

CHAPTER 5 PASTORAL THEOLOGY OF PARTICULAR BAPTISTS ORDINATION SERMONS

5.1 Introduction

The following chapter will describe the main theological priorities of the Particular Baptists of the long-eighteenth century. More specifically the elder's specific qualifications and duties will be considered. The purpose is to discover the essence of their pastoral theological priorities as seen in their ordination sermons.

5.2 Ordination Themes from Sermons

In an ordination service consistent themes emerged from the pastoral addresses which showed the priorities of Particular Baptists ministry. These essential characteristics help to define how they viewed the ideal of pastoral ministry – highlighting those qualities and concerns that they felt were indispensable to the successful execution of the office.

As we have noted, for the Particular Baptists of the eighteenth century the Bible was the supreme authority of all matters of faith and practice. The importance of the doctrine of Scripture is evidenced in *The Second London Confession*. Based on verses such as 2 Timothy 3:15, 16, 17¹ the Confession begins,

The Holy Scripture is the only sufficient, certain, and infallible rule of all saving Knowledge, Faith, and Obedience; Although the light of Nature, and the works of Creation and Providence do so far manifest the goodness, wisdom and power of God, as to leave men unexcusable; yet are they not sufficient to give that knowledge of God and His will, which is necessary unto salvation. Therefore it pleased the Lord at sundry times, and in divers manners, to reveal himself, and to declare that His will unto his Church; and afterward for the better preserving, and propagating of the Truth, and for the more sure Establishment and Comfort of the Church against the corruption of

¹ 2 Timothy 3:15 KJV "And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶ All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: ¹⁷ That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

the flesh, and the malice of Satan, and of the World, to commit the same wholly unto writing; which maketh the Holy Scriptures to be most necessary, those former ways of God's revealing his will unto his people being now ceased.²

Particular Baptists understood the Holy Scriptures to comprise the canonical books of the Old and New Testament, explicitly excluding the Apocryphal books.³ These canonical books were completely authoritative in the life of the church because they were convinced that an infallible God was their author. Therefore it was the duty and wisdom of men and women to believe it, reverently esteem it, and obey it.⁴ Naturally the Bible was the final appeal for all controversy over the opinions of ancient writers, or special new revelations.⁵

The integral relationship between God and the salvific necessity of the Word is emphasized throughout the first chapter of the Confession.⁶ Not only are the Scriptures central to salvation, their positive influence affects everything necessary for mankind's relationship to God.⁷ But it is not the words of Scripture alone which provide saving understanding, but the accompanying illumination of the Holy Spirit is also necessary.⁸

Nevertheless Scripture is plain and clear in meaning and all things concerning salvation

² Lumpkin, *Confessions*, 248-9.

³ Lumpkin, *Confessions*, 249.

⁴ Lumpkin, *Confessions*, 250. "The Authority of the Holy Scripture for which it ought to be believed dependeth not upon the testimony of any man, or Church; but wholly upon God (who is truth itself) the Author thereof; therefore it is to be received, because it is the Word of God."

⁵ Lumpkin, *Confessions*, 252. See Article 10.

⁶ For example, "the full discovery of it makes of the only way of man salvation." Lumpkin, *Confessions*, 250. See also article seven. "All things in Scripture are not alike plain in themselves, nor alike clear unto all; yet those things which are necessary to be known, believed, and observed for Salvation, are so clearly propounded, and opened in some place of Scripture or other, that not only the learned, but the unlearned, in a due use of ordinary means, may attain to a sufficient understanding of them." Lumpkin, *Confessions*, 251.

⁷ Lumpkin, *Confessions*, 250. "The whole Counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own Glory, Man's Salvation, Faith and Life, is either expressly set down or necessarily contained in the *Holy Scripture*; unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new Revelation of the *Spirit* or traditions of men."

⁸ Lumpkin, *Confessions*, 250. "Nevertheless we acknowledge the inward illumination of the Spirit of God, to be necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the Word,..."

are accessible to both the learned and unlearned alike.⁹ The most reliable way to get at the intended meaning is to allow Scripture to interpret Scripture.¹⁰

At the heart of an ordination service was a desire to remain faithful to the precepts of the Word of God. So, for example, in the introductory discourse at Thomas Morgan's (1776-1857)¹¹ ordination in 1802, John Sutcliff begins, as does the *Confession*, by emphasizing the primacy of the Bible as the "all-sufficient and only guide in matters of religion."¹² The Bible is not only authoritative in the formation of Baptist faith, but it also must regulate all Baptist practice.¹³ An orthodox belief in the Word of God represented a beginning point for Particular Baptists of the eighteenth century, but it was not enough just to believe these fundamentals in a hypothetical or intellectual sense. A Christian, and especially a pastor, must also manifest them as a reality in his daily life by living out the truths he professed. The grandest truth of all was to love God supremely resulting in a corresponding love to all mankind.¹⁴ The most significant manifestation of love for a pastor to the church, in line with the Baptists objectives for the office of elder, was to speak the truth in love – to faithfully exposit the Scriptures.

As we have seen, it was important for Baptists to demonstrate that they were not a seditious body, but were committed to obeying the laws of the nation. Yet at the same time, they were bound in conscience to the Word of God, and servants of a superior authority. They had one master, Jesus Christ, to whom they were ultimately bound. The

⁹ Lumpkin, *Confessions*, 251.

¹⁰ Lumpkin, *Confessions*, 252.

¹¹ He succeeded Samuel Pearce at Canon-street Birmingham.

¹² Sutcliff, *Ordination of Morgan*, 1.

¹³ Sutcliff, *Ordination of Morgan*, 2.

¹⁴ Matthew 22:37-39. "Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. ³⁸ This is the first and great commandment. ³⁹ And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Ryland, *Ordination of Morgan*, 19.

state had no legislative authority in the church, just as the church had no legislative authority in the state. This rule of self governance gave Baptist churches the right to choose their own officers in elders and deacons.¹⁵ This fundamental right was almost always expressed at some time during an ordination service.

For Particular Baptists the offices of elder and deacon in a local church were central to God's salvific plan for His elect. In fact the office of elder was believed to be the most worthy office a man could hold on earth.¹⁶ The church was a divine institution where elders functioned as stewards of a trust given by God. Their high view of God as the infallible judge served to further magnify the worth of the office.¹⁷ The minister was likened to an ambassador of Christ, whose job it was to reconcile God's kingdom to a hostile world.¹⁸ It is important to point out however, that they placed more value in the office itself than her officers. Despite the importance of the eldership to them, they also recognized that most people would not recognize the prestige of the office.¹⁹

The grace of God was a prerequisite for success in ministry.²⁰ God not only raised up men for ministry, he also qualified them. Without this divine qualification a man could

¹⁵ Sutcliff, *Ordination of Morgan*, 3- 4.

¹⁶ Daniel Turner, *A Charge and a Sermon, Delivered at the Ordination of the Rev. Mr. Job David, October 7, 1773, at Frome, Somersetshire. The Charge by Daniel Turner, M. A. The Sermon by Caleb Evans, M. A. Published at the Request of the Church* (Bristol: Printed and Sold by W. Pine, T. Cadell, M. Ward, & C. and by J. Buckland, in London), 15.

¹⁷ Clark, *Ordination of Dore*, 99.

¹⁸ Turner, *Ordination of David*, 15.

¹⁹ Evans, *Ordination of Dunscombe*, 3.

²⁰ John Gill, *The Work of a Gospel-Minister recommended to Consideration. A Charge delivered at the Ordinations of the Reverend Mr. John Gill, Mr. James Larwill, Mr. Isaac Gould, Mr. Bonner Stone, and Mr. Walter Richards. Sermon XXXVIII in A Collection of Sermons and Tracts: In Two Volumes. Volume II. Ordination Sermons. Several of which were never before Printed. By the late Reverend and Learned John Gill, D.D. To Which are Prefixed, Memoirs of the Life, Writings, and Character of the Author. Vol. II.* (London: George Keith, 1773), 22.

not effectively fulfill the duties of the office. The Lord also supplied him with strength, wisdom, and encouragement, even directing the congregation to accept his ministry.²¹

The Baptists were very concerned that no unqualified men enter the ministry, out of fear it might hinder the advance of the glory of God in the world.²² Success in ministry was understood as the magnification of the glory of God.²³ In a charge by Daniel Turner to Job David at his ordination on 7 October 1773, at Frome, Somersetshire, Turner admonishes David to, “constantly endeavor to do all with a single eye to the glory of God, and to keep self intirely [sic] out of sight.”²⁴ God was glorified in different ways, but the chief means was through the salvation of sinners. John Ryland explains the connection between the glory of God and the salvation as sinners as follows:

Gospel ministers are called to subserve God's grand and gracious purpose of glorifying all his perfections, in the Salvation of sinners; by restoring them to the enjoyment of his favour, through the Mediation of his only – begotten Son; and bringing them again, by the effectual agency of the blessed Spirit, into a state of voluntary subjection to his will, and genuine conformity to his image: that thus they may glorify and enjoy him, truly on earth, and perfectly and eternally in Heaven. This was God's wise and merciful design, in instituting the gospel ministry; and this must be the design with which we discharge all our professional services.²⁵

God would be glorified through the salvation of sinners and a chief means he used to accomplish this was through the “gospel ministry.” This meant that elders stood at the center of God’s plan to glorify his name through the redemption of sinners.

²¹ Pearce, *Ordination of Belsher*, 8.

²² Stennett, *Ordination of Rees*, 108.

²³ Evans, *Ordination of Dunscombe*, 17.

²⁴ Turner, *Ordination of David*, 14.

²⁵ Ryland, *Ordination of Morgan*, 30.

But before a minister could be used effectively by God, he must first be conscious of his own weakness.²⁶ The magnification of the glory of God did not find its source in, natural abilities, reasoning power, eloquence, learning, or diligence, but in the supernatural empowerment of the Holy Spirit in the conversion of souls.²⁷ As a servant of God, the pastor was ordained as a means for the furthering of the spiritual kingdom of God on earth, and this could only be accomplished by the grace of God. Humility would lead to a greater dependence on the grace of God and true humility and dependence were best demonstrated by frequent prayer.

Ministers were to function as stewards of the mysteries of Christ and the pastoral office was a charge, or trust, committed to them by God (1 Cor. 4:1).²⁸ A trust is an interest held by one person for the benefit of another, and so as stewards, their cardinal responsibilities were diligence and faithfulness.²⁹ The trust they were given was the gospel, a revelation of divine mercy and grace in of Jesus Christ, which was considered a treasure of inestimable worth. Again it becomes apparent that undergirding their theology of ministry was this persistent Christological emphasis. Although their primary responsibility was for the state of the flock they were required by the law of Christ to do good to all men; and they took this responsibility seriously.

The responsibility of such an important office creates the need for a concomitant authority. They did not believe the authority of the pastor originated with man, but that it

²⁶ John Ryland, *The Difficulties and Supports of a Gospel Minister; and the Duties incumbent on a Christian Church: A Charge by John Ryland, D.D. And a Sermon, by James Hinton; Delivered Nov. 17, 1801, At the Ordination of Thomas Coles, A.M. to the Pastoral Care of the Baptist Church, at Bourton-on-the-Water, Gloucestershire* (Bristol: Button, 28. He based this assertion on the verse in 2 Corinthians 12:10 "Therefore, I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong."

