New Testament as a whole” (Beasley-Murray 1992: 86). It will be one of my tasks to investigate how this doctrine influences the position of a pastor in a Baptist church. Suffice it here to ask if it is proper to use the word “doctrine” for this understanding.

The second part of the principle is often paraphrased as the “autonomy of the local church”. Immediately after presenting a view on the church in general, the next sentence already focuses on the local church. It is understood as the manifestation of the global church, and consequently put in the centre of all Baptist ecclesiology. From there, most presentations of the church and its ministry circle around the local church. With their distaste for hierarchy, Baptists also widely disregard the bigger picture of the church as an ecumenical body crossing both national and denominational borders. Consequently, the pastor is merely seen in his relation to and position within the local church. As one can observe in the quotation from the Baptist Principles, the “place where the Word of God is preached” is mentioned, but not the person who preaches it. This is one of my main observations in the Baptist Principles: they go to great lengths in presenting and justifying the role and identity of the church and of the individual in it, but they do not even mention the person and position of the minister.

The last sentence on the autonomy of the local church has sparked a lot of debate in recent years, not the least on the African continent. Whereas originally it was meant as a protection against hierarchical domination of the local church by a distant and elevated church authority, nowadays it is more often seen as a hindrance for the development of the churches. In a world where networking and cooperation are well-accepted concepts and even necessities, the isolation of local churches as autonomous entities does not have the same appeal that it may have had in earlier times.

Regardless of this discussion, the autonomy of the local church is still a constituent factor of Baptist ecclesiology. It can also be used to undermine

attempts to generalize Baptist theology and practice. Whatever a Baptist body declares as its principles or foundations, it does not necessarily bind the Baptist churches that are associated in it. There is very little doctrinal or structural alignment in a Baptist association of churches.

The principle is reflected in the names of associations such as “Bund Evangelisch-Freikirchlicher Gemeinden in Deutschland” (*“Union of Evangelical Free Churches in Germany”*). The term “church” is mostly reserved for the local church, whereas the national body is called a “union / convention of churches”. The debate about whether the national body can be called “church” has not come to a decisive conclusion, as far as I can see.

This logically affects all investigations on Baptist theology and practice, as it casts doubt on any statement about Baptists in general. Any local church might stand up and disprove the statement by its own diverging practice. We will have to keep this limitation in mind, when we focus more on the theological implications of the emphasis on the local church.

Let me include the second Baptist Principle in this paragraph:

“BELIEVER’S BAPTISM as an act of obedience to our Lord Jesus Christ and a sign of personal repentance, faith and regeneration; it consists of the immersion in water into the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.”

(Handbook 1995/96: 315)

While many things could be said about this principle – not least that it has brought Baptists their name – it does not have much bearing on the topic of ministry and the pastor in Baptist churches. I will restrict my comments to the observation that again no reference is made to the person of the minister. While I have not found the literature explicitly mentioning the role of the pastor concerning baptism, the following statement obviously alludes to it:

“Es ist die Gemeinde, die das Wort predigt und die Sakramente feiert [...] Normalerweise tut sie diese Dinge durch die Person des Predigers, aber nicht allein durch ihn.”

“It is the congregation that preaches the word and celebrates the sacraments [...] Usually it does these things through the person of the preacher, but not exclusively through him.”

(Brandt 1989: 92)

The use of the term “sacraments” is unusual here, especially for German Baptists. Brandt is probably echoing Lutheran definitions of the church. However, he seems to represent a widespread Baptist understanding when he denies any exclusive rights and responsibilities for the pastor with regard to the sacraments.

The Principles of “congregational church government” and the “priesthood of all believers” are the main factors defining or limiting the understanding of the pastor in Baptist churches. I will treat them more comprehensively in separate chapters. This leaves the last two principles for presentation here:

The Individual

The principle of RELIGIOUS LIBERTY, namely that no individual should be coerced either by the State or by any secular, ecclesiastical or religious group in matters of faith. The right of private conscience is to be respected. For each believer this means the right to interpret the Scriptures responsibly and to act in the light of his conscience.”

(Handbook 1995/96: 315)

The idea of freedom of conscience and religion is nowadays highly regarded in the political arena and reflected in many constitutions and bills of rights. Baptists pride themselves in having fought for this idea even before some of the political movements did so. Some Baptists today are not aware of that history and the fact that religious liberty is one of their distinctives.

With regard to my topic, it must be noted that this principle also has repercussions on the position of the pastor: it specifically limits his influence, as it promotes the freedom of any believer to interpret the Scriptures and live his faith according to his own conscience. The principle stands against coercion in matters of faith, thereby opposing systems that give the religious group or its leadership control over the lives of the believers. In the individualistic cultures of Europe and America, though, the principle can be stretched to an extreme: the right of conscience of the individual makes it difficult for the church or its leadership to insist on moral or theological rules. With this strong emphasis on the individual and its freedom of conscience, the question of the role and authority of leadership must be raised.

Brandt clearly emphasizes this freedom in his lectures on Pastoral Theology:

“Diese geistliche Selbständigkeit [...] ist von uns immer geachtet worden. Sie widerspricht zu Recht allen Tendenzen, Schriftauslegung als Monopol ausgebildeter Theologen zu betrachten.”

“This spiritual autonomy [...] has always been respected by us. It rightfully opposes the tendencies to regard the interpretation of Scripture as a monopoly of trained theologians.”

(Brandt 1999: 2)

Brandt is aware of the dangers of this autonomy when he states further that the congregation must be led to read the Scriptures carefully; they must be equipped with Biblical understanding. He also warns against a purely individualistic interpretation, which is not shared in the community of believers. The downsides of this Principle are apparently understood in the German context. However, the theological competence of the pastor is seen as a danger rather than an asset to the maturity of the congregation.

Brandt warns against the dependency on the respective theological teacher and demands that the pastor respect the spiritual competency of the members. Only then can he avoid incapacitating the church members while using his theological competency.

It has become clear that the principle of religious liberty puts a restriction on the authority of the pastor in a Baptist church. Combined with certain scepticism against theological training, as it is found in some Baptist circles, this restriction can discourage the pastor from sharing his theological insights with the congregation. That means that even in his field of studies, the expertise of the pastor does not give him a position of authority.

The Society

As mentioned above, the German Baptists do not formulate the separation of church and state in a separate item in their list of Baptist Principles. The Baptist Union of South Africa, however, presents it as follows:

“The principle of SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE in that, in the providence of God, the two differ in their respective natures and functions. The Church is not to be identified with the State nor is it, in its faith or practice, to be directed or controlled by the State. The State is responsible for administering justice, ensuring an orderly community, and promoting the welfare of its citizens. The Church is responsible for preaching the Gospel and for demonstrating and making known God’s will and care for all mankind.”

(Handbook 1995/96: 315)

A proper interpretation of this principle has to take the historical and political context into account. This Principle has been formulated against a background of very intimate relations between church and state in the history of Christianity in Europe. Baptists have always fought against the dominance of political leaders within the church. In addition, they often suffered exclusion from the privileges that state churches enjoyed.

When applied to the present political context, one immediately hears the difference between the European and the South African situation. In Germany, Baptists find themselves in the confusing reality of a highly secularized society on the one hand, while on the other, the two dominating churches (Roman

Catholic and Protestant) still enjoy certain privileges and benefits. With the principle of separation of state and church, German Baptists question these privileges; they see their strength in the independence from the State.

“Die Stärke der freikirchlichen Position liegt in der Unabhängigkeit vom Staat und den politischen Machthabern.”

“The strength of the position of a free church is the independence from the state and the political powers.”

(Der Bund 1992: 119)

At the same time, German Baptists claim a prophetic role of the church in their society, primarily as it must remind the political powers of their limitations, and raise its voice against structural injustices. We hear the background of totalitarian political regimes in Germany in the twentieth century in the statement:

“verweisen sie die Machthaber und Ordnungen dieser Welt in die Vorläufigkeit und entzaubern ihre Ideologien.”

“they remind the mighty and rulers of this world of their transience, and reveal their ideologies.”

(Der Bund 1992: 119)

This is an understanding of the separation between church and state that does not allow the church to withdraw from the world. On the same note, speakers from the Baptist Convention of South Africa criticise the Baptist Union’s interpretation of the principle. In her paper on “An Overview of Baptist Principles in Historical Context”, Kretzschmar points out:

“Thus, at a time (1987) when many Christians were being harassed by the State for their struggle for the civic liberties of black South Africans, the predominantly white Baptist Union Assembly ratified a privatised and abstract formulation of the doctrine of the separation of Church and State.”

(Kretzschmar et al. 1997: 40)

More than any other, this Principle must be interpreted in a given historical and political context. The publications from South Africa have to reflect the

Apartheid realities and the conflict between black and white. Where they do not, this failure in itself becomes a reason for suspicion and criticism against them.

I will not go further into the debate on this Principle. Suffice it to point to the fact that, of course, the perception of the public role of a Baptist pastor stems from the answer one gives to the questions above. How a Baptist pastor interacts with the local political authorities, is based on his own understanding of this Principle. The Baptist Convention of South Africa has taken a clear stand that its theology and church ministry must be relevant and contextual. It has understood its call to become involved in the transformation of society. This allows a different perspective on the political role of the church and the pastor than a pure proclamation of separation of church and state.

This chapter has proved that all the Baptist Principles have implications for the understanding of the church and its ministry. While some of them have been treated here briefly, the two remaining will receive broader attention, as they are the defining factors for the ministry of Baptist pastors.

2. The Priesthood of all Believers

Introduction

Probably the Baptist Principle that is quoted most frequently is the one about the “priesthood of all believers”. While the term is obviously derived from Biblical passages, it offers less clarity than it suggests. Wherever it is referred to, it begs for explanation, and literature research has revealed a host of different ways of explaining the concept. In this chapter, I will present a number of these explanations in their contexts.

Morris, *Ministers of God*

In the second chapter of his research on the New Testament understanding of ministry, Morris states that “the one basic ministry is that of Christ himself” (Morris 1968: 25). He provides evidence by showing that all ministerial titles are in the first place used for Christ, among them the title “priest”. Christ has the final priesthood as he offers himself as a sacrifice. After finding that nowhere in the New Testament is an individual Christian called a “priest”, he comes to the conclusion that this title is reserved for Christ: “His is the only priesthood in the Christian church” (Morris 1968: 30).

It then comes as a paradox and surprise that the New Testament introduces the concept of the “priesthood of all believers”. Morris attaches two meanings to it: negatively, it excludes the need for mediators – no one can or should stand between the individual and God, because all believers are priests. And positively it means that all believers must sacrifice themselves to God.

Underpinning these two meanings is an understanding of the role of the priests in Israel in Old Testament times. Priests had special authority from God to enter the temple and stand before God on behalf of the people. They were involved in the ritual sacrifices in the Old Testament religion. From there,

Morris derives their role as mediators, as they represented the people of Israel to God. Morris concludes clearly that no such designation is given to any human being in the New Testament. He summarizes his findings by saying that the New Testament knows no privileged caste with special rights of access to God. (Morris 1968: 35-36)

The role of the Old Testament priests has been taken by two different entities in the New Testament: On the one hand, Jesus Christ is presented as the priest, the mediator and the sacrifice. On the other hand, the whole body of believers is called priesthood and is called to be a sacrifice. Morris applies this latter understanding to the ministry, when he states: “The whole church must do what the ministry is doing.” (Morris 1968: 37) Reflecting on this statement, he insists that this is not an individualistic understanding of priesthood, but a corporate one, as it does not hand the priesthood to “each believer”, but to “all believers”. We will see later, how Baptist theology has often crossed this line and interpreted the principle in an individualistic way.

The strength and the limitation of Morris’ work is that he confines himself to the exegetical task of finding out what the Bible says about ministry. Only in chapter 7, he applies his understanding to the church realities in our time. There he adds one aspect to the priesthood of all believers, namely that it disqualifies the term “lay” for church members. There can be no “lay”, since everyone is a “priest”.

British Baptists

In his book *Radical Believers*, Beasley-Murray treats the question of “authority among Baptists” in chapter 5. In his presentation of “Theological Principles”, he concedes that we do not have a normative New Testament model for the church. However, he names some basic ecclesiological principles in the New Testament, among them the priesthood of all believers. In a typically Baptist way, he unfolds it in negative statements such as “no need for any human

mediator” and “no one spiritual elite” (Beasley-Murray 1992: 60-61). What the Baptists reject is primarily the concept of a need for mediation between God and the human being.

In the introduction to chapter 7, Beasley-Murray introduces a new category, as he spells out the priesthood of all believers as “equal access to God” and “equal responsibility to serve God” (Beasley-Murray 1992: 86). “Equality” can be seen as the key concept that forms the Baptist understanding of the priesthood of all believers. As all are put on the same level of dignity, there is no longer room for inequality that may lead to injustice. It should not be too difficult to prove the close relationship of these theological statements to the political movements since the 18th century that have claimed equal rights for all citizens.

In his recent article in *The Baptist Quarterly*, Wright confirms this interpretation of the priesthood of all believers, but adds another aspect:

“It affirms that all believers have living access to God through Christ in the Spirit and so have a freedom and an authority of their own. [...] The priesthood of all by no means excludes the calling of some to particular office and to leadership”
(Wright 2001: 163-164)

“Access to God” is another one of the key terms to describe the consequences of the principle and exclude the need for a human mediator. However, Wright explicitly gives room for the special callings and offices in the church. Apparently, he represents a stream in Baptist theology that responds to extreme interpretations of the principle. They consider the equality of all members to be overstretched when interpreted as the “pastorate of all believers”. Wright stands up against these tendencies and states: “But Scripture is clear that some, and not all, are called to particular offices and ministries.” (Wright 2001: 164)

The authority for this position is taken directly from the Bible in quotations from Ephesians 4:11 and 1 Corinthians 12:28. In the following paragraph, I

will present another example of how the exegesis of the New Testament questions the Baptist understanding of the priesthood of all believers.

Popkes, „Das allgemeine Priestertum der Gläubigen“

Popkes, a leading New Testament scholar among German Baptists, presented a remarkable study on the topic in the ecumenical quarterly *Una Sancta* in 1988. Before going into his exegetical study, Popkes comments on three tendencies in the Baptist understanding of the priesthood of all believers:

- It is anti-authoritarian when it stresses the equality of believers before God, discredits the distinction between clergy and laity and promotes democratic church structures.
- It is anti-hierarchical in its presentation of the variety of gifts in the church and it does not allow for a ranking of gifts according to importance.
- It is anti-sacramentalist by excluding any mediating role in the church and by allowing all acts in the church to be performed by any member.

Popkes points out that this understanding of the principle is obviously an “anti-position” in which the Baptists want to distance themselves from the ecclesiology and church practice of other denominations. Based on this “anti-position”, Baptist explanations of the priesthood of all believers often use only negative formulations of the principle – that is, what Baptists cannot accept in their churches.

Popkes criticizes not only this negativity, but also the narrow scope of Baptist teaching, dwelling as it does on the “all”, failing to bring clarity to the “priesthood”, and not even mentioning the parallel motif of “kingdom/royal”. It is this imbalance in Baptist theology that he wants to redress in his article.

He sets out by presenting a historical study of the term “priest/priesthood”. In the New Testament the terms appear for Christ or for the church as a whole,

never for individuals in the church. Terms for church positions are never taken from the Old Testament cult or compared to Christ's priesthood. This changes progressively in the following centuries, as Old Testament models are introduced into the life of the church, and a class of priests emerges. The change is based on a new interpretation of the sacraments, not on the few passages of the New Testament that mention the "priesthood".

Popkes then leads the reader into a detailed exegesis of two New Testament passages, both of which are quoting from Exodus 19:6. The first one is found in 1 Peter 2:5 and 9:

"you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ [...]
But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light."

Christians are reminded of their high calling to live in holiness. The "Sitz im Leben" of this passage is found in baptismal catechism, where new believers are prepared for church membership and taught about the Christian life. By no means can this passage be read as an ecclesiological model text. Priesthood is understood as status (called to salvation), existence (surrendering your lives) and action (sacrifice in the form of proclamation). It is interesting that this passage not only makes reference to the sacrifices of the priests, but also introduces the element of worship.

The second passage, Popkes gives a detailed investigation, is Revelation 1:5-6:

"To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father - to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen."

The doxology starts with three Christological titles in verses 4-5 and adds three activities of Christ in verses 5-6. The main feature of the priesthood here is the closeness to God, the right to see and serve him. Just as in the above passage,

the priesthood is connected to the kingdom to emphasize the high position of Christians.

In his conclusion, Popkes states that the New Testament passages come from baptismal teachings and aim at encouraging the believers about their status, exhorting them to an appropriate life. They clearly have a worship context, therefore a proper understanding of the priesthood of all believers must lead to worship, not to discussing church organisation. Popkes says explicitly that these New Testament passages do not refer to the later theological debates in church history.

Popkes' conclusion can only be interpreted as a warning against abusing these passages of scripture in the ecclesiological debate. Nevertheless, the principle of the priesthood of all believers has retained its prominence in German Baptist circles. I assume, its appeal lies not least in its use of Biblical terminology.

Other German Baptist voices

A few years prior to Popkes, in 1982, Schütz wrote an article for *Una Sancta*, in which he presented a Baptist view on the ecumenical discussion on "Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry" (BEM). He commends the "Lima Documents" for their emphasis on the "calling of the whole people of God". Schütz summarizes the Baptist ecclesiology by stating that the priesthood of all believers is the basic structure of the church. Ministry must be understood in the plural, and Baptists prove their appreciation of the priesthood of all believers by allowing lay people to preach, lead and administer the sacraments.

In the same series as Popkes, Brandt added the article "Das allgemeine Priestertum im Leben der Baptistengemeinden" (*"The priesthood of all believers in the life of Baptist churches"*). Brandt starts by presenting the "Ekklesiologische Grundposition" (*"Ecclesiological Foundation"*):

“Das allgemeine Priestertum aller Gläubigen ist die der christlichen Gemeinde von ihrem Herrn gegebene Grundstruktur.”

“The priesthood of all believers is the foundational structure given to the Christian Church by the Lord.”

(Brandt 1989: 91)

The church is not constituted by the ministry, but by Christ and by the fellowship of believers called by Him. After looking at the pneumatological foundation of the church and the role of gifts, Brandt discusses the ministry of the pastor within the priesthood of all believers. His emphasis is on integrating the pastor into a “Dienstgemeinschaft (*“community of ministry”*) in the church. The calling does not put the pastor above the church, and it does not allow the distinction between “clergy” and “lay”. This refusal of a higher position of the pastor in the Baptist church is very typically summarised in the statement:

“Es ist die Gemeinde, die das Wort predigt und die Sakramente feiert [...] Normalerweise tut sie diese Dinge durch die Person des Predigers, aber nicht allein durch ihn.”

“It is the congregation that preaches the word and celebrates the sacraments [...] Usually it does these things through the person of the preacher, but not exclusively through him.”

(Brandt 1989: 92)

Brandt represents a Baptist view that is highly critical of the position of the pastor, regarding him as a potential danger to the maturity of a Baptist church, when he warns against “Entmündigung der Gemeinde” (*“incapacitation of the congregation”*).

In his research paper *Das Amtsverständnis des Gemeindepastors im deutschen Baptismus (The understanding of the office of the church pastor among German Baptists)*, Hölzl tries to correct this polarity between priesthood of all believers and ordained ministry. Referring to the Protestant theologian Härle, he concludes:

“Das zeigt, dass Allgemeines Priestertum und ordiniertes Amt einander weder aufheben noch einschränken, sondern bedingen und ergänzen.”

“This shows that priesthood of all believers and ordained ministry do not exclude or limit each other, but presuppose and complement each other.”

(Hölzl 1999: 52)

In his conclusion, Hölzl pleads strongly for a rediscovery and appreciation of the special ministry in the Baptist churches. Against an extreme anticlericalism that creates a polarity between the concepts of priesthood of all believers and ordained ministry, he wants to rediscover the correlation between the two. There is no need to fear the domination by the pastor or the incapacitation of the members. With reference to Stott, Hölzl resumes that “the church is not a universal pastorate” (Hölzl 1999: 86).

Let us now have a closer look at South African Baptist positions regarding this principle.

The Baptist Union of Southern Africa

The priesthood of all believers is the fourth item in the list offered in the *Statement of Baptist Principles*, as adopted in 1987, and is worded thus:

The PRIESTHOOD OF ALL BELIEVERS, by which we understand that each Christian has direct access to God through Christ our High Priest, and shares with Him in His work of reconciliation. This involves intercession, worship, faithful service and bearing witness to Jesus Christ, even to the end of the earth.

(Handbook 1995/96: 315)

Corresponding with abovementioned positions, this statement focuses on “direct access to God”. Harris shows how two key concepts contribute to this understanding:

“The Lordship of Christ and the competency of the person signify that no priest, church or earthly government has a right to interpose itself between God and the human soul.”

(Harris 1996: 61)

Clearly, we find an individualised interpretation of the principle, where the freedom and capacity of the individual believer is held as inalienable. Remarkably though, the principle is connected very closely to the Lordship of Christ, which is understood as “direct, unmediated, undelegated” (Harris 1996: 61). In chapter 4, Harris denounces the view that “priesthood” means only the “right to approach God himself” as too limited, but affirms the “common dignity, calling and privilege of all Christians before God” (Harris 1996: 240).

An undoubted strength of the Baptist Union’s phrasing of the Principle is that it uses positive categories for its explanation: the shared ministry and active participation of all members in prayer, service and missions – Harris adds the term “socio-political involvement”. The anticlerical impetus of the Principle is less prominent in the South African understanding than in the German.

The Baptist Convention of South Africa

At the Winter School of Theology in 1997, Kretzschmar presented “An Overview of Baptist Principles in Historical Context”. After locating the priesthood of all believers historically in the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century, she criticizes the Baptist Union for not giving any practical indications on how to apply it. She continues by addressing specifically the limited role of women and youth in Baptist churches. The equality intended by the principle has never been realised by sectors other than the adult male part in Baptist congregations. I will return to this question in chapter 5 of this part of my thesis. The emphasis on the issue of women and youth participation in Baptist churches is also reflected in the Epilogue of the Winter School book, which summarizes key issues. There, the Principle is interpreted with regard to the equal participation of members:

“The priesthood of all believers means that all the believers in a local church, whether they be men, women or young people, all have duties, responsibilities and a ministry to exercise in the context of the local church.”

(Kretzschmar et al 1997: 272)

Unfortunately, the papers and discussions of this Winter School do not go further in explaining these “duties, responsibilities and a ministry”. However, the emphasis obviously is on the participation of all members. One year prior, in the midst of a discussion on “Rainbow Exegesis”, Richards points to another aspect of the principle:

“We believe in the priesthood of the believer, freedom of conscience and all those good Baptist principles? We as Baptists claim that what the Moruti (pastor) says and what the church member says has equal validity! Or don’t we believe this?”

(Kretzschmar and Richards 1996: 36)

Richards attaches a new meaning to the principle when he compares the authority of statements made by church members and by the pastor. The priesthood of all believers has thus been turned into the democratic principle of equality of voice. This notion is not developed further, but from personal experience I can confirm that Baptist congregations often insist on this understanding.

At the Winter School of Theology in 1999, Hayashida extends the principle further and explicitly calls all church members “preachers”. In his paper on “Relevant Preaching” he broadens the concept of preaching to “proclamation [...] by deed as well as by word, by the arts as well as by presence” (Msiza et al 1999: 48-49). In this sense he claims a “preacherhood of all believers” and nearly doctrinal validity of this principle:

“The hallmark of the Christian church is its inclusivity, the laos, the people.”

(Msiza et al 1999: 49)

Just as the latter point touches only indirectly on the priesthood of all believers, I find that the extensive debates at the Winter Schools of Theology refer only seldom directly to the principle. The Baptist Convention is mainly concerned about the topics of church government, leadership, the calling, the training and the position of the pastor. The priesthood of all believers has engendered comparatively little debate. However, in a different way, it has been incorporated in the Mission Statement of the Baptist Convention, as it was accepted in 1994:

“The Baptist Convention of South Africa is a Fellowship of member churches whose mission is to develop and proclaim a holistic, Afrocentric, and participatory understanding of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and thereby equip its constituencies to facilitate the dynamic transformation of societies.”

(Hoffmeister and Kretzschmar 1995: 1)

The term “participatory understanding” is then unfolded:

“ As [...] Baptists we believe in the priesthood of all believers [...] As disciples of Jesus Christ we all have gifts and ministries to contribute to the edification and mission of the Church. [...] We are to participate in the work of the Church because we are called to be followers and disciples, not mere observers.”

(Hoffmeister and Kretzschmar 1995: 2)

The principle of the priesthood of all believers is integrated in the self-concept of the Baptist Convention. However, it has not been investigated and explained thoroughly. I evaluate its interpretation in terms of the participation of all members as too limiting.

Baptist World Alliance

The “Study and Research Division” of the Baptist World Alliance has published the book *We Baptists* reflecting “the views of the representatives of six BWA study commissions on issues which define contemporary Baptist identity and practice around the globe.” (About Us 2006)

We Baptists mentions the negative definition of the principle, when it claims, “neither priest nor church stands between God and the individual Christian” (We Baptists: 21). However, it puts much more emphasis on a positive definition of the church as priesthood:

“it goes to God on behalf of humankind, and to humankind on behalf of God. It has a worshipping and witnessing function.”
(We Baptists: 29)

Here we find a twofold interpretation of priesthood, which is then later applied to the individual Christian:

“Each believer is a priest, both before God for oneself and by caring for fellow believers and for persons in the world for whom Christ died.”
(We Baptists: 63)

In the same chapter, the ministry of the priest is described as service and not as rule. The priesthood is understood as a mutual ministry among the Christians. It remains unclear where these definitions of “priest” come from, and how they relate to Biblical passages. I find it rather surprising that Baptist scholars turn to such a positive concept of “priest” whereas we found that the New Testament does not suggest the use of the word for individual Christians at all. The priesthood of all believers has here clearly been turned into the “priesthood of each believer”. It seems the document speaks of “priest” when it describes the mission or ministry of the church and each believer.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I need to return to the introductory sentences of this chapter. It is now proved that there are a great variety of interpretations to the Principle of the priesthood of all believers. We also discovered a broad stream of anticlerical and egalitarian understandings of the principle. Many times, the explanations are more negative than positive, and obviously they differ strongly when it comes to the specific applications. German Baptists come from a strong anti-position, but have produced interesting attempts at

rediscovering the principle. The exegetical groundwork by Popkes still awaits a wider reception and practical application. The positive correlation of the priesthood of all believers and the special ministry of the pastor has to be defined in order to avoid fruitless confrontation and extremism.

“What makes the pastor special, when the whole church is a priesthood?” – that could be the question that it boils down to. My thesis works on that question, especially in part C, where I attempt to present the “marks of the pastor”.

3. Congregational Church Government

Introduction

The other Principle that is used to describe the Baptist ecclesiology is mostly called “Congregational Church Government”. In order to discuss this topic of the authority of and within the church, one needs to take a closer look at the Baptist understanding of the church in general. Baptists clearly prefer to speak about the local church, and lack enthusiasm when dealing with the larger bodies or the church as a whole. The Principle does not mention the *nota ecclesiae*, the theologically defined marks of the church. The Baptist distinctive is not seen in a special definition of church, but rather in the attribution of authority to the local church. One aspect of the discussion is the question whether or not the term “democracy” describes the Baptist church structure appropriately.

It needs to be noted in this introduction that the German literature has a different title and emphasis for this principle:

“Die Selbständigkeit der Ortsgemeinde, daher kein mit besonderen Befugnissen ausgestatteter kirchlicher Überbau”

“The autonomy of the local church, therefore no hierarchical church structure with special higher authorities”

(Walter 1995: 19)

We will observe how this different emphasis is reflected in the explanations from German Baptists compared to others. I will attempt to show the difference by formulating two leading questions for this chapter:

- Who has the authority for decisions *in* a local Baptist church?
- Is there any authority *over* the local church in a Baptist system?

Congregational church government can mean the authority of the assembly of the members of the congregation in all matters of a local church, or the authority of a local congregation in all matters of the church at large. We will

find the first interpretation as the prevalent use of the term and the main object of investigation in this thesis.

“The Baptist Way of Being the Church”

I consider Beasley-Murray’s book *Radical Believers* as one of the contemporary classics on Baptist theology. As the subtitle “The Baptist Way of Being the Church” suggests, ecclesiology is at the heart of his Baptist self-concept. In chapter 5, Beasley-Murray treats the issue of authority among Baptists with the title “Living under the Lordship of Christ”. Before entering into any discussion of church structures and authorities, he lays the foundation by stating: “God rules his people”. And again, under the “Theological Principles”, after conceding that there is not only one New Testament model for the church, he presents the “Biblical Principles”, starting with the “Lordship of Christ”.

There is no doubt that Baptists want to hold up this basic understanding of theocracy as God’s rule in and over the church. They see the congregational church government as one of the ways to express God’s rule, but undoubtedly as the best way.

Beasley-Murray explicitly warns against confusing the congregational model with a democratic structure and reminds the reader of the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the judgements of God that prevail over the church meeting. He concludes his explanation of the topic with the statement:

“ultimate authority under God rests in the meeting together of the church’s members, and not - as some would suggest - with the elders or other leaders within the church.”

(Beasley-Murray 1992: 65)

He strongly reinforces his point with New Testament examples and presents the practical implementation of the thesis. He argues for the church meeting and its decision-making role with passages from the books of Acts and 1

Corinthians. After that, he comments critically on New Testament passages that support the authoritative role of leaders in the church, suggesting that they are “not as unambiguous as they might at first sight seem” (Beasley-Murray 1992: 63).

We need to ask whether his proof texts for the church meeting would withstand a similar critical investigation. I find the results of Beasley-Murray’s exegesis not very convincing. Perhaps his desire to find proof for the Baptist church model in the New Testament makes him interpret the texts according to his preconceived understanding. He pushes the model very hard when he speaks of “ultimate authority” – immediately limiting it by saying “under God”. The combination of these concepts looks like a contradiction in itself. A similar redundancy of absolute terms is seen in the next quotation:

“Although the service of elders and deacons is to lead, they are always ultimately subject to the church meeting which in the Baptist understanding of the church, always has the primacy.”
(Beasley-Murray 1992: 93)

This use of terms shows the dogmatic weight that the congregational church structure has for the author. Beasley-Murray only allows little discussion of it in the inserted text boxes called “To Think About”. However, he is consistent when he spends many pages unfolding this model and describing in detail how the church meeting works and what its agenda should be. He calls it a “demanding and exciting model”, nevertheless concedes that “Baptists do not always live up to their ideals”, and in conclusion claims that “there is no finer instrument for discovering the mind of Christ.” (Beasley-Murray 1992: 72)

In this book, we hear a pure Congregationalist presenting the “Baptist way of being the church” with strong conviction and all arguments to defend his case. I will compare that to other Baptist positions, and especially enquire into the understanding of “theocracy”, “democracy” and leadership in this Baptist ecclesiology.

Confirmation and Criticism

Turner's presentation *Baptist Beliefs and Customs* confirms Beasley-Murray's position that congregational church government is the Biblical and best order for the church. In chapter eight, Turner mentions weaknesses and dangers of the model, but generally does not question it. Contrary to Beasley-Murray, he uses the term "democratic" to describe congregationalism:

"This church is an autonomous body, operating through democratic processes under Lord-ship of Jesus Christ."
(Turner 1987: 16)

In the chapter on "Church Government", Turner unfolds his understanding of local church government explicitly with a view to democracy. His positive emphasis on the democratic character of congregationalism could stem from his American background or be related to the African context in which his book is published. It must be noted that while Turner rigorously claims the decision-making power for the church membership, he also deals extensively with the qualifications, nature and authority of the church leaders. Turner holds the pastor in high regard as the leader of the church, but at the same time he limits the powers of the pastor. This ambiguity and the priority of the congregation is evident in the passage about baptism:

"The church, not the pastor, should decide who is admitted into its fellowship. The pastor is the spiritual leader of the congregation. The congregation usually accepts his advice concerning who should be baptized. However, he does not have authority to baptize them without church approval."
(Turner 1987: 41)

Turner also puts clear restrictions on the committees within the church: they must be chosen very carefully and never be given too much power.

