

Forming Ministers or Training Leaders?

An Exploration of Practice and the Pastoral Imagination

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Forming Ministers or Training Leaders?
An Exploration of Practice and the Pastoral Imagination
by Anthony J. Clarke

Abstract

This thesis is a piece of practitioner research located in the context of the author's practice as Tutor in Pastoral Studies at Regent's Park College. It is written from the context of change, both from denominational reviews, university restructuring and government funding and from wider changes in theological education and arises from a sense of dissatisfaction that recent debates have tended to separate out a discussion about the preparation for ministry from an understanding of ministry itself.

The thesis is set in a framework of two concepts: practice and the pastoral imagination. The first draws on the work of MacIntyre, Dykstra, Bourdieu and Graham and describes an on-going *habitus* that is structured, cooperative and creative; the second draws on Dykstra and Foster and is used to describe an overarching understanding of the nature of ministerial practice. It utilises the 'four voices' approach developed by Cameron *et al.* as its overarching methodology.

The thesis explores ideas of ministry and leadership, arguing that, in the face of the challenge posed by leadership language and thought, a historic and contemporary Baptist understanding of ministry is best understood through a dialectical model of ministry, a *habitus*, rather than through a *habitus* of leadership. It then charts the history of preparation for ministry among Baptists and explores the contemporary developments in language and suggests that formation is the most appropriate and helpful description of the process.

Interwoven through the thesis is empirical research that explores the nature of preparation for ministry among the five Baptist colleges of England and Wales and a selection of other colleges and courses. This probed first the similarities and differences between the individual Baptist colleges and then whether there

is anything approaching a Baptist understanding of ministerial formation. This empirical research suggests that there are some differences between the Baptist colleges within a strong shared understanding, and that while Baptist colleges share some significant similarities with the other institutions, certain elements, a collaborative understanding of ministry, a significant mission focus, and an understanding of ministerial formation as an integrative process shaped by practical theology, receive particular emphasis among the Baptist colleges.

The thesis then offers not a Baptist theology of formation, as if totally distinct, but a theology of formation for Baptists, weaving together the representative Baptist voice, the espoused and operant practices of the Baptist colleges and the formal voice, particularly drawing on the work of Paul Fiddes. It comes to the conclusion that Baptists should be engaging in forming ministers rather than training leaders and offers a coherent theological and ecclesiological understanding of this process for Baptists. The thesis concludes by returning to the context of Regent's Park College and the author's own practice, proposing an explicit pastoral imagination and suggesting some ways that this will shape future developments at the college.

Summary of Portfolio

There are only three other supporting pieces to this thesis within my DMin portfolio, due to credit being given for a published Oxford BD thesis, 'Jesus' Cry of Forsakenness and its Interpretation in Modern Theology'. These three pieces are a literature review and a thesis proposal together with one further essay, written under the following rubric:

Imagine that you have been invited to present a paper to the leadership of your church or denomination on the subject of, 'a contemporary theology of Christian leadership.' In this paper you will develop and justify your theology of Christian leadership and you will consider some of its implications for the contemporary practice of leadership within your church or denomination.

This article, written first, enabled me to begin an exploration of Christian leadership in a Baptist context. As well as exploring my specific denominational context, in this essay I draw on Moltmann, Volf and Fiddes to offer a nuanced trinitarian understanding of Christian leadership, which is then developed further in the thesis. This essay is included as Appendix 3.

The literature review allowed me to reflect on the current state of writing on ministry and leadership especially in a Baptist context and in particular to engage with five key representative books: Paul Goodliff writing on ministry in a Baptist context; Banks and Ledbetter on developments in approaches to Christian leadership; Foster *et al.* reflecting on their empirical research on clergy education in the USA; Andrew's Mayes' published DMin thesis on spiritual formation in a UK Church of England context and Miroslav Volf's exposition of Free Church ecclesiology. Reviewing all five books helped to understand the wider current literature, and I have engaged significantly with Goodliff, Foster and Mayes in the thesis. Given the shape of the final thesis the clear omission from this literature review is the work of Paul Fiddes, but I was already very familiar with his work. The Literature Review is included as Appendix 4.

This thesis proposal outlines the intended study, offering a theological rationale, a methodology and a proposed thesis outline. The final thesis is different in some ways to the proposal, as the project developed, although the overall shape has remained the same. The most significant change was the decision I made to engage with Paul Fiddes as the key theological dialogue partner instead of Miroslav Volf, which I made for two reasons. The wider breadth of Fiddes' work offered a greater number of significant points of contact and it increasingly seemed more important, in a thesis on British Baptist colleges, to engage with the most significant contemporary British Baptist theologian. The original proposal is included as Appendix 5.

1.

Introduction: Practice and the Pastoral Imagination

It was Monday morning. We had moved into a freshly decorated house and the children had settled into new schools. On Saturday the church had been more than full for an inspiring ordination and induction, and yesterday I had preached my first sermon as an ordained minister. And as I sat at my new desk, mug of coffee in hand, I thought to myself: what do I do now?¹

It may rarely be expressed in such explicit terms, but this has been a fundamental question of those who have settled in a church after finishing a process of preparation for ordained ministry. What should be done – now, today, first? The existential nature of the question may strike deeper among Baptist ministers, the majority of whom are inducted into sole pastorates without a ‘senior’ colleague to direct them and more recently the timing of such questioning may have been brought earlier, as the majority of Baptist ordinands already exercise ministry while preparing for ordination. But it is a question at many levels. It is a question about the practice of ministry. Within the specificity of daily tasks are woven questions about a self-understanding and theology of ministry, out of which practice emerges and which then shapes a developing theological understanding. It is also a question about the practice of preparation for ministry which has enabled, encouraged and shaped the practice of ministry both leading up to an ordination and induction and beyond. And it is a question about the way that these two practices are connected.

¹ Scenario based on conversation with a current minister.

The Practice of Ministry

Over recent years the term 'practice' has become an increasingly significant concept in both sociology and theology. The influential work of Alasdair MacIntyre² describes practice as much more than a procession of unconnected individual events, or a series of technical abilities driven by instrumental needs, but as a 'coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realised'³ and as such is something which is both shared with others and persists over time.

Building on MacIntyre's work a number of writers have developed a more explicitly theological understanding of 'practice'.⁴ Bass and Dykstra, for example, suggest that, while MacIntyrean in basis, the distinct theological turn in their own understanding of practice is to replace MacIntyre's stress on 'internal goods' with goods orientated towards God and God's intention for creation. So a practice must 'pursue a good beyond itself, responding to and embodying the self-giving dynamics of God's own creating, redeeming and sustaining grace'⁵ and be 'a sustained, co-operative pattern of human activity that is big enough, rich enough and complex enough to address some fundamental feature of human existence'.⁶

An alternative approach is found in the work of Pierre Bourdieu who has explored the relationship between the object and subject, between structure and agency, arguing for a complex dialectic in which practices are neither unchanging responses to 'rules' given within cultural structures, nor entirely the

² Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* 3rd edition, (London: Duckworth, 2007).

³ MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, p. 187.

⁴ See, for example, Dorothy C. Bass and Craig R. Dykstra, *For Life Abundant: Practical Theology, Theological Education and Christian Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008); Craig R. Dykstra and Dorothy C. Bass, 'A Theological Understanding of Christian Practices' in Miroslav Volf and Dorothy C. Bass, *Practicing Theology: Beliefs and Practices in Christian Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002); Kathryn Tanner, 'Theological Reflection and Christian Practices' in Volf and Bass, *Practicing Theology*; Duncan Forrester, *Truthful Action: Explorations in Practical Theology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000).

⁵ Bass and Dykstra, *For Life Abundant*, p. 30.

⁶ Dykstra and Bass, 'A Theological Understanding', p. 27.

product of individual or communal agency.⁷ This Bourdieu describes as a *habitus*. For Bourdieu this is understood fundamentally at the level of the individual, although he recognises the ‘homogeneity’ that exists within a group,⁸ but like MacIntyre there is significant stress on that which persists and continues. A *habitus*, for Bourdieu, derives from ‘structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures’⁹ and is ‘a present past that tends to perpetuate itself into the future by reactivation in similar structured practices’.¹⁰ While there is some space in Bourdieu for change and novelty, the prevailing sense is on continuity that is structured by the past into the present.

Elaine Graham draws on Bourdieu to offer the same kind of mediation between determinism and voluntarism and offers a reading of Bourdieu which places greater stress on the agency of the individual. Graham explores further the possibility for novelty and development within the structured and structuring structures; for her *habitus* is ‘thus conceived as the residuum of past actions, a deposit of past knowledge and practice’ but specifically one that ‘is always available as the raw material for creative agency or ‘regulated improvisations’.¹¹ Following Graham’s reading of Bourdieu practice may be described in performative terms which involves both the given and the creative.¹²

Drawing these perspectives together I utilise, in this thesis, an understanding of practice that can be described as structured, co-operative and creative. One response to the initial scenario then is to suggest that it places too much stress on individual agency. Ministry is a practice shared with others

⁷ Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), p. 53.

⁸ Bourdieu, *Practice*, p. 58.

⁹ Bourdieu, *Practice*, p. 53.

¹⁰ Bourdieu, *Practice*, p. 54.

¹¹ Elaine Graham, *Transforming Practice: Pastoral Theology in an Age of Uncertainty* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2002), pp. 102-3, with reference back to Bourdieu, *Practice*, p. 57. For a reading of Bourdieu which sees a greater emphasis on the more closed structuring nature of the *habitus*, thus in some contrast to Graham, see Paul S. Fiddes, ‘The Body as Site of Continuity and Change’ in Pamela Sue Anderson, *New Topics in Feminist Philosophy of Religion: Contestations and Transcendence Incarnate* (London: Springer, 2010) pp. 263-5.

¹² Graham, *Transformative Practice*, pp. 97-104.

contemporaneously and historically, persisting over time and concerned for the external goods of the mission and kingdom of God and so the answer to the question posed here is: 'do what ministers have always done'. Yet ministry is also performative, in creative and sometimes unexpected ways, which, in response to the call of God, break from the established patterns. A second, and contrasting answer, to the scenario then would be: 'do what the context demands'.

We see here the tensions both between structure and creative agency but also between the corporate and the individual. The concept of ministry explored here will be firmly rooted in the mission of God and the ministry of Christ in which the church and individuals are called to participate. There is, therefore, a necessary givenness which is both structured and structuring and which persists over time. Yet it will be rooted in the mission of God who 'is about to do a new thing'¹³ and calls God's people in radical and unexpected ways. Equally, while Bourdieu is surely right that all of us carry our own *habitus* – as embodied, internalised and forgotten history – MacIntyre's stress on the co-operative nature of practice helpfully rebalances this approach so that our *habitus* is also corporately shaped. The practice of ministry in any tradition will, therefore, be a constant negotiation between the givenness of ministry as it is both historically and corporately mediated, that is both structured *and* cooperative, and the creative performance from the agency of the individual.

So in this thesis I will explore Baptist ministry understood as a co-operative practice, which persists over time and provides something of a corporate and structured *habitus* within which the individual minister may creatively improvise.

The Practice of Preparation for Ministry

If there is this 'givenness' in the practice of ministry that is both structured and cooperative then a process of preparation for ministry can be expected to be one way through which the structured and cooperative practice of ministry is

¹³ Isaiah 43:19.

mediated. To 'do what ministers have always done' requires being inducted into the practice of ministry. The overall understanding of practice I have explored above applies to the practice of preparation for ministry as well, which itself will be both structured and co-operative, within which there is room for creativity and individual agency, and this can apply to both the overall work of an institution and the more specific work of a tutor, shared with a variety of classes over time.¹⁴

The individual agency of a tutor happens in the context of cooperative action with colleagues and the structured practice of the institution, and the wider practice of the institution will be shaped in contemporary and historical perspective, through its particular theological and ecclesiological commitments.. But, again, within these cooperative, structuring structures there is space for creative improvisation both as colleges develop particular patterns and individual tutors establish distinct pedagogical practices.

I will, therefore, also explore in this thesis the historical development of patterns of preparation for ministry within the British Baptist colleges, understood as a *habitus*, which is structured by its past, co-operatively developed with others within which creative improvisation happens.

The Pastoral Imagination

One of my concerns, which prompted this research, is that the connection between the practice of preparation and the practice of ministry has been underdeveloped in the wider literature. Andrew Mayes, for example, in some important research into the preparation for ministry within the Church of England can use terminology such as priest, minister and leader interchangeably, as if there were no theological distinction.¹⁵ The material from the ecumenical

¹⁴ C. R. Foster, L. E. Dahill, L. A. Goleman, and B. W. Tolentino, *Educating Clergy: Teaching Practices and Pastoral Imagination* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2006), pp. 28, 372.

¹⁵ Andrew Mayes, *Spirituality in Ministerial Formation* (Cardiff: University of Wales, 2009). From a Baptist perspective Derek Tidball, *Ministry by the Book: New Testament Patterns for Pastoral*

Quality in Formation Panel intentionally does not offer any particular theological understanding of the practice of ministry, but seeks to ensure that each institution offers preparation appropriate to the breadth of traditions within the sponsoring church.¹⁶ Paul Goodliff, in his exploration of the influence of a sacramental theology of ministry, does begin to make some links between the teaching of tutors and the theology of ministers, but does not seek to differentiate between colleges, for example, or explore what might be a distinctly Baptist approach.¹⁷

My aim is to explore this underdeveloped area and probe the complex of ways the practices of ministry and preparation are connected and do this by utilising and building on the concept of the ‘pastoral imagination’ first developed by Craig Dykstra and then further refined by Charles Foster *et al.* Dykstra introduces this notion of the pastoral imagination to describe the overall approach of a minister to pastoral practice as it develops over time. It is, he suggests, ‘a way of seeing into and interpreting the world which shapes everything a pastor thinks and does’, which is both a gift but also deeply shaped by professional practice.¹⁸ The pastoral imagination, therefore, is the particular and distinct way that *ministers* see and approach their pastoral practice *as ministers* and this can be compared with the ‘legal mind’, a way of seeing and thinking that is particular to that profession or the ‘artistic imagination’, common and unique to artists.¹⁹

While recognising the individuality involved in pastoral practice – and Dykstra bases his comments on his personal observations of ‘good’ pastors – Dykstra

Leadership (Nottingham: Apollos, 2008) explicitly admits to using ‘the terms ‘ministry’, ‘leadership’ or ‘pastoral leadership’ as interchangeable’, p. 14.

¹⁶ Quality in Formation Panel, *Quality Assurance and Enhancement in Ministerial Education: Inspection, Curriculum Approval, Moderation* (London: Church House Publishing, 2010) and *Quality Assurance and Enhancement in Ministerial Formation: A Guide for Inspectors and Training Institutions* (London: Church House Publishing, 2012).

¹⁷ Paul Goodliff, *Ministry, Sacrament and Representation: Ministry and Ordination in Contemporary Baptist Theology and the Rise of Sacramentalism* (Oxford: Regent’s Park College, 2010).

¹⁸ Craig R. Dykstra, ‘The Pastoral Imagination’, *Initiatives in Religion*, 2001, 9 (1), p. 2.

¹⁹ Dykstra, ‘Pastoral Imagination’, p. 1.

strongly stresses the cooperative and structured similarity, shared among 'good' ministers but distinct from other professions. He suggests that 'pastoral ministry may require a complexity and integrity of intelligence that is as sophisticated as is needed for any kind of work' and a 'kind of internal gyroscope and a distinctive kind of intelligence'.²⁰ So, for Dykstra, and following MacIntyre, a pastoral imagination could be described as one that is shared with others, persists over time, and is co-operative and part of the structuring structure that shapes ministry in a more universal way.

Dykstra's interest here is less the connection between the pastoral imagination and preparation for ministry but more with the practice of ministry itself, giving practice significant epistemological significance, for

it is always forged ... in the midst of ministry itself, as pastors are shaped by time spent on the anvil of deep and sustained engagement in pastoral work. It is the actual practice of pastoral ministry ... that gives rise to this particular and powerful imagination.²¹

Foster, *et al.*, intentionally build on Dykstra's concept and language,²² but do so in a way that offers a greater emphasis on diversity and individual agency rather than structure, but also begins to link the practice of preparation with the practice of ministry. Recognising the diversity of seminary education they broaden the terminology, referring throughout to a 'pastoral, priestly or rabbinic imagination'.²³ While stressing that there is something shared about the practice of 'clergy', as professionals with leadership responsibilities in their communities who act as agents of God, integral to their research project is the exploration of diversity of approaches and so a diversity of pastoral imaginations.

²⁰ Dykstra, 'Pastoral Imagination', p. 1. See Craig R. Dykstra, 'Pastoral and Ecclesial Imagination' in Bass and Dykstra, *For Life Abundant*, p. 51.

²¹ Dykstra, 'Pastoral and Ecclesial Imagination', pp. 41-2.

²² Foster *et al.*, *Educating Clergy*, pp. 12-13. There is also an institutional partnership between the Carnegie Foundation which sponsored the research in this book and the Lily Endowment of which Dykstra was the vice-president.

²³ Foster *et al.*, *Educating Clergy*, p. 13.

The research question behind their work asks about the connections between the practice of preparation and specific pastoral imaginations, asking how seminary educators foster among their students a particular pastoral, priestly or rabbinic imagination.²⁴ They suggest that seminaries do seek to form the disposition or *habitus* of a given religious or intellectual tradition within their students, suggesting Dykstra does not place enough responsibility for pastoral imagination on seminaries, and offering a gentle and respectful correction,²⁵ and that ordinands enter ‘the community of the seminary educator’s practice as apprentices’,²⁶ rather like apprentices of a master craftsman.

Yet Foster, *et al.*, although exploring a variety of Christian and Jewish traditions, still tend to work with a generic understanding of ministry applied across denominations. The fact that the book is titled *Educating Clergy*, with no apologetic for or discussion of the theology already conveyed in such language, indicates that their work does not pay enough attention to the way that the deep seated concept of ministry, at the heart of any pastoral imagination, varies too.

Drawing on the foundational work of Dykstra and the developments of Foster *et al.* I propose a particular, refined, understanding of the pastoral imagination, which I will use as the central concept for joining together the practices of ministry and preparation for ministry. In this thesis, then, I understand the pastoral imagination as:

- the fundamental way of seeing into and interpreting the world which shapes everything a pastor thinks and does;
- co-operative and structured, sharing in aspects of ministry that will be universal across the church, but also shaped within a particular and distinct church tradition;

²⁴ Foster *et al.*, *Educating Clergy*, p. 13.

²⁵ Foster *et al.*, *Educating Clergy*, p. 23.

²⁶ Foster *et al.*, *Educating Clergy*, p. 372.

- creative and contextual, allowing space for the interplay between the co-operative and structured, the individual agency and personality of the minister and the particular context in which ministry is practised;
- shaped both by the practice of ministry itself and the practice of preparation within the particular *habitus* of an institution;
- forged in the interplay between the practice and theology of ministry, for there is no neutral understanding of ‘ministry’, leading to a constant dialectic between the practice of ministry and an underpinning theology of ministry itself.

The Context of the Research

I come to explore these questions as a Baptist minister who has served two congregations and is still engaged, to a more limited degree, in the practice of ministry in a local church, and as a tutor at Regent’s Park College and member of the Faculty of Theology and Religion within the University of Oxford, having significant responsibility for preparing ordinands. I come also as a member of the Baptist Staffs’ Conference, the combined meeting of tutors in the Baptist colleges, as secretary of the Baptist Colleges’ Partnership, a more formal decision-making body that brings the Baptist colleges together with other areas of the Baptist Union, and as someone engaging in various ecumenical conversations. I have not only a unique role and particular concerns, but also significant responsibility and experience, and so I am particularly well placed to research into the future development of the practices of ministry and the preparation for ministry in a British Baptist context.

I come, therefore, in the language of Fox *et al.* as both a practitioner-researcher²⁷, engaged in the practices of both ministry and the preparation for ministry, and also as a researcher-practitioner, an academic in the University of Oxford, involved in teaching on and researching in the practice of ministry. I seek

²⁷ See Mark Fox, Peter Martin and Gill Green, *Doing Practitioner Research*, (London: Sage, 2013) pp. 1-2.

to be both a 'scholar-practitioner' and so to 'integrate scholarship into ... practice and generate actionable knowledge'²⁸ and also integrate practice into scholarship as a practical theologian.

I understand this also to be an aspect of on-going professional development,²⁹ shaped by both my growing concern with the theological prior commitments of ministerial students, and a growing sense that understandings of the practice of ministry and the practice of preparation for ministry are too disconnected. My desire is to develop my own practice, which will in turn have significant implications for patterns of preparation for ministry at Regent's Park College and develop resources that can be offered to the wider denomination.

When I returned to Regent's Park College as a tutor I was struck by the significantly changed pattern of preparation for ministry from my own experience as a student there fifteen years earlier, which had been a traditional three year college-based course focussed on the final honours school of the Oxford BA, with a very heavy weighting towards biblical studies and systematic theology. But further changes and challenges have also occurred during the course of the research, which all affect my on-going work and which have thus contributed further to this research project. I highlight seven such key changes and challenges.

1. The Faculty of Theology in the University of Oxford engaged in a process of consultation leading to its re-naming in 2012 as the Faculty of Theology and Religion, together with a new final honours school degree in Theology and Religion which begins in the 2016/17 academic year. Such a move is part of a much wider development in British Universities that have seen degrees reworked within a religious studies perspective, and theology departments renamed or incorporated into wider departments or schools around broader historical or sociological studies. The unifying nature of theology implicit in such

²⁸ David Coghlan and Teresa Brannick, *Doing Action Research in Your Own Organisation*, 4th Edition (London: Sage, 2014), p. 8.

²⁹ The possibility and the subject area of the thesis were discussed in my periodic development review in 2008. See Fox *et al.*, *Doing Practitioner Research*, p. 83.

a move is thus the methodology of religious studies, which raises important questions about the wider theological task the college is involved in.

2. In the autumn of 2014 the Common Awards were launched by the Church of England and its ecumenical partners in collaboration with Durham University. Driven initially by the financial crisis in theological education created by changes in the UK Government's policy towards the funding of Higher Education, space was created to reflect more substantially on the nature and purpose of theological education, especially for 'authorised ministries'. Whereas the comparatively short timescale envisaged for the proposed changes and the sheer diversity of approaches within the Church of England pushed towards pragmatic solutions, there have been some moments in the process to reflect on purpose and pedagogy. The move towards Common Awards at Durham has also had a significant impact on some of the Baptist colleges through their partnerships with Anglican institutions. For Regent's Park College this has meant significant work to relocate the BTh suite of courses in the Department of Continuing Education, away from the Faculty of Theology and Religion, which brought opportunities to rework the syllabus, and this has affected the wider ministerial curriculum.

3. In the Autumn of 2013 the Baptist Union Ministries Team launched a review of the selection, funding and formation of Baptist ministers, setting up an overall review group, which was then sub-divided into five working groups, concerned with: the selection of ministerial students; initial ministerial formation; continuing ministerial development; collaboration between the Colleges; the funding of ministerial formation. I was invited to be part of the sub-group on ministerial formation. Such a process among Baptists follows closely on the *Fruitful Field* project in the Methodist Church and before that a similar review within the United Reformed Church. While a consultation document was produced drawing on the reports of the working groups, other changes within the Baptist Union led to this particular review being put on hold. Then in 2015 a wider review of the whole working of the new Ministries Team began, under the title of *The Ignite Project*, which included the Union's understanding of ministry

and its future development. *The Ignite Report* was published at the end of 2015 and discussions on its content are on-going; its recommendations, if and when implemented, will certainly have significant impact on my work.

4. In March 2014 the Ministries Division of the Church of England established the Resourcing Ministerial Education Task Group to 'review the current forms of initial ministerial education, including access to different training pathways and funding arrangements.' This review was wide-ranging and both commissioned and drew on a range of empirical research. The findings of the task group were published in January 2015, which then began a process of consultation. Changes in patterns of preparation for ministry in the Church of England tend to have consequences and implications for others involved in such preparation, although the nature of these is yet unclear.

5. Since 2007 The Baptist colleges have been officially part of the wider ecumenical inspection regime, formally known by Anglicans as Bishops' Inspections and more recently recast ecumenically under the auspices of the Quality in Formation Panel (QiFP). In early 2014 the Baptist colleges, feeling increasingly that the paperwork and pattern of inspections under QiFP were too deeply Anglican, came to a common mind that from the academic year 2014/15 the five colleges would leave the QiFP inspection system and initiate instead a system of peer review. I was significantly involved in the small group planning this process and wrote much of the subsequent paperwork. Regent's Park College was the first college to receive a peer review, which took place in May 2015, for which I drafted the documents submitted for the peer review and, afterwards, the college's response. The peer review was a positive and affirmative process, but has made helpful suggestions that will need further reflection and implementation, in which I will play a leading role.

6. In the summer of 2014 the University of Oxford began a high level review of the place of ordination training in the university. Partly in response to the changes made in the light of the Common Awards, the review body has consulted a wide variety of interested parties and its report is still awaited. The

consequences of the report could be significant for the work of the college and its ecumenical partners in Oxford.

7. Also in that summer Regent's Park College's Governing Body instituted a wide-ranging review in order to enable it to proceed into the future with balanced budgets, and within this wider remit a small group reviewed the pattern of preparation for ministry at the college. Again, while financial considerations were an initial impetus, this created space to reflect on the most appropriate ways to develop the practice of preparation in the college in the light not only of changing financial patterns, but also the significant changes happening in the denomination, the university and more widely within theological education. The response has been a significant reshaping of the yearly pattern for congregation-based students, beginning in 2015-16, which reduces attendance in term time to one day, increases block weeks of teaching outside of term and makes more use of technology to provide webinars and 'flipped classrooms'.³⁰

These changes have brought considerable uncertainty and opportunity to my own work, with repeated changes to the overall curriculum and the experience of ordinands. My research, as appropriate for a practitioner-researcher, has fed into the wider college discussions, which have often needed to focus on very specific questions of curriculum, pedagogy and finance, and changes in practice have shaped my on-going research.

I view this thesis as an opportunity to stand back from the specific details of the specific practice of preparation for ministry at Regent's and ask more fundamental questions, which arise from and are shaped by practice. There have been both significant questions and developments within the wider denomination, and my desire in this research is to explore the practice of ministry and the practice of preparation as it is understood and expressed within the wider Baptist Union so that this can both shape future developments at college and be offered as a resource to the wider denomination.

³⁰ See Jonathan Bergmann and Aaron Sams, *Flip Your Classroom: Reach Every Student in Every Class Every Day* (Eugene, OR: ISTE, 2012).

A Methodology

In this thesis I will be conducting a piece of practitioner-research, understanding practice as the bearer of theology and concerned with the interplay and mutual shaping of theology and practice. I assume an overall philosophical stance that might best be described as critical realism,³¹ which combines what Maxwell describes as ‘ontological realism and epistemological constructivism’.³² I take the position that the different expressions of the practice of ministry are in fact different ways of participating in the one mission and ministry of God in Christ, thus grounding practice in the prior reality of God rather than the subjective approaches of individuals and institutions, but recognise that all knowledge both of the participants and the researcher is provisional and partial.

I follow the advice of Swinton and Mowat and seek to develop a more fluid and flexible use of research methods appropriate to this unique context,³³ integrating insights from a range of empirical approaches, but in this thesis I will draw particularly on the practice of participant observation and the ‘four voices’ developed by Helen Cameron *et al.*³⁴

Participant observation is an established anthropologically-based approach to exploring the wider life of a particular community. It recognises that observation of human communities requires some element of participation and that participation always allows opportunities for observation. Participant observation increasingly recognises the importance of interviews or focus groups,³⁵ since ‘observation rarely grasps the intentions behind people’s behaviour’.³⁶

³¹ Helen Cameron and Catherine Duce, *Researching Practice in Ministry and Mission* (London: SCM, 2013), pp. 29-30.

³² Joseph A Maxwell, *A Critical Approach for Qualitative Research* (London: Sage, 2012) p. 6.

³³ John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research* (London: SCM, 2006), p. 50

³⁴ H. Cameron, D. Bhatti, C. Duce, J. Sweeney, and C. Watkins, *Talking About God in Practice: Theological Action Research and Practical Theology* (London: SCM, 2010).

³⁵ See, Mary Clark Moschella, ‘Ethnography’ in Bonnie J Miller-McLemore, *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Practical Theology* (Chichester: Wiley and Sons, 2014), p. 225.

The 'four voices' methodology was originally developed within an approach described as 'theological action research', that is offered as 'a single methodological and theological vision'³⁷ to keep theory and practice connected together. Cameron *et al.* describe theological action research as:

a partnership between an insider and outsider team to undertake research and conversations answering theological questions about faithful practice in order to renew both theology and practice in the service of God's mission.³⁸

It is a praxis-orientated methodology that explicitly combines the wider understandings of both action research and practical theology, particularly drawing on systematic empirical research conducted collaboratively and patterns of theological reflection. Cameron *et al.* suggest five key characteristics to their methodology,³⁹ all of which will be helpful to this thesis in different ways. First it is 'theological all the way', rather than adding theological reflection to empirical data that is otherwise seen as devoid of theology, and this encourages me to look for and work with the theology embedded in the empirical data. Secondly, theology is disclosed through the conversational method, and this will be a key aspect of the empirical research methods. Thirdly theological action research looks for the formative transformation of practice and fourthly allows practice to contribute to the transformation of theology, which sets up the vital dialectic between theory and practice that will be at the heart of this research.

The final and most innovative aspect of this methodology is the development of 'four voices' which in particular enables research to be 'theological all the way' and to combine theory and practice. The four theological voices that Cameron *et al.* identify are: the formal (the voice of the academy), the normative (the voice of the particular denomination as it speaks authoritatively), the espoused (the

³⁶ Cameron and Duce, *Researching Practice*, p. 60.

³⁷ Cameron *et al.*, *Talking About God*, p. 32.

³⁸ Cameron *et al.*, *Talking About God*, p. 63.

³⁹ Cameron *et al.*, *Talking About God*, pp. 51-60.

expressed self-understanding of a particular group) and the operant (the theology embedded in the group's practice).⁴⁰

Cameron *et al.* suggest that theological action research could be conducted apart from the methodology of the 'four voices' and that the 'four voices' description of theology has value beyond theological action research.⁴¹ More recently Cameron and Duce offer the 'four voices' approach as a particular methodological response to the connection of theory and practice without it being linked specifically to theological action research.⁴² My intention is to follow this development and utilise the 'four voices' methodology, in distinction from the fully developed pattern of theological action research, in an approach that engages with organisational studies, action-research and ethnography, but remains distinct from all of them.

The connections with organisational studies are particularly around the practice of researching one's own organisation. Coghlan and Brannick describe this as research conducted by a 'complete member' of an organisation, 'contextually embedded' and immersed in what Donald Schon has famously described as the messy and confusing 'swampy lowlands' of practice.⁴³ What is particularly helpful about this approach is the recognition of the unique role that the practitioner-researcher plays, the shadow side of any organisation that an 'insider' may have access to beyond the public view, and the constant need for reflexivity within the researcher who naturally and rightly brings his or her own understandings and commitment to the project.

Yet the evaluative nature of my research project, which is understood to be a key aspect of researching one's own organisation,⁴⁴ is limited. For example, I will explore the intentions of the Baptist colleges in encouraging a particular pastoral imagination rather than evaluate their success, the research is not related

⁴⁰ Cameron *et al.*, *Talking about God*, pp. 53-5.

⁴¹ Cameron *et al.*, *Talking About God*, p. 51.

⁴² Cameron and Duce, *Researching Practice*, p. xxx.

⁴³ Coghlan and Brannick, *Doing Action Research*, pp. 4, 121.

⁴⁴ Fox *et al.*, *Doing Practitioner Research*, pp. 66ff.

directly to a process of organisational change⁴⁵ and there is no official 'reporting' procedure in place.⁴⁶ Rather than researching one's own organisation as such, I understand myself, as someone engaged in college and denomination life, to be researching my own practice. My role and the structure of Regent's gives me significant responsibility and freedom within a collaborative framework, and the denomination is a loose network rather than one clear organisation; research into questions of power and structure within the denomination lies beyond the scope of this thesis, although the research will be attuned to issues of power and structure that are integral to my own work

There are also clearly important connections to the overall wider methodology of action-research. Reason and Bradbury define action research as:

a participatory, democratic process, concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes ... [which] seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern.⁴⁷

Key features of action research methodology are a collaborative / participative approach throughout, a particular cyclic methodology, a problem solving approach to the contemporary situation and a prior commitment to action.⁴⁸ What is particularly helpful about action research methodology is this commitment to action as the outcome of research, its insistence on participation and an inherent concern for human flourishing. Fox *et al.* also develop their understanding of practitioner-research as an aspect of action research⁴⁹ which

⁴⁵ Coghlan and Brannick, for example, stress strongly the place of transformational change as a goal of the research, *Doing Action Research*, pp. 121-130.

⁴⁶ Fox *et al.*, *Doing Practitioner Research*, p. 74.

⁴⁷ Peter Reason and Hilary Bradbury, *Handbook of Action Research: Participative Inquiry and Practice* (London: Sage, 2001), p. 1.

⁴⁸ See also Coghlan and Brannick, *Doing Action Research*, Mary Brydon-Miller *et al.*, 'Why Action Research?', *Action Research* 1.1 (2003), pp. 9-28, Ralph Norman, 'Theological Foundations of Action Research for Learning and Teaching', *Discourse*, 8.1 (2011), pp. 114-140.

⁴⁹ Fox *et al.*, *Doing Practitioner Research*, p. 48.

connects with the aspect of action-research Coghlan and Brannick describe as self-study of the researcher.⁵⁰

While sharing something of the praxis-oriented approach within a socially constructed epistemology, and sharing the desire for the extrapolation of useful⁵¹ knowledge, fundamental aspects of the action research methodology make it inappropriate for this research. My concern is not to solve a problem but to reflect on practice in a more open way;⁵² it is not to make a particular action more effective or to seek large-scale transformational change of the organisation; it is not to build on behavioural science and the cyclic model which tests action and reflects on it as part of the process.

Thirdly, the thesis also sits within the broader scope of ethnography, particularly through the practice of participant observation. Mary Clark Moschella describes ethnography as immersing oneself in the communal and ritual life of a group in order to gain an understanding of this group in which participant observation is the hallmark.⁵³ The principal aim of ethnography is to lead to greater knowledge and more nuanced understanding,⁵⁴ particularly of the shared patterns of values, behaviour, beliefs, and language of an entire social group,⁵⁵ although it may also lead to challenge and change. Key features of ethnographic research include observation, conversation, making field notes, qualitative interviews and the collecting of relevant documents.⁵⁶

Important aspects of ethnography within my research will be my own position as a participant observer, already immersed, as a 'complete member', in the life of

⁵⁰ Coghlan and Brannick, *Doing Action Research*, p. 126.

⁵¹ Coghlan and Brannick, *Doing Action Research*, p. 16.

⁵² In this it shares the concerns of Cooperrider and Srivasta, 'Appreciative Inquiry', that action research's prior commitment to fixing what is broken could be better expanded to include what the authors describe, more positively, as 'appreciative enquiry'.

⁵³ Moschella, 'Ethnography', p. 225.

⁵⁴ Moschella, 'Ethnography' p. 226.

⁵⁵ John W Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches* 2nd edition (London: Sage, 2007), p. 68.

⁵⁶ Alan Bryman, *Social Research Methods* 4th edition (Oxford: OUP, 2012), p. 432.

Regent's Park College and the collaborative partnerships within the Baptist Union and observing as an 'outsider' the other Baptist colleges and a number of other non-Baptist institutions. I seek to engage with the lived world of others within the empirical research, and gain a greater understanding of the entire social world of British Baptist preparation for ministry. I am also concerned with the establishment of new knowledge, which, as Cooperrider and Srivasta, suggest, has a 'generative capacity',⁵⁷ therefore shaping my own practice, the practice of the college, and potentially the wider denomination. Yet, as a piece of practitioner-research that begins with the desire to reflect and develop my own practice, and with the limited immersion possible in the other Baptist colleges there are other aspects which cannot be understood in straightforward ethnographic terms.

In addition, the four voices that Cameron *et al.* propose will be developed in different ways. I will conduct empirical research to explore the operant and espoused practice of the preparation of the Baptist colleges. I assume here that no theological college will be neutral in respect to the future ministry of its ordinands but through a theological vision, shared history and the particular practices of its tutors it will be seeking to encourage a particular pastoral imagination in its students. A first key issue centres on the nature of the pastoral imagination that each of the Baptist colleges is seeking to develop. This is formalised into the first of two empirical research questions: 'what is the pastoral imagination which the Baptist colleges individually are seeking to inculcate in their students?'