²⁷ Ryland, *Ordination of Coles*, 22.

²⁸ Stennett, *Ordination of Rees*, 98.

²⁹ John Brine, *The Solemn Charge of a Christian Minister Considered. A Sermon Preach'd at the Ordination of the Revd Mr John Ryland, on the 26th of July, 1750 by John Brine* (London: John Ward), 5.

ultimately came from God. Yet, even though pastors are responsible to God, and placed by him as leaders over his Church, they are not to, “lord it over his heritage,” but to gently teach and shepherd the flock. As leaders their job was to follow the Master’s direction as laid out in his Word.³⁰ The trust was not given primarily for the minister’s personal well-being, but for the edification of the entire church,³¹ and so he had a responsibility, “to beseech poor sinners, in Christ’s stead, to be reconciled to God, and to build up his people in knowledge, faith, holiness, and comfort unto eternal life.”³²

With diligence and faithfulness as the key criteria, as stewards, a minister must serve as one who would give account for his ministry when Christ returned.³³ He was responsible to a higher power – an impartial judge. If any person in his charge was to perish everlastingly due to pastoral neglect and carelessness, he was considered responsible.³⁴ The pastor was not forced to enter the work of the ministry, but did so voluntarily out of love for Christ and a compassion for souls,³⁵ and since he accepts the free invitation of the church to proclaim Christ through ministering the Word and Ordinances, he must give himself wholly and unreservedly to the task.³⁶

A phrase that appears over and over again throughout extant Particular Baptists Ordination sermons, is found in 2 Corinthians 2:16, “Who is sufficient for these

³⁰ Robert Hall, *God’s Approbation The Study of Faithful Ministers. A Sermon delivered at the Ordination of the Rev. George Moreton, Pastor of the Baptist Church at Kettering. Nov. 20th 1771. The Complete Works of the Late Rev. Robert Hall, Arnsby, Leicestershire. Consisting of Sermons, Essays, and Miscellaneous Pieces. Collected and Arranged by J.W. Morris, with a Prefatory Memoir of the Author* (London: Published by W. Simpkin and R. Marshall, Stationers’ Hall Court. 1828), 205.

³¹ Dore, *Ordination of Dore*, 56.

³² Evans, *Ordination of Dunscombe*, 17.

³³ Brine, *Ordination of Ryland*, 5.

³⁴ Turner, *Ordination of David*, 19, 20.

³⁵ Ryland, *Ordination of Belsher*, 19.

³⁶ Gill, *Ordination of Stone*, 15-16.

things?”³⁷ Both personal experience and the Word of God had taught seasoned pastors delivering the charge to these newly ordained pastors that difficulties in the ministry were inevitable and so when they discussed the nature of the office it was important for them to highlight the reality of these difficulties. Throughout the history of Christianity, leaders in particular had faced various discouragements, they argued, and so why should it be any different now?³⁸ Opposition both external and internal was to be expected.

Some difficulties would arise due to the inherent nature of the office. The pastor himself has the impediment of indwelling sin. He is not always consistent, impartial, and wise in his actions and he struggled with a variety of imperfections making him vulnerable to the world’s seduction and comforts.³⁹ Yet his goal was to convert souls to Christ and show the way of eternal life against the opposition of many who do not want to believe his message proclaiming condemnation under the wrath of God.⁴⁰ The preaching of such a message was sure to inspire detestation in some.

Another discouragement was false teachers who try to draw some away from truth by teaching their own gospel and not that of Christ.⁴¹ Finally, John Gill warned ordinands

³⁷ For example see, Fall, *Ordination of Fall*, 17; Hall, *Ordination of Moreton*, 233; Evans, *Ordination of Dunscombe*, 17.

³⁸ Ryland, *Ordination of Morgan*, 11. Acts 20:24.

³⁹ Ryland, *Ordination of Morgan*, 12.

⁴⁰ Robert Hall, *On the Discouragements and Supports of the Christian Minister: A Discourse, Delivered to the Rev. James Robertson, at his Ordination over the Independent Church at Stretton, Warwickshire. Published 1812. The Works of the Rev. Robert Hall, A.M. with A Memoir of his Life by Dr. Gregory; Reminiscences, by John Greene, ESQ.: and his Character as a Preacher, by the Rev. John Foster. Published under the Superintendence of Olinthus Gregory, LL.D.. F.R.A.S., Professor of Mathematics in the Royal Military Academy; and Joseph Belcher, D.D. In Four Volumes. Vol. I.* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1849), 136. This is an interesting example because it is an instance of a Baptist minister preaching at the ordination of an Independent minister.

⁴¹ Ryland, *Ordination of Morgan*, 13.

that productive ministers can also expect Satanic attack to hinder their good work in a variety of forms.⁴²

Although discouragements were inevitable, pastors were also encouraged to expect God's comfort and support amidst all difficulties.⁴³ The greatest comfort a minister had was the promise of Christ's gracious presence offering his protection, assistance, and ultimately his reward.⁴⁴ As mentioned, when overwhelmed with the pressures of the ministry coupled with innate human inadequacies, a minister might be tempted to think "Who is sufficient for these things"? (2 Cor.2:16). The answer given was, "His grace is sufficient for you."⁴⁵ These Particular Baptists believed that for those God had called he gave abilities to do the job effectively.⁴⁶ Ultimately the pastor does not rely on his inherent abilities but believes, "he can do all things through Christ who strengthens..." (Phil.4:13).⁴⁷

Although God constantly supplies help to the minister, there is no excuse for him to neglect the means of grace appropriated through a disciplined and holy life. He must therefore strive to develop personal traits such as purity of character, long-suffering, and kindness, while continually making every effort to increase in experimental and practical knowledge of God.⁴⁸ To do this he must be filled with the Holy Spirit, enabling him to care for others with an unfeigned love.⁴⁹

⁴² Gill, *Ordination of Stone*, 27.

⁴³ Turner, *Ordination of David*, 17.

⁴⁴ Gill, *Ordination of Stone*, 27.

⁴⁵ Evans, *Ordination of Dunscombe*, 18. 2 Corinthians 12:9.

⁴⁶ Evans, *Ordination of Dunscombe*, 17.

⁴⁷ Evans, *Ordination of Dunscombe*, 18.

⁴⁸ Ryland, *Ordination of Morgan*, 15, 16.

⁴⁹ Ryland, *Ordination of Morgan*, 20, 21, 22.

5.3 Church's Call

Another necessary step in the appointment of a gospel minister, secondary to the call of God, was the acknowledgment of the Church in the free choice of the people. God qualifies the minister for office, but the church has a responsibility to recognize this calling. A typical example from an early Particular Baptists ordination sermon explains the theological relationship between the Lord's call and the church's recognition of a pastor.

Near the beginning of the "Long Eighteenth Century,"⁵⁰ Nehemiah Coxe⁵¹ preached an ordination sermon to a Particular Baptist congregation in London at Petty France, for the appointment of an elder and some deacons.⁵² In the exposition of his text found in Titus 1:5,⁵³ Coxe emphasized the necessity of the implementation of a God ordained leadership to manage the affairs of a local church as reflected in the example of the primitive church. His basic hermeneutic supposed the requisite of a biblical continuity between the practices of the early church with his contemporary context. So the implementation of leadership in local churches was not based purely on pragmatic necessity, but as an appropriate response to the requirements of God as seen in Scripture.

Yet at the same time, Coxe recognized a certain discontinuity between the ancient and existing ecclesiastical milieu. He recognized that the apostles were "extraordinary

⁵⁰ The Long Eighteenth Century is sometimes calculated from 1688 to 1832. For example, Frank O'Gorman, *The Long Eighteenth Century British Political and Social History 1688-1832* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

⁵¹ Nehemiah Coxe was ordained an Elder at Petty France on 21 September 1675. T. E. Dowley, "A London Congregation during the Great Persecution Petty France Particular Baptist Church, 1641- 1688" *The Baptist Quarterly* 29 (January 1978), 234. On Coxe see Crosby, *History of English Baptists*, 265.

⁵² Nehemiah Coxe, *A Sermon Preached at the Ordinatoin [sic] of an Elder and Deacons in a Baptized Congregation in London* (London: Printed for Tho. Fabian, at the Bible in Saint Paul's Church-yard, a corner Shop next Cheap-side, 1681). This sermon is considered to be the "earliest recorded public ordination by dissenters after the Restoration." Dowley, *Petty France*, 236.

⁵³ Titus 1:5 "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee."

officers” – they were men with a unique historical ministry in that they had “an immediate and extraordinary call to their office, by God and our Lord Jesus Christ.”⁵⁴

Whereas the apostles received their call directly from Christ, contemporary Baptist ministers, whom he labeled “ordinary officers,” were called to the office by the local church, though their authority ultimately did not come from men but from God.⁵⁵ With the “extraordinary” call of the apostles came special gifts and abilities as seen primarily through a unique existential guidance of the Holy Spirit. However these extraordinary officers with their attendant authority and gifting had ceased with the completion of the New Testament canon. Now Scripture alone mediated by the Holy Spirit provided guidance and direction to the continuing church throughout the ages. The authoritative principle for the continuing church as opposed to direct existential revelation was,

all Church – Offices and Affairs are to be regulated and guided by the ordinary and standing Rule of the Scriptures: And every particular Congregation hath not only *right*, but is in *duty* bound to dispose herself in that Order, and under that Rule and Government, which Christ hath appointed in his Testament.⁵⁶

As Titus was admonished by Paul to “set things in order that are lacking,” so it was the duty of the Particular Baptists to follow suit. This was accomplished through the appointment of officers to local churches in the form of elders and deacons. The motivation for order in the church was opposed to formal litigious niceties characterized by contentment with form; rather the goal was to implement the appointed office of Christ in conformity to his will as seen in Scripture. Christ was the head of the Church and as such all church officers received their power and authority from him, for “... There is no such thing as Authority in or over the Church, but what is derived from Christ, who

⁵⁴ Coxe, *Ordination of Elders*, 6.

⁵⁵ Coxe, *Ordination of Elders*, 6.

⁵⁶ Coxe, *Ordination of Elders*, 8.

hath all Power in Heaven and Earth committed to him.”⁵⁷ For Coxe, this Christological prominence is the underpinning of all his practical theology providing a key to understanding the motives, desires, and inevitable outgrowth of an eighteenth - century Particular Baptists ordination service.

With these general principles in mind Coxe understands Acts 6 as description of the first ordination service in the history of the church conducted by “ordinary” ministers. More specifically Coxe believes that Acts 6 provides an example of setting thing in order through the appointment of deacons in the Jerusalem Church.⁵⁸ As the church membership increased, the need for ordained leaders became necessary to maintain order. The main functions of the elder – preaching and prayer – were being neglected. Therefore they looked for men full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom to tend to the needs of the poor and effectively administer the churches material resources.

Elders were called “ordinary officers” of the church because they did not have the same supernatural powers as the apostles. Because the office of elder is concerned primarily with the spiritual health of the church as opposed to the temporal, it was considered greater than the office of deacon.