While Turner is a typical example of the Congregationalist understanding of the church, Wright takes a critical look at the Baptists' "distaste for hierarchy".

This is one of the six “persistent sticking points” in the Baptist ecclesiology that he treats in his intention to “offer a robust doctrine of ministry”. He addresses the realities of congregational church government, when he points out:

“All groups beyond a certain size create hierarchies [...] to manage their own affairs and activities [...] We cannot avoid therefore an element of superordination and subordination and neither should we try to. We should rather establish healthy and accountable ways of managing power.”

(Wright 2001: 167)

Wright gives examples from committee and church meetings led by a chairperson, and warns against exchanging legitimate rule for an illegitimate one. He also reminds Baptists of the “rule in Christ” – I assume that this is how he formulates the “Lordship of Christ”.

Wright uses a sociological approach and argumentation in this point, and not a strictly Biblical or theological one. However, he is very convincing in questioning the “Baptist mantra” of “no hierarchy”. He clearly raises the question of how to organise and manage the decision-making processes in the church. Even a democratic structure is in need of reflection and clarification of these processes. Congregational church government cannot be taken as a simple solution to these questions.

Harris’ investigation of the Baptist Union of Southern Africa summarizes this topic with an interesting conclusion:

“in Baptist structures there has developed a need to balance the foundation of congregationalism with a leadership structure that directs without detracting from every member participation.”

(Harris 1996: 230)

It is important to admit that the Baptist principle of congregational church government inherently collides with the need and reality of leadership. Harris does not suggest that Baptists can take sides in this collision of principles, but

rather that they need to find a balance and elaborate it. This is repeated in the concluding chapter where he makes the proposal:

“Fourthly, Baptists need to strive for a greater consistency in their understanding of ministry. A far more articulate presentation of the balance between congregationalism and elected leadership, inclusive of the ordained ministry, needs to be made.”

(Harris 1996: 329)

I will now investigate how the Baptist Convention of South Africa has discussed the topic at their annual Winter School of Theology in 1997.

Winter School of Theology 1997

In her “Overview of Baptist Principles in Historical Context”, Kretzschmar compares the congregational with the episcopal system of church government. She shows the strengths and weaknesses of both systems with regard to practical realities of church life and especially in the context of apartheid South Africa. She concludes by saying:

“In order for Congregational government to work effectively, it is vital that members and leaders of churches be properly educated and empowered so that they can exercise their ministries in a harmonious and effective way.”

(Kretzschmar et al 1997: 36)

The Winter School of Theology devoted another full plenary session and time for large group and small group discussions to the topic of “Baptist Church Government”. Looking at this time allocation, we can conclude that the principle of congregational church government was of primary concern within the Baptist Convention at that time. The concluding chapter of the report booklet from this Winter School of Theology confirms this priority when it spends three of five pages on this topic. It also offers a short definition of the principle: “the local congregation as a whole is the basic decision-making body” (Kretzschmar et al 1997: 272).

Msiza, principal of the Baptist Convention College in Soweto, introduces his topic as a controversial one, before he defines it as “the democracy in the local church”. He reveals the “belief of the competency of the soul” as the foundation for this principle. Every member has the competence to take its own decisions even in matters of faith. Msiza uses the New Testament passage from Acts 6:1-6 as a scriptural basis: “Seemingly this was one of the practices in the early church, to involve every member in decision making.” (Kretzschmar et al 1997: 59) He then confirms the Lordship of Christ as the overruling principle and restricts the freedom of the members as a “freedom which is governed by the Holy Scriptures in the unity of God the Holy Spirit” (Kretzschmar et al 1997: 60)

Msiza lists theological concepts that go together with the principle of congregational church government: “Creation in the image of God” gives every person the capacity and responsibility of their own choices; “revelation of God” is given not to a restricted group of people, but to every member in the church. In both his lists of positive and negative things about the principle, the first remark shows the dilemma of power struggles in the church:

- “This principle prevents the misuse of power by the church leaders”
- “It can promote the exploitation and oppression of the leadership. This can happen when the congregations choose to disregard the position and the responsibility placed upon the leadership.”

(Kretzschmar et al 1997: 61-62)

Msiza is fair enough to concede that whoever is given the power in the church, is in danger of abusing it. In a similar manner, he admits that the freedom of participation allowed by congregational church government does not only propagate growth and responsibility, but can also retard progress.

After referring specifically to the gender inequality, which has not been overcome by Baptists as they apply the principle, he then introduces suggestions for contextualization:

“In an African context (South Africa) the people will always respect the suggestions by the leadership [...] The African context believes in leadership which speaks and gives direction [...] people are involved in processes which lead to decision making, but they would always want to know the mind of the leadership.”

(Kretzschmar et al 1997: 63-64)

Msiza suggests that congregational church government in an African context will never be understood in a rigid way as to undermine leadership. However, he gives no further suggestions how this togetherness of participation and direction could be made fruitful. The large group discussion following Msiza’s paper reflects his concerns especially with regard to the acceptance of women in Baptist church leadership. It also brings up general questions like the following:

“What is congregation? Individual churches or the Convention of churches? Is the pastor over or part of the congregation?”

(Kretzschmar et al 1997: 67)

Several speakers raise a new topic by pointing to the fact that in Baptist churches we find not only the two levels of leadership which are the pastor and the congregation, but an additional one which can be seen in the executive or the committees or the deacons. The small group discussions that followed Msiza’s presentation reflect this wider scope of the question and hold a lot of material for the deeper understanding of the issue as it presents itself in and to the Baptist Convention of South Africa.

One discussion group has collected long lists of statements concerning pastors and concerning committees and the congregation. While they show a broad spectre of differing positions, I find a tendency to strengthen the leadership role of the pastor, balanced by a desire to improve the communication and

cooperation of all parties involved in church leadership. The following examples underline my interpretation:

- “The pastor (& spouse) are to lead, to participate and oversee. We must have a new structure to empower the pastor and leaders to lead.”
- “The pastor must not feel threatened by strong leaders, but allow and challenge others to use their gifts and abilities.”
- “The church members and the pastor form a team with the pastor as the coach.”

(Kretzschmar et al 1997: 69-71)

The other discussion group used a more systematic approach to the topic and dealt with some underlying questions like the models of church government, and the question of appointment or election of the pastor. The models show that between the pastor and the church members, Baptist churches also have the level of an executive committee or elders and deacons. The group comes to the following conclusion:

“that some of the problems [...] are not caused so much by Congregational church government, but rather by the fact that it is a Presbyterian form of government that is operating in our churches, whereby the executive committee holds the power in the church.”

(Kretzschmar et al 1997: 75)

In the closing section, the group lists the duties of the three parties within the church and clearly limits the executive committee to a supportive and advisory role.

Obviously the issue of church government has touched a weak spot in the BCSA and caused much debate at the Winter School of Theology 1997. The final chapter of the book presents a summary: “Some Key Issues that arose at the 1997 Winter School of Theology that have relevance to the Baptist Convention of South Africa” uses four of these five pages to repeat the discussions about church government. It ends with a list of fifteen questions on

the topic, ranging from rather general and theological to highly specific and practical. For example:

- “What is the congregation, does this refer only to the local congregation or to the whole gathering of Baptist Convention churches?”
- “Ought we to have both elders and deacons in our churches or is it enough to have an executive committee?”
- “What can a local church do if a pastor has become ineffective, lazy, unjust or dictatorial?”
(Kretzschmar et al 1997: 274-275)

As a conclusion for my research, it must be stated that the congregational church government is a hotly debated issue within the BCSA and seemingly raises more questions than clear answers about its general and practical meaning.

Brandt’s Conviction

As we have seen in the previous chapter, Brandt represents a German Baptist conviction with an anti-clerical tendency. In his article “Das allgemeine Priestertum im Leben der Baptistengemeinden”, he confirms this position with regard to the congregational church government. His specific emphasis shows in the headline of part five: “Die mündige Gemeinde” (“*The mature church*”). In order to be able to fulfil its responsibility for the teaching and life of the church, the congregation must strive for spiritual maturity through Bible study and sharing. Brandt elevates the “spiritual competency” of all members above the specific expertise and competencies of certain individuals in the church. This is clearly a limitation of the authority of the pastor, but Brandt tries to bind it to the demand for maturity in the church. He repeats this connection when he explains that this model of consensus democracy is based on the theological conviction that only the mature church can live its calling in the world. It seems, though, that Brandt refuses to even think of the possibility of the church failing in this regard.

In notes from his lectures in 1999, he explains that consensus democracy for him is an expression of pneumatocracy, as it is not mainly about democratic procedures, but about the guidance by the Holy Spirit. He emphasizes the necessity of maturity within the congregation and holds the pastor responsible for the empowerment of the members. The pastor must help the members to mature and not make them depend upon him as their only teacher. Brandt goes so far as to claim that the church leaders always have to plead with the Spirit-filled and Spirit-guided congregation for approval and agreement. I regard this as an extreme Congregationalist understanding.

Other German voices

Hölzl has based his thesis on much historical research, but also an interesting spectre of contemporary Baptist and other voices. He himself sees a tension between the Congregationalist structures on the one hand and the high appreciation of pastors in Baptist churches on the other. Historically, the three founding fathers of the German Baptists seem to have differing understandings of church government. While Oncken insists on a strong lay leader, Lehmann and Koebner seem to have favoured a plurality in leadership by a committee. The institution of a powerful, long-term lay leader in the church next to - and sometimes above or against - the pastor, seems to be a particular German Baptist development. Critically it is sometimes called the “papacy of the elder” and is therefore often met with the demand for a plurality in the leadership. Rust reminds Baptists to rediscover an Episcopal tradition where certain people have special leadership responsibility (Hölzl 1999: 79).

In chapter 7, Hölzl presents different protestant models of church government, based on Grudem’s Systematic Theology. After an overview of Episcopalianism, Presbyterianism and Congregationalism, he unfolds the latter into five models:

1. The Single Elder Model (pastor leads)
2. The Plural Elder Model (pastor is one among the elders)

3. The Corporate Board Model (board of directors employs the pastor)
4. Pure Democracy
5. No Government

Hölzl concludes that Baptist churches usually claim to use model 1 or 2, while in reality they rather have models 3 to 5. As a matter of fact, the issue of how Baptist churches are led or governed, shows to be much more debatable than the Baptist Principles suggest.

Conclusion

As in the conclusion about the priesthood of all believers, it must be stated that the Principle of congregational church government far from answers the questions of Baptist church life. It is sometimes interpreted as a system of consensus democracy, and as such is based on the belief in the “competency of the soul (= individual church member)”. It calls for a high level of commitment and spiritual maturity on the part of the members, and it limits the pastor to the role of a facilitator and coach for a mature congregation. However, the reality of Baptist churches raises questions about a purist Congregationalist ecclesiology and about the distribution and use of power in the church. There is a broad discussion about the role of executive committees and elders in the Baptist church, but still relatively little on the positioning of the pastor within these leadership groups.

4. German Baptist theology in *Rechenschaft vom Glauben*

The background

Baptists have a very delicate relationship towards creeds. From their origins they have regarded the creeds of the church as endangering the sole authority of the scriptures. In their radical understanding of the reformation of the church they have not only refuted the Roman Catholic insistence on the normative power of church tradition, but also criticized the Protestant development towards a dogmatic authority of creedal formulations. At the same time, Baptists have not completely done without creeds, as we can easily deduce from the long list of Baptist “Confessions of Faith” as they are usually called. The German Baptists have produced an outstanding document in that category: *Rechenschaft vom Glauben* (“*Account of Faith*”). It was drawn up by an international committee consisting of members of the Baptist Unions of Austria, Switzerland, the German Democratic Republic and the Federal Republic of Germany. It was then discussed at three consecutive assemblies in West Germany in the years 1975 to 1977; in May 1977 it was finally accepted and recommended for use in the churches. Since then it has been reprinted several times and has only been slightly changed once: after the reunification of the East and West German Unions, when their different versions of the article on baptism made a revision necessary, which has resulted in a completely new version of that article. Apart from that, this creed has proved to be a strong unifying document that is widely used in Baptist churches and publications in the German-speaking unions.

The prologue

The document introduces itself to the reader in two short paragraphs preceding the main text. They present firstly a Baptist definition of “creed” and then a short methodological foundation. In the following, I quote the first part:

“Dieses Glaubensbekenntnis ist Ausdruck und Zeugnis der Übereinstimmung der Gemeinden im Glauben. Es kann also nicht selbst Gegenstand des Glaubens oder bindendes Glaubensgesetz sein. Als zusammenfassende Auslegung der Heiligen Schrift wird es durch diese begründet und begrenzt. Es setzt das Apostolische Glaubensbekenntnis als gemeinsames Bekenntnis der Christenheit voraus und bleibt offen für die künftige Bekundung der Wahrheit.”

“This creed is an expression of and testimony for the consensus of the churches in matters of faith. It can therefore not itself be an object of faith or a binding rule of the faith. As a summarizing explanation of the Holy Scriptures it is founded on and limited by them. It has as its precondition the Apostolic Creed as a common confession of the whole of Christianity, and it remains open for future expressions of the truth.”

(Rechenschaft: 1)

With this prologue, the editors reveal pillars of Baptist theology and ecclesiology: as much as the radical Protestants cannot accept an absolute authority of any document of the church outside the scriptures of the Bible, the specific Baptist position is seen in the reference to the “consensus of the churches”. The German Baptists then show their ecumenical standing on the basis of the Apostolic Creed, which is also printed in a German authorized version on page 2 of the *Rechenschaft vom Glauben*. As with the Baptist Principles, this document also explicitly binds Baptists together with other Christian churches and does not allow Baptists an exclusive claim to the truth of their faith.

An overview

Rechenschaft vom Glauben is divided into three parts, centring on the kingdom of God. Part One, “Die Aufrichtung der Gottesherrschaft” (“*The establishment of the Kingdom of God*”), presents God’s revelation in Jesus Christ, the sin and salvation of humankind, God’s creation and covenants and His word, the Bible. Part Two, “Das Leben unter der Gottesherrschaft” (“*The Life under the Rule of God*”), is divided into subparts about the church of Jesus Christ and the Christians in the world. It contains the ecclesiology and the theological ethics

of German Baptists. Part Three, “Die Vollendung der Gottesherrschaft” (“*The perfection of the kingdom of God*”), presents the eschatology.

It is obvious that the *Rechenschaft* follows neither the traditional Baptist Principles nor the classical topics of systematic or dogmatic theology. As much as it is centred on the concept of the kingdom of God, it is also predominantly Christological in its layout. Over and above these key categories, it expands widely on the life of the Christian church and individual. About one third of the whole document is formed by the part about the church.

Within this part, we find a chapter each about the mission of the church, the proclamation, baptism, the Lord’s Supper, ministry, counselling and church discipline and the unity of the church. It is important to recognize that this strong emphasis on the church is expanded on more than four pages of the 14-page document. Seeing how generous the *Rechenschaft* is in dealing with matters of ecclesiology, one expects a broad explanation about the ministry of the church. In my view, the chapter on “Geistesgaben, Dienste und Ordnungen” (“*Spiritual gifts, ministries and orders*”) remains surprisingly short.

Focus on the congregation

In good Baptist tradition, *Rechenschaft* gives the church a prominent place in its presentation of faith. In the following, I will show how this ecclesiology is unfolded in seven topics. Firstly, the formation of the church is described in “Sammlung und Sendung der Gemeinde” (“*Gathering and sending of the congregation*”). It should be noted that the text uses the German term “Gemeinde” (“*congregation*”) throughout, and avoids to say “Kirche” (“*church*”). It may be a peculiarity of the German language and theology, but also shows a specific Baptist emphasis on the local church as it congregates in a given place. Even the words used, express theological emphasis not on the church in a global sense, but focused on the visible local congregation.

The first paragraph describes how God calls human beings, Christ gathers them for fellowship and ministry and the Holy Spirit enables them to live under God's rule. The answer of the church is presented as worship and repentance, and leads to the sending of the church. The sending consists of proclamation in word and deed ("Evangelisation und Diakonie"), prayer and intercession for the whole world. The last sentence reminds the reader again that every member of the church is called to preach the Gospel. The next part, "Verkündigung und Unterweisung" ("*Proclamation and Teaching*") unfolds the mission of the church in the twofold task of public proclamation of the Gospel and Biblical education of the church members and the children. It is presented purely as the activity of the Lord Jesus Christ himself: He builds His kingdom, gives His word, shows His love and gives His Spirit; He calls to follow and obey, and calls unbelievers to a decision of faith and commitment of their lives.

It is noteworthy that the whole passage on proclamation and teaching does not mention the ministers of the word at all. I have found a similar approach in the passage on ministry: there the church has the active role, while regarding proclamation and teaching the Lord is the sole origin.

Baptism and the Lord's Supper are each treated in separate parts, again with a strictly Christological approach. After these chapters comes the above-mentioned part on "Geistesgaben, Dienste und Ordnungen", which I will scrutinize in detail hereunder. It is followed by the part "Seelsorge und Gemeindeglieder" ("*Pastoral Care and Church Discipline*"), where the counselling task of the church and church discipline as a consequence of it are described. The opening statement refers to the responsibility of the church:

“Der ganzen Gemeinde ist die Seelsorge an ihren Gliedern anvertraut.”

“The pastoral care of its members is entrusted to the whole church.”

(Rechenschaft: 11)

Again, the church is the grammatical and logical subject of all activities in this area, specifically when coming to executing church discipline. There is no mention of ministers, not even in the sentences on pastoral care,.

The last part, “Der eine Leib Christi und die getrennten Kirchen” (“*The one body of Christ and the divided churches*”) deals with the reality of different denominations – in this case the term “Kirchen” (“churches”) is explicitly used. First, the local church is called the manifestation of the one body of Jesus Christ. Then, the reality of different churches is explained as part of God’s working in a variety of ways. Finally, *Rechenschaft* admits that the separation between Christians must also be seen as error and guilt on all sides. Prayer for renewal, more mutual respect and a unity in witness and service are demanded.

I return to a closer investigation of the paragraph that contains the German Baptists’ theology of ministry. From observations in the other parts of the document, I already have the key question:

Where are the ministers?

The first paragraph of the part “Geistesgaben, Dienste und Ordnungen” (“*spiritual gifts, ministries and orders*”) speaks about the gifts given to all members of the church through the experience of God’s grace. It lists particularly gifts of proclamation and teaching, love and caring, leading and prophecy (“Gaben der Verkündigung und Lehre, der Liebe und Fürsorge, der Leitung und der aktuellen Weisung”). Immediately it reminds the reader that the Holy Spirit empowers the whole church with these gifts and does not leave any member without a gift. The paragraph closes with an emphatic statement:

“Das allgemeine Priestertum aller Gläubigen ist die der christlichen Gemeinde von ihrem Herrn gegebene Grundstruktur.”

“The priesthood of all believers is the basic structure given to the Christian church by the Lord.”

(Rechenschaft: 10)

This paragraph sets the tone for the whole topic of ministry by focusing on the giftedness and priesthood of all believers. Even when it mentions specific gifts, it compiles them in a long list and avoids mentioning individual carriers of gifts.

A similar anonymity of ministry is found in the next paragraph. Only three sentences cover the field of ministry before the following paragraph moves into the topic of the autonomy of the local church. The main sentence about the ministry says:

“Die christliche Gemeinde beruft geeignete Männer und Frauen, deren besondere Begabung durch den Heiligen Geist und Berufung durch Gott sie erkennt, in spezielle Dienste und bildet sie dazu aus.”

“The Christian church calls suitable men and women, whose particular giftedness by the Holy Spirit and calling by God it recognizes, into special ministries, and trains them for these.”

(Rechenschaft: 10)

As short as this theology of ministry is, the sentence requires careful interpretation to uncover what it confesses and also what it omits. The grammatical subject of the sentence is the “Christian church” – thus the German Baptists claim to be in agreement with other Christian churches’ confessions and practices. At the same time, *Rechenschaft* shows the particular Baptist emphasis: ministry is always and foremost the ministry of the church, ordered by the church and oriented towards the mission of the church. The next paragraph makes it clear that in Baptist practice it must be the autonomous local congregation that is active here.

Its activity is described with the verbs “beruft” (“calls”), “bildet aus” (“trains”) and “erkennt” (“recognizes”). In the next sentence the congregation’s activity is described with the term “ordnet” (“puts in order” or “structures”). Nowhere are the ministers the acting subject of the ministry. While the term “calling” is at the heart of Christian ministry, it is rather unusual that the “calling” is seen

primarily as an act of the church. Only in the subordinate clause are we referred to the “calling by God”. The latter must come prior to the calling by the church, which “recognizes” this divine call. However, as the grammar of this sentence subordinates the divine activity, it allows the church to control the area of ministries.

Nevertheless, the divine activity is given its place, when the Holy Spirit is introduced as the giver of special gifts and God as the one who calls. I have taken these two basic terms as the first pair of “marks of the pastor” in part C of my thesis. There I will comment in detail on the topic of the calling and on the relationship between gifts and calling.

From the calling of persons, the text of *Rechenschaft* moves straight into the structuring of ministries. Again, the congregation takes control over the diverse ministries. German Baptist theology is apparently not willing to define the church structure with personal terms (pastor, elder, deacon, church leader), but prefers to name the fields of ministry. The reason is given in the next passage, where the autonomy of each local congregation regarding its life and structures is claimed. In the last sentence, the purpose of ministry is defined:

”Geistesgaben und Ämter dienen in gleicher Weise der Sammlung und Sendung der Gemeinde Jesu Christi.”

“Spiritual gifts and offices serve in the same way the gathering and sending of the church of Jesus Christ.”

(Rechenschaft: 10)

This is the only time that the word “Ämter” (“offices”) is used in *Rechenschaft*. It is one of the key terms to understand the German Baptist theology. It gives the position of the minister an official touch and for the German reader connotes the sphere of political offices and public administration. German Baptists like to criticize other denominations with the term “Amtskirche” (“Officers’ church”) – meaning that they are ruled by officers who do not necessarily have the spiritual qualification to lead a church. German Baptist theology rejects the concept of a hierarchy of offices. That is also why it

usually avoids the word “Amt”, when it describes the ministry in the Baptist church. Therefore, it is rather surprising that *Rechenschaft* uses the term here, all the more so, as it has avoided any reference to the person of the minister. On the other hand, it is within the logic of ministerial anonymity to speak generally of “Ämter” here. The whole sentence probably alludes to the theological discussion about the relation between gifts and offices in the church ministry.

Conclusion

Rechenschaft vom Glauben is a well-received creedal document of the German Baptists. It presents its theology with a specific emphasis on the kingdom of God, centring on the activities of the Trinity, as well as on the role of the local church within God’s work on earth.

Wherever it touches on issues of ministry in the church, it keeps either God or the church as the subject, never mentioning any positions, titles or specific characteristics of the ministers. In my interpretation, *Rechenschaft* is clearly in line with the Baptist Principles, and at the same time shows a deliberate neglect of the person of the pastor in its ecclesiology.

I regard this as a contribution that is unique to contemporary Baptist theology, but I also consider it a theological shortcoming. When Baptists overemphasize the role of the congregation and its members, they fail to locate the specific ministries and ministers in the church. Baptist churches in Germany, though, in most cases have pastors and elders. Their shortcoming in ecclesiology therefore causes structural conflict between members and officers, which is evident in many conflicts in the local churches. I reckon that the *Rechenschaft* does not help in solving these conflicts, but rather manifests the theological reason behind them. My thesis is an attempt to counteract this omission and fill the gap with a positive understanding of the ministry and ministers in Baptist churches.

5. Contemporary Issues

Theology in contexts

One of the major lessons of my theological work and experience of the past years is that theology is always done in context. The social, political and religious situation has a formative influence on the way people understand God and express their faith. It may have been the failure of European theology that it denied its context and claimed to be global and absolute. With the development of Third World theologies (such as the Latin American liberation theology, Korean or African theologies) came a growing awareness that every form of theology is indeed contextual – that means, it can and must be interpreted in the light of the historical context from which it emerged. That gives a new relevance to the subject of Church History, in which the context of a specific form of theology is investigated and illuminated. It is important to understand that Contextual Theology cannot be regarded as just another theological discipline or an extra chapter in a thesis. Theology must be contextual in all its parts and chapters.

As I turn to “Contemporary Issues” at this stage of researching Baptist ecclesiology, it must not be interpreted as merely adding a little local colour to otherwise “pure theology”. Throughout my presentation the reader finds references to the country of origin of a document, the historical factors that have influenced it, and the social background of certain authors and statements. This last chapter of my short presentation of Baptist ecclesiology merely seeks to highlight some of the issues that have strong repercussions on the Baptist understanding of the church and especially of ministry.

A list of issues

One topic that is discussed at length in the literature, is the role of women in Baptist ministry. This is obviously one of the key questions in the

contemporary discussion and has led to serious debate and conflict within Baptist churches. I am not in a position to research that debate. I will merely sketch some of the statements given in the literature that I have reviewed. I will ask where and how the question intersects with my topic. Let me say in advance that I am convinced that the Baptist pastor can be female as well as male: the marks that I identify for the Baptist pastor are in no way exclusive to the male gender. The literature presented here agrees with this view, whereas it must be admitted that the contrary position is also found in Baptist circles.

The second issue that must be mentioned here is apartheid. South African authors cannot deny the history of racial segregation in their country and the impact that it had on church life and theology. The observation that a South African document does not refer to this context is interpreted and criticized for exactly that absence of contextual understanding. Kretzschmar and Harris are particularly critical of the Baptist Union's apolitical theology and its failure to address the prevailing social and political injustices. Conversely, the Baptist Convention of South Africa regards as one of its main characteristics the commitment to a contextual and relevant interpretation of the Bible and theology. So far, this means that it has to address the injustices of the past apartheid era and the need to transform South African society and church.

There are two other issues that I will mention in this chapter, both movements within Christianity that have severely influenced its theology and practices, especially in the twentieth century. Firstly, it is the ecumenical movement in which the denominational separations of church history are addressed as a scandalous neglect of Jesus' demand for Christian unity. The ecumenical discussions have, among others, produced a famous document on "Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry". This document directly addresses my topic as it reflects on the differences and possible consensus about the ministry in the church. In the Baptist literature, I have found some reference to this document and to the ecumenical movement, which I will present here.

Secondly, the charismatic movement is one of the most influential forces in world Christianity at the end of the twentieth century. It has also brought some new emphasis on the issue of leadership in the church. Even though I have not found much reference to it in the literature, I will attempt to comment on the impact that it may have had theologically on Baptist ecclesiology.

This list does not claim to be complete in any way, but reflects the observations I have made in the literature. It serves to show that Baptist ecclesiology is not formulated in isolation of the specific situation, but can only be interpreted with a view to its contexts.

Women in Ministry

In her presentation of the Baptist Principles at the Winter School of Theology 1997, Kretzschmar comments on the priesthood of all believers as having serious implications for the role of women and youth in Baptist churches.

“Concerning women, the Convention is faced with the task of fully integrating women into its structures and particularly in relation to its decision-making processes [...] Within the Convention, we need to look at the status and roles of women in relation to their ministries at a local church level as well as at regional and national levels.”

(Kretzschmar et al 1997: 37)

Kretzschmar claims a place for women on all levels of ministry and leadership within the Baptist Convention. She reminds the BCSA to also prepare the way for the women who were trained at the Baptist Convention College and went into church ministry. There is no discussion of the gender issue in this article, not even in the whole Winter School booklet. The Baptist Convention takes an unambiguous stand on the integration of women into all levels of ministry and leadership.

However, the issue of women in ministry does arise occasionally in the Annual Winter Schools of Theology. In 2000, one of the main papers is presented

under the title “Can a woman lead?” Together, Mrs. and Rev. Mhlophe tackle the question by looking at definitions for leadership, and going through the history of interpretation of the Bible concerning the issue of women in ministry. They end their presentation with a call to black women to strive for their own liberation. The open discussion of this plenary session leads to several demands, especially towards the leadership of the BCSA.

“A letter should be sent out to churches that women can lead and that churches call these women ‘Pastors’ [...] A declaration should be made “We are going to ordain women.””
(Nthane et al 2000: 125)

Evidently, the BCSA is taking a clear stand about the role of women, but is still struggling to implement that position in the realities of church life and denominational structures.

In his thesis, Harris focuses on the Baptist Union of Southern Africa, and looks at its understanding of the Baptist Principles. In his chapter “Discipleship as Ministry”, he spends more than a third of the space on “The Role of Women in Ministry”. The Baptist Union had a committee investigating the matter between 1987 and 1989. It came to the conclusion:

“Since God clearly calls and equips women for ministry there can be no objection to the ordination of women.”
(Harris 1996: 247)

Harris then goes into details of a Biblical and theological discussion of the issue, where he presents his clear conviction that women are called and qualified for leadership positions in the church and should be included in the ministerial list of the Baptist Union. Harris especially elaborates on the hermeneutical questions of how the Bible should be used in this debate. His following remarks make it clear that the issue is far from settled within the Baptist Union.

“Where the Baptist Union is concerned, it leaves the choice of leaders to local congregations.”
(Harris 1996: 262)

This is the classical Baptist solution to problems: leaving the answer to the autonomous local church. However, Harris is correct in insisting that the mother body of these churches must also come to a theological answer to major questions like these. He repeatedly points to the inconsistency on the side of Baptists when they recognize female missionaries, but not women pastors.

The debate is, of course, not only a South African one; we can find it similarly in the European context. Beasley-Murray uses several New Testament scripture passages to prove his point:

“There is therefore no reason why women may not share the leadership with men in today’s church.”

(Beasley-Murray 1992: 89)

He continues by showing that Baptists are still divided over the issue, and in many countries women cannot be Baptist pastors. While the British Baptists recognised the first women minister in 1922, they still have comparatively few. It is a fact that the discussion about the recognition of women pastors has been one of the most dividing ones in recent Baptist history in many countries. After lengthy discussions over many years, the largest of all Baptist bodies, the Southern Baptist Convention in the USA, has decided in 2004, to withdraw its membership from the Baptist World Alliance. One point of contention was the ordination of women practised in many Baptist groups, but very strongly rejected by the Southern Baptists.

The German Baptists have also gone through a phase of serious debate and conflict over the issue. In 1974, they opened the door for women to study at their Theological Seminary and go into ministry as “Theologische Mitarbeiterinnen” (“*Theological Co-Workers*”). Only in 1992 did the National Assembly decide to allow women to be called “Pastors”. One of the influential opponents was Swarat, lecturer at the Theological Seminary. Hölzl quotes from his report of the debate and its Biblical and hermeneutical background, closing with Swarat’s negative conclusion:

“Wie in den anderen evangelischen Kirchen ist leider auch im BEFG die Entscheidung zugunsten derjenigen Auslegung gefallen, die mit dem feministisch-emanzipatorischen Zeitgeist konform geht.”

“As in the other Protestant churches, the BEFG [German Baptist Union] unfortunately also decided in favour of an interpretation in line with the feminist-emancipatory zeitgeist.”

(Hölzl 1999: 82)

Hölzl immediately points out that other German Baptists support the opposite view of women in ministry. Referencing *Gemeinde lieben, Gemeinde leiten* (*Loving the church, leading the church*), a book about church leadership by Rust, he observes that hardly any other question has been debated so bitterly in evangelical churches. According to Rust, Jesus, and even the apostle Paul, had a liberating message concerning the role of women, thereby paving the way for the future changes in society and in the church. Rust observes the diversity among Baptist churches where women are still not widely accepted as leaders and ordained ministers, and he suggests moving the discussion towards awareness of the variety of leading functions in the church. Rust is probably alluding to the five-fold ministry to counter the reduction of ministry to the role of a pastor.