Historically and anecdotally it has been the distinctive approaches of the five Baptist colleges in England and Wales that have been stressed, and perhaps exaggerated, although a more recent perspective suggests that these differences have largely disappeared in reality if not in perception.⁵⁸ Exploring, then, what

⁵⁷ David L Cooperrider and Suresh Srivasta, 'Appreciative Inquiry in Organisational Life', *Research in Organisational Change and Development* 1(1987), p. 130. The authors are seeking to rehabilitate the place of theory in social transformation.

⁵⁸ So suggests Goodliff, *Ministry*, p. 45.

has been a contentious issue and building on pastoral imaginations discerned in the individual colleges, a further research area will be to identify elements within the practice of the five Baptist colleges that may be considered cooperative and aspects of a wider structuring structure. Therefore, I will compare the operant and espoused voices of the other Baptist colleges with a sample of non-Baptist institutions. The second empirical research question will then be: 'is there a particular combination of practices and elements of a pastoral imagination that could be considered distinctly Baptist?'

Although Cameron *et al.* refer to a normative voice, in reality the nature of Baptist ecclesiology, with its strongly congregational basis, means that any attempt to offer such a normative voice on ecclesiological issues is immediately challenged and undermined by this very ecclesiology. This, therefore, requires some refinement of these 'four voices'. The one document that can be claimed to have *normative* status is the relatively brief Declaration of Principle reworked into something like its present form in 1904 and with the content settled in 1938.⁵⁹ This is the document that all churches, ministers, colleges and associations agree to and affirm in joining the Baptist Union.

In addition to the Declaration of Principle, there are other documents of significance which might be better described as a *representative* voice rather than a *normative* one, in that they have emerged from a wider process of reflection and deliberation within the Baptist Union and so have some sense of shared ownership, but *represent* a wider, collective view rather than being one which can be imposed on others in any normative sense. Particularly significant among these documents, for our purposes, are papers and reports that have been agreed by the Baptist Union Council. Such reports might be categorised into two historical groups: those between 1948 and 1969, which Goodliff describes as 'the foundational documents'⁶⁰ and then a later grouping from 1994

⁵⁹ A very minor change in 2009 altered Holy Ghost to Holy Spirit.

⁶⁰ Goodliff in fact describes the reports from 1957 to 1969 as 'foundation documents', and considers the 1948 report as part of an ecumenical imperative, but his narrative both connects these strongly together and recognizes the more settled gap between 1969 and 1994. See *Ministry*, pp. 30 and 34.

onwards, which were mostly received by the Baptist Union Council rather than accepted. In addition to these more formal documents the views of a variety of Baptist theologians, including Goodliff, himself, as leader of the Ministries Team of the Baptist Union of Great Britain until 2014, offer personal *representative* voices into the debate as those who have engaged in wide discussion and shaped on-going practice within the wider Union.

Set in Higher Education contexts the Baptist colleges themselves are deeply engaged with the formal voice of the academy, but among a variety of contributions to the formal voice drawn into the theological discussion, I will make particular use of the contribution of Paul Fiddes, one of the most significant contemporary Baptist theologians, both to the more specific discussions about ministry and also to a wider and deeper theology of the practice of preparation.

The key conversation, then, between the 'four voices' will be between the theology embedded in the operant practices of the Baptist colleges and a sample of other institutions, the theology these colleges and institutions espouse, the normative *and* representative developments within the Baptist Union and the formal voice in the theology of Paul Fiddes.

My aim, then, is to engage in a piece of practitioner-research that reflects on my own practice, is reflexive throughout, draws on the wider understanding of participant observation and especially on my existing participation in Regent's Park College and the wider Baptist Union, and utilises with some refinement, the 'four voices' developed by Cameron *et al.*, with the aim that both theology and practice are transformed. Within this research I am seeking to establish new knowledge with the expectation that the 'generative capacity' contained in such knowledge will impact my own work, the work of the college and also the life of the wider denomination. As such, it sits between the more action-orientated approaches of action research and the more knowledge based approaches of ethnography.

The Thesis

My aim in this thesis is to explore the practice of ministry, the practice of the preparation for ministry and the connection between them through the concept of the pastoral imagination. I turn first, in chapter 2, to the understanding of the practice of ministry generally, but not exclusively, by British Baptists through a literature review of key contemporary Baptist writers and important Baptist reports and papers. This will also offer something of a representative voice in the debate on the practice of ministry. I focus particularly on the current debate about understanding ministry through the paradigm of leadership, suggesting that 'ministry' and 'leadership' each convey a distinct *habitus* and offering my own preference for the *habitus* of ministry.

I then turn, in chapter 3, to the understanding of the practice of preparation for ministry exploring the historical development of practice and language in Baptist settings and also in the wider ecumenical context again through a literature review which also draws on both significant unpublished papers and the documents of QiFP, once again establishing something of a representative voice. I conclude by contrasting 'training' and 'formation', offering my own preference for the *habitus* of formation.

In chapter 4 I build on the overall methodology outlined above and set out the particular methods employed in the empirical research that explored the operant and espoused practice of the five Baptist colleges in England and Wales together with five non-Baptist institutions. Chapters 5 and 6 offer the findings from this research and discuss the practice of preparation for ministry embedded in the different institutions, and in particular I suggest the pastoral imagination that emerges from both espoused and operant theologies.

In chapter 7 I bring together theology and practice through a conversation between the espoused and operant voices of chapters 5 and 6 with the representative voice from chapters 2 and 3, in dialogue with the formal voice found particularly in the work of Paul Fiddes, a key Baptist theologian who has written extensively both on Baptist ecclesiology and the doctrine of God. Out of

this conversation, and particularly drawing on Fiddes' work, I offer a new contribution to theory in the form of a distinct, trinitarian theology of formation for Baptists that combines the current representative position with the empirical research and is firmly rooted in a doctrine of God.

In chapter 8 I also combine practice and theology by reflecting on my own practice, exploring the nature of the practice of preparation and a proposed pastoral imagination preparation at Regent's Park College, and considering some of the implications for my own practice. Finally in chapter 9 I conclude by suggesting the contribution to knowledge that the thesis has offered and asking some brief refinements to the theoretical understanding of practice and the pastoral imagination set out in this opening chapter.

2.

The Practice of Ministry

What should be done – now, today, first? This is the question with which we began. The way any minister responds to this challenge will be shaped contextually but also by the particular minister's underlying understanding of the role of ministry, which may be partly implicit and partly explicit, partly structured and partly creative, and this complex but fundamental underlying sense of ministry I have described as the 'pastoral imagination'.

This question about what should be done is set here within the framework of ordained ministry. Baptists over the centuries have, like most denominations, always recognised the particular calling and role of some – the few – within the wider church – the many.⁶¹ The theology, language and practice connected to this exercising of ministry has changed, but the Baptist tradition has clearly affirmed both the ministry of all in the local gathered congregation and the particular ministry of some, whom it has often described, amongst other terms, as 'ministers'. In recent decades, as part of the continual debate about ministry, two contrasting issues have been particularly dominant, both in the literature and also in my experience of working with ministerial students: the practice of ministry as leadership and the understanding of ministry as sacramental. Both have significant impact on the way a minister responds to the challenge of beginning a ministry.

In this chapter I will explore how this changing practice of ministry among Baptists has been understood by exploring the *representative* voice as set out in Baptist documents and expressed in a range of contemporary Baptist authors and then will begin to set out my own preference for a pastoral imagination built on the concept of ministry rather than that of leadership.

⁶¹ See Goodliff, *Ministry*, pp. 24-5.

A Dialectical Model

Over the last 70 years reports within the Baptist Union have continually stressed that ordained ministry is always appointed by Christ, from above, yet is called by the local church, from below.⁶² In 1994 the Baptist Union Council received a report from the Doctrine and Worship Committee, entitled *Forms of Ministry Among Baptists: Towards an Understanding of Spiritual Leadership*, which summarised and reiterated an understanding of ministry endorsed through various Council debates earlier in the twentieth century. The thrust of this understanding is that the ministry of ‘the few’, who are set-aside in a particular way is rooted both in the ministry of God in Christ and emerges from the ministry of the whole church.

Ministry is exercised by the whole Church as the Body of Christ, which thus ‘preaches the Word, celebrates the sacraments, feeds the flock and ministers to the world’; but some individuals are called to spiritual leadership, exercising forms of ministry in a representative way on behalf of the whole.⁶³

I suggest that this might best be described as the dialectical model of ministry in which the ministry exercised by all and by the few stands in creative tension. Further it may justly be termed the *representative* position of the Baptist Union in the twentieth century, finding support both historically and in contemporary writers as well as, significantly, in documents agreed by the Baptist Union Council, and, as such, stands against both the wider catholic tradition, rooted in the historic episcopate and the patterns of newer churches, dependent on the role of apostles.

A leading voice in articulating, expounding and developing such a view of ministry is that of Paul Fiddes. One of Fiddes’ first published works was devoted

⁶² Goodliff, *Ministry*, p. 47.

⁶³ *Forms of Ministry Among Baptists: Towards an Understanding of Spiritual Leadership*. p. 17, quoting *The Baptist Doctrine of the Church* in Roger Hayden (ed.) *Baptist Union Documents 1948-77*, pp. 8 and 89.

to this issue,⁶⁴ and he has returned to it often since; Fiddes was also a long-serving member of the Doctrine and Worship Committee of the Baptist Union Council, its Moderator in the early 1990s during a time of particularly contested thinking and a significant contributor to various of the key reports. Fiddes argues for this careful balance between the whole gathered church and those it sets aside for ordained ministry, and contrasts this with, on the one hand a hierarchical model, found in both secular and some church contexts, and on the other hand an employment model, in which the minister is simply at the behest of the congregation.⁶⁵ Rather he argues for ‘the offering of trust’ in which ‘oversight flows to and fro between the personal and the communal, since the responsibility for ‘watching over’ the church belongs both to *all* the members gathered in church meeting and to the pastor.’⁶⁶ Fiddes considers this dual oversight to be rooted theologically in the overall rule of Christ, and finds support for such a position in the seventeenth century confessions.⁶⁷

David Bebbington also describes how early Baptists saw themselves as the whole gathered church sharing in the kingly ministry of Christ, as well as his priestly ministry, so that it is the believers together who ‘have all power both of the kingdom and priesthood immediately from Christ’,⁶⁸ while also practising ‘a form of high churchmanship’ which gave an important role to elected leaders to feed, govern and serve.⁶⁹ Bebbington explains how early Baptists like Smyth and Helwys disagreed with the radical puritans who entrusted authority, and the keys

⁶⁴ Paul S. Fiddes, *A Leading Question: The Structure and Authority of Leadership in the Local Church* (London: Baptist Union, 1983).

⁶⁵ Paul S. Fiddes, *Tracks and Traces: Baptist Identity in Church and Theology* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2003) pp. 84-87.

⁶⁶ Fiddes, *Tracks and Traces*, p. 87.

⁶⁷ Fiddes, *Tracks and Traces*, pp. 87-91.

⁶⁸ David Bebbington, ‘An Historical Overview of Leadership in a Scottish Baptist Context’ in Andrew Rollinson (ed.), *Transforming Leadership: Essays Exploring Leadership in a Baptist Context* (Baptist Union of Scotland, downloaded from <http://www.scottishbaptist.org.uk/sites/default/files/files/TransformingLeadership.pdf>), p. 15. quoting John Smyth, *Differences of the Churches of the Separation in Works*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1915), p. 315.

⁶⁹ Bebbington, ‘Historical Overview’, p. 16.

of the kingdom, to the church officers alone, instead holding in tension both the high place of the whole gathered church as the spouse of Christ who rules with her husband and the significant responsibility of the few called to serve and govern.⁷⁰ He then suggests that in the nineteenth century the more positive influence of the Brethren and the more negative response to the Oxford Movement led to a lower estimate of the place of the few in this dialectical understanding.⁷¹

Nigel Wright seeks a similar kind of balance in his suggestion of ministry as 'inclusive representation' in a 'deliberately irenic'⁷² paper first written when he became the then moderator of the Doctrine and Worship Committee towards the end of the 1990s.⁷³ Wright wanted to uphold a view of ministry which did not exclude the ministry of the many, which some saw as under threat, but still sought a particular role for ordained ministers.⁷⁴ In Goodliff's survey of the current understanding of Baptist ministers 95.9% would use representative language to describe their role, by far the greatest consensus,⁷⁵ and Haymes, Gouldbourne and Cross reaffirm that 'there can be no ministerial function apart from the church, for there is no ministry apart from the church, and the ministry does not exist over against the church.'⁷⁶

This particular position has been further refined in two ways. First, while the importance of having particular individuals set aside in some ministry role has

⁷⁰ Bebbington, 'Historical Overview', pp. 15-16.

⁷¹ Bebbington, 'Historical Overview', pp. 16-7.

⁷² Goodliff, *Ministry*, p. 55.

⁷³ Nigel Wright, 'Ministry: Towards a Consensus', (Doctrine and Worship Committee, BUGB, 2000/13) reworked as 'Inclusive Representation; Towards a Doctrine of Christian Ministry', *Baptist Quarterly* 39.4 (Oct 2001), pp. 159-74.

⁷⁴ Robert Ellis suggests that Fiddes and Wright reach a similar position from different starting points, Wright drawing more explicitly on New Testament texts and Fiddes building on a doctrine of the Trinity, in 'The Leadership of Some...? Baptist Ministers as Leaders?' in Pieter J. Lalleman, *Challenging to Change: Discussions with a Radical Baptist Theologian* (London: Spurgeon's College, 2009), p. 77.

⁷⁵ Goodliff, *Ministry*, p. 182.

⁷⁶ Brian Haymes, Ruth Gouldbourne and Anthony Cross, *On Being the Church: Revisioning Baptist Identity* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2008), p. 156.

been stressed, such individuals have generally been seen to be for the *bene esse* of the local church but not essential. So Bebbington suggests that for the first Particular Baptists a local church would not be complete without both ‘officers’ and members; the influential, and deeply ecumenical, Ernest Payne in the middle of the twentieth century argued for the necessity of ministers;⁷⁷ and Nigel Wright offers one of the strongest contemporary arguments, that ‘they are almost necessary but not quite absolutely’.⁷⁸ But the more general position among British Baptists affirms the importance of elected lay-leaders and the significant contribution of ministers, but does not make these theologically necessary. A Baptist church with just members is still a church. This shapes the dialectical model in a particular way.

Secondly, Fiddes argues that one of the distinctives of those individuals who exercise *episkope* is that they represent the wider universal church bringing more of the length and breadth of the universal church to the local congregation.

We should resist the view that the minister’s authority is simply delegated from the local church meeting. The minister has been commissioned by Christ, and he or she comes into the local situation from the life of the church world wide.⁷⁹

Whatever language is used to describe other officers in the local church, and the traditional term deacon has in many places been supplemented or replaced by elders or leaders, Fiddes argues for a clear distinction, although not in rank or status, between those ‘lay’ leaders of a congregation and those ordained to the office of minister, which again could be described in representative terms, this time representing the universal church.

This concept of a Baptist minister being a minister of the universal church while practising ministry in a local congregation becomes established, after a number

⁷⁷ See Ernest Payne, *Fellowship of Believers: Baptist Thought and Practice Yesterday and Today* (London: Carey Kingsgate, 1952) p. 39.

⁷⁸ Nigel Wright, *Free Church, Free State: The Positive Baptist Vision* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2005) pp. 173.

⁷⁹ Fiddes, *Tracks and Traces*, p. 95.

of historical disputes, in these foundational documents in the middle part of the twentieth century. In the eighteenth century debate developed between Daniel Turner and John Gill, with the former arguing that a minister was a minister of the church in general and so able, occasionally, to preach and preside in other churches, while Gill strictly limited the practice of ministry to the one local church.⁸⁰ In the twentieth century Arthur Dakin, then Principal at Bristol Baptist College, published an account of ministry which argued strongly for restricting those called Baptist ministers to those serving in the pastorate of a local church, who should be re-ordained on moving pastorate, and thus for excluding others from such a title, including College Principals! Ernest Payne, who had recently moved from Regent's Park College to become the Baptist Union's General Secretary, responded with a more universal vision of ministry.⁸¹ By 1969 and the report on *Ministry Tomorrow*, while there was still a strong privileging of pastoral ministry in a local congregation, there was clear support for an understanding of the practice of ministry which among other things involved representing the universal church. This also shapes the dialectical model, but in a different and contrasting way.

While there is clear evidence that this dialectical model establishes itself as the *representative* voice, it is Fiddes who expresses this tension most clearly and creatively, stressing how this is a distinctively Baptist approach. Clearly there are significant ecumenical connections, both in the way that the ministry of 'the few' is described through the Reformed understanding of the ministry of Word and Sacrament, which is prevalent among leading Baptist thinkers during these decades,⁸² and in the way that the language of the priesthood of all believers has been developed more widely among other Protestant churches, in which the 'laity' have found a much more significant place.⁸³ Yet ultimately this dialectical

⁸⁰ See Goodliff, *Ministry*, p. 25.

⁸¹ See Earnest Payne, *Fellowship of Believers: Baptist Thought and Practice Yesterday and Today* (London: Carey Kingsgate, 1944).

⁸² Goodliff, *Ministry*, pp. 30-33, 46-7.

⁸³ So, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (Geneva: WCC, 1982) stresses the role of the whole people of God. See also the report from the Faith and Order Advisory Group, *The Mission and Ministry of*

model, in which the few and the many share in the task and practice of oversight, remains distinct.

The liberty of local churches ... is not based on a human view of autonomy or independence, or in selfish individualism, but in the sense of being under the direct rule of Christ who relativizes other rules. This liberating rule of Christ is the foundation of what makes for the distinctive 'feel' of Baptist congregational life, which allows for spiritual oversight (episkope) both by the *whole* congregation gathered together in church meeting, and by the minister(s) called to lead the congregation. This oscillating movement between corporate and individual oversight is difficult to pin down, and can lead to disasters when it begins to swing widely from one side to another, but is based in taking the rule of Christ seriously.⁸⁴

A Leadership Challenge

Although there have always been differing understandings of ministry among Baptists, this dialectical approach has been particularly challenged in recent years by an increasing stress on leadership. The foundational documents and the wider tradition does not at all resist the language of leadership to describe this oversight, for ministers 'are appointed to the tasks of leadership and this leadership is to be recognised by the church',⁸⁵ but they understand it in this particular dialectical way.

There has been a very small minority voice which has argued that Baptist ministers should not be described as leaders at all, for leadership resides only in

the Whole Church: Biblical, Theological and Contemporary Perspectives (London: Archbishop's Council, 2007).

⁸⁴ Paul S. Fiddes, *Doing Theology in a Baptist Way* (Oxford: Whitley, 2000), p. 22; See also Ellis, 'The leadership of some'.

⁸⁵ *Doctrine of the Ministry* (London: Baptist Union, 1961) p. 13. In Goodliff's research 80% agreed with the statement that ministry is 'the role of pastoral leadership'.

the gathered congregation, rather than in this dialectical model.⁸⁶ Yet in recent decades the most significant challenge has come from the positive adoption of leadership language,⁸⁷ at times as a deliberate attempt to rebut this rejection of ordained ministers as leaders.⁸⁸ A survey of the more recent popular literature that pertains to ministry, suggests that the language and concept of 'leadership' has become increasingly dominant, especially within the evangelical wing of the church.⁸⁹ Among Baptists this leadership challenge arises from a complex blending of theology and cultural influence, but three key factors are significant.

Internal Baptist Reflections

One challenge comes from internal Baptist reflections on the nature of ministry and church life. A key proponent of this among British Baptists has been Paul Beasley-Murray, whose most extended contributions came in the 1990s, but who still exercises influence today.⁹⁰ Beasley-Murray's starting point is that he believes he is writing in the context of a crisis in church and so a crisis in ministry.⁹¹ This crisis is experienced both as an encroaching clericalism and also as the wider adoption of an employment model resulting in a significant number of ministers being regarded simply as paid workers at the behest of the church's

⁸⁶ For example, Ted Hale, 'Down with Leaders', *The Baptist Ministers' Journal* 276 (October, 2001).

⁸⁷ Ellis is amongst those who suggest that we are now in a 'leadership paradigm', in 'The Leadership of Some' p. 71.

⁸⁸ See the correspondence between Hale and Beasley-Murray, *Baptist Times* between February 18th and March 18th 2011.

⁸⁹ For wider discussions of the developing of leadership thinking see, for example, Robert Banks and Bernice M. Ledbetter, *Reviewing Leadership: A Christian Evaluation of Current Approaches* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2004); Malcolm Grundy, *What's New in Church Leadership? Creative Responses to the Changing Pattern of Church Life* (London: Canterbury Press, 2007); Michael Quicke, *360-degree Leadership: Preaching to Transform Congregations* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2006).

⁹⁰ Paul Beasley-Murray, *Dynamic Leadership* (Eastbourne: Marc, 1991); 'The Meaning and Practice of Ordination' in Paul Beasley-Murray (ed.), *Anyone for Ordination?* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1995). Beasley-Murray has also been Chair of Ministry Today and the newly formed College of Baptist Ministers. He has recently published the e-book *Living Out The Call* (2015) in which many of these themes are re-emphasised.

⁹¹ Beasley- Murray, *A Call to Excellence*, pp. 1-5; Beasley-Murray recognizes that he draws mainly from examples in the USA to support his point.

every whim,⁹² although it seems that Beasley-Murray is drawing on anecdotal evidence for his description of the underlying issues. His response is to think differently about ministry. The language of ministry should be reserved for the whole church, to protect the Baptist understanding of the priesthood of all believers,⁹³ while the language of leadership should be used for those who are set apart, thus avoiding a particular clerical approach to the role of the few.⁹⁴ All are called to ministry but only some are called to leadership.⁹⁵

Beginning with the three New Testament lists of gifts, Beasley-Murray claims they all included leadership (although he recognises that the language is not explicit), and so concludes that it is 'fair to argue that this concept of leadership is the distinguishing concept between the ordained ministry of the church and the general ministry of the church' and among a plurality of local church leaders the distinctive role of those who are ordained is to be the 'leader of the leaders'.⁹⁶ Ordained ministers serve God, but lead the church and 'no ministry in the church is more important than pastoral leadership'.⁹⁷

This increasing stress on leadership language exemplified by Beasley-Murray is seen in a number of places. Similar language is adopted by Nigel Wright who has the subheading 'the leadership of some and the ministry of all' in the chapter 'Ministers and Members' in *Free Church, Free State*,⁹⁸ although in an exposition which overall holds on more strongly to the dialectical model. Michael Quicke, another former Principal at Spurgeon's has drawn significantly on leadership

⁹² Beasley-Murray, *Dynamic Leadership*, p. 11.

⁹³ Beasley-Murray, *Anyone for Ordination*, pp. 164-5.

⁹⁴ It is perhaps a little ironic then that Beasley-Murray referred to himself as Senior Minister, and is chair of two organisations for ministers!

⁹⁵ A colleague at Spurgeon's College, Mike Nicholls, writes in a similar vein, that the term minister should be abandoned, and Union structures be renamed, for example, to the Leadership Recognition Committee; 'Ministry – Mean What You Say', *Baptist Ministers' Journal*, 230 (April, 1990), p. 14.

⁹⁶ Beasley-Murray, *Anyone for Ordination*, pp. 162-3.

⁹⁷ Beasley-Murray, *Anyone for Ordination*, p. 172.

⁹⁸ Nigel Wright, *Free Church, Free State*, p. 160.

ideas in *360-degree Leadership*,⁹⁹ and the work of Bill Allen and Viv Thomas,¹⁰⁰ who have both taught at Spurgeon's, and Derek Tidball¹⁰¹ former Principal at London School of Theology, has also been influential. Clive Burnard in a recent doctoral thesis, which examined the ministry of a former BUGB General Secretary, suggests that Baptist views on congregational governance can exist in a healthy tension with a biblical view of leadership,¹⁰² but his overall stress is significantly on the role of the few as leaders.

Most passionately Brian Winslade argues for a different kind of relationship between ministers and members within a Baptist ecclesiological polity.¹⁰³ Winslade, a New Zealand Baptist minister who has also worked in Australia and USA but whose thinking has begun to influence British Baptists,¹⁰⁴ insists that he is not 'advocating an alternative to Baptist congregationalism' but seeks 'new ways of expressing congregationalism in the emerging twenty-first century that will better position Baptist churches for the primary task of mission'.¹⁰⁵ It is this missionary focus rather than a particular process of decision-making and discernment which, for Winslade, is at the heart of Baptist ecclesiology.¹⁰⁶ Offering a particular, and somewhat polemic, view of the development of early

⁹⁹ Michael Quick, *360-degree Leadership*.

¹⁰⁰ Bill Allen, *Pathways to leadership: The provision of education for training for leadership in the ordained ministry*, (University of Wales PhD, 1999): see also, 'Pathways to Leadership' in John Adair and John Nelson (eds.), *Creative Church Leadership* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2004); Viv Thomas, *Future Leader* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1999).

¹⁰¹ Derek Tidball, *Builders and Fools: Leadership the Bible Way* (Nottingham: IVP, 1999); *Ministry by the Book* (Nottingham: Apollos, 2008).

¹⁰² Clive Burnard, 'Transformational Servant Leadership as Exemplified in the Ministry of the Reverend Doctor David R Coffey' (unpublished DMin Thesis for University of Wales, April 2014), p. 66.

¹⁰³ Brian Winslade, *A New Kind of Baptist Church: Reframing Congregational Government for the 21st Century* (Macquarrie Park, NSW: Morling Press, 2010) and reworked from his doctoral thesis 'Prioritising Mission Within a Baptist Polity', (Unpublished Thesis, Bethel University: Bethel St. Paul, Minnesota, March 2007).

¹⁰⁴ See the review of his book by Paul Beasley-Murray, *Baptist Times*, February 18th 2011, his 'Let's not be Afraid to Learn Lessons from New Zealand', *Ministry Today*, 53 (2011) and *Living Out The Call*, and in the doctoral work of Clive Burnard.

¹⁰⁵ Winslade, *A New Kind*, p. 6.

¹⁰⁶ Winslade, *A New Kind*, pp. 4-5.

Baptist practices as deeply shaped by the rise of parliamentary democracy – despite the fact that in the early seventeenth century such a small percentage of the male population had a vote suggesting that Baptist practice was rather more counter-cultural¹⁰⁷ – and a rather stereotypical portrayal of current Baptist church life as trapped in the intricacies of parliamentary democracy according to ‘Robert’s Rules’, Baptist ecclesiological practices are seen as both culturally bound and no longer fit for purpose.

But most significant is Winslade’s insistence that while congregational governance protects the local congregation from outside authority,

the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers can be a subtle belief in the leadership of none or, worse still, the leadership of all. Congregational government does not imply congregational leadership and congregational management.¹⁰⁸

Governance is the responsibility of the few, the elders, and Winslade advocates a contemporary secular model that explicitly equates the elders of a church to the company board and the senior minister as the CEO.¹⁰⁹

While these various authors can be carefully nuanced about the way the few exercise leadership, in terms of being persuasive but not demanding, servant-hearted not over-bearing,¹¹⁰ there has been a tendency that reaches its climax in Winslade to radically recast the relationship between the few and the many. Here there is no mutual sharing of oversight but the clear, if compassionate, leadership of the few. This leadership challenge brings with it two further consequences.

¹⁰⁷ Stephen Holmes, *Baptist Theology* (London: T&T Clark, 2012), p. 102, notes that the 1832 Reform Act increased suffrage to 10% of the male population!

¹⁰⁸ Winslade, *A New Kind*, pp. 4-5.

¹⁰⁹ Winslade, *A New Kind*, ch 10.

¹¹⁰ Tidball is typical in stressing that leadership that ‘is hierarchical, authoritarian, abusive, singular or exalts personality ... would not be legitimate.’ *Ministry by the Book*, p. 238.

First, it provides impetus towards a more functional view of ministry. While earlier foundational documents tended to eschew a very ontological view of ministry, a strongly functional view is also a distinct and significant development. Such a view of ministry can also be seen as integrated in a classic evangelical position, which 'does not particularly require a separated ministry so much as an enthusiastic laity'.¹¹¹

Second, while rejecting a clerical paradigm that reserves certain aspects of ministry to those who are ordained, it substitutes this for a leadership paradigm with a strongly hierarchical basis that divides a congregation into leaders and followers,¹¹² so that the majority of the church are then followers of the few or even single leader. This language offers a very different lens through which to view the relationship between the few and the many, in which a sense of shared discipleship and ministry is replaced by this dominant leadership structure. In order to avoid the employment of clerical model writers such as Beasley-Murray and Winslade have moved towards a more strongly hierarchical one that tends to set service and leadership apart.¹¹³

External Ecclesial Pressures

Influence on Baptist understandings also comes from other denominations and churches, whether that be from the evangelical wing of the Church of England, the Restorationist stream in the United Kingdom, or the teaching and literature of American churches. Within this there is the clear tendency, that reflects cultural leadership studies, to treat the question of leadership as a discrete and independent subject, with its own theological rationale, further shaping the communal ways that leadership is being understood across denominations. The result of this has been the sharp separation of the study of leadership from ecclesiology. The recent book by British Baptist Michael Quicke, *360-degree*

¹¹¹ Goodliff, *Ministry*, p. 55.

¹¹² See, for example, Quicke, M, *360-degree Leadership*, pp. 46 and 70, quoting approvingly from John MacGregor Burns and Warren Wilhelm.

¹¹³ Beasley-Murray, *Dynamic Leadership*, especially pp. 32-6.

Leadership, is typical in considering leadership as expressed in a variety of recent American publications from a generic standpoint, rather than a clear ecclesiological one.¹¹⁴

One of the significant influences on many local Baptist churches is the material from Willow Creek, an independent evangelical church near Chicago, and its Senior Pastor Bill Hybels. Hybels' book, *Courageous Leadership*, typical of the genre, offers biblical and theological rationales but with no ecclesiological grounding. Hybels' central thesis is the importance of the few in the life of the church and the failure of this to be sufficiently recognised. So he insists that 'all over the world, people have never been led... I believe that the great tragedy of the church in our time has been its failure to recognise the importance of the spiritual gift of leadership.'¹¹⁵ One area, for example, where this influence is expressed is that of choosing other officers or leaders. Whereas in the dialectical model and in more traditional Baptist patterns the responsibility lies firmly with the congregation who both nominate and elect, there seems a growing desire among ministers to be able to pick their team to complement their own gifts or for 'the few' to take full responsibility for discerning who else should join this group.¹¹⁶

It may be that the dislocation of leadership from ecclesiology is part of a wider post-denominational movement that seeks to locate faith, church and ministry in biblical patterns that seek to be culturally relevant but end up being acontextual. The reality is of course that there is an operant ecclesiology at work in all churches, embedded in structures and practices even when that is neither acknowledged nor explicitly developed. Willow Creek, for example, does have an explicit ecclesiology as an independent church with a governing Board of Elders, which the church understands to be the Biblical model,¹¹⁷ rather than based on congregational government. The development of its practices of leadership and

¹¹⁴ Quicke, *360-degree Leadership*: There is a hint, pp. 58-9, of ecclesiology in advocating corporate discernment.

¹¹⁵ Bill Hybels, *Courageous Leadership*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009) p. 67.

¹¹⁶ See Hybels, *Courageous Leadership*, pp. 80-6 for advocacy of such a policy.

¹¹⁷ See, <http://www.willowcreek.org/governance>, accessed 12th May 2014.

ministry has happened in this very specific ecclesial setting, and so to adopt certain practices involves bringing with them implicit ecclesial understandings.

It is significant that Winslade openly admits, in a way that reflects the practice of others, that larger Baptist churches develop what is in effect a nuanced 'presbyterian' form of governance, although he still seeks to argue that in doing so the church still upholds a congregational polity.¹¹⁸ Such a construction of membership and ministry, influenced by presbyterian, episcopal or apostolic polities, challenges and moves away from the dialectical model which is rooted in an explicit and foundational congregational ecclesiology, the heart of a representative Baptist understanding of the church.

Wider Cultural Developments

The third, though interconnected, area of influence comes from wider cultural developments, both in more general patterns of modernity and post-modernity, and in the more specific development of leadership studies. It is, of course, too simplistic to categorise this as a divide between the secular and the Christian, as both are often woven together. Robert Greenleaf's influential development of 'servant leadership', for example, emerged from his role within a 'secular' company, AT&T, but he writes both as a CEO and shaped by his Christian faith.

While it is often recognised that it is important that wider cultural practices are not simply and uncritically baptised into church structures, it is questionable whether such caution has always been adopted. In particular, as suggested earlier, leadership theory has tended to see itself as a discrete subject which can be developed either from first principles or as reflection on practice and experience, creating a significant disconnect with an ecclesologically rooted understanding of ministerial oversight.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ Winslade, *A New Kind*, ch 12. It is only presbyterian in that the local church is governed by elders rather than being part of a wider denominational presbyterian structure.

¹¹⁹ See Banks and Ledbetter, *Reviewing Leadership*, ch. 4; for an early and incisive caution against reading modern leadership patterns into the ministry of Jesus see Henry Cadbury, *The Peril of Modernising Jesus* (London: SPCK, 1962).

Among contemporary Baptist thinkers, Paul Goodliff in particular has drawn on the MacIntyrean analysis, which has categorised modernity in terms of therapist and manager, to explore the way that developments within late modernity and post-modernity have significantly shaped the understanding and practice of ministry.¹²⁰ Seeing the way that these trends identified by MacIntyre have shaped the church, Goodliff concludes that an older tradition of attentiveness to God has been 'replaced by the activist, the managerial, the administrative tasks of running an organisation called the church.'¹²¹ Goodliff suggests that the combination of evangelical activism and the 'false god of visible success' has significantly contributed to contemporary understandings, which has led to judging ministerial practice by an instrumental effectiveness, expressed as 'the ability to lead and manage a local church in pursuit of growth in numbers, and it must be acknowledged, financial support.'¹²² This effectiveness, he suggests, may be coined in terms of church growth or ministry as leadership,¹²³ and his conclusion is that it has resulted in a particular kind of malaise.¹²⁴

The leadership challenge is thus both widespread and significant. Whereas few Baptist ministers and churches have adopted this approach to the extent that Winslade encourages, my own experience, confirmed by Goodliff, points to the widespread influence of these ideas in the shaping of much contemporary practice.

¹²⁰ MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, pp. 29-30, suggests that modern western culture is shaped by three 'characters', which stand as metaphors for cultural developments and emphases: the therapist, manager and rich aesthete.

¹²¹ Goodliff, *Ministry*, p. 132.

¹²² Goodliff, *Ministry*, p. 139.

¹²³ Goodliff, *Ministry*, p. 140.

¹²⁴ For further theological critique of the stress on management see Stephen Pattison, *The Faith of the Managers* (London: Cassell, 1997) and 'Management and Pastoral Theology' in James Woodward and Stephen Pattison, *The Blackwell Reader in Pastoral and Practical Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000) pp. 283-93.

A Sacramental Turn

Yet there is also evidence of more recent changes in a different direction and in a significant move away from a more functional understanding of ministry, which Goodliff describes as a 'sacramental turn'.¹²⁵ Goodliff's work offers both a narrative and systematic account of the twists and turns which led to an increasing suspicion of the more traditional language of 'Word and Sacrament' in the mid-twentieth century with a pull towards a more functional direction, and then, under the influence of a small number of significant college tutors and principals, a move towards embracing some kind of sacramental understanding of ministry.

His empirical research suggests that 56.8% of Baptist ministers consider ministry to be a sacramental office and 76.3% consider their ordination to the Christian ministry to be shared with other traditions, thus somehow representing the universal church.¹²⁶ Looking more closely at the data Goodliff concludes that there is strong evidence of a change from the 1950s to 2000s with a clear trend towards an increasingly sacramental understanding of ministry, although the group which showed the most functional characteristics and least sacramental ones were those who were at college in the 1980s, which further reinforces the sense of the functional turn before the sacramental one.¹²⁷ Goodliff's own current assessment is that among Baptist ministers there would be 'a centre of gravity around about the notion of a representative individual and some kind of light sacramentalism'.¹²⁸

Goodliff offers a number of reasons that have influenced this change, including the development of a more open evangelicalism, the influence of charismatic and ecumenical partners and a more general adoption of post-liberal theology mediated again by college tutors.¹²⁹ In particular Goodliff identifies the work of

¹²⁵ Goodliff, *Ministry*, pp. 60-1.

¹²⁶ Goodliff, *Ministry*, p. 182.

¹²⁷ Goodliff, *Ministry*, pp. 86.

¹²⁸ Interview with PG, 17th July 2013, p. 5.