For Coxe, Ephesians 4:11-13⁵⁹ provides as example of both the continuity and discontinuity of the apostolic office. Some of the offices and gifts in Ephesians 4:11 have ceased, but others must continue until Christ returns to perfect his church.⁶⁰ Apostles, prophets, and evangelists were necessary in apostolic times because they laid the

⁵⁷ Coxe, *Ordination of Elders*, 7.

⁵⁸ Coxe, *Ordination of Elders*, 8.

⁵⁹ Ephesians 4: 11-13 “And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; ¹² For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: ¹³ Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.”

⁶⁰ Coxe, *Ordination of Elders*, 16.

foundation for the nascent church. But pastors and teachers are necessary for carrying on the work of building the church until Christ returns. The other officers became defunct with the firm establishment of the church.

The terms, “elders” and “overseers” are parallel in meaning. The elder’s duty is to provide oversight to the church, as a shepherd does his flock. He must guard their souls as one who will give account. Likewise the church has duties and responsibilities towards their pastor because they are in community. But no church can make a man a minister that Christ has not qualified, “for the validity of all the church’s acts depends upon, and is determined by, their conformity to the rule of Christ’s Holy Will and Testament.”⁶¹ So a minister must be convinced of the call of ministry in his own life in addition to the call of the church after having authenticated this call through a public demonstration of his abilities.⁶²

5.4 Characteristics of Ministers

There is a possibility for confusion when describing the qualifications and duties of an eighteenth-century Particular Baptist elder. There is a subtle distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic elements of an elder’s qualifications and duties that can easily overlap and appear redundant. Some of the qualities of elder reflect more the essential being, nature, or constitution of the man, whereas, other characteristics emphasize a more extraneous quality. So for example, the extrinsic qualification of “not addicted to much wine” may be a practical manifestation of the more intrinsic quality of “temperateness.” Both qualities are essentially ontological, but one, the extrinsic, leans more towards the

⁶¹ Coxe, *Ordination of Elders*, 16.

⁶² Gill, *Ordination of Stone*, 24.

functional, or practical, yet it is still distinguishable from a duty. Adding to this possible confusion is the fact that duties, though primarily functional, are still also grounded in the ontological (being). What one *does*, is connected to who *one is*. Yet duties are distinguished from the natural or outer extrinsic characteristics (i.e. aptitude for learning) and are even farther removed from the more “being orientated,” or intrinsic characteristics (i.e. zeal for the glory of God), by a primarily operational, as opposed to ontological, characteristic. From an eighteenth-century Particular Baptists theological perspective, actions manifest being as duties reflect intrinsic characteristics. Therefore, in describing qualifications there is often a subtle semantic layering affecting these descriptions of pastoral characteristics, which really only reflect different points of a continuum, but which at times may seem repetitive.

The church recognized the call of God on an elder based on evidence of certain qualifications manifest in him. These scripturally defined qualifications, found mainly in the biblical texts, 1 Timothy 3:1-7,⁶³ and Titus 1:5-7,⁶⁴ reveal the essential moral standards that the church required.⁶⁵ For those ordinands that emerged from within the

⁶³ 1 Timothy 3:1-7 KJV “This *is* a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.² A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; ³ Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; ⁴ One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; ⁵ (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) ⁶ Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil.⁷ Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.”

⁶⁴ Titus 1:5-9 KJV “For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee: ⁶ If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly. ⁷ For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; ⁸ But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate; ⁹ Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.”

⁶⁵ William Staughton summarizes the Qualifications for Elders as follows. The sign of the necessary qualifications are primarily; not displayed by a passion for souls alone, or by the assertions of relatives and friends, nor is success in ministry a sign. These qualities are all too subjective. Things that are supposed to disqualify but do not, include a deep persuasion of a man’s entire unworthiness, great fear at the

ranks of the local church, their character was already well known, but if a man came from outside the church, he usually brought with him recommendations of other Particular Baptists pastors who could attest to his character. As mentioned, the steps of his calling were publicly reviewed at his ordination to ensure orderliness according to Scripture.

The qualifications and duties of a newly ordained pastor were expounded by a visiting elder during the charge. The most important preliminary characteristic for the office of elder was evidence that his heart had been renewed by grace so that he both knew and felt the gospel.⁶⁶ “Knowing the Gospel,” referred to an understanding and adherence of biblical precepts expressed through a Reformed, Baptist orthodoxy as articulated, for example, in Baptist confessions of faith, while “feeling the Gospel” implied an emotional attachment to those truths. They were looking for signs that he had become a new creature in Christ no longer governed by the old nature. This did not mean he was perfect or free from the influence of sin, but that his life was generally consistent with the gospel.⁶⁷ Further he was not to be a new Christian, but as a leader, be settled and mature in the faith.⁶⁸ For example, he should be publicly known as a man who was generally well balanced and who had an even temper,⁶⁹ and was characterized by liberality and hospitality not hesitating to entertain strangers.⁷⁰ No longer was he self-willed, greedy or covetous, seeking his own gain; rather he was concerned solely for the

prospect of service, the neglect or contempt of those who profess, or an appearance of no immediate success. Godliness is requisite (holiness of heart and purity of life), he must be converted, knowledge is requisite –he must be growing in the Word, he must have an aptness to teach and a readiness to communicate, and he must have a divine call. Roger Hayden, “What are the Qualifications of a Gospel Minister?” *The Baptist Quarterly* 19 (October 1962), 352-357.

⁶⁶ Osborn, *Ordination of Belsher*, 6.

⁶⁷ Coxe, *Ordination of Elders*, 19.

⁶⁸ Stennett, *Ordination of Rees*, 102.

⁶⁹ Gill, *Ordination of Braithwaite*, 6. Coxe, *Ordination of Elders*, 20.

⁷⁰ Stennett, *Ordination of Rees*, 100.

glory of God and His Church.⁷¹ As a man who did all things in love, displaying tenderness and compassion, he was always empathetic with those in distress.⁷² He was also to be a lover of peace⁷³ who no longer walked with wicked men preferring instead the company of godly people.⁷⁴

As indicated, the key qualities of a steward are faithfulness and diligence and the quality of faithfulness was emphasized as an “indispensable qualification.”⁷⁵ Faithfulness requires perseverance, even amidst trial, so the visiting elder often gave encouragements or “motives” to the ordinand to resist the lure of the world and its trials, and to remain faithful to the end.⁷⁶ James Fall lists several of these encouragements which are frequently repeated in other ordination sermons. First, a minister must be faithful because it was the command of God. All Christians, and especially his ministers, have a fundamental obligation to obey God. Second, the minister’s time and strength are not his own and so his primary obligation is to the Lord and his work. Third, the Lord is worthy of honor and the minister primarily honors the Lord through his fidelity to the Scriptures. Finally, a minister should be faithful because of the importance of the work. The ministry fulfills a high calling, proclaiming the glory of God in the salvation of sinners,⁷⁷ and so the time he invests is well worth all his efforts which will be amply rewarded in eternity.

5.4.1 Diligently Strive to Improve Gifts

⁷¹ Osborn, *Ordination of Belsher*, 31. Coxe, *Ordination of Elders*, 20.

⁷² Gill, *Ordination of Davis*, 48. Osborn, *Ordination of Belsher*, 30.

⁷³ Coxe, *Ordination of Elders*, 10.

⁷⁴ Stennett, *Ordination of Rees*, 11.

⁷⁵ Osborn, *Ordination of Belsher*, 27. Gill, *Ordination of Stone*, 24. Brine, *Ordination of Ryland*, 4. Hall, *Ordination of Moreton*, 223. Stennett, *Ordination of Evans*, 54.

⁷⁶ Wallin, *Ordination of Booth*, 43- 45.

⁷⁷ Fall, *Ordination of Fall*, 16.

Some of the gifts Jesus Christ gave to ministers to qualify them for the office of elder (Ephesians 4:11) may be taken away or decline if under-utilized or misused.⁷⁸ For Scriptural support for this assertion, John Gill appeals to Matthew 25:28, 29, “Take therefore the talent from him, and give *it* unto him which hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.”⁷⁹ The consequences of neglecting ministerial gifts could be devastating as potentially, “All his light and knowledge, his abilities and usefulness, shall be taken from him (Zechariah 11:17).”⁸⁰ Two common temptations to neglect gifts included persecution, and discouragement from an apparent lack of success in ministry.

Since the pastor who neglected his gifts harmed not only himself but the whole church, he had a duty not only to use his gifts, but to diligently strive to improve them.⁸¹ In a charge to Thomas Dunscombe, Caleb Evans exhorts him to allow no distractions in the ministry.

The grand object of your life now, my brother, should be the *fulfilment* [sic] of the ministry you have received in the Lord. You are a Christian minister, and as such, your principal concern should be to *make full proof* of your ministry. See to it then, that you attend... to all your duties habitually. ...Guard against everything which might hinder you in your main work and business ...⁸²

⁷⁸ Gill, *Ordination of Stone*, 117; Gill, *Ordination of Braithwaite*, 3.

⁷⁹ Gill, *Ordination of Braithwaite*, 3.

⁸⁰ Gill, *Ordination of Braithwaite*, 4.

⁸¹ Stennett, *Ordination of Evans*, 49-50.

⁸² Evans, *Ordination of Dunscombe*, 14. This was based on such verses as 2 Timothy 2:15 “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” and 2 Timothy 4:2 “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.”

A Baptist minister was to embrace every proper opportunity to use his gifts⁸³ which required great self discipline and industriousness.⁸⁴ Knowing this, he must be prepared for a great physical and mental exertion.⁸⁵ In fact a common metaphor for a minister of God was as a workman. He was a labourer sent by God to plow up fallow ground – to convince sinners of their need of repentance.⁸⁶ He was also to be characterized by exceptional courage, not fearing men, but intrepid, constant, immovable, and persistent, persevering in this end despite all obstacles.⁸⁷

In order to accomplish this he must be careful to avoid certain things that may hinder diligence. The biggest enemy of diligence was squandering time.⁸⁸ A pastor must be careful not to be distracted by worldly affairs, but must focus on the tasks of, meditation, prayer, and reading Scripture and the writings of “good men.”⁸⁹ He must also avoid “trifling recreations” as he is not in the ministry for his own comfort, but for service to God and His church.⁹⁰ Even in the discharge of duties such as visiting individuals in the congregation he must be careful not to trifle away time through idle chatter, but rather focus on the task of spiritual edification.⁹¹

⁸³ Turner, *Ordination of David*, 5.

⁸⁴ Hall, *Ordination of Moreton*, 204, 205. Gill, *Ordination of Davis*, 48.

⁸⁵ Stennett, *Ordination of Evans*, 58.

⁸⁶ Hall, *Ordination of Moreton*, 205. Wallin, *Ordination of Burford*, 4.