From my perspective, the German Baptists have moved on regarding the ministry of women when they appointed a woman as their General Secretary in 2003. In addition, I see a growing number of established women pastors and some lay women holding regional and national leadership positions. The debate is still ongoing and potentially divisive, as the German Baptist Union comprises not only regular Baptist churches, but also two other groups, which are in outright opposition to the pastoral and leadership ministry of women: the churches of the Brethren tradition, and the churches consisting of “Aussiedler” (“*emigrants*”), Germans who have re-immigrated from Russia. Both of these groups disagree with the view on ministry in the BEFG and do not normally recognize pastors, but advocate the leadership by elders. I have not examined in detail these parts of the BEFG.

In conclusion, it is obvious that the issue of women in ministry is one of the major fields of debate within Baptist churches in recent times. There are strong opposing convictions among Baptists, and the solution is mainly found in the autonomy of the local church. There is a general move towards recognizing women as pastors, but there is also fierce resistance to it in certain circles. The issue has the potential to divide Baptists in different churches or even within the same church. My research will abstain from further discussion on the issue, while I maintain the conviction that women and men are called to ministry in the church, and that all the marks of the pastor apply to female as well as male pastors. As stated above, the use of male terms and pronouns in this thesis is only based on grammatical convenience and does not intend to discriminate against women.

Apartheid

Apartheid was the one pervasive reality in South Africa between 1948 and 1991 that dominated all spheres of society. On the basis of a contextual approach to theology, any document of church life or theology from this period must be evaluated in how far it addresses apartheid. Kretzschmar does this in all her presentations of the Baptists in South Africa.

In “An Overview of Baptist Principles in Historical Context” at the Winter School of Theology 1997, she compares the Statement of Principles by the Baptist Union (1987) and the Barkly West Declaration by the Baptist Convention (1990). She finds that the Baptist Union statement affirms the Baptist Principles “without any reference whatsoever to the social, cultural or political context within which Christians live.” (Kretzschmar et al 1997: 18) She gives a specific example of this failure in her presentation of “The Separation between Church and State”:

“Thus, at a time (1987) when many Christians were being harassed by the State for their struggle for the civic liberties of black South Africans, the predominantly white Baptist Union Assembly ratified a privatised and abstract formulation of the

doctrine of the separation of Church and State. The BU failed to explain what the relationship ought to be between the Christian faith and social reality.”

(Kretzschmar et al 1997: 40)

Kretzschmar uses the term “privatization” regularly to describe this kind of theology that avoids addressing the specific context. It has even provided the title for her own thesis “The Privatization of the Christian Faith amongst South African Baptists” (Cape Town, 1992; published in 1998).

The Baptist Convention of South Africa is programmatically striving to be contextual and to address the situation of the society it finds itself in. In 1990, a workshop was held in Barkly West by the Awareness Campaign Committee of the Baptist Convention. Many of the speakers looked at their experiences within the Apartheid state and how it has impacted on their faith and theology. The document of this workshop is a good example of contextual theology and a constant reminder of how Apartheid shaped the church life in South Africa for many years.

As we study documents from more recent years, for example from the Winter School of Theology, it becomes clear that the new dispensation in South Africa demands a new contextual approach. It is not enough to refer back to apartheid to be contextual, but in the last years of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first century, one must address the new political realities. They can be summarized with terms like social needs, poverty or HIV/AIDS. At the Winter School of Theology 2004, a forum of experts presented the present challenges in three areas: HIV/AIDS, education, justice. Apartheid has disappeared as a contemporary issue, but the experiences of that period are still very present in the hearts of many. They emerge here and there in the discussions, as the present state of affairs cannot be fully understood without this past. Suffice it to mention the lack of financial resources available to the Baptist Convention and its pastors. Many times the story of BCSA pastors touches on the reality that “being a pastor means being poor”. I will refer to this problem in the last chapter of Part C.

The ecumenical movement

The twentieth century is sometimes characterized as the century of the ecumenical movement. After centuries of splitting and separation of churches and denominations emerged an emphasis on unity amongst Christians. Ecumenical conferences and debates were held, institutions founded, documents published. In many instances, Baptists were at the forefront of these activities or at least following them with a positive attitude. But there has also been considerable scepticism towards and criticism against them. In a desire to defend the truths of their faith, some Baptists have denigrated all ecumenical efforts as undermining these truths and trying to create a “world-church” that does not stand on the basis of the Bible. Especially the statements of the World Council of Churches (WCC) against the South African Apartheid ideology have provoked those reactions in Europe. Christians saw the WCC as too political and withdrew from membership in these ecumenical institutions. In South Africa, the debate about the membership in the South African Council of Churches (SACC) became a major point of contention between the Baptist groups and within them. The Baptist Convention took a clear stand of full membership in the SACC, whereas the Baptist Union Assembly in 1970 passed the following resolution:

“The Assembly notes that the Baptist Union of South Africa is not and never has been a member of the World Council of Churches, basically for theological reasons.”

(Harris 1996: 49)

While there is no need here to discuss the Baptists’ positions towards the ecumenical movement, it does have clear implications for our topic. The question of ministry is one of the dividing issues among denominations, as the understandings and practices differ widely about the role of a priest, pastor or elder. One of the most famous documents of the ecumenical discussions is on “*Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*” (*BEM*) and has found manifold responses also in Baptist circles.

In Germany, Schütz responded in the article “Die Freikirchen vor der ökumenischen Diskussion um das kirchliche Amt”. He starts by praising the emphasis on the calling of the whole people of God, then goes on to contrast *BEM* with *Rechenschaft vom Glauben*. He turns to specific criticism of parts of *BEM* and closes with the remark that the World Council of Churches seems to take the route of the high church on the issue of ministry. He insists that the Bible rather than the churches’ traditions must be the basis of all theology. Overall, this theological response shows some openness for the processes of ecumenical discussions, even though it disagrees with its results.

Harris, in his thesis, refers regularly to the ecumenical movement and regrets the negative attitude of the Baptist Union towards it. He continually reminds the Baptist Union of the need to be more ecumenical in its theology and approach, for example when it comes to the conflicts about baptism and church membership. Harris concludes:

“South African Baptists reveal an inconsistency by maintaining a separatist stance towards the ecumenical movement and its appeal for a more inclusive ecclesiology. This is seen particularly by the South African Baptist refusal to be part of the SACC since 1975, and by their lack of response to the WCC’s BEM document.”

(Harris 1996: 153)

Concerning the question of ministry, Harris doubts that the Baptists’ wariness of the traditional three-fold order of deacons, presbyters and bishops is consistent, as they also practice a multi-level hierarchy not dissimilar from the one they criticize. Especially in the area of ministry, Baptists cannot discuss and formulate their convictions in a vacuum, but they must acknowledge that they form part of a larger ongoing debate within the Christian churches. Baptists in Germany and South Africa seem to be more or less aware of that situation and make constructive use of the ecumenical discussion and even provide input for it.

Charismatic movement

Another major force in twentieth century Christianity is the charismatic movement. It has reached most denominations and has become a credible voice within them as much as in the newly founded independent charismatic churches. It has brought new emphases to the understanding of ministry. Just as it has strengthened the idea of a shared ministry by reminding the church of the variety of spiritual gifts, it has also made leadership a central issue. From an interpretation of the lists of spiritual gifts that include the gift of leadership – given to some, not to all – it has questioned the democratic structures in the church. Charismatic theology has mostly claimed that the Holy Spirit does not speak through majority decisions, but rather through the leaders God has called and gifted. Congregationalists have taken this as a challenge to their ecclesiology and responded in various ways, but mostly with disapproval. Beasley-Murray presents a typically Baptist response, when he mentions and questions the charismatic tendencies:

“There has arisen an emphasis on a pastor’s calling to lead the people of God. Influenced in particular by charismatics within some of the ‘new churches’ [...] Scriptures are appealed to which appear to give real ‘power’ to pastors and other church leaders.”

(Beasley-Murray 1992: 63)

Beasley-Murray continues by giving his exegesis of certain passages and showing how he does not understand the New Testament to promote powerful leadership positions. In his conclusion, he emphasises that leaders are accountable to the church as well as to God, and that “ultimate authority under God rests in the meeting together of the church’s members” (Beasley-Murray 1992: 65).

Whereas Beasley-Murray mentions the charismatic movement only in passing, Hölzl takes them much more seriously. He devotes several pages of his thesis to voices from the charismatic movement, and quotes several of their representatives.

Liebschner is one of the prominent voices, as a spokesperson of the “Arbeitskreis Gemeinde & Charisma” (“*Committee Church & Charisma*”) and a lecturer at the Theological Seminary in Hamburg. His position is summarized in the following statement:

“Jesus will anders, als uns sonst manchmal einzuleuchten scheint, beides geben: Eine begabte Gemeinde und eine starke Leitung”

“In contrast to what seems to make sense to us sometimes, Jesus wants to give both: A gifted congregation and a strong leadership”

(Hözl 1999: 78)

Hözl then turns to presenting the position of Rust, another leading representative of the Committee. In his book *Gemeinde lieben, Gemeinde leiten*, he revisits the issue of leadership that has witnessed the abuse of leadership terminology by the totalitarian Hitler regime. Rust reasons from the New Testament that leaders always come in the plural and must share responsibilities. He also admits freely that he wants to balance the purely Congregationalist ecclesiology of Baptists with elements from the Episcopal.

As far as I can see, charismatic theology has greatly impacted on Baptist churches in Germany: the traditional model of a strong lay executive and emphasis on the democratic church meeting is now blended with a new focus on eldership, spiritual leadership and the five-fold ministry. Some of these topics will appear in the next part. I have not found a similar influence of the charismatic movement in the documents from the South African context.

In many ways the brevity of this chapter is regrettable, as it raises contemporary issues that have a bearing on the topic in hand. Each of these issues is potentially a research topic of its own. I will now return to the specific undertaking of this thesis, namely to examine certain marks of the pastor according to Baptist theology.

C. Marks of the Baptist Pastor

Introduction

In the previous part, the Baptist understanding of church and ministry has been presented and discussed. Now in this main part, I will introduce four pairs of “marks of the pastor”. The eight terms are referring directly to the person of the pastor, characterizing the essentials of his ministry and position. The first four are verbal adjectives or passive participles. They underline that the pastor is “made” rather than being of his own making. It is my theological conviction that becoming a minister in the church is not primarily a choice of the individual. The initiative must come from God and involve the community of believers. I have grouped these marks with regard to who is the source of authority: the calling and gifts come from God, ordination and training is instituted by the church.

The following four marks are presented as nouns that could be titles for the Baptist pastor, or else different aspects of his role. “Leader” and “Servant” describe his relationship to the church members in a contrasting pair. Yet, the two terms are often combined to the idiomatic expression “servant leader”. “Preacher” and “shepherd” might be more traditional terms or titles for the pastor. However, their significance for a proper understanding of ministry will be explained, as well as the different approaches they suggest.

In the final chapter of this part, I present several other terms that are used in characterizing the Baptist pastor. They refer to more practical aspects of his ministry, but also to the Biblical list of the five-fold ministry.

While all of the terms and topics are extracted from the literature, the list cannot claim completeness. The selection of the pairs, however, is not random. It reflects my understanding of the Baptist pastor, and it puts emphasis on the topics that need to be taken into consideration and given clarity.

1. Called and Gifted

Meaning of the term “called”

The *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary* lists nine meanings for the verb “to call”. One of them is described by the synonyms “summon; wake; send a message to”. As a special case of this meaning, the dictionary presents the idiomatic expression “be/feel called to” with the synonym “be/feel it to be one’s duty to do it”. Next to that, it shows the noun “calling” as “special duty; profession; occupation”. This is obviously the meaning that we have in mind when we speak about the Baptist pastor being “called”. Seeing that the dictionary presents various meanings of the verb “to call”, it is rather surprising that it does not refer to the religious meaning at all. At the same time, this shows that “to call” is a widely used verb; I will have to investigate carefully the extent to which it carries a theological meaning.

The case is different in the German language, looking at the term “berufen”. It is a compound verb with a more specific meaning than its root verb “rufen”. Whereas “rufen” translates “call” in several of its general meanings, “berufen” is translated with “to appoint” by *Langenscheidts Grosses Schulwörterbuch*. Only in the passive and adjectival forms do I find the translation “called”. One of the examples for the adjective is “zum Priester berufen sein”: “be called to be a priest”. The corresponding noun “Berufung” is translated as “calling, vocation, appointment”. Of note for our research, the German language has another noun from the same stem: “Beruf” = “job, occupation, profession, trade, business, career”.

As an initial observation, I need to note the difference between the German and the English term. The German “berufen” is more specific in designating the call by a higher authority and for a specific purpose.

Biblical use and theological interpretation

According to Horne, the term “calling, call” “is one of the most common words in the Bible, representing over twenty words in the Hebrew and Greek text” (Horne 1975: 694). Horne particularly mentions that the Pauline epistles use “call” to describe God’s saving activity. One of the two other applications of the term that he presents is “God’s call to a special office or service” (Horne 1975: 694).

Motyer expands on three dimensions of theological significance for “call, calling”: worship, election and vocation. As he elaborates on the latter two, he adds as further related ideas “naming, election, ownership and appointment” and “initiation, destiny, holiness” (Motyer 1996). Looking at the aspect of vocation, there is the prominent use by the apostle Paul who introduces himself as “called to be an apostle” (Romans 1:1). While apostleship is “the only spiritual gift in connection with which the word “call” is used”, it is possible “to extend the idea of vocation to all ministries within the church”, and even to secular employment (Motyer 1996).

The entry “Berufung” in the German theological dictionary *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart* presents firstly a comprehensive overview of Biblical meanings. In a dogmatic part, it then highlights the specifications of the term throughout history, especially the distinctions of general and special calling and of internal and external calling. In the last part, Müller distinguishes between two main meanings:

“Die Praktische Theol. unterscheidet die B. im weiteren Sinn als B. in den Christenstand (1.) von der B. im engeren Sinn als B. in ein kirchl. Amt (2.)”

“Practical Theology distinguishes between Calling in a general sense as Calling into the status of being a Christian (1.) and Calling in a narrower sense of Calling into an office in the church (2.)”

(Müller 1998: 1352)

In explanations to both meanings, Müller shows his strictly Lutheran theology, especially when he emphasizes the external nature of the calling. In short, he defines the specific calling:

“theologisch als Beschlagnahme durch den Heiligen Geist [...], kirchenrechtlich als durch die christliche Gemeinde (Kirche) im Namen Gottes vollzogene Beauftragung”

“theologically, as seizure by the Holy Spirit [...], according to church law as authorization carried out by the Christian church in the name of God”

(Müller 1998: 1353)

This definition leads us to another question for our investigation: Who is active in calling the pastor? I am expecting to find clear agreement on the active role of God, but some discussion on the role of the church in the process of calling. In the following, the relevant Baptist documents are discussed according to their response to some guiding questions.

What is the relation between the general and the special call?

Baptists apparently agree on the distinction between the general and the special call. Beasley-Murray summarizes it in the opening sentence of his chapter on leadership: “All God’s people are called to serve, but not all are called to lead.” (Beasley-Murray 1992: 88) His chapter on ministry is based more on the idea of gifts than on calling, though. He speaks about the appointment of leaders, whereas earlier in the chapter on “authority among Baptists”, he included a separate part on “The Calling of a Pastor”. The latter will be scrutinized in my investigation of the role of the church in the calling.

On the relation between the general and the special call, the Baptist World Alliance Committee states that even though every church member is called for ministry, “that does not mean that all members have the same function within the church.” (We Baptists: 29)

In the following sentence, the document goes far beyond Beasley-Murray:

“The early Baptists insisted that a local church was only a complete church when it had appointed its necessary spiritual leaders.”

(We Baptists: 29)

As this statement claims the necessity of appointed leadership for every local church, it seems to stand in contradiction to Brandt.

“Konstitutiv für die christliche Kirche ist nicht das Amt, sondern die von Gott erwählte, von Christus berufene und durch den Heiligen Geist wiedergeborene Gemeinschaft der Glaubenden.”

“The Christian church is not constituted by the office, but by the fellowship of the believers chosen by God, called by Christ and born again by the Holy Spirit.”

(Brandt 1989: 91)

These two statements are just an example of a general difference between the Anglophone and the German Baptist theology. Whereas the English documents mostly take the need for a Baptist church to have a pastor as a given, the German Baptists have a stronger emphasis on the self-sufficiency of the congregation, based on the idea of the priesthood of all believers. Brandt repeatedly claims the equality of all members in the church and the spiritual maturity of the congregation as a whole, and is at pains to limit the influence of the pastor. I conclude that the German Baptists see a tension between the general and the special call, whereas the Anglophone Baptists rather combine the two aspects. Turner expresses this combination in one paragraph:

“All are called by the Spirit unto salvation. All are called to be mature in the faith. Some are called to special service.”

(Turner 1987: 57)

The German creed, *Rechenschaft vom Glauben*, also shows the double use of the term “berufen”. On the one hand, Part 2 starts by saying:

“Gott [...] beruft die Menschen zu einem Leben unter dieser Herrschaft.”

“God [...] calls the human beings to a life under this rule.”
(Rechenschaft: 7-8)

In this paragraph, salvation and sanctification are connected, and God is the one who calls. On the other hand, *Rechenschaft* uses the term “berufen” differently in the part on ministry, where it explains the specific call. There, the grammatical subject of the sentence is the church and the calling by God is pushed into the subordinate clause (Rechenschaft: 10). This leads me to the next question:

What is the role of the church in the process of calling?

As a consensus of the beliefs of German Baptists, *Rechenschaft vom Glauben* states about the ministry in the church:

“Die christliche Gemeinde beruft geeignete Männer und Frauen, deren besondere Begabung durch den heiligen Geist und Berufung durch Gott sie erkennt, in spezielle Dienste”

“The Christian congregation calls suitable men and women, whose particular giftedness by the Holy Spirit and calling by God it recognizes, into specific ministries”

(Rechenschaft: 10)

While the chronological priority is obviously with God’s call, the grammatical structure of the sentence turns it around and makes the church the primary subject of the statement. The terminology used for the church’s and for God’s activity is using the same stem: “beruft” and “Berufung”. The German Baptists make no linguistic distinction between the calling by the church and the calling by God.

Hudson puts his emphasis on the active role of the church, even though he does not question the divine source of the call:

“The call is ‘by the church’ but it is ‘from Christ’ [...] nonetheless the pastor’s calling is derived basically [...] from the act of the congregation.”

(Hudson 1979: 54)

Hudson goes on by showing the historical development from the “immediate calling” of apostles and prophets to the “mediate calling” into church ministry since the time of the early church. His formula “by the church, but from Christ” might be seen as a helpful construct, but in his explanations, he shows a clear priority on the church activity and no hesitation to use the term “call” for it.

Other documents are more cautious against using the same term for the divine and the human acts. *We Baptists* uses mostly the verbs “to appoint” or “to set apart” when it speaks about the church. Turner asks, “What Kind of Man Should a Church Choose as Pastor or Deacon?” and “How Should a Church Select its Leaders?” (Turner 1987: 55/57) In his answers to the latter question, Turner qualifies the church’s duties:

- “A church should examine every person who says that he is called of God to be a leader.”
- “This call must be confirmed by the church.”
- “Choosing a church leader should never be like an election within the government where campaigning is done.”

(Turner 1987: 57)

While the church does have serious responsibilities concerning the call into specific ministry, Turner does not use the verb “to call” for its activities. The church’s involvement is described as “choosing”, “selecting”, “confirming” and “examining”, and again distinguished from the secular way of elections.

Kretzschmar follows a similar route when she puts the word “called” in inverted commas where the church is its logical subject (Kretzschmar et al 1997: 34). The discussions within the Baptist Convention of South Africa show a degree of uncertainty about the right terms and concepts in this regard, as demonstrated in the following quotes from the Winter School of Theology 1997:

- “My understanding is the pastor is the voice of God, not appointed by the congregation.”

- “When calling a pastor, the church must focus on God’s call [...] Church should affirm God’s call.”
- “If it is true that the church calls the pastor, does it mean that the church appoints the pastor, or is this pastor appointed primarily by God?”
(Kretzschmar et al 1997: 67/70/75)

Tsoai makes a strong claim toward the end of his personal testimony: “Remember the church doesn’t call you. God calls you.” (Kretzschmar et al 1997: 121) With this statement, he represents a strong conviction among South African pastors that the authority of God in their ministry is much more important than the role of the church. When reading similar personal testimonies, one has the impression that these pastors feel abused by their congregations and they need this affirmation of God’s call in their lives. I will later consider a very similar view from the German Baptist pastor Hildebrandt.

Before looking at this, I need to examine the terminology used by Beasley-Murray. In chapter 7 he states, “Leadership is appointed by the church”, but he also uses the phrase “elect to leadership” (Beasley-Murray 1992: 92). In chapter 5, however, he titles the last part “The Calling of a Pastor” and uses the term regularly in his detailed description of how the church goes about the process. It culminates in this sentence:

“the call only becomes a reality once both the church and the pastor-to-be are convinced that God is indeed in this call.”
(Beasley-Murray 1992: 71)

This description suggests that the initiative of the call is fully in the hands of the church members, while the deacons and the candidate only play a minor role. God is only found to be “in this call” at the end of the process, not throughout its duration. I do not want to over-interpret this, and rather balance my presentation of Beasley-Murray by quoting the conclusion of his chapter:

“For those belonging to a local Baptist church, there are few greater privileges than helping to discover and decide what God would have his church be and do.”
(Beasley-Murray 1992: 72)

Beasley-Murray repeatedly describes the high spiritual task of a church meeting as representing God's rule within the church. However, in his terminology he undermines this very rule when he puts the initiative of calling clearly into the hands of the church members.

The old *Hiscox Guide for Baptist Churches* was much stricter in reserving the activity of calling for God, while limiting the church's role to this:

"All that a church or a council can properly do is to recognize and express approval of a man's entering the ministry."
(Hiscox 1990: 51)

Hiscox also had a lot to say about the personal experience of the divine call, which is echoed in many testimonies of Baptist pastors. As I do not want to leave this dimension out of my presentation, I will now turn to the question:

How do you experience "being called"?

Hiscox paints a lively picture of how a person experiences the call. Hiscox starts by listing other factors that may influence the decision to become a minister, and qualifies all of them as "not enough":

"piety [...] ability [...] education [...] a facility in the use of language [...] an earnest desire to do good [...] the mere choice of a profession [...] the dictate of an ambition"
(Hiscox 1990: 49)

He then defines the call as "a deep, abiding, and unalterable conviction, wrought into his soul by the Holy Spirit" and an "inward movement and guidance of the Spirit" (Hiscox 1990: 49). These are undoubtedly the features of an inner call (*vocatio interna*) and explicitly connected to the working of the Holy Spirit in a person. They are contrasted to the insufficient examples of an outward call. After referring to the process of accepting the call, Hiscox concedes that there must be "evidences of this divine call" (Hiscox 1990: 50). The first two are still more within the person, but the latter two evoke the

vocatio externa - the approval of others and the opportunities for training. We might find some of the other marks of the pastor in Hiscox' list of insufficient factors, but he clearly favours the (inner) call far beyond any other and gives it highest priority. According to Hiscox, more than anything else the pastor needs to be called by God. Nevertheless, this does not prevent Hiscox from taking a close look at the necessary qualifications for the ministry and the procedure of ordination of ministers in the following chapters of his book.

African experiences

It is significant that at the Winter School of Theology 2003, both Kretzschmar, in her paper on Christian Ethics and Spirituality, and Longwe, in her presentation "The Challenge of Producing Christian Leaders of Integrity, Courage and Compassion" refer explicitly to the call. From the latter I quote the following:

"All these people became men and women of integrity, courage and compassion because God had called them and they followed their call. God's call is outside of us; it is an inner compulsion that comes from the Holy Spirit. The same Holy Spirit guides and helps the person to respond to this inner compulsion. Other people and/or the Church, affirm what God has already done in the leader's heart. Churches in Africa are suffering because of lack of called leaders. Many leaders are elected or appointed by the people or they are self-appointed."

(Kretzschmar 2004: 103)

Longwe confirms the position that God is the one who calls and that the Holy Spirit plays a key role in the calling. While she is not so clear on the distinction between inner and outside call, she strongly distinguishes the divine call from the human decisions. It remains an open question how one can practically distinguish between a church "affirming" or "electing".

The BCSA Winter School of Theology has the tradition of asking participants to tell their personal stories of faith and ministry as an "evening story". These stories are also recorded in the Winter School booklets and are a compendium

of first-hand experiences, especially those that relate the call to become a pastor. As I compare the stories, I find remarkable similarities, but also a wide variety of differences with regard to how South African pastors experienced their calling.

- “I never heard the Lord whispering to me I should be a pastor, I just felt it was right.”
(Ngodela, in Kretzschmar and Richards 1996: 116)
- “God spoke to me at the new year’s eve prayer meeting through a vision. He showed me the Holy Book just floating in the air and instructed me to take the book and preach what was in it.”
(Rakhetse, in Nthane and Mogashoa 2002: 67)
- “When God revealed to me about my call, He confirmed it through one of His servants.”
(Maime, in Msiza et al 1999: 95)
- “I had always felt God’s calling into full-time ministry for some years, but I just could not figure as to when and how to make a move [...] I now give God the glory and honour that he provided for the three needs I brought before him.”
(Moloi, in Nthane et al 2000: 139-141)
- “I wasn’t sure if it was the Lord who had called me [...] I tried every excuse and the Lord still continued to call me.”
(Tsoai, in Kretzschmar et al 1997: 120)

All pastors agree that at the beginning of their ministry they experienced a call from God. How the call reaches the person can be very different: from simple reasoning to a vision or a prophetic word from another - anything can be the carrier of the divine call. Mostly, the call is questioned by others or by oneself. Many times, there are emotional or circumstantial barriers to accepting it and it takes time before the person fully agrees with the call. Often it needs the confirmation of others or the experience of opportunities opening up. All of the pastors express their conviction that they are called, even in the midst of difficulties. Some stories are explicit about the continuing problems the pastors experience. For example, Ngodela’s story ends like this:

“It is unfortunate that our churches have negative attitudes about their ministers. Nevertheless, I am willing to serve in a church. Even if I am mistreated by the deacons or the members I will stay with them.”

(Kretzschmar and Richards 1996: 121-122)

German reflections

While I have not found a similar source of personal testimonies from German Baptist pastors about their call to ministry, an article in the magazine *Theologisches Gespräch* touches on the very same issues. It is a paper presented to the national conference of Baptist pastors in Germany in 2000 by Hildebrandt. It is titled “Unser Beruf und unsere Berufung” (“*Our profession and our calling*” – note that “Beruf” and “Berufung” in German have the same root) and has the form of a devotional piece or a sermon rather than that of an academic paper. Hildebrandt addresses his colleagues and makes important statements on how he understands the calling.

“Deine erste Berufung gilt immer dem Einssein mit Jesus Christus und Deinem Menschsein [...] Wer von Berufung spricht, der weist auf den hin, der beruft, der der Ursprung ist, der unsere Begründung ist.”

“Your primary calling always is about your oneness with Jesus Christ and your humanness [...] When you speak of the calling, you point to the one who calls, who is the origin, who is our foundation.”

(Hildebrandt 2000: 63)

Hildebrandt puts a strong emphasis on the message that the calling is aiming at both a Christlike and a humble human existence. He warns strongly against making strong demands and loud proclamations about your own calling, and also against the love of power. Weaknesses and limitations should not be seen as hindrances to the ministry but as essential elements of the calling. Also, those called stand for the truth; for Hildebrandt, the truth is more about God’s acceptance of every person than about credal statements.

Hiscox’ list of insufficient factors are evoked, when Hildebrandt advocates:

“Es lohnt sich, den guten Hirten auszuschaauen; und nicht so sehr sich selbst, seine Stärken und Schwächen; denn sie machen unsere Berufung ganz gewiss nicht aus!”

“It is worth, looking at the good shepherd; and not so much looking at oneself, one’s own strengths and weaknesses, because they are definitely not the basis of our calling!”
(Hildebrandt 2000: 65)

Contrasting it to the Roman Catholic understanding of the authority of the office, Hildebrandt tries to define the calling as follows:

“Wir verstehen unter Berufung eher: Die Wirkweise der Worte des Evangeliums in einem Christen (Johannes 6,63)!”

“We understand calling rather as: The way the word of the Gospel works in a Christian (John 6:63)!”
(Hildebrandt 2000: 65)

Finally, the story of Moses’ calling at the burning bush is interpreted within the context of the pastor’s calling. Hildebrandt sees the bush as a symbol for the dry, useless existence of Moses and of human beings in general.

“Ausgerechnet in diesem Dornbusch erscheint Gott dem Mose [...] Gott verwandelt dieses Öde und die Leere [...] in uns zum Ort SEINER Gegenwart und Berufung!”

“It is in this thorny bush, that God appears to Moses [...] God transforms this wilderness and the emptiness [...] within us into the place of HIS presence and calling!”
(Hildebrandt 2000: 68)

While it might not be easy to follow the poetry and exegesis of Hildebrandt’s paper, it is definitely an example of how German Baptist pastors struggle with their understanding and personal experience of the calling. Calling invariably goes hand in hand with adversity from without, and doubts and resistance from within.

Hildebrandt reminds his colleagues that these obstacles can not be overcome by strong statements and claims, but rather in the humble submission to the one who called us. The voices from South Africa were less humble in tone, but in

the end similar in approach: only God can reassure the pastor of the call He has imparted. The church appears to be the place where the pastor is called to minister, but also one of the forces that oppose his conviction and frustrate his ministry.

Conclusion

It cannot be denied that the term “called” is a primary mark that Baptist theology uses to describe the pastor. While Baptists sometimes put more emphasis on the general call of all members, at least they concede that there is a special call for some and into specific ministries. Obviously, God is the primary source of the call, and many would even reserve the term “call” for the divine act. Others use it also for the process in which a local congregation validates God’s call in the life of a person and chooses him to become their pastor. This is mostly described with other terms and seen on a different level.

When one looks at how pastors present and interpret their own story, “being called” is at the heart of their experience, and their inner conviction is the one sustaining element. The voices of others, the attitude of the church and the circumstances are more often seen as obstacles and temptations. At the same time, affirmation of the calling can come from the same sources.

I would conclude that in Baptist theology, “being called” is not just one mark of many, but a *conditio sine qua non* for accepting a person as a pastor. From my experience at the German Baptist Theological Seminary and the Baptist Convention College in Soweto, one of the key criteria for admitting students of theology is their testimony of how they were called.

Meaning of the term “gifted”

According to *Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary*, the adjective “gifted” means, “having a special ability (in a particular subject or activity)”. The definitions for the German word “begabt” in *Duden* are: “mit besonderen Anlagen, Fähigkeiten (zu bestimmten Leistungen) ausgestattet; talentiert”.

In both languages the term is derived from the noun “gift” (“Gabe”) and does not have an explicitly religious connotation. Thus, the definitions do not reflect the fact that a “gift” connotes the existence of a “giver”. This link is immediately found when investigating the Biblical and theological meanings of the term: In *Baker’s Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology* the search for “gifted” leads to an article on “Gifts of the Holy Spirit”. The author, Blomberg, starts by presenting the four New Testament passages that list specific gifts: Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12-14; Ephesians 4:7-13 and 1 Peter 4:10-11. While different Greek words are used – *carisma* derived from the word “grace” and *pneumatika* from the adjective “spiritual” – the concept is the same:

“distinctive, divinely originated endowments to serve the
Triune God for the common benefit of his people, the church”
(Blomberg 1996: Par.1)

It is in this more specific sense that I use the term “gifted” in this chapter. In its theological meaning, it does not only name the giver as God or the Holy Spirit, but it also points to the purpose of God’s gifts: to serve God and His people. Defining God as the giver is connected with accepting His sovereignty to give when and what he wants. Gifts can only be received, not achieved or learnt.