¹²⁹ Goodliff, *Ministry*, ch 7.

Eugene Peterson as having a significant impact in calling ministers away from 'modernist and functionalist concerns for managing the church'¹³⁰ to an older and deeper view of ministry, and he concludes that 'the resurgence of sacramentalism might be seen as a reaction to an overly managed church and a too functional view of ministry.'¹³¹

As always there is a spectrum of views with John Colwell, a tutor at Spurgeon's from 1994 to 2009, arguing for the strongest sacramental position of an indelible ordination,¹³² with milder versions adopted by Paul Fiddes,¹³³ Nigel Wright¹³⁴ and Stephen Holmes.¹³⁵ As the majority position moves along the spectrum from more functional to more sacramental this may have consequences for the way the dialectical model or leadership paradigm are worked out, although further research will be required. It is certainly true that Baptist writers who would embrace and encourage a more sacramental understanding have, to varying degrees,¹³⁶ argued for a more dialectical model of ministry. Goodliff in addition suggests that a functional approach has proved inadequate in the task of forming ministerial virtues as part of the preparation for ministry.¹³⁷ It would seem that the leadership model, while being adopted and espoused by some, is increasingly perceived as inadequate by others and is being challenged by a more sacramental view of ministry.

¹³⁰ Goodliff, *Ministry*, p. 130.

¹³¹ Goodliff, *Ministry*, p. 149.

¹³² John Colwell, *Promise and Presence: An Exploration of Sacramental Theology* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2005) p. 222.

¹³³ Fides, *Tracks and Traces*, pp. 101-2.

¹³⁴ Wright, *Free Church, Free State*, pp. 169-71.

¹³⁵ Stephen Holmes, 'Towards a Baptist Theology of Ordained Ministry' in Anthony R. Cross and Philip E. Thompson (eds) *Baptist Sacramentalism* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2003) pp. 258-62.

¹³⁶ So Colwell, Fiddes, Holmes, Goodliff and Ellis. Wright is perhaps the most willing to embrace aspects of the leadership paradigm.

¹³⁷ Goodliff, *Ministry*, p. 142.

Ministers or Leaders?

There is not in the literature any simple contrast between ministry and leadership and the vast majority of Baptist writers adopt some understanding of the way ordained ministers exercise leadership. Whether ordained ministers should have a role in pastoral leadership is not the significant question. What is at stake is the way that the 'few' and the 'many' are related in contemporary Baptist church life, and whether the representative position within the Baptist Union in the twentieth century, which I have described as the dialectical model, will be modified or replaced.

Recognising that there is a spectrum of thinking and not just two distinct views, we may still suggest that 'ministry' and 'leadership' each offer quite distinct pastoral imaginations. They are both ways of understanding practice that are structured, cooperative and creative, seeking to be rooted in God's coming in Christ, sharing with others in an approach to ministry that persists over time, as well as being contextual and giving space for individual creative improvisation. They are both shaped by the interplay between the practice, theology and language used. As such then ministry and leadership each develop their own *habitus*, which continues to structure and shape those who indwell them.

In etymological derivation, 'minister' derives from the word for servant, based on the Latin translation of the Greek word '*diakonos*'. Theology embedded in the language of ministers and deacons suggests all are servants. 'Leader', at least its most common secular terminology, is not used in the New Testament for those set apart in the Christian Church.¹³⁸ On the other hand, in contemporary use, while some hear the word 'minister' in an overly clerical sense, others may hear the word 'leader' in an overly authoritarian way, and we noted earlier the tendency to rename those traditionally called 'deacons' as elders or leaders. Language is not neutral and will contribute to the overall *habitus* that is developed.

¹³⁸ 'Archon' is used 36 times in the New Testament but never to describe those in the church.

Regarding the detail of the practice of ministry, the Baptist Union reports during the twentieth century focus their understanding on preaching the Word, presiding at the sacraments, pastoral oversight and pastoral care. Such an understanding has developed cooperatively over time but has roots deep in Baptist history, with early Baptists focusing on feeding the flock, preaching and praying, and with administering the sacraments and pastoral oversight being added in time.¹³⁹ Most recently, with the interesting addition of the outward focussed emphasis on evangelism, it has been expressed as:

The essence of such ministry will always be that of 'bearing the Word', that is to say, proclaiming, teaching and interpreting for today the Word of God spoken in Jesus Christ and witnessed to in the Holy Scriptures. This Word is to be applied to all people through pastoral care, evangelism or teaching by those who are instructed in the beliefs and practices of the Christian faith and able to be reliable guides.¹⁴⁰

This contrasts with the much greater stress on strategy and management which has accompanied a more functional stress on leadership. This is not to deny the place of the practices listed above but Beasley-Murray's categorisation, for example, of ordained ministers as 'leaders of leaders' positions ministry more within this management category even though preaching and pastoral care remain central tasks.¹⁴¹

The pastoral imagination, then, within the ministry *habitus* understands ministerial practice more strongly around 'bearing the Word' in worship, preaching and pastoral care. This paradigm intentionally uses the same language

¹³⁹ Goodliff, *Ministry*, p. 26.

¹⁴⁰ Baptist Union of Great Britain Doctrine and Worship Committee, 'An agreed statement on ministry', January 2002.

¹⁴¹ A recent Oxford MTh thesis by Gareth Garland, 'Anyone Can? An Exploration of Ordained Baptist Ministry as one of Word and Sacrament', (Unpublished MTh thesis, Oxford University, 2014), seeks to correlate the practice of ministry of a sample of Baptist ministers with their more functional or more sacramental espoused understanding, and his findings suggest a greater emphasis on management and delegating among the more functional group and a greater emphasis on pastoral care and incarnational mission amongst the more sacramental group.

of the few and the many to stress that these practices are fundamentally shared and prefers the historical language rooted in '*diakonos*', recognising that as meanings work in complex ways, there may be no obvious title that clearly conveys the radical servant nature at the root of the words. Using language with this dual focus may run certain risks, of being misinterpreted so that the 'obvious' Baptist theology of the priesthood and ministry of all becomes lost,¹⁴² but holds onto the clear dialectical model.

The pastoral imagination that emerges from the leadership *habitus*, on the other hand, contrasts the calling of the few and the many, categorising some as leaders and the rest as followers, and while wanting to hold on to the epithet of servant, it is the noun 'leader', qualified by the adjective 'servant', that remains dominant. Oversight is not shared between the few and the many but resides firmly in the few, together with a much greater emphasis on the task of management.

As a structuring structure a pastoral imagination provides a fundamental framework within which creative ministry develops. We can expect our opening question – 'what do I do?' – to be answered quite differently within a pastoral imagination shaped by either 'leadership' or 'ministry'.

Reflecting on my own ministry over twenty-five years, the way I answered this question in my own practice – to visit and listen to people rather than to engage in the management and organisation of others – and my own developing espoused theology, I approach the question firmly committed to a pastoral imagination based on the *habitus* of ministry rather than leadership, believing this to be the *representative* Baptist position, and recognising this as a significant structuring structure in my ministry. I approach the practice of ministry instinctively looking for the dialectical model to be at the heart of the pastoral imagination that I bring with me to my role in the practice of preparation.

¹⁴² This is Beasley-Murray's claim, 'The Ministry of All', p. 158, although one hopes that what is obvious is remembered!

3.

The Practice of Preparation

‘What should I do?’ I have suggested in the previous chapter that the pastoral imagination revealed in the answer to this question would be very different if shaped more around the *habitus* of ministry or the *habitus* of leadership. A number of factors will be involved in shaping the way an individual minister responds to this question, but Goodliff’s research has clearly shown that preparation for ministry in Baptist colleges has shaped the understanding of ministry of students, and so we can expect that the pastoral imagination or *habitus* of a new minister will have been partly shaped by their experience of the process of preparation.

There has been this preparation for ministry for a considerable period of church history,¹⁴³ and for the majority of Baptist history too.¹⁴⁴ The majority of new ministers settling in Baptist churches and entering into the Register of Nationally Accredited Ministers of the Baptist Union have been prepared in one of the five colleges in membership with the Baptist Union, although, within the freedom of a local Baptist church to call its own minister, three other routes exist.¹⁴⁵ Some exercise ministry having studied in a variety of other contexts, principally non-denominational Bible Colleges. Such people can apply to the Residential Selection Conference to be considered for acceptance onto the Register. Secondly, in 2006, the London Baptist Association launched a Portfolio Route, designed for those already exercising ministry, who needed further preparation for ministry if they were to be accredited, but for whom patterns and programmes of formation in the context of one of the Baptist colleges were not deemed appropriate. Currently this is limited to London, and is focused on those

¹⁴³ See Mayes, *Spirituality*, chs 1 and 2 for a survey of such preparation through Christian history.

¹⁴⁴ Bristol Baptist College, the oldest Baptist ministerial college in the world, was founded in 1679, actually beginning in 1720.

¹⁴⁵ Figures in the *Ignite* report suggest that 72.6% of current active ministers were prepared for ministry in a BUGB Baptist College.

ministering in a variety of ethnic churches although other Associations have expressed interest in the scheme. Thirdly, it is possible to apply to transfer into the Register from a different Baptist Union or a different denomination recognised by the Baptist Union of Great Britain. This range of pathways into Baptist ministry is likely to lead to varying pastoral imaginations, although exploring this particular issue is beyond the scope of this research project. Instead, I will explore here the work of the five Baptist colleges as they seek to prepare new ministers.

There have been significant changes to the practice of the Baptist colleges over the last thirty years, in line with developments more widely in the preparation for ordinands. In this chapter I will explore how the practice of preparation for ministry among Baptists has developed historically, including contemporary initiatives, through engaging with the limited published literature, important unpublished papers from those involved in the Baptist colleges, and the influence of patterns of ecumenical inspection. I will then begin to set out my own preference for an understanding of the practice of the preparation for ministry as formation.

Diverse Terminology

Up until this point I have consistently used the language of 'preparation' to describe this practice, looking for a more neutral and descriptive word in the midst of linguistic and pedagogical diversity. In reality varied language has been and is used to describe the process of preparation, language which again has been both contested and which carries embedded theology. Alongside wider terms such as growth, learning or development, the three key descriptors have been education, training and formation.

'Theological education' has been particularly connected with the cognitive dimension of learning expressed in terms of knowledge and understanding. The connection of theology with academic education goes back to the very origins of

universities, and while it has been a broader term, there was a tendency, certainly within the twentieth century, to equate theological education with preparing ordained ministers. Building on this strongly cognitive understanding, one unnamed Baptist College Principal from the 1960s is reported to have said ‘train a man’s mind and the rest will take care of itself.’¹⁴⁶ While educational philosophy itself has developed and there is a broader and more foundational epistemology in many contemporary accounts, which argue that education engages the whole person in all their dimensions and relationships,¹⁴⁷ understanding the term to derive from the Latin ‘*educere*’,¹⁴⁸ to lead or draw out, the language of education still tends to retain its cognitive stress.

‘Ministerial training’ became the most common description of this process of preparation in the latter half of the twentieth century. The 1960s and 1970s in particular saw a reaction to the perceived heavily academic bias of the colleges and this led to the development of intentional courses in pastoral studies, which explored more practical aspects of ministry. Corresponding to a greater stress on the development of skills in other aspects of education, this became a significant feature of the way the practice of preparation was rethought during these decades. It is language which is still widely used and for Baptists it is embedded in the denomination description of those in the process of preparation as ‘Ministers-in-Training’.

The language of ‘formation’ has its roots in the Catholic tradition in the mid-eighteenth century, particularly in French religious orders, where formation is occasionally applied specifically to the development of ordinands in spirituality

¹⁴⁶ Quoted by Michael Taylor, ‘The Free Churches Selection and Training’ in *Christian World*, (Jan 1979). Michael Taylor also comments that it was not that long ago in the 1950s that remarkably little practical training was given, just degrees in theology, /2nd lecture on ‘The Theology of Spiritual Formation’ at 14th Atlantic Seminar in Theological Education’, 1982 (private papers in Angus Library), p. 3.

¹⁴⁷ See, for example, Jeff Astley, *The Philosophy of Christian Religious Education* (Birmingham, Alabama: Religious Education press, 1994) pp. 38-9.

¹⁴⁸ As opposed to the Latin ‘*educare*’ meaning to bring up or train.

and holiness,¹⁴⁹ and was first used in an ecumenical context in the 1965 World Council of Churches *Gazzada Statement* on 'laity formation'.¹⁵⁰ It then begins to make its mark in the Protestant churches in the late 1970s, and is the language which has become increasingly significant, indeed dominant in some circles.¹⁵¹ The language of formation allows for a stress on both the place of spirituality and character in the practice of preparation and also on the way that various diverse aspects are integrated together.

Reflecting on all three linguistic descriptions a recent Baptist Union document states:

Ministers are not simply 'trained' in skills required, or 'educated' in the academic discipline of theology and its many sub-disciplines. While both are certainly major components of ministerial courses, there is a third area, one concerned with character and spirituality, ethics and human relationships, that is essential to ministry. When these aspects are added to the development of skills and the acquisition of knowledge and understanding, there is a complex mix that is generally referred to as 'formation.'¹⁵²

But the above quote raises a number of important questions about the use of language. First, it proposes three aspects to the overall preparation, two of which are labelled as training and education, and linked to practical skills and cognitive knowledge, but the third is left untitled. Sometimes, as we will see, this third area is described as 'formation', so that the whole process is one of training, education and formation. But confusion arises because all three terms

¹⁴⁹ Mayes, *Spirituality*, pp. 35-8, who suggests that no research into the origins and development of 'formation' have been published.

¹⁵⁰ Konrad Raiser, 'Fifty years of ecumenical formation: Where are we? Where are we going', *Ecumenical Review*, 48 (1996), p. 440.

¹⁵¹ In addition to Mayes' work see Jeremy Worthen, *Responding to God's Call: Christian Formation Today* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2012) and Angela Shier-Jones (ed.), *The Making of Ministry* (Peterborough: Epworth, 2008).

¹⁵² *Patterns of Ministry among Baptists: A Review of The Register of Covenanted Persons Accredited for Ministry*. A Report of the 'Review of the Register Working Group', presented to BUGB Council in November 2010, p. 11.

are also used to describe the whole process as well as particular aspects of it. Second, it suggests that this complex mix is 'generally' referred to as formation, but it remains unclear who is thought generally to use the language in this way, although Baptists would seem to be included. Third, a further unspoken implication is that while this may be contemporary practice it has not always been so, but the document offers no account of how Baptists in particular have reached this point. I offer such an account below.

An Agreed Language? The Emergence of the Formation Paradigm

The origins of a formation paradigm in the eighteenth century Catholic Church are developed in and after Vatican II, with some of the texts referring explicitly to different aspects of formation, and also more generally referring to the development of spirituality as distinct from academic study.¹⁵³ Reflections on the spiritual formation of Catholic ministers in the USA explicitly develops this language,¹⁵⁴ which comes to fruition in the 1992 Papal Encyclical *Pastores Dabo Vobis* from John Paul II. This uses formation language as the dominant paradigm and refers to human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral formation. These have since become the dominant four categories in Catholic thinking.¹⁵⁵

Additional evidence of its roots in Catholicism comes from John Henry Newman in the middle of the nineteenth century, in his lectures in support of a new exclusively Catholic university in Dublin. He brings together the intellectual and spiritual in a university setting in a way that has significant modern resonances. He speaks of the way 'a habit of mind is formed which lasts a life-time'¹⁵⁶ and

¹⁵³ Mayes, *Spirituality*, p. 42.

¹⁵⁴ See Alfred Hughes, *Preparing for Church Ministry. A Practical Guide to Spiritual Formation* (Denville, NJ: Dimension, 1979) and the report of the Task Force of the National Federation of Spiritual Directors Seminary, *Spiritual Formation: Current Issues*, June 1979 referenced in Tilden Edwards Jr, 'Spiritual Formation in Theological Schools: Ferment and Change', *Theological Education* 17 (1980) pp. 1-52.

¹⁵⁵ Mayes, often works with these categories; *Spirituality*, pp. 172-4.

¹⁵⁶ J. H. Newman, Discourse 5 'Knowledge its Own End' in *The Idea of a University* (New York: Image Books, 1959) p. 129.

that a university education quite explicitly concerns the formation of character. Mike Higton summarises Newman's understanding of university education, based on his experience at Oxford and hopes for Dublin, as 'a school of intellectual virtue, forming its students as human beings, citizens and professionals'¹⁵⁷ and as 'formation in counter-cultural intellectual virtue: in patient questioning and the pursuit of coherence or integrity.'¹⁵⁸

Other significant developments come in a number of interconnected and mutually dependent ways. In 1977 the World Council of Churches produced their new journal, *Ministerial Formation*.¹⁵⁹ It attempts no definitive definition, yet an early edition suggested this was a holistic process involving: intellectual resourcefulness, awareness of God and sensitivity to real human problems, the assimilation of appropriate skills, enrichment in exemplary spirituality and a commitment to congregations and people.¹⁶⁰

Around the same time in the USA the Association of Theological Schools responded to the increasing sense of the paucity of spirituality in theological colleges both in the formal curriculum and in the wide life of students and staff with a two year research project that culminated in the 1980 report, 'Spiritual Formation in Theological Schools: Ferment and Change'.¹⁶¹ It offered its own definition of 'spiritual formation':

Anything can contribute to our spiritual formation, including the critical tradition of belief we normally call academic theological education and the personal identity/role development involved in pastoral formation. But intentional spiritual formation is distinguished from these by its up-front focus on conscious means of cultivating attentiveness to grace, especially to the called out Christ-

¹⁵⁷ Mike Higton, *A Theology of Higher Education* (Oxford: OUP, 2012) p. 80.

¹⁵⁸ Higton, *Theology of Higher Education*, p. 90.

¹⁵⁹ The first edition appeared in January 1978 and it continues to be published.

¹⁶⁰ Aharon Sapsezian, 'Exploring the Nature of Ministerial Formation: An Invitation to Dialogue' in *Ministerial Formation* 5 (Geneva: WCC, 1979) pp. 20-21.

¹⁶¹ Edwards Jr, 'Spiritual Formation'.

nature, in our individual and corporate life.¹⁶²

Such concerns were then taken up in the so-called 'Theological Education Debate' from the early 1980s onwards and, in reaction to contemporary experience that was seen as fragmented and overly cognitive, ways of speaking of the wider process of theological education that drew on formative language were developed. So, for example, responding to the critique and challenge set by Edward Farley, Richard Neuhaus edited papers from a symposium under the title *Theological Education and Moral Formation*.¹⁶³ A similar contemporary parallel is the work of James Smith, who argues more generally that Christian colleges and universities in the United States have been too concerned about information rather than formation, and that education needs to be more deeply formative.¹⁶⁴

In 1987, the Church of England produced a significant report on the future of Ministry, *Education for the Church's Ministry*, often known as ACCM 22,¹⁶⁵ which begins their tentative use of formation language. This is consolidated in subsequent years by the reports, *Theology in Practice* and *Integration and Assessment*.¹⁶⁶ Likewise, the Methodists discussed the preparation for ordained ministry in some depth through their report, *The Making of Ministry*,¹⁶⁷ which leads to formation language becoming the dominant language adopted at the Methodist Conference in 1999. A major further development was the consultation and reflection process that produced *Formation for Ministry within a Learning Church* in the Church of England, which sees formation as the 'overarching concept that integrates the person, understanding and

¹⁶² Edwards Jr, 'Spiritual Formation', p.10.

¹⁶³ Richard Neuhaus, *Theological Education and Moral Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992).

¹⁶⁴ James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom* (Grand Rapids, MI; Baker, 2009), p. 221.

¹⁶⁵ Advisory Council for the Church's Ministry, *Education for the Church's Ministry* (London: Church House Publishing, 1987).

¹⁶⁶ *Theology in Practice* (London: Church House Publishing, 1998) and *Integration and Assessment: the Report of an ABM Working Party on Educational Practice* (London: Church House Publishing, 1992).

¹⁶⁷ Ministerial Training Policy Working Group, *The Making of Ministry* (Peterborough: Methodist Publishing House, 1996).

competence' and not just one aspect of the whole.¹⁶⁸ The developing nature of the process can be seen in the way the second and final version of the report uses formation language to a much greater degree than the first published drafts.¹⁶⁹ Frances Ward connects this development within Anglican documents with the rejection of a particular, 'banking' model of education and the adoption of new perspectives from adult education and life-long learning.¹⁷⁰

Yet formation language has not been universally adopted within the Church of England. The most recent review is entitled *Resourcing Theological Education*, and the website suggests this will review initial ministerial education and different training pathways. The language of theological education has a long history and, by avoiding ministerial language, may appear more inclusive. Formation language is present in the new review but appears to be more downplayed and is not developed further.¹⁷¹

Baptists appear to be early adopters of this language, although Baptist ecclesiology means it is harder to follow the development through a normative voice of denominational documents.¹⁷² In fact there is a very intriguing reference to the work of Hugh Evans, Principal at Bristol in the later part of the eighteenth century as 'forming them able, evangelical, lively, zealous ministers of the Gospel.'¹⁷³ More recently, the most significant figure was Michael Taylor, an initial member of the WCC PTE Commission, a regular contributor to *Ministerial Formation* and whose previous study at Union Theological Seminary, New York

¹⁶⁸ Archbishops' Council, *Formation for Ministry within a Learning Church* (London: Church House Publishing, 2003), p. 29.

¹⁶⁹ For a fuller account of these developments see Mayes, *Spirituality*, chs 3 and 4.

¹⁷⁰ Frances Ward, *Lifelong Learning: Theological Education and Supervision* (London: SCM, 2005), p. 73.

¹⁷¹ http://www.ministrydevelopment.org.uk/resourcing_ministerial_education, accessed 12.2.2015. The terms of reference, found at <https://www.churchofengland.org/media/2029479/rme%20terms%20of%20reference.pdf>, use education four times, training three times and formation once!

¹⁷² It is perhaps for this reason that Mayes' quite extensive review of formation language makes no mention at all of Baptists!

¹⁷³ Quoted in Chris Ellis, 'Being a Minister: Spirituality and the Pastor' in Pieter Lalleman (ed.), *Challenging to Change*, p. 57.

connects him to the American context. Taylor, it seems, becomes the conduit from international and ecumenical developments to the wider Baptist denomination in the UK.

He writes in 1979 that one of the perplexities that remained was 'how to form persons and not just train minds or develop skills'.¹⁷⁴ In 1982, in a series of lectures, Taylor explores the different uses of the word 'formation' and the scope of its meaning, asserting his preference for the term personal formation (spiritual formation seeming to separate out the spiritual from the rest of life), by which he means the entirety of the process of preparing for ministry as an aspect of the on-going formation of the people of God. Yet he concedes that 'we do, in my world, pay lip-service to formation in the more all-embracing sense to which I have referred.'¹⁷⁵ In 1983 Taylor gave a paper to the Baptist Colleges' Staffs' Conference on 'Ministerial Formation', and the following year's conference followed the theme of 'Formation of Persons for Ministry' and 'Education as the Formation of Persons'.¹⁷⁶

The adoption of formation language was not and is not total. Articles in the magazine of the Baptist Ministers' Fellowship, *The Journal*, in the 1990s reflect on developments in ministerial training with no mention at all of formation,¹⁷⁷ and in my own experience the preparation in college is much more commonly described as ministerial training. But there have been significant changes in the practice of preparation that have moved away from the more dominant cognitive model to one which embraces this 'complex mix'. This has often been represented by the language of 'head, heart and hands' and 'knowing, being, doing' or the image of three interlocking circles (figure 1 below), from the work

¹⁷⁴ Michael Taylor, 'The Free Churches Selection and Training' in *Christian World* (Jan, 1979).

¹⁷⁵ Taylor, 1st lecture, 14th Atlantic Seminar in Theological Education, p. 6. A letter from Brian (presumably Haymes, a tutor at Northern) to Taylor as Principal in 1982 reveals the debate among staff there about the language, with the language of training still dominating but with a growing belief in the language and idea of formation. (private papers in the Angus Library).

¹⁷⁶ Minutes of The Baptist Colleges Staffs Conference (the Angus library).

¹⁷⁷ See, Mike Nicholls, 'An Evaluation of Church-based Training', 234 (April 1991); John Weaver, 'Developing Patterns of Ministerial Training', 250 (Jan, 1995).

of Bill Allen when he was tutor at Spurgeon's College.¹⁷⁸ This interconnection between knowledge, character and skills corresponds to the cognitive, normative and practical 'apprenticeships' identified in clerical and other professional education by Foster *et al.*,¹⁷⁹ and, to some degree, to the cognitive, affective and volitional aspects of education.¹⁸⁰

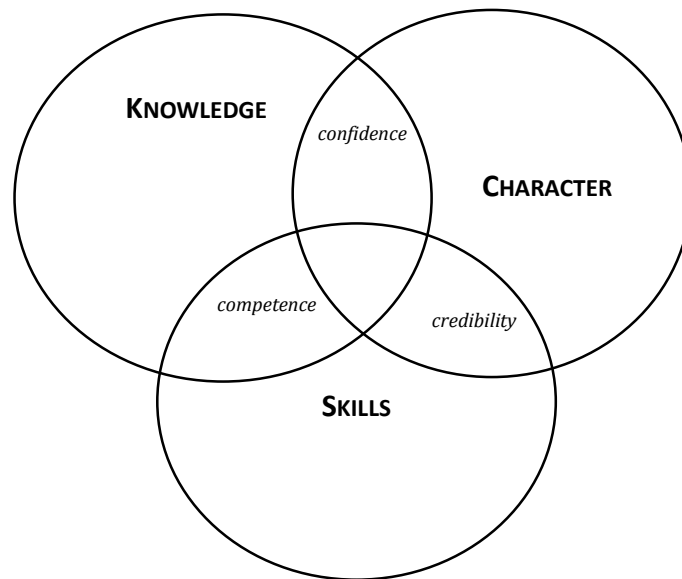


Figure 1: Venn diagram of integrating preparation for ministry

Although the last twenty-five years have seen a move into the formation paradigm there is not yet a clearly and universally accepted use of language. Three important aspects stand out.

First, the word 'formation' itself, as we have seen, is used in two contrasting ways: it may indicate a distinct third area of preparation which particularly centres around issues of spirituality and character, but it may also indicate the whole process of preparation of which education and training and the development of character are aspects. So the recent paper 'Ministry and

¹⁷⁸ The origins of this model are in Bill Allen's PhD, 'Pathways to leadership'.

¹⁷⁹ Foster *et al.*, *Educating Clergy*, pp. 406.

¹⁸⁰ See Astley, 'Dimensions of Christian Education', in Jeff Astley, *Learning in the Way: Research and Reflection on Adult Christian Education* (Leominster: Gracewing, 2000) pp. 35-7.

Mission: Direction of Travel' as part of the Common Awards process is typical of much documentation in that it uses formation in both these ways.¹⁸¹

Secondly, the words education, training and formation are, at times, all used interchangeably to describe the whole process of preparation. A document on restructuring the Union's Accredited list in 1998 can refer simply to ministerial formation without any further explanation,¹⁸² assuming that such language would be understood. Yet other Union documents and articles by college staff from the same period will refer simply to ministerial training,¹⁸³ and the report on the colleges and the Union can use education, training and formation, seemingly interchangeably, and although it explicitly proposes a holistic practice of preparation, training language significantly dominates.¹⁸⁴

Within this diversity it is also possible to trace a common way that language has developed in all of the colleges. For example, earlier versions of student handbooks predominantly use training language, which has been gradually changed to place more emphasis on formation.¹⁸⁵ In a survey of the websites of the British Baptist colleges in the summer of 2012, there was very little mention of ministerial formation and the majority of colleges simply referred here to ministerial training, despite other significant internal documents stressing formation. It may be that there is some sense that 'training' communicates more easily with those outside of the colleges, or simply that websites tend to lag behind.

Thirdly, as well as confusion and variety there has also been some resistance or reluctance to use the language of formation. The URC nationally has been much

¹⁸¹ Church of England Ministry Division, 'Ministry and Mission: Direction of Travel' (July, 2012) pp. 3-4.

¹⁸² BUGB, 'Towards a New List'.

¹⁸³ See, for example, Nigel Wright, 'Ministry: Towards a Consensus' a paper for the BUGB Doctrine and Worship Committee, 2000.

¹⁸⁴ *Partners Together: The Colleges and the Rest of the Baptist Union of Great Britain – Report of the Union/Colleges Partnership Task Group* (BUGB, August 1998).

¹⁸⁵ Mayes concludes that there has been the same gradual change in language in Anglican colleges.

more cautious of formation language, considering it to suggest an elitist and ontological understanding of ministry.¹⁸⁶ This alerts us to the theological presuppositions about the nature of ministry behind developments in formation and the important link between the practice of preparation and the pastoral imaginations that it shapes. Certainly the language of formation with its person centred and holistic stress fits easily with an understanding of ministry as ‘being’ as well as ‘doing’. For some, the fact that the language has emerged from the Catholic tradition has not been helpful.¹⁸⁷ Others, while embracing the holistic concept, are concerned that formation may too easily be seen as ‘conformation’ to a predetermined pattern, suggesting too great a centralisation by ecclesiastical authorities,¹⁸⁸ or that a college can do more in three years than is possible.¹⁸⁹ Foster *et al.*, prefer to use ‘clergy education’ as the overarching description, aware of the limits of ‘formation’ language, but formation still plays a key role, as they suggest it does in any professional identity.¹⁹⁰

This confusion of language is exemplified in the work of the ecumenical QiFP. Since 1990 colleges and courses within the Church of England were subject to detailed internal inspections overseen by the House of Bishops. Increasingly this became ecumenical and in 2007 QiFP was established, also involving the Methodist Church, the URC and the Baptist Union. QiFP has produced significant literature in the form of questionnaires and notes, which have developed over time,¹⁹¹ and drawing on ‘best practice’ in other areas, particularly the OFSTED

¹⁸⁶ Mayes, *Spirituality*, p. 64.

¹⁸⁷ Mayes, *Spirituality*, p. 171: it is not ‘evangelical’ language.

¹⁸⁸ Interview with RK, p. 5.

¹⁸⁹ Interview B, pp. 13-4.

¹⁹⁰ Foster, *Educating Clergy*, p. 100.

¹⁹¹ There are iterations from 2008, 2010 and 2012. The 2010 and 2012 documents bring together two previously separate components, the curriculum validation process and the periodic external review. The former has its origins in *Education for the Church’s Ministry* and its format was developed in the 1990s and articulated in *‘Mission and Ministry: The Churches’ Validation Framework for Theological Education*, (1999) and 2nd edition (2003.) The later has a long history, although the form of the questionnaire as it is in the QiFP documents takes shape in the 2002 inspection handbook.

framework, the QiFP material influences the wider field of the practice of preparation both linguistically and conceptually.

While there is an explicit stress on the inspected institution's own understanding of the mission of God and the resulting ministry of the church, the QiFP framework is, of course, not neutral. The fact that certain questions are asked in a certain order already deeply embeds theological assumptions and the language of the questions will shape answers given. But the over-riding impression is that there is no clear and explicit understanding of formation as a shared basis and the documentation shows signs typical of the wider confusion.

First, as elsewhere, the language of education, training and formation are at times used interchangeably, to refer to the whole process of preparation and distinct aspects of it. There are clear developments within the iterations: the title of the 2010 handbook, *Quality Assurance and Enhancement in Ministerial Education* is revised in 2012 to *Quality Assurance and Enhancement in Ministerial Formation*, although its subtitle is still 'a guide for inspectors and training institutions'. Even with the subtle change in title, it is the language of 'training' that is most commonly used in both the 2010 and 2012 versions, followed by formation and then education.¹⁹²

Secondly, the documentation can refer to 'ministerial, personal and spiritual formation'¹⁹³ with no discussion of any differences in these terms, or simply to 'ministerial formation'. Conceptually, the QiFP documentation suggests a practice of preparation that aims at being holistic, in that it seeks to incorporate a number of distinctive elements that draw together Foster *et al.*'s categorisation of the cognitive, normative and practical, but does so in a way that is not entirely consistent.

¹⁹² The 2010 version uses training 117x, formation 76x (including 31 references to QiFP) and education 58x. In the 2012 version training is used 62x (plus a further 10 references to the training of inspectors for their role), formation is used 48x (of which 7 refer to QiFP) and education is used 36x (plus a further two references to a candidate's previous education).

¹⁹³ This is the title for Section F in the documentation.

Despite the confusion, it is nevertheless clear that there has been a trajectory over the last forty years of an emerging formation paradigm and that there is some truth in Mayes' conclusion that 'this is not just a change in semantics, but represents the embracing of a new dynamic model of learning that resonates with ancient concepts and yet challenges some inherited patterns of training.'¹⁹⁴ From a Baptist perspective, Chris Ellis echoes this conclusion while recognising that to describe formation language as a culture shift is still contested.¹⁹⁵

However, what is 'new' about this model must be stated with clarity and care. In previous patterns of preparation when predominantly young men studied for university degrees in residential communities, there would have been a similar underlying concern for Christian maturity and deep spirituality, and some expectation that living in the semi-monastic community of a seminary centred upon the chapel, refectory and library would naturally shape students.¹⁹⁶ The experience of students may well have been that there was little, if any, explicit mention of character or spirituality, but David Russell, in 1971, speaks of 'the need to wrestle with truth and be prepared to pay the price of distress and doubt in order to possess it',¹⁹⁷ ideas which would be considered deeply formational. Norman Moon reflects on the purpose of the College at Bristol, and expresses what would have been the common view:

The primary task of a theological College is not merely to teach, certainly not to indoctrinate, nor merely to train in techniques, but to help students grow as persons, Christian men and women. For such a purpose the residential community is most valuable in itself.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁴ Mayes, *Spirituality*, p. 72.

¹⁹⁵ Chris Ellis, 'Being a Minister', p. 57.

¹⁹⁶ Taylor, 1st lecture, 14th Atlantic Seminar in Theological Education, p. 7: 'having acknowledged this, in my tradition at least, we tend to leave it to look after itself. Great faith is often put in the college community... being forced to live with other students in training, having to maintain good relations with them, 'knocking spots' off each other, smoothing rough corners, sharing the times of doubt and faith, giving and receiving in fellowship with a common aim, these are the dynamic realities which can be trusted to mould raw material into suitable characters for ordination.'

¹⁹⁷ David Russell, 'The College and its Future', (papers in Angus Library), p. 4.

¹⁹⁸ Norman Moon, *Education for Ministry*, (Bristol: Bristol Baptist College, 1979), p. 98.

But the development of the formation paradigm offers two advantages. First it offers the possibility of a shared language which makes explicit what has often been assumed but left unsaid. Secondly it offers a model for connecting together a variety of aspects of the practice of preparation that often remained distinct and separate.

A Shared Practice: Developments in the British Baptist Colleges

There has been little published reflection by Baptists on the practice of preparation. However, the decision to move to a peer review process prompted not only practical discussion but also theological reflection on our shared practice, with a paper, which I drafted, entitled *Ministerial Formation in the British Baptist Colleges: A Commitment to Shared Practice*, agreed by the Baptist Colleges' Partnership.

The possibility of such an agreed document itself points to a significant degree of shared practice and understanding, which we may also describe as structured, collaborative and creative. It is collaborative not only as this document has been explicitly developed together, but the whole way that the preparation for ministry has developed over time has been shaped by interaction between the colleges. It is structured both in terms of the way that the practice of preparation has persisted and developed historically, but also in the way more recently that documents drawn up together have become the structuring reality of preparation for ministry. Yet within this structuring and collaborative pattern there is significant space for creative development. This cooperative and structuring practice of ministerial formation among Baptists has developed over time weaving together a number of distinct aspects.¹⁹⁹ Six such aspects are particularly significant all of which contribute to the kind of pastoral imaginations Baptist colleges are seeking to develop in their students.

¹⁹⁹ For a more detailed exploration of these historical developments see my 'How Did We End Up Here? Theological Education as Ministerial Formation in the British Baptist Colleges', *Baptist Quarterly* 46. 2 (April, 2015), pp. 69–97.

University Validated Courses

Central to the practice of preparation is an academic course in theology, either with the college being a constituent part of a university or as a validated partner. The Baptist Union requires that all those who are accredited have studied theology at least to level 5.²⁰⁰ While this is clearly the contemporary shared practice, historically there have been two quite distinct strands of thought.