⁸⁷ William Steadman, *The Qualifications Necessary for the Discharge of the Duties of the Christian Ministry. A Pastoral Charge, Addressed to Mr. George Sample, on his Ordination over the Baptist Church, Assembling at West-Gate, Newcastle upon Tyne, October, 21, 1818. By William Steadman D.D. Theological tutor of the Baptist Academy, Bradford, Yorkshire. Published from the Ms. of the Author. By particular request* (London: Button and Son, 1819), 7-8. Gill, *Ordination of Davis*, 48. Hall, *Ordination of Moreton*, 225. John Brine, *Diligence in Study Recommended to Ministers. In a Sermon, Preached at the Ordination of the Reverend Mr. Richard Rist, in Harlow, Essex. December 15, 1756. Published at the Request of the Church. By John Brine* (London: John Ward, 1757), 26.

⁸⁸ Ryland, *Ordination of Coles*, 10.

⁸⁹ “The writings of good men” referred to the works of faithful, orthodox, expositors of the Scriptures. Gill, *Ordination of Braithwaite*, 5.

⁹⁰ Brine, *Ordination of Rist*, 5.

⁹¹ Gill, *Ordination of Braithwaite*, 5. Brine, *Ordination of Rist*, 6.

The gifts that the pastor was required to “stir up within,” or improve, included both natural and spiritual gifts.⁹² Since a key function of an elder was teaching (1 Timothy 3:2), one of the chief ways to improve talents was through an improvement of his knowledge of Scripture. They believed in two aspects of knowledge, human and divine. Human, or natural knowledge, included information derived from academic disciplines such as, the liberal arts, biblical languages, history, logic, apologetics, and even extra biblical writings of Christians.⁹³ But as useful as these were as a supplement to studying the Scriptures, they were less important than divine knowledge. Divine knowledge was the “knowledge of God and his will, of Christ and the way of salvation by him . . .,” and was acquired mainly through prayer, Bible study, and meditation on Scripture.⁹⁴

Knowledge must also be experimental, or practical, as well as intellectual, or it is of no use.⁹⁵ Experimental knowledge is felt as well as believed and it begins with an acquaintance with the true God.⁹⁶ It is absolutely essential that a minister have intimate knowledge of correct biblical doctrine to defend the faith, but he must also be able to discern more subjective phenomenon. For example, he must be able to discern the schemes of the Devil and understand how the Holy Spirit encourages the church.⁹⁷ Practical knowledge is the manifestation of intellectual knowledge coupled with the work of the Spirit of God which allows an understanding of biblical truth with the

⁹² Evans, *Ordination of Dunscombe*, 16.

⁹³ Gill, *Ordination of Stone*, 22.

⁹⁴ Stennett, *Ordination of Evans*, 50, 51.

⁹⁵ Stennett, *Ordination of Evans*, 51.

⁹⁶ Ryland, *Ordination of Belsher*, 25. Abraham Booth, *Pastoral Cautions: An Address to the Late Mr. Thomas Hopkins, when Ordained Pastor of the Church of Christ*, in Eagle Street, Red Lion Square, July 13, 1785. In *The Works of Abraham Booth* (London: Button and Sons, Paternoster-row, 1813), III: 142.

⁹⁷ Brine, *Ordination of Rist*, 8.

accompanying ability to effectively live out and express this biblical truth to others. Since this knowledge must be shared the art of sanctified persuasion was essential to the pastoral office.

This knowledge must also manifest itself in a pastor's personal life as a self-evident reality. "Example," it was believed, was often a better teacher than "precept."⁹⁸ Therefore it is essential that a pastor constantly guard his own heart (Acts 20:28) so that his moral and civil behavior was consistent with the message he preached.⁹⁹ It was believed that this absence of hypocrisy brought power to preaching and authenticated his ministry.¹⁰⁰

Discretion was believed to be another indispensable quality for a pastor/elder. He must not only abstain from evil, but avoid all appearance of evil,¹⁰¹ especially in the way he managed his temporal affairs.¹⁰² Wisdom and prudence were also absolutely necessary. He had an obligation to speak out against sin, but it must be done in love. Although a pastor may risk offence with anyone rather than God in this matter, he must do it in love not anger.¹⁰³ John Ryland says, "Imprudence is one of the greatest enemies to the pastoral office: and, excepting a gracious heart, no qualification is more necessary, for a Minister, than prudence."¹⁰⁴ He must be careful that he maintains a good reputation in the community at large.¹⁰⁵

⁹⁸ Stennett, *Ordination of Evans*, 39.

⁹⁹ Wallin, *Ordination of Booth*, 41.

¹⁰⁰ Turner, *Ordination of David*, 11.

¹⁰¹ Ryland, *Ordination of Belsher*, 26.

¹⁰² Stennett, *Ordination of Evans*, 57.

¹⁰³ Ryland, *Ordination of Belsher*, 26.

¹⁰⁴ Ryland, *Ordination of Belsher*, 26.

¹⁰⁵ Stennett, *Ordination of Rees*, 103.

Another important qualification for an elder was an attitude of cheerfulness. A pastor is called to serve and should perform his functions willingly and happily recognizing that God was always present to strengthen him.¹⁰⁶ Part of his responsibility was to comfort people and lead them to closer relationship with God; and he could not effectively do this with a dour disposition.

As mentioned a chief means for improving a minister's gifts was the attentive reading of Scripture. Although natural knowledge is helpful, it is secondary and should not distract the pastor from studying the Bible.¹⁰⁷ His chief work was to know and communicate scriptural truth. Since an important element in effective communication was knowledge of people, he must also make himself a student of human nature.¹⁰⁸ Further, it was not enough to just study Scripture, men, and other writing's but he must meditate on them.¹⁰⁹ Meditation involved prolonged thought on a subject until the truth was internalized.

Gifts were also improved through prayer, both private and corporate¹¹⁰ as God's assistance was vital for ministerial success. Caleb Evans concurs with this assessment advising Thomas Dunscombe to, "Give attendance to reading, meditation, and, above all, to *fervent prayer*..."¹¹¹

It was understood that the main reason a pastor would accept a charge was out of love to God and his gospel¹¹² as his religion was to be radically God-centered, doing

¹⁰⁶ Stennett, *Ordination of Evans*, 62, 64.

¹⁰⁷ Brine, *Ordination of Rist*, 6.

¹⁰⁸ Hall, *Ordination of Moreton*, 229, 230.

¹⁰⁹ Hall, *Ordination of Moreton*, 225.

¹¹⁰ Hall, *Ordination of Moreton*, 225.

¹¹¹ Evans, *Ordination of Dunscombe*, 16.

¹¹² Ryland, *Ordination of Coles*, 10.

everything focused on the glory of God.¹¹³ He must deny himself as a humble servant of God and mortify his innate desire for fame, power, possessions, gratification of the flesh, and all selfish ambition.¹¹⁴ He absolutely could not love money and must detest unjust gain.¹¹⁵ To be successful he must constantly guard against these things and trust in a wise and good God to supply his happiness.¹¹⁶ A common example of the dangers of this can be seen in their regular warning to avoid showing preference to wealthy people.¹¹⁷ They were to maintain a disinterested zeal and impartial love for the glory of God.

This self-denial was demonstrated by a lifestyle characterized by moderation.¹¹⁸ For example, they were to control the amount of alcohol they drank¹¹⁹ as a pastor must always be sober and in control of his passions.¹²⁰ Despite this emphasis on controlling the passions and desires, they also guarded against an extreme form of asceticism where they might damage their physical health. Often the presiding pastor would advise new pastors to take care of their health, families etc., in addition to guarding their souls.¹²¹ They were concerned for the whole man avoiding a dualistic separation of the corporeal and the ethereal.

In regard to marriage and the family, he must be the husband of one wife, which these Particular Baptists generally understood as a prohibition against polygamy. They

¹¹³ Clark, *Ordination of Dore*, 14.

¹¹⁴ Turner, *Ordination of David*, 15.

¹¹⁵ Stennett, *Ordination of Rees*, 99.

¹¹⁶ Turner, *Ordination of David*, 15.

¹¹⁷ Booth, *Ordination of Hopkins*, 170.

¹¹⁸ Coxe, *Ordination of Elders*, 20.

¹¹⁹ Coxe, *Ordination of Elders*, 20. "Not given to much wine." (1 Timothy 3:3) At times, drunkenness was a major problem in eighteenth-century society in England. G. M. Trevelyan, *The Eighteenth Century* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd, 1964), 46. Roy Porter, *English Society in the Eighteenth Century* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, Ltd, 1982), 235.

¹²⁰ Stennett, *Ordination of Rees*, 99. "Not a Striker." (1 Timothy 3:3)

¹²¹ Brine, *Ordination of Rist*, 11. Gill, *Ordination of Braithwaite*, 2.

could not be divorced and remarried.¹²² Nor, generally, could they be polygamous before their conversion, as this forfeited the right to become an elder.¹²³ The husband was also admonished to protect and care for his wife as she represented a co-minister with him.¹²⁴ Also their children were required to be faithful to the Gospel, not necessarily as believers, but instructed in the Christian faith, sober, orderly, and living submissive lives to the authority of their parents and the church.¹²⁵

5.5 Duties as Elder

Essentially the pastor of an eighteenth-century Particular Baptist church functioned as a ruler.¹²⁶ He would maintain discipline over the church, and direct and encourage Christians to live faithfully to the Scriptures.¹²⁷ He was not to be a tyrant lording it over the church, but a shepherd, gently guiding, protecting, and feeding God's flock.¹²⁸ This biblical metaphor of a shepherd was often used to describe the elder's main duty. The flock, which represents the church, was depending on the shepherd to feed them good food which they understood metaphorically as biblical doctrine.¹²⁹ To preach the Word of God was often referred to as the "principle [sic] business" of the pastor.¹³⁰ He was a type of mediator between God and the people, who offered prayers, petitions, confessions, and public praise, on behalf of the church.¹³¹ Also, pastors represented God as his mouth

¹²² Coxe, *Ordination of Elders*, 19.

¹²³ Stennett, *Ordination of Rees*, 97.

¹²⁴ Booth, *Ordination of Hopkins*, 153.

¹²⁵ Coxe, *Ordination of Elders*, 20. Stennett, *Ordination of Rees*, 97.

¹²⁶ Stennett, *Ordination of Evans*, 48.

¹²⁷ Wallin, *Ordination of Burford*, 6-8.

¹²⁸ Fall, *Ordination of Fall*, 2-3.

¹²⁹ Fall, *Ordination of Fall*, 3, 4, 5.

¹³⁰ Gill, *Ordination of Stone*, 18.

¹³¹ Stennett, *Ordination of Rees*, 90.

piece to his people.¹³² The pastor comforts and warns men speaking in God's name through the preaching of the Word.¹³³

5.5.1 Preaching

The central purpose of Particular Baptists worship was the magnification of the glory of God through preaching the Word.¹³⁴ They felt that it was a dangerous, but an ever-present temptation, for a pastor to try and exalt himself above the Lord; to preach "self" rather than Christ. This exaltation occurred when he sought the praise of his people – when there was a desire to please the hearers by preaching what they wanted to hear, rather than faithfully proclaiming the Scriptures. So a common warning to ordinands in the charge was to guard against the fear of man.¹³⁵ They were admonished not to be afraid to share all the truths of the gospel even if they were offensive to some in the congregation.¹³⁶ Further they were warned not try and appeal to a certain theological party to gain favor.¹³⁷ Finally, they were cautioned against trying to discover and teach new things in Scripture that God may not have intended so as to entertain the congregation. If a pastor wished comfort and success in the work of the ministry he had to aim to try and please God as the one who would reward him.¹³⁸

The goal was to "excite people" to the gospel, of which Christ was the main substance.¹³⁹ They were to labour for the salvation of souls by warning people of the

¹³² Coxe, *Ordination of Elders*, 22.