Theological discussion of the gifts

When Blomberg attempts to group the gifts, he comes to one main conclusion, that “one must be careful not to confuse gifts with offices” (Blomberg 1996:

Par. 2). This turns out to be one of the major areas of theological debate: What exactly is the relationship between the gifts and the offices in the church?

Cole presents the interesting finding that the spiritual gifts are “either the spiritual gifts showered upon the individual [...] or the individuals themselves, seen as God’s gift to the Church as a whole” (Cole 1975: 506). This understanding is reflected in the lists in Ephesians 4:10-11 and 1 Corinthians 12:28, where apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers are named as God’s gift. Blomberg interprets the ranking in these lists as “more one of chronology than of priority” (Blomberg 1996: Par.3). Obviously these lists show a variety and diversity of gifts and do not allow claiming a concentration of all gifts in one person or an access to one gift by all Christians. The diversity of gifts, though, is bound together in unity by the one giver and the defined purpose of all gifts.

“There is a unity of source and origin, but also a unity of goal; i.e., although the gifts are individual, the purpose is collective [...] Paul added a higher bond of unity, for all such gifts are to be used in love”

(Cole 1975: 507)

It is noteworthy that *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible* brings up the topic of spiritual gifts again in the article on “Ministry”. There, in part IV. “Spiritual gifts and ministry”, Bodey expands on the “primacy of the Holy Spirit in ministry”, the “charismatic character of ministry” and the “varieties of spiritual gifts”. He states that “all ministry is charismatic, so that it is the Spirit’s gifts which decisively qualify men for service” (Bodey 1975: 237).

On this foundation, I will now investigate the extent to which being “gifted” should be understood as a mark of the Baptist pastor. We have seen that the adjective itself is not used in the New Testament, but the term “gift” is used with very specific meanings in connection with the work of the Holy Spirit and with the defined purpose of serving God and the church.

All Christians are gifted

Baptists have a strong conviction that according to the New Testament, all believers have received gifts from God. Beasley-Murray states affirmatively that “all God’s people are gifted for ministry” (Beasley-Murray 1992: 86). The German *Rechenschaft vom Glauben* concludes in the negative: “Es gibt kein unbegabtes Glied am Leib Christi” (“*There is no ‘un-gifted’ member in the body of Christ*”) (Rechenschaft: 10).

This is not a uniquely Baptist understanding. The ecumenical document *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* confesses the same:

“The Holy Spirit bestows on the community diverse and complementary gifts [...] All members are called to discover [...] the gifts they have received and to use them”

(Baptism: M5)

The consequence that churches must discover and acknowledge the gifts of their members, is also formulated by South African Baptists in the Winter School documents (e.g. Hoffmeister 1995: 40; Kretzschmar et al 1997: 206). The document “Die Identität der Gemeinden im BEFG” (“*The identity of churches in the BEFG*”) goes one small step further by demanding the following:

„die Notwendigkeit, der Vielfalt der Gaben in der Gemeinde Raum zu geben und eine Vormachtstellung einzelner Gaben und Gabenträger zu vermeiden.”

“*the necessity to give room to the diversity of gifts in the church and to prevent a hierarchy of certain gifts and carriers of gifts.*”

(Brandt 2002a: 2)

The concern of the German Baptists is not only formulated in an affirmation of the gifting of all members, but also in the warning that this diversity must be safeguarded against any domination. The idea of diversity here is strongly tied

to a concept of equality. The German interpretation does not allow for a ranking of gifts.

“Aufgrund dieser Setzung Gottes verbietet sich eine Abwertung oder Bevorzugung einzelner Gaben oder gar eine Überordnung bzw. Vormachtstellung einer besonderen Gabe.”

“Based on this institution by God, the depreciation or preference of certain gifts is forbidden just as the priority or supremacy of a specific gift.”

(Brandt 1989: 92)

In these statements from the German Baptists, the issue of gifts is obviously connected to the question of power in the church. The diversity of gifts seems under constant threat, so that the ministers must be warned not to hinder it. However, it would be very limiting to understand the pastor’s role only in facilitating the diversity of gifts. Therefore, I have to investigate the following question:

How does the pastor fit in?

Brandt’s summary starts with a negative statement:

“Zusammenfassend ist zu sagen, dass die Baptisten im Pastor nicht den Gabenträger schlechthin sehen, der alle zum Aufbau der Gemeinde nötigen Gaben in sich vereinigen würde.”

“In conclusion it can be said that the Baptists do not see the pastor as the ultimate carrier of gifts, who combines all gifts necessary for the development of the church in one person.”

(Brandt 1989: 93)

Most Christians will probably agree with Brandt’s statement, but one feels compelled to ask what necessitates the polemic tone. Who has ever advocated this “all-gifted” nature of the pastor? There is surely a strong resistance among German Baptists to clerical domination in the church. Brandt mentions it in the last sentence of his article:

“versuchen die Baptisten, den Tendenzen einer „Pastorenkirche“ [...] zu begegnen und an der Berufung und Begabung aller Gemeindeglieder festzuhalten.”

“Baptists try to resist the tendency towards a “Pastor’s church” [...] and to hold on to the calling and gifting of all church members.”

(Brandt 1989: 94)

In his lectures to the Baptist students of Pastoral Theology, Brandt repeatedly asks them to fit into the “Dienstgemeinschaft” (“*community of ministry*”) and to respect the “Vollmachtsgemeinschaft (“*community of authority*”) of the local church (Brandt 2002b). It appears as if he wants to rule out any possibility of separating the pastor from the members. At this point it must be allowed to ask why then the ministry of a pastor is needed in the church at all. Brandt explicitly speaks against a “Sonderstatus” (“*special status*”), a monopolizing or exclusive understanding of ministry. Does he leave any room for a special ministry in the Baptist church? The summary of his article in *Una Sancta* may bring some clarity:

“Er hat vielmehr die Aufgabe, seiner Berufung gemäß mit seinen Gaben der Gemeinde zu dienen, für die Entfaltung der unterschiedlichen Gaben Gottes in der Gemeinde Raum zu schaffen, zum rechten Umgang mit Charismen anzuleiten und alles der Sendung der Gemeinde zuzuordnen.”

“He rather has the responsibility to serve the church with his gifts according to his calling, to make room for the unfolding of the diverse gifts of God, to give direction for the correct use of charismas and to relate everything to the mission of the church.”

(Brandt 1989: 93)

Brandt defines tasks and responsibilities for the pastor, but they are strictly subordinated to the gifting of the whole church and to its mission. The calling and the gift of the pastor are not considered any further.

The Baptist World Alliance document *We Baptists* defines the work of the pastor in similar words:

“The pastor [...] seeks to help the congregation to find and exercise the variety of gifts”

(We Baptists: 30)

In the same sentence it grants him the exercising of “spiritual leadership, that of a servant to the church”. I will investigate this pair of marks of the pastor in chapter C.3 of my thesis. I now want to address another question:

Does the pastor have a special gift?

In the lists in Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12, Beasley-Murray finds a special ministry of leadership:

“Within the context of every-member ministry there are those specially gifted to ‘preside’ over the church”

(Beasley-Murray 1992: 88)

He presents his position as being in line with Baptist traditions, even though not all Baptists might agree with his use of the term “leadership”. His limitations for leadership in a Baptist church will be investigated later. Beasley-Murray goes on to define the ministry of the pastor as teacher, shepherd and enabler. After the presentation of these tasks, he returns to the statement: “none of these specific tasks [...] are exclusive to those engaged in pastoral ministry” (Beasley-Murray 1992: 95).

It is not easy to describe a special gift of the pastor, but the indication of “leadership” might be worth following. I find that Brandt also makes regular use of the terms “Leitungsbegabungen” (“*leadership gifts*”) or “geistliche Gabe der Leitung” (“*spiritual gift of leadership*”).

Rechenschaft vom Glauben is the most explicit text on the special gifts. It shows a clear priority of the spiritual gifts (“Geistesgaben”) against the special ministries. The gifts are given to all members of the church for the strengthening of the body of Christ. Of the range of gifts, some are mentioned specifically:

“Gaben der Verkündigung und Lehre, der Liebe und Fürsorge,
der Leitung und der aktuellen Weisung”

*“gifts of proclamation and teaching, of love and care, of
leading and specific instruction”*

(Rechenschaft: 10)

While the last term seems to be a paraphrase of “prophecy”, the others are rather broad categories derived from the New Testament lists, but not using the same terminology. *Rechenschaft* introduces them as particular gifts, but to me they rather represent the whole spectre of gifts. A similar approach is taken in the next paragraph, when the ministries of the church are listed again in categories that are a comprehensive description of the whole of the church’s mission. In this second paragraph the creed speaks of special gifts by the Holy Spirit, which the church recognizes and approves when it calls its ministers.

The gift of ministry

On a different note, some documents speak of the ministry as a gift in itself. This is what Cole presented as the second use of the term “gifts” in the Bible, as elaborated above. *We Baptists* takes up this concept and states emphatically: “Specialized ministers are gifts from the ascended Christ to his church” (*We Baptists*: 29). From there, the document explains the Baptist practice of ordination. The significance of this statement should not be underestimated. It takes the discussion about the term “gift” to a different level. The focus is not on certain abilities that pastors can or should have, but on the minister himself as a gift from God.

This can be compared to the ecumenical statements in *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*: “The ordained ministry which is itself a charism, must not become a hindrance for the variety of these charisms” (*Baptism*: M.32). Even this document, which has been accused of taking too much of a “high-church” position, warns against the dangers of identifying the gift with the ministry. At the same time, the document promotes a hierarchy within the variety of gifts:

“Among these gifts a ministry of episkope is necessary to express and safeguard the unity we seek”

(Baptism: M.23)

This sounds more like a Roman Catholic position with an institutionalized ministry to oversee the life of the church. *We Baptists* certainly does not see the gift of a minister in this way. However, it is remarkable that a Baptist paper calls the minister a gift to the church. I find a connection with my investigation of the term “called”: As God is named as the originator of the call, He is also the giver of gifts to the church. These need not only be identified with certain abilities, but also with specific persons. Brandt comes to a similar conclusion when he quotes from the German Baptist patriarch Köbner:

“besetzt der Heilige Geist selbst diese Ämter, indem er durch seine besonderen Gaben Menschen fähig macht, sie zu bekleiden.”

“the Holy Spirit himself fills these offices, as he enables people through his special gifts to hold them.”

(Brandt 1999: 5)

Conclusion

Baptists have no question about the fact that God is the giver of all gifts, spiritual or natural. Every Christian receives from God, and consequently has the task of discovering her or his gifts, and then actively using them in serving God, his people and the world. The church is the place where believers should be encouraged to discover and use their gifts, and the pastor has a specific role in facilitating that process.

The pastor is also seen as gifted, but there is not much indication about what makes his gifting different from that of other Christians. Many Baptists would probably agree that the gifts of the pastor are different from, but not superior to those of other church members. In fact, there is no clear designation of what the gifts of the pastor exactly are. I cannot find any reference to a “gift of pastoring” as such. There is some mention of the “gift of leading”, probably

also preaching and caring would be considered as specific gifts. When we say that the pastor is gifted, it means that he has a certain combination of gifts, which make him fit for the pastorate. How the spiritual gifts and the ministry of a pastor belong together, are worthy subjects of further research.

In any case, the sources do not put an emphasis on the special gifting of the pastor. The term “gifted” rather evokes the understanding that all church members are gifted, and that there is a wide variety of gifts. Baptists would see that as a confirmation of their principle of the priesthood of all believers, as the gifts of the Spirit are not given exclusively to pastors or leaders, but to all members. When referring to the gifts, Baptist theology regularly points to the diversity of gifts. This diversity must be cultivated and encouraged and any tendency that restricts it, must be seen as dangerous. Leadership structures are in fact assessed according to their potential to allow or hinder this diversity.

In most German documents, one finds an interpretation that the gifts are not only diverse, but that they are equal in value and significance. We have found several indications that Baptists warn against the domination of certain gifts over others. The use of gifts is interpreted in terms of a power struggle, and a strictly democratic system is claimed for Baptist churches. It remains an open question: how can this equality be practiced in the spiritual and administrative running of the church?

The term “gift” can also be used differently: not describing specific abilities that individuals receive from God for the ministry, but attached to the person of the minister. One Baptist source calls the minister a gift from God to the church. This personalization of the word “gift” is rather unusual for Baptists, and brings in a different theological component. It represents a high estimation of the individual, and therefore should not be completely foreign to Baptist theology. However, it tends to be misunderstood as promoting a hierarchy in the church, which the Baptists have always refuted.

Connecting the pair: “Called” and “gifted” belong together

Without any exception, all Baptist sources have seen the two marks as belonging together. There is no way that a minister could be called, but not gifted, or vice versa. This is necessarily so, when one claims that both the calling and the gifts come from God. It would be a contradiction of God’s actions if “called” and “gifted” did not concur in the individual.

Baptists still differ on the emphasis they put on these two elements. We have found that the term “called” is used much more with regard to the special ministry. Baptists hold the conviction that every member is called, in the general sense of “called to serve”. The special calling of women and men to the ministries of preaching, leading and caring for God’s people dominates the usage of the term. Where a writer wants to emphasize the equal status of all church members, he rather uses the concept of the gifts and their diversity. We have found several examples for this use of terminology, especially among the German Baptists. “Gifted” has a much more inclusive meaning than “called”. While there is a difference in emphasis between these two marks, let us first look at the common attributes of the two marks, especially concerning their origin in God.

“Called and gifted” by God – the divine origin of ministry

There is no doubt that the gifts originate in God, whereas I have sketched the debate as to whether the calling comes from God or from the church. While Baptists can speak of the church “calling” a pastor, the significant majority of the sources prefer to reserve the word “call” for God. There are several other terms that can be used to describe the church’s activity, such as “to appoint”, “to choose”, “to confirm” or “to select”. The verb “to call” has a strong inclination to demand a divine subject.

It can be concluded that the two terms “called” and “gifted” are marks that describe the divine origin of the minister’s identity, with regard to his being elected and equipped. This will be paralleled in the next pair with the human process of electing and equipping, based on activities of the church. The pair “called and gifted” lays the foundation for the identity of the pastor, by answering the questions: “Why am I a pastor? What has made me a pastor?” The emphatic answer is: God has made me a pastor by giving me gifts for, and a specific call into ministry. The human part of the story is always seen as a response or reaction to this divine initiative, never the other way around: One cannot apply to become a pastor. If that is true, then Baptists must admit that there is something like a divine status of a pastor, even if this must not separate him from the church members or elevate him above them. Let us remember that Baptists claim for both terms a general and a special meaning, and often emphasize the general in order to avoid an exclusive use of the special.

After having defined the congruency of the two marks in their origin in God, it is still possible to distinguish who is active in the calling and giving of gifts. At least the latter is mostly associated with the Holy Spirit, as we can already see in the idiom “spiritual gifts”. *Rechenschaft vom Glauben* titles the paragraph “Geistesgaben, Dienste und Ordnungen” (“*Spiritual Gifts, Ministries and Orders*”). The clause about the ministry lists the two criteria as “besondere Begabung durch den Heiligen Geist und Berufung durch Gott” (“*special gifting by the Holy Spirit and calling by God*”).

I have not found a clear designation of which person of the Trinity is related to the call. Within a few passages Turner uses these phrases “called by Christ”, “called of God”, “called by the Spirit” synonymously (Turner 1987: 56/57). The latter seems to represent an exception, though: the calling usually comes from God or from “the Lord”. This confers with the Biblical examples, where God calls the prophets in the Old Testament, and Jesus calls his disciples in the New Testament. In conclusion, one should be allowed to say that a person is “called and gifted” by the triune God.

“Called and gifted”: What comes first?

Is it possible to identify a chronological or theological order of these two marks? There could be the alternative between, “God calls those that he previously equipped with his gifts” and “God gives his gifts to those that he previously called”. I have not found any such explicit chronology in the Baptist sources.

Both Brandt and the *Rechenschaft* give chronological priority to the gifts: the latter starts the paragraph with the spiritual gifts before moving to the special ministries into which the church calls; Brandt speaks of a “pneumatological foundation” (“Pneumatologische Begründung”) before he considers the special ministry of the pastor (Brandt 1989: 91). Still they closely juxtapose gifting and calling. Brandt defines the task of the pastor to serve, “seiner Berufung gemaess mit seinen Gaben” (“according to his calling with his gifts”) (Brandt 1989: 93). In this phrase, the gifts are the instrument, the calling rather the guideline of ministry.

Longwe identifies an interesting relationship in this phrase:

“People who discover the meaning of their call in terms of their own uniqueness and giftedness become successful leaders.”
(Kretzschmar 2004: 103)

She argues against the limitation of ministry to the pastorate and pleads for a more open understanding for ministry. The specific gifts are taken as a guideline for a clearer definition of the call. While the calling could be a rather general urge to serve God, a discovery of one’s particular gifts would help to specify the focus of ministry. This is confirmed by the observation that the calling is mostly seen “to ministry”, while the gifts have more specific emphases, like “leading”, “preaching”, “caring” or “administering”. In the same sense, Brandt suggests to the pastor to allow the diversity of gifts within

the church to complement him, and to exercise his ministry according to his personal gifting (“persönliche Begabungsschwerpunkte”: Brandt 2002b: 2).

I do not want to over-emphasise these distinctions, though. Both calling and gifting are the basis on which the pastor unfolds his ministry. Both terms can be used to describe the general approach to serving God, as well as giving a very specific focus and area for this service. As they stand, both testify to a divine origin, but need further definition in terms of the purpose: What am I called and gifted for? Before researching on this question, I will present the human side of electing and equipping the pastor.

2. Ordained and Trained

Meaning of the term “ordained”

According to *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, one of the meanings of the verb “to ordain” is: “to appoint or admit ceremonially to the ministry of the Christian Church”. This religious meaning of the verb is predominant, while it has some other general meanings. The German *Duden* makes a distinction between two traditions within Christianity and introduces two different meanings with references to the respective church:

“1 a) (ev.) einen Pfarrer feierlich in sein Amt einsetzen;
b) (kath.) zum Kleriker weihen”

“1 a) (protestant) ceremonially induct a pastor into his office;
b) (catholic) dedicate into clergy”

Interestingly, not only the title of the minister varies, but also the synonym used to explain “ordain”. Throughout the literature, we find a host of synonyms, each one with its specific context or connotation. They range from “consecration” and “investiture” (for the noun “ordination”) to verbs such as “to admit”, “to appoint”, “to set apart”, “to install” or “to recognize”.

In the *Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, White adds the historical dimension to the linguistic analysis: the meaning of the verb “to ordain” has changed considerably since the times of the original King James Version of the Bible. It then mainly carried secular meanings like “initiate, order, establish, decree, arrange”; only in some passages in the King James Bible does it take the specific religious meaning presented above (White 1975: 542-543).

As the term “to ordain” does not appear in a specific sense in most English versions of the Bible, *Baker’s Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology* does not even have an entry for it. One has to consult the entries “to appoint” and “ministry” to find explanations. Dockery shows the usage of “Consecration

for Service” in the Old Testament stories about the priests and Levites. He uses the term “ordination” explicitly with regard to the priesthood of Aaron. In the New Testament, he refers to the appointment of Jesus’ disciples and also of church leaders, but does not use the term “ordination” for it. He mentions that these appointments are about leadership and authority and raises the question: “who appointed the elders – the apostles or the congregation?” (Dockery 1996) From the text, the answer must be “the apostles”, but Dockery tries to evade this answer, apparently because of his Congregationalist ecclesiology. In the background we can hear the “classic debate as to whether or not the ordination of the NT minister is a sacerdotal investiture” (White 1975: 543).

The term “ordination” has obviously not only undergone a historical shift in meanings, but also a theological battle between the different denominational traditions. We will find that whenever Baptists use the word “ordained” they feel compelled to comment on this history of theology. The synonym “investiture” is only accepted in the Roman Catholic tradition, where ordination is a sacrament and understood as the transfer of authority from the bishop. Protestant theologians tend to distance themselves from this doctrine and usually do it by referring to the biblical terminology:

“The formal ceremonial installation which became characteristic of the Church in the Medieval period is not implied or expressed in the original sense of the terms.”

(White 1975: 543)

Toon calls ordained ministry “not a strictly biblical expression” and remarks “there are only minimal details of this in the New Testament” (Toon 1996). White explicitly limits the significance of what the church does in ordination to “merely demonstrating the choice of God” and “only to acknowledge the function of the individual” (White 1975: 543). In the following, we will investigate how specifically Baptists understand “ordination”; we will see a wide range of opinions and typically more negative definitions than positive ones.

“No” to ordination

Warkentin, who comes from a Baptist and Mennonite background in the United States, summarizes her book *Ordination. A Biblical-Historical View* in the following sentences:

“Ordination can have no function in such a system, for it sets up barriers where none should exist, that is, between one Christian and another”

“When the Spirit of God “lays hands on” men and women at conversion, this is their consecration, their call to serve their High Priest, Jesus Christ [...] God has made provision for their ordination at baptism. They need no other.”

(Warkentin 1982: 187-188)

Warkentin’s research goes deep into the history of Old and New Testament, Rabbinic Judaism and then the Church History. She portrays the Baptists from their beginnings in the 17th century and comes to the following conclusion:

“that ordination practices were not so much based on Scripture as that Scripture was employed to justify practices that were deemed necessary to preserve denominational identity.”

(Warkentin 1982: 86)

Warkentin elaborates her radical view on ordination and the laying on of hands by a diligent investigation of the Scriptures. That approach as well as her emphasis on the authority of Christ given to the church as a whole, makes her a good representative of Baptist theology. Nevertheless, she criticizes the Baptists strongly for having betrayed their own convictions by practising ordination, and by justifying this practice theologically. Indeed, I have not found anything like her radical criticism of ordination in the Baptist literature.

There is another way of rejecting ordination, though, which I detect in Baptist sources: both the “Regulations Governing Recognition for Ministry” in the *South African Baptist Handbook* and the German Baptist *Rechenschaft vom Glauben* simply avoid the term “ordination”. *Rechenschaft* only alludes to it

when it mentions “Ämter” (“*offices*”) and how the congregation “ordnet die Dienste” (“*orders the ministries*”) (Rechenschaft: 10). As we have already seen, it does not even mention any title or position of a minister and consequently can do without reference to ordination.

The *South African Baptist Handbook* speaks of “recognized ministry”, and defines how the local church appoints ministers, following a list of criteria. Again, there is no mention of “ordination” whatsoever. I have not verified in how far that is reflected in the practice of Baptist Union churches. Harris is not as rigid in avoiding the term, but also prefers to put it in inverted commas. The German Baptists definitely have a regulated practice of ordination. It will have to be debated how they relate it to their theological convictions.

“No” and “Yes” to Ordination

Most of my sources, though, seem to give a mixed response to the question. Turner starts by calling ordination “a tradition in the churches which can bring some problems” (Turner 1987: 60). After a short discussion of the semantics of the word, he juxtaposes his negative and positive statements about ordination:

“Ordination IS NOT an act of giving power or special grace. It IS the recognition of power given by God. Ordination IS NOT an act of ordained leaders. It IS an act of the local church. Ordination IS NOT an act of setting the pastor apart from the members. It IS an act of setting the pastor apart for his God called ministry.”

(Turner 1987: 60)

In these three pairs, Turner presents his understanding of ordination with regard to its essence, its subjects and its purpose. In a typical Baptist way, he uses the terms “recognition” and “setting apart” for his positive definitions. First, let us look at the negative ones: Turner alludes to the Roman Catholic tradition, that sees ordination as a sacrament given by bishops and effectively turning the minister into clergy. In his Baptist understanding, he emphasizes the ultimate authority of God, which can only be recognized by the church. The

church must do that as a whole and without separating the minister from the members. The Biblical examples are all taken from the New Testament, mostly from the book of Acts, and refer to the “setting apart” of individuals for special ministry in the early church. Turner shows no intention at all of avoiding or dropping the concept of ordination, but simply attempts to redefine it within the framework of Baptist theology.

In a similar way, Hudson claims that ordination does not confer a special status before God, but simply means “to appoint and to install formally [...] in a specific office” (Hudson 1979: 65). The key in this interpretation is in the term “status”, as it describes the Baptist concern when it comes to ordained ministers: they must not be given a special status, that sets them apart from the other members.

This is also the place of the discussion about the terms “lay” and “clergy” in Baptist churches. There is consensus that these terms are not appropriate to describe the positions of ministers and members in Baptist churches. The idea of ordination, though, has an inherent tendency to create two classes of Christians – that is why ordination is sometimes rejected completely. However, we have seen that there are ways of positively redefining ordination to make it fit into Baptist theology.

Beasley-Murray follows the same route of “No” and “Yes” to ordination in the final chapter of the book *Anyone for Ordination?*. He presents the Baptist perspective under the title “The ministry of all and the leadership of some”. His conclusions about ordination are firstly formulated in negative statements:

- “a) Ordination is not to the ministry [...]
- b) Ordination does not involve metamorphosis [...]
- c) Ordination is not indelible [...]
- d) Ordination is not an initiation to priesthood [...]

(Beasley-Murray 1993: 164-167)

There can be no doubt that Beasley-Murray addresses the Roman Catholic traditions on ordination and rejects them. Among Baptists, ordination shall not be understood as irreversibly transforming the ordained. In contrast to that understanding, Beasley-Murray claims: “Ordination is primarily about recognition and trust” (Beasley-Murray 1993: 166). He moves on to admit, however, that ordination does bring a change in the life of the ordained. He is given a “new responsibility” and also entrusted a “certain amount of authority”. Immediately, Beasley-Murray tries to restrict this statement by demanding a leadership style of a servant from the ordained. The authority of the leaders cannot be based on their office, but on the recognition and trust given to them by the members, “because they discern within them the marks of Christian leadership” (Beasley-Murray 1993: 172).

These marks and the connection of leading and serving will be investigated in the next chapter of my thesis, where “Leader and Servant” are paired. Suffice it here to observe that Beasley-Murray also approaches the topic of ordination by rejecting wrong understandings and promoting a new and better theology of ordination.

In his book *Radical Believers*, he rejects another misconception that is related to the clerical interpretation of ordination: that the ordained minister has the exclusive right to perform certain acts in the church like baptizing or administering the Lord’s Supper. He also touches on the question of who is active in ordaining the minister – the local church or a national union of churches. We will take this question up later. But we still have to acknowledge that there is another Baptist view:

“Yes” to ordination

Wright comes to the pointed conclusion that all the Baptist concerns and even rejections of ordination are not necessary.

“Just as Baptists might celebrate communion (and even call it the eucharist) without thereby signing up to the doctrine of transubstantiation or practise baptism without embracing baptismal regeneration, so ordination can mean what our own theological reasoning leads it to mean.”

(Wright 2001: 168)

Wright then briefly describes what a Baptist theological reasoning on ordination should look like. He refers to the same idea of recognizing the call of God that we have seen in other Baptist documents, and adds the terms “legitimation” and “authorization”. He concedes that this act of ordination might not be necessary, but calls it “a fitting and appropriate act” (Wright 2001: 168).

Wright then introduces an interesting argument on the “change” that this act brings about in the ordained. While he agrees with other Baptists in rejecting the concept of an “ontological change” and an “indelible character” through ordination, he demands that Baptists cannot deny a change completely:

“However, in that the ordained person is set aside for ministry with the prayers of God’s people, those prayers must count for something, unless we believe that prayer in general counts for nothing.”

(Wright 2001: 169)

The logic of appealing to the transforming power of prayer must attract good Baptists. Wright manages to turn the theological discussion onto a practical level, and it is difficult to disagree with him. He goes on to define the status of the ordained minister as a “way of being” and claims a “difference to the ordained person’s sense of responsibility to live a disciplined and godly life” (Wright 2001: 169). At the very end of his paper, Wright comes back to the topic of status and admits that a concern for status in ministry is harmful. He solves the problem by introducing new terminology:

“the importance of God’s chosen ministers being people of *standing* among us [...] Status is what we seek for ourselves. Standing is what others give to us, most of all when we do not seek it.”

(Wright 2001: 174)

Again, Wright succeeds in moving the debate to a new level, where the old theological paradigms and separations can be overcome by accepting new terminology and concepts that bridge the gaps. I strongly sympathize with this creative approach of Wright.

Questions from South Africa

While the Baptist Convention of South Africa has a distinct procedure for ordination, it cannot refer to clearly defined regulations in that regard. Over several years the report of the “Ministers’ and Spouses’ Department” has proposed a set of regulations to the National Assembly, but without any resolution. The proposals, though, did not contain any theological reflection on ordination, but simply outline the prerequisites and the administrative steps for ordination.

In two instances at the Winter Schools of Theology, the practice of ordination in BCSA was addressed by the speakers. In 1997, in the small group discussions after Kretzschmar’s paper on the Baptist Principles, the group appreciated the principle of the priesthood of all believers, and derived the question: “Why are lay preachers, deacons and children’s workers not ordained?” (Kretzschmar et al 1997: 55)

As far as I can see, this question does not receive an answer in this or any of the subsequent Winter Schools of Theology. In the following year, though, Nthane in his evening story makes two remarks about ordination from his own life experience.

“I stayed almost ten years being “un-ordained”, because I was not pasturing [sic] a church.”

“After some years working with Scripture Union, I was considered for ordination because I was working for a recognized para-church organisation.”

(Kretzschmar et al 1998a: 22-23)

These remarks may seem incidental, but they do reflect a high estimation of ordination by the speaker. At the same time, he alludes to one of the detailed questions of the practice of ordination: which kind of ministry must one be involved in to qualify for ordination? The whole issue of the requirements for ordination needs further investigation, part of which will be done in the next part of this chapter, when we look at the term “trained”. Before that, we must have a closer look at the German Baptists’ regulations.

“Ordnung für die Ordination” („Regulations for Ordination“)

As we have seen earlier, the German Baptists’ creed does not even use the term ordination, and is on the whole very reserved about the special ministry. However, the German Baptist Union has a comprehensive set of regulations for ordination – as for many other areas of church life. A document concerning ordination was accepted by the “Bundesleitung” (“*National Executive*”) in 2001, and carries the following title:

“Ordnung für die Ordination von Pastorinnen und Pastoren im BEFG sowie zur Durchführung von Ordinationsgottesdiensten”

“Regulations for the Ordination of female and male Pastors in the BEFG, as well as for the Practice of Ordination Services”

The title shows the clear decision of the German Baptists to ordain both men and women as pastors. Not only the title, but also the table of contents, makes it clear that the ceremony of ordination is to take place in a local church service and has to include certain mandatory elements. We will look at these elements later.

First, it must be noted that these regulations are based on a theological preconception, which is presented in the first two parts of the document. The first part of the document starts by emphasizing that the ministry is given to the whole congregation, which has to discover the diversity of gifts, and encourage

and train all members to use them. The specific ministries are understood in the context of the priesthood of all believers, and as ordered ministries exist next to ad-hoc mandates by the Holy Spirit. This is the German Baptist solution to the conflict between “Charisma” (“*charisma*”) and “Amt” (“*office*”). Point 2.1. provides a definition for ordination:

“Die Ordination ist nach unserem Verständnis die öffentliche Beauftragung einer Pastorin / eines Pastors, durch die sie / er sich für den Dienst der Verkündigung, Seelsorge und Leitung in Pflicht nehmen lässt.”

“The ordination is, according to our understanding, the public commissioning of a pastor, by which she / he accepts the duty of the ministry of proclaiming, counselling and leading.”

(Ordnung für die Ordination 2001: 1)

This is followed by the prerequisites that the gifts of the pastors must have been recognized and approved by the congregation, and that the pastor is willing to take up the ministry within the kingdom of God. One of the key concepts in this statement is public recognition. A separate clause emphasizes the public nature of the ministry, and refers to its legal obligations. Beyond this, the ordination service is called a “spiritual occasion”, because in it the pastor receives confirmation of his calling. At the same time, he and the church are reminded of their shared ministry and responsibility.