An emphasis on academic education has been a long-standing tradition among Baptists. The founding of Bristol Baptist College by Edward Terrill's gift deed witnesses to this desire to provide for the education of young men for ministry by someone 'well skilled in the tongues of Hebrew and Greek',²⁰¹ and Paul Ballard traces the general impetus back to the seventeenth century and the puritan demand for an educated clergy.²⁰² This trajectory developed as the various colleges established greater university connections. Baptist colleges were significantly involved in the early years of the new universities in London, Bristol, Manchester and Cardiff and even Spurgeon's College, which under Spurgeon himself had been very cautious about formally recognised education, began considering a possible affiliation with London University in 1902, which was finalised in the 1930s. David Russell, General Secretary of the Baptist Union and a former college Principal, summed up the role of the colleges to produce mature men and women of God as:

among other things this will mean the creation of an educated and cultured ministry. This has been characteristic of our Baptist theological education in the past and I hope it will continue to be ...

²⁰⁰ See Chris Ellis and Malcolm Goodspeed, 'Towards a New List: Proposals for the Restructuring of the List of Accredited Ministers of the BUGB (Draft 5), Doctrine and Worship Committee (July 1998).

²⁰¹ Moon, *Education for Ministry*, p. 1.

²⁰² Paul Ballard, 'The Emergence of Pastoral Studies', in Paul Ballard (ed.), *Foundations of Pastoral Studies and Practical Theology* (Cardiff: University College, 1986), p. 9.

And this in turn will mean the encouragement in our students of an open-minded search for the truth wherever it be found.²⁰³

Yet, intertwined from the beginning was also a strong anti-intellectual strand, for 'to be destitute of learning has been esteemed a good proof of a preacher's mission from above'.²⁰⁴ At the dawn of the twentieth century there were fierce debates in response to the Baptist Union's desire to introduce the concept of ministerial accreditation to safeguard the use of a proposed Sustentation Fund, with the first Ministerial Recognition Committee established in 1896, and the later introduction, or imposition, of the Baptist Union examination.²⁰⁵ Behind this lay both some sense of antagonism between those who had trained at the Baptist colleges and those who had entered ministry through other routes, but also a distinctly mixed view of university education, with those at the heart of the Union's structures being supporters of high levels of education with others concerned that 'ministers empty churches by degrees'!²⁰⁶ Randall suggests that at the turn of the twentieth century only eight per cent of Baptist ministers had been connected with a validated university as opposed to just a college course.²⁰⁷

Some in the early decades of the twentieth century feared that this partnership would open ministers to the influence of liberal and secular theology,²⁰⁸ while others celebrated Baptist involvement in higher education.²⁰⁹ More recently Stephen Pattison writes of a conservative turn in British church life with less interest in the liberal ethos of secular universities, and the financial attraction of

²⁰³ David Russell, 'The College and its Future', an address given on the retirement of L. G. Champion and the inauguration of W. M. S. West as President of Bristol Baptist College, 1971 (personal papers in the Angus Library).

²⁰⁴ Mike Nicholls, *Lights to the World: A History of Spurgeon's College 1856-1992* (Harpenden: Nuprint, 1994) p. 24, quoting St Andrew's Street Church Book, Cambridge, 72A.

²⁰⁵ Ian Randall, *English Baptists of the Twentieth Century* (Didcot: Baptist Historical Society, 2005), pp. 64-8 and Douglas Sparkes, *An Accredited Ministry* (Didcot: Baptist Historical Society, 1996).

²⁰⁶ Randall, *English Baptists*, quoting Ian Sellers (ed.), *Our Heritage: The Baptists of Yorkshire, Lancashire and Cheshire 1647-1987* (Leeds: Yorkshire Baptist Association, 1987), p. 128.

²⁰⁷ Randall, *English Baptists*, p. 64.

²⁰⁸ Randall, *English Baptists*, pp. 133-6.

²⁰⁹ So T. R. Glover's article in *the Times*, March 1932.

cheaper church-centred courses.²¹⁰ Alongside the positive benefits, there has also been some recognition of the constraints of university affiliation over the years, especially those laid on the curriculum by a degree programme.²¹¹

There are also questions about the broader educational philosophy. The founding of University College, London in 1828²¹² on a distinctly utilitarian-based approach to education led the way to the forming of polytechnics which later became universities, and degrees in single, increasingly vocational, subjects. The debate from Locke onwards about the teleological end and utility of education has been settled firmly in recent years by connecting education with employment. The increase in vocational education and training particularly in UK in the 1980s, partly in response to unemployment, and the introduction of NVQs in 1986, with their stress on the development of competence and transferable skills, are clear evidence of this. More recently the government moved responsibility for higher education to the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, although this was reversed in 2016.²¹³ The adoption of the formation paradigm asks searching pedagogical questions to these validating partners about the extent to which practices should be virtue-based or utility driven.

Currently all five Baptist colleges are firmly rooted in higher education settings, which seems significantly symbolic: of a commitment to open critical enquiry; of a belief that good practice of pedagogy and theology can be found in these wider institutions; of an understanding of the relationship between the church and the wider world in which both are incorporated in God's wider purposes.

²¹⁰ Stephen Pattison, 'Research, Resources and Threats' in Ballard (ed.), *Foundations of Pastoral Studies*, pp. 144-5.

²¹¹ As early as 1967 David Russell makes this point in a paper 'Theological Education in the Free Church Tradition: The British Situation' (private papers in the Angus Library).

²¹² Regent's Park was significantly involved in the developing of London University. See R. E. Cooper, *From Stepney to St Giles: The Story of Regent's Park College 1810-1960* (London: Carey Kingsgate, 1960), pp. 77-8.

²¹³ The then Education Secretary, Nicky Morgan, explicitly talking about character, stressing that a narrow focus on passing exams will not produce a well rounded education; *Daily Telegraph*, 16th March 2015.

Practical Theology Methodologies

In the latter half of the twentieth century there was a growing sense of unease that such academic theology was not enough. Cooper's history of Regent's Park College,²¹⁴ addresses to the Baptist World Alliance by David Russell,²¹⁵ then joint Principal at Northern, and letters to the *Baptist Times*²¹⁶ all express the same concern that there was not enough practical training, teaching on spirituality or engagement with experience. Colleges seemed to some to be preparing professors not ministers. Significant changes developed which partly focused on an increased skills-based approach in the curriculum, a move perhaps from an education to a training paradigm, but also shaped by a developing approach to the study of theology itself.

The mid-1960s saw the appointment of lecturers in Pastoral Studies, as an academic discipline in its own right, first in Birmingham and then later in Cardiff and Manchester. Paul Ballard, a Baptist minister, was appointed to teach at Cardiff in 1968, and looking back highlights a number of important contributing factors to these developments, such as the general growth of professional training in areas like administration and social welfare, the professionalization of the clergy, especially in the Church of England, and the influence of practice from other parts of the world, notably liberation theology and the movements of Clinical Pastoral Education and Pastoral Counselling from the United States.²¹⁷

Within wider Baptist circles, an address by David Russell in 1964 already recognised the issues involved, that the more practical side of the courses were 'full of bits and pieces', and also offered clear insight into the necessary way forward.²¹⁸ He rejects the false dichotomy between theoretical and practical knowledge, between becoming professors and mere technicians who are good at

²¹⁴ Cooper, *From Stepney*, pp. 128-31.

²¹⁵ David Russell, 'Practical Training for the Ministry in Britain', 1964 (private papers in Angus Library).

²¹⁶ Gethin Abraham-Williams, *Baptist Times* 13th, 20th, 27th September, 1973.

²¹⁷ Ballard, 'The Emergence of Pastoral Studies' pp. 9-18. See also Taylor, 2nd lecture on 'The Theology of Spiritual Formation', p. 3.

²¹⁸ Russell, 'Practical Training'.

the mechanics of churchmanship, arguing for an integrated approach. This is one which does not simply 'apply' theology to different contexts, which recognises the significance of the whole experience and environment and not just the course of study, and which would produce spiritual leaders able to live in the world as true interpreters of the Gospel, enabling the ministry of the Church in the world. He recognises that British colleges may have much to learn from his American audience especially about the centrality of 'field-work' and the necessity of learning through pastoral experience. Despite Russell's foresight it would be some time before these changes were realised more generally in the British context.

But when these changes happened, it was Michael Taylor again who was a significant and mediating figure. From his arrival as Principal at Northern in 1969 he took a more radical approach which played down the traditional stresses on biblical languages and systematic theology in favour of a course which strongly related theory to practice, and offered a constant dialogue between the church and contemporary culture together with an openness to other disciplines.²¹⁹ Under his leadership Northern developed their whole degree course around contextual theology. In 1975 Taylor notes how the colleges had responded in different ways to the concerns of ministers and the rise of pastoral studies. The colleges in Cardiff and Manchester had developed university diplomas in pastoral studies, Regent's had developed its own in-house course as a supplement to the University degree and Spurgeon's was re-working its degree programme to include something similar.²²⁰ A few years later Taylor would write to his fellow Baptist ministers, that 'forming a person to be such a reflective theologian rather than teaching a person a lot about theology is what theological education is ultimately about.'²²¹ And significantly influenced by Northern's experiments this new way of bringing theory and practice began to shape other colleges too.

²¹⁹ Shepherd, *The Making of a northern College* (Manchester: Northern Baptist College, 2004), pp. 229-30.

²²⁰ In a paper prepared for Ecumenical Consultation on the role of Theological Colleges, (private papers in Angus Library).

²²¹ Michael Taylor, 'Ministerial Training at Northern College', *The Fraternal*, 196, (July, 1981) p. 6.

Regents' Park appointed its first full-time and stipendiary Tutor in Pastoral Theology in 1981, and one of Bruce Keeble's first actions was to visit Northern and talk with Taylor. Keeble writes²²² of his own three basic principles: the formation of the whole person, doing theology as a way of life, and beginning with experiences and letting these experiences raise questions, especially what the experience prompts us to say about God.

Ultimately this is a change in methodology. The parallel and intersecting rise of sociology and psychology, the advances in learning theory and adult education, and the influence of practical field education all combined to challenge the dominance of the deductive *Wissenschaft* model which certainly reserved a real place for practical theology, but only as the pinnacle of a deductive process derived from first principles. Practical theology is now 'an academic field primarily defined by method and only secondarily by a sense of content.'²²³

The Schleiermachian approach has its attractiveness in seeming to ground practice on a prior understanding of Scripture and the traditional doctrines of the church. By contrast Pattison describes theological reflection as 'a critical conversation which takes place between the Christian tradition, the student's own faith presuppositions and a particular contemporary situation.'²²⁴ Practical theology has its own spectrum, of the particular balance between theory and practice, but the notion of Scripture being included in a genuinely critical conversation is, certainly for some students, a challenging development.

But the Baptist colleges have all adopted the methodologies of practical theology and the practice of theological reflection now finds a place in the curriculum and in patterns of assessment. The language of ministers as essentially 'reflective practitioners' is commonplace. Long essays, fieldwork reports, and portfolios have come to replace some or all of the traditional exams producing a very

²²² In private correspondence.

²²³ Paul Ballard, *Practical Theology: Proliferation and Performance* (Cardiff: Religious and Theological Studies, Cardiff University, 2001), p. 61.

²²⁴ Stephen Pattison, *A Critique of Pastoral Care* 3rd edition (London: SCM, 2000), p. 136.

different educational experience and reflective practice becomes central to this sense of a structuring and cooperative practice.

Practice-based Patterns

Up until the end of the 1970s preparing for ordained Baptist ministry involved three years (at least) in a residential college. Now the vast majority of Baptist ordinands are on a pattern generally referred to as 'congregation-based' or 'church-based', which involves a student becoming a 'Minister-in-Training' in a local Baptist church, either in the role of sole pastor or as part of a wider team, living in the community of the church and travelling into a college for one or two days a week.

Once again it was Michael Taylor who led the way and in September 1978 Northern began an experiment entitled the Alternative Pattern of Training (APT). Taylor was partly influenced by developments happening around him in the Church of England, such as the North West Regional Training Scheme, but also patterns of theological education in the rest of the world: the pedagogical challenges of Freire and the critical reflective approach of liberation theology; the refusal and practical inability to privilege both full time residential training for young men and women and then full time stipendiary ministry; the desire to develop extension courses where theological education could run parallel with secular employment; the engagement of those already of some Christian maturity.²²⁵

Baptists, as well as other denominations, had discussed for some years alternative approaches to ministry and recognised the need to have other patterns alongside full-time stipendiary roles²²⁶ but this had not yet translated into the practice of preparation for ministry. Northern's APT, the first such experiment, was alternative in a number of ways, such as the intensity of the course and the age and experience of the majority of the students, but the

²²⁵ See Lesslie Newbigin, 'Theological Education in a World Perspective' in *Ministerial Formation*, 4, (Oct 1978) pp. 3-8.

²²⁶ Most significantly in the 1969 report *Ministry Tomorrow* (London: BUGB, 1969).

fundamental change it made was on the priority of the placement of each student, which was no longer the context in which the theology learnt at college was merely applied, but at least as important a place for learning and formation as the college context. Education, training and formation happened in two centres and as Taylor expressed it:

our case study on ministerial formation suggested that the main place or agent of formation is the practice of ministry itself. Men and women become ministers by being ministers in the local congregation right from the beginning of their training.²²⁷

Regent's then began its congregation-based course (Regent's In-Pastorate Training) in the autumn of 1982, deeply influenced by the 'two centre' (college and church) pattern at Northern, with five students accepted to study in this way. Spurgeon's, although initially quite critical, declaring that ATP had dumbed down serious scholarship and undoubtedly still wary of the associations with Taylor,²²⁸ nevertheless began to adopt the pattern in 1985.

The congregation-based pattern drew its pedagogy significantly from the experience of fieldwork in the USA, and the emerging methods of practical theology. But more than being the basis for reflection *on* practice, it also established the methodology of reflection *in* practice. One of the distinctive aspects of current Baptist practices of preparation, enabled by a distinctive ecclesiological basis, is that these are more than placements for students, although they are seen in that way as well, but these are opportunities for the genuine practice of ministry by those so called by local churches.

Without doubt there were also financial motives to the original developing of a congregation-based pattern, searching for sustainability in a way that college-based patterns would not provide. Increasingly for Baptists it appears that there

²²⁷ Taylor, 2nd lecture on 'The Theology of Spiritual Formation'. Note here the total interchangeability of formation and training.

²²⁸ See Shepherd, *Making*, p. 250. Taylor had caused significant controversy in 1971 in a sermon at the Baptist Assembly which many took to doubt the divinity of Christ.

will be little place for a more traditional 'college-based' approach, except for those much younger candidates who have not yet had student loans, but the experience of even these students will be shaped by the rationale, methodology and experience of practice-based patterns. Baptists have begun to reflect on the extent to which the congregation-based pattern itself is sustainable, and whether sufficient local churches are willing and able to cover the significant funding of stipends, accommodation and expenses, but this current shared practice seeks to develop further patterns of theological reflection.

Professional Ministry

The roots of ministerial professionalisation may be traced back to the so-called clergy paradigm developed from Schleiermacher, which then was developed further by both the increasing utility of education and the growth of the professions in the twentieth century. Ballard highlights the effect that this wider professional development had on the preparation of ministers, including the dialogue between theology and other traditions such as sociology and psychology and the influence this has on the curriculum.²²⁹

These changes happened alongside the change in the student body of the colleges. Moving away from the residential community of almost exclusively young men, Northern's APT programme was specifically designed to make preparing for ministry possible for more mature students, married with families, and this was paralleled in other colleges as the congregation-based pattern developed. By 1989 the average age of students at Spurgeon's was 32.4.²³⁰ Increasingly they brought with them other professional training together with leadership experience in secular contexts. This was the context when Paul Beasley-Murray was Principal from 1986-1992.

A further important development is the language of competency, key to the development of secular vocational training. In the early 1980s the language of

²²⁹ Ballard, *Foundations of Pastoral Studies*, pp. 12 and 16.

²³⁰ Randall, *English Baptists*, p. 451.

competence is used, though sparingly, for example in *The Aims and Objectives of Ministerial Training* at Northern Baptist College, from around 1982, and Michael Taylor brings competence and professionalism together for 'this ministry is a profession in that like other professions it can quite properly be expected to be competent'.²³¹ But the more dominant language at this time would nevertheless seem to be personal qualities rather than competencies.²³² The 1998 report 'Towards a New List'²³³ then brings these together and talks of the three elements necessary for accrediting ministry as call, competence and character.

Competence language is taken further in the work of Bill Allen, Tutor in Pastoral Studies at Spurgeon's College, who offers a list of seven key competencies for ministry, which in turn should shape ministerial training.²³⁴ A few years later, partly prompted by the stimulus of the Hind Report and partly from the concerns of a new Head of Ministry, a paper went to the Baptist Union Council in August 2005 proposing a number of core competencies for accredited Baptist ministers.²³⁵

Within a commitment to wider ministerial formation, these core competencies, modified slightly, now feature significantly in all the Baptist colleges and have shaped the way that curricula have developed and assessment takes place. But there would seem to remain some uncertainty and hesitation about the competencies, both in terms of the language itself and in the more functional stress they bring. An on-going search for other language continued. Jim Gordon, then Principal of the Scottish Baptist College, offered a paper at the 2012 Baptist

²³¹ Michael Taylor, West Midlands Area Ministers Conference, *Essays in Ministry* 1, 1985 (in private papers in Angus Library).

²³² Taylor offers 25 personal qualities in his 14th Atlantic seminar presentation, 1982.

²³³ Ellis and Goodspeed, 'Towards a New List'.

²³⁴ Bill Allen, 'Pathways to Leadership'. Allen's seven competencies are the ability to: engage in theological reflection and application; construct a foundation of spirituality to undergird ministry; carry out mission and ministry with integrity; communicate in public and private settings; lead others; engage in effective pastoral care and support; manage self and workload in a competent way.

²³⁵ Paul Goodliff, 'Patterns of Ministry among Baptists: A Review of the 'Register of Covenanted Persons Accredited for Ministry'', (BUGB: Council, 2010).

Colleges Staffs' Conference on 'Ministerial Attributes'²³⁶ as an alternative, more person-centred approach to expressing something of the hoped for pastoral imagination of those leaving college, and the consultation report of the recent Baptist Union review of formation suggested the development of core comprehensions and core virtues alongside competencies.

The *Ignite* report proposes replacing competencies with 'Marks of Ministry', which have a greater stress on character. This outline has been agreed by the Baptist Union Council, but the exact nature of these marks is still under discussion, with some feeling that the aspects of competencies should not be lost.²³⁷ But the language of competencies, even though they are expressed in language that operates in a strongly formational way, has shaped current shared practice as part of a more professional understanding of ministry. The extent to which competencies or virtues, or marks of ministry shape the practice of preparation will in turn have an influence on the kind of pastoral imaginations being developed.

Ecumenical Partnerships

Currently the five Baptist colleges in England and Wales have significant though different ecumenical connections. Northern remains the most ecumenically structured, with its explicit commitment to the Lund Principle and its partnership in the Luther King House Educational Trust, with the Methodists, URC, and Unitarians. Bristol and South Wales have strong bi-party links with their neighbouring Anglican colleges, Trinity and St Michael's respectively. Regent's is part of the Oxford Partnership for Theological Education and Training (OPTET) with the three Anglican colleges based in and around Oxford, together with the Catholic halls. The ecumenical links of Spurgeon's have developed in the area of the BME churches which have often come from an independent Pentecostal

²³⁶ Michael Fuller and Kenneth Fleming 'Bridging the Gap: A Curriculum Uniting Competencies and Theological Disciplines' *JATE* 2.2 (2005) pp. 163-178, conclude that competencies can be used in a holistic and 'soft' way to refer to characteristics and attributes rather than a 'hard' way about skills and knowledge, although their eight competencies might be called attributes.

²³⁷ For example, discussion at the Baptist Colleges' Partnership Meeting in April 2016.

heritage and now over half their ministerial students are from churches beyond the Baptist tradition.

This has not always been the case. Unsurprisingly, it was Michael Taylor who expressed, on his appointment as Principal, the key conviction that ministerial formation needed to be thoroughly ecumenical in its nature.²³⁸ Taylor proceeded to begin discussions with the Congregational College, the Methodists, who moved into Brighton Grove in 1973 when Hartley Victoria College was going to be closed, and the Anglican North Western Ordination Course, resulting in, amongst other things, the Northern Federation for Training in Ministry launched in 1984.²³⁹

Within the wider Union at that time there were mixed views on this as a way forward. The establishment of a new and innovative ecumenical college in Birmingham in 1970, The Queens Foundation, made some Baptists at least wonder if they should be part of this process.²⁴⁰ At a similar time, *The Report of An Advisory Group and Other Related Documents made available by the Baptist Theological Colleges in England and Wales* encouraged Northern Baptist College to explore ecumenical opportunities in the light of its perceived struggling context for ministerial training but seems more generally to have stressed residential training and been distinctly cool on ecumenical commitment.²⁴¹

The next two decades saw considerable development in the attitude of the denomination in this respect, represented most significantly by the rise of the Inter Church Process and the *Not Strangers but Pilgrims* report of 1987. The Union voted to join the new ecumenical process at the Assembly in 1989 (although a quarter of delegates were not in favour) and decisions to formally join CTE and CTBI in 1995 received larger majorities.²⁴²

²³⁸ Shepherd, *Making*, p. 229.

²³⁹ See Shepherd, *Making*, pp.244-7 and 253-4. Recently the URC and Methodist church have pulled back from the Luther King House partnership after denominational reviews.

²⁴⁰ Russell, 'Theological Education'.

²⁴¹ Shepherd, *Making*, pp. 236-7

²⁴² Randall, *English Baptists*, p. 495.

In 1986 the Churches Together in England document *Called to be One* looked for opportunities for ministerial students to live alongside each other and explore other traditions. The response of the Baptist Union Council the following year stressed the need not just for ministerial students to know something about but to immerse themselves in the realities of other traditions²⁴³ and the Union, through the then Ministry Department, joined the ecumenical inspection process in 2003.

Taylor's early and more radical convictions have become, in time, the mainstream approach, and there is a clear willingness expressed in the different college partnerships not to be isolationist, but to view the preparation for ministry within the wider context of the universal church. Yet there is clearly some range within the colleges themselves, and probably a much wider spectrum within the churches of the Union. The geographical and university contexts of the five Baptist colleges offer different kinds of ecumenical relationships, which will impact on the kind of pastoral imaginations being developed, but these are individual college developments within a shared practice of ecumenical co-operation.

Missional Concerns

While not, of course, uniquely Baptist it has often been recognised that the 'missionary impulse' is both a Baptist distinctive and a key part of Baptist history and identity.²⁴⁴ Yet it is also clear that the changing developments within contemporary culture over recent decades have demanded that clearer and more focused attention be paid both to the church's missional call and the context in which it works.

Spurgeon's College responded with the development, in 1990, of a specific church planting and evangelism course, alongside that for pastoral ministry, and around half the modules taught were in conjunction with the pastoral ministry

²⁴³ See 'Partners Together' p. 9.

²⁴⁴ See Holmes, *Baptist Theology*, pp. 141-3.

track. This particular approach lasted until the early 2000s when the two courses were integrated more fully together, but in a way which allowed some choice of modules through the course. Spurgeon's were partly reflecting on their own experience, that there was no clear correlation between the particular pathway a student chose at the beginning and the kind of ministry they exercised on leaving college.

In 2001, the BUGB Council agreed to make some formal distinctions within ordained ministry and to add the categories of accredited youth specialists and accredited evangelists alongside that of the pastoral minister. Yet the distinction between evangelists and pastors has not been entirely clear. The most recent suggested ordination service in *Gathering for Worship*, after initial shared questions on belief in God, making disciples and being a disciple offers different words for pastors and evangelists. The former are much more extensive and have some focus on word and sacrament, whereas the latter focus on being a witness and a minister of peace, love and hope, which have long been seen as part of the role of all ministers.²⁴⁵ The core competencies initiated by the Ministry Department were originally the same for both pastors and evangelists, and the number of those seeking to be ordained as evangelists has been very small, anecdotally because being an accredited pastor allows an individual to act as an evangelist but accept open possibilities for wider ministry as well.

Yet in contrast to the distinction created formally between pastors and evangelists, the colleges have increasingly placed greater stress on integration, so pastoral ministry and pioneer evangelism appear as different emphases within one course, which as a whole has developed a more explicit and culturally relevant missional feel. In recent years there has been some resistance from colleges to the call from some for a separate church planting or pioneer course, seeking instead a greater integration of pioneering mission across all ministerial formation, alongside opportunities for some to focus more on pioneering

²⁴⁵ Ellis and Blyth, *Gathering for Worship*, p. 125. This, also, is representative, not normative.

ministry.²⁴⁶ Bristol, since 2010, has offered the most distinct pathway through ministerial formation, that is one in urban mission and church planting in partnership with Urban Expression, in which part of the overall course is shared with all ministerial students and part is distinct and unique.

One further aspect of the changing missional context is the partnership which all the colleges have had in recent years with BMS World Mission. In March / April 2008 Bristol took the first student teams abroad to India and Brazil with BMS, with the other four colleges following soon after. This reflects a more significant place for the contribution of the global church to the formation of ministers in the UK and for the significant learning and experience of BMS. Culturally relevant, globally sensitive and alert to the need for a greater emphasis on pioneering ministry: this would seem to reflect the colleges' desire for contemporary ministerial formation and so the pastoral imagination for all ministers, in which there would also be space for a variety of particular specialisms to grow.

Formation or Training?

From the above literature review two recent historical developments have become clear. First, alongside other denominations, there has been a move towards using formation language to describe the practice of preparation in the Baptist colleges,²⁴⁷ and second, among the Baptist colleges there has developed structuring and co-operative practices, focussing on six key aspects identified above that already shape some shared sense of the kind of pastoral imagination Baptist colleges are looking to develop in their students.

In the same way that there was no simple contrast between ministry and leadership, so again it is not possible or helpful to cast education, training and formation as opposed to each other, for the development has been towards

²⁴⁶ Based on discussions at the 2010 annual Baptist Staffs Conference.

²⁴⁷ See *Ministerial Formation in the British Baptist Colleges*.

integration not separation. But, in a similar way to that suggested in the previous chapter, formation and training can each represent a different *habitus*, which will in turn shape the pastoral imagination in different ways.

Within the formation paradigm, two concepts in particular stand out, which might be summarised as integration and integrity. Integration offers a model that unites different aspects in one process. These include the integration of separate theological disciplines, theory and practice, the church and the world, prayer and spirituality, previous life experience and current ministerial formation, pre- and post-ordination training, the individual and the community.

Integrity places the student, and the student's spiritual development at the centre of the process, while combining knowledge and skills. While all language here has been problematic, with Baptists moving between virtues, marks, attributes,²⁴⁸ integrity describes the key element in formation that revolves around spirituality, character and maturity. Combining these aspects of integration and integrity together Foster suggests that 'learning as formation is a process by which the student becomes a certain kind of thinking, feeling, acting being.'²⁴⁹

On the other hand, the practice of training places the acquisition of skills centre stage so that the gaining of knowledge and any development of character are in the service of the development of these skills. This does not reject the more cognitive or formational aspects but stresses the relationship in a different way. Paralleling Foster's comment above, learning as training might be thought of as a process that enables a student to act in a particular kind of way, although we must be careful not to overplay this distinction as Foster *et al.* also suggest that professional training will always have some formative element to it.

Training and formation *can* stand as each offering a different *habitus*, while historically there seems to have been more of a development between these

²⁴⁸ Mayes, *Spirituality*, pp. 80-4, recognises the difficulty, with character and ministerial 'identity' both carrying particular theological undertones in different Christian traditions.

²⁴⁹ Foster, *Educating Clergy*, p. 10.

two approaches. As a structuring structure a formation or training *habitus* provides a fundamental framework within which a pastoral imagination is shaped. Our opening question – ‘what do I do?’ – may then be answered quite differently by those ‘trained’ or those ‘formed’ for ministry.

But I conclude from the literature that the British Baptist colleges understand their shared practice as ministerial formation in which they are seeking to develop a pastoral imagination in their students so that they:

- engage in open critical enquiry, drawing from the tradition of the church and the understanding of the wider world
- are reflective practitioners
- can reflect *in* practice as well as *on* practice
- are competent in a range of ministerial practices
- are ecumenically sensitive
- are missionally engaged, culturally relevant, globally sensitive and alert to the need for a greater emphasis on pioneering ministry

Conclusion

In these last two chapters I have argued that a strong representative voice within the Baptist Union is committed to a dialectical ministry rather than leadership *habitus*, and that the British Baptist colleges have been moving towards a shared understanding of the practice of preparation as formation rather than training. Beginning to answer our central question, the literature discussed suggests that the representative position among British Baptists is that the practice of preparation is best described as forming ministers rather than training leaders.

In addition, I have also argued from the literature that there has developed a significant sense of shared practice and understanding among the British Baptist Colleges, and this can be described, in the language drawn from Dykstra and Bourdieu, as a co-operative and structuring structure. I have suggested six key areas that combine in this co-operative and structuring structure of ministerial

formation among the Baptist colleges, and which will be central in developing a certain pastoral imagination. There will be some creativity and improvisation in the way that the six areas are adopted and combined in the different colleges, but I suggest that the representative position among British Baptists is ministerial formation understood in this particular structured, co-operative and creative way.

As I reflect on nine years working as Tutor in Pastoral Studies at Regent's Park College, the ways I have worked on curricula, handbooks and other documents, the content of my teaching and my conversations with other tutors, then increasingly I too have wanted to frame my own practice as that of forming ministers. This is the *habitus* into which I have increasingly grown as a tutor rather than the more training *habitus* that was my experience as a student. Given my involvement in the wider life of the colleges and the Union it is, perhaps, not surprising that my own thinking should cohere with and be shaped by this wider representative position.

4.

Exploring Practice and the Pastoral Imagination:

Approaching the Empirical Research

I began with an existential question about what a new minister might actually begin to do in ministry, that is about the practice of ministry, suggesting ministry may be seen as a structured and co-operative practice, which persists over time, and provides something of a *habitus* within which the individual minister may creatively improvise. I suggested that the way a minister answers this individually will be complex, but will involve their experience of preparation for ministry, which can also be described as a structured and co-operative practice with its own *habitus*. The way these two practices are connected, I suggest, is through the concept of the 'pastoral imagination', a way of seeing and interpreting the world which shapes everything a minister thinks and does, and which a college is seeking, implicitly or explicitly, to shape and develop.

By exploring a variety of literature I then argued that, although there are alternative voices, there is a *representative* voice among British Baptists which understands the practice of preparation as forming ministers, and that some shared, co-operative and structuring sense of the nature of formation which seeks to produce an overall pastoral imagination has developed.

The co-operative practice and the representative voice, then, both suggest that there should be some significant similarities in the practice of preparation within the British Baptist colleges and the particular pastoral imaginations they are each seeking to develop. Yet the different contexts, histories and the popular belief in the differences between the colleges suggest that there might be some important differences as well. The empirical research will, therefore, test the co-operative practice and representative voice that has emerged from the literature against the actual practice of each college, offering an opportunity to further refine and triangulate the co-operative practice and representative voice. It therefore asks two fundamental empirical research questions.

What is the pastoral imagination which the Baptist colleges individually are seeking to inculcate in their students?

Is there a particular combination of practices and elements of a pastoral imagination that could be considered distinctly Baptist?

The first question considers what is distinct to each of the five colleges and aims to move beyond the anecdotal to a more secure empirically based understanding of the unique nature of each of the five colleges. It is explored by an in-depth analysis of five Baptist Colleges which are: Regent's Park College, Oxford; Spurgeon's College, London; Bristol Baptist College; Northern Baptist Learning Community, Manchester; South Wales Baptist College, Cardiff. These are the five Baptist Colleges in England and Wales which are at the heart of the Baptist Union of Great Britain,²⁵⁰ and which have expressed their commitment to shared practice.²⁵¹ There is an important sense of completeness to the research as all the Baptist colleges in membership with the Baptist Union are included.

The second question considers what might be shared by the Baptist colleges but be different from other approaches to the practice of preparation, seeking to understand whether there is anything that can be considered distinctly Baptist. It is explored by considering the results of research into the Baptist colleges with data from a similar in-depth analysis of five non-Baptist colleges or courses, chosen to represent breadth and variety. These include residential colleges and non-residential courses, institutions from a single denomination, those which are ecumenical or non-denominational, and from a breadth of churchmanship. The sample is not large enough to make valid comments on the practice of preparation in other denominations, or in independent colleges, or in courses rather than residential colleges, which are all valid and important areas of research but which lie beyond the scope of this project. Rather this second set of

²⁵⁰ Y Coleg Gwyn (North Wales Baptist College), Bangor, The Scottish Baptist College and the Irish Baptist College are also in membership of the Baptist Union of Great Britain, but are more connected to other Unions, ie Baptist Union of Wales, Baptist Union of Scotland and the Association of Baptist Churches in Ireland.

²⁵¹ For example, the Colleges' Partnership Meeting, the annual Baptist Staff's Conference and regular Principal's meetings.

data offers a representative sample used to help explore further the particular emphases of the five Baptist colleges.

Research Methods

As set out in chapter 1 this is a piece of practitioner research in which I seek to generate knowledge, as a basis for further reflection on my own role and practice and then offered to the wider Baptist Union. The ‘four voices’ of Cameron *et al.* provides the overall methodological framework, with participant observation as a central method, while I also draw on broader aspects of organisational studies and ethnography. My aim is to establish the particular operant and espoused voices of the different institutions through an analysis of documents from the five Baptist colleges and the five non-Baptist institutions and a series of semi-structured interviews.

There are a number of methodological and ethical issues that these research methods raise in the development and conduct of the empirical research.

I approach the research as both a participant and as an observer, and as both an insider and an outsider. Knott explores the connection between these two and proposes a continuum rather than simple alternatives.²⁵² Overall I am an ‘insider’, in that I am researching an overall area in which I am deeply involved as a participant, but within this I have a variety of different relationships. I am a tutor of one of the Baptist colleges, a member in the wider body of college tutors and secretary of the Baptist Colleges’ Partnership. I have significant relationships with the other Baptist colleges, but I am an ‘outsider’ to their particular institutional life, and this is true to a much greater degree with the non-Baptist institutions.

The very particular nature of the research, in which both the researcher and the interviewee are theological tutors engaged in the practice of preparation creates

²⁵² Kim Knott, ‘Insider / outsider Perspectives’ in John R. Hinnells (ed.), *The Routledge Companion to the Study of Religion*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), p. 262.

an expectation that an interview will be a shared conversation in theological reflection, one of the core elements identified by Cameron *et al.*²⁵³ Further, although I initiated the conversations those interviewed have a clear and significant interest in the development of the research, and generally appreciated the opportunity to reflect with someone else on a central part of their role. The nature of these interviews suggests that the data gathered here will already be theologically rich and able to contribute to a developed understanding of theology as well as practice.

Drawing further on the literature, and the insider-outsider issue, I recognise my own non-neutrality in the research project. I adopt the wider and more general hermeneutical approach of Gadamer which does not seek some imagined neutrality, but recognises the involvement of any researcher, with his or her prejudices, as a prerequisite to understanding,²⁵⁴ together with Silverman's warning that always 'facts are impregnated with our assumptions'.²⁵⁵ More than this I come to the empirical research with particular views formed over time about both the practice of ministry and the practice of preparation and which I have begun to articulate. The research thus demands a significant degree of reflexivity to recognise what I bring to the research, how my views shape the conduct of the research project and how my views change and develop through the process, but the data will always be shaped to some degree by my own perspective.

Of the nine institutions involved in the process I only experienced defensiveness in one institution, which was much more guarded about the release of internal documents that could be considered at all sensitive, and seemed a little more concerned about presenting an institutional line than engaging in shared conversation, perhaps sensitive to previous questioning within inspection processes. Whereas interviewing those with whom I had strong relationships would have been unavoidably shaped through the lens of friendship, these

²⁵³ See page 23.

²⁵⁴ See Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology*, pp. 110-116.

²⁵⁵ David Silverman, *Interpreting Qualitative Data* 3rd edition (London: Sage, 2006), p. 11.

individuals were also the most open with their documentation, allowing a greater insight into the institution. Here insider-outsider relationship plays out in a particular way. I am aware, for example, of responding much more positively to interviews marked by an openness and vulnerability that developed shared theological reflection rather than those that seemed more defensive.