¹³³ Coxe, *Ordination of Elders*, 23.

¹³⁴ Clark, *Ordination of Dore*, 79.

¹³⁵ Gill, *Ordination of Stone*, 18; Gill, *Ordination of John Reynolds*, 63.

¹³⁶ Clark, *Ordination of Dore*, 60.

¹³⁷ Clark, *Ordination of Dore*, 66.

¹³⁸ Clark, *Ordination of Dore*, 83, 84.

¹³⁹ Gill, *Ordination of Stone*, 18, 19.

wrath to come.¹⁴⁰ The goal of preaching was to rebuke sin, comfort in affliction, and encourage in perseverance.¹⁴¹ In a nutshell the goal was to evangelize and try and persuade men to be born again and live a holy life submitted to God.¹⁴²

5.5.1.1 Content of Preaching

The elder must take great pains to ensure that he was preaching the pure Word of God in its entirety since there was a constant temptation to add to the sentiments of Scripture through the inclusion of his own ideas. The goal was to not make the words of the Bible advance a pastor's own agenda, but to teach the truths contained in the Scripture allowing its intended meaning to emerge. This included not only the words of the Bible, but also their sentiments or ethos.¹⁴³ He must studiously guard against the temptation to water down, or let his own prejudices determine, the content, but teach all essential biblical doctrines fully explicating all their import. As we have seen, this meant that the preacher must boldly proclaim doctrines that may be offensive to the congregation, without softening their implications. The pastor was not to make hard truths more palatable to the prejudices of the hearers, but to transform those prejudices through faithfully adhering to what was written. These principles of preaching are succinctly summarized by Robert Hall Jr. in his charge to J. K. Hall,¹⁴⁴ where he advises his nephew to,

Preach the word purely and fully; mix nothing with it that does not belong to it, or may not evidently be inferred from its language. State every doctrine and opinion as near to the mind of the Spirit as you can ascertain. The doctrines of the word you will bring

¹⁴⁰ Coxe, *Ordination of Elders*, 145.

¹⁴¹ Coxe, *Ordination of Elders*, 14.

¹⁴² Coxe, *Ordination of Elders*, 15.

¹⁴³ Robert Hall, *The Substance of a Charge, Delivered at the Ordination of the Rev. J. K. Hall, at Kettering, November 8, 1815. [From the notes of the Rev. S. Hillyard, of Bedford.]* In *The Works of the Rev. Robert Hall, A.M.* (New York, 1854), IV: 476.

¹⁴⁴ John Keen Hall followed Fuller as Pastor at the Baptist Church in Kettering.

forth in their full import, without concealing them, or endeavouring to melt them down and mould them so as to suit the prejudiced and indolent depravity of the human heart. The gospel is not suited, and cannot be made to suit, the corrupt dispositions and inclinations of the carnal “mind;” but the faithful preaching of it is calculated to oppose and to overcome those evil prejudices so far as to excite men to attend to the doctrines it contains and the blessings it proposes. It is your duty, not to bring down the gospel into a conformity with them, but to change them into a conformity with the gospel.¹⁴⁵

There were theological tests to determine whether or not certain doctrines qualified as the “pure word.” According to John Brine, the test for a true doctrine is if, “it exalts the Glory of the Grace of God, as the *sole* and *entire* Cause of Salvation: If it humbles the Creature, and *excludes all Boasting*: If it provides for the Honour of the Law and Justice of God: If it is a solid and sure Ground of *strong Consolation* to the Saints...”¹⁴⁶

5.5.1.2 Purpose of Preaching

The purpose of preaching was to display the holiness, righteousness, and justice of God.¹⁴⁷ This was achieved through preaching the “whole counsel of God”¹⁴⁸ in order to exhibit the entirety of His revealed character. They wished to guard against partiality in proclamation so they attempted not to neglect the complete range of biblical doctrine and teaching.¹⁴⁹ Despite this desire, of course, some doctrines were highlighted more than others, but even these truths were those which they felt the Bible itself emphasized. In terms of specific doctrines, Particular Baptists tended to stress salvation by Christ, the doctrines of pardon by his blood, justification by his righteousness, and atonement and

¹⁴⁵ Brian Stanley, *The History of the Baptist Missionary Society 1792-1992* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1992), 32; Hall, *Ordination of Hall*, 476.

¹⁴⁶ Brine, *Ordination of Ryland*, 6.

¹⁴⁷ Fall, *Ordination of Fall*, 17.

¹⁴⁸ From Acts 20:27 “For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.”

¹⁴⁹ Wallin, *Ordination of Booth*, 36.

satisfaction by his sacrifice.¹⁵⁰ Their theology was profoundly Christological because they felt that Jesus was the centre of all religion and life in both the Old Testament and the New Testament.¹⁵¹ This was not a contradiction to their aphorism of proclaiming “the whole counsel of God,” because they saw Christ as central to the meaning and purpose of Scripture. This is well illustrated with Nehemiah Coxe’s admonition to a new pastor:

His [Christ’s] Glory must be the Mark aimed at by all your Labours, and his Grace the principal Subject of all your Discourses; It is not a Philosophick Harangue that will save the Souls of Men, but the *preaching of Christ Crucified*; His Gospel is the *Power of God unto Salvation to them that believe*; and his Holy Name is the Ointment that perfumes all Religious Exercises; Therefore I will not only say, Let there be *Aliquid Christi*, something of Christ in every Sermon, but let Christ be the beginning, middle, and end of your Discourses; for in him are hid *all the Treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge*; in him is the Fountain and Head-spring of all true Comfort and Holiness.¹⁵²

For Particular Baptists the sum and substance of the whole counsel of God was Christ in his person, offices, and grace.¹⁵³ Since Christ was the center of all Scripture, he should be preached in every sermon.¹⁵⁴

As Calvinists, this Christological prominence emerged soteriologically in the regular proclamation of the so called “doctrines of grace.”¹⁵⁵ But among most Particular Baptists, this emphasis on the doctrines of grace generally encouraged, rather than discouraged, evangelistic preaching, especially in the latter part of the century. Their God was sovereign in salvation, and although God chose his elect before they were even born, this did not inhibit the churches responsibility to proclaim the gospel to the world. Even the so-called father of High Calvinism, John Gill regularly encouraged pastors to preach

¹⁵⁰ Ryland, *Ordination of Belsher*, 20.

¹⁵¹ Turner, *Ordination of David*, 8.

¹⁵² Coxe, *Ordination of Elders*, 26.

¹⁵³ Gill, *Ordination of Stone*, 18.

¹⁵⁴ Gill, *Ordination of Stone*, 18. Stennett, *Ordination of Evans*, 42.

¹⁵⁵ Brine, *Ordination of Ryland*, 7-17.

the gospel for the salvation of sinners.¹⁵⁶ Particular Baptists maintained this emphasis on the doctrines of grace despite the constant danger of being labeled “Arminian” on the one hand and “Antinomian” on the other.¹⁵⁷ In summary, their goal was to preach nothing but the crucified Christ.¹⁵⁸

Preaching the whole counsel of God involved more than just teaching a wide range of biblical doctrine. It also included the sentiments of Scripture. For example, some teaching was more instructional or propositional in nature, whereas other teaching might emphasize morality. For these Particular Baptists, the commitment to Scripture extended even to the ethos of the text that is the spirit as well as the letter. They sought to incorporate scriptural attitudes in their teaching, recognizing that even their well-intentioned prejudices could contaminate the intended purposes of the Bible. There was a particular danger of teaching just aspects of morality without the undergirding doctrine which supported it.¹⁵⁹ So they strove to explain the theology emerging from Scriptures and then to clearly delineate its practical implications. In the words of Robert Hall, a common rule was to, “preach the doctrines practically, and preach practice

¹⁵⁶ “Care should also be taken by a minister of the gospel, that his doctrine be the doctrine of Christ; that is, such as Christ himself preached, which he has delivered out by revelation to others, and of which he is the sum and substance. *We Preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness.* This doctrine is most likely to be useful for the conversion of sinners ...” Gill, *Ordination of Braithwaite*, 8. “What can, or does, more strongly encourage ministers to take heed to themselves, to their doctrine, and abide therein, than this? That they may be useful in the conversion, and so in the salvation of precious and immortal souls, which are of more worth than a world: *He that converteth a sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sin.*” Gill, *Ordination of Braithwaite*, 13.

¹⁵⁷ Olin C. Robison, “The Particular Baptists in England 1760-1820” (PhD Thesis, Oxford University, 1963), 41. Ryland, *Ordination of Coles*, 14.

¹⁵⁸ Coxe, *Ordination of Elders*, 146. Evans, *Ordination of Dunscombe*, 5. Turner, *Ordination of David*, 6. Gill, *Ordination of Braithwaite*, 8. 1 Corinthians 2:2 “For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.”

¹⁵⁹ Hall, *Ordination of Hall*, 477. Brine, *Ordination of Ryland*, 21.

doctrinally.”¹⁶⁰ The concern was not to just state truth, but to win hearts to God and guide people into a life of holiness.¹⁶¹ The most important goal, the conversion of sinners, must be kept in mind at all times as their goal was not primarily to make Baptists.¹⁶²

5.5.1.3 Method of Preaching

The foundational principle of preaching was a commitment to handle the Word of God with reverence because its content was considered sacred.¹⁶³ The pastor was to speak the truth in love without compromising veracity out of a fear of men.¹⁶⁴ Therefore there could be no partiality when teaching biblical doctrines. They were neither to neglect the poor or ignorant nor to favour the rich.¹⁶⁵

Further although they were to speak the truth in love, this was not considered a license to engage in controversy for controversy sake. The pastor must strive to avoid unproductive quarrelling while contending for the faith.¹⁶⁶ This did not mean he should not reprove those in error or sin through solid reasoning from Scripture.¹⁶⁷ The purpose of such reproof was to magnify the glory of God and the reputation of the gospel as holy; and it was done for the good of the church.¹⁶⁸ The pastor must therefore be careful to avoid bringing his own personal grievances into the pulpit.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁰ Hall, *Ordination of Hall*, 478.

¹⁶¹ Ryland, *Ordination of Coles*, 12.

¹⁶² Steadman, *Ordination of Sample*, 27.

¹⁶³ Coxe, *Ordination of Elders*, 14.

¹⁶⁴ Ephesians 4:15 “But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.”

¹⁶⁵ Hall, *Ordination of Hall*, 481.

¹⁶⁶ Turner, *Ordination of David*, 6.

¹⁶⁷ Brine, *Ordination of Ryland*, 22.

¹⁶⁸ Fall, *Ordination of Fall*, 13.

¹⁶⁹ Steadman, *Ordination of Sample*, 23.