According to the regulations in the German Baptist Union, ordination takes place at the beginning of the ministry of a pastor and always in close cooperation between the local church and the denomination. While it is not stated explicitly, it is understood that the ordination ceremony takes place in a local church service. Among the elements of the ordination service, we find a four-fold ordination vow that encompasses the areas of proclamation, pastoral care, leadership and conduct. A long list of Scripture passages is suggested to provide encouragement to the pastor.

This document specifies not only details of the liturgy, but also locates the ordained ministry within the general ministry of the congregation and within

the wider context of the denomination and the church at large. Particularly on this last part, Baptists in different countries differ in their understanding of ordination.

Who ordains?

The German regulations state that the ordination ceremony takes place in a local church, but it is carried out by a representative of the denomination and in the name of Jesus Christ. Both the denomination and the local church confirm the calling of the pastor, but only the denominational representative is called the “ordainer”. Whereas these regulations emphasize the public and denominational quality of ordination, Beasley-Murray warns strongly against an Episcopal concept.

“ordination needs to be seen not as an action of a particular person, but rather an action of the whole church.”
(Beasley-Murray 1993: 171)

To avoid an Episcopal tendency, he demands that the prayer and laying on of hands be done not only by one person, and not only by ordained ministers, but by several, including lay persons from the congregation. For Turner, ordination is strictly “an act of the local church”, which only needs to be reported to the other churches or the national union (Turner 1987: 60-61). Baptist theology does not have a consensus on the priority of the local or national body of the church when it comes to ordaining their pastors.

How to ordain?

While Baptists are generally known for their minimal approach to liturgical regulations in their worship services, they seem to be rather prescriptive when it comes to the ordination service. Several of the documents quoted so far provide a detailed list of elements of the ordination service and ceremony. They agree on the key element of prayer with laying on of hands. The message in this service is called a “biblical challenge [...] to the person and to the

church” (Turner 1987: 61), or a “charge to the candidate / to the church” (Hiscox 1990: 56).

As mentioned above, the German Baptists have a set of ordination vows formulated as questions to the ordained. Turner puts them more simply as “questions to show his spiritual maturity, call, gifts and biblical knowledge” (Turner 1987: 61). Hiscox and the German Baptists advocate a certificate of ordination, unlike Beasley-Murray, who prefers a gift:

“it is good to present to ordinands a Bible, as a sign of their authority, which in turn is a reminder that pastor and people alike are all under the authority of the Word of God.”

(Beasley-Murray 1993: 172)

Warkentin, in her attempt to discredit the idea of ordination, also dwells for many pages on the issue of “The Laying on of Hands” (Warkentin 1982: 109-156). She arrives at an adamant conclusion:

“The laying on of hands has nothing to do with routine installation into office in the church, whether as elder, deacon, pastor, or missionary.”

(Warkentin 1982: 156)

Most of the Baptist documents, though, agree that the laying on of hands is an integral part of the ceremony, and that there is no need to discuss its validity or biblical foundation. Turner simply calls it “a symbol of recognition of a God called ministry” (Turner 1987: 61).

Conclusion

It has become clear that ordination is problematic in Baptist theology. The occurrence of the concept in the Bible does not provide enough clarity, and furthermore, the history of doctrine has produced a host of different meanings for ordination. In ecclesiology, ordination seems to be connected more easily with the Roman Catholic concepts of church and ministry than with the Baptists.

Nevertheless, there is no outright rejection of the term found in most of our literature. Some Baptists try to avoid the term, while most of them prefer to give it a new and distinctively Baptist interpretation. In any case, most Baptist churches have a practice of ordination and do not shy away from the term itself. It remains to be debated, if Baptists betray their own theological convictions when they ordain, or if they simply take the liberty to fill the term with their own meaning, and rightfully do so.

For Baptists, ordination must be closely linked to the local church, but at the same time include the wider context of a national body of churches. They value the elements of prayer and laying on of hands in the ceremony. They do not want ordination to create a different status for the pastor, as they generally refuse the distinction between lay and clergy. As an ordained minister, the Baptist pastor enjoys the recognition of the church and is given the higher responsibility of the special ministry.

Meaning of the term “trained”

The term “trained” is an adjective derived from the verb “to train” for which *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* renders among others the explanations:

“2a) to instruct and discipline generally, to educate, rear, bring up; b) to instruct and discipline in or for some particular art, profession, occupation or practice”

Apparently there is a more general and a specific meaning of the verb, the latter referring to the purpose of the training. The German term “ausbilden” has the same spectre of meanings, but the *Duden* adds two aspects in its explanation:

“1a) durch Vermittlung von Kenntnissen, Fertigkeiten auf einen bestimmten Beruf vorbereiten”

“1a) to prepare for a specific profession by providing knowledge and skills”

Firstly, training is defined as a preparation for a profession. Secondly, the method or content of training is at least named in the general categories of knowledge and skills. When the pastorate is defined as a job or profession, it logically requires some kind of training.

There is widespread consensus on this definition among Baptists and they have generally been known for their high estimation of training and education. However, the emphasis on the spiritual prerequisites on the one hand and the egalitarian understanding of ministry on the other, have sometimes led Baptists to question the need and usefulness of theological training. Beyond the notion of rejecting training altogether, a multitude of models are in evidence for the training of Baptist pastors. It exceeds the scope of this investigation to debate the appropriate knowledge and skills for the pastorate. I will only give some indications of Baptist suggestions about the content and methods that Baptists find useful and desirable in the training of their pastors.

My main question here is to what extent training is seen as a necessary and essential characteristic of a Baptist pastor. From this, we shall briefly examine the models for theological education developed by Baptists in Germany and South Africa.

Before turning to the Baptist literature, let us look at the ecumenical position in the document *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry (BEM)*, which is summarized in the following clause:

“Candidates for the ordained ministry need appropriate preparation through study of scripture and theology, prayer and spirituality, and through acquaintance with the social and human realities of the contemporary world. In some situations, this preparation may take a form other than that of prolonged academic study. The period of training will be one in which the candidate’s call is tested, fostered and confirmed, or its understanding modified.”

(Baptism: M.47)

The first sentence relates training to ordination as a necessary stage of preparation. It defines the scope of this preparation in a holistic way: it is not only about academic studies, but also about the practice of faith, and not least rooted in an awareness of the context. Indirectly *BEM* criticizes models of training that are limited to only one of these three aspects. I would like to add the dimension of skills training that is also needed in preparing pastors for their ministry. The questions of how to lead, preach or counsel, cannot be neglected. Current models of education often use the triad of “knowledge – skills – values” to describe a holistic approach to education.

The second sentence in the *BEM* clause takes “prolonged academic study” as the general rule for training pastors, but allows exceptions to this form. The rule is probably taken from the tradition of academic theological studies as it has developed in Europe over many centuries. In Germany, theology has always been one of the primary faculties of the great universities. Especially the Protestant churches have forfeited control over the theological training of their pastors by allowing the theological faculties at universities a high degree

of scientific freedom. I see a need for the church to re-claim this field of training their pastors and question the monopoly held by the universities over theological training.

The third sentence in *BEM* relates the training dynamically to the call of the pastor. The call is understood to come before the training, but the training understood as a time of preparation also has a shaping, and even critical, influence on the call. According to this statement there is a clear chronology from call to training to ordination. From my first two pairs of terms in the list of marks of the pastor, only “gifted” does not appear in this clause of the ecumenical statement.

Baptists embrace training

Throughout their history, Baptists have been famous for promoting training on many levels. An outstanding example of this is the Baptist “Sunday School”, a well-known model for involving all members, from the children to adults, in Bible study and developing their faith. It is therefore no surprise that the German Baptist Union has presented one of its ten guidelines under the heading “Bildung” (“training”) as follows:

“Wir fördern Menschen durch ein breit gefächertes Bildungsangebot und qualifizieren sie für ihre Aufgaben in Gemeinde und Gesellschaft.”

“We empower people through a wide variety of educational opportunities and provide qualifications/training for their tasks in the church and society.”

(Leitbild 2002: 3)

This statement deliberately includes all members as recipients of training in Baptist churches. This corresponds with the emphasis on the priesthood of all believers. This principle has as its basis God’s calling and gifting of human beings for the works of ministry. It mentions professional and volunteer workers in the church both of who require training. Theological training of pastors is implicitly rather than explicitly indicated in this statement.

The Baptist Convention of South Africa has named “Theological Education” as one of their five goals in the long-term “Vision Jubilee 2010”. In the closing comments of the first Winter School of Theology, the editors state: “Theological Education, we believe, is a means of empowerment” (Hoffmeister and Kretzschmar 1995: 110). And “empowerment” is one of the most highly rated concepts in the “New South Africa”. *The South African Baptist Handbook* is less effusive, but still expresses a positive appreciation of the need for training in the following statement:

“ministry, for which the union requires theological training and vocational equipping.”

(Harris 1996: 266)

The Baptist Union insists on certain criteria for recognizing pastors, but in the following sentence proclaims the autonomy of the local church, even in setting the conditions for entry into ministry. We must establish why and how the Baptist Union distinguishes between “theological training” and “vocational equipping”.

Baptists require training

Similar to the South African Baptists, the German Baptist Union has stipulated in its rules that a pastor must have a certain kind of theological training. The document *Kriterien für die Ordination und Aufnahme auf die Liste der Pastorinnen und Pastoren* goes to great lengths to describe four different ways to attain the necessary qualification. The first one provides the general rule:

“Voraussetzung für die Ordination zum Pastor des BEFG ist in der Regel eine fünfjährige theologische Ausbildung mit dem Abschluss eines “Master of Theology”.”

“A prerequisite for ordination as a pastor of the BEFG is normally five years of theological training leading to the degree “Master of Theology”.”

(Kriterien 2004: 1)

It is a long story, how the German Baptists decided to use the English designation “Master”. More importantly, it must be observed that this prerequisite allows for exceptions, as they are listed in the other three points of this document. The document expands on the routes of qualification through studies at other institutions, or even through a prolonged process of recognition of ministerial experience that only needs one semester of residential studies at the German Baptist Theological Seminary in Elstal. Apart from the detailed rules about how to acquire an approved level of training, the document also gives a brief description of the model of training:

“Die Ausbildung im Theologischen Seminar Elstal (Fachhochschule) verbindet akademische Qualifizierung mit Praxisorientierung.”

“The training at the Theological Seminary Elstal combines academic qualification with practical orientation.”

(Kriterien 2004: 1)

The underlying concept here is similar to what the South African Baptist Union terms “theological training and vocational equipping”. One might want to correlate these two aspects with the educational terms “knowledge” and “skills”. Where the dimension of values comes in, remains to be clarified. The Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland approved the document *The Baptist Doctrine of the Church* in 1948, and in it proclaims:

“Ministers receive intellectual and spiritual training and are then invited to exercise their gifts in a particular sphere.”

(Shurden 1993: 91)

There is an interesting reference to the gifts in this sentence. Beyond that, the twofold description of the training as “intellectual and spiritual” is noteworthy. Here we find an example for the explicit requirement of “spiritual training” for pastors. Kretzschmar expands this in her paper on “The implications of new developments in Christian Ethics and Spirituality for curricula and staff development at Baptist theological colleges in Southern Africa” (Kretzschmar 2004: 75-100). She specifically claims the need for theological educators to learn from and educate within the experience of the spiritual disciplines.

“the spiritual disciplines are not ends in themselves, they are means to enable us to grow as disciples so that we can live and act as ministers of the gospel.”

(Kretzschmar 2004: 90)

It is surprising that Baptists do not show a strong emphasis on this dimension of the qualification of the pastor. Maybe it is taken for granted that the pastor is a spiritual person, but nevertheless the need for development in that area seems to be underestimated. The Baptist Convention College in Soweto, though, makes it clear in its brochure that its aim is “ministerial formation” rather than just academic training. It defines this formation also with a view to “holistic spirituality”.

The spiritual dimension of the qualification can also stand in contrast to the academic training. It must be admitted that Baptists sometimes tend to favour the spiritual dimension to the secular requirements of education. I will comment on that tendency in the next paragraph.

Baptists question the need for training

Turner might be a typical representative of this tendency. In his answer to the question “What kind of Man should a Church Choose as Pastor or Deacon?” he calls it the “first qualification” that he must be “a spiritual person”. The next demand is to be a wise person, which is then qualified by the sentence: “Wisdom is not education from schools.” (Turner 1987: 55) In his definition of the pastor on the previous page, Turner refers specifically to theological training:

“Neither do they [Baptists] limit the use of the word pastor only to those who have received theological training.”

(Turner 1987: 54)

Here, Turner contradicts the clear requirement for theological training that we have found in other Baptist churches. The reason could be either that he speaks

on behalf of poorer churches and countries, where education is not easily accessible. But it might well be his theological conviction about church and leadership that makes him warn against a fixation on theological training. We find similar caution against the theological qualification in completely different contexts. The Baptist World Alliance Study and Research Division alludes to this reservation against the theologically trained in the following statement:

“Although Baptists accept help from those qualified to interpret the Bible’s language, literature, and culture, [...] no one can interpret dogmatically for another.”

(We Baptists: 23-24)

One senses the fear of the authors that academic theology could dictate beliefs to the members, and their refusal of anything that might be called “dogmatic”. Nevertheless, their conclusion seriously questions the role of the theologically trained. That sounds very similar to the restrictions given by Brandt, who emphatically proclaims the “geistliche Selbständigkeit” (“*spiritual autonomy*”) of the church members. From there, he refuses any tendency to monopolize the interpretation of scripture in the hands of theological experts only. He demands that pastors build a strong foundation of Biblical understanding in the church and respect the spiritual insight of the members. Only then can the pastor avoid incapacitating the church through his theological competency (Brandt 1999: 2).

South African Baptists redefine theological training

In her paper at the Winter School of Theology, Kretzschmar describes “The Ethos and History of the Baptist Convention of South Africa’s Winter Schools of Theology”. What she says about the first three Winter Schools of Theology, expresses her conviction of how theological training should happen in general:

“They have been events; times when we have met with God and each other. The WSTs are not simply places where an exchange of ideas takes place on a cerebral (mental) level. The WSTs have involved our hearts, minds, souls and strength.”

(Kretzschmar et al 1998a: 5)

This emphasis on a holistic experience stands out as one of the key concepts of the Baptist Convention philosophy of theological training. Students and staff at the Baptist Convention College (BCC) in Soweto have subscribed to a list of commitments about their theological work, within which the holistic approach is a prominent criterion. Next to it stand the critical approach to the Baptist theology and heritage, combined with close contact and loyalty to the churches and the denomination. Another predominant feature of the BCC approach is contextual theology, expressed thus:

“To avoid the privatisation of the Gospel and instead pursue a holistic, biblical spirituality that actively interacts with the ecclesiastical and social contexts within which believers live.”
(Kretzschmar et al 1998a: 7)

This commitment encompasses a range of convictions about theological education –among them the emphasis on a holistic approach and on the spiritual dimension. It starts by naming the negative – which in Kretzschmar’s words is the “privatisation of the Gospel”. In brackets she unfolds it in four directions, one of which is called the “a-contextual approach to the Christian faith”. On the positive side, she describes the contexts as the realities of church and society. Her overview of the history of theological education for black Baptists in South Africa then demonstrates how decisive a role segregated education under Apartheid and unequal distribution of resources played in the history of the Baptist Convention College.

The dream of a “united, relevant and credible theological Baptist education in South Africa” has especially encountered difficulties in the area of unity in the South African situation. The three challenges were repeated in the topic and the resolution of the Winter School of Theology 2003. The Resolution from that conference (Kretzschmar 2004: 198-202) provides plentiful material for reflection and interaction, but this is outside the scope of my research.

Baptists develop models for theological education

It should be noted that South African Baptists have not only promoted the need and the principles of theological education, but also discussed the changing models and methods. Mugabe, Principal of the Theological Seminary in Zimbabwe, proposes six categories for theological education, starting with “contextuality”. In his explanations he focuses on the need for African personnel and finances for African institutions, but also includes the active involvement of women and a “theological innovativeness”. Under the category of “Integrated Programme” he presents the triad of “spiritual formation, academic development and practical relevance”. Again, it could be compared to “knowledge – skills – values”, and at the same time related to the demand for contextual theology. This is confirmed when he expands the category as a “commitment to political and social transformation”. In the other categories he focuses on the methods of instruction and assessment and closes with a call to more cooperation in the field of theological education. Mugabe summarizes his educational approach in the statement: “Theological education must liberate people by helping them to think” (Kretzschmar et al 1998a: 38). It is noteworthy that African Baptists link theological education emphatically with their key motifs of transformation and liberation. Why is it that the European Baptists regard theological training much more as a danger than as a catalyst of freedom?

Kidd, from the Northern Baptist College in Manchester, responds to Mugabe by calling the traditional European model of university education “a model dominated by classic western assumptions about power and control” (Kretzschmar et al 1998a: 40). It is associated with an overemphasis on the intellectual part of training and an “objective” understanding of the content and the assessment of training. In contrast to that, and with reference to the Latin American educator Freire, Kidd proclaims a holistic, contextual and egalitarian approach to education. And he also points to the liberating aspect of this model and commends the Baptist Convention College for its motto “Truth Liberates”.

In the same tradition, Ndala, lecturer at the BCC, presents the change of models in theological education with the title “Banking concept vs Partnership in learning and teaching” (Kretzschmar 2004: 123-125). The brief notes from his paper repeat many of the concepts mentioned above. They add two interesting Biblical examples from the New Testament:

“The Bereans were critical thinkers. They always listened and went home to check if the information is true and applicable in their lives [...] Jesus was always effective because he engaged his listeners and asked thought provoking questions.”

(Kretzschmar 2004: 124)

Ndala applies the two different models of education to the South African realities and compares the “banking concept” to “Bantu education” under apartheid, and the partnership model to the recently introduced model of “outcomes-based education”.

Conclusion

All of these presentations and discussions in South Africa obviously centre on the best method of theological education and the different models and approaches. There is no doubt and no question about the need and demand for theological training. This reflects the general consensus in South African society after Apartheid that education is a key to progress, liberation and transformation. In that specific context, this is not the time to doubt or question the necessity and value of training. But in the same way in which the old model of education is questioned for its exercise of power over the learner, one could caution against the temptation for the trained pastor to abuse his power as a trained person against the church members. This is where the European doubts and warnings about the status of the “theological expert” come in. While the Africans will do well to listen to this side of the story, Europeans could learn a lot from the emphasis of the liberating and transforming power of education. Baptists will then not have to limit their appreciation of education, but rather allow their pastors to play their role as “trained trainers” for the empowerment of the whole church.

Connecting the pair: “Ordained” and “trained” as secondary categories

From the above, it has become clear that the two marks in this pair are much more questioned among Baptists than the first pair. I am inclined to call them secondary marks of the Baptist pastor for several reasons:

Firstly, neither term has a strong Biblical basis. We found that neither term is listed in most dictionaries of the Bible, simply because they both do not appear in the Biblical texts. In both cases, one can only find synonyms or related concepts in the Bible. For Baptists, this is a strong indication, that the concepts are secondary and might even be deleted from a strictly Biblical theology. At the same time, Baptists have come to accept the fact that they are not simply an extension of the early church as depicted in the New Testament. The history of the church over two thousand years cannot be ignored, but must be taken into account when explaining the Baptist faith. Therefore, most Baptists would agree that it is allowed and even necessary to include terms and concepts in their statements of faith and theology, which are not found in the Bible. But the discussion has also proved that “ordained” and “trained” are categories that need definition and can even be questioned to the point of dismissing their value and applicability completely.

Ordination and theological education are forms that have developed over the course of church history and also in greatly diverse forms among Christian denominations. Therefore, the presentation of these categories has to explore the variety of different Christian practices, for example regarding the ordination. We identify a distinctly Roman Catholic theology from which the Protestant understanding is distancing itself. That is where some of the negative definitions for ordination have their background. In the case of ordination, that leads to serious suspicion among Baptists even against the term itself. However, they still use it and seem to have agreed that they can give it their own meaning.

“Trained” is a concept that is much closer to the Baptist heart, and needs less apology and reinterpretation. Baptists have always been fond of education, and the only questions are about the forms and methods. Both terms are understood to describe human activities and regulations, whereas the first pair was about the divine initiative. The human side can only be seen as a response to and consequence of the divine. Ordination is explicitly called the act of recognition of the divine call. Training is understood as the effort of unfolding and sharpening the gifts that God has given. In both cases the pastor is a candidate who has to prove to an examining body that he fulfils the requirements: only if he can make a credible claim of being called and others confirm that he is gifted, will he be accepted for training and then for ordination.

Even in terms of chronology, training and ordination must come after receiving the call and the gifts. No Baptist would expect the call to come during the training or because of ordination. In this regard, Baptists are thoroughly sceptical of the impact of humanly instituted and regulated acts.

Ordination and training tend to be exclusive

The caution among Baptists against ordination and even theological training stems from the fact that both tend to separate the pastor from the church members. Baptists claim on solid theological grounds that all believers are called and gifted. Pastors are seen as special cases of calling and gifting, but they still fall under the general rule and are not qualitatively different. This egalitarian philosophy is related to the Baptist principle of the priesthood of all believers.

When it comes to ordination and training, this equality cannot be maintained. We have found that even on the idea of training, the emphasis of Baptist theology is that training should be offered to all members on different levels and areas of skills and needs. Again, the theological training is seen as just one

specific case of a general rule. This is confirmed by the German *Leitsätze*, which promote education as a key area of the identity of the BEFG without referring to theological training explicitly. At the same time, the German Baptist theology is highly aware of the exclusive touch of theological training, and therefore warns the pastor against the abuse of his knowledge and training. Brandt repeatedly claims the capacity of all believers in the field of interpreting the Bible, and restricts the pastor even with his theological training to the position of a facilitator.

We have also found that the South African Baptists are much less wary of domination by theological experts, and validate rather the empowering and liberating effects of theological education. Could it be that this difference in perception comes from the cultural backgrounds of a highly individualistic self-concept of the European versus a communitarian society in Africa? Is it true that the training of an African leads more directly to the empowerment of his whole community as he shares his knowledge and skills with them? Interestingly, Turner contrasts two concepts of “setting apart”:

”Ordination IS NOT an act of setting the pastor apart from the members. IT IS an act of setting the pastor apart for his God called ministry.”

(Turner 1987: 60)

In this interpretation, the exclusive touch of ordination is not seen as a separation between lay and clergy. It is rather interpreted with view to the specific task and purpose of the pastor that does not separate him from the members, but in fact draws him into ministry for (and with) them. Ordination and training would then not create an exclusive status for the pastor, but rather a specific responsibility.

Ordination and training are regulated by the denominations

Both ordination and theological training are common features among Baptists worldwide, but with a wide variety of practices and regulations concerning the

details. This confirms the human and historical character of these marks, as the church responds to God's activity of calling and giving gifts. In their response, the churches and denominations necessarily reflect their specific contexts.

Both ordination and theological training are the responsibility of a larger (mostly national) body of Baptist churches. In that regard, they overcome the strict emphasis of Baptists on the local church, and provide a justification for the association of Baptist churches into unions or conventions. Even though ordination in some countries is seen as an act of the local church, it creates a relationship of trust between the pastor and his denomination. Theological training is generally seen as a task that can only be fulfilled by an organization larger than the local church. The specific relation between the two is defined by the rules and regulations of a Baptist body concerning the recognition of ministers and the respective lists. As a general rule, a certain level of theological training is one of the requirements for ordination.

3. Leader and Servant

Meaning of the term “leader”

“Leader” is a noun derived from the verb “to lead”, describing the person who leads. A comparison of entries in different dictionaries reveals that the synonyms or explanations for “leader/lead” differ quite considerably. *Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary* renders the meaning of “leader” as “a person in control of a group, country or situation”. The term “control” suggests a rather strong position of authority and even dominion. The *World Book Dictionary* gives not only the synonyms “guide, direct, influence, persuade”, but also the paraphrase “show the way by going along with or in front of” for the verb “to lead”. This definition sounds much more communicative, leaving room for the freedom of the follower. *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* offers a whole range of meanings, including most of the abovementioned. They are grouped in different categories: the first one with the main meaning “to cause to go along with oneself” or “to guide by going on in advance”; in the third category we find the terms that express superiority like “to have the first place in” or “to be the chief”. It is apparent that the term “leader” shows a diversity of meanings. It is no wonder therefore that the concept of leadership in general is hotly debated. Maybe most of the conflict stems from different understandings of the term.

The *Bertelsmann Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache* offers just two synonyms for “leiten”: “führen” (“guide”) and “lenken” – the latter comes from the use of vehicles, where it also translates “steer” or “drive”. The *Duden* presents a range of explanations, most of them using the synonym “führen”, but supplemented with different adverbs such as “verantwortlich” (“responsibly”), “begleitend” (“accompanying”) or “hinweisend” (“by pointing to”). The activity of “guiding” apparently can be associated with different styles or motifs. The influence exerted by a “leader” has to be qualified.

The verb “influence” is undoubtedly a key component of a proper understanding of “leading”. Maxwell uses the short phrase: “Leadership is influence – nothing more, nothing less” (Maxwell 1998: 17). In the same chapter, Maxwell exposes five concepts that are commonly understood as marks of leadership – he calls them the “myths” of management, entrepreneur, knowledge, pioneer and position. In the chapter “The Law of Navigation”, he rejects the adequacy of the synonym “steer” when he states: “Anyone can steer the ship, but it takes a leader to chart the course” (Maxwell 1998: 33).

I will refrain from going into detail on Maxwell’s explanations of the “irrefutable laws of leadership”. I have come to understand that the term “leader” is open to a wide variety of concepts, understandings and convictions that are sometimes presented with great vigour. In recent times, leadership has become the favourite topic in literature, both from the fields of business and religion. Often, distinguishing between leadership in these two areas has become impossible, but it remains to be debated whether there are indeed principles that apply to both fields.

A Biblical understanding

Baker’s Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology presents a long article on leadership, but it contains surprisingly little general definition or explanation (Hildebrand 1996). Firstly, it distinguishes the usage in the Old and New Testaments. Secondly, it simply goes through Biblical stories to present examples and models for leadership. Thirdly, it groups these examples under the categories of “civil leaders”, “religious leaders” and “charismatic leaders”. Only in three short paragraphs at the end of the article, Hildebrand highlights “theological dimensions of leadership in the Bible”. There are three main statements in this paragraph:

- “there is no authority except what has been established by God”

- “The role of leadership was not intended for self-advantage but for service.”
 - “Leaders are accountable to God.”
- (Hildebrand 1996: 5)

Hildebrand has obviously no intention of relating his findings about leadership in the Bible with a business-oriented concept. This conviction is revealed in the fact that the category “civil leaders” is only applied to the Old Testament; Hildebrand finds no New Testament equivalent to the role of the elders and kings of Israelite society. Even the charismatic judges and prophets of the Old Testament find very little parallel in the New Testament. “Religious leader” becomes the dominant category for Hildebrand in New Testament times while he admits that “the office was by the very nature of it intended for persons who were recognized for, among other qualifications, their spiritual gifts.” (Hildebrand 1996: 5)

The abovementioned three theological aspects are reflected in a diversity of ways in the presentations of leadership in the Baptist documents that I will scrutinize in the following paragraphs.

The Congregationalist view of leadership

Most Baptist theologians refer to the Baptist principle of congregational church government when they deal with the topic of leadership. They take as a starting point the “Lordship of Christ” and conclude that it is best realised through the congregation. Sometimes they use the word “theocracy” to describe that the rule comes from God. Turner even refers to all three persons of the divine Trinity in the same paragraph:

“The church is more under the direct control of Christ [...] Theocracy means ‘government by God’. The Holy Spirit leads the church”

(Turner 1987: 64)

Brandt uses the two terms “Christokratie” (“*Christocracy*”) and “Pneumatokratie” (“*pneumatocracy*”) to describe the theological foundation of Baptist ecclesiology. Based on this, he develops a strictly Congregationalist view of the church and of leadership. I have decided to approach the Baptist understanding of leadership from this angle. It is radical in that it does not confer a real leadership role on the pastor. In his article “Das allgemeine Priestertum”, Brandt describes the ministry of the pastor mainly by showing that there is no task or responsibility in the Baptist church that could only be carried out by the pastor. At least for the German Baptists, that is true even of the leadership responsibility in the church.

“Die Gemeindeleitung liegt allgemein nicht beim Pastor, sondern bei einem Ältesten”

“The leadership of the church is usually not in the hands of the pastor, but of an elder ...”

(Brandt 1989: 93)

It is a striking reality in German Baptist churches that the leader of the church (“Gemeindeleiter”) has traditionally been a lay member elected by the congregation. Historically and even today, the pastor has always had to find his place beside this leader or in a leadership team that comprises lay leaders. The pastor is mostly seen as an *ex-officio* elder, but not as the church leader. On this background, Brandt presents a whole lecture on leadership in Baptist ecclesiology without making any specific reference to the pastor. His main concern about leadership is how to handle and communicate it in such a way that the congregation can accept it.

On a similar note, *We Baptists* limits the power of the leaders explicitly with reference to the authority of the congregation:

“Leaders will undoubtedly offer guidance, but in a Baptist church the congregation has the final authority, under Christ”

(We Baptists: 25)

In the same chapter, conflicts are explained as the attempt of leaders to “scheme to impose their ideas”. This undisguised preference of the authority of the congregation over the authority of leaders is nevertheless countered in the paragraph on “The Ministry”, where leadership is called indispensable for Baptist churches. At the same time, the pastors are introduced as “leaders of the congregation in its worship” (We Baptists: 30). Maybe the qualification “in its worship” contains the specific understanding of what is later called “spiritual leadership”. There is some evidence of a typically Baptist way of distinguishing between the institutional and the spiritual aspects of authority. This allows some Baptist theologians to proclaim both congregational church government and the leadership role of the pastor.

Turner propounds this view, when he titles two consecutive chapters in *Baptist Beliefs and Customs*: “Church Leadership” (chapter 7) and “Church Government” (chapter 8). The latter is an unambiguous plea for congregational church government, the autonomy of the local church and the democratic process of decision-making. There is not much room for leadership in this model, except the task to facilitate this process: “The leader needs to give every member [...] an opportunity to speak” (Turner 1987: 70). However, in the preceding chapter, Turner sets a completely different stage with the following opening statements:

“Church leadership is important. With good church leaders the church can be strong [...] The leader is responsible for the spiritual condition of the church.”

(Turner 1987: 53)

If these two chapters are not to be seen as contradictory, only the abovementioned distinction between the institutional and the spiritual level of authority can hold their teachings together. There is no explicit indication, though, if this distinction is intended by the authors.

A contrasting view from South Africa

“The pastor has one task that no one else has. He alone can do it: Lead the congregation [...] Only the pastor can lead the church to accomplish the vision ...”

(Nthane et al 2000: 21)

With this pointed statement, Mogoera closes his presentation on “Contemporary Biblical Leadership”. The title of the paper already raises questions about the combination of the two adjectives “contemporary” and “biblical”. Mogoera uses both attributes in his proclamation of courageous leadership in the church. He does not refer at all to the traditional Baptist terminology and ecclesiology. Instead, he applies modern concepts of leadership from the corporate world, but integrates them in a distinctly Biblical and spiritual presentation of leadership. He decries the lack of relevant training for leadership and the obsession with positions in the church. He lists many persons of the Bible who provide examples of leadership qualities. Finally, he focuses on Jesus as the role model of servant leadership. I will come back to this specific issue in the second main part of this chapter.

It is noteworthy that Mogoera simply claims the leadership role for the pastor. At the same time, he has made it completely clear that the leader is not made by the title or position, but by the ability to make followers, to influence. And he is obviously aware of the dangers of leadership and the misuse of power, when he states: “The power that is given to us is not to boss people around” (Nthane et al 2000: 10). Mogoera goes on to present his definition of leadership:

“Biblical leadership is the task of leading God’s people into mutual ministry with one another for the purpose of building up the body of Christ and reaching out to the world.”

(Nthane et al 2000: 10)

I will investigate only two of Mogoera’s points about the leadership of the pastor: the spiritual quality and the empowering role of the leader. Afterwards,

I will take a look at other concepts that are connected with the Baptist understanding of leadership.