Ethically, the size of the field of Baptist colleges being examined suggests the impossibility of complete anonymity and so confidentiality. Clearly the definition of anonymity proposed by Sapsford and Abbot, that individual replies will not be known even to the researcher cannot be possible or even desirable.²⁵⁶ Given that there are only five colleges, all of which are involved in the study, it would be impossible to prevent incidental information identifying a particular institution. Those involved in the research from the different Baptist colleges have therefore all agreed that the thesis can name colleges on the basis that those representing the different institutions will be sent a copy of those sections of the thesis which deal with the qualitative data before it is submitted and that there will be fresh discussions and negotiations before any material is published in the public domain.²⁵⁷

Since five non-Baptist institutions have been chosen from a larger number of colleges and courses involved in the preparation for ministry, it is possible to offer some degree of anonymity. Institutions were invited to participate in this research project on the basis that as far as possible anonymity would be protected within the final thesis. The institutions are listed as Institutions A, B, C, D and E. However, given the relatively small size of the overall constituency of colleges and courses, and the importance that context might provide in shaping the pastoral imagination, there may be some details which offer clues as to the identity of particular institutions. So these institutions were given the same two assurances that they would be sent a copy of those sections of the thesis which

²⁵⁶ R. J. Sapsford and P. Abbot, 'Ethics, Politics and Research' in R. J. Sapsford R, and V. Jupp, *Data Collection and Analysis* (London: Sage, 1996) pp. 318-9, quoted in Judith Bell, *Doing Your Research Project: A Guide for First-time Researchers in Education, Health and Social Science* 5th Edition (Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2010), p. 49.

²⁵⁷ See appendix 2.

deal with the qualitative data and that there would be fresh discussions and negotiations before any publication.

Despite the good institutional and personal relationships involved, there is an inevitable and unavoidable element of the 'market' involved in the preparation of Baptist ministers, shaped particularly strongly within a Baptist ecclesiology. Individuals who sense a call to minister are commended by the local church and association and are free to apply to whichever college they choose. For Baptists this 'market' extends beyond the five Baptist colleges and may include non-denominational colleges and ecumenical courses, which a significant minority of Baptist ministers attend. There may be advice given by current ministers and traditional church connections with a particular college, but with the significant financial burden often falling on the individual student, their own choice becomes paramount.

As a researcher I also bring a variety of commitments to the project. I have a clear instinct for the college in which I work to appear in the best light, as do others in the research including my supervisor, while I am a student at another of the Baptist colleges and have significant friendships with all those involved in the Baptist colleges²⁵⁸. For me it is this aspect that has been more dominant and it has made being critical of other Baptist colleges harder. Within the non-Baptist institutions I have a much wider range of relationships, knowing one of those interviewed well, two of them to a degree and meeting two others for the first time in the process. I am equally aware that within a much wider range of theology and churchmanship represented I warm more naturally to some institutions than others, as well as respond to the degrees of openness in different ways, and this affects both the content of the interviews and the analysis of all the documents.

A final ethical issue involves the conduct of the interviews themselves. The interviewees were asked and all agreed to the conversations being recorded,

²⁵⁸ That this thesis is being submitted through one of the colleges who are part of the research project together with the fact that a supervisor from this college would see the on-going work was made clear.

with the recordings then transcribed. The feel of the interviews as shared conversations was aided by the lack of any power in-balance between interviewer and interviewee.²⁵⁹ All those interviewed held significant responsibility in their institutions, being very well qualified academically and with significant experience in the preparation of ministers.

Discerning the Espoused Voice

I have sought to establish the espoused voice the other four Baptist colleges and the five non-Baptist institutions are seeking to develop in their students by combining a document analysis together with an interview of the person in the institution most connected with the practice of preparation.

The document analysis centred on submissions by the colleges to the inspection process, QiFP inspection reports, handbooks, brochures, strategic plans and websites. Some of these documents are in, indeed intended for, the public domain, as part of a college's promotion of its approach to preparation for ministry and others are private confidential documents kindly supplied by the colleges.

These documents are mainly examined on the basis of an ethnographically shaped narrative analysis,²⁶⁰ exploring the way that such texts 'depict reality',²⁶¹ recognising that different texts may have different authors, are written for a variety of different contexts, purposes and readerships, but which together build up a narrative of the institution. This is combined with a certain amount of content analysis,²⁶² in which, for example, the frequency of the use of specific language, especially formation, training and education, is counted in documents. While holding some hermeneutic of suspicion that documents cannot necessarily

²⁵⁹ Silverman, *Interpreting Qualitative Data*, p. 144.

²⁶⁰ Silverman, *Interpreting Qualitative Data*, p. 164ff.

²⁶¹ Silverman, *Interpreting Qualitative Data*, p. 168.

²⁶² Silverman, *Interpreting Qualitative Data*, p. 159ff.

be 'firm evidence of what they report',²⁶³ my assumption is that the nature of these documents, as primary sources produced for clear and specific purposes, suggests a high level of confidence in their reliability,²⁶⁴ that is, the internal documents, those produced for an inspection and those produced to communicate with the public reliably reflect the actual understanding of the college, and that an inspection report reliably reflects the opinions of that team of inspectors.

After an initial document analysis I arranged an interview as a second source of gathering data, normally, with one key representative whose responsibilities meant that they were able to offer an authentic, valid and significant insight into the theological understandings currently shaping the practice of preparation in that institution, aware that principals and tutors have had significant impact on the way current ministers understand their role.²⁶⁵

In two of the Baptist colleges it was the principal and in one it was the vice-principal who subsequently became principal. In the fourth Baptist college, Northern, I made the decision to interview three people, although this meant there was some lack of parity with the other colleges, but this seemed important and necessary: I interviewed both co-principals, since they shared equally responsibility for ministerial preparation and this is part of the college's self-identity, together with the president of the wider ecumenical partnership, a Baptist minister, since the majority of the curriculum is shared ecumenically and overseen by the partnership, significant documents had come from the partnership, and without such an interview the same overall ground might not be covered. In the non-Baptist institutions, two of those interviewed were the Principal, two were a vice-Principal with particular responsibility for the preparation of ministers and one was a pastoral tutor, who again carried the significant responsibility for the practice of preparation.

²⁶³ Amanda Coffey and Paul Atkinson 'Analyzing Documentary Realities', in David Silverman, *Qualitative Research: Theory Method and Practice* 2nd edition (London: Sage, 2004), p. 58.

²⁶⁴ See Bell, *Doing Your Research Project*, p. 119.

²⁶⁵ Goodliff, *Ministry*, p. 151ff.

These interviews were recorded and the transcripts then became documents that were analysed in a similar way to the other sources, building on Gummesson's emphasis that there is a 'continuous flow of data' between documents and interviews rather than a significant distinction.²⁶⁶ Conducting in-depth interviews after the initial data analysis provided a process of triangulation.²⁶⁷ Given the assumption that both the document sources and interviews will be the result of considered theological reflection, the expectation was that the process of triangulation would result more in confirmation than challenge. Taken as a whole, the breadth and depth of the research together with appropriate reflection and analysis of all the gathered information suggests that the conclusions offer some viable and credible conclusions.²⁶⁸

One of the challenges of the research decision to interview, normally, just one person in each institution was the possible, even likely, difference of opinion between staff. In one way this contrasts with the document analysis, which sought to be comprehensive by considering all the documents available, whereas the interviews sought one perspective. The three interviews from Northern confirm that there is some variance of thought amongst them within a broader agreed approach and occasionally the other interviewees expressed their own sense of different opinions amongst their colleagues. But the broad agreement at Northern and the recognition of differences amongst others, combined with the triangulation of interviews with college documents, suggests that while there is clearly the danger that distinct voices in each institution are not heard, there can be some confidence in the representative nature of interviewing one individual and that although a different approach was taken with one institution, the impression gained is broadly similar to the others. It would be possible to develop the research further by deepening the participant observation of each institution and interviewing a much wider group of people. This would certainly

²⁶⁶ Evert Gummesson, *Qualitative Methods in Management Research* 2nd edition (London: Sage, 2000), pp. 126-7.

²⁶⁷ Bell, *Doing Your Research Project*, p. 118.

²⁶⁸ See Bell, *Doing Your Research Project*, pp.119-20.

give a more in-depth and nuanced picture of each college and could be a future piece of work.

Given the respective roles and existing relationships, the interviews were conducted as 'a guided or focused interview',²⁶⁹ which were wide-ranging, relatively unstructured, but were always 'a conversation with a purpose'.²⁷⁰ I took this approach in order to allow the maximum space for the conversation to be shaped by the interviewee. The nature of the interviews draws on what Silverman describes as an emotionalist approach with some elements of constructionism.²⁷¹ That is, I understood the interviews to give authentic insight into the experiences and understandings of the interviewee, while recognising that the shared conversation might generate a certain amount of mutually constructed meaning.

The first question in the interview asked interviewees to suggest the key words that they hoped would describe students when they leave the college. It would have been possible, as an alternative, to have used a method of a card sort or a repertory grid, so that those interviewed could choose from a selection of words I had chosen. While this may have had some advantages in comparing answers, the open interviews allowed tutors, themselves practical theologians, the maximum space to develop answers in their own language.

The interviews then focused first on a number of open questions, which explored key ideas around ordination, leadership and the professional nature of ministry, and the language and understanding of the practice of preparation.²⁷² Finally, the interviews explored a number of more specific questions emerging from the document analysis, seeking points of clarification or expansion.

²⁶⁹ Bell, *Doing Your Research Project*, p. 165.

²⁷⁰ Bell, *Doing Your Research Project*, p. 164, quoting L. Dexter, *Elite and Specialised Interviewing* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1970), p. 123.

²⁷¹ Silverman, *Interpreting Qualitative Data*, p. 118.

²⁷² Appendix 2 contains the list of the core questions used in all the interviews.

It would have been possible to explore the espoused theology of Regent's in the same way at this point, but I decided not to pursue this option for two reasons. First the information available would not have been gathered in the same way: there were comparable documents available but they had mostly been written or re-edited by me, and it seemed inappropriate to interview another member of the Regent's staff who would have had less responsibility for ministerial formation. Secondly, as a piece of practitioner research, which enables me to reflect on my own practice, I wanted to be able to reflect on this empirical research so that I could refine my own thinking and articulate how these have developed and this is set out in chapter 8.

Discerning the Operant Voice

Alongside an espoused understanding expressed in the documents and interviews sits the operant voice expressed in the actual practice of preparation. The aim of this aspect of the research was to establish as clearly as possible the actual practice of each institution so that the operant voice might confirm or challenge the espoused position. This data, rooted in practice, will enable a clearer conversation between theory and practice and further reflection on my own practice as a tutor.

Following Eisner, the wider practice of preparation may be thought about in terms of explicit, implicit and null curriculum.²⁷³ The null curriculum is a helpful concept in that it alerts us to what might be absent from a particular curriculum and raises questions about choices made for inclusion, but it is also philosophically problematic. There is something instinctively ambiguous about the definition of something that is absent, for something can only be deemed 'missing' from a curriculum on the basis of a prior framework that is already

²⁷³ Elliot W. Eisner, *The Educational Imagination: On the Design and Evaluation of School Programs* second edition (New York: Macmillan, 1985), pp. 87ff.

established as educationally valuable.²⁷⁴ The intention here is to compare the curricula of the colleges to each other rather than to any separate normative curriculum. Therefore in this research I focus on exploring the explicit and implicit curricula of each of the different institutions, highlighting certain aspects that are absent or have a reduced significance compared to the other institutions.

The Explicit Curriculum

The explicit curriculum is that which an institution professes to teach and is found in guides, texts and courses.²⁷⁵ From the handbooks, module details, timetables and interviews I have sought to establish the explicit curriculum that each college considers to be compulsory for its ordinands. The central methodological challenge was to provide a clear and fair way to compare the different curricula. I approached the task by dividing the overall curriculum into a number of different areas and establishing the percentage of the curriculum that could be located in each of these areas.

There is no objective way of dividing the curriculum and an inevitable degree of arbitrariness in the choice of these categories ensues. Although all the institutions divide the curriculum into different modules, shaped by the need to account for teaching hours, credit and as the basis for assignments, they do so in different ways, using different pedagogical approaches in their choices. In any examination of these different curricula it is necessary to impose categories, which meant dividing some modules that an institution kept as a whole.

It would have been possible to use a basic Schleiermachiian model with four subject areas, and when the data is arranged in this way it does itself produce interesting results. But practical theology is too wide a category and the detail too important to be grouped together. Working instead with the various sub-

²⁷⁴ For further discussion of the usefulness and ambiguity of the null curriculum see David J. Flinders, Nel Noddings and Stephen J. Thornton, 'The Null Curriculum: Its Theoretical Basis and Practical Implications', *Curriculum Inquiry* 16:1 (Spring, 1986), pp. 33-42.

²⁷⁵ Eisner, *Educational Imagination*, p. 88.

divisions of the different institutions used and developing the categories as further documents were read, the following emerged from the research as the final list of curriculum areas, which has more sub-divisions than any single institution uses but which offers the most detailed data:

- Bible
- Doctrine
- History
- Ethics
- Mission
- Worship / Preaching
- Pastoral Care
- Spirituality / Personal Development
- Leadership
- Baptist Identity
- Theological reflection
- Placement
- Quiet Days / Retreats
- Tutorials
- Other
- Student Choice

While all the colleges offer a number of different pathways for ordinands depending on previous qualifications and experience, the curricula compared here are those offered to a Baptist ministerial student without any previous theological study before embarking on an undergraduate course. This offers the best comparison of those elements that an individual college desired to include without needing to build on previous academic curricula.

I allocated the curricula to these different areas on a percentage basis of contact hours, thus avoiding the differences between overall contact hours amongst the

colleges.²⁷⁶ In order to focus on how the pastoral imagination is intentionally developed by the college, I included those aspects of the curriculum that are compulsory and gathered under student choice those which are optional.

In order to help mitigate against uncertainties I sent the final table for the curriculum of each college to the interviewee and requested comments, with the result that the tables were altered where necessary to achieve the most accurate presentation.

The Implicit Curriculum

The implicit curriculum is that which is beyond the clearly specified modules, which Eisner suggests centres on values and culture, is often unintentional and is because institutions, in his case schools, 'are the kind of places they are'.²⁷⁷ I chose to concentrate an exploration of the implicit curriculum on the corporate worship of each institution, because this emerged from the documentation of the different institutions as of significant importance and also because there was clear documentation on the way that each institution sought to develop this area of its life. This offers an insightful, though limited, perspective into each institution, and is based again on documentary analysis and interviews. This is one of the more limited areas of the research and a more thorough immersion into an institution through extended participant observation would create significantly more data about the implicit curriculum, including a 'feel' of the worship in each institution. This lies beyond the scope of this project, but would be helpful further research in its own right.

In gathering information about the corporate worship of the different colleges, recognising the variations of different pathways, I applied the same criteria of an ordinand taking an undergraduate course and, again, I focused on the corporate worship that ministerial students are expected to attend, rather than that which is optional. Consistent with the approach that seeks to explore the intentions of

²⁷⁶ Such differences, themselves part of operant practice, are discussed in chapters five and six.

²⁷⁷ Eisner, *Educational Imagination*, p. 93.

the colleges, this aspect of the research makes no attempt to measure actual participation or student response to collective worship.

Exploring the range of corporate worship within the various institutions, six categories clearly emerged from the varying practice:

- Shorter services of morning or evening prayer
- Longer services of the Word
- Eucharistic services
- Shared ecumenical services
- Informal prayer in small groups
- Retreats / Quiet days

Given that the operant voice is an exploration of practice, primarily discerned through an analysis of data rather than through interviews, I have included the material relating to Regent's Park in chapter 5 so that clear comparisons can be made at this stage.

Discerning a Representative Voice

I have already reflected on the representative voice of the Baptist Union concerning the practices of ministry and preparation for ministry through a literature analysis, but alongside this, there was a further 'guided and focused' interview, with the then team leader of the Ministries Team within the Baptist Union, Revd Dr Paul Goodliff. Matters relating to ministry, and especially those related to ministerial accreditation, are one of the most centralised aspects of British Baptist life²⁷⁸ and so Goodliff acts primarily as a representative of the then position in the wider Union. Somewhat different to the other interviews this was more akin to an 'expert interview', used as a 'parallel' and 'complementary method'²⁷⁹ to the other interviews, able to gather information within the field

²⁷⁸ This desire for a Union wider accredited ministry was reaffirmed by the recent *Ignite* report.

²⁷⁹ See Uwe Flick, *An Introduction to Qualitative Research* 4th Edition (London: Sage, 2009), p. 168.

and to offer both connections and contrast to the other interviews. Given the very particular nature of this interview, which was to clarify recent developments and explore the theological understandings of ministry explicitly and implicitly held within the wider Union, there was no question of anonymity in the final thesis. However, noting that Goodliff's own research was, and is, in a similar area, the extent to which those in office within the Union are reflecting their own theological views or those of the Union, at least as agreed in Council and Executive, remains an open question.

Conclusion

Building on the methodology of exploring theology in four voices through participant observation, I have set out in this chapter the research methods and choices used in discerning the espoused and operant voices within the different institutions and in further refining the representative voice of the Baptist Union. The results of this empirical research are set out and explored in the following chapters. In chapter 5 the espoused voice of the other four Baptist colleges is presented and analysed and then the operant voice of the five Baptist colleges, including Regent's Park is discussed. In chapter 6 the espoused and operant voices from the five non-Baptist institutions are considered.

5.

Discerning a Pastoral Imagination: Some Findings Among Baptist Colleges

Espoused Theologies

On the basis of the document analysis and interviews, I offer here a suggestion of the way that the practice of preparation is understood and the pastoral imagination being developed in each of the other four Baptist colleges in England and Wales. The findings will suggest some clear differences within a significant degree of a common shared practice and so generally confirm the expectations the review of the literature has suggested.

Northern Baptist Learning Community

Northern Baptist Learning Community (NBLC), formerly Northern Baptist College,²⁸⁰ was formed in 1964 by the amalgamation of two independent colleges, Manchester College and Rawdon. It is a founding member of the Luther King House Educational Trust (LKH) combining Baptist, Methodist, URC and Unitarian traditions. The partnership is explicitly founded on the Lund Principle, first embedded in the charter for the Northern Federation for Training in Ministry in 1984 which then developed into LKH.

NBLC uses the language of formation, education and training in a variety of contexts often inter-changeably. Both the *Memorandum of Association* of LKH²⁸¹ and the *Mission Statement of NBLC*²⁸² define the principal work in terms of 'theological education'. The language of training is disliked, because of too great

²⁸⁰ The name has recently been changed back to Northern Baptist College, but NBLC was correct at the time of the research.

²⁸¹ 'The advancement of education in areas of Christian faith, practice and dialogue...'

²⁸² 'The NBLC is a widely accessible resource for mission through theological education, equally available to the whole people of God across the whole constituency of the Midlands and the North'.

an association with a set of skills,²⁸³ and the language of formation, although preferred to training, is tainted by its use elsewhere. NBLC strongly rejects ideas that the process of preparation for ministry is about conformation to a particular model;²⁸⁴ rather it is about starting with individuals who grow and develop uniquely. Phillips and Kidd (joint Principals at the time) both draw on the root meaning of education, 'to lead out', as the linguistic and pedagogical basis for this, with the banking model of education specifically rejected and a Freirean approach to learning, which both values the contributions of the learner and is alert to political and justice issues, specifically embraced.²⁸⁵ Their commitment to one-to-one tutorials is in line with this approach.

NBLC launched its BA in contextual theology in 1994, when it became an affiliated institution able to develop its own degree programme, more fully integrating the placement experience, paying attention to the particular and specific nature of the context within a framework that is wholeheartedly committed to the methodology of practical theology, and with a commitment to contextual learning along Freirean lines.

The QiFP Report suggests that contextualization is 'a thread running through the whole learning process',²⁸⁶ although the journey to such contextual integration was at times difficult,²⁸⁷ and this is expressed as part of the core ethos of the College. This involves the centrality of students being 'rooted' in communities,²⁸⁸ with whom and from whom they learn, shaped by a collaborative understanding of ministry.

Although there is some concern about possible connotations of formation language NBLC is deeply committed to a formation paradigm that holds together

²⁸³ Interview with RK, p.4.

²⁸⁴ Interview with RK, p. 5.

²⁸⁵ LKH inspection submission, p. 4; interview with AP, pp. 6-7.

²⁸⁶ QiFP Report, p. 35.

²⁸⁷ The interview with RK offers a frank reflection on that time, which is a little at odds with the much more positive version in the more official history, in Shepherd, *Making*, pp. 249ff.

²⁸⁸ Interview with AP, p. 1; Interview with RK p. 1.

integration, integrity and contextualisation. Within this understanding of the practice of preparation the pastoral imagination that NBLC seeks to develop might be described as:

- **Ecumenical:** NBLC has deliberately chosen not to be without its ecumenical partners or the other students who attend through LKH's Open College. This is intended as a deeply formational experience, which shapes ecumenical awareness.²⁸⁹ The majority of the curriculum is shared together with just one separate session of 'college time' each week. The strong ecumenical context brings struggles as well as benefits, for example needing to work against a very strongly ontological view of ordination²⁹⁰ and some understandings of formation within wider ecumenical partners.²⁹¹ But NBLC is committed to the belief that 'formation in an ecumenical context makes a huge contribution to the development of denomination-specific identity'.²⁹²
- **Reflective:** The QiFP inspection report stresses the centrality of reflection,²⁹³ which was affirmed strongly in interviews.²⁹⁴ The first module taught is on theological reflection with an assignment involving facilitating theological reflection with a group in their placement.²⁹⁵ But there is also a strong 'reflexive' element, with expectations that students will have questioned assumptions and been through a process of deconstruction and reconstruction, aware of patterns of faith development.²⁹⁶

²⁸⁹ Interview with GS, p. 1.

²⁹⁰ Interview with RK, p. 4.

²⁹¹ Interview with RK, pp. 4-5.

²⁹² QiFP Report, p. 7.

²⁹³ QiFP Report, p. 35.

²⁹⁴ Interview with AP, p. 1; Interview with RK p. 1.

²⁹⁵ Module descriptor for BA401 'Learning Together Theologically'; interviews with GS, p. 2 and AP, pp. 2-3.

²⁹⁶ Interview with AP, p. 1.

- **Global:** Whereas only one interviewee speaks explicitly of a missional commitment,²⁹⁷ the other two use different language to identify an outward looking nature, which may be best summarised as ‘global’.²⁹⁸ This is expressed as the desire to see ministers as global citizens particularly sensitised to issues of justice, drawing on the language of liberation theology, and expressed both in LKH’s teaching and commitment to diversity.²⁹⁹ This global / liberation stress derives from and supports a Freirean approach to education.
- **Collaborative:** NBLC has the desire to ‘shape patterns of discipleship which are essentially participatory,’³⁰⁰ offering an explicit model of ministry that is deeply collaborative,³⁰¹ eschewing disabling hierarchies and seeking to empower others. Such a desire is reflected in the collaborative governance of LKH itself and in the development of co-principals in NBLC. The language of leadership and professionalism is used sparingly, generally sidelined because of implicit connotations.³⁰² A variety of leadership styles are taught because ‘they need to know what the other styles are in order to critique them’³⁰³ while the collaborative style is unashamedly affirmed as being truly Baptist.³⁰⁴ Further this is also expressed in gender terms with the model of the sole heroic leader cast in male terms being replaced by the collaborative, consultative more female approach to leadership.³⁰⁵ This seems one of the few areas in

²⁹⁷ Interview with AP, p. 1.

²⁹⁸ Interview with RK, p. 1.

²⁹⁹ Interview with GS, p. 2.

³⁰⁰ LKH inspection submission, p. 3.

³⁰¹ Interview with AP, p. 4: ‘we are clearly distinctive because we regard leadership as collaborative.’

³⁰² Interview with AP, p. 2, 4; Interview with RK p. 1, where Kidd is concerned with those overly interested in success and numbers.

³⁰³ Interview with AP, p. 5.

³⁰⁴ Interview with AP, pp. 4-5.

³⁰⁵ Interview with AP, p. 4.

which the college staff would look to inculcate a particular understanding of ministry.

Spurgeon's College

Spurgeon's College was founded in 1856 as The Pastor's College with the explicit aim of preparing ministers for Baptist churches. This remains at the core of its vision, although it has diversified considerably, offering counselling courses, on-line theology courses, and expanding the number of independent ministerial students, who now outnumber those accredited BUGB students. In particular Spurgeon's reflects its South London setting, drawing significantly from London based Pentecostal BME churches, and from the newer charismatic streams.

Spurgeon's understands the process of preparation to involve education, training and formation, but the language of training dominates its documentation. Three of the five aims of the college, set out in the strategic plan, refer to training while one refers to continually improving levels of education, formation and learning, and the person who oversees the preparation of Baptist ministers has the title 'Director of Training'. On the other hand, the renewed website now, for the first time, employs language of formation as well as training. Formation, training and education are used interchangeably, as in the college's inspection submission in 2011, and with some degree of inconsistency.³⁰⁶ But drawing explicitly on Foster the document also prioritises formation and the college seems to be moving towards an increasing use of formation language, so that 'the overall aim is to practice the presence of God and grow in spiritual leadership'.³⁰⁷

The practice of preparation seeks to integrate the three aspects of knowledge, skills and character – frequently using the three-circle Venn diagram³⁰⁸ – together with a clear desire to integrate theory and practice,³⁰⁹ with the BTh and

³⁰⁶ Spurgeon's Inspection submission (2011), p. 19.

³⁰⁷ Inspection submission, p. 22.

³⁰⁸ Inspection submission, pp. 20 and 24.

³⁰⁹ Inspection submission, p. 35.

BD drawing on the methodologies of practical theology and theological reflection.

Spurgeon's has embraced, to some degree, the language of formation and is also committed to the ideas of integration and integrity that are at its heart. There is, though, also a clear commitment to the concept of 'training' as an important aspect of the practice of preparation and Spurgeon's seeks to hold together both training and formation. It seems significant that a number of Spurgeon's Principals have placed a greater stress on the leadership paradigm, especially Paul Beasley-Murray.

The documentation as a whole explicitly affirms an espoused pastoral imagination by using a variety of different adjectives: their inspection submission centres on being 'orthodox, evangelical, radical, missional and ecumenical',³¹⁰ developing ministers who are grounded in the life of faith, rooted in Scripture and the Free Church tradition, able to relate faith effectively to contemporary culture, competent, winsome and an effective witness to Christ,³¹¹ an internal document, on the other hand, describes the college's core activity as 'the training of attractive and evangelical ministers'³¹² and that it seeks to 'prepare confident, competent and credible leaders'.³¹³ Drawing together these with all the other evidence, the pastoral imagination that Spurgeon's seeks to develop might be described as:

- **Evangelical:** understood in a broad sense, this is a key descriptor within their *Mission Statement*, one of five areas of common concern, and is deeply rooted in the college's history. Spurgeon's has developed its own set of key elements of ministry, which parallels the BUGB core competencies and a comparison reveals more clearly espoused evangelical concerns: communicating the Gospel faithfully and persuasively, guarding its truth, having the intellectual ability to interpret

³¹⁰ Inspection submission, p. 12.

³¹¹ Inspection submission, p. 17.

³¹² *Models and Patterns of Training at Spurgeon's College*, p. 2.

³¹³ *Models and Patterns*, p. 3.

faith accurately and defend it against misrepresentation and hostile criticism.³¹⁴ It does therefore seem significant that the word ‘evangelical’ was not used at all in the interview, perhaps to avoid appearing type-cast, although it remains central to the college’s espoused pastoral imagination as set out in its documentation.

- **Missional:** this features significantly in the *Mission Statement*, as the first of five areas of concern. Ministry is understood as ‘highly missional’, with the college seeking to prepare ‘missionary ministers’³¹⁵ and ‘desiring to embed mission in all training’,³¹⁶ although this perspective is slightly tempered by the ‘Supervisors Pack for College-based students’ in which the template for reporting is dominated by more ‘pastoral’ aspects of ministry such as worship, preaching and pastoral care rather than mission.
- **Spiritual:** In the interview the central description of the college was as a discipling institution, concerned with preparing ministers as a form of ‘specialised discipleship’, so that amid developing skills and understanding there is a core element of growth in spiritual and personal awareness.³¹⁷ The particular version of the three-circle model always appears in Spurgeon’s documentation with spirituality at the overlapping centre. Spiritual also includes the language of being attractive, credible, and winsome, because there is an authentic and deep spirituality woven through all ministerial practice.
- **Professional:** The core, shared formational activity is described as ‘Professional Ministerial Practice’, and professional language is found in learning outcomes for the BTh and BD, the *Strategic Plan* and generally through the documentation. This interview confirms this is language that

³¹⁴ Inspection submission, p. 16

³¹⁵ Inspection submission, p. 15.

³¹⁶ QiFP *Report*, p. 10.

³¹⁷ Interview with RS, p. 1.

is positively embraced and welcomed.³¹⁸ It is reflected in the repeated desire to develop competent ministers. Linked with this, the language of leadership features strongly in the documentation. With their variety of students 'leader' may be a more helpful generic term than 'minister'.³¹⁹ Leadership is understood as communal service not the exercise of dominion,³²⁰ which the staff seek to model in the day-to-day life of the college. Professional would also seem to be a key word of self-description of the college, reflected in its desire to be a 'progressive and competent evangelical institution'.³²¹

Bristol Baptist College

Bristol Baptist College has also diversified in recent years developing an expertise in youth, community and children and family workers, as well offering theological education to independent students alongside the core activity of preparing ministers. The college has traditionally taught academic awards from Bristol University, although in 2014, with its very strong partnership with Trinity College, it joined the Common Awards.

The documentation uses a mixture of formation, training and education language and the composite nature of some documents, for example, the *Student Handbook*, suggests how the language has developed, with ministerial training being gradually replaced with the language of ministerial formation.³²² The reworked aims and objectives, agreed by the college council in 2012, describe the purpose of the college as to 'share in the mission of God in the world through the formation of ... women and men for different forms of Christian ministry'. Wider documentation and the interview concur that there is a preference for understanding the whole practice of preparation as one of

³¹⁸ Interview with RS, pp. 2-3.

³¹⁹ Interview with RS, pp. 8-9.

³²⁰ Inspection submission, p. 14.

³²¹ *Spurgeon's College Strategic Plan*.

³²² The Aims and Objectives refer to the formation of ministers and the training of children's, community and other church workers.

formation, of which education and training are aspects. The documents express the importance of integration both in terms of the connection between learning, skills and character and between theory and practice through practice-based learning.³²³

The college has expressed clearly and succinctly its pastoral imagination as the formation of ‘competent, passionate, spirit-filled and evangelical’ ministers. This is a deliberate modernisation of the historic description of the pastoral imagination expressed by Caleb Evans in a sermon on the death of his father Hugh Evans, the Principal of the college, in 1781 ‘as not merely to form substantial scholars but as far as in him lay he was desirous of being made an instrument in God’s hand of forming them, able, evangelical, lively, zealous ministers of the Gospel’.³²⁴ Although these words are part of the tradition and are warmly embraced, some of the emphasis actually seems to lie elsewhere. For example, the college willingly uses the language of ‘competent’, shaped by its commitment to work with the current BUGB framework of competencies, while at the same time seeking to move beyond that, and so lessening its significance, giving a greater place to the language of values and character.³²⁵ The pastoral imagination that Bristol seeks to develop might, therefore, be described as:

- **Missional:** The inspection submission articulates the missional challenge as a major concern and the central responsibility for ministers as making disciples and helping to sustain the discipleship of others.³²⁶ This advocates a holistic view of mission, drawing on the five marks of mission³²⁷ while recognising that Baptists have historically tended to stress those more concerned with proclamation and conversion.³²⁸ The

³²³ Inspection submission pp. 12-13.

³²⁴ Quoted in Chris Ellis, ‘Being a Minister’, p. 57.

³²⁵ Interview with SF, p. 5.

³²⁶ Inspection submission, p. 1.

³²⁷ These originate in the global Anglican context but have been embraced more widely. See Andrew Walls and Cathy Ross, *Mission in the 21st Century: Exploring the Five Marks of Global Mission* (London: DLT, 2008).

³²⁸ Inspection submission, p. 2.

college has developed in recent years a more explicitly mission-focused version of its course and mission features as one of its distinct three cross-curricula themes.

- **Evangelical:** This is a word that appears in both the historic and contemporary list of adjectives, but is always understood with a lower case 'e'.³²⁹ It is understood to refer to the authority of the Bible, 'something very significant for Baptists'³³⁰, and 'biblical' is the second of the cross-curricula themes. The underlying foundational competence is 'the indwelling of the Christian story and the ability to communicate it with others', from which all others flow.³³¹
- **Leading collaboratively:** The college, in its documentation, willingly embraces the language of leadership. It prepares women and men for pastoral and missional leadership',³³² describes the role of pastors on the accredited list as the 'ministry of pastoral leadership'³³³ and the college's overall vision is to train Christian leaders of healthy growing churches.³³⁴ Discipleship and leadership is also the third of the three cross-curricula themes. The language of leadership is carefully nuanced and understood as servant leadership, expressed as oversight that empowers and enables others.³³⁵ Such collaborative leadership is modeled in the collegiality of the college and the insistence on shared common space and meals between students and staff. The *Student Handbook* on occasion positively embraces the language of professional, while the Principal was much more cautious, stressing instead the importance of spirituality and

³²⁹ Interview with SF, p. 1.

³³⁰ Interview with SF, p. 2.

³³¹ Interview with SF, p. 4.

³³² Inspection submission, p. 1.

³³³ Inspection submission, p. 8.

³³⁴ *Student Handbook*, p. 30.

³³⁵ Inspection submission pp. 6-7; Interview with SF p. 3, who prefers oversight to the language of word and sacrament as this allows for greater missional diversity, and who understands this, more unusually, as a shared oversight of the whole Union which is focused in a specific local context.

character. Ministers are ‘disciples who make disciples and help sustain the discipleship of others’³³⁶ and hold ‘power in order to hold the ring so that others can exercise their gifts in non-competitive ways’.³³⁷

South Wales Baptist College

South Wales Baptist College (SWBC) relates to both the Baptist Unions of Great Britain and of Wales. Its bilingual heritage gives the college a particular context, which is also shaped by their independent students, its significant partnership with St Michael’s Anglican College, and its close connection with Cardiff University, where some lectures are taught across a whole range of students.

There is a clear commitment to an integrated approach, drawing on the same three-circle diagram and increasingly articulating that the whole of the experience contributes to the whole of the process of preparation and to the three strands within it. Their documents also reveal a clear development of language, with some older, seemingly composite, documents using the language of training very heavily.³³⁸ The more recent documents, confirmed in interview, show a much greater use of and commitment to formation as the overarching description, which includes elements of training and education. The new document *Ministerial Formation at SWBC* highlights four components, one of which is pastoral training, the others being personal and spiritual development, biblical and theological studies and a placement.

This integrated approach is reflected in the BTh, whose *Programme Specifications* stress that the whole course is one of critical theological reflection, drawing on the methodologies of practical theology and on other disciplines such as psychology and sociology. This is perhaps shaped by the significant place Cardiff University has had in the development of practical theology. While the

³³⁶ Interview with SF, p. 2.

³³⁷ Interview with SF, p. 3.

³³⁸ For example, the *Church Based Training* booklet., *A Reflection and Evaluation of the Strategic Plan in 2008* and *College Handbook* and *Student Handbook* combine the language of training and formation.

degree is deeply contextual there are still some elements of the whole process of formation which do not yet find a place in the BTh. Such future development is the clear intention and the recent addition of a level 4 module on preaching is an example.

A new document, *Equipping for Ministry and Mission at South Wales Baptist College*, expresses a pastoral imagination as missional, reflective, rooted, global and holy. Drawing on this, wider documentation and recent developments at SWBC the emphasis of the pastoral imagination that SWBC seeks to develop might be described as:

- **Missional:** All ministry is connected with mission, and this is a crucial example of how a pastoral imagination has become more explicit. Some of the older documents around placements give much more space and emphasis to pastoral rather than mission activity. The current espoused pastoral imagination seems more explicitly mission focused.
- **Reflective:** The college is committed to reflective practice as the primary theological method, recognising that ‘evangelical activists’ often ‘do not find it easy to reflect on practice’.³³⁹ One of the significant opportunities of the context of SWBC in the specific bilingual and increasingly devolved Wales is a very specific context to reflect upon.³⁴⁰ Again there are hints of the way this is developing, for an older document, *Guidelines for Term-time Student Placement*, suggests that the placement is where the theoretical input of College is worked out in practice, suggesting a more ‘applied’ model rather than an integrated one, but in other ways there is a clear commitment to practical theology.
- **Global:** Recognising that ‘the centre of gravity of world Christianity has moved south of the equator’,³⁴¹ the need for ministers who are global in their understanding and commitment has recently received greater

³³⁹ *Equipping for Ministry and Mission at SWBC*, p. 4.

³⁴⁰ Interview with PS, p. 2.

³⁴¹ *Equipping for Ministry and Mission at SWBC*, p. 5.

emphasis, as indicated by the connection that SWBC has made with BMS World Mission. This will become increasingly embedded in the course,³⁴² supported by a new module on 'Majority World Voices', drawing on the Principal's previous experience of partnering in theological education with seminaries in Ghana.