Sermons were to be delivered with plainness and simplicity of style as their sole purpose was to effectively communicate the Word of God. There was a tendency to want to entertain the audience, rather than teach them – to give them what they want, rather than what they needed, and this must be resisted. It seems that the emphasis on simplicity and plainness was at least partly a reaction to a widespread trend in the eighteenth-century for ministers to deliver eloquent discourses designed to impress congregations with their erudition and elocution. This was accomplished primarily through a display of reasoning powers or beautiful words.¹⁷⁰ Particular Baptists believed that this sort of preaching was a product of intellectual pride and so in opposition to this they taught that a preacher must have the “mind of Christ” teaching the truth of the text with an attitude of humility and holiness.¹⁷¹ They were to seek growth in their congregations, but not through entertainment, or by relaxing standards for church membership through invitations to those who are not Christians, or accepting those practicing sin, or by trying to entice others away from their churches.¹⁷² Rather, they were to increase through the real conversion of sinners.¹⁷³ They were convinced that God rewarded faithfulness but not human ingenuity.¹⁷⁴

So their style of preaching was described as “judicious, methodical, scriptural, plain, and experimental,” adapted to the state and conditions of the people, and delivered with boldness and earnestness.¹⁷⁵ Preaching was considered an extremely practical event so speech was to be clear and natural effectively communicating to all kinds of different

¹⁷⁰ Evans, *Ordination of Dunscombe*, 4.

¹⁷¹ Hall, *Ordination of Hall*, 481; Coxe, *Ordination of Elders*, 14.

¹⁷² Wallin, *Ordination of Booth*, 42.

¹⁷³ Stennett, *Ordination of Rees*, 125; Wallin, *Ordination of Booth*, 41.

¹⁷⁴ Stennett, *Ordination of Rees*, 126.

¹⁷⁵ Wallin, *Ordination of Booth*, 38.

hearers.¹⁷⁶ Pastors were admonished to strive to speak to the level of those with the least capacity for understanding¹⁷⁷ as they recognized that people had different natural capacities for understanding.¹⁷⁸

Although the style and delivery was to be simple this did not imply that sermonic content was simplistic. They emphasized over and over again the importance and necessity of thoughtful study. When composing a sermon they wanted to make sure that the sermon was not superficial, but was the result of hard dedicated study worthy of the subject matter.¹⁷⁹ As clear communication was a primary aim they emphasized specificity with the avoidance of generalities.¹⁸⁰

As they wished to reflect the sentiments as well as the teachings of Scriptures, they stressed that the delivery of the sermon, though plain and simple, should be solemn and void of distracting gestures and tones.¹⁸¹ Yet preaching was not the same as a passionless lecture, because they were to earnestly contend for souls.¹⁸² It seems that although most pastors allowed for different methods and styles, most preferred preaching extempore without notes as it reflected their desire for spontaneity in worship.¹⁸³

Simplicity required the pastor to try and prove one main principle, flowing out of his doctrine that answered all possible objections that might arise in the hearer's minds.¹⁸⁴

He was to rebuke sin mainly by teaching the Law, explaining it, and clearly describing

¹⁷⁶ Hall, *Ordination of Moreton*, 232.

¹⁷⁷ Hall, *Ordination of Moreton*, 232.

¹⁷⁸ Steadman, *Ordination of Sample*, 20.

¹⁷⁹ Evans, *Ordination of Dunscombe*, 8.

¹⁸⁰ Hall, *Ordination of Hall*, 478.

¹⁸¹ Evans, *Ordination of Dunscombe*, 9.

¹⁸² Evans, *Ordination of Dunscombe*, 9.

¹⁸³ Evans, *Ordination of Dunscombe*, 9; Robison, *Particular Baptists*, 208, 229.

¹⁸⁴ Brine, *Ordination of Ryland*, 23.

what it threatened.¹⁸⁵ The pastor must regularly warn men of the deep need for repentance, living faith, and persevering obedience.¹⁸⁶ Also he was to exhort his congregation and comfort those under conviction of sin with the promises of the gospel, showing that with God salvation is possible.¹⁸⁷ Also he must comfort those who were experiencing different trials, encouraging them to persevere, and demonstrate sympathy with his people in all their temptations and afflictions. For this he needed wisdom, experience, and sound judgment.¹⁸⁸ He was expected to be especially sympathetic with those beginning to inquire after salvation.¹⁸⁹ Also he was expected to exhort men not to sin, to read Scripture, and to pray. They wanted their congregations to truly love others from the heart.¹⁹⁰

In terms of the frequency of preaching, the main text they referred to was 2 Timothy 4:2 which commands preachers to, “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.” Essentially they were to preach whenever they had opportunity overcoming all difficulties and opposition.¹⁹¹ This was part of the mandate to faithfully discharge their stewardship. A pastor was expected to be faithful with the gifts God has given them and minister with all his strength as opportunity allowed.

¹⁸⁵ Brine, *Ordination of Ryland*, 24.

¹⁸⁶ Hall, *Ordination of Hall*, 479.

¹⁸⁷ Brine, *Ordination of Ryland*, 26.

¹⁸⁸ Fall, *Ordination of Fall*, 13.

¹⁸⁹ Hall, *Ordination of Hall*, 480.

¹⁹⁰ Gill, *Ordination of Reynolds*, 63; Brine, *Ordination of Ryland*, 33.

¹⁹¹ Turner, *Ordination of David*, 5.

5.5.2 Administer the Ordinances

The second key duty of a pastor was to administer the ordinances.¹⁹² For the Particular Baptists of the eighteenth-century there were two ordinances, Baptism and the Lord's Supper. We explored the essence of the doctrinal underpinnings of these ordinances earlier in the discussion of confessions of faith. It was the responsibility of the pastor to teach the "nature, use, and ends" of the ordinances which were instituted by Christ.¹⁹³ They were to administer the ordinance in his name. Although there was difference of opinion in the matter, generally only the pastor was to administer Baptism and the Lord's Supper.¹⁹⁴ The important thing was to try and conform to the pattern of Scripture which they referred to as "orderliness."¹⁹⁵ Baptism denoted dying to sin and living righteously and Lord's Supper stood for union with Christ and an utter dependence on Him.¹⁹⁶ It was a very solemn but joyous act.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹² Stennett, *Ordination of Evans*, 47.

¹⁹³ Stennett, *Ordination of Rees*,

¹⁹⁴ Gill, *Ordination of Stone*, 20. Davies, *English Puritans*, 223. E. P. Winter, "Who may Administer the Lord's Supper" *The Baptist Quarterly* 16 (July, 1955), 132. "All agreed that the pastor was the proper person to administer the Supper, when he was available; but prolonged lack of pastors, because of "inter-regnums" or imprisonment, saw differing points of view emerge. However, all agreed that the proper authorization of the local church was necessary, even when ordination was not made a pre-requisite." The 1677 Confession of Faith said the Lord's Supper should be administered by "those only, who are qualified and a called according to the commission of Christ." Winter, *Administer Lord's Supper*, 131. "Baptists have always agreed that it is the function of the pastor to administer the ordinances. They have not agreed on the question of whether it is exclusively his function so to do. In contrast to the 17th and 18th century practice, the more recent tendency has been to recognize the right of laymen to administer the sacraments if authorized by the church concerned." R. L. Child, "Baptists and Ordination" *The Baptist Quarterly* 14 (April 52), 249.

¹⁹⁵ Evans, *Ordination of Dunscombe*, 12.

¹⁹⁶ Turner, *Ordination of David*, 9.

¹⁹⁷ Stennett, *Ordination of Evans*, 47.

5.5.3 Public Prayer

Another important duty of the pastor was to lead public prayer. They were not to give “preaching prayers” but to extemporaneously and earnestly petition God on behalf of his people. Caleb Evans sums up the essentials of a pastor’s prayer to Thomas Dunscombe,

In the discharge of this part of your office, you are sensible, my brother, that it is particularly desirable to preserve a temper of mind strictly devotional; to be methodical, and yet not formal; pathetic but not extravagant; copious, but not tedious; and to suit your prayers to different occasions, and to different frames and circumstances both of yourself and your hearers. Endeavor always to pray with the Spirit, and with the understanding also. Avoid formality and a sameness in your public prayers, and never think the excellency of a prayer consists in the length of it.¹⁹⁸

Effective public prayer was a considered to be as much as a gift as the ability to preach well. Robison says, “With preaching, hymn singing, and reading of the Scripture, prayer was one of the major elements in Baptist worship, the simple and spontaneous expression of the converted to their Lord.”¹⁹⁹ The pastor, of course, was also expected as a duty to pray privately for the individuals in his charge.²⁰⁰ Hall quotes Abraham Booth as saying, “He that does not pray oftener for his people than with them, neglects an important part of his duty.”²⁰¹

5.5.4 Church Discipline

In Titus 1:5, Paul tells Titus, that, “For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee.” The reason Paul left Crete, according to Nehemiah Coxe, was to set in order the

¹⁹⁸ Evans, *Ordination of Dunscombe*, 10.

¹⁹⁹ Robison, *Particular Baptists*, 249.

²⁰⁰ Stennett, *Ordination of Rees*, 124.

²⁰¹ Hall, *Ordination of Hall*, 479.

things that were disorderly. This was accomplished through the ordination of elders. To “set in order” referred to,

... the settlement and disposing of things relating to the Offices and Government in the House of God, and the Order of their Communion in the Church who were Members of it, in a full and exact agreement with the Rule of Christ’s Appointment; which the Apostle had to time to bring to perfection during his stay with them.²⁰²

Further this “order” was connected with the edification and beauty of the Church, which, to these early Baptists, was essential if the Church were to be conformed to the will of Christ.²⁰³ They believed that Christ’s will for the purity, peace, and prosperity of the church was maintained through this order and any neglect of discipline would result in the disruption of harmony and unity.²⁰⁴ This Christological basis is the foundation of the importance of church discipline to Particular Baptists.

Conformity to Christ’s will in the church required order, and as an elder was God’s overseer, following the apostolic pattern as seen in the written word, it was ultimately his responsibility to zealously ensure that church discipline was practiced when necessary.²⁰⁵ The power of discipline properly belonged to Christ as the head of the church, but it was to be executed through the elder with the consent of the church.²⁰⁶ He was required to diligently watch over the state of his flock as he was responsible to know their spiritual condition as a duty of eldership.²⁰⁷ This watchfulness began with the admission of new members as he was to guide the church in impartially determining a

²⁰² Coxe, *Ordination of Elders*, 4-5.

²⁰³ Coxe, *Ordination of Elders*, 5.

²⁰⁴ Wallin, *Ordination of Booth*, 40.

²⁰⁵ Coxe, *Ordination of Elders*, 3; Gill, *Ordination of Stone*, 20; Coxe, *Ordination of Elders*, 3

²⁰⁶ Gill, *Ordination of Stone*, 20.