A spiritual leader

Throughout his paper, Mogoera makes it clear that he does promote a holistic understanding of spirituality.

“We can no longer isolate the church from sickness, poverty, unemployment or problems in the spirit world.”

(Nthane et al 2000: 8)

When he lists the lessons to learn from Biblical persons, he mentions the qualities of organization and delegation, planning and research as well as those of confessing sin and proclaiming Christ. The categories of the leadership style of Jesus encompass his focus on giving God the glory, as well as having a consistent character and a capable team. The only category that Mogoera dwells on is “staying in touch with the boss” (Nthane et al 2000: 17). He reminds the audience of the prayer life of Jesus, his eagerness to know what God wanted. And he asks some questions:

“How can the kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven if church leaders have not found out from the Father where he is already working? How can church leaders join in the Kingdom building process without instruction from the Lord of the kingdom?”

(Nthane et al 2000: 18)

It is this emphasis on prayer and a close relationship with God that I understand as the spiritual quality of the leader.

Turner adds another aspect in his description of the church leader as a “spiritual person”. He refers to the “quality or kind of life a person lives” (Turner 1987: 55), and alludes to the ethical or moral dimension of the spiritual life by giving the example of a “man with many wives” who is unfit for a leadership position (Turner 1987: 58). In the same paragraph he presents the spiritual dimension in an interesting list of contrasts:

“Choosing education instead of gifts, popularity instead of spirituality or outward appearance instead of inward quality brings problems.”

(Turner 1987: 58)

Empowering leadership

One of the comments at the Winter School of Theology 2000 connects the qualities of spiritual and empowering leadership:

“Pastors are called to be spiritual leaders in the church. They are sent to empower, edify, teach their people and to bring up their gifts.”

(Nthane et al 2000: 24)

While “empower” is a favourite term in South Africa, the concept, if expressed differently, is found all over the Baptist world. Longwe, a lecturer at the Baptist Theological Seminary in Malawi, describes Jesus Christ and the apostle Paul as examples for how a leader trains others to follow him. She frames this paragraph with two statements that define leaders according to this willingness to equip others:

“Leaders are people who have been given an equipping gift to train others [...] Some of our leaders build kingdoms and leave no room for the younger generation.”

(Kretzschmar 2004: 103-104)

The phrase “equipping the saints” is taken from Ephesians 4:12, and has provided the title for the Winter School of Theology 1999. Beasley-Murray refers to the same passage of scripture but coins a new term, when he describes the pastor as “enabler”. He explains how “enabling” can have a tremendous effect: “Far from monopolising ministry, the pastor is called to multiply ministry.” (Beasley-Murray 1992: 94)

This aspect of leadership finds strong resonance in the Congregationalist view – it might even be the only role that this view concedes for the pastor. *We Baptists* unfolds its understanding of spiritual leadership in the sentence:

“The pastor [...] seeks to help the congregation to find and exercise the variety of gifts found in the life of the church.”
(We Baptists: 30)

Brandt also refutes the idea of a monopoly in ministry and exhorts the pastor to focus on the following:

“Entdeckung, Begleitung, Ermutigung und Förderung der Mitarbeiter, die zur Entfaltung ihrer Berufung und Begabung angeleitet werden.”

“Discovering, accompanying, encouraging and supporting the co-workers, who are led to developing their calling and gifts.”
(Brandt 2002b: 1)

In this respect, the traditional Baptist theology concurs with the modern church growth concepts. Hölzl quotes from Schwarz, when he names one of the marks of quality of a church “bevollmächtigende Leitung” (“leadership that empowers”), and again refers to Ephesians 4:11-12. The *Leitbild des Bundes Evangelisch-Freikirchlicher Gemeinden* defined “Leitung” in 2002 as follows:

“Wir verstehen unter Leitung, Einzelne und Gemeinden so zu führen und zu fördern, dass Begabungen entfaltet, Veränderungen bewältigt und Ziele erreicht werden können.”

“We understand leadership as guiding and supporting individuals and congregations in a way that helps them develop their gifts, cope with change and achieve goals.”
(Leitbild 2002: 3)

With the latter two concepts, the German Baptists bring up another mark of leadership, that is goal-orientation.

Goal-oriented leadership

In his book *Courageous Leadership*, Hybels claims that the strongest force to change the world is an inspiring vision. His definition of a leader is therefore based on the notion that the leader is the one who has the vision and communicates it in a way that inspires and motivates others. Hölzl shows how this understanding has influenced many German Baptist churches. He comments:

“dieser Ansatz geht von der Synthese von starker pastoraler Leitung und der gabenorientierten Mitarbeit möglichst aller Gemeindeglieder aus.”

“this approach is based on a synthesis of strong pastoral leadership and the gift-oriented participation of all church members.”

(Hölzl 1999:70)

Hölzl also refers to other representatives of a similar understanding of leadership like Schwarz who explicitly speaks of “zielorientierte Leitung” (“*goal-oriented leadership*”) and Warren who has introduced the term “purpose-driven church”. It is worthy of note that the German translators have turned this phrase into “Kirche mit Vision” (“*Church with Vision*”).

In the Baptist Convention of South Africa, the emphasis on the vision has been well received and applied in various ways. A discussion group at the Winter School of Theology 1997 mentions in the list of duties of a pastor: “to present a vision for the church to the congregation” (Kretzschmar et al 1997: 77). The same group concludes that it is the duty of the executive committee of the church to put that vision into practice and the duty of the congregation to follow that vision.

The teaching of Brandt uses the same ideas for the German Baptists. He defines the primary task of the church leadership as follows:

“die Ziele der Gemeinde zu formulieren und mit der Mitarbeiterschaft und der Gemeinde zu kommunizieren.”

“to formulate the goals of the church and communicate them with the co-workers and the congregation.”

(Brandt 2002a: 1)

Brandt mentions three factors that are necessary for a theologically sound formulation of goals: studying the Holy Scriptures together as a congregation; listening to the voice of Christ; discerning the specific situation of the church. In *Leitgedanken* (1999), he describes in detail how this process should work in a Baptist church. He puts a strong emphasis on the consensus of the congregation. In order to reach it, a lot of patience and respect is required from all church members. For the leadership, he insists on the aspect of communication.

Leaders must communicate well

In the Congregationalist church structure, the leadership always needs to convince the church members, who are the final decision-makers in the Baptist church. Brandt concludes:

“Daraus ergibt sich, dass die Gaben der Leitung immer auf echte Kommunikation hin angelegt sein müssen.”

“It follows that the gifts of leadership must always be based on true communication.”

(Brandt 1999: 5)

Brandt describes at length the processes of defining the goals of a local church. As mentioned above, he insists especially on the need for patience to gain a consensus in the congregation about matters like this. He warns against “quick solutions” through “strong leaders”, as they would only alienate the members. Again, the absolute priority of the congregation is confirmed in the statement:

“Die vom Heiligen Geist erfüllte und geleitete Gemeinde geht davon aus, dass seitens der Gemeindeleitung um Verständnis geworben und um inneres Einverständnis gerungen wird”

“The congregation, filled and led by the Holy Spirit, assumes that the leadership asks for understanding and strives for inner approval”

(Brandt 1999: 6)

In words that are hard to translate into English, Brandt emphasizes the sovereignty of the congregation to a point that emasculates the leadership. The congregational understanding of the church implies that the leaders are always accountable to the congregation that has appointed them.

Accountability of leaders

Beasley-Murray makes the accountability of leaders one of three “Baptist Principles concerning leadership”. Closely connected to it is the principle that leadership is appointed by the church meeting. The members therefore decide on the procedures of appointing leaders, on the length of their terms of leadership and other regulations of their ministry. Beasley-Murray concedes that the leaders are accountable to God, but claims immediately that they are also accountable to the church. The implications of this accountability are mentioned and discussed in his chapter on authority among Baptists. Two of his statements will serve to highlight his understanding:

- “Hence, the church has the right not only to encourage its leaders, but also to admonish them.”
- “Honour and respect may be due to pastors and other church leaders, but there are times when they too need to be given direction”

(Beasley-Murray 1992: 65)

Beasley-Murray comes to the conclusion that there is real tension within the Baptist understanding of authority. This tension cannot be resolved, but must be accepted. The authority of the leaders must be understood as delegated authority, “which the leaders are free to exercise until the church withdraws its recognition of them.” (Beasley-Murray 1992: 65)

In his explanation of the matter, Beasley-Murray jumps back and forth between appreciating the “God-given role” of leadership, and limiting it with reference to the “ultimate authority” of the church meeting. In the end, the pendulum always swings back to the higher authority of the congregation:

“However, no leaders are infallible – not even the pastor! The church meeting is the rightful place for testing all major proposals for church life, irrespective of from whom they come.”

(Beasley-Murray 1992: 66)

I get the impression that the infallibility that is excluded for the pastor is then secretly claimed for the congregation. At least, the following paragraph binds the authority of the church meeting back to the Lordship of Christ. There is yet another important aspect on leadership proposed by Beasley-Murray:

Leadership is shared

“In no Baptist church is the pastor the only office-holder” (Beasley-Murray 1992: 92). While we will look at the understanding of “office” later, the principle of shared leadership is very common among Baptists. We have already mentioned that in German Baptist churches, the lay leader traditionally has a similar standing to the pastor.

Brandt assumes this plurality of leadership, when he speaks of the women and men that are called as elders and deacons. He refutes a hierarchy of power and requests that within the leadership committee the communication and cooperation shall reflect unity in diversity. Kretzschmar agrees, when she formulates her “Challenge to the Pastors”:

“No single minister can be expected to do everything that needs to be done in a Church. For this reason the New Testament often speaks of a team of leaders.”

(Hoffmeister and Kretzschmar 1995: 38)

She then points to the list of ministers mentioned in Ephesians 4:11. It has become known as the five-fold ministry and permeates the current discussion of leadership in the church. Even though it may be understood and applied in various ways, it reflects one fact that is generally accepted among Baptists: leadership is shared, and therefore the term “leaders” has to be used in the plural.

The discussions of South African Baptists at the annual Winter School of Theology sometimes suggest a different view. There is a certain use of the words “leader” or “overseer” in the singular that reflects the concept of the pastor as the only leader of the church. It is balanced, though, by statements that put the pastor together with other leaders, especially those in the executive. This can go to the extent of creating a new metaphor: “The church members and the pastor form a team with the pastor as the coach.” (Kretzschmar et al 1997: 71)

There are many questions and discussions connected with the topic of shared leadership in the Baptist churches. What exactly the relationship between the different church leaders could be, and how they share responsibilities and power, are but two ways of approaching the issue. Another aspect will be covered in the second part of this chapter, when I look at the term “servant”. Before that, however, let us explore one final aspect of leadership.

Leading by example

It is mostly taken for granted that a leader can only influence others in so far as he is a living example of faith. When Turner demands that the leader should be a wise and respected person, he says about the leader:

“He should be an example of a believer. Many non-believers are watching his life and actions.”

(Turner 1987: 55)

Turner puts the exemplary life in the context of the impression that a leader makes outside the church. Cole, in his presentation on “Personality Types and Leadership Styles” at the Winter School of Theology 1997, gives examples of the kind of role model the leader must be inside the church:

“In the church, the leader of the stewardship ministry must be generous [...] The leader of evangelism must be a soul winner.”

(Kretzschmar et al 1997: 224)

Longwe applies the same principle to the theological educators and their influence on students:

“First the lifestyle of the educator must be exemplary and good [...] There must be a total life exposure of the teacher. We must have a lifestyle and a life changing influence as educators upon those we are training.”

(Kretzschmar 2004: 111)

Harris confirms the same view when he quotes from White, *Crisis in Leadership*: “the ‘basic qualification for spiritual leaders is that they be living demonstrations of the reality of all that they teach.” (Harris 1996: 221)

The same emphasis that is found here in the contribution of African Baptists cannot be explicitly found in the European Baptist literature. There are only few indications that support the idea that the pastor leads as a role model with his exemplary life. That is not to say that the Baptists in Europe do not accept the idea; but it raises the question why they do not stress the importance of it in the same way as the Africans do. Brandt only mentions in connection with the pastors’ leadership responsibility, that their life is part of their proclamation: “ihren Dienst so wahrzunehmen, dass ihr Leben Teil ihrer Verkündigung ist.” (Brandt 2002b: 2)

Beasley-Murray drives the point when he comments on a passage from 1 Corinthians 16:15-16. He tries to show that in the Biblical passages, leadership authority is not derived from positions and submission cannot be “imposed and unthinking”.

“What was true then is surely still true today: ultimately people obey their leaders not because of what they say but because of who they are. This is servant leadership.”

(Beasley-Murray 1992: 63)

With this same conviction, Longwe presented her paper on “The Challenge of producing Christian leaders of integrity, courage and compassion” (Kretzschmar 2004: 101-112). It is the emphasis on the spiritual dimension and on the character of the leader that allows him to be an example and role model for those who follow.

As we have seen, Beasley-Murray uses the term “servant leadership” as a synonym for this idea. While I doubt that the term really reflects what he has said before, it goes to show that the connection of “leader” and “servant” is a powerful and recurring notion in the Baptist theological discussion of church and leadership. It will be investigated after the conclusion to this part.

Conclusion

There is a general consensus that the Baptist pastor is a leader in his church, but the understanding of the term has many variations. The congregational church structure gives a clear prerogative to the meeting of the church members in terms of making decisions about church life. In such a structure, the role of leaders is defined by terms such as “advisor” or “facilitator”. Even with their restrictive understanding of leadership, European Baptists usually insist that the pastor cannot take the leadership position alone. He is always bound together in a leadership team with other lay members or elders. Some Baptists make a distinction between the administrative and the spiritual dimension of leadership in the church. That would put the pastor in the position of the “spiritual leader”. Whereas this term could be used to describe a certain area and aspect of church life (“lead in worship”), it rather suggests a certain quality of spiritual life expected from the pastor.

Generally, African Baptists are more ready to call their pastor the “leader” of the church and ascribe authority to him. The South African Baptists’ discussions at the Winter Schools of Theology show that they are struggling with the concept of leadership and with the question how to relate the authority of the pastor to that of the church executive and of the congregation. The living example of the pastor as a role model would be one way of demonstrating his leadership. In Germany the need to communicate well is emphasized more than in Africa, especially by Brandt who proclaims the ideal of a consensus democracy in the church. Goal-orientation and empowering leadership are two concepts that are mentioned by most Baptist documents. The pastor can only lead the congregation when he works towards a goal or a vision. The origin of this vision would always be seen in God, but the primary receiver of it could be the pastor or the congregation. In the latter understanding, the leaders mainly need the patience and ability to facilitate a process of vision finding. In the former, the pastor provides the vision, and then has to communicate it to the congregation.

In any case, Baptists agree that all members must be led to be active and participating in the church life. Therefore, the role of the leadership is defined by the tasks of enabling, empowering and motivating. The pastor is not the one who “runs the church”, but who helps the members to develop their gifts and callings, and to carry the work of the church together. Coming back to the definitions of the word “leader” in the beginning of this part: the synonym “to control” would probably be strongly rejected by most Baptists; rather the paraphrase “to show the way by going along with or in front of” expresses the Baptist understanding well. That still leaves many questions about the theological background and the practical implications of leadership.

One of the favourite answers given by Baptists comes with the term “servant leadership”. In my approach to the concept, I will now present the second element of the pair of terms.

Meaning of the term “servant”

An overview of the dictionaries reveals immediately that the contemporary and the Biblical uses of the term differ hugely. *Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary* only gives one explanation: “a person who is employed in another person’s house, doing jobs such as cooking and cleaning, especially in the past”. The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary presents two explanations:

- “1. a personal or domestic attendant;
2. one who is under obligation to render certain services to and obey the orders of a person / body of persons in return for wages or salary”

The *Duden* shows that in German the term “Diener” has a specific connotation that is not there in “servant”:

“jemand der in einem Gemeinwesen bestimmte Pflichten erfüllt, ein öffentliches Amt bekleidet”

“someone who fulfils certain duties in a community, who holds a public office”

Looking into the uses of the term in the Bible, there is an immediate distinction between the general understanding of a servant and the specific meaning of “servant of God”. The servant depends fully on a master and has to actively obey him. A synonym for “servant” in this regard is “slave”, even though some of the connotations of the term in our languages are rooted in the practices of slavery at a much later time.

Michaels points out that a “servant can be anyone committed to someone more powerful than he” (Michaels 1975: 358-359). He shows that there is a specific Biblical understanding of the servant-master relationship as a voluntary covenant. This is taken from the Old Testament but revived by the apostle Paul to describe the relationship of Christians to their Lord Jesus Christ.

While the Old Testament portrays the “servant of God” as a leader over Israel, it does not imply that he is therefore also a “servant of the people”. There is a shift in meaning in the New Testament, in that the servants of Christ are explicitly called servants of the community of believers as well.

“Again the decisive factor in the shift is Jesus, who reversed the customary patterns of authority (both pagan and Jewish) first by His teaching, and then by His own fulfilment of the servant role.”

(Michaels 1975: 359)

Morris makes a strong case by stating that the main word used for Christian ministry is taken from a commonly used term for lowly services. Other words were available, but not used. It is this characteristic of the Christian church that causes much of the structural debates and questions throughout church history. How can any church order reflect the servant quality that the New Testament demands?

One of the focus points of this research has to be on the subjects and the objects of serving in the church. To what extent can the pastor be seen as the servant? And whom is he serving – God or the church or the world?

All Christians are servants

Beasley-Murray has titled one chapter in *Radical Believers* “Serving One Another – a Baptist concept of ministry”. In the introduction, he looks at the terms “ministry”, “minister”, “diakonia”, “diakonos”, “servant” and “service”, and comes to the conclusion that all of them apply to every member of the church.

“Thus we can argue that if all God’s people are called to ‘serve’, then by definition every Baptist [...] is a ‘minister’ [...] We might therefore also argue that every Baptist is called to be a deacon.”

(Beasley-Murray 1992: 86)

We Baptists approaches the topic under the title “Service for God”, and starts by presenting the servanthood of Jesus as described in Mark 10:45 and demonstrated in the washing of his disciples’ feet. The ministry and testimony of Jesus had to have consequences for his followers.

“Seeing that Jesus lived as a servant, early Christians began to describe themselves as servants and to seek service.”

(We Baptists: 67)

Unfortunately, in the course of the argument, the authors jump between the church and the leaders as the subjects of this attitude of servanthood. There is no clear reasoning where and how to apply this rule of serving. It may be a deliberate choice to juxtapose these two statements without strictly relating them.

“If Jesus was a servant, the church is a servant community. As Jesus was a servant, the legitimate work of church leaders is to serve others rather than to glorify themselves.”

(We Baptists: 68)

The Baptist Convention of South Africa confirms this understanding in the discussion of the Baptist Principles at the Winter School of Theology 1997. The priesthood of all believers is presented in a direct connection with servanthood: “We are all priests. We are called to serve.” (Kretzschmar et al 1997: 55)

Brandt presents the same idea, using more complicated terminology. In his lectures to future pastors, he repeatedly warns them not to forget that in a Baptist congregation authority and ministry always have to be shared. He uses the words “Dienstgemeinschaft” (“*community of service*”) and “Vollmachtsgemeinschaft” (“*community of authority*”) to state the fact that the pastor has no monopoly of service or of power. Unfortunately, he does not specify the service that all members of the church have to render.

Only *We Baptists* makes a clear point of describing the service of the church as a whole – and not only of the church members as individuals and to each other:

“The church’s finest hours have been those when it served the world [...] The church’s service includes worship [...], proclamation [...], and ministry. So evangelism is the work of a servant, not a salesperson. Feeding the hungry, helping the poor, and assisting the oppressed are acts of servants (Luke 4:17-19).”

(*We Baptists*: 68)

Beasley-Murray refers to this aspect of service in his paragraph “Ministry in the World”. He apologizes for the fact that most of his book dwells on the ministry within the church, whereas “it is likely that for most Christians their primary sphere of service is not in the church but rather within the wider world.” (Beasley-Murray 1992: 88)

As we delve into the investigation of the pastor as a servant, we do remember the general understanding of service as a quality of all followers of Christ and its wider object being the world.

Church leaders are servants

Beasley-Murray goes back to the leader of the first English Baptist church, John Smyth, who distinguished two sorts of ministers in the church: pastors/elders and deacons. Only for the latter did Smyth use the word “serve”. Their title in itself is derived from the Greek word for servant.

Mostly, Baptists do not apply this distinction between two sorts of leaders, especially not when it comes to calling them servants. Even though Turner has started his exegetical notes on deacons in the local church by stating “Deacon means ‘servant’”, he does not hesitate to name the first quality of a church leader as being a servant. In the explanation, he substitutes the term “church leader” with the word pastor and explains the pastor’s servanthood thus:

“The pastor seeks to help the people and does not use them for his benefit.”

(Turner 1987: 56)

Before we unfold the connection of the two terms “leader” and “servant”, we need to examine whom the leaders are serving.

Servant of the church or servant of God

There are only a few indications that the pastor is primarily a servant of God. Turner calls him a “servant under Christ” (Turner 1987: 53) and Beasley-Murray concedes that “leaders are serving the church as well as their Lord” (Beasley-Murray 1992: 65). However, the overwhelming echo in Baptist theology is that the pastor as a church leader has to serve the church. Erickson states the general rule for churches with a congregational structure:

“any leaders engaged are servants, not masters, of the churches and their members. They serve by the will of the membership [...] and for specified limited periods.”

(Erickson 1992: 1079)

While Erickson refers to the administrative and structural aspects of the service, *We Baptists* unfolds it for the spiritual arena:

“The pastor exercises a spiritual leadership, that of a servant to the church, and seeks to help the congregation to find and exercise the variety of gifts found in the life of the church.”

(We Baptists: 30)

It might be questioned whether there is a difference between the servant “to the church” and “of the church”. Clearly, the enabling task mentioned above is understood as a key element of the pastor’s service. There is no room for debate in Beasley-Murray’s definition of authority in the church:

“The church is not subject to any human authority figure, whether within or without the church; rather the church is served by deacons, elders, pastors”

(Beasley-Murray 1992: 59)

The language in German Baptist documents is mostly more abstract: it uses the term “Dienst” (“*service*”), but nowhere the term “Diener” (“*servant*”) and only rarely the verb “dienen” (“*to serve*”). Brandt repeatedly insists that a basic principle in the church of Christ says that leadership must be service.

“Ein Leitungsdienst, der nicht als diakonia, als Dienst im Namen Jesu Christi verstanden und auch konkret gelebt wird, widerspricht elementar dem geistlichen Grundgesetz, das der Herr seiner Gemeinde für ihren Weg [...] eingeschärft und mitgegeben hat.”

“When the service of leadership is not understood and practiced as diakonia, as service in the name of Jesus Christ, it fundamentally contradicts the basic spiritual law that the Lord has given to and impressed on the church for its walk.”

(Brandt 1999: 6)

In an earlier paper, Brandt has for once used the verb “to serve” to describe the task of the pastor as “der Gemeinde zu dienen” (“*to serve the congregation*”). (Brandt 1989: 93)

The harshest formulation of this fact is found in another BWA document called “Towards a Baptist Identity”, ratified in Zagreb in 1989. It describes the constitution of a local church and its competence to appoint its ministers.

“These officers will serve its interests and execute its will in matters pastoral, educational and practical”

(Shurden 1993.: 64)

This statement completely reduces the pastors and deacons of the church to “executive officers” and does not leave room for their leadership role. In that regard, it gives us the purest use of the term “servant of the church” for the Baptist pastor. In general, we have already found much more of a combination of the terms “servant” and “leader”. This is the pair that I have chosen for this part of my investigation, and I will now go on to reflect on how the two terms belong together in a Baptist understanding of the pastor.

Connecting the pair: The “servant leader” as a Biblical model

Throughout the last part of the investigation, we have found a widespread consensus among Baptists that the terms “servant” and “leader” belong together. In fact, the Baptist understanding of leadership has been defined by the combination of the two in the term “servant leadership”.

There is one instance where Beasley-Murray uses that combined term. However, he only expresses the limited meaning of leading by example there (Beasley-Murray 1992: 63). In the German context, Brandt proposes his own way of combining the two terms as he alternates in speaking of “der geistliche Dienst der Leitung” (“*the spiritual service of leading*”) or “Leitungsdienst” (“*leadership service*”) or proclaims in short: “Leitung ist Dienst!” (“*Leadership is service!*”). Similarly, the German Baptist Union presents the background to its definition of leadership:

“Leitung ist eine Gabe für die Gemeinde, sie hat dienende Funktion und ist nicht Selbstzweck.”

“Leadership is a gift for the congregation; it has a serving function and is not an end in itself.”

(Leitbild 2002:3)

As far as my range of research has established, the South African Baptist context provides the only explicit and extensive use of the combined term “servant leader”. At the Winter School of Theology 1998, Mugabe concludes his paper on “New Models and Methods for Theological Education in Africa” with the demand: “Education must not promote elitism. Servant leadership is what we seek” (Kretschmar et al 1998a: 37). Earlier in his paper, Mugabe had identified one of the weaknesses of current theological education in Africa as “producing graduates who are elitist rather than servants” (Kretschmar et al 1998a: 34). Unfortunately, he does not give any examples or explanation of this observation. The conclusion we can take from his presentation is that for him the “servant leader” is the answer to and correction for a dangerous

development he calls “elitism”. In his perception, this development is connected with the way the Baptist pastors are trained. In much the same way, two years later at the Winter School of Theology, Mogoera finds the problem in the training.

“The most critical problem facing our black churches in South Africa today is the lack of relevant training for servant leaders to serve effectively in our churches and communities.”

(Nthane et al 2000: 7)

We need to add this critical evaluation of theological training to the earlier findings about the training for ministry. Mogoera does not stay with these critical comments, but moves on to positive descriptions. He gives some brief leadership lessons from persons and stories in the Bible and then presents the “leadership style of Jesus”.

“Servant leadership is leadership through service and this is how Jesus modelled and taught discipleship among his followers.”

(Nthane et al 2000: 16)

He describes Jesus leadership with the four categories: “clear mission – consistent character – capable team – in touch with the boss”. I have referred to this part earlier in my investigation on the “spiritual leader”. Here, I want to quote from the eight “principles of leadership” Mogoera puts forward just before his concluding challenge to the audience.

- “Servant leaders humble themselves;
- follow Jesus rather than seek a position;
- give up personal rights to find greatness in service to others;
- can risk serving others because they trust that God is in control;
- take up Jesus’ towel of servanthood to meet the needs of others;
- share their responsibilities and authority with others;
- multiply their leadership by empowering others;
- follow the leadership of their Pastor.”

(Nthane et al 2000: 19-20)

Some of these principles throw light on how the terms “leader” and “servant” can be combined. The servant attitude must not lead to denying the responsibility or clouding the authority of the leader. Rather, it defines and characterizes the way he fulfils his duties as a leader. The servant is taken as a model for leadership, not as a contradiction to leadership. Wright strongly insists that the two concepts must not be seen in contradiction, but rather as defining each other. He refers to the example of Jesus Christ and points to his position of sovereignty.

“It can hardly be denied that Christ, the pioneer of salvation, gave leadership to his disciples, but in so doing he permanently redefined what spiritual leadership looks like. It does not involve domination and coercion but meekness and self-sacrifice.”

(Wright 2001:164)

Wright strives to overcome the opposition of service and leadership and does so with a unique definition of leadership as a “form of service”:

“It serves the church by offering something which is greatly needed, an example that points the way and leads into good pasture, that nurtures and enables the whole people of God”

(Wright 2001:164)

In this way, Wright seems to restore dignity to the work of leadership that has sometimes suffered even from the combination with the term “servant”. Again, it is the South African discussions that make us aware of the pitfalls of our Baptist concepts of leadership.

“The Bible says a leader is a servant, but when the pastor is like a servant, the deacons can boss him around and misuse their power.”

(Kretzschmar et al 1997: 54)

Servanthood, when demanded unilaterally from the pastor, can bring with it experiences of oppression and abuse that are not justifiable. Baptists will have to emphasize the “servanthood of all” to give balance to the relationships in the church.

Conclusion

Baptists are increasingly accepting that leadership has to be one of the categories to define the role of the pastor. They may have their questions about the appropriate form of leadership in a congregational church structure. They define it with reference to the spiritual quality of the pastor's role. They limit the leadership authority by declaring it as appointed, delegated and shared; but they cannot eliminate it completely.

The Biblical and theological approach that is finding increasing acceptance is to define the leadership understanding of Baptists by combining it with the terminology of "servanthood". Taking Jesus as an example in his teachings and his life, Baptists propose the specific model of the "servant leader". It still has to be defined in theory and in practice, how the activities and attitudes of leading and serving can work together harmoniously. It must be debated how strongly the church should claim the pastor as its servant. Certainly, the pastor must also be seen as a servant in his relation to God and to the world. However, the terminology of the "servant leader" with its inherent tension has the potential to form a new understanding of leadership among Baptists and to overcome some of the extremes on both ends of the spectrum.

With this background, we can move to some more practical aspects of the position and role of the Baptist pastor.

4. Preacher and Shepherd

Meaning of the term “preacher”

The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary explains the noun “preacher” having a predominantly religious, but also a secular meaning:

- “a) one who proclaims religious doctrine by public discourse, esp. a minister of religion; one licensed to preach;
- b) one who exhorts earnestly”

Preaching is defined by the synonym “to proclaim”, but also with regard to the content, the person and the circumstances. In a similar approach, *WordNet* defines the preacher as “someone whose occupation is preaching the gospel”. Again, the content of the preaching and the position of the preacher are specified. The *Duden* only explains various meanings for the verb “predigen” (“to preach”). The non-religious meaning is expanded more than in the English dictionaries:

- “1a) im Gottesdienst die Predigt halten; b) verkündigen;
- 2a) eindringlich ans Herz legen, anempfehlen, auffordern;
- b) nachdrücklich in belehrendem Ton sagen”

- “1a) to hold the sermon in a church service; b) to proclaim;
- 2a) to urge, to recommend, to request; b) to say firmly in a schoolmasterly tone”

Bertelsmann also adds in brackets, that the preacher usually is a professional minister of religion. Especially from a Baptist point of view, it is an interesting question why the “preacher” has predominantly become a term to name a profession rather than just a function.

We will find out that the Baptist theologians strongly claim that in the Baptist church, preaching is not the sole preserve of the pastor. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that among the German Baptists the term “Prediger” (“*Preacher*”) was the standard title for the pastor for many years. Only in the second half of the twentieth century, have they adopted the title “Pastor” and changed the

name of their institute for pastors' training from "Predigerseminar" (*"Preacher Seminary"*) to "Theologisches Seminar" (*"Theological Seminary"*).

In the Bible, we do not find the word "preacher". *Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology* does not have an entry for the noun, but for the verb "to preach", combined with its synonym "to proclaim". Both English verbs translate the Greek verb "khrussw". Farrell shows how this verb appears in the New Testament, frequently and with a consistent meaning:

"These uses, like those in the Gospels and Acts, set forth the public nature of the Christian proclamation. They also show that the content of this proclamation is the gospel or Christ - his death and resurrection for the salvation of humankind."

(Farrell 1996: 4)

Investigating the Baptist theological literature, we will find a similar tendency: the noun "preacher" appears much less than the verb "to preach"; in the German literature, there is also the generic noun "Verkündigung" (*"proclamation"*) that is used much more than the personified "Prediger" (*"preacher"*).

Is every Baptist a preacher?

Several authors quote the following statement to summarize the Baptist understanding:

"It is the Church which preaches the Word and celebrates the sacraments [...]. It normally does these things through the person of its minister, but not solely through him."

(Wright 2001: 166)

While most Baptists agree on this statement, they are divided on the question, which sentence to put the emphasis on. The renowned *Hiscox Guide for Baptist Churches* has influenced Baptist theology since its first publication in 1859. It claims the task of preaching for every member, yet reserves a higher responsibility for the pastors:

“Every Christian is under obligation to preach the gospel according to his ability and opportunity; but special leaders and teachers are needed for the pastorates of churches.”