Some Reflections

While one college claims it 'has developed its own distinctive values and models of training'³⁴³ another suggests that the 'desire to provide a process which encourages personal formation as gospel practitioners is reflected in the integrated model of theological formation which undergirds the courses in all of the Baptist colleges'.³⁴⁴ The reality combines both.

The Practice of Preparation

Exploring the practice of preparation of the other four Baptist colleges, two issues come to the fore.

First, there is strong evidence of a shared understanding and description of the practice of preparation as one of formation. This is the language that is used most significantly in all the interviews, even if not in all the documentation. When the college Principals reflected personally on their understanding of preparation they spoke most clearly about formation. But there are also some more nuanced distinctions within this shared practice. NBLC was the most hesitant about the language itself, but probably has the strongest commitment to the underlying ideas of formation. Spurgeon's wanted most clearly to hold onto the language and ideas of training alongside those of formation. Bristol and

³⁴² Email from PS, 4.7.2012.

³⁴³ *Models and Patterns of Training at Spurgeon's College*, p. 2.

³⁴⁴ *Equipping for Ministry and Mission at SWBC*, p. 2.

then SWBC have embraced formation language and ideas together most consistently.

There is also strong evidence that this has been a more gradual development rather than a sudden change. I noted how several of the documents clearly appeared to be composite, developed over time, but moving towards embracing formation language. This is confirmed by my own experience of inheriting a set of documents which I have worked with and developed rather than beginning completely afresh. I too have gradually reworked these documents so that formation language and ideas have become more prominent, while the language of training has decreased. The documents suggest there is both some confusion and hesitation about the most appropriate language to use,³⁴⁵ but there has been a clear development over time.

Further this has also been something of a shared journey. From the visits in the early 1980s of Bruce Keeble to Michael Taylor to Peter Stevenson's explicit drawing on Spurgeon's documents after appointment as Principal at SWBC there are clear individual connections. In addition, the colleges have acted as a community of practice, with ideas and developments flowing between them. The yearly Staffs' Conference, meetings of the Principals, as well as other informal links have helped develop a shared practice. This shared journey is most clearly expressed in the document *Ministerial Formation in the British Baptist Colleges: A Commitment to Shared Practice*.

Formation, then, has developed as the habitus of the practice of preparation for British Baptists, as the structured and structuring structure which is shared by the colleges and which seeks integration and integrity as key aspects. But within a commitment to the integration of the three aspects represented by being, knowing and doing, there is also space for creative improvisation so that the three aspects might be given different weight or emphases in a different college. In pictorial form, the three circles may in fact be different sizes – the greater

³⁴⁵ Interview with PS p. 9 suggests that some Principals 'seek to rehabilitate training language'.

stress at Spurgeon's on training might make their 'doing' circle larger – and an examination of the operant theologies embedded in the curricula below explores this further.

Second, there have been clear developments in the way that all the colleges have moved away from a more traditional academic approach to theology and have developed courses shaped by the methodologies of practical theology. NBLC was the first to launch a fully contextual degree and others have followed in that direction. Alongside the commitment to contextualisation, the integration of theory and practice and theological reflection, there have been developments to ensure that all the different aspects of the curriculum are integrated into the validated programme, rather than standing as a separate pastoral studies strand, and an increasing commitment that the whole of the wider curriculum delivers the whole of formation. 'Academic' modules, for example, do not simply offer knowledge, but these are also understood to shape character and spirituality.³⁴⁶ This is in distinction to Foster *et al.*, who seem to divide the whole into different apprenticeships accomplished by distinct aspects of the whole curriculum,

Again, within this co-operative practice there are some practical differences, shaped by pedagogical and educational distinctions. Baptist colleges reflect the spectrum and diversity within practical theology of the way that theory and practice mutually influence each other. NLBC, for example, expresses the most distinct educational philosophy drawing on Freirean and wider liberation theology models, gives most space to the way that practice can shape theory, and pays the most attention at the beginning to the practice of theological reflection.

Again my own experience at Regent's fit into this same pattern of development. The Oxford University BTh, first developed in the mid-1990s, as an alternative to the traditional BA, was still shaped around the classic four-fold sub-divisions of theology, although with the different aspects taught contemporaneously not sequentially, with methodologies of theological reflection limited to certain

³⁴⁶ Foster *et al.*, *Educating Clergy*, pp. 7-8.

papers. The reworking of the BTh in 2014 offered some scope for further developments and aspects of practical theology methodologies are now in an increasing range of papers, but within an overall degree that still retains a more traditional shape of biblical studies, historical and systematic theology and practical theology. Both the desirability and practical possibilities of a fully contextual degree remain open and important questions.

The Pastoral Imagination

In terms of the pastoral imagination that each college seeks to develop there is also considerable overlap. Almost all of the adjectives above would be embraced by all the colleges, but given differing emphases. There would be very broad agreement that a shared pastoral imagination should be missional, reflective, contextual, spiritual, ecumenically sensitive, collaborative, and rooted in the Scriptural witness and the tradition of the church, particularly as expressed among Baptists. Evangelical would be more contested, because of concerns it may carry a very narrow meaning. Spurgeon's adopt this language most fully in its documentation, although we noted significant hesitancy in the interview to use this terminology. Where evangelical is taken in its broad meaning, of a commitment to the importance of Scripture, the place of conversion and baptism and the missional nature of the church, as expressed, for example, in the Declaration of Principle, it would find broad assent.

Within a shared pastoral imagination it is NBLC which seems to offer the most distinct emphases, being the most ecumenically committed, the most collaborative in their approach to ministry, understood partly in gendered terms, and the most committed to seeing the practices of both preparation and ministry through the lens of liberation theology and the quest for global justice.

There are also genuine differences in the way that professional language is adopted, which connects with understandings of leadership. It would appear that the five colleges would broadly assent to what was described in chapter two as the dialectical model of ministry rather than to the leadership paradigm.

Where leadership language is used it is with a sense of collaboration and service. But again within a broader agreement there are important differences. Spurgeon's most readily adopts leadership and professional language, and seeks to teach a range of views of leadership, so that students can develop their own understanding, but recognises that the breadth of their student body will shape these discussions. NBLC is the most collaborative in its approach to ministry, seeking to stress and inculcate a particular approach as Baptist, and so mitigate ecumenical influence at this point.³⁴⁷ Within a spectrum NBLC offers the strongest espoused view of a collaborative ministry and the dialectical model, while Spurgeon's seems to show the greatest influence of the leadership paradigm.

These findings do seem to confirm the way that the historical *habitus* of a college acts as a structured as well as structuring structure. The legacy of Michael Taylor has actually shaped all colleges, but the distinct ecumenical and liberation stress at NBLC corresponds most closely to his work, where there is, as expected, the strongest legacy. Equally the greater stress on leadership and professionalism that marked the work of former Principals at Spurgeon's, especially Paul Beasley-Murray and Michael Quicke, correlate with a greater continuing stress on these aspects of formation. The desire of Bristol to faithfully rework the pastoral imagination as expressed by Hugh Evans points to a willing embrace of that historical structuring.

The pastoral imagination here has been deliberately described using adjectives – which adjectives are the most appropriate in describing ministers – rather than trying to define the noun 'ministry'.³⁴⁸ The research has specifically not focused on differences expressed in functional, ontological or sacramental understandings of ministry and there are certainly different views among tutors about the nature of ordination. But these adjectival descriptions carry their own embedded theology and so shape the meaning of the noun, some, perhaps, more so than others. To describe ministers as missional, or collaborative or

³⁴⁷ Interview with RK, p. 4.

³⁴⁸ Interview with SF, pp. 1-2.

professional not only describes the way that ministers might shape their own practice but also suggests quite strongly something about the very essence of that practice. Or, in other words, being missional, or collaborative or professional cannot be purely functional but carries ontological undertones.

The Context

Alongside the understanding of the practice of preparation and the distinct pastoral imagination, a third important issue, shaped by and also influencing the other two aspects, is the specific context of each college. In fact, it is the context of each of the five Baptist colleges, shaped historically, strategically and theologically, that appears most distinct. This confirms the research of Foster *et al.* who suggest five factors which influence theological education, the first being campus setting and the fifth diversity of the student body.³⁴⁹

The colleges work within their own structured structures and these have affected location, validation and the constituency to which a college most immediately connects. One striking example is the decision of Regent's Park to move to Oxford in the 1920s, so that a Baptist presence would increase the Free Church contribution to one of the two historic universities and so the college, and so the Baptist Union, could benefit from all the resources and status of Oxford University.³⁵⁰ This decision has shaped Regent's on-going approach to formation. Whereas in the past one fundamental aspect of the shared context would have been full-time residential communities predominantly for Baptist ordinands, financially it has not been possible for any college to survive in this mode, resulting in a variety of strategic decisions about buildings, expanding student numbers and partnerships with other colleges.

The move to create the partnership around Luther King House is driven most clearly by explicit theological convictions, but financial considerations and geographical contingencies played a part in a move that was otherwise

³⁴⁹ Foster, *Educating Clergy*, pp. 43ff.

³⁵⁰ Cooper, *From Stepney*, pp. 84-6.

theologically shaped. The presence of Anglican colleges in Bristol, Cardiff and Oxford have led to varying degrees of partnership within ministerial formation, and the changing nature of church life and ethnic make-up in London has led to a distinct and increasingly varied context for Spurgeon's.

These contexts are partly chosen and partly contingent. All five contexts have become increasingly ecumenical, although this has shaped the pastoral imagination most significantly at NBLC. All five contexts have a range of other students who are not Baptist ordinands, although the context at Regent's Park is the broadest. All five contexts welcome independent students, although the number and diversity at Spurgeon's seems to be the most significant. The contexts of the colleges then offer ministerial students different experiences of formation, and this seems to be one of the most significant ways in which the five colleges remain distinct.

This is also one of the major underlying issues within the current review of ministry. Financial concerns have meant that there are, and have been, voices calling for the amalgamation of some or even all the colleges, for Baptist ordinands to be formed all together in one central location, or for ministerial formation to be devolved to Association Partnerships, perhaps without university validated courses. Yet context is of theological significance, particularly in terms of ecumenical relationships, and any discussions within the Baptist Union must pay close attention to the desired contexts of formation.

Operant Theologies

The Explicit Curriculum

Figure 2, below, shows the results when the curricula of the five Baptist Colleges were assessed as set out in chapter four. Once again, there are some significant overall similarities but there are also some real differences.

	Spurgeon's	Spurgeon's	Spurgeon's	Bristol	Bristol	SWBC	Northern	RPC
	Th	SD	Pastor	Mission	Mission	Hours	Hours	Hours
	Hours	Hours	Hours	Hours	Hours	Hours	Hours	Hours
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Bible	120.5	186.5	123.5	93.5	78.5	73.5	89.5	12.3%
	15.4%	19.2%	13.5%	10%	11%	12%	12.3%	
Doctrine	89.25	100.25	67	57	87.25	88	45.5	6.2%
	11.4%	10.3%	7.3%	6%	13%	15%	6.2%	
History	44	44	20	20	24	34	13	1.8%
	5.6%	4.5%	2%	2%	3%	6%	1.8%	
Ethics						12	16	2.2%
Mission	83.25	83.25	110.5	150.5	73.25	78	131.5	18.0%
	10.6%	8.6%	12%	16%	11%	13%	18.0%	
Preaching/Worship	42.25	42.25	75	75	28.75	61.5	92	12.6%
	5.4%	4.3%	8%	8%	4%	10%	12.6%	
Pastoral/Care	80.25	80.25	68	68	24.25	52.5	77.75	10.7%
	10.2%	8.3%	7%	7%	4%	9%	10.7%	
Spirituality/Personal Development	37	37	76	76	70.75	43.5	30.5	4.2%
	4.7%	3.8%	8%	8%	10%	7%	4.2%	
Leadership	49.25	49.25	12	12	24	15	17.5	2.4%
	6.3%	5.1%	1%	1%	3%	3%	2.4%	
Baptist Identity	37	48	30	30	20.25	28	40	5.5%
	4.7%	4.9%	3%	3%	3%	5%	5.5%	
Theological Reflection	6.25	6.25	72	72	48	27	37.75	5.2%
	0.8%	0.6%	8%	8%	7%	5%	5.2%	
Placement			70	70				
			7.66%	7.66%				
Quiet Days/Prayer Groups	102	102	75	75	85	36	75	10.3%
	13.0%	10.5%	8.2%	8.2%	12.3%	6.0%	10.3%	
Tutorials						39	15	2.1%
Other	2.5	2.5	35	35	6.25	9	21	2.9%
	0.3%	0.3%	3.83%	3.83%	0.91%	1.51%	2.9%	
Student Choice	91	190	80	80	120	28	28	3.8%
	11.6%	19.6%	9%	9%	17%	100%	3.8%	
Totals	784.5	971.5	914	914	690.25	597	730	100.0%
	100.0%	100.0%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100.0%	

Figure 2: curriculum in Baptist colleges

If sub-divided within a traditional scheme of Biblical, historical, systematic and practical theology, then it is significant how the majority of all the courses can be accounted for by practical theology. The figures for biblical, historical and systematic theology might increase in recognition that sessions on mission, preaching and pastoral care will contain doctrinal and biblical input, but it is also significant that such input is shaped explicitly by the concerns of practice. Such a rebalancing towards practical theology and an integrated approach has happened across the colleges and reflects the espoused theology of integration discussed above.

In particular the concern for mission, expressed in both the representative voice and in the espoused approaches shared by all the colleges, is confirmed by its place in the curricula. In all the colleges it is given the most time amongst the areas more explicitly connected to practice, and is one of the highest three subjects in all colleges.

The two columns from Spurgeon's raise the important issue of college-based (BD) and congregation-based (BTh) patterns of formation, which transcend colleges. Spurgeon's college-based BD students have more contact hours than the BTh, and all of the additional hours centre on the more traditional subjects of Biblical studies and doctrine. More strikingly still, the Spurgeon's college-based BD course offers 32% of the curriculum on Biblical studies, doctrine and history, compared to only 18% on the Bristol Mission congregation-based course. There is scope for some further work here that could examine the Bristol Mission course in much greater detail, including the content of all the teaching sessions, to explore just how much Biblical, doctrinal and historical teaching is included in mission focussed sessions.

Further, the two pathways with the most student choice are the residential courses at Spurgeon's and SWBC. Congregation-based courses which have to deliver the teaching in a more restricted time-period necessarily involve the restriction of choice, although there is still the more limited choice at Regent's and Northern and more sustained choice at Spurgeon's and SWBC. This reduces

opportunity both for student-led learning and for space where students can begin to explore particular specialties and interests. Within the whole patterns of college-based and congregation-based formation, then, the balance between the three elements of knowledge, skills and character is arranged differently. Those who are congregation-based have significant time devoted to the practice of ministry and so developing skills, and those who are college-based have greater time for academic study of more traditional subjects-.

Not only do the majority of Baptist ordinands now prepare through congregation-based patterns, increasing pressures on these patterns are likely to result in students being in college for less time. There is clear evidence here that the majority of Baptist ordinands, while engaging increasingly in the practice of the ministry, will have had significantly less time to study the more traditional subjects of Biblical studies, doctrine and history, with very limited possibility of becoming proficient in a biblical language, and less chance to pursue particular interests. The latter may be compensated for by students pursuing study at Masters' level, but the pressure on curricula and limited contact hours will not decrease and so the detail of formation pathways remains an important discussion.

There are some important differences between the colleges. The courses are constructed in slightly different ways. Bristol is the only college to give formal credit for engaging in a placement, although the experiences of placements are built on in other colleges, and Northern and Regent's Park are the two colleges that give a significant place to tutorials. There is also a considerable variety in the contact hours of different colleges, with the highest overall contact hours offered by Spurgeon's college-based route.³⁵¹ These differences might be shaped by

³⁵¹ Spurgeon's works on 24 contact hours per 10 credits, although in practice teaches 22 hours plus a reading week. Bristol has 20 contact hours per 10 credits at level 4 and 10 contact hours per 10 credits at levels 5 and 6. NBLC and SWBC have 12 contact hours per 10 credits. At Regent's only 6 contact hours per 10 credits is required by University regulations.

regulations of validating universities and by pragmatic issues of time and money, but there are also pedagogical influences at play.³⁵²

All the colleges are committed to theological reflection as a core aspect of the whole curriculum, but include it in different ways. Spurgeon's seeks to integrate theological reflection into all its areas³⁵³ and so it appears to have a very low figure. Yet the other colleges seek to do this as well, in addition to setting aside time for teaching and practice, and this suggests some difference of approach. A more detailed examination of pedagogical practices across the whole curriculum would be needed to be more certain, but these figures suggest that theological reflection has significantly less space at Spurgeon's.

Regent's offers the most time to both preaching and worship and also pastoral care, with the least contact time devoted to spirituality and personal development. By contrast SWBC gives the most time to spirituality and personal development and the least time to both preaching / worship and pastoral care. Again, further exploration may help decide whether this does relate to a greater element of training in the skills of preaching, leading worship and pastoral care at Regent's Park and greater emphasis on formation at SWBC.

The Implicit Curriculum

Figure 3, below, shows the results of the patterns of worship at the five Baptist colleges, as set out in chapter four.

³⁵² 'Contact hours', and their definition, has been a significant issue for universities and students in recent years. See, for example, work from the QAA, <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/contact-hours.pdf>.

³⁵³ Interview with RS, p. 12.

Patterns of Worship					
	Spurgeon's	Bristol	NBLC	SWBC	Regent's
Short services	30	56		63	34
Longer services of Word	24	3	12	17	20
Eucharistic services	4	16	12	4	6
Ecumenical services		4	all	1	2
Retreat days	3	3	2	2	1
Prayer Groups	24	22		20	22

Figure 3: patterns of worship at Baptist colleges

In all the colleges formation happens in the wider context of corporate worship, which is an important integrative element and key aspect of the implicit curriculum, although the nature of corporate worship has changed with the move away from the semi-monastic models of a residential community. Once again, behind the figures, there are key aspects of a shared practice. All the colleges have one central weekly worship service a week in term time for all ministerial students, which are supplemented in most colleges by shorter 'daily prayers', which students attend on those days when they are in college, together with occasional retreat days. Differences emerge particularly around the balance between Eucharistic and non-Eucharistic services and the ecumenical experience of worship. The figures for Bristol and SWBC for shorter services are higher as their pattern is two shorter services plus a longer service each week, compared to one of each for Spurgeon's and Regent's.

NBLC appears the most distinct with only one longer service each week, which is always ecumenical, with no other services or prayer groups. This clearly offers the most ecumenical experience, but also both the least 'Baptist' and also the least opportunity for corporate worship to shape formation. This obviously raises

issues about how worship is deemed to be Baptist. Spurgeon's worship, for example, reflecting the variety of the student body, often has a more Pentecostal and BME flavour alongside patterns that will be considered more Baptist. The implicit curriculum is significant in shaping the experience of preparation, but the less frequent time in college puts greater emphasis on the local congregation as a context for liturgical formation.

Conclusion

My first empirical research question was:

What is the pastoral imagination which the Baptist colleges individually are seeking to inculcate in their students?

In this chapter I have answered this question by outlining the pastoral imagination of the other four Baptist colleges and have suggested that there are some clear differences within a significant overall shared practice between the Baptist colleges. The pastoral imaginations have been expressed by both espoused and operant theologies, with significant correlation between them in the different colleges. There are some clear pedagogical differences in the way that the practice of formation is delivered. There are clear differences in the contexts of the five colleges that significantly shape the experience of formation. There are also clear differences between the experiences of congregation-based and college-based ordinands that transcend the particular college.

But there is wider agreement that the practice of preparation is best understood as formation, which involves integration, integrity and contextualisation. Ministry is understood in strongly missional terms, and there is some shared understanding of ministry as collaborative and dialectical. This confirms the representative position established through the literature and in particular confirms the correlation between the practice of preparation in the individual colleges and the espoused position in the shared document *Ministerial Formation in the British Baptist Colleges*.

The empirical research has also highlighted areas that could be developed further. For example a much more complete immersive experience of participant observation in the individual colleges would help explore the differences that approaches to pedagogy and context might make to the experience of students.

My second empirical research question was:

Is there a particular combination of practices and elements of a pastoral imagination that could be considered distinctly Baptist?

The results of the research have suggested some aspects of shared practice and considering a sample of non-Baptist institutions in the next chapter will help discern what might be described as distinctly Baptist.

6.

Discerning a Pastoral Imagination:

Some Findings Among non-Baptist Institutions

Espoused Theologies

On the basis of the document analysis and interviews, I offer here a suggestion of both the way that the practice of preparation is understood and also of the espoused pastoral imagination being developed in a sample of five non-Baptist institutions in England and Wales. The findings will suggest points of similarity and difference with the five Baptist colleges and, by locating the Baptist colleges within broader ecumenical approaches, point towards some aspects of a Baptist emphasis in the preparation of ministers.

Institution A

Institution A is a single denomination, principally full-time residential college whose core activity has been the preparing of candidates within that denomination. It is set within a wider university context and is part of a strong ecumenical partnership.

Different language for the practice of preparation is used interchangeably. Training is used quite extensively in a variety of documents, and in the institution's most recent submission to QiFP it is by far the dominant language. Elsewhere, in a published lecture by the Principal, the language of theological education is by far the most frequent. There is evidence – the appearance of training and formation language in distinct clusters – that some documents may be composite, drawn together from different sources and adapted over time. There is also evidence that as an institution it has moved from a more training paradigm – one document rejects a simply utilitarian view of education³⁵⁴ – and

³⁵⁴ Interview A, p. 7.

would now firmly embrace the understanding and language of formation as a holistic overarching description. Their handbook is shaped around the language of ministerial formation and new trust deeds set out the institution's aims as including 'training in theology and formation for ministries'. This is confirmed in the interview with the Principal who would want 'to use all three words, but make formation king'.³⁵⁵ Such language has the inherent danger of suggesting a 'sausage machine mentality',³⁵⁶ but helpfully stresses that there is a tradition to inhabit.

Whereas the word 'minister' is explicitly used to describe those who are ordained and lay, with no distinction, the Principal's lecture uses the language of 'leader' throughout. The recent inspection submission refers to leaders in a number of key places and the website suggests that their vision is to train church leaders. On the other hand, professional language tends to be avoided,³⁵⁷ accepted as an adjective but not as a noun.³⁵⁸

The documentation points to an espoused pastoral imagination, but different documents offer different lists! The website points to six areas, the general handbook four areas, the tutorial handbook four different key objectives, the inspection submission seven suggestions under 'curriculum for education and formation', together with six areas of development given by wider denominational documents. Drawing on this document analysis and an interview with the Principal, the pastoral imagination that Institution A seeks to develop might be described as:

- **Wise.** The institution aims 'to produce wise ... leaders who know how to step back from situations, to read, to think and to seek God's Word in the

³⁵⁵ Interview A, p. 7.

³⁵⁶ Interview A, p. 7.

³⁵⁷ The inspection submission, p. 17, describes one of the strengths of the Institution as a strong academic team 'committed to developing ... the appropriate professionalization of pastoral theology'.

³⁵⁸ Interview A, p. 3.

words and actions of all kinds of people and places',³⁵⁹ and this is reflected in the inspection report and the Principal's lecture. Such wisdom is explicitly understood in practical terms, drawing on phronesis, the key to which is the ability to integrate theory and practice within personal integrity and maturity, so that being a reflective and reflexive practitioner is a key aspect of being wise. Yet Institution A clearly values its very strong academic heritage and the importance of being within a rigorous community of scholarship,³⁶⁰ and is keen to offer more 'traditional' subjects such as biblical languages alongside practical theology, so that the wider Christian tradition might contribute to the development of wisdom.

- **Prayerful.** This is the first response in the interview,³⁶¹ understood not in a narrowly pious or individual sense, but used to express spiritual maturity, serious discipleship and living out of a shared and corporate tradition. As a 'residential community of prayer and scholarship'³⁶² shared worship remains a significant feature of the institution's common life³⁶³ and is 'an intentional tool of formation'.³⁶⁴
- **Ecumenical.** The institution is part of a wider ecumenical partnership, and is committed to forming people who are rooted in their particular denomination but thoroughly ecumenically shaped and committed. Much of the learning happens in an ecumenical setting, including academic content and shared life and worship, and the particular and specific context of an ecumenical partnership has been 'hugely important'³⁶⁵ for the formation of ministers. Thus this has been very positively embraced in the pastoral imagination. Yet being ecumenically aware and sensitive

³⁵⁹ Inspection submission, p. 21.

³⁶⁰ Inspection submission, p. 4.

³⁶¹ Interview A, p. 1.

³⁶² Inspection submission, p. 5.

³⁶³ Inspection submission, p. 5.

³⁶⁴ Inspection submission, p. 5.

³⁶⁵ Interview A, p. 9.

has also helped ordinands to 'feel competent and confident to be ministers' in their own tradition.³⁶⁶

Institution B

Institution B is a non-denominational college, whose students come from a broad evangelical background and which has a residential community at its heart, although it has diversified to include study through block weeks, at other satellite campuses and on a part-time basis. It has a strong evangelical self-understanding with a commitment to Scripture and mission. Institution B has the status of collaborative partner with its validating university, through whom it offers two BAs and two MAs.

The language of training dominates in all the documentation, and is clearly Institution B's self-understanding of its work, which might be summarised as training effective Christian leaders. The language of formation is in fact avoided, used only once in a quote from the QAA Theology and Religious Studies Benchmark statement.³⁶⁷ However, the institution's commitment to a holistic approach to education and training is stressed repeatedly, combining and integrating spiritual, practical, academic (or intellectual) and relational aspects.³⁶⁸ The end of year *Supervisor's Report* concentrates more on character, relationships and self-awareness than on skills. Understanding formation as life long, Institution B seeks to avoid the impression that it can fully form someone in three years. It may also reflect the Brethren roots of the institution and a more general uncertainty among an evangelical constituency about language with a Catholic origin.³⁶⁹

Institution B is committed to practice, and to practice-based learning, and students are expected to learn both in and by reflecting on practice. The degree programme is not fully contextual, but all modules are included in the validated

³⁶⁶ Interview A, p. 10.

³⁶⁷ QAA Self-Evaluation Document, p. 14.

³⁶⁸ These four adjectives appear repeatedly; see interview B, p. 5.

³⁶⁹ Interview B, p. 13.

degree and the desire is that practice connects somewhere to every module and all aspects of the course.³⁷⁰ There is a strong sense that integration is understood in quite applied terms – applied theology is the description of the course – in which the theory is worked out in practice rather than a more critical conversation between theory and practice,³⁷¹ although email correspondence after the interview revealed a range of opinions within the institution.

This stress on training is linked to a particular emphasis on the employability of students, as the college invites current professionals in and advertises possible employment opportunities, but also partly shaped by the QAA self-evaluation process.³⁷² With such an emphasis on training and employability Institution B seems to fit happily into current higher education practices which have a strong utilitarian focus, tempered with its own stress on holistic growth and maturity. Professional language is used frequently and positively, as students develop professional competencies, tutors share their professional experience and practice, and with a MA course explicitly conceived as continuing professional development.³⁷³ Institution B does not use the language of ‘ministers’, which may also be shaped by its Brethren roots, and offers no particular understanding of ordained ministry. The preferred language is that of practitioners or leaders.

Drawing on the document analysis and an interview with one of the vice-Principals, the pastoral imagination that Institution B seeks to develop might be described as:

- **Growing in maturity:** Institution B’s current strategic plan starts with ‘growth as disciples’ and in the interview developing Christian character was stressed as the most significant hope for students.³⁷⁴ In recognition of the great breadth of age and initial maturity of the student body such growth might be summarized as growth in maturity. The exact nature of

³⁷⁰ QAA Self-Evaluation, pp. 66-7.

³⁷¹ Interview B, pp. 16-7.

³⁷² Their two special themes for 2013-15 were employability and student participation.

³⁷³ QAA Self-Evaluation, pp. 26, 30, 66-7.

³⁷⁴ Interview B, p. 6.

this growth is not spelt out in detail, although a consultation with a group of professional advisors drawn together produced a list of twenty qualities they would hope to identify in graduating students. This consultation process has led to qualities such as emotional intelligence being given a higher place, and self-understanding is a major theme developed within the course.³⁷⁵

- **Effective:** Institution B understands its primary role as equipping students to be effective practitioners,³⁷⁶ and being equipped with tools to be effective Christian leaders is the second point of the strategic plan. The stress throughout is on applied theology as faith worked out on the ground,³⁷⁷ and alongside character the developing of key skills is frequently stressed.³⁷⁸
- **Professional:** Professional language is warmly embraced with a desire that leaving students can obtain employment and flourish in those settings.³⁷⁹ The *Programme Specifications* for the BA includes the ‘demonstration of excellent professional approaches and skills’, and the second year course contains specific sessions on writing CVs and being interviewed.³⁸⁰ The fact that Institution B teaches youth and community work and is accredited by the National Youth Agency, drawing on a strongly utilitarian and professional language, influences the general approach of the college.

Institution C

Institution C is a part-time non-residential ecumenical course, drawing students from a number of denominations. Students work via distance learning, in local

³⁷⁵ Interview B, p. 14.

³⁷⁶ *QAA Self-Evaluation*, p. 4.

³⁷⁷ Interview B, p. 17.

³⁷⁸ Interview B, p. 1.

³⁷⁹ Interview B, p. 10

³⁸⁰ Interview B, p. 10.

groups, in supervised ministry practice and gather for short regular residential blocks. The majority of students exit with a Foundation Degree, which can be topped up post-ordination to a BA.

It offers a fully contextual and integrated course, combining together Biblical studies, doctrine and practical theology in all their modules, and issues of integration and critical theological reflection are foundational to the course. There is no student choice in the course, which is designed around an explicit theological journey. Placement work is significant and is set within a clear missiological understanding. The overall explicit curriculum is wider than the validated modules with residential weeks providing teaching which undergirds, expands and complements the distance learning rather than always being directly related to a distinct module, while also giving significant time for both corporate worship and small groups.

Rooted historically in a commitment to education and training, the aims of Institution C are now expressed in terms of education, training and formation, which both represent the three distinct strands,³⁸¹ but are also used to describe the whole process of preparation. The language of training dominates in the documents, and in the inspection submission and in the very detailed *Student Handbook* training appears significantly more than the other two combined,³⁸² although, like other institutions, it is increasingly embracing formation language,³⁸³ used with a number of qualifying adjectives, such as personal, ministerial and spiritual. There is again some evidence of composite and developing documents: the inspection submission includes three pages taken from an earlier document that offers an ‘articulate and inspiring vision’³⁸⁴ employing only formation language.

³⁸¹ *Programmes Handbook*, pp. 7, 29.

³⁸² In the *Programmes Handbook*, training is used 218x, compared to formation (37x) and education (48x). Although ‘initial ministerial education’ is set up as the normative language ‘initial ministerial training’ actually occurs four times as often.

³⁸³ Interview C, p. 8.

³⁸⁴ QiFP *Report*, p.28.

Professional and leadership language is embraced to some degree for it offers ‘professional training for public ministry which meets the criteria of sponsoring churches’.³⁸⁵ But in other ways this is undercut in the interview, which tends to avoid both sets of language.³⁸⁶ A representative approach to ordained ministry, concerned for the ministry of all, is generally stressed, although it is interesting that the curriculum approval process asked that the self-description ‘training for public ministry’ be expanded to ‘training for public, ordained and eucharistic ministry’³⁸⁷ – and alerts us to the fact that a pastoral imagination in a particular institution may also be shaped from outside.

Institution C seeks, in its own words, to be theological, doxological, missiological, contextual, ecumenical and collaborative. Changes in denominational practices mean that its ecumenical nature is under threat and although being directed towards God’s world is part of its orientation,³⁸⁸ it does not actually seem to feature strongly. Drawing on this document analysis and an interview with the Principal, the pastoral imagination that Institution C seeks to develop might be described as:

- **Reflective:** Foundational to the way the whole course has been designed is critical reflection worked out through a contextual degree and in assessment portfolios. The aim of the course includes developing reflective practitioners ‘marked by wisdom, empathy and compassion’ who understand the importance of context³⁸⁹ and who can ‘connect thought and practice in rigorous, creative and prayerful ways’.³⁹⁰ Alongside this the course seeks to engender an ongoing desire to learn and grow rather than any sense of completion.³⁹¹ A distinctive feature of the overall course is the Local Learning Group, made up of people

³⁸⁵ *Programmes Handbook*, p. 7.

³⁸⁶ Interview C, pp. 4-5.

³⁸⁷ Inspection submission, p 12.

³⁸⁸ *Programmes Handbook*, pp. 5-6.

³⁸⁹ *Programmes Handbook* p. 7.

³⁹⁰ *Programmes Handbook*, p. 36.

³⁹¹ Interview C, p. 1.

beyond the course, in which the students themselves lead reflective learning on the module being studied.

- **Mature in Christ:** This is the key answer offered in interview, which is expressed in strongly psychological terms as part of wider human development, as personality and character issues are resolved, but within a relationship with God that provides 'a fundamental confidence'.³⁹² Its aim is that 'ministerial development and spiritual formation are fully mainstreamed'³⁹³ in all its different modules.

Institution D

Institution D is a denominational residential college, which has expanded in recent years to include a broader student base and wider educational pathways. Within the evangelical tradition and with a strong reformed heritage it has an explicit theologically conservative standpoint. It works with a validating university partner offering Foundation Degrees, Honours Degrees and a variety of postgraduate courses. Until 2014 the college had combined a degree with its own unaccredited certificate in ministry but this is now being fully integrated into the degree programmes.

Institution D also draws on the varied language of education, training and formation in which information, skills and spiritual depth form a coherent whole.³⁹⁴ In the documentation the language of training is the most dominant³⁹⁵ whereas the interview uses training and formation more evenly, with just the concern that formation might carry particular meanings from the denominational centre.³⁹⁶ The *Programme Specifications* highlight skills, although this might be shaped by the QAA framework. The development of

³⁹² Interview C, p. 1.

³⁹³ *Programmes Handbook*, p. 5.

³⁹⁴ *Prospectus*, p. 6.

³⁹⁵ The *Prospectus*, for example, uses training 22x, formation 4x and education once.

³⁹⁶ Interview D, p. 9.

Christian character is stressed, information must go together with formation and transformation,³⁹⁷ often employing the language of Christian graces; throughout the course ‘personal formation is a constant focus’³⁹⁸ with a focus on ‘character, competence, chemistry and conviction’.³⁹⁹ There are times when aspects of character are described in quite strongly cognitive terms, so maturity is based on seeing the Bible as a whole and understanding how the different aspects of theology build on each other,⁴⁰⁰ and students are encouraged to ‘grow in the intellectual graces of truthfulness, humility, charity, rigour and godliness’,⁴⁰¹ but the interview offers a more holistic view of formation into the image of Christ.

The reshaped course explicitly includes theological reflection for the first time, which is treated as a discrete area generally linked with placements,⁴⁰² and models that apply biblical truth rather than develop critical conversations seem preferred as students ‘trace through from a specific area of systematic or historical theology to its practical implications’,⁴⁰³ and integration as a whole is principally found within Scripture.⁴⁰⁴ The theme of integration is important, including the way that the whole of the broad curriculum contributes to the whole process of preparation,⁴⁰⁵ and the recent development of the Foundation Degree as practice-based learning has been a significant change.⁴⁰⁶

Drawing on this document analysis and an interview with one of the vice-Principals, the pastoral imagination that Institution D seeks to develop might be described as:

³⁹⁷ *Strategic Plan*, p. 4; Interview D, pp. 8-9.

³⁹⁸ *Learning Pathways Brochure*.

³⁹⁹ *Aims for Students at Institution D (handout)*.

⁴⁰⁰ *Prospectus*, p. 6.

⁴⁰¹ *BA Programme Specifications*, p. 1.

⁴⁰² Interview D, pp. 11-12.

⁴⁰³ *BA Programme Specifications*, p. 2.

⁴⁰⁴ *Strategic Plan*, p. 6.

⁴⁰⁵ Interview D, p. 8.

⁴⁰⁶ Interview D, p. 10.