²⁰⁷ Coxe, *Ordination of Elders*, 28.

potential member's fitness for church membership.²⁰⁸ It was important to take great care when a person joined membership by ensuring that they were believers who were committed to covenant with the local church and assume the expected responsibilities of membership willingly.²⁰⁹

If discipline became necessary it was the Elder's duty to ensure that the church gathered for judgment.²¹⁰ They followed the scriptural rules in enacting church discipline where the offended brother was to first tell the offender of his fault, and then try to convince him to repent. If he failed, then he took one or two more members with him, but if the offender remained stubborn, he was to bring it to the church.²¹¹ But those who sinned openly, visibly disgracing the church, they were to be publicly rebuked so that others may fear and not follow their example.²¹² In the implementation of discipline the church was encouraged to exercise wisdom, prudence, gentleness, tenderness, diligence, and impartiality. The pastor was to authoritatively rebuke those needing discipline, but not lord it over them as dictator.²¹³

Discipline normally took the form of censure, suspension from the Lord's Table, and exclusion from the church. Censure was the most lenient form of discipline dealing with sins that were impulsive, or considered less serious than other sins.²¹⁴ This may include things like absence from worship and was meant primarily as a reprimand or as an admonishment for those guilty of error. If this did not elicit repentance then the member may be suspended from the Lord's Table, thereby disrupting fellowship with the

²⁰⁸ Wallin, *Ordination of Booth*, 40.

²⁰⁹ Stennett, *Ordination of Rees*, 91; Evans, *Ordination of Dunscombe*, 12.

²¹⁰ Wallin, *Ordination of Booth*, 40.

²¹¹ Gill, *Ordination of Stone*, 21. See Matt. 18:15-17.

²¹² Stennett, *Ordination of Rees*, 90; 1 Tim. 5:20; Gill, *Ordination of Stone*, 21; 2 Thess. 3:6.

²¹³ Evans, *Ordination of Dunscombe*, 12; Stennett, *Ordination of Rees*, 91.

²¹⁴ Robison, *Particular Baptists*, 328.

church. Finally, the definitive disciplinary action was expulsion from the church. This was a last resort after many attempts to seek repentance from the offender. The excluded person however, if they repented, could be restored back into fellowship, and indeed this was the goal. The purpose for expulsion was not only to glorify God by keeping his Church pure, but also it was an act of love meant to persuade a wayward sinner back into fellowship with God and his church, through humble submission and repentance.²¹⁵ Discipline issues included such things as heresy, apostasy, and immorality.²¹⁶

5.5.5 Visitation

Verses such as Acts 5:42, “And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ,” and Acts 20:20-21, “And how I kept back nothing that was profitable *unto you*, but have shewed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house,” provided the scriptural basis for the pastoral duty of visitation.

As mentioned it was essential that a pastor know the spiritual state of his flock.²¹⁷ If he were always locked away in his study, not intermingling with his people, there was a danger of neglecting his oversight of the flock.²¹⁸ He was to make himself accessible to the church so they would feel comfortable in approaching him to share honestly their spiritual state.

²¹⁵ Evans, *Ordination of Dunscombe*, 13.

²¹⁶ Stennett, *Ordination of Rees*, 91; Evans, *Ordination of Dunscombe*, 12; Gill, *Ordination of Stone*, 21.

²¹⁷ Wallin, *Ordination of Booth*, 40.

²¹⁸ Steadman, *Ordination of Sample*, 30.

Great wisdom and prudence was necessary for pastoral visitation. He was not to be a stranger yet careful not to visit too frequently. Still it was better to visit more frequently in short periods rather than stay for extended periods of time.²¹⁹

The main purpose of visitation was to ascertain, and enhance, the spiritual condition of the person visited. He was to help them by reproof, exhortation, rebuke, and comfort (especially the sick and the afflicted).²²⁰ He would take every opportunity to instruct in the Word and some pastor's even catechized children during pastoral visitation.²²¹

They were to visit both members and non-member as non-members provided another opportunity for evangelism.²²² Gill succinctly describes visitation to members in an ordination charge to several pastors,

Another part of your work, is to visit the several members of the church, as their cases may require, especially when distressed, either in body or mind; then to pray with them, and for them, to speak a word of comfort to them, and to give your best counsel and advice; and this will introduce you into divers families; but take care not to meddle with family-affairs; what you hear in one family report in not in another...²²³

The aim of these visits was strictly business and so the ordinands were often reminded to avoid certain dangers that might distract them from their spiritual purposes. Often they were warned to avoid gossiping, levity, and pointless conversation.²²⁴ The pastor must not meddle in people's lives as a busy body, but must know them well enough as to offer sound spiritual advice.

²¹⁹ Steadman, *Ordination of Sample*, 31; Wallin, *Ordination of Booth*, 40.

²²⁰ Evans, *Ordination of Dunscombe*, 13.

²²¹ Evans, *Ordination of Dunscombe*, 13.

²²² Gill, *Ordination of Stone*, 21.

²²³ Gill, *Ordination of Stone*, 21.

²²⁴ Hall, *Ordination of Hall*, 481.

Knowing the spiritual condition of the congregation was also an invaluable tool for effective preaching. By better learning their state, visitation helped the pastor to make his sermons more relevant to the congregation's needs. In the words of William Steadman in his charge to George Sample, knowing his people well allowed the pastor to "adapt his public discourses to their capacities and their wants."²²⁵

5.5.6 Preside Over Singing

Another duty of an eighteenth-century Particular Baptist minister, albeit mentioned very infrequently in the extant published ordination sermons, was the duty of "presiding and regulating" over congregational singing.²²⁶ Caleb Evans says, "Another branch of worship, which as a minister of Christ it lies upon you to preside over and regulate, is *singing psalms and hymns*."²²⁷ He admonished Thomas Dunscombe not to think it was too unimportant a task for a minister to be involved in the choosing of "suitable compositions," that would inspire the people's devotion, helping them to set their affections on God.²²⁸

The selected hymns and Psalms were to compliment the subject matter of the sermon by helping to more deeply impress those truths on the congregation's minds. Clearly Evans believed that singing was a useful and effective means of enhancing worship and so he encouraged the churches participation. He said, "If public singing be a

²²⁵ Steadman, *Ordination of Sample*, 30.

²²⁶ Evans, *Ordination of Dunscombe*, 11.

²²⁷ Evans, *Ordination of Dunscombe*, 11.

²²⁸ Evans, *Ordination of Dunscombe*, 11.

duty, let it be attended to accordingly, and attended so that it may *answer*, not *frustrate* the animating, enlivening designs of it.”²²⁹

5.6 Ordination of Deacons

In a Baptist church the other office besides the elder was that of deacon. Essentially the term “deacon” meant “to minister”²³⁰ and his duties and responsibilities were clearly outlined in 1 Timothy 3:8-13.²³¹ In most cases deacons were men, but some like John Brine seemed to believe in the biblical validity of deaconesses.²³²

²²⁹ Evans, *Ordination of Dunscombe*, 11-12. Baptists have often recognized hymn selection as an important part of worship. H. V. Larcombe, “A Minister and his Hymns” *The Baptist Quarterly* 10 (July, 1940), 154.

²³⁰ Brine, *Ordination of Deacons*, 10.

²³¹ 1 Timothy 3:8-13 “Likewise *must* the deacons *be* grave, not doubletongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being *found* blameless. Even so *must* their wives *be* grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things. Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.”

²³² Brine, *Ordinations of Deacons*, 2-3. “The Apostle bestows this Character on *Phebe*; *I commend unto you Phebe our Sister, which is a Servant, a Deaconess, of the Church which is at Cenchrea.* (Romans 16:1.) I am of Opinion, that there were Deaconesses in the primitive Churches, whose Business it was to visit the poor, afflicted, and aged Sisters, and to administer Relief to them; to acquaint the Church with their Necessities, and obtain Help for them. Persons chose to this Work were generally Widows, such who had been married, and behaved in that Station of Life with Chastity, Diligence, and Prudence, who are called *Widows indeed* (1 Timothy 5:3.). It was required that they should be Sixty Years of Age when appointed by the Church to attend on this Service; *let not a Widow be taken into the Number, under Threescore Years old, having been the Wife of one Man* (Ver. 9.). The excellent and learned ecclesiastical Historian Mr. *Bingham* speaking of them hath these Words: “There is some mention made of them in Scripture, by which it appears, that their Office was as ancient as the apostolical Age; St. *Paul* calls *Phebe, a Servant of the Church at Cenchrea, Romans 16:1.* The original Word is *Diakonov*, answerable to the *Latin* Word *Ministra*; which is the Name given them in *Pliny’s Epistle*, which speaks about the Christians. *Tertullian* and some others, call them *Viduae*, Widows; and their Office, *Viduatus*; because they were commonly chosen out of the Widows of the Church. For the same Reason *Epiphanius*, and the Council of *Laodicea*, call them *elderly Widows*; because none but such were ordinarily taken into this Office” Not but that Virgins were sometimes admitted to this Service, as he afterwards observes. And Dr. *Cave* allows the same, whose Account of them is this: “Their Original was very early, and of equal standing with the Infancy of the Church; such was *Phebe* in the Church at *Cenchrea*, mentioned by St. *Paul*; such were those two Servant-Maids spoken of by *Pliny* in his Letters to the Emperor...*Constantinople*, not to mention any more particular Instances. They were either Widows, and then not to be taken into the Service of the Church, under Threescore Years of Age, according to St. *Paul’s* Direction, or else Virgins, who having been educated in order to it, and given Testimony of a chaste and sober Conversation, were set apart at Forty.

Based on Acts 6:6,²³³ deacons were ordained in a similar manner as elders by the imposition of hands.²³⁴ A good illustration of the procedure at a deacon's ordination is found in Crosby's account at the installation of the Rev. Joseph Burroughs.

After the ordination of Mr. *Burroughs*, they proceeded to the *ordination* of two *deacons*, which was after this manner. Mr. Stinton stood and up said. We must now address our selves again to you, the members of this congregation, that stately worship God in this place. We were informed by your messengers aforesaid, that you have chosen two persons from amongst yourselves, unto the office of *deacons*, in this church of Christ, *viz.* brother *Matthew Shelfwell*, and brother *George Reynolds*. It will therefore be necessary, that you should in this, as you have in the other case, declare and confirm your election. All you, therefore, that do approve, and confirm your former choice of brother *Matthew Shelfwell*, to be a *deacon* in this church, and desire that he may now be ordained to that service, be pleased to signify it, by the lifting up of your hands. And then the *negative*. After this the same question was put, both in the *affirmative* and *negative*, with respect unto the other; and it appeared, they were both unanimously chosen; and upon being asked, whether they accepted the churches call to this work? and, Were willing to take this office upon them? They answered, they were. Then the deacons elect kneeled down, and the ministers laying their right hands upon their heads, ordained them, Mr. *Mulliner* putting up a prayer to God suitable to this part of the solemnity; and then he went up into the pulpit, and entertained the assembly with a very excellent discourse, on 1 Thes. v. 12, 13. in which, according to the province assigned him, he treated of the duties of the members of a Christian church to their

What the proper Place and Ministry of these Deaconesses was in the ancient Church, though *Matthew Blasteres* seems to render a little doubtful, yet certainly it principally consisted in such Offices as these; to attend upon the Women at times of publick Worship, especially in the Administration of Baptism, that when they were to be divested, in order to their *Immersion*, they might overshadow them, so as nothing of Indecency and Uncomeliness might appear; sometimes they were employed in instructing the more rude and ignorant sort of Women in the plain and easy Principles of Christianity, and in preparing them for Baptism; otherwhiles in visiting and attending upon Women that were sick, in conveying Messages, Counsels, Consultations, Relief (especially in Times of Persecution, when it was dangerous for the Officers of the Church) to the Martyrs, and them that were in Prison. And these Women, no doubt it was, that *Libanius* speaks of among the Christians, who were so very ready to be employed in these Offices of Humanity. "To these Observations the Words of *Clemens Alexandrinus* agree; *We also know what Things Paul requires of Deaconesses in the first Epistle to Timothy*. It has been thought proper by some Congregations of late Years, to appoint faithful Women to such Service among them, as the Primitive Churches did; nor can I apprehend that anything is justly to be excepted against that Practice, since it appears to be apostolical. THIS Name is especially given to the Stewards of the Church-Treasure, and those who take care of the Poor; which is one considerable Branch of their Work."