(Hiscox 1990:46)

We will see later in this chapter how Hiscox compares the terms “preacher” and “shepherd” with regard to the position of the pastor. Alluding to the Baptist Principles, his position is sometimes summarized in the phrase “preacherhood of all believers”. In a different context, Hayashida claims the same: “The preachers are all the saints of God!” (Msiza et al 1999: 51) This statement is qualified by his definition of preaching:

“I mean that this proclamation ought to be expressed by deed [...] as well as by word [...], by the arts [...] as well as by presence [...]. Proclamation, or preaching, so defined opens the gateway for exciting possibilities for all of God’s children in the church.”

(Msiza et al 1999: 48-49)

Hiscox understood preaching strictly as verbal proclamation of the gospel, though not necessarily from a pulpit or within a church building. Hayashida gives a much broader meaning to the word by including non-verbal means of proclamation. It might be more appropriate to interpret his paper as explanations of proclamation, rather than preaching in the narrow sense of the term. According to my opinion, the word “ to preach” can hardly be used for communication that is not verbal. Even in Baptist theology, it is uncommon to see a preacher in every member of the church. The Baptist consensus is rather that the pastor is not the only preacher.

The pastor is not the only preacher

In his paper on the priesthood of all believers, Brandt defines the role of the pastor in a church with a congregational constitution. As he moves through the various fields of ministry, he repeatedly opposes the monopoly of the pastor:

“Der Dienst der Verkündigung ist nicht auf den Pastor beschränkt, auch wenn er aufgrund seiner theologischen Ausbildung in der Regel predigt. Daneben predigen in Baptistengemeinden aber immer auch andere Gemeindeglieder, und zwar nicht nur im Notfall als Vertretung für den Pastor.”

“The ministry of proclamation is not limited to the pastor, even though as a rule he preaches because of his theological training. In addition to him, there are always other members in a Baptist church who preach - and not only in emergency situations where they stand in for the pastor.”

(Brandt 1989: 92)

Brandt qualifies both his statements about the task of preaching. The pastor’s theological training gives him priority in this role. With this reference, Brandt admits that he sees the pastor mainly as a theological expert. On that background, he formulates his repeated warnings that the expertise of the pastor must not lead to disregarding or incapacitating the members and their understandings of the Bible.

When Brandt mentions the reality that in Baptist churches one regularly hears members other than the pastor preach, he again qualifies it: it must not only be seen as an emergency solution to the pastor’s unavailability. Instead, it should be made a rule that preaching is done regularly by lay members – that is, to complement the pastor in his ministry, and to avoid a monopoly of the pastor in any field of ministry. Brandt explicitly warns of this danger in his lectures on Pastoral Theology:

“Eine Monopolisierung dieser Dienste würde ein exklusives Amtsverständnis nach sich ziehen, das letztlich auch zu einer Vollmachtsdifferenz führen würde. Dem gilt es nachdrücklich zu widerstehen.”

“Monopolizing these ministries would result in an exclusive understanding of the office, and finally in a difference in authority. We must firmly oppose this tendency.”

(Brandt 2002b: 1)

Beasley-Murray confirms the view that the Baptist pastor cannot be the only preacher in a Baptist church. Like Brandt, he applies it also to the other fields

of ministry, and warns against an exclusive right of the pastor to perform the different tasks of ministry. The pastor is mainly seen as the “enabler” who encourages and equips the members for the works of ministry. Beasley-Murray also mentions that the tasks of the pastor include preaching and teaching. And he points to the specific responsibility of the pastor concerning the ministry of the church:

“However, as the overall leader of a church, the pastor is accountable for ensuring that these tasks are responsibly delegated.”

(Beasley-Murray 1992: 95)

The position of the pastor with regard to ministry is defined as one of overseeing and empowering the members who are actively doing and participating in it. In a previous paragraph, the responsibility of the pastor is spelled out even more pointedly:

“many of the pastoral tasks are shared with other suitably gifted members. The pastor, however, is the one who spearheads the work of the church’s mission and ministry, and thereby acts as the leader of the leaders.”

(Beasley-Murray 1992: 94)

Beasley-Murray consistently puts the task of preaching together with that of teaching. He takes the title “teacher” for the pastor from Ephesians 4:11, where “pastors and teachers” form the final pair in the list of the five-fold ministry. The term “teacher” could be suggested as being more comprehensive than “preacher”, but at the same time, its meaning is mainly non-religious. Brandt tends to combine the terms to “Verkündigungs- und Lehrdienst” (“*ministry of proclamation and teaching*”) and even calls the pastor “Lehrer der Gemeinde” (“*teacher of the church*”) (Brandt 1999: 3). In the same paper, he repeats his admonition that the pastor has to fulfil this task together with the members of the church, being aware of his own limitations.

While not many Baptists claim that every believer is a preacher, most Baptists would agree at least that the pastor is not the only preacher of the gospel. There is definitely a consensus among Baptists that the pastor is a preacher.

The pastor is a preacher

We Baptists goes to great lengths to explain that every member in a Baptist church participates in the work of ministry. When it finally comes to the specific ministry of the pastor, it states briefly and clearly:

“Pastors are recognized as preachers of the Word of God and leaders of the congregation in its worship.”

(We Baptists: 30)

We have already taken a closer look at the view on leadership that the document presents. In this chapter, I want to emphasize that the pastor is undoubtedly seen as a preacher of the Word of God. Again, we find a qualification of the content of the preaching: the word of God. In its further explanations, the document confirms the task of the pastor to build up the church and equip the members for their ministry. But it leaves no doubt that the pastor himself must be a preacher. I have presented the similar position of Beasley-Murray above. It is echoed and confirmed in the German literature by Hölzl, who quotes from the ordination vow used by the German Baptists:

“Willst du das Evangelium von Jesus Christus, wie es in der Heiligen Schrift bezeugt und dir durch den Heiligen Geist verständlich gemacht worden ist, klar und eindeutig als gehorsamer Hörer und treuer Zeuge des Herrn predigen?”

“Will you preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ, as it is testified in the Holy Scriptures and explained to you through the Holy Spirit, clearly and unequivocally, as an obedient listener and faithful witness of the Lord?”

(Hölzl 1999: 46)

The vow adds two more questions: one about counselling with a shepherd’s mind, and one about being a witness in word and deed. This vow gives the

priority to the task of preaching. In typical German conciseness and diligence, it qualifies this task with a host of specifications. They are defining the object of the preaching as the “Gospel of Jesus Christ” with a theological determination of scripture and spirit. They are also looking at the appropriate attitude and position of the preacher towards the Lord and his word.

Preaching in context

While there is definitely a consensus among Baptists that the pastor is first and foremost a preacher, voices from South Africa remind us that preaching must be embedded in and related to a specific context. Bruce recalls how in apartheid times, he made a discovery: “I soon realised ministry wasn’t just preaching!” (Hoffmeister and Kretzschmar 1995: 71) He emphasizes the dire needs of the people and injustices in the country that had to be addressed by the church and its ministry. This contextual approach to theology and ministry can be unfolded in two directions. Bruce speaks more about the deeds of ministry, the action that has necessarily to form part of the proclamation. Sometimes this social involvement becomes more important than the preaching of the word of God from the pulpit.

Hayashida drives the same message in his paper on “Relevant Preaching”. As we have already seen, he defines preaching very broadly as word and deed, arts and presence. He calls for “therapeutic preaching”, and again means much more than the comforting and compassionate words of the preacher.

“We preach or proclaim Christ in every attempt at skills development, hunger relief and health care.”

(Msiza et al 1999: 54)

Indeed, all the documents of the Winter Schools of Theology reflect the belief of the Baptist Convention of South Africa in the holistic proclamation of the Gospel, and the emphasis on the practical and social consequences of this belief.

Relevant preaching

In a few instances, the Winter School of Theology also refers specifically to the verbal proclamation of the Gospel and “preaching” in the narrower sense of the word. Kretzschmar reminds the pastors of the need to be well informed about society and life around them:

“As someone once said, we need to preach having the Bible in one hand and the newspaper in the other hand [...] Preachers need to endeavour to make their preaching relevant and empowering.”

(Hoffmeister and Kretzschmar 1995: 38)

Some years later, Chirovamavi, pastor and lecturer from Zimbabwe, expanded on that demand with a remarkable paper on “Preaching in the Contexts of Poverty, Violence, Corruption and HIV/AIDS” (Kretzschmar 2004: 48-74). Chirovamavi demands that the preaching in Africa must be dialogical and prophetic, and he gives many examples on how this can happen in specific contexts. It all begins with the pastor’s awareness of the society he lives in:

“Prior to sermon delivery, a preacher must know the real situation, needs, dilemmas and thoughts of the audience, and identify with that situation, in order to share God’s liberating news of his kingdom.”

(Kretzschmar 2004: 50)

In these brief words, Chirovamavi asks the preacher not only to read the newspaper, but to deeply and personally identify with his hearers. And he implies an understanding of the Gospel with an emphasis on the kingdom of God and the liberation it brings.

Before he goes into detail about the issues that relevant preaching has to address, Chirovamavi introduces “Preaching as Bearing Witness”. He prefers the “witness” as a synonym for “preacher” to other terms such as “herald” or “pastor”. The “witness” refers to courtroom terminology, but above that to Biblical terms.

“It is no accident that the New Testament word for witness is martyr, because often times bearing witness to the truth, in our time as it was for the prophets, and Jesus carries with it a great price. We must be prepared to pay such a price.”

(Kretzschmar 2004: 53)

Relevant preaching is not only about a proper understanding of society, but “consists of God’s claim upon our lives” (Kretzschmar 2004:53). I am closing this paragraph with two examples of how Chirovamavi presents specific realities and shows how preachers must take them into account when they proclaim the Gospel:

- “Prophetic preaching in contexts of violence and corruption must make people aware that the cost of wars jeopardizes countries’ developmental programmes especially for the poor, women and children.”

(Kretzschmar 2004: 65)

- “Our sermons must break the silence that surrounds the issues of sexuality in the church and denounce in word and deed all manifestations of stigma, which are a hindrance to both prevention and care [of HIV/AIDS]”

(Kretzschmar 2004: 68)

Conclusion

There can be no doubt that the Baptist pastor is first and foremost defined as a preacher. He is a minister of the word of God, a preacher of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Taking a closer look, though, Baptists hesitate about this definition. They are immediately reminded of their Principle of the priesthood of all believers. Some tend to interpret it in terms of a “preacherhood of all believers”. They advocate the conviction that the pulpit in a Baptist church must not be reserved for the pastor. Preaching must regularly be done by other members of the church to reflect this ecclesiology of Baptists.

Others choose to question the narrow interpretation of preaching as verbal delivery of a sermon. With a holistic understanding of proclamation they include in their notion of “preaching” deeds, artistic expression or even living the Gospel message. From this, it is not just possible, but compelling to claim that every church member must be a preacher.

Coming back to a narrower interpretation, there is agreement among Baptists that the pastor is a preacher, but must not be seen as the only one. His task as a leader is to empower and equip others to participate in the ministry of preaching. Still, one of the primary tasks of the pastor is to preach. Therefore this task must be well defined and transformed towards a relevant, contextual and prophetic proclamation of the word of God.

The preacher must be well informed about the society he is living in, so that he can address real life issues. He must identify with the needs and life situations of his listeners. And he must be willing to even suffer for the message he is proclaiming. In that regard, preaching can never be reduced to the delivery of religious speeches on Sunday mornings. It must include the witness in deed and life. It is a reflection of the loving care of the preacher for the people he is preaching to. The pastor is not only a preacher, but even more a “shepherd”. This is the next term to be researched.

Meaning of the term “shepherd”

The dictionaries agree on the primary explanation of the term “shepherd” as a person who takes care of sheep. *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* provides three synonyms for this act of caring: “guards, tends, herds”. It also provides a second explanation for the figurative meaning of “shepherd”: “a spiritual guardian or pastor of a ‘flock’”. The metaphorical meaning has apparently become so closely attached to the term that it is a standard metaphor.

The terminology is nearly the same in the *Bertelsmann Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache*, when it explains the word “Hirte” as “Geistlicher, der eine Gemeinde betreut”. There is another specific distinction in the German language: The word “Hirte” is defined as antiquated and only rendering the religious meaning, whereas the secular and contemporary meaning is carried by the shorter form “Hirt”.

Looking at the theological usage of the term, I find that *Baker’s Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology* has no entry for “shepherd”. “Shepherd” appears frequently both in Old and New Testaments, both literally describing the profession of taking care of sheep, and metaphorically referring to leaders of the people or even to God and Christ. Those references would justify an entry in a dictionary that analyses Biblical theology. By leaving it out, the editors of the dictionary probably express their uneasiness with the concept of “shepherd”. It might be based on the logical weakness of the metaphorical use: the image suggests an ontological difference between “shepherd” and “sheep” that is not applicable for the relationship of pastor and church member.

The research of Baptist theology must find out, whether the term “shepherd” is obsolete, or whether it holds significance as a characteristic of the Baptist pastor.

“Shepherd” as the literal and primary meaning of “pastor”

Before looking at any interpretation, it is important to remember that the term “pastor” is originally a Latin word which translates as “shepherd” in English. Thus, from its linguistic origin, the term “pastor” inevitably carries the meaning “shepherd”. We have seen that even the dictionary meaning of the word “shepherd” has been influenced in reverse by this link between the two words. We should therefore expect nothing less than a consistent interpretation of the pastor as the shepherd. It comes as a surprise then, that in the more recent Baptist literature we find relatively little reference to this mark.

We have to go back to *The Hiscox Guide for Baptist Churches* to find evidence of the expected connection between the concept of “pastor” and the term “shepherd”. Hiscox introduces the idea immediately when he speaks of the “Purpose of the Ministry”, and sees it “clearly enough defined in the popular mind”: the primary task of the church minister is “to shepherd the flock” (Hiscox 1990: 47). Interestingly, Hiscox uses the verb “to shepherd”, which is much less common than the noun. Typically, though, the term collocates with the object “the flock”, which has become a standard metaphor for the church.

In his chapter “The Pastoral Office”, Hiscox turns to a closer investigation of the Greek and Latin words that have informed the English terms and titles. This is a notable deviation from his otherwise rather practical approach to the topic. After explaining the terms “episcopos” and “presbuteros” he turns to the pastor:

“The term pastor signifies a shepherd, and well indicates the nature of the relation he sustains to the church; that of leading, feeding, guiding and guarding the flock committed to his care.”
(Hiscox 1990: 57)

Hiscox is using four verbs to describe the work of the pastor as a shepherd, and summarizes them with the noun “care”. Three of these terms appear again in the next paragraph, where Hiscox contrasts the tasks of the preacher and the shepherd. I will refer to this interesting comparison later in this chapter. Having “the care of a church” becomes the prevailing paraphrase for the pastorate, which is also labelled “local and permanent” (Hiscox 1990: 57), as opposed to the itinerant preachers or church planters. Hiscox then gives one of his lyrical portrayals of the pastor as the shepherd:

“He is not to be indifferent to their temporal interests, but their spiritual welfare is his special charge. He is to be the ever-ready, sympathizing and helpful friend to all”

(Hiscox 1990: 58)

Perhaps, a description like this one has prompted other Baptist theologians to abandon the image of the shepherd, as it idealizes the relationship between pastor and church, or simply asks too much of the pastor. Nevertheless, it emphasizes clearly the fact that the pastoral work demands of the pastor to be close to the members of his church and even to non-believers.

Contemporary examples of the same use

Beasley-Murray follows this understanding when he presents the “Carer/Shepherd” in his list of synonyms for the pastor. He puts the caring role next to that of the “Teacher” and the “Enabler”. As with Hiscox, the term “care” becomes interchangeable for the work of the shepherd. Beasley-Murray also connects it to the work of the overseer (episkopoj):

“Rightly understood, pastoral care involves not just helping the hurting but also encouraging people to grow and develop in the Christian faith. This is the ‘episcopal’ function of ‘oversight’”

(Beasley-Murray 1992: 94)

Beasley-Murray does not fully continue the usage of “shepherd”, but mostly rephrases it with the term “pastoral care”. This change of terminology has become rather popular, as we will also see in the German literature.

Hölzl represents this tendency, when he quotes the German Baptists' ordination vow. Whereas the first question asks the candidate about his readiness to preach, the second addresses the task of pastoral care:

“Willst du in der Seelsorge in der Hirtengesinnung Jesu den Menschen nachgehen, für die der Herr dich verantwortlich macht, und ihnen den Zuspruch und Anspruch des Evangeliums persönlich nahebringen?”

“Will you in counselling in the shepherd's attitude of Jesus follow [meaning: take care of] the people given into your responsibility by the Lord, and bring the encouragement and demands of the Gospel personally close to them?”

(Hölzl 1999: 46)

The term “shepherd” has been kept in the formulation of the duties of the pastor, but only as a description for the attitude. The focus is on the term “Seelsorge”, which practically means counselling, but as a generic term is rendered best as “pastoral care”.

In his presentation of the contemporary discussion among German Baptists, Hölzl comes back to the term “shepherd” and confirms the abovementioned transformation of terms with reference to Rust:

“Der ‘Dienst des Hirten’ kann ‘im heutigen Verständnis der Seelsorge’ wiedergefunden werden, wobei der Hirtendienst ‘in der Regel als ein ortsgebundener Dienst’ verstanden wird.”

“The ‘ministry of the shepherd’ can be found ‘in the contemporary understanding of pastoral care’, where the shepherd's ministry is understood ‘generally as a local ministry’.”

(Hoelzl 1999: 80)

In this discussion, the term “shepherd” is often placed in inverted commas. However, in his conclusion, Hölzl reclaims it for his understanding of the pastorate, when he quotes from Stott:

“Christian ministers are pastors, shepherds of Christ’s flock. This is their only distinctiveness. Of course they are themselves also Christ’s sheep. But they are called to be shepherds.”
(Hölzl 1999: 86)

In his final remarks, Hölzl uses the term “Hirten” (“*shepherds*”), when he encourages pastors not to lose sight of their calling. They need to be clear about their role, and then will not abuse their authority, but bring glory to their “Oberhirte” (“*chief shepherd*”), Jesus. Hölzl gives us the impression that the term “shepherd” plays an important role in affirming the position of the pastor in the Baptist church.

At first sight, the proceedings of the Baptist Convention of South Africa, especially at the annual Winter School of Theology, seem not very interested in the shepherding responsibility of the pastor. When leadership issues are discussed, the “shepherd” is not used as a model. However, at least two examples can be found, illustrating how the metaphor has shaped the South African Baptists’ understanding of the pastor. A workshop paper on “The Pastor and Church Relationships” is introduced with the Bible verse from Acts 20:28. Mashiane applies it to the relationship of the pastor “to the flock” and repeatedly uses that same metaphor, be it in encouragement or in admonition:

- “If you feed His flock, then He will feed you as He fed Elijah.”
- “On that day Pastors will have to give account to Christ for the negligence of their responsibility of shepherding the flock that Christ died for.”

(Kretzschmar et al 1997: 174-175)

Nthane gives another example of the underlying understanding of the “shepherd” for the pastoral work. He also shows the transformation of the terminology in his presentation on “Pastoral and Counselling Skills” (Hoffmeister and Kretzschmar 1995: 96). Nthane interchanges the terms “pastoral skills”, “counselling skills” and “shepherding skills”. His answer to the question “What is the Shepherd’s Role?” is given by simply listing five Bible passages about the shepherd’s work.

Neglect of the term “shepherd”

In contrast to this common metaphorical use of “shepherd” for the pastor, Brandt completely refrains from referring to the term and the imagery of the “shepherd” in his lectures in Pastoral Theology. This can only be explained with reference to his ecclesiology. Brandt puts all emphasis on the maturity and capacity of the individual believer and especially of the gathered congregation. The pastor is mostly warned not to dominate or incapacitate the members and their gatherings. Brandt sees the pastor mainly as a theologian, who has a specific training and knowledge, but must only use it to empower the church and facilitate the growth of the members. There is no room for the authority and responsibility of a shepherd in Brandt’s theology, despite his otherwise strong inclination to Biblical terminology and imagery. The same is true for *Rechenschaft vom Glauben*, where the term “shepherd” simply does not appear.

In his paper on the priesthood of all believers, Brandt unfolds this Principle for all the aspects of ministry in the Baptist church. Just as the ministry of proclamation and the responsibility of leadership are not given to the pastor alone, but to all gifted church members with him, so it is with the pastoral care:

“Auch im Blick auf die Seelsorge rechnen die Baptisten damit, dass die Gabe der Seelsorge innerhalb der Gemeinde bei vielen vorhanden ist. Sie sprechen bewusst von der Gemeindeseelsorge und delegieren Seelsorge nicht automatisch an den Pastor.”

“With regard to pastoral care, Baptists also expect that the gift of pastoral care is given to many within the church. They deliberately speak of the church’s pastoral care and do not automatically delegate it to the pastor.”

(Brandt 1989: 93)

Brandt operates mainly with the concept of gifts, which are given to the church as a whole. The responsibility and authority to minister and to delegate rests

fully with the congregation. He defines ministry as the threefold task of “Verkündigung, Seelsorge und Leitung” (“*proclamation, pastoral care and leadership*”), but repeatedly warns against monopolizing it in the hands of the pastor. I cannot find any evidence that Brandt would apply the title “shepherd” to the pastor.

The elders as “shepherds”

Many Baptists use the Biblical terminology of “elders” and “deacons” to describe the leadership structure of their local church. According to Hiscox, the term “presbuteros or elder, was evidently derived from the synagogue, and used chiefly by Jewish Christians to designate the same person” (Hiscox 1990: 57). Hiscox refers to what he earlier explained about “episcopos”: a term he translates as “overseer” and takes as a synonym for the pastor, “who had the oversight of the flock, and performed the work of a shepherd in spiritual concerns.” (Hiscox 1990: 57)

Whereas Hiscox combines all these terms into the description of one person, others tend to split up the titles, tasks and offices. *We Baptists* initially regards “elder” as just another name for the pastor, but later concedes that “[s]ome churches also appoint elders to assist the pastor.” (We Baptists: 30) Beasley-Murray unfolds a history of the terminology and shows the diversity within Baptist churches. Seemingly there are two main positions: one that identifies the pastor as “the elder”, another that puts “elders” beside the pastor, and defines their position as follows:

“then the elders usually have a leadership role in the spiritual and pastoral affairs of the church”

(Beasley-Murray 1992: 91).

Beasley-Murray tries to prove that the New Testament does not show us “one blueprint for ministry”, but rather a diversity of models. At the end of the paragraph, he voices his uneasiness with the term “elder”, because he feels that the term refers to the age of the leader. In this regard, the term does not reflect

the realities in Baptist churches today, where leaders are often not elderly members. In his discussion of leadership models, Harris presents a list of “specific duties” of elders:

“overseeing and managing, shepherding, being responsible for doctrine, teaching, preaching, and being examples to both believers and unbelievers”

(Harris 1996: 224)

Here we find the use of “to shepherd” again, and it is juxtaposed with other verbs like “to oversee” and “to preach”. Harris presents a similar combination of tasks of the pastor as Brandt, but his list is extended with the two elements of “being responsible” and “being examples”.

Hybels, as quoted in Hölzl, makes the clearest distinction between the elders and the pastor:

“As shepherds of the church, it is one of the roles of the elders to appoint other leaders with complementary gifts to undertake areas and aspects of the ministry that cannot be filled by the senior pastor.”

(Hölzl 1999: 72)

Hybels identifies the elders as shepherds, but distinguishes them clearly from the pastor. The structure of his church, though, is definitely not Baptist, even though his ministry has impacted strongly on Baptist churches in Germany. Hybels has apparently formed his model of church leadership after his own experience of his gifts and calling. For him, “the senior pastor is primarily to be a teacher of the Word of God” (Hölzl 1999: 72).

Conclusion

“Shepherd” is the literal translation of the Latin word “pastor”, and as such has to be at the centre of the Baptist understanding of the pastor. The term has dominated the theology and terminology in early Baptist history in the 19th

century. The contemporary Baptist documents under investigation show diverse developments for the usage of “shepherd”.

- The terms “shepherd” and “flock” are present, but they tend to be replaced by other terms. The imagery is regarded as antiquated; the use of it has sometimes idealized the pastor; its ecclesiological implications are separating the pastor from the church members.
- There is a tendency to regard “shepherding” as just one part of the ministry of a pastor. This task has been named “pastoral care” (“Seelsorge”) and stands next to the tasks of “proclamation” and “leadership”.
- In contrast to this narrowed meaning, there is continued use of “shepherding” for the overall responsibility of the pastor. In that sense, it is synonymous with “overseeing” and describes the leadership role.

In some parts of German Baptist theology, the term “shepherd” has completely disappeared. Brandt advocates the priesthood of all believers for all areas of ministry. That leaves to the pastor only the role of a theological advisor and facilitator of the life and growth of the members. For Brandt, pastoral care is one of the important areas of the church’s ministry, but, like all the other areas, it is the responsibility of the congregation and cannot be delegated completely to the pastor.

The task of “shepherding” is often connected with the understanding of the role of an elder in the Baptist church. The title “elder” combines the responsibilities for leadership and pastoral care of the church. Different relationships between “elder” and “pastor” are discussed in the literature: the equation “the pastor is the elder”; the concept of a team of elders, to which the pastor belongs; the distinction between the pastor on the one hand and the elders on the other. In the next part, I will investigate how the Baptist pastor can fit into both categories of “preacher” and “shepherd”.

Connecting the pair:

“preacher” and “shepherd” - complementing aspects or contrasting concepts?

Both terms give a name to the pastor: “preacher” names him according to one of his main activities; “shepherd” uses a metaphor from rural societies. The latter is clearly suggested by the original meaning of the word “pastor”. Both terms have become synonyms for “pastor”. Both have been used as titles, but are sometimes regarded as antiquated. In the contemporary literature, they are replaced by terminology taken from the modern world and its professions, such as “manager”, “coach” or “counsellor”.

There are two tendencies in Baptist theology that have additional impact on the use of the terms. One is the emphasis on the priesthood of all believers combined with a teaching on the gifts. As every member has a priestly position and has gifts from God, the titles for the pastor receive less consideration in the theological debate. Church life is described in terms of the different gifts and tasks. The other is the tendency, especially in Germany, to use functional and generic terminology rather than personifying titles. We might call it the “neutralization” of ministry: using the words “proclamation”, “pastoral care” and “leadership” instead of “preacher”, “shepherd” and “leader”.

Complementing aspects of ministry

In a way, the terms “preacher” and “shepherd” go well with the division of church ministry into different functions. In this understanding, preaching is mostly combined with teaching and forms the task of proclamation. This is the part of the pastor’s ministry where he addresses the congregation verbally and as a group, be it from the pulpit on Sunday morning or in a weekly Bible study. Preaching is generally understood to be more general about God and faith and also addresses unbelievers. Teaching is more detailed and specific, strengthening and growing the faith of the believers.

The task of the “shepherd” involves the pastor with the individual members of the church: he looks after them, ministers to their problems and weaknesses and stands by them in times of crisis. The “shepherd” is a counsellor, comforter and friend to the church members. This area of the pastor’s work is called “pastoral care” or, in German, “Seelsorge”. It is a task that needs time and requires special skills of counselling. It has been emphasized strongly in the past decades, probably as a result of the individualization of our societies.

The aspect of shepherding can, however, be categorized differently, with a view to the overseeing and leading responsibility of the shepherd. In this respect, he looks after the flock, as he gives direction, keeps the sheep together and protects them from enemies. If the metaphor of the “shepherd” is understood in this way, it is a synonym for the “leader”. Sometimes leadership is also seen as one of several aspects and duties of the ministry, looking more at the management and organizational skills it requires.

As we look at different aspects of the work of ministry, they stand next to each other, complementing each other, and together forming the whole. The work of ministry can then only be fulfilled, by a pastor who handles all tasks, or by a variety of persons who have to be assigned with a specific aspect, according to their gifts.

I have the impression that, especially among German Baptists, pastors are regarded as having their strength in one area only. Those who are strong in addressing the crowd, challenging and teaching the people are the “preachers”. Those who have the gift of listening and are warm-hearted, comforting ministers, are the “shepherds”. Those who communicate a vision and motivate others to follow, are the “leaders”. With this understanding, the pastor is expected to be an expert in a certain field, but needs to be complemented by other gifted members who can cover the other aspects of the ministry. One would then have to ask the pastor: “Are you a preacher or a shepherd?”

Contrasting focus in ministry

It can be observed from the literature that the two terms “preacher” and “shepherd” are usually connected with genitive objects. We find the “preacher of the word / the gospel” and the “shepherd of the flock”. This can lead to an interesting distinction between the two titles. The focus of the two roles seems to differ widely: The preacher is concerned about God’s word, the shepherd about God’s people. To understand the Bible, the preacher needs exegetical training, and to communicate it, he needs rhetorical or pedagogical skills. The shepherd must understand the human condition and have the competency to intervene in matters of the individual – therefore he needs psychological training and counselling skills.

Both focuses can be seen with their strengths and weaknesses: the preacher is committed to the word of God and stands for the truth. But he can become isolated from the people, judgmental or irrelevant to them. The shepherd is committed to the well-being of the people and cares for their lives. But he can get lost in their situations, become a mere human advisor and lose sight of God.

The preacher and the shepherd are representatives of different theological emphases as they convey the messages: “God speaks to us” or “God lives in us”. In the end, I suggest it will be best to combine the two concepts as a constant reminder of the two sides of ministry. The pastor has to be close to God and close to the people. He has to stand for the truth and embody love. He has to sometimes confront the church members as a “preacher of the word of God”. However, he also has to be in their midst, live and suffer with them as their “shepherd”.

5. Further issues to be considered

Apart from the four pairs of terms I have chosen to present as marks of the Baptist pastor, there are several other topics that appear frequently in the literature. In my opinion, they need not be regarded as characteristics of the pastor according to Baptist theology. However, they add substantially to our understanding of the situation of pastors. At the same time they raise questions that have to be answered in Baptist theology or church practice. That is why I will introduce them in this part, with a brief discussion from the literature.

Poor or paid?

With this pair, we are looking at the economic conditions of being a pastor. Whenever pastors of the Baptist Convention of South Africa tell their stories at the annual Winter School of Theology, they refer to this issue. These stories first of all reflect the poor and disadvantaged state of the black population in South Africa in general, most of them referring back to apartheid times. However, they are also stories about churches that do not provide for their pastors financially. The following two examples underline this neglect on the part of the churches:

“It was a very big church. I was there for 10 years, but I earned very little even though the church had a lot of money.”

(Kretzschmar and Richards 1996: 119)

“At that time my husband was earning R 75 a month. Each year the grant was reduced. We survived only by God’s grace.”

(Kretzschmar et al 1997: 137)

Even when these testimonies relate the harsh economic realities of pastors’ lives, they also talk about how pastors have experienced God’s intervention in those difficult circumstances. Two pastors reveal how their attitude of giving despite the lack of finances helped them overcome the poverty and dependency:

”The first month my salary was R 500. The Lord said: ‘Give it back to the church and the well will never run dry.’ So I did. [...] Today I have a church of 1000, [...] a manse with nine rooms and a garage, and a car!”

(Hoffmeister and Kretzschmar 1995: 67)

“I now live this way. By giving God will bless. I will never stop giving. Even the church has been working this way. I now have two cars and I didn’t pay anything for them. [...] Giving is my philosophy. Even when things are difficult, I must keep on giving. The Lord blesses me and I don’t regret being in the ministry.”

(Kretzschmar et al 1997: 121)

The financial need has been accepted as a testing ground for the faith of the pastor, for his faithfulness in giving and for his perseverance in ministry. While these testimonies demonstrate the positive learning experiences, it is not difficult to imagine that others would tell sad stories of lack that led to suffering and despair. The Winter School documents do not contain a discussion on the topic of pastors’ salaries, but only reflect it in the stories. Their genre as testimonies provides a reason for their mostly very positive message. Overall, the stories do not promote the financial exploitation of the pastor, but rather relate the way pastors and their wives have coped with the difficulties.