- **Christlike:** This is the first answer in the interview⁴⁰⁷ and is used a number of times. It links to the commitment of Institution D to a formation process, even when sending churches would rather the students simply gain knowledge.⁴⁰⁸ This is supported by the various references in the *Prospectus* to the expectation that the experience will be positively transformative for students.
- **Biblically literate:** The integrating aspect of Scripture means ‘to understand it in depth’,⁴⁰⁹ pedagogically combining a complete overview, in-depth study of key biblical books and biblical language study.⁴¹⁰ The mission statement of Institution D is described as ‘equipping people to serve with a grasp of God’s revealed truth that is adaptable, deep, broad and integrated’.⁴¹¹ In the published stories of former students now in ministry the greatest gratitude for the college course is for Biblical insight and doctrinal truth.⁴¹²
- **Effective as preachers:** Within its reformed heritage it sees preaching as something unique and the foundational ministry of the church’s life, thereby ‘enabling missionary congregations by pastoring through teaching’. It is therefore the central, although not only, ministry task for which students need training. Behind such a conviction is the foundational place of Scripture and Biblical studies, reflected in all the college’s documents.
- **Adaptable:** The College’s mission statement uses four adjectives to describe the ‘grasp of God’s revealed truth’ the first of which is adaptable

⁴⁰⁷ Interview D, p. 1.

⁴⁰⁸ Interview D, p. 10.

⁴⁰⁹ *Prospectus*, p. 4.

⁴¹⁰ *Prospectus*, p. 5.

⁴¹¹ *Strategic Plan*, p. 4.

⁴¹² The *Inspection Report* comments that students are seen by others as good preachers and communicators, p. 28.

and this 'distinguishes the college's programmes'.⁴¹³ Based on an understanding of culture that is in significant flux, those who are being prepared for a lifetime of ministry will need to adapt their practice several times during their future ministry to respond to changing culture. The undergraduate course deliberately begins with a module on culture, the college has developed a significant cross-cultural strand, and modules on apologetics and world religions are both compulsory.⁴¹⁴

Institution E

Institution E is a single denomination college that embraces both a residential community and those preparing for ministry on a part-time non-residential basis. It relates to two universities and has some limited ecumenical partnerships.

Language of education, training and formation is used in the documentation both interchangeably and with some inconsistency. The *Formational Handbook* actually uses the language of training more than twice as often,⁴¹⁵ although this is partly explained by the inclusion of denominational documents in appendices where training language dominates. Generally training describes the overall preparation in which the formational is a key element.⁴¹⁶ However, other evidence suggests that the college is working more within a formational paradigm. *Information for Supervisors* and the *Placement and Practical Theology Handbook*⁴¹⁷ give templates for reports on students which are significantly weighted towards formational rather than training issues and the interview confirmed formation would be the preferred overall descriptor.⁴¹⁸

⁴¹³ *Strategic Plan*, p. 4.

⁴¹⁴ *Learning Pathways*.

⁴¹⁵ Training is used 71x, formation 31x, and education 1x.

⁴¹⁶ *Formational Handbook*, p. 3. *Guide to Foundation Degree* and *Guide to MA* use training language predominantly.

⁴¹⁷ *Information for Supervisors: Long Summer Placement*, pp.7-10; *Placement and Practical Theology Handbook*, pp. 29-30.

⁴¹⁸ Interview E, pp. 5-6.

Formation is described as ‘academic, personal, liturgical, ministerial and spiritual’⁴¹⁹ and within this, liturgical formation seems to be a significant aspect of the overall preparation, for worship ‘transforms us as we grow into the image and likeness of God’⁴²⁰ and ‘provides the overarching context for all our learning and being together’.⁴²¹

For Institution E methodologies of critical theological reflection are fundamental, together with the integration of education, training and formation into a whole. One reason for retaining formation as an element of the whole is that ‘it would be entirely inappropriate to treat such honest self-reflection as an academic exercise’.⁴²² Placements are central and ‘the crucial aspect of every placement ... is the critical theological reflection which stimulates authentic integration.’⁴²³ This integration is not in academic achievement or ministerial skills but understood as a ‘growth in wisdom, habit of life, and representative role’.⁴²⁴ The most recent inspection report also recognises the distinct way that the two validating universities handle integration, with one being rather frustratingly more fragmented.⁴²⁵

The process of preparation is part of a lifelong commitment of discipleship, and is both ‘a more intense awareness of the spiritual journey we share with all Christian disciples’,⁴²⁶ while also something distinct. Some documents speak of the ‘transition’⁴²⁷ from being a lay member of the church to being ordained, made more complicated by the breadth of churchmanship in the college.

⁴¹⁹ *Formational Handbook*, p. 12.

⁴²⁰ *Worship Handbook*, p. 4.

⁴²¹ *Ministry Course Worship Handbook*, p. 3.

⁴²² *Formation Handbook*, p. 4.

⁴²³ *Placement and Practical Theology Handbook*, p. 3.

⁴²⁴ *Formational Handbook*, p. 5.

⁴²⁵ *QjFP Report*, p. 31.

⁴²⁶ *Formational Handbook*, p 10.

⁴²⁷ *Second and Final Year Placements: Information for Supervisors*, p. 1.

Alongside this, one of the key areas of learning from a placement is described with professional language.⁴²⁸

Drawing on the document analysis and an interview with the Director of Pastoral Studies, the pastoral imagination that Institution E seeks to develop might be described as:

- **Reflective:** at the heart of the espoused understanding is the desire for ministers to be reflective practitioners, something which is more than a skill but becomes ‘habitually part of their understanding and approach to ministry’.⁴²⁹ Reflective presentations on placements, which explicitly draw on tools like journaling, critical incident reports and verbatim reports, are seen as central.⁴³⁰ Such reflection involves a significant degree of reflexive practice as ‘formational theology on the course will focus very largely on personal reflection’⁴³¹ expressed in self-awareness and self-assessment.
- **Spiritual:** the espoused place of worship in the institution’s life, together with the quiet days, a retreat in daily life and the role of spiritual directors suggests that the spiritual growth of students is a key aspect of Institution E’s understanding. Although the language of training dominates the website, there is also the stress there on ministerial and spiritual formation,⁴³² and denominational expectations are interpreted not in academic achievement or ministerial skills, but growth in wisdom and habit of life.⁴³³ There is a sense ministerial formation is understood within a virtue ethic framework.

⁴²⁸ *Placement and Practical Theology Handbook*, p. 20.

⁴²⁹ Interview E, p. 1.

⁴³⁰ *Information for Supervisors: Long Summer Placements*.

⁴³¹ *Formational Handbook*, p. 4.

⁴³² *Formational Handbook*, p. 3.

⁴³³ *Formational Handbook*, p. 3.

- **Integrated:** Not only is the wider practice of formation ‘much more demanding and far more enriching than a purely academic course of study’,⁴³⁴ Institution E places significant expectation on the individual to be able to integrate the various aspects of the process of preparation for themselves as part of personal growth towards maturity.

Some Reflections

The same three issues that we observed in the previous chapter, around the language and understanding of the practice of preparation, the nature of the pastoral imagination and the importance of context come to the fore again here.

The Practice of Preparation

The same diversity and confusion of language exists in these institutions. Three of the institutions are clearly on the same journey and, while training language still dominates documents, are clearly moving towards describing the whole practice of preparation as formation. One institution avoids the language of formation clearly preferring the language of training and another uses formation language but more ambivalently. Is this simply a matter of language, as all institutions are committed to character development as an integral aspect, or is there something more substantial behind it? Although there is this shared concern for character development, one likely correlation is that the two more conservative and explicitly evangelical institutions have more reservations about the language of formation and prefer the language of training. Alongside hesitancy about formation language in Institution B sits a particular concern for the development of skills. While stressing that the first thing they look for is character, Institution B stresses the development of skills more than other institutions.⁴³⁵

⁴³⁴ *Formation Handbook*, p. 3.

⁴³⁵ Interview B, pp. 13-4.

In a number of the institutions there is also similar evidence of the gradual development of formation language with an analysis of the documents showing them to be composite and developed over time. In Institution C the most strongly formative language comes from a slightly older document inserted into the handbook, but the general move, based on the interviews, is towards formation language. This would clearly suggest that the Baptist colleges are part of a wider development among those engaged in the practice of preparation towards the formation paradigm, and that within the range encountered here the Baptist colleges are generally at the forefront of this development.

Integration is of central importance to the five institutions. This is expressed in different ways, but all five institutions offer holistic courses combining elements often designated as education, training and formation and also seek ways to connect theory and practice together. Institution C has developed a fully contextual degree in a similar way to NBLC, whereas the others offer varying approaches to this aspect of integration within the curriculum.

In terms of the integration of theory and practice all five institutions now include theological reflection, but practised in different ways. Again, in the two more conservative institutions theological reflection seems to be used in a more 'applied' way, in which theory is worked out, even if the conversation begins with practice, and for Institution D this is a very recent addition, still on the fringe of the curriculum. In other institutions, especially C and E, theological reflection is both central to the whole curriculum and understood as a critical conversation between theory and practice.

The understanding of the relationship between the different aspects of the curriculum and the whole process of preparation varies. Institution D explicitly intends that all aspects of the whole curriculum engage in education, training and formation,⁴³⁶ whereas the interviewee in Institution E expressed frustration about the lack of an overarching unity between learning and formation through

⁴³⁶ Institution D, pp. 8-9.

academic modules, community life and placements.⁴³⁷ There seems to be, again, a greater variety of approaches among these five institutions, and although integrative aspects of language, practice and the whole curriculum are shared beyond any particular denomination Baptist colleges seem to be among those seeking to develop this widespread integration the most and further reflection on how the whole of the broad curriculum provides the whole of formation remains important.

The Pastoral Imagination

While, as expected, there are significant areas of overlap with each other and with the Baptist colleges, there are also important points of difference. All the institutions are concerned for character and spirituality as part of a holistic approach, but institutions B and D have a stronger activist element that stresses skills. The stress on effective preaching in Institution D contrasts with the recognition in Institution E that their students might be preaching for the very first time as part of their first year summer placement.⁴³⁸ Picturing this visually, the 'skills' circle in our Venn diagram appears to be larger in institutions B and D than the others. On the other hand for Institution A, though certainly not discounting skills, it appears the smallest circle.

'Missional' appears in the pastoral imagination of three of the four Baptist colleges, while it does not find a place in the other five institutions. This is clearly a matter of degree, and, to an extent, subjective.⁴³⁹ The other institutions certainly recognise and respond, in different ways, to the current context of the church, but there is a clear suggestion that for the Baptist colleges this has a stronger place. Two of the Baptist colleges have stressed the importance of a global influence on ministry, shaped by experience and in one case an explicit liberation emphasis. Such an emphasis was not found in these other institutions.

⁴³⁷ Interview E, p. 8.

⁴³⁸ *Information for Supervisors: Long Summer Placement*, p. 2.

⁴³⁹ The pastoral imaginations of all the institutions were prepared separately and then only later compared.

Within these five institutions there is a variety of approaches to leadership. Professional language is most strongly embraced by Institution B but was used much more cautiously by Institutions A, C and E, especially by those interviewed. Leadership language is used to some degree by all five institutions, although more cautiously in some than others. In a non-denominational setting where students come from many traditions leadership language seems to be embraced as a helpful generic term which avoids the theological complexities of ministerial language. On the other hand, Institution A, a denominational college, develops leadership language in its documentation alongside a wide-ranging use of the language of ministry.

To some degree this supports the notion that the dominance of leadership language among churches is partly due to the uncertainty and diverse understandings about the nature of ministry. In some settings leadership language may offer what appears to be a more neutral possibility free from some of the long-standing ecclesial debates, although bringing its own cultural shaping.

The Context

One of the features which distinguishes the five institutions from each other and from the five Baptist colleges is again context: the inspection report for one of the institutions comments on problems resulting from a residential community of mainly intelligent, competitive young men. A number of aspects relating to context help further reflections on the Baptist colleges.

First, two of the institutions have an explicit ecumenical context, and this aspect features most strongly in their pastoral imaginations. But current changes for Institution C confirm the fragility of such partnerships, as well as their importance. These ecumenical partnerships may, again, result from a mixture of historic, pragmatic and intentional reasons but underline the significance this has for the pastoral imagination. It challenges the Baptist colleges about the intentionality of their current contexts.

Secondly, four of the five institutions continue a strong residential pattern and stress, in different ways, the importance of the gathered community. I have noted the way that the Baptist colleges, by contrast, have all developed more dispersed communities based on congregation-based patterns of formation and some of the issues this has raised.

Thirdly, while congregation-based patterns dominate, the Baptist colleges have a shared commitment that formation cannot be achieved through on-line study. Such a position receives some challenge from Institution C, which is by no means restricted to on-line modules, but it does mean that the overall time that the wider formational community gather together is much more limited. Baptist colleges are also beginning to rethink patterns of formation that might both draw on developing technology and result in less time physically together for students.⁴⁴⁰

Fourthly, these five institutions have a number of university settings, and I suggested above that the strongly utilitarian ethos of modern universities and the QAA framework is a factor that shapes the overall context of an institution. This may resonate with wider concerns of a college, as it seems to with Institution B, or be an aspect a college explicitly works against.⁴⁴¹ On the other hand, these institutions have also developed Foundation Degrees in theology, partly attractive for being two-year courses, which have an explicit practice-based element to them. Such contexts clearly are not neutral and this raises fundamental questions about a theology of higher education, the place of ministerial formation in the modern university and what those institutions engaging in ministerial formation have to offer the wider university.

⁴⁴⁰ The Baptist Staffs' Conference in 2015 considered teaching in the digital age.

⁴⁴¹ See Interview E, pp. 8-9.

Operant Theologies

The Explicit Curriculum

Figure 4, below, shows the results when the curricula of the five non-Baptist institutions were assessed as set out in chapter four. A number of reflections can be made of similarities and differences between the five institutions themselves and then with the five Baptist colleges.

In the majority of the categories the highest or lowest figures, and occasionally both, are recorded by the non-Baptist institutions, and in the remaining areas they are virtually identical. It is not surprising that, given the greater diversity of theology and church practice, there is a wider spectrum of curricula, in which the Baptist colleges are located in a narrower range. This would support the notion of a more shared Baptist approach to ministerial formation. But within this general observation there are some significant aspects of Baptist practice which stand out.

First we noted that the average for Biblical studies, history and systematic theology in the Baptist Colleges is around 23% of the curriculum, although this figure may increase a little further when student choice is included. Among the five non-Baptist institutions the average for these subjects is around 33%, again probably increasing with student choice, with the highest figures being above 40%. More specifically, Biblical studies averages at 13.3% among the Baptist colleges compared to 21% in non-Baptist institutions. Three of the four non-Baptist institutions, which are residential colleges, are also quite strongly committed to the teaching of biblical languages. The most obvious conclusion is that the Baptist colleges simply teach less of these three traditional subjects, and that is almost certainly true of biblical languages, and this could suggest students who are less biblically and theologically literate. It may be that the Baptist colleges teach them in a different way, where the focus and starting point is within the realm of practical theology, and further research could explore this, but this is unlikely to equate to the percentages at the non-Baptist institutions.

	Institution Hours	%	Institution Hours	%	Institution Hours	%	Institution Hours	%	Institution Hours	%	Institution Hours	%
Bible	102	20.4%	62	11.5%	180	22.3%	124	27.5%	272	28%	89	16%
Doctrine	42	8.4%	32	5.9%	60	7.4%	53	11.8%	76	8%	48	9%
History	20	4.0%	30	5.6%	15	2%	18.5	4.1%	63	7%	18	3%
Ethics							11	2.4%	30	3%	23	4%
Mission	27	5.4%	7	1.3%	85	11%	44	9.8%	51	5%	28	5%
Preaching/Worship	42	8.4%	42	7.8%	40	5%	68.25	15.1%	55	6%	92	17%
Pastoral Care	51.5	10.3%	41.5	7.7%	20	2%	22.25	4.9%	39	4%	69	13%
Spirituality/Personal Development	37.5	7.5%	47.5	8.8%	50	6%	39	8.7%	17	2%	20	4%
Leadership	12	2.4%	12	2.2%	80	10%	5.75	1.3%	23	2%	4	1%
Denominational Identity	64	12.8%	64	11.9%	8	1%	20.75	4.6%	10	1%	12	2%
Theological Reflection	20	4.0%	40	7.4%	70	9%	8	1.8%	10	1%	26.75	5%
Placement							7	1.6%				
Quiet Days/Prayer Groups		0.0%		0.0%	66	8.2%	18	4.0%	72	7.5%	45	8.2%
Tutorials	16	3.2%	16	3.0%	13	1.6%						
Other							9	2.0%				
Student Choice	65	13.0%	145	26.9%	120	15%	2	0.4%	247	26%	72	13%
Totals	499	100.0%	539	100.0%	807	100%	450.5	100.0%	965	100%	546.75	100%
											572.5	100.0%

Figure 4: curriculum in non-Baptist institutions

Second, the Baptist colleges seem particularly committed to the place of mission in the curriculum, since its percentage is significantly more in the Baptist colleges (12.7%) than the non-Baptist institutions (6%). So a further suggestion from the figures is that the Baptist colleges place a stronger emphasis on the need for ministers to be formed in missional ways.

Thirdly, in three of the non-Baptist institutions (A, C and E) there is a significant combination of worship and preaching, pastoral care and denominational identity (25%-32%), which have, by contrast, only 8% and 11% in Institutions B and D. It is expected that the two single denomination colleges and an ecumenical course where the focus is strongly on ordained ministry should have high figures. Equally, as a non-denominational college with a much broader range of students it is not surprising that Institution B has the lowest figures for these areas, and instead has the highest figures for leadership which correlates with its espoused theology that is expressed much more in generic leadership terms than in ministry. The figures for Institution D are more surprising, given a much stronger espoused pastoral imagination centred on preaching, but a lower figure on preaching is supplemented by a much higher figure for biblical studies – the stress is on hermeneutics not homiletics. For the Baptist colleges the combined figures for teaching in worship, preaching, pastoral care and denominational identity are located around the middle of the whole range, suggesting these elements remain important but not as fundamental, lending further support to a Baptist stress on more missional aspects of practice.

Fourthly, the issue of pathways and pedagogical preferences is again highlighted by contact hours and student choice. There is among these institutions an even greater spread of contact hours with Institution C, a part-time course that utilises on-line courses that are expensive to set up and develop, offering less than half the contact hours of Institution D, a more traditional residential community. In a similar contrast there is virtually no choice in Institution C's carefully constructed part-time non-residential course, to choice in almost a third of the course at Institution D (although the choices are limited, shaped by the arrangement of modules within streams). Of the five non-Baptist institutions it is Institution C

that has most similarity to the non-residential pattern of formation undertaken by most Baptist ordinands. It highlights again some of the consequences of the kind of pathways on offer.

Finally, the combined figures for spirituality / personal development together with quiet days / prayer groups are higher for the five Baptist colleges than for the other Institutions, but these figures need to be treated with some caution. Whereas Institution C is non residential, and has one of the higher figures, the other non-Baptist Institutions are residential communities which all place a significant, though differing emphasis on both the formational nature of the community and a particular pattern of shared worship, which is considered below. What this may reveal is that among the Baptist colleges, which are predominantly non-residential, spirituality and personal development are written more into the curriculum whereas they remain assumptions of community life in other institutions.

The Implicit Curriculum

Figure 5, below, shows the results of the patterns of worship at the five non-Baptist institutions, as set out in chapter 4.

The most striking aspect of the above figures is the variation between institutions. Some differences are explained by overall patterns of formation, for example residential or dispersed communities, but more fundamentally the differences seem based on theological approaches tied closely to wider ecclesial understandings. These figures also suggest some strong correlations between the pastoral imaginations of the institutions and their patterns of worship. So, for example, higher figures for ecumenical worship in Institution A reflects its setting and the high level of preaching in the shared worship of Institution D clearly reflects its pastoral imagination. A little more tentatively we might surmise that the comparatively low figures for Institution B, given it is a residential college, also correlates to a pastoral imagination that retains a strong skills-based professional approach.

Patterns of Worship					
	A	B	C	D	E
Short services	48	15	30	27	162
Longer services of Word	18	25	1	81	46
Eucharistic services	24	3	9	27	43
Ecumenical services	12		all		2
Retreat days			1		9
Prayer Groups	24	27	9	27	27

Figure 5: patterns of worship at non-Baptist institutions

This helps focus various questions for Baptist colleges, having moved away from residential communities and as they think further about the challenge of bi-vocational formation: what is the place for shared worship in the wider implicit curriculum and in the whole process of formation? How might an understanding of formation in two centres (college and local congregation) be expressed in patterns of liturgical formation? And how do the more formal aspects of spirituality and personal development combine together with the more informal aspects of community and shared worship?

Conclusion

My second empirical research question was:

Is there a particular combination of practices and elements of a pastoral imagination that could be considered distinctly Baptist?

I have suggested in this chapter that Baptists have been part of a shared process of development, for example in the adoption of the formation paradigm, share

concerns with other institutions, for example integration and integrity, but also have some particular emphases. The Baptist colleges appear to occupy a narrow section of a wider spectrum of approaches to the practice of preparation, as might be expected for colleges that share a denominational history. The Baptist colleges, with others, also appear at the forefront of developments in the practice of preparation, which was suggested earlier in our literature review.

This empirical research in this chapter also suggests a number of areas that contribute together to a distinctive Baptist approach. The Baptist colleges have a greater overall commitment to congregation-based pathways, although other denominations are increasingly developing these, have an explicitly missionally orientated curriculum, develop a collaborative approach to ministry and share, with others, a commitment to the methodologies of practical theology.

But the empirical research has also raised significant questions and challenges that the Baptist colleges will need to reflect on further:

- the place of biblical studies, biblical languages and systematic theology in the curriculum to ensure ongoing high levels of biblical and theological literacy;
- the differences between the experiences of congregation-based and college-based ordinands, especially with the increasing pressure on time in college;
- the context of each college and the way that this is intentionally chosen as well as contingently shaped;
- the importance and place of liturgical formation in what are generally non-residential settings.

These questions will be explored further in chapter 8 as I reflect further on my own practice and the formation *habitus* at Regent's Park.

7:

Practice and the Pastoral Imagination:

Towards a Theology of Formation for Baptists

I set out in the opening chapter how this thesis has emerged from a context of significant change for Regent's Park College. These changes have themselves presented both the challenge and opportunity to reflect further on the practice of preparation, developed further in this research project. But up to now, there has been no sustained attempt to offer a theology of the practice of preparation among and for British Baptists. This chapter offers a contribution to such a theology.

The literature review has shown that a variety of language has been used by Baptists to describe the practice of preparation, but suggested that there has been over recent years a move to the 'formation paradigm'. Our empirical research has confirmed that this move has been taking place although is not yet complete and the assertion that this 'is a complex mix that is generally referred to as 'formation''⁴⁴² seems true for British Baptists. I also argued, in chapter 3, for the importance and appropriateness of the formation paradigm and so in this chapter I will seek to offer a theology of the practice of preparation as ministerial formation.

The empirical research in chapters 5 and 6 revealed similarities and differences both between the five Baptist colleges themselves and between the Baptist colleges collectively and a sample of non-Baptist institutions. A theology of ministerial formation will need to respond to these similarities and differences and, therefore, what I offer here is not a Baptist theology of ministerial formation, as if totally distinct, but a theology of ministerial formation for Baptists.

⁴⁴² *Patterns of Ministry among Baptists*, p. 11.

I have argued for and utilised in this thesis an understanding of practice that balanced structure and agency and the individual and the corporate, and thus was structured, cooperative and creative. This is true of the practice of ministry and also for the practice of the preparation for ministry, which structures the practice of ministry through the development of a pastoral imagination. I, therefore, seek to offer here a theology of the practice of preparation that is structured by the tradition from which it has emerged, co-operative in the way it has been developed with others, yet having room for creative improvisation.

I have set this research in an overall methodological framework adapted from Cameron *et al.*'s 'four voices'. I will, then, bring into conversation here the *representative* voice around the practices of ministry and preparation that emerged from the literature reviewed in chapters 2 and 3, the *espoused* and *operant* voices discerned through the empirical research set out in chapters 5 and 6 and the *formal* voice of the academy, particularly, but not entirely, as it is expressed in the theology of Paul Fiddes. Fiddes, whose work and significance has been introduced earlier, brings a particular stress on the trinitarian doctrine of God. Building on the previous chapters what I offer here is a theology of the practice of preparation for Baptists, understood as ministerial formation, which will be structured, co-operative and creative, and firmly rooted in the trinitarian doctrine of God.⁴⁴³

Formation as Participation: A Theological Emphasis

I have suggested through a literature review and empirical research that the preparation for ministry understood as formation includes more traditional aspects of academic knowledge and skills-based training in a holistic approach that integrates these different aspects in an overall growth in Christ-like

⁴⁴³ There is not a unique Baptist position, or an approach taken by all Baptists. Mayes, *Spirituality*, suggests that the Anglican and Roman Catholic approach has tended to be Christological rather than trinitarian, p. 82, but Ward explores trinitarian thinking and theological education more fully, *Lifelong Learning*, pp. 75-9.

character and maturity. This overall aim predates the language of formation, but the formation paradigm has both made this explicit and also given attention to what practices of preparation will particularly help in this process of formation. At the heart then of formation is a process of growth and development as part of Christian discipleship.

Fiddes helps us take this forward by offering a profound theological vision based on the language and concept of participation. Convinced that the language of imitation or even contemplation is not sufficient theologically, epistemologically, or pastorally,⁴⁴⁴ compelling human beings to strive after and copy the impossible model of trinitarian relationships, Fiddes explores the gracious way that our lives are drawn into these trinitarian relationships. Thus our lives and human communities do not merely shape themselves in response to a trinitarian pattern, but are shaped by participation in the very trinitarian pattern itself. Formation, then with its growth in maturity is ultimately the gracious work of God.

One of the most striking metaphors through which Fiddes develops his trinitarian theology is that of the divine dance, bringing together two distinct patterns – a circle dance and a progressive dance.⁴⁴⁵ The metaphor of the circle dance, Fiddes argues, encapsulates the best of the Western trinitarian tradition, which lays stress on ‘the equality, mutuality and reciprocity of the three persons.’⁴⁴⁶ But not only are trinitarian relationships marked by mutuality and reciprocity, they are also truly *ecstatic*, that is they are ‘self-transcending in communication with others, especially in the movement of love’⁴⁴⁷ so that Father, Son and Spirit live in the constant openness to each other in which true identity is found.

⁴⁴⁴ Paul S. Fiddes, *Participating in God: A Pastoral Doctrine of the Trinity* (London: DLT, 2000), pp. 28-30 and 38. Fiddes argues that, in contrast to the strongly objectifying enlightenment approach, God is known through an epistemology of participation.

⁴⁴⁵ Fiddes, *Participating*, pp. 34-46. Fiddes himself understands the Trinitarian persons as ‘subsistent relations’ but suggests that the theme of participation does not depend on the acceptance of this basis.

⁴⁴⁶ Fiddes, *Participating*, p. 77.

⁴⁴⁷ Fiddes, *Participating*, p. 22.

Such an ecstatic trinitarian theology becomes the theological foundation for the way human persons exist and are formed in community. Such a concept offers a dynamic picture of what it means to become more 'Christlike', as we are drawn to participate in what is like 'a willing response of a son to a father, becoming co-actors and co-narrators with his 'Yes. Amen' to the Father's purpose',⁴⁴⁸ and are transformed by that participation. Here is formation that is not simply based on greater human effort but on an openness to the gracious work of God.

Although not explicitly dealing with *ministerial* formation, Fiddes' ideas here address two concerns we have encountered about both the experience and language of formation among those who would otherwise embrace the formation paradigm: that entering a process of ministerial formation may lead to the loss of the self and what is unique to the individual, together with the fear that formation is in reality conformity to a particular, centralised, view of ministry. Fiddes calls for a 'balance between a proper self-centring, which is not a destructive self-centredness, and formation through our social relationships'⁴⁴⁹ and insists that an 'openness to others will not mean conformity to the human other, which would be a loss of one's own will, but conformity to the Christ we meet in and through the other.'⁴⁵⁰ These ideas strengthen the way that formation should be understood in an holistic sense, in the growth of the individual in community, which happens in this dialectic between self-centring and openness to the other.

Yet we need to push Fiddes here and reflect further on who the 'others' might be through whom we might meet Christ and so be conformed to his likeness. The empirical research has suggested very clearly that context, whether intentional or contingent, has a significant impact on ministerial formation and the kind of pastoral imagination being encouraged. These 'others', through whom we are formed, cannot remain theoretical but always encountered in context.

⁴⁴⁸ Fiddes, *Participating*, p. 53.

⁴⁴⁹ Fiddes, *Participating*, p. 52.

⁴⁵⁰ Fiddes, *Participating*, p. 53.

Part of the context will be an institution's distinct tradition and Astley helps take this discussion forward as he contrasts and combines aspects of what he describes as formative and critical education.⁴⁵¹ All education has a formative element because there is no community or tradition which is neutral and value free but belongs in a particular tradition in which those preparing for ministry are developing and being shaped, that is all education is both structured, through the tradition, and structuring itself in the passing on of the church's values, beliefs and practices. Astley suggests that such formation is a 'proper – indeed essential – dimension of *any* education that wishes to call itself Christian.'⁴⁵²

Therefore, if our learning to be a Christian is always mediated in this way, we must insist that generic categories such as ministerial formation are not sufficient. The wider structuring Christian faith is always expressed and mediated in particular traditions so formation is always into a distinct community with its particular values, beliefs and practices. This would suggest that there must then be a distinctive *Baptist* formative education, not wholly different but shaped co-operatively by a particular tradition, in the same way as there will be, for example, distinctive Methodist formation, and so a distinctive Baptist ministerial formation. That this exists was confirmed by the empirical research.

Alongside being formed within a particular community, critical education engages in reflective analysis and evaluation of the church's self-understanding and tradition in the light of the individual's own experience. This places much more emphasis on the freedom and creativity of both a college, to improvise within the tradition, and a student in an educative process which begins with them and draws out from them their understanding. Such an understanding was most clearly articulated by NBLC in the empirical research.

Yet the ability to develop patterns of critical engagement and reflection is neither an automatic given nor a learnt skill. It is, as Passmore and MacIntyre

⁴⁵¹ See Astley, *Philosophy of Christian Religious Education*, ch. 5.

⁴⁵² Astley, 'Dimensions of Christian Education', p. 38.

both suggest something much more deeply embedded in character.⁴⁵³ As such it is actually part of the process of formation, in which students are encouraged and enabled to develop in this tradition of critical thinking.⁴⁵⁴ The literature review identified university validated courses as a key historic commitment of Baptist approaches to the practice of preparation, despite some continuing internal opposition, which provide a key aspect of context for developing critical thinking.

The 'others', through whom we are conformed to Christ in Baptist ministerial formation include those from the Baptist tradition, those from the wider church and those within the university context, so that the experience is both formative, within the Baptist tradition as part of the universal church, and critical.

Baptist ministerial formation then is to be located in the formation of the whole people of God which happens in community in the negotiation of the self in relation to others, in response to the gracious invitation of God through which we are drawn to participate in the community of God's trinitarian life. It happens in a community that is both shaped by and lives a Baptist tradition, but open to others, from the universal church and the wider university context, so that the critical and reflective skills can be developed.

Revisiting the practice of preparation in the light of this theology of participation, what is required is the kind of 'space' that is shaped by the Baptist tradition, is open to others and to critical reflection, avoids the pressure towards too narrow a kind of conformity yet allows room for and encourages formation to be based on participation in God's trinitarian life. The empirical research suggests a number of ways that such 'space' may be encouraged.

Such space has a liturgical aspect, expressed in more formal acts of prayer and worship and, shaped by the Baptist tradition as the structuring structure, will

⁴⁵³ See Astley, *Philosophy of Christian Religious Education*, pp. 84-6.

⁴⁵⁴ See Charles M. Wood, 'Theological Enquiry and Theological Education' in Jeff Astley, Leslie Francis and Colin Crowder (eds), *Theological Perspectives on Christian Formation: A Reader on Theology and Christian Education* (Leominster: Gracewing, 1996).

include particular Baptist ways of responding to God's gracious invitation in worship. With the changing pathways in Baptist colleges and the dominance of congregation-based patterns, liturgical formation like the whole process of formation, must be understood in two centres: college and local congregation. This presents a number of challenges.

The empirical research showed significant diversity of approaches among the Baptist colleges, with NBLC having the smallest number of moments of liturgical formation, of which all are ecumenical. Given the limited time in college, there will also be the temptation to allow worship to be squeezed out by more time in the classroom. An understanding of formation as participation will need to safeguard sufficient time for a rhythm of Baptist worship shared by the group of tutors and students as a community. With the congregation-based pattern the liturgical formation of a gathered and dispersed community, building on the models of Iona and the Northumbria Community, may offer an important way forward. Equally, more explicit attention will need to be given to the way that a local congregation acts as a community of formation and the recognition that the local congregation is not only a space for exercising ministry but also for ministerial formation in the midst of a particular Baptist worshipping community.

Such space also has an educational aspect. We would expect those preparing for ministry within Baptist churches to be shaped by their engagement, in an explicit curriculum, with Baptist history, principles and ecclesiology. Yet our empirical research also suggests a growing understanding that the whole of the broad curriculum is involved in shaping the whole of the student. So participation in the life of God happens not only in the formal liturgical settings, but in the breadth of the explicit and implicit curriculum, and engaging in Greek or church history can and should be moments of participation. The whole of the curriculum providing the whole of formation needs to shape the pedagogical approach of tutors.

Such space, finally, has a relational aspect. Fiddes offers a vision of formation, which is both self-centring and also ecstatic in its openness to others. Colleges

have stressed that inter-student relationships are as important as those between staff and students and when these work well formation happens apace. But there are also situations when relationships within a particular group of students struggle, when there is limited openness to the other, or when relationships become destructive and individuals seek their fulfilment at the expense of, rather than in cooperation with, others. One of the great challenges is to help create and facilitate the most helpful and appropriate learning environment, in which formation can be encouraged. In this respect the specific practices of college staff, in both teaching and in community, become important in helping to create relational space that is both self-centring and ecstatic.⁴⁵⁵

Formation as Discipleship: An Ecclesial Emphasis

Arising from the literature review in chapter 2 I proposed that, for Baptists, ministry must always be understood in dialectical terms, in which the few and the many stand in creative tension. This was then confirmed to some degree in the empirical research in that while there is some variety between Baptist colleges and clear overlap with the other institutions, there are aspects of a distinctive approach.

Overall the Baptist colleges are working within a dialectical framework supporting the *habitus* of ministry more than that of leadership. There is a variety of approaches to the use of professional and leadership language, from warm embrace to reluctant adoption. Spurgeon's College adopts most strongly leadership and professional language and its context suggests the influence of students coming from non-Baptist backgrounds and a tradition that has championed leadership, but its espoused pastoral imagination focuses on the concept of shared discipleship that links together rather than separating the few

⁴⁵⁵ See suggestions made in David I. Smith and James K. A. Smith (eds), *Teaching and Christian Practices: Faith and Learning* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011) and L. Gregory Jones and Stephanie Paulsell, *The Scope of our Art: The Vocation of the Theological Teacher* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012).

and the many, with more recent Principals reshaping the tradition. NBLC and Bristol also make an explicit emphasis on this particular collaborative approach to ministry so that, as a structuring feature of the course, it forms part of the pastoral imagination that they are seeking to encourage.

In addition, there does seem to be some distinction between the Baptist colleges and the other institutions, which both collectively make more of leadership language and make less, ecclesologically, of such a dialectic between the few and the many. There is thus some supporting evidence for our assertion that the dialectical model is the most authentic Baptist understanding of ministry and that, despite the influence of the leadership paradigm, it shapes the work of the colleges, although to different degrees.

I also discussed in chapter 2 the contribution of Fiddes to these discussions and in particular his championing of this dialectical approach. For Fiddes this is more than an ecclesial emphasis; rather it is rooted in his trinitarian understanding of God as he argues for a trinitarian picture of God, which avoids oppression, dominance and hierarchy, thereby challenging both political and ecclesial monarchianism.⁴⁵⁶

Fiddes discusses such a position in critical dialogue with both Jürgen Moltmann and Miroslav Volf, and it is Volf, shaped by his own Free Church, who offers the most comprehensive trinitarian ecclesiology, and insists we must reject the 'pyramidal dominance of the one' and 'the hierarchical bipolarity between the one and the many', and embrace instead 'a polycentric and symmetrical reciprocity of the many',⁴⁵⁷ that is the Trinity as a community of free and equal persons.⁴⁵⁸

⁴⁵⁶ Fiddes, *Participating*, pp. 62-108.

⁴⁵⁷ Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), p. 217.

⁴⁵⁸ One of Fiddes' criticisms of Volf is that Volf relies too much on the church shaping its life in correspondence to God rather than through participating in God's gracious trinitarian relationships. See, *Participating*, pp. 48-9.

Such a view has certainly been a strong part of the structured Baptist tradition. So a previous report to the Council of the Baptist Union of Great Britain, concerned with organisational developments around ministry insists that:

there is no hierarchy in God, as if the Father rules the Son and both instruct the Spirit. The Persons of the Trinity are co-equal and mutually interdependent one on the other. It is not simply in the distinct Persons but in the nature of their relationship that the Trinity consists.⁴⁵⁹

A Baptist approach to ministerial formation will insist that it is held within an understanding of the wider shared discipleship of the whole people of God who participate in and so reflect the mutuality of trinitarian relationships, creating 'space' for formative and critical education. And so a Baptist approach to this balance between the formative and the critical would be the way this is handled dialectically between the few and the many. Such an approach will have a number of clear implications for the practice of preparation.

First it suggests that the process is rightly described as *ministerial* formation, rather than leadership training or formation, because the dialectical model insists that the same language be used for both the 'few' and the 'many', although this demands a greater clarity of expression and understanding. All are involved in ministry and the whole congregation exercises oversight over its corporate life but some are called to exercise ministry and oversight in a particular representative way.

Ministerial formation is deeply connected to Christian formation, which is also deeply connected to wider human formation. An Irenaean model of anthropology is helpful at this point, which recognises that the process of growth is part of our God-given human nature.⁴⁶⁰ Christian formation is then understood as this human process of growth being explicitly orientated as growth into the

⁴⁵⁹ *Transforming Superintendency*, p. 9.

⁴⁶⁰ For recent relevant trends in psychology and neurobiology, see Jeannine K. Brown, Carla M. Dahl and Wyndy Corbin Reuschling, *Becoming Whole and Holy: An Integrative Conversation about Christian Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), p. 4.

image of Christ. And ministerial formation, for Baptists, is not something distinct from such Christian formation, intending to shape ministers in ways that others are not, as suggested within other traditions,⁴⁶¹ but a particularly ‘intentional and intensive’⁴⁶² aspect of Christian formation or ‘specialised discipleship’.⁴⁶³ In the same way that all discipleship includes aspects best described as education and training, so such elements are also integrated into ministerial formation.

Second, it suggests that it would also be better to avoid the language of ‘professional’ within a Baptist understanding of ministry and formation. While professional language itself can be carefully nuanced and recognising that the intended emphasis of professional may be on the way that the practice of ministry is accomplished – that is, well, thoroughly, competently, not in a slapdash way – an unavoidable aspect of professional language is the implied distinction and separation between those who are professional and those who are not. One clear element in the development of the professions was, after all, to be able to demarcate who belonged ‘in’ the profession and so who did not. Yet such a total distinction undercuts a dialectical model of ministry that proposes a fundamental connection between the few and the many.

Thirdly, while Goodliff argues to retain the title ‘Ministers-in-Training’ for those currently engaged in the process of preparation on the basis that the most significant aspect of college is training whereas formation is the ‘broader horizon’ that precedes and proceeds from college,⁴⁶⁴ it would seem more consistent to use the alternative title ‘Minister-in-Formation’. Goodliff himself writes that the whole process is now ‘generally known as formation’, and any suggestion that implies formation is complete on leaving college would need to be avoided, as would any suggestion that a new minister is trained in everything, but changing the title would help connect the particular formation of ministers

⁴⁶¹ So Worthen, ‘A Model of Ministerial Formation’, p. 41, and Angela Shier-Jones, ‘Calling and Vocation’, pp. 27-31.

⁴⁶² Interview with SF, p. 7.

⁴⁶³ Interview with RS, p. 1.

⁴⁶⁴ Interview with PG, p. 8.

to the wider formation of the people of God. This would be strengthened if the on-going development, while drawing on the best of secular models of CPD, supervision and coaching, were to be understood as Continuing Ministerial Formation, based on mutual accountability and growth in Christ, rather than simply professional practice.

Fourthly, since, for Baptists, the local church remains the foundational expression of the formative community, it could be argued that recent practices of ministerial formation which have moved away from a pattern of withdrawal from the local church into a separate residential community, even if partly financially driven, have regained a more Baptist approach by explicitly involving the local congregation in the formation process in a dialectical way. Not only do 'ministers-in-training' exercise ministry in a local congregation; that local congregation becomes the central site in which formation happens both in an initial stage of preparation for ministry and in lifelong formation, in such a way that the local congregation contributes to the formation process. This offers significant challenges to the way a college and a number of local congregations partner together, but this does seem an approach in keeping with a Baptist ecclesial vision.

Formation as Covenant: A Biblical Emphasis

I rehearsed, in chapter 3, the narrative of the key developments in the 1980s that decisively moved Baptist colleges from residential communities to a more dispersed congregation-based approach. While practice-based learning provided a strong educational impetus, financial pressures were present from the very beginning and have since intensified. While this congregation-based pattern is certainly not unique to Baptists, I have suggested from the empirical evidence that its dominance as a pathway for ministerial formation, in contrast to other traditions, makes it a distinctive Baptist emphasis particularly suited to a Baptist ecclesiology.

Ministerial formation now happens in two centres, with students part of two distinct communities, but the relationship between the student and these two centres needs further development and clearer expression. One way of doing this is to draw on the language and theology of covenant, which is rooted biblically and is part of the structured and structuring historic and contemporary Baptist tradition.⁴⁶⁵

Alongside the theological insights of participation and dialectic, covenant language has also been central to Fiddes' work. In discussing the various biblical covenants, especially the distinction between the Mosaic and Davidic covenants, Fiddes points out how both, although different, are firmly rooted in the divine initiative and both open up ways of response.⁴⁶⁶ One of the unique and insightful developments that early Baptists made, he suggests, is the way that they explicitly linked the horizontal church covenants they wrote with the vertical covenant God had initiated with human beings. Human covenants are not simply statements of commitment, but are a response to and a participation in God's divine initiative.

Fiddes suggests that a key aspect of the covenant made between churches is the possibilities it opens up for discovery.⁴⁶⁷ While a local congregation sits under the Lordship of Christ and in response to that Lordship assumes responsibility for its life and mission it does not do so independently, but seeks to discover the mind of Christ through covenant relationships with others. Building on the comments above on a relational space, formation happens through encountering Christ in covenantal interaction with others. Fiddes develops this further by connecting the covenant of being God's people with the wider covenant God creates with all living things, within God's trinitarian story, arguing that our covenant relationships need to broaden, open both ecumenically to the whole of the Christian family and beyond to the whole of God's created world. He relates this

⁴⁶⁵ See, recently, *Covenant 21*, and the desire to develop covenant theology within the *Ignite* project.

⁴⁶⁶ Fiddes, *Tracks and Traces*, pp. 74-6.

⁴⁶⁷ Fiddes, *Tracks and Traces*, pp. 55-6.

specifically to a vision for higher education⁴⁶⁸ and argues that theological education – and offers the British Baptist colleges as examples – should not happen by withdrawing from surrounding culture as if Christians were simply an alternative society, but should ‘live vulnerably on the boundaries’⁴⁶⁹ in a whole world where Christ is Lord. Such covenant theology offers a number of insights and possibilities for ministerial formation.

First, within the college community the necessary distinction between tutor and student, in which the former is called to assess and commend the latter, must be negotiated within the context of covenant relationships understood within a lifelong journey of formation. This takes us deeper into this relational space, one that is created, intentionally, or otherwise, by the practices of the tutors involved and the way they navigate these relationships.

One way that this could happen is through the affirmation of a specific covenant that is written by a college community, as has happened at SWBC, weaving together commitments that are made to each other within the theology of the divine covenant of grace. Such a covenant will find ways of incorporating historic elements, as part of the structured and structuring habitus of formation within a college as well as expressing the creative vision and commitment of a new re-forming of the community. Such a covenant will want to express, amongst other things, the sense of hospitality offered to each other in the light of God’s welcome, the desire to go out in love, and the willingness to work at the right kind of self-centring in the midst of open relationships. It would be an interesting exercise to produce a college covenant and re-write it, say every three years, so that all students are involved once.

Second, within the context of a local congregation where the student is also called to be a minister (in preparation) there is a further delicate negotiation in which the student offers ministry to the church as one whose call has been

⁴⁶⁸ Paul S. Fiddes, ‘Christianity, Culture and Education: A Baptist Perspective’ in Roger Ward and David P. Gushee (eds), *The Scholarly Vocation and the Baptist Academy* (Macon, GA, Mercer University Press, 2008), pp. 1-25.

⁴⁶⁹ Fiddes, ‘Christianity, Culture and Education’, p. 18.

affirmed and who has been welcomed as God's gift, but also as one willingly shaped by the local congregation in their own growth in ministry. Such a pattern is, of course, already based on the dialectical model of ministry we have argued as distinctly Baptist and this further stress on covenant in fact helps to see how such a dialectic can be held theologically and practically. Without denying the complexity of negotiating human relationships in which a congregation may feel empowered to dominate a 'student', or a student consider this to be their opportunity to have their own way, it offers an important context for formation in a particularly Baptist approach to ministry.

Thirdly, there is the crucial connection between these two different contexts and centres. While the churches that welcome such 'ministers-in-training' are often called placement churches, that language, though functional, seems inadequate to express the kind of commitment between college and church. There is the need to balance the real exercising of ministry by students, who are paid a half stipend and live in the context of the church, with the college understanding that they are full-time students, with the college having some oversight of their work. Better would be to describe them as 'partner churches' and explicitly explore the way that this partnership can be expressed and developed in covenantal terms. The relationship between colleges and these churches within the one process of ministerial formation remains one of the critical aspects that has not been fully developed.

Fourthly, Fiddes' arguments suggest that in ministerial formation the relational space must intentionally move beyond the Baptist tradition and engage with the universal church, within a wider understanding of covenant. The empirical research has made clear the different ways that all the Baptist colleges do engage in ministerial formation in a wider ecumenical setting and two in particular include a global perspective in the pastoral imagination they encourage, and the literature review concluded that two of the key espoused commitments were to be ecumenically sensitive and missionally, indeed globally, engaged evidenced by relations with overseas partners such as BMS World Mission.

Such espoused and operant commitments are strengthened further by the breadth and depth of this understanding of covenant, so that formation is not limited geographically but includes opportunities for hearing the voice of the universal church. Interviews with representatives from NBLC and Institution C revealed the sometimes fragile nature of ecumenical partners, subject, for example, to denominational decisions beyond the institutions' control, and financial considerations continue to make overseas visits challenging. But these are more than pragmatic issues and raise challenging questions about the breadth of our covenantal theology and the kind of space that we envisage formation inhabiting, particularly with the world-wide Baptist church and the wider universal church.

Fifthly, a further key conclusion of the literature review, and confirmed by the empirical research, was the centrality of relationships with universities, either as integral members or as validating partners, and Baptists here share a common pattern with the other historic denominations. The nature of the universities themselves has changed, together with the 'space' offered for the study of theology, and in some cases the very presence in contemporary universities may feel, sometimes uncomfortable, like 'living vulnerably on the boundaries'.

It would be possible to conceive of a pattern of formation in which all Baptist ordinands come together for shared teaching in a programme agreed by the Baptist Union but disconnected from both university and ecumenical partners, and such possibilities have been mooted. This may reduce significantly the cost of ministerial formation, partly by removing university and partly by centralising the current five dispersed colleges. Again financial pressures may shape the theology of formation that ought rather to be understood in covenantal terms. The empirical research has revealed importance of context, and any centralised approach is liable to reduce any kind of covenantal relationships with ecumenical partners, with a broad contextual student body and with secular universities.⁴⁷⁰

⁴⁷⁰ A piece of empirical research which explores the effects of Common Awards in replacing local, perhaps more committed, validating arrangements with one national validating body would be important and helpful.

Formation as Hospitality: A Missional Emphasis

One of the clear aspects of the empirical research, expressed in both the espoused and operant voices, was the way that the pastoral imagination that the Baptist colleges are seeking cooperatively to inculcate is one that is strongly missional. This is not unique, but is a distinct emphasis. Again such empirical findings clearly reinforce one of the key conclusions of the literature review in chapter 3.

Returning to the kind of trinitarian theology espoused by Fiddes, fundamental to this understanding of God is the sending of the Son and the pouring out of the Spirit, with the temporal 'sendings' corresponding to the eternal generation of the Son and procession of the Spirit, pointing us to a God whose nature is fundamentally characterised by going out to others in love. In developing the metaphor of the dance, Fiddes suggests that the two patterns of circle and progressive dance may help to ameliorate each other, the circle dance mitigating against a tendency towards hierarchy in the eastern pattern while the progressive dance opens up the western tradition to ensure that the circle dance does not mean that God is closed and self-sufficient. As in a progressive dance, other dancers are always being brought into the patterns, so God opens the divine dance so that human partners can be brought in.⁴⁷¹ God does not want to be God without us.⁴⁷²

This approach clearly owes much to the theology of the *missio Dei*, which has become increasingly influential over the last fifty years, understanding the mission of the church to have its origin and very existence in participating in the mission of God. God is a missionary God, and 'mission is not primarily an activity of the church but an attribute of God.'⁴⁷³ In a significant internal document on the nature of ministry, Baptists share such a perspective that 'the God to whom

⁴⁷¹ Fiddes, *Participating*, p. 78.

⁴⁷² See Karl Barth's doctrine of election in *Church Dogmatics* II/2 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1957), pp. 36-75.

⁴⁷³ David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in the Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991), p. 390.

the Bible bears witness is always 'going out' in love to others'.⁴⁷⁴ Mission, insists Fiddes, is not an imitation of, but a participation in this self-giving of God,⁴⁷⁵ which shapes our shared life, and so mission will be at the heart of ministry, which will enable and model such 'going out in love'.

Alongside the metaphor of the dance, a further metaphor that has been used widely in recent theology to express this missiological approach is that of hospitality. The church is a community which makes room for the other as an embodied sign of this process of divine reconciliation⁴⁷⁶ and in this way the metaphor has already been applied to theological education.⁴⁷⁷ In addition, Henri Nouwen, proposing that hospitality is creating a free 'space' where the stranger can enter, writes that 'hospitality is not to change people, but to offer them space where change can take place',⁴⁷⁸ that change being intrinsically the work of God. Resonating with our earlier discussion on participating in God, this offers an additional and deep connection between the practice of ministry and the practice of preparation based on a deeper connection still with the practice of God who welcomes us: hospitable ministry that creates space for others in mission is formed by hospitable colleges that create a relational and missional space for students and staff. This is then key to a pastoral imagination.

The language of hospitality offers a creative way of pursuing a theology of ministerial formation for Baptists that takes into account a trinitarian vision of God alongside the missional stress within the practice of the Baptist colleges. The offer of grace and the subsequent sense of belonging are vital 'if we want to

⁴⁷⁴ 'Transforming Superintendency', p. 9.

⁴⁷⁵ Fiddes, *Tracks and Traces*, p. 251.

⁴⁷⁶ See Christine Pohl, *Making Room, Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999); Luke Bretherton, *Hospitality as Holiness, Christian Witness Amid Moral Diversity* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006).

⁴⁷⁷ See, E. Newman, 'Who's Home Cooking? Hospitality, Christian Identity and Higher Education', *Perspectives in Religious Studies*, 26, no 1, Sept 1999; Reinhard Hütter, 'Hospitality and Truth: The Disclosure of Practices in Worship and Doctrine', in Miroslav Volf and Dorothy C Bass (eds), *Practicing Theology*, pp. 206-227.

⁴⁷⁸ Henri Nouwen, *Reaching Out, The Three Movement of the Spiritual Life* (Glasgow: William Collins, 1976), pp. 68-9.

foster that ... vulnerability, openness to judgment, and responsiveness which are the core virtues of learning.⁴⁷⁹ This raises questions about a number of aspects of the practice of the colleges.

One of the concerns I have expressed through the thesis is to integrate together an understanding of the practice of ministry with the practice of preparation. I discussed, in chapter 3, the fact that since 2001 there has been a distinction between those who are ordained as pastors, youth specialists and evangelists. While those who are called by God for ministry will be gifted in different ways, and there will be some significant differences in their practices, the distinction between those called to a more pastoral role (pastors) and a more missional role (evangelists) is not altogether helpful. The fact that only seventeen evangelists are listed in the 2012 Register of Nationally Accredited Ministers⁴⁸⁰ together with anecdotal evidence that those coming to our colleges are tending to opt for recognition as pastors for the sake of expediency, confirms this unhelpfulness.

Yet in current debate 'pastoral' and 'mission' tend to be used antithetically. It is as if, to draw on the dance metaphor again, some churches are only interested in a circle dance and some only in a progressive one. Recognising the strengths and weaknesses of both circle and progressive patterns in trinitarian terms, this must also be true for churches and disciples who participate within these trinitarian movements – all pastoral work is seeking to go out in love to others, and all mission seeks to enable individuals to grow in their participation within God. It therefore seems time in both our language and structures to reassert that all sharing in the ministry of Christ, as churches and as ministers, is deeply missional and deeply pastoral, and to have just one category of ordained ministry.

Moving from this to the practice of preparation, the clear trend within Baptist colleges has been to offer one overarching approach to ministerial formation

⁴⁷⁹ Mike Higton, *Vulnerable Learning: Thinking Theologically about Higher Education* (Cambridge: Grove, E140, 2006), p. 15

⁴⁸⁰ Baptist Union Directory (Didcot: BUGB, 2012), p. 145; twenty-eight are listed as Youth Specialists.

within which there can be different emphases,⁴⁸¹ which are all clearly missional, though to different degrees, as well as pastoral. In terms of the curriculum, while it may be necessary to have sessions or modules that are designated in a way that stresses their more missional or pastoral content it is also important that the whole curriculum is understood as both missional and pastoral in an integrative way. The metaphor of hospitality offers a creative way of combining these emphases in which space for the other is created in all aspects of church life.

The metaphor of hospitality also helps integrate the two central contexts of a congregation engaged in mission and a college engaged in reflection. Hospitality will always seek to give full attention to the other, expressed in the inter-human relationships within and between staff and students and in the voices heard through placements, study and culture. We might conclude that the *direction* of ministerial formation is always outward looking, so that the call of the church to participate in God's going out in love is echoed in our colleges, in their going out in hospitality.

Formation as Integration: A Pedagogical Emphasis

A further key theme that has emerged from both the literature review and the empirical research is that of integration, and I argued that this was a key aspect to the overall formation *habitus*. There were some differences between institutions in the nuanced way that integration was understood and practised, but it was clearly an important issue in the espoused, operant and representative voices.

Integration has appeared in a number of ways. It happens between those aspects of the practice of preparation that were normally named as education, training and formation, embraced by all the colleges, with some variations. It happens in the integration of theory and practice, although there is a spectrum

⁴⁸¹ The mission course at Bristol is a slight exception to this.

with NBLC embracing the 'turn to practice'⁴⁸² most fully, but all the colleges committed to theological reflection, *in* practice and *on* practice, as a key aspect of shared understanding of formation. There is then the integration in the way that the whole of the curriculum is understood to contribute to all the varying aspects of formation, rather than expecting academic modules simply to teach knowledge and restricting formation to shared worship and community life. And, especially for the Baptist colleges there is the integration of the few and the many, in that all are called to a holistic, integrated journey of discipleship, and it is the responsibility of the church to preach, preside at the sacraments and offer pastoral care, but that some are called to do these things in a particular representative way.

I suggested earlier that at the very heart of Fiddes' doctrine of God is the notion of our participation in God's trinitarian life, which is not static but itself dynamic, ecstatic and self-transcending in the movement of love. In language which Fiddes himself does not use, God's trinitarian life could be described as a constant and dynamic integration of Father, Son and Spirit as one God. I also pointed out the way that Fiddes explores one aspect of human formation as the integration of a proper self-centredness with a vulnerable self-giving. If both God's own life and our own fundamental human development can be described in integrative terms, then this provides a strong theological basis for these pedagogical developments.

Although the concept of integration is both significant and varied, the exact description of this integration has not been clear. If, for example, we want to reserve formation language for the practice of preparation as a whole, how might we describe the third circle alongside education and training? Chris Ellis suggests it would be best described as 'devotional practices' and the three circles together described as a 'ministerial way of being'.⁴⁸³ This has some connection with the model at Spurgeon's which puts spirituality, understood in a broad

⁴⁸² Elaine Graham, Heather Walton and Frances Ward, *Theological Reflection: Methods* (London: SCM, 2005), pp. 194-6.

⁴⁸³ Ellis, 'Being a Minister', pp. 60-1.

sense, at the centre, but uses 'character' instead of 'devotional practices'. Bristol Baptist College's version of the three circle diagram is similar, except that it combines spirituality and character in the third circle and uses oversight as the integrative word, which offers more emphasis on a ministry *habitus* than the original diagram from Allen which speaks consistently of church leadership.

Ellis' suggestion has the advantage of creating a clear, distinct and bounded third strand and would encourage colleges to help students focus more intensively on this aspect of discipleship. It also meets Mayes' challenge that spiritual practices, especially prayer, have been squeezed out of formation.⁴⁸⁴ Formation would then be described as education, training and the development in spiritual disciplines.

An alternative would be to keep the language of character but to give it a clearer meaning by approaching it in a consciously psychological way. Institution D seems to adopt language drawn clearly from a strand of Christian spirituality, while Institution C tends to express similar concerns in broader psychological language that stresses the need to deal with issues from the past. In this case formation as a whole would be described as education, training and development in self-awareness, and paying more explicit attention to self-awareness may help provide a focus around which the development of character can be evaluated.

Both propositions have some attraction as they help concretise what otherwise can remain nebulous. So, while the three circles diagram allows for a clearer overlapping centre, it is perhaps time to develop that pattern into four interweaving strands: gaining knowledge, developing skills, deepening spiritual practices and growing in self-awareness.

Such an interweaving pattern describes a formation *habitus*, which is structured, drawing significantly on a Baptist tradition, could be agreed co-operatively, while also allowing space for creativity and improvisation. For different individuals at

⁴⁸⁴ Mayes, *Spirituality*, p. 3.

different times, the stress on individual strands may be different. Equally, within a commitment to shared practice different colleges may offer an experience of formation that balances the strands in different ways.

A second issue in the exact nature of integration, again prompted by the empirical research, concerns the particular influence that theory and practice exert on each other. We saw in the different institutions a diversity of approaches to relating theory and practice, from the kind of a 'critical conversation'⁴⁸⁵ proposed by Pattison in which there is space for change in all three of the conversation partners to a more 'applied' model. The empirical evidence also suggested a narrower spectrum among the Baptist colleges, with collectively a greater commitment to methods of theological reflection than, for example, Institutions B and D, but within that spectrum Spurgeon's giving the least dedicated place to theological reflection and Northern articulating most clearly an approach shaped partly by liberation theology.

Part of the structured and structuring Baptist tradition has always been a stress on the importance of the biblical witness as a source of authority, thus the term 'evangelical' in the pastoral imagination, and this question of methodology of integration is deeply rooted in some of the popular concerns about academic theology and from where some of the historic stereotypical understanding of the Baptist colleges emerges. Spurgeon's would appear to give a stronger place to the biblical tradition in the conversation, and holds on most firmly to a self-description as evangelical, and Northern, popularly conceived as the most 'liberal' college, appears to offer the greatest openness to the shaping of theology by practice. Yet within the broader spectrum within the empirical research it could be argued that there is a sufficient shared approach that this is part of the structuring and co-operative *habitus*, within which the differences emerge as creative.

⁴⁸⁵ Stephen Pattison, *A Critique of Pastoral Care* (3rd edition, London: SCM, 2000), p. 136.

Formation as Growth in Virtue: A Personal Emphasis

Alongside integration, the second key aspect of the formation *habitus* that I developed at the end of chapter 3 was integrity, which then emerged through the empirical research in a whole variety of ways. Corresponding to the pedagogical developments within the practice of preparation is the more personal aspect of those who are in the process of being formed. I suggested that the desire, in the recent *Ignite* report, to replace the language of ‘competencies’, against which ministry is evaluated, with ‘marks of ministry’ is evidence of the growing place integrity has in the representative, and indeed, normative voice, and corresponds to the move away from a more functional view of ministry.⁴⁸⁶

Whereas various different words were used within the institutions to describe the pastoral imaginations that they were seeking to develop, a significant number, spiritual, growing in maturity, wise, mature in Christ, prayerful, focussed in different ways on this personal development in spirituality and virtue. Understanding ministerial formation as a process of growth in virtue requires a significant openness to the process, to others and to God that is marked by vulnerability and risk-taking.

At Regent’s, both at interviews and at the very beginning of the course, reference is made back to probably the earliest book on pastoral theology in English, George Herbert’s *The Country Parson*, which places this same need for growth in virtue at the heart of preparation and refers to those at university in a preparatory way:

whose aim and labour must be not only to get knowledge, but to subdue and mortifie all lusts and affections: and not to think, that when they have read the Fathers, or Schoolmen, a Minister is made,

⁴⁸⁶ Goodliff, *Ministry*, pp. 146-9.

and the thing done. The greatest and hardest preparation is within.⁴⁸⁷

Returning to Fiddes once more, one of his earlier and most distinctive theological contributions, *The Creative Suffering of God*,⁴⁸⁸ traces this vulnerable openness back into the very life of God. The very particularity of the birth of Jesus expresses God's commitment to creation not only in this unique moment, but also as the climax of God's covenant history with the people of Israel. And this particularity is the 'going out' of God in vulnerability, in which God gives Godself away in love, encountering negativity and death, while remaining true to who God is eternally.⁴⁸⁹ These concepts of covenant and willing vulnerability, in which God is genuinely open to the world, are not the kind of kenotic theology in which God *becomes* vulnerable on the cross. Rather the very possibility of the cross is based in the eternal covenant and vulnerability within the Trinity between Father, Son and Spirit and is the very basis for God's risky 'going out in love' to the world, and including us in God's trinitarian life.

David Cunningham has developed trinitarian thinking in a similar pattern, and in a way that resonates particularly with this discussion he connects together trinitarian virtues and practices. He understands virtues as those 'dispositions that *God has by nature* and in which *we participate by grace*' and 'as gifts, these virtues are not forced upon us; but we can allow them to form us, and thus allow God to take us up into the divine life.'⁴⁹⁰ For us, Cunningham suggests, it is not simply virtues that lead to practice, rather

elements of the *triune* character of God ... are present in our development of specifically *triune* habits. In this way our lives can

⁴⁸⁷ George Herbert, *The Country Parson and Selected Poems* (London: SCM, 1956) p. 13.

⁴⁸⁸ Paul S. Fiddes, *The Creative Suffering of God* (Oxford: Clarendon: 1988).

⁴⁸⁹ Fiddes, *Participation*, especially pp. 170-186.

⁴⁹⁰ David S. Cunningham, *These Three are One: The Practice of Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), p. 123.

take on a triune character as well, conforming more closely to the image of God in which we were created.⁴⁹¹

Fiddes' trinitarian theology describes the *willing* vulnerability of God, in which nothing is imposed on God, but God freely and graciously opens the divine life to the world. Human life will, of course, sit in a somewhat different tension between that which the individual freely chooses and that which is imposed from without, that is between what is structured and creative, but for the process of ministerial formation will require participating in those practices involving risk-taking and willing vulnerability, the opening up of life to others, through which this trinitarian virtue will be shaped. This further shapes the whole way we must understand the practice of ministry and so the practice of preparation.

The change from the language of competencies to marks of ministry reflects a shift in the understanding of the *habitus* of ministry, a shift that has a strong theological rationale. The trinitarian theology outlined by Fiddes and Cunningham stresses the way that human virtues are formed through participation by grace in God's life and that engaging in trinitarian practices will lead to the development of trinitarian virtues. Whether the language of attributes, qualities or marks is used, a virtue inspired rather than competence driven approach is rooted more firmly in this trinitarian theology. Such virtues will, according to our dialectical theology, be Christian virtues, rather than any sense of priestly character, which those called to ministry seek in particular intentional and intensive ways.

With regard to the practice of preparation, Astley offers three metaphors for the wider process of education: as a production line in which the 'teacher' does something *to* the learner, as gardening in which the 'teacher' does something *for* the learner and as a journey in which the 'teacher' does something *with* the learner. Understanding formation as growth in virtue, in which the teacher and

⁴⁹¹ Cunningham, *These Three are One*, p. 125.

students are both engaged in their own formation, the only kind of metaphor that is applicable is Astley's 'journey'.⁴⁹² Astley himself quotes Dykstra:

Everything is not all decided in advance, and what happens in my learning will make a difference to her. She is willing to become my equal and to be vulnerable to what takes place. I see in her face that my own learning moves her, and that she is committed to me and my learning over the long haul.⁴⁹³

But even in this sense of ministerial formation as a journey, the process not only involves a willing risk-taking but can also *impose* a certain vulnerability on those who respond to God's call, placing people in a threatening, if affirming, context. A change of employment, housing and schools, a drop in income and being launched into an unfamiliar setting are all significant challenges. Perhaps one of the greatest challenges for many is the return to study with the need to write essays and sit exams, in which an identity as a 'student' replaces a very different employment and life-situation. This itself can be hard and feel both threatening and de-skilling and a key challenge in ministerial formation is to enable students to willingly embrace that which is already, to a degree, imposed.

This then has significant implications for the liturgical, educational and relational 'space' created in a college context, which seeks to encourage growth in virtue in a context that enables risk-taking and vulnerability. This will impact the relationships which staff develop and model where the necessary asymmetrical relationship of staff and students is challenged by an alternative mutuality and openness, for styles of teaching, that do not hide behind unquestionable expertise but open up a common journey of learning, and for the way that our Baptist colleges relate together in a community of practice. The recent development of a peer review process, for example, reflects something of this risk and vulnerability.

⁴⁹² Astley, *Learning in the Way*, pp. 40ff.

⁴⁹³ Craig Dykstra, *Vision and Character*, (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1981), p 104.

Conclusion

During the course of this research I drafted *Ministerial Formation in the British Baptist Colleges: A Commitment to Shared Practice*, which was affirmed by the Baptist Colleges' Partnership as a working document that reflected and expressed the current shared understanding of the practice of preparation. My writing of this document was, naturally, shaped by the research project and by my growing understanding of the historical, structured and structuring, representative voice. The operant and espoused voices discerned through the empirical research have generally confirmed this growing representative voice.

Building on an understanding of a Baptist *habitus* of ministry, categorised as a dialectical model, and a shared Baptist approach to preparation for ministry, best understood as formation, and using formal voice of the academy to add depth to the representative, espoused and operant voices, I have offered here a theology of ministerial formation for Baptists. I have suggested how it is structured and structuring, cooperative and creative, distinctly Baptist but part of the broader understanding of the church and based on a trinitarian theology of participation and vulnerability. I offer this as a theology that emerges from the tradition and can shape future practice, both at Regent's and in the wider denomination. I now return to reflect on my own practice and the work of Regent's Park College, in the light of the empirical research and these theological propositions.

8.

Practice and the Pastoral Imagination At Regent's Park College

'What should I do, now, first?' This was the existential question of a new minister with which I began. I have suggested that the answer to this question in practice will be shaped by many things, including the minister's context and personality, but it will be particularly shaped by the pastoral imagination a college is seeking to inculcate during the process of preparation. While it has been shown that college principals and tutors have significantly influenced the theological understanding of students,⁴⁹⁴ a helpful further piece of research would be to correlate the pastoral imagination a college seeks to develop with the actual on-going practice of ministry amongst its former students.

But in the light of this whole research project, 'what should I do, now?' takes on a further meaning. What should I do as Tutor in Pastoral Studies at Regent's Park College in the light of this empirical research and these theological proposals and in the context of significant change and development, to develop our practice of preparation so that it develops a particular pastoral imagination? I have responsibility, as part of a team, for writing documents, developing curriculum, preparing timetables, liaising within the University, within the Baptist Union and with placement churches as well as offering teaching and pastoral care to students. Following on from the structure of chapter 5 and 6 I offer here reflections on both the overall practice of preparation and the particular pastoral imagination that I think Regent's should be seeking to develop in its students.

⁴⁹⁴ See Goodliff, *Ministry*.

The Practice of Preparation

There has been an on-going interplay between my practice and research over the last five years, as would be appropriate for a research-practitioner and practitioner-researcher, but this chapter offers me an opportunity both to recognise some of this interplay and also to step back and reflect more fully on the future direction. Drawing together the discussions in the previous chapters I highlight six issues of current significance: language, context, the congregation-based pattern, bi-vocational ministry, student choice and liturgical space.

First, there has been both a certain linguistic inconsistency in our documentation as well as some gradual development in recent years, parallel to what has happened in other institutions. Our documentation (brochures, website, handbooks etc) now intentionally uses more formation and less training language and the key overall descriptor 'ministerial training' became 'ministerial formation and training' and then again 'ministerial formation'. These changes have happened gradually and have been part of this interplay, for my redrafting of documents year on year has been shaped by my research findings and my own increasing explicit commitment to a formation *habitus*. Although these documents are the sole responsibility of Regent's Park, the changes have happened as part of the developing shared practice among Baptist colleges, and forms part of the structured and structuring tradition. A remaining task is to look to ensure that there is a consistency of approach across all documentation.

Secondly, I have suggested that context, as it is both intentionally chosen and contingently shaped, is a significant factor in the experience of formation. Regent's has a context formed by two distinct commitments, as a PPH of Oxford University, where a variety of subjects are taught to students of various faiths and none, and as a member of the Baptist Union of Great Britain. Together they form the unique structured tradition within which the college seeks to work collaboratively and creatively. Building on my theological understanding of formation as covenant, then these two distinct aspects of context bring three covenant partners: the wider university, the colleges and halls from other

Christian denomination within the University and the wider Baptist denomination.

The commitment to Oxford University carries the requirement to teach only courses of the University, which themselves tend to be shaped by more traditional approaches to theology, but Regent's is a full partner in the university courses, able to shape their development as well as abiding by their regulations. While strongly committed to a university setting as the most appropriate context for ministerial formation and to this university context in particular, further reflection on both the nature of the academic theological courses taught will be important ways in which aspects that are contingent can be intentionally owned.

One of the changes I have overseen is the move of the Oxford BTh degree from the Faculty of Theology and Religion to the Department of Continuing Education, together with quite substantial changes to the curriculum. No longer are there four papers a year, which has strong parallels to the Oxford Final Honours School, but rather six papers a year, each worth a notional twenty credits, offering a much closer parallel to modular degrees in most other universities. The new BTh curriculum continues along more traditional sub-divisions with papers in biblical studies, history and doctrine and practical theology, but the vast majority of the wider formational curriculum now maps onto the new BTh, and there is stronger overall sense of the course being shaped by a practical theology methodology with is a more significant place for contextual based assignments. But the empirical research raises for me two significant, but contrasting questions.

Would it be beneficial for the BTh to continue to develop into a fully contextual degree, more akin to that at NBLC and Institution C, and do we need to allow more space for the 'traditional' subjects of biblical studies and systematic theology? The possibility of a fully contextual degree was raised in our Peer Review in 2015 (in which the Peer Review Team Leader was one of the Co-Principals at NBLC), and in our response we indicated that the significant recent changes to the BTh that were still bedding in and the need for agreement across

a broad constituency in the university meant that this could not be a priority in the coming five years. There is also a difference of opinion among staff at Regent's. For me there has been, through the research, a growing sense that the integration of learning for our ministerial students would be enhanced by a stronger contextual approach to the degree programme if this were possible.

Yet I was also surprised by the apparent lower percentages of biblical studies and systematic theology in the curriculum – especially given the appreciation of my own Oxford theology course of which these formed a significant majority. Given the rebalancing of the overall experience of formation towards practice, and the decrease of time in college, I am anxious to ensure that the rigorous academic and theological foundations, essential for good contextual theology, are not lost, but rather developed further. The advantages of a fully contextual degree remain, for me, an open question, and a pressing piece of work is to reflect systematically on the content of biblical studies and theology in all the modules and experiment with developing opportunities that help develop both rigorous scholarship and contextual theology.

The formal ecumenical context is expressed through OPTET, but the introduction of Common Awards is changing the nature of this partnership, fragmenting some of the previously shared academic courses and presenting the challenge to reimagine its nature. While joint ecumenical teaching on the MTh, and twice yearly shared worship remain constant features, for those on undergraduate courses the experience is more varied. Each year brings a renegotiation of possibilities, shaped significantly by the need for different institutions to make a complex internal system work well. Our move, in 2015-16, to one core day in term-time instead of two, supplemented by longer block weeks out of term, has resulted in the potential loss of ecumenical 'space' for formation, since in developing timetables we have so little room for manoeuvre. To develop a more significant ecumenical aspect to formation will require the kind of creativity and commitment that is currently not present in OPTET.

The commitment to the Baptist Union involves being part of the Baptist Colleges' Partnership, which has oversight of ministerial formation within the Union, and which has more recently developed a greater sense of a cooperative and shared practice, structured within the Baptist tradition. The college is committed to this wider ecclesial setting and intent to