²³³ Acts 6:6 "Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid *their* hands on them."

²³⁴ Stennett, *Ordination of Rees*, 81, 112. Coxe, *Ordination of Elders*, 8. "From the seventeenth to the early nineteenth century the laying on of hands was general at the appointment of deacons." Ernest A. Payne, "Baptists and the Laying on of Hands" *The Baptist Quarterly* 15 (January 1954), 207. See Second London Confession, Lumpkin, *Confessions*, 287. "And of a Deacon that he be chosen by the like suffrage, and set apart by Prayer, and the like Imposition of hands." Crosby, *English Baptists*, 188.

officers, both *elders* and *deacons*, after which he prayed, then a psalm of thanksgiving was sung, at the conclusion of which the assembly was dismissed with one of the apostolic benedictions.²³⁵

This usually occurred on the same day as the elder's ordination, or in an evening ceremony, or in another ceremony on the day following an elder's ordination.²³⁶

Deacons were appointed to the office by the church and ordained by the eldership.²³⁷ Like the elders, they were to be faithful stewards in the office entrusted to them by the church by performing their duties diligently. Two qualities that complimented these characteristics of diligence and faithfulness, which were often mentioned as being particularly crucial for a deacon, was discretionary prudence coupled with a heart of compassion. As their main duty was to relieve the poor and to care for the "outward state of the Church," empathetic kindness was an essential quality.

There was no standard rule as to the number of deacons a church should have, but it was determined by the need of the church and the availability of qualified officers.²³⁸

²³⁵ Crosby, *English Baptists IV*, 188-9.

²³⁶ Stephen Copson, "Two Ordinations at Bridlington in 1737." *The Baptist Quarterly* 33 (July 1989), 148. This was the case at the ordination of Deacons at Bridlington, 1737. "The Order in Which the Deacons were set apart was as followeth. Lords-day June 5th 1737 being the day next following the forementioned solemnity publick service being over the Auditory dismyssed ye Brethren stay'd and signified their desire (by Br. George Nessfeild the onely acting Deacon of late Years) to the Pastors present the Churches desire of their assistance in the ordination of Br. Robt. Sedgfeild, Br. Marmaduke Slumber and Br. Michael Cannome with him the said George Nesfeild to the office of Deacons in the same Church. Upon which Mr. George Braithwaite asked the Church. Q1. Whether they had solemnly called the Sd. Brethren to that Office. It was answered they had after which the said Mr. Braithwaite asked the said Brethren seperately [sic] whether they Accepted the said Office to which the Church had called them. They answered they did, then Mr. John Sedgfeild spent some time from Act 6th to display the Office and Duty of a Deacon, after which the said Mr. John Sedgfeild with the Imposition of the Right hand of Every Pastor present on the head of Br. Geo. Braithwaite Br. Robt. Sedgfeild, which was succeeded by Mr. Alvery Jackson praying over Br. Marmaduke Slumber and the whole concluded by Mr. Rich'd Machin's praying over Br. Michael Cannome – the hands of the pastors being on the head of ye Deacons during the time each was prayed over."

²³⁷ Coxe, *Ordination of Elders*, 10.

²³⁸ Coxe, *Ordination of Elders*, 11.

5.6.1 Qualifications

The necessary qualifications for the office of deacon were reflected in the characteristics described in 1 Timothy 3:8-13,

Likewise *must* the deacons *be* grave, not doubletongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being *found* blameless. Even so *must* *their* wives *be* grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things. Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.²³⁹

Generally they were to be honest men whose innocence and holy life were well attested to in the community at large;²⁴⁰ men of known integrity filled with the Holy Spirit and wisdom (Acts 6:3).²⁴¹ For Rees being “filled with the Holy Spirit,” signified “persons of remarkable piety, and who have wisdom and discretion to manage the office well ...”²⁴²

They generally interpreted the 1 Timothy qualifications as follows. “Grave” meant that the deacon was not inappropriately humorous, regularly displaying great “levity of mind.” He was not to be a flippant person who always teased and joked.²⁴³ Rather deacons were characterized by honest sobriety – “men of probity” – as they were entrusted with the care of the churches wealth.²⁴⁴

“Not double tongued,” inferred men of great integrity who were not double-minded in their commitment to the gospel ministry. This sincerity was reflected in purity

²³⁹ 1 Timothy 3:8-13.

²⁴⁰ Coxe, *Ordination of Elders*, 11.

²⁴¹ Coxe, *Ordination of Elders*, 11.

²⁴² Stennett, *Ordination of Rees*, 106.

²⁴³ Stennett, *Ordination of Rees*, 103.

²⁴⁴ Brine, *Ordination of Deacons*, 2.

of speech,²⁴⁵ so they were to be free from any guile or hypocrisy and speak and act truthfully.²⁴⁶ They were not to feign love for the needy, but demonstrate sincere affection and compassion. Further they were to act on this love by doing all in their power to supply the poor any relief they could while at the same time not promising more that they could deliver.²⁴⁷

“Not given to much wine” reflected the same temperateness required of an elder. They believed that moderate use of good things was allowable, including drinking wine, but excessive drinking was “absolutely unlawful.”²⁴⁸ The dangers of drunkenness were particularly dangerous for a deacon who was responsible for the churches treasury.

“Not greedy of filthy lucre” suggested a deacon had to be faithful and just in the distribution of the churches resources.²⁴⁹ He must not be a person prone to covetousness or greed, but generous by nature. Leading by example, his generosity would encourage other members to give generously also.²⁵⁰

“Holding the mystery of faith with a pure conscience,” meant that they must know and love biblical truth as reflected in their Reformed Baptist orthodoxy. They must understand the “fundamentals” of the Bible and also practice these truths with a clean conscience.

“Let them first be proved,” did not refer to a test after their call as deacon to see if they were fulfilling their mandate properly.²⁵¹ Rather, it was antecedent to the call,

²⁴⁵ Stennett, *Ordination of Rees*, 104.

²⁴⁶ Brine, *Ordination of Deacons*, 2.

²⁴⁷ Brine, *Ordination of Deacons*, 2.

²⁴⁸ Brine, *Ordination of Deacons*, 2.

²⁴⁹ Stennett, *Ordination of Rees*, 104.

²⁵⁰ Brine, *Ordination of Deacons*, 2.

²⁵¹ Coxe, *Ordination of Elders*, 12.

determining if the person had demonstrated the characteristics required in 1 Timothy.²⁵²

After thorough examination, they were chosen to the office when these qualifications had been demonstrated in their lives.²⁵³

Regarding the family relations of deacons there were several stipulations. “Wives must be grave.” This simply meant that wives of deacons were to be sober minded like their husbands.²⁵⁴ Also, like the elders, deacons were to be “the husband of one wife,” meaning that they, “never had the scandal of polygamy upon them.”²⁵⁵ And finally, they must “rule their household well” by teaching their children and servants the Scriptures, reproving them for sin, and encouraging them to pursue the things of God.²⁵⁶

Deacons were to be “blameless” men, “no slanderers, sober, faithful in all things.” This was important in that they were in a unique position to shame the church and its testimony to Christ in the community by defrauding it.²⁵⁷

5.6.2 Duties

Based on Acts 6 the essential duty of a deacon was to serve tables, which was understood as comprising three main tasks. First, they were responsible for the table of the Lord.

“The Deacons are to provide everything necessary for the Celebration of this Institution, but not at their own private Expense.”²⁵⁸ The Lord’s Table was a community affair and the church as a whole was to supply all the resources necessary. The deacon was expected to furnish the table, and to “communicate the Bread and Wine to the several

²⁵² Coxe, *Ordination of Elders*, 12.

²⁵³ Stennett, *Ordination of Rees*, 104.

²⁵⁴ Stennett, *Ordination of Rees*, 105.

²⁵⁵ Stennett, *Ordination of Rees*, 105.

²⁵⁶ Brine, *Ordination of Deacons*, 6.

²⁵⁷ Stennett, *Ordination of Rees*, 105.

²⁵⁸ Brine, *Ordination of Deacons*, 10.

Members of the Society.”²⁵⁹ Second, it was their duty to relieve the poor. They were to distribute the stockpile that the church gathered for this purpose. Deacons collected the money and distributed to those in need of help. They were required to visit members who required assistance to determine the extent and necessity of the need. For example, if it was determined that the person was wasting money or living extravagantly, the deacon was to reprove them. Visitation was also importance because sometimes people were too timid to ask the church for help. When visiting various members the deacon had a wonderful opportunity to encourage them. This is why compassion and a kind disposition were essential.²⁶⁰ Finally, it was a deacon’s duty to take care of the ministers table. They were responsible to ensure that the pastor and his family were adequately taken care of.²⁶¹ “It belongs to the Deacons to consider, whether the Elder of the Church is agreeably furnished with the Accommodations of Life” and if not to procure a “more liberal Contribution” from the church to provide for his needs.²⁶²

In the charge addressed to deacons outlining their responsibilities, characteristics, and duties, the preacher, as in the charge to the elder, would encourage them to persevere in their important work. They would remind the deacon that he was called to God’s work and as such could expect God’s help. When God called a man to the office of deacon, he would give him the necessary abilities to perform the job effectively. The office was difficult but it was a great honour to be a deacon and provided a unique opportunity to serve the Lord through His church.²⁶³

²⁵⁹ Coxe, *Ordination of Elders*, 10.

²⁶⁰ Coxe, *Ordination of Elders*, 10.

²⁶¹ Brine, *Ordination of Deacons*, 11.

²⁶² Brine, *Ordination of Deacons*, 11.

²⁶³ Brine, *Ordination of Deacons*, 12-13.

5.7 Conclusion

These key aspects of the themes that emerge from a study of the extant eighteenth century Particular Baptist ordination sermons provide a general overview of their pastoral priorities. They had high standards for both the qualifications and duties of a pastor. Especially central to the pastor's duties was the need to preach plainly and evangelistically in order to affect the hearts of the hearers. In the next chapter Fuller's pastoral theology will be explored to help determine his own unique contribution to his tradition and to determine what key theological priorities shaped his understanding of pastoral ministry. Was there a radical discontinuity in Fuller's theology from his Baptist forbears?