We must read Turner’s explanations about why the pastor should be paid, on the abovementioned background. Turner rejects the misconception that, whoever works for God, will be paid by God directly. Turner quotes Bible passages to support his view, but also appeals to the logic from the business world:

“The church receives the benefits of the pastor’s labour. They have asked him to work for them. They should pay the pastor.”

(Turner 1987: 59)

Turner advocates strongly that the payment must come from the local church, not from any other person or denominational structure. He does not refrain

from suggesting a certain salary level, even though it might be difficult to determine practically.

“As a principle, the pastor’s salary should be about the same amount of money that the majority of the members receive.”

(Turner 1987: 59)

The regulations in Hiscox’ manual, even though from a different context, sound very similar:

“A pastor should be well and generously supported as to his salary, according to the ability of the church he serves. He will not expect to live up to the standard of the wealthiest; he ought not to be expected to live down to the standard of the poorest.”

(Hiscox 1990: 63)

The practice of Baptist churches in Germany or England today has been formed by regulations like these. The Baptist Convention of South Africa is presently struggling to find a way of implementing this understanding. I have witnessed discussions of the matter on many occasions, but have yet to see the fruit in terms of a sufficient and fair salary level for pastors.

In the European context, the pastor’s need for a fair salary seems undisputed. Interestingly, though, the proper payment is mentioned as also having a negative effect on the attitude of church members. Beasley-Murray refers to a time “when many a Baptist pastor was often more or less regarded as the paid servant of the church, there to fulfil every whim of the congregation” (Beasley-Murray 1992: 63). Hölzl presents an example of how the salary can be used against the pastor.

“Ein Gemeindeleiter sagt zum Pastor: ‘Ich habe hier das Sagen und du wirst tun, was ich dir sage. Letztendlich haben wir dich gerufen und zahlen dir das Gehalt.’”

“A church leader says to the pastor: ‘I am in charge here and you will have to do what I tell you to do. In the end, we have called you and we are paying your salary.’”

(Hölzl 1999: 81)

The pastor is regarded as a paid employee of the church, who has to simply execute the will of those who pay him. This goes to show, that the relationship between church and pastor can be abusive, irrespective whether the pastor receives a regular salary or not. The demand to protect the pastor from abuse by the local church by rooting him in a denominational structure might stem from there. It leads us to the question, about where the pastor has his support and loyalty:

Local or 'translocal'?

One of the Baptist Principles confesses the belief in the autonomy of the local church. Consequently, the Baptist pastor is seen first and foremost as a pastor of the local church. Turner argues for his demand that the pastor must be paid by the local church:

“Some Baptist churches give money to the association or union which is paying the pastor. This has put the pastor in a difficult place. Since the church members think the association or union is paying the salary, they do not give. Since the church does not give, the association or union has no money to pay the pastor.”
(Turner 1987: 59)

Even with regard to ordination, Turner keeps this strict rule that the local church must be in control. He only concedes that other churches and leaders be informed and give their approval to the legal aspect of the ordination. This position, however, is an extreme expression of the principle of autonomy of the local church. Other Baptists proclaim a stronger role of the denomination or the church at large. “The Baptist Doctrine of the Church” from the British and Irish Baptists states that the pastor “is not only a minister of a local Baptist church but also a minister of the whole Church of Jesus Christ” (Shurden 1993: 92). As a reason, the document mentions the fact that the call comes from God and the ministry is a gift to the church, rather than its own making. Wright calls the pastors “representatives of the wider church within the context of a local manifestation of the church.” (Wright 2001: 172)

While these documents claim the “translocal” loyalty of the pastor, they do not elaborate on what it might entail. Brandt points to the unity of the body of Christ and also the recognition of the pastor by the denomination. He concludes with remarks on the positive effects:

“In dem Masse, wie die Pastorinnen und Pastoren sich als leitende Persönlichkeiten der größeren Konfessionsfamilie verstehen, können sie den Blick über die eigenen Gemeindegrenzen hinaus weiten helfen, geschwisterliche Begleitung und Unterstützung der Nachbargemeinden fördern und die Perspektive des Reiches Gottes gegen einen engstirnigen Gemeindeegoismus wach halten.”

“To the extent that pastors understand themselves as leading personalities of the wider family of the denomination, they can help the church open their view beyond the borders of the local church, encourage the care and support for the neighbouring churches and keep the church aware of the perspective of the kingdom of God against a narrow-minded self-obsession of the church.”

(Brandt 2002b: 2)

In his lecture on the Baptist ecclesiology, Brandt goes to great lengths to explain and defend the importance of the unity of the body of Christ. He qualifies the term “autonomy of the local church” as theologically inappropriate, and replaces it by speaking of the specific spiritual responsibility of the local church for its community. Pastors are called to represent the unity of the church by supporting the denominational structures and gatherings.

Hözl warns that if the local church perceives the pastor to have deeper loyalty to the denomination than to the local church, it will undermine his position. He quotes a church member saying:

“Er ‘gehört gar nicht richtig zur Gemeinde’, ist ‘von außen gekommen, bleibt eine Zeitlang und geht wieder.’”

“He ‘does not really belong to the church’, has ‘come from outside, stays for a while and then leaves again.’”

(Hözl 1999: 81)

This statement questions the loyalty of the pastor to the local church by referring to his limited time of ministry at a specific place. It is based on the experience that Baptist pastors used to move from one church to another after several years, and usually did not settle down in any of them. In my observation, this is the case for many Baptist pastors in Germany, whereas I have heard more stories of extended times of ministry from the Baptist Convention of South Africa. I can neither present statistics nor an investigation into the possible reasons for this tendency. I just raise my concern about the attitude portrayed in Hiscox' suggestions to the pastor:

“But let a minister flee ‘church quarrels’ as he would a pestilence. [...] Let him retire to other fields, where he can serve without conflict, and leave the fighting to those who have less at stake. The world is wide, and he can do good and be happy in many another field.”

(Hiscox 1990: 63)

Hiscox promotes the role of the pastor as a peacemaker. In his suggestions for the length of the pastorate, he suggests that the pastor can be a peacemaker by leaving the conflict zone, rather than by actively helping to resolve the conflict. As pastors have followed his advice, they might have given rise to the churches' questions about their loyalty. In striking contrast to Hiscox' portrayal of the peacemaker, more recent publications on church and ministry rather demand that the pastor be a “change agent”. Brandt concedes that there are different leadership styles, but promotes the “prophetic element”. This leads us to an investigation into the understandings of the five-fold ministry, as the list of gifts in Ephesians 4:11 is frequently referred to.

Apostle, prophet, evangelist

As the last two terms from the list in Ephesians have already been treated in the previous part (“shepherd” and “teacher/preacher”), I will now focus on the other three: “apostle”, “prophet” and “evangelist”.

Turner takes the list from Ephesians as the starting point for his presentation of church leadership. With a dispensationalist view of church history, he qualifies the apostles and the prophets as past forms of ministry. The prerequisite of being an eye-witness of the resurrected Christ “prevents one today from being called an apostle” (Turner 1987: 53). Turner gives two reasons, why prophets are not needed anymore in the church:

“One was the coming of Jesus Christ. The other was the coming of the Holy Spirit upon ALL believers.”
(Turner 1987: 53)

That leaves the evangelist as a contemporary form of ministry, along with the pastor/teacher and the deacons. Turner defines the evangelist as “one who preaches and teaches the gospel to those who have not heard” (Turner 1987: 53). Then he rejects the wrong use of the term today, when it is understood as “pastor’s assistant”, “untrained preacher” or “crusade preacher”. This refers to African churches that have created two levels of ministry: the evangelist and the pastor. In the German Baptist context the term evangelist is indeed used for pastors who preach in evangelistic meetings or events. The German Baptist Union even has the institution of full-time national evangelists (“Bundesevangelisten”), who are invited by the churches to preach in tent campaigns or evangelistic meetings.

Wright criticizes this limitation on the three last terms from the list in Ephesians, and demands more debate on the other two:

“I remain persuaded that more reflection on these patterns would be of value, particularly concerning that continuing pattern of ministry that might be represented by the worlds [sic!] ‘apostle’ and ‘prophet’, provided that we allow it to remain a flexible and porous pattern and avoid making it a stylised and ritualised form.”
(Wright 2001: 173)

Unfortunately, Wright does not elaborate at all on the ministry of apostles and prophets. We are left with his challenge to think further, and with his warning to not produce rigid and fixed definitions.

Beasley-Murray gives the term “apostle” some thought when he presents “The Ministry of Superintendents”. He divides the list from Ephesians into two parts:

“church pastors and teachers were – for the most part at least – locally based, whereas apostles, prophets and evangelists seem to have exercised a ‘translocal ministry’ “

(Beasley-Murray 1992: 96)

As I have investigated the question of “local” or “translocal” already, I want to focus on Beasley-Murray’s understanding of apostles now:

“The word ‘apostle’ literally means ‘one who is sent’; these ‘apostles’ were sent out from a church or group of churches with an evangelistic and overseeing function which went beyond the local church.”

(Beasley-Murray 1992: 96)

The concept of an “apostolic role” is then compared to the institutions of “messengers” and “superintendents” in the Baptist Union of Great Britain. At the end of the chapter, the view is broadened to other “translocal ministries” developed by this denomination. Beasley-Murray concludes:

“Although there may be no strict New Testament precedent for their respective offices, the principle at least is found in the translocal ministry of apostles, prophets and evangelists.”

(Beasley-Murray 1992: 98)

When I recall how Beasley-Murray insisted on a strict and literal exegesis of New Testament texts concerning congregational church government, I can only be surprised about his looseness of interpretation regarding Ephesians 4:11. I regard it as another example of reading the scriptures with a denominational prejudice: the Bible is made to support the author’s understanding of church rather than being allowed to challenge and question it. In the end, Beasley-Murray does not apply the functions of apostles, prophets and evangelists to the ministry of the local church pastor.

In the South African Baptist literature, there is hardly any reference to the five-fold ministry. Only during the group discussion of Msiza's paper on "Baptist Church Government", there is a reminder to consider Ephesians 4:11 "regarding the various roles of pastors, apostles, evangelists, prophets and teachers" (Kretzschmar et al 1997: 65). There is no evidence that this contribution has been followed-up.

The pastoral theology of Brandt gives some hints on how the apostles and prophets might be interpreted in German Baptist churches. Just as I have observed for the terms "shepherd" and "preacher", the terms "apostle" and "prophet" are also not used as titles for the pastor. Brandt has turned them into adjectives describing aspects of the ministry. The "apostolische Lehre" ("*apostolic teaching*") must be observed and unfolded by the church. There is no reference to the pastor in this regard.

In two instances, Brandt introduces the "prophetic element" and applies it to the ministry of pastors. The first one qualifies the whole range of tasks of the pastor as follows:

"in prophetischer Weise [...] in und mit der Gemeinde, im Einzelfall wohl auch im Gegenüber zur Gemeinde."

„in a prophetic way in and together with the congregation, in specific cases even in confrontation to the congregation.“

(Brandt 2002b:2)

Brandt keeps his general insistence on the shared authority and ministry, but allows for the exceptional situations, where the pastor has to confront the church with the word of God.

In the second instance, Brandt reminds the pastors to facilitate Bible study in and with the congregation. When the church follows the testimony of the Bible, it will resist the temptation to just uphold its traditions. The pastor then has the opportunity to guide the church in a process of change:

“die Gemeinde für die Wahrnehmung ihrer Sendung in die Welt hinein anzuleiten und auch das prophetische Element in der Gemeindegemeinschaft gelten zu lassen”

“to lead the church into the realization of its mission into the world, and also to allow the prophetic element in the church ministry”

(Brandt 2002b: 2)

Brandt puts the prophetic element together with the mission-mindedness of the church, and he explains it with the term “change-agents”. In both cases, the use of the term “prophetic” is not very specific. It suggests a rather general understanding of challenging the status quo.

I conclude that in contemporary Baptist theology the five-fold ministry is not much more than an occasional point of reference. It has not been integrated into the understanding of ministry and not been formulated specifically. Before I close my research, I want to highlight a few other aspects that have not been appropriately treated in Baptist theology and need more attention in future:

In public, at home, in prayer

Beasley-Murray reminds his readers that ministry “is not confined to the sphere of the church” (Beasley-Murray 1992: 87). Most church members have their daily life - and therefore also their ministry - outside the church, be it at home, at work or wherever they are placed in society. The same point could be made about the pastor: his life and ministry is not only within the church walls. Kretzschmar notes the specific responsibility and opportunity of church leaders:

“In our attempts to build a genuinely ‘new’ South Africa, the churches can play an important role since their leaders have direct access to some of the key leaders in the various sectors of our society”

(Hoffmeister and Kretzschmar 1995: 38)

The pastor has a public position and a role to play in the community and society. Very little has been said and explored of how that could affect his

ministry. Probably the Baptist principle of the separation of church and state is a reason for this neglect. However, there is a need to investigate the reality that the ministry of the pastor also entails the position of a community leader, an influential voice in society.

On the other hand, the pastor also has a private life. In many cases, the Baptist pastor is married and has children. From experience we know that the church ministry often collides with the demands of family life. Sometimes family members complain that the pastor is more concerned about his church members and their needs than about his family members. If it has ever been openly demanded that the pastor must “sacrifice his family” for the sake of his calling, this has certainly changed over the last years or decades. There is a strong sense that the callings to partnership and family and to ministry must not be excluding each other, but must be reconciled.

During a group discussion at the Winter School of Theology 1997, several suggestions were brought forward to this end:

- “Pastor’s [sic] should protect their wives.”
- “Pastor’s wives should be close by to their husbands so as to avoid jealousy and suspicion.”
- “Family time should be created. The church should be taught to respect the pastor’s family. They need privacy and rest.”

(Kretschmar et al 1997: 180-181)

There is still a need to further explore the relationship between church ministry and family life, theologically as much as practically.

Finally, I want to mention another need for “intimacy”: that is the spiritual dimension. The Baptist pastor is expected to be a prayerful person, listening closely to God and communicating not only his ministerial needs to Him. Kretschmar regularly brings up the topic of spirituality, spiritual formation

and spiritual disciplines in the proceedings of the Winter Schools of Theology. She relates it closely to the ministry:

“Nevertheless, the spiritual disciplines are not ends in themselves, they are means to enable us to grow as disciples so that we can live and act as ministers of the gospel.”

(Kretzschmar 2004: 90)

The Baptist pastor is often torn between the demands of church work, ranging from administrative duties to pastoral care and leadership tasks. The dimension of spirituality easily gets lost. There is a need to define the ministry also with a view to prayer and spiritual disciplines. I suggest taking as a guideline for Baptist pastors what Acts 6:4 states about the priorities for the apostles in the early church in Jerusalem:

“[We] will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word.”

D. Conclusion

Recapturing the Journey of this Research

The research started with a list of example stories leading to questions about the role and the position of Baptist pastors in Germany and South Africa. These questions gave the motivation for my work: I envisaged bringing more clarity into the theological understanding of the Baptist pastor. By doing so, I hoped to resolve some of the conflicts that arise in Baptist churches over the position of the pastor. The research was limited to written sources, thus dismissing the plans for an empirical study. The focus was on material from the German Baptists Union and the Baptist Convention of South Africa. Some other influential Baptist voices were used for highlighting the background of the debate or a general Baptist perspective. I revealed my personal involvement in and my convictions about the topic.

Baptists regard ecclesiology as the field where they give a unique contribution to Christian theology and practice. They summarize their beliefs in the Baptist Principles – six statements offering a distinctively Baptist position. Two of these Principles describe specifically the Baptist understanding of the church: the “priesthood of all believers” and the “congregational church government”. They emphasize the equality of all church members, and their individual rights to participate and decide in church matters. The Baptist Principles leave room for different interpretations in theory and in practice. They do not describe the position of the pastor explicitly, but rather implicitly limit it. The German creed *Rechenschaft vom Glauben* expresses this tendency most clearly when it refers to ministry only in general terms. It focuses on the activities of God in building His kingdom, and on the response of the whole people of God in worship and ministry. My motivation in this thesis is to counteract the neglect that these Baptist theological statements show for the role of leaders and pastors.

In order to do that, I presented four pairs of terms as “marks of the pastor”. The pair “called and gifted” describes the divine origin of ministry, as both terms lead to God as the one who calls the person and endows gifts. In Baptist theology, both characteristics are not exclusive to pastors. There are a variety of spiritual gifts, which are not concentrated in one person, but distributed to all the believers. There is little indication of what the specific gifting of the pastor would be. The term “called” is sometimes understood as exclusive for the pastor. Baptists, however, emphasise the general call that designates a divine purpose for each believer. The specific call into church ministry is then a special case within a general category. The term “called” is mostly reserved to an act of God, only in few cases is it used to describe the appointment by the church.

The pair “ordained and trained” is summarized as a secondary category, which describes the human institutions and prerequisites for the ministry. Baptists hold contradicting views on ordination: some reject the concept as it brings a separation of lay and clergy with it; most Baptist theologians, though, redeem the concept of ordination by providing a distinctly Baptist interpretation of its significance. There is no major debate about the value of theological training. The exact need and the specific modelling of theological education, though, remain issues for debate. The practices of ordination and training are defined by the social and religious contexts and can thus differ significantly amongst Baptist churches.

“Leader and servant” are a seeming contradiction in terms, but have become a combined idiom as “servant leadership”. It describes the style of leadership that fits into a congregational church structure. Leaders in Baptist churches are accountable to the whole congregation and must therefore communicate well. It is their responsibility to empower the members for the ministry. Pastors are regarded as part of a leadership team with delegated and shared authority. While all church members have the duty to serve, the leaders are specifically reminded that they must be servants. Where the term is used for “servants of

the church” rather than “servants of God” it can contradict the leadership role and open the position of the pastor for abuse by the congregation. The demand for “servant leaders” has become commonplace, yet the understanding of the phrase varies, and it has not yet led to a clearer definition of leadership in Baptist theology.

“Preacher and shepherd” are used as synonyms for the term “pastor”. While the task of preaching is not restricted to the pastor in a Baptist church, it is mostly expected of the pastor that he regards it as one of his main duties. “Shepherd” is the direct translation of the Latin word “pastor”. It has on the one hand become an antiquated metaphor, on the other hand retained its significance for the pastoral ministry. The emphasis on the task of pastoral care is connected with the term “shepherd”. Similarly, the rediscovery of leadership responsibilities of the pastor has made use of the term. “Preacher and shepherd” can thus be understood as two different aspects of the ministry of a pastor: proclamation and pastoral care. However, the two terms can also point out a contrast in focus for the ministry: is it more concerned with God and his word or with the “flock” and its well-being? I suggest that Baptist theology should not take sides, but rather keep both aspects together to allow for a balanced view of ministry.

With the discussion of some further issues to be considered, I have presented a comprehensive picture of the Baptist pastor. Recently, the concept of the five-fold ministry according to Ephesians 4:11 is used to revive the debate on the specific gifts and roles of leaders in the church. The impact of this debate on Baptist theology and practice has yet to be seen. I am demanding that the public role and the private life of the Baptist pastor also be discussed more intentionally. Definitely, Baptists are not yet finished with understanding and defining the position of their pastors.

Avoiding the classic points of contention

I have deliberately chosen to use the above marks to define the Baptist pastor positively. I might be accused of neglecting the key words “lay” and “clergy”, as well as the German term “Amt” (“*office*”). It is my observation that these terms mostly lead to controversy on the issue. They are part of the Baptist “anti-position”: referring to forms of ministry that have developed in church history, and that Baptists want to overcome. When Baptists want to be consistent in their rejection of clerical authority, they could decide not to accept the position of pastors in their churches at all. The Baptist principle of the priesthood of all believers elevates the lay people to the status of clergy and therefore nullifies the distinction. However, as they recognize and ordain pastors, Baptists have themselves created the dilemma that this research attempts to address.

Baptists are tempted to deny their pastors authority for fear that they might create a division of lay and clergy. It is my desire to dispel this fear, and I decided to do so by ignoring the terminology that lies at its heart. I am aware that I cannot escape from the terms of discourse dictated by centuries of history. However, I attempt to look at the issues from a different point of view and with new terminology.

There are additional reasons to avoid the term “Amt” in this research paper. Hölzl has covered the field with his research on the “Amtsverständnis” (“*understanding of the office*”) among German Baptists. The term “Amt” is unique to the German language and has no appropriate translation in English. “Office” has different connotations and is by no means as theologically loaded as “Amt”. Again, the purpose of this thesis is to revisit the issue of ministry with a fresh perspective. The old terminology was not regarded as conducive to this approach.

It should be noted that the terms used in my presentation of marks of the pastor are relating to the person, not to an institution. Therefore, generic nouns were avoided, and preference was given to verbal terms. From this grammatical analysis, a theological emphasis on action and function can be deduced. Baptist theology should be more concerned about the personal involvement of the pastor in God's work on earth than on the status associated with it.

Relating the Marks of the Pastor to the Baptist Principles

The Baptist Principles were presented as the ecclesiological backbone of Baptist theology. However, they did not provide material for the understanding of the pastor. I have attempted to create new definitions by introducing the pairs of "marks of the pastor". They are found in Baptist literature, but mostly not reflected on the level of the Principles. On the basis of these marks, I will now revisit the Baptist Principles and investigate their validity. Is it necessary and possible to rephrase the Principles in the light of our understanding of the marks of the pastor?

The Principle of the priesthood of all believers is essential to Baptist theology. It is derived from Biblical passages and cannot be discarded without damaging the Baptist identity. However, it is necessary to rediscover its original meaning, so that it may not be misused in discussions of church structure. Baptists state emphatically that every human being can have direct access to God through Jesus Christ and has therefore no need for a mediator. Popkes highlights the worship context of the Biblical references. The priesthood of all believers must be understood as encouraging believers with regard to their standing before God, while at the same time exhorting them to live accordingly. The Principle emphasizes the equality of all believers in this elevated position and special responsibility. It stands against any attempt to divide the church membership into classes according to lower or higher ranks before God. It reminds all believers of their responsibility to participate in the ministry of serving God and the world.

However, there is no necessity to turn the Principle of the priesthood of all believers against the recognition of persons called for specific ministries within the church. According to a Baptist understanding of the Bible, God distributes a diversity of gifts to the church. They are to be accepted and used for the common good. When the congregation recognizes specific gifts and callings, it can safeguard their credibility by the institution of ordination and the requirement of training. It has to look out for the right people to take over the special tasks of leaders, preachers and shepherds. All of these positions are tied to the Biblical demand to “serve one another”. The context of “priesthood” can well be used to remind the congregation and the pastor of the high and holy call they have received. They are bound to worship God and serve the world, and do it through institutions and structures that foster their mission. The concept of the “priesthood” is a strong reminder that the church always exists under God and for His glory.

The principle of congregational church government is more problematic in many ways. Its terminology already points to the affinity to the political sphere. I hesitate to use the word “government” for a function within the church. The contemporary German discussion has no equivalent for this terminology in the Anglophone theological discourse. The positive contribution of this principle can be seen in its democratic intention. The assembly of church members has the responsibility to decide on the affairs of the church. It would be unreasonable, though, to deny the need for delegation and diverse levels of authority. The congregation cannot be asked for decisions on all matters of church life. Beasley-Murray emphasizes the delegation of authority and insists on the accountability of the leaders towards the congregation.

The model on the whole, though, is based on an idealized view of democracy in the church. Its supporters claim that God has given the capacity and responsibility for governing the church to each individual and to the assembly of its members. They have no such clarity to explain why God would then still

have to give His gifts and callings to specific members of the church. The emphasis on the congregational powers does not leave much room for the leadership roles in the church. As Congregationalists, Baptists tend to confine God's influence on His church to the democratic rules of government. The role of the pastor is accordingly restricted to that of an expert who gives theological advice, or of a facilitator who oversees and manages the processes in the church.

I suggest that the principle of congregational church government be amended and rephrased. There is a need to acknowledge the role of leaders in the church. Baptists should not hesitate to accept God's working through individuals He has called and gifted for specific ministry in the church. This does not eliminate the right of the congregation to examine the contribution of its leaders. But it requires a certain degree of trust, not mainly in human leaders, but in God's sovereign choice to work through them. On the other hand, the system of congregational church government must be elaborated: there is a need to define the different levels of decision-making and responsibility. In reality, Baptist congregations already decide on relatively few issues. Where the pastor has the oversight of the pulpit, he clearly influences the spiritual climate of the congregation and forms its theological understanding. Directors of departments within the church, or teachers in Bible study groups have a similar position of power. A realistic picture of the system of a church cannot neglect these levels of influence. The principle of congregational church government must therefore not be reduced to a model of church organization. It could be amended to include the responsibilities, duties and rights of "officers" of the church on all levels. However, it could also be questioned generally as to its validity for the church of God. As Baptists insist on the "Lordship of Christ", they must be more flexible on how they perceive Christ to do His work in their midst.

Challenges for the German Context

German Baptists historically have a preference for the lay element in the church. This fact can be explained by their origin as a lay movement, which only installed a trained pastorate in their churches during the third generation of denominational leaders. The disastrous experiences with the dictatorial political leaders of the twentieth century - specifically Hitler's "Führerprinzip" ("*principle of the leader*") – have certainly not helped the cause of responsible and acceptable leadership in Germany. Addressing the role of the pastor in German Baptist churches, one therefore has to deal with deep-rooted suspicion. It is expressed for example in the frequent warnings not to become a "Pastorenkirche" ("*pastors' church*").

Nevertheless, I attempt to raise some challenges for the German Baptist churches regarding my topic. First of all, I see a need to rediscover the category of "calling". The document *Rechenschaft vom Glauben* has to be revised in that regard. It shows a complete neglect of the specific calling of individuals for ministries in the church. Ministry cannot only be defined in generic terms and with view to the capacity of the congregation. The personal component of called pastors, leaders, preachers and shepherds must be recognized in the terminology of the creedal document.

The theological training must find positive definitions of the role of the pastor. It is not enough to warn them of the dangers such as "incapacitating the church". As much as the members participate in the ministry and share the authority in a Baptist congregation, the pastor does have a specific share of the work. Congregations are called to discover and recognize that specific responsibility of pastors, and allow them to use their specific gifts.

According to my observations, German Baptists have undermined the position of their pastors during the past decades. At the same time, we hear about an ongoing loss of ministers from the "Pastorenliste des BEFG" ("*List of Pastors*").

of the BEFG”), in most cases through resignation of pastors. With all caution, I would ask the question whether these two developments are not directly linked. In other words: Does the - implicit or practical - ecclesiology of Baptist churches make the ministry of the pastor so unbearable that they inevitably lose some of those who were in fact called, gifted, trained and ordained for it?

I am encouraged to hear, that the Theological Seminary of the German Baptists recently introduced the course “Leiten lernen” (“*Learn to lead*”). This is a step into the direction of appreciating the leadership role of the pastor and providing training in that regard. Another confirmation of my observations and suggestions can be found in an article by the current BEFG President, Grossmann, who lists five decisive qualifications of the pastor:

“Berufung – Befähigung – Inspiration – Integration – Koinonia”

“*Calling – Ability – Inspiration – Integration – Koinonia*”
(Grossmann 2005:12-13)

The first two terms are similar to the marks “called” and “gifted”, but “Befähigung” also includes the necessary training. “Inspiration” reminds of the dimension of spirituality, when Grossmann mentions love for the Bible, listening to God in prayer and the working of the Holy Spirit in the pastor. “Integration” alludes to the priesthood of all believers or the shared ministry.

“Pastoren stehen weder über noch unter den Mitgliedern ihrer Gemeinde. Sie sind Teile eines größeren Ganzen und wirken mit den anderen zusammen als Glieder am Leib Christi.”

“*Pastors stand neither above nor below the members of their church. They are part of a greater whole [entity] and work together with others as members of the body of Christ.*”
(Grossmann 2005: 13)

“Koinonia” is defined as a fellowship of giving and taking. It could be regarded as synonymous to the element of “integration”.

In Grossmann's article, I discover a combination of the marks "called", "gifted" and "trained" with the principles of Baptist ecclesiology. However, I find little indication of the leadership role of the pastor. The article mostly retains the German understanding of the pastor having a specific contribution to the life of the church, not so much an overall responsibility.

The traditional organizational structure of a German Baptist church lies at the root of this understanding: the "Gemeindefeiler" ("*church leader*") is a lay person, sometimes called the chairperson of the church executive. This tradition makes it difficult for German Baptists to recognize their pastors as leaders, and must therefore be revisited. I find a tendency in some Baptist churches to get rid of the position of the "Gemeindefeiler", and rather install a leadership team of elders, including the pastor. This is a model that retains the concept of shared leadership, but clearly recognizes the role of the pastor within the church leadership. I suggest that German Baptists need to elaborate on this model.

Challenges for the South African Context

Generally, Baptists in South Africa respect their pastors as spiritual leaders. They have a high opinion of the call and of ordination. They expect their pastors to be preachers and shepherds of the flock. However, they have their deficits in other areas: the understanding of the diversity of gifts for ministry is not elaborated; the general and theological education of pastors is only developing after decades of disadvantaging blacks; the lack of provision of pastors with decent salaries and other material benefits is in many cases beyond description. Structurally, the leadership role of pastors often collides with the understanding of the executive committees. I observe a certain degree of division between matters spiritual and administrative. On the other hand, pastors claim authority in fields beyond their competency and training.

The challenge is for South African churches and pastors to recognize the diversity of gifts and callings. This should result in a better cooperation between pastors and church members, and in a reduction of power struggles. The training of pastors must keep pace with the generally improved educational situation in the country. It is a matter of concern, when the educational level of pastors is significantly below that of their church members. South African Baptists must develop their own model of servant leadership. Many conflicts concerning the provision for and position of pastors can be resolved by implementing contractual regulations for the ministers. Personally, I would caution against an over-emphasis on administrative and legal measures, though. The advent of a “new dispensation” in South Africa has generally brought an excessive trust in procedures and regulations. I still have to see a healthy integration of the spiritual and administrative aspects of church life.

In the Baptist Convention, there is still no adequate recognition of women in ministry. A number of theologically trained women struggle to find proper appointment by a congregation. The leadership role of women is questioned more within the church than in other spheres of society. The private and family life of the pastor is another area of concern: it has yet to be seen if the younger generation of pastors will succeed in balancing their attention to the demands of ministry and to those of their spouses and children.

Concluding Remarks

The research of the Baptist understanding of the pastor had to be descriptive and comparative. It is necessary to carefully analyse how Baptist leaders and theologians characterized the principles of their churches and the role that pastors have. The comparison of South African and German contexts helped me detect some of the details of the topic. An investigation such as this one, however, is not objective and without intention. I have indicated my own opinion or perception in several instances. Even where I have not explicitly

done so, the presentation might have been guided by my own motives and even emotions. I believe I have not distorted the views of the authors I quoted. By presenting differing, sometimes even contradicting views, I allow the reader to engage with the topic and come to her or his own conclusions.

On the last few pages, I have presented my conclusions from the research done. They relate specifically to the Baptist Principles. At the Winter School of Theology, I have repeatedly heard members of the Baptist Convention of South Africa demanding that the Baptist Principles be reformulated and contextualised for their own situation. It is my hope that my thesis can give some suggestions and guidelines for this necessary process. A better understanding and application of Baptist ecclesiology will have impact on the life of Baptist churches. As Baptists resound the motto of the Reformation “*ecclesia semper reformanda*” (“*the church is always [or continually] to be reformed*”), they should not reject suggestions for change in the organization of the church and understanding of ministry. It is my hope that my academic work may contribute to a fruitful discussion of these topics to bring about change where necessary.

Finally, I submit my efforts and desires to God, who is the founder and owner of the church, the One who calls human beings to serve Him, the One who deserves the glory in everything.

“May the LORD have mercy on us, pastors and churches, and grant us His Spirit and guidance to fulfil his mission together and serve Him with joy!”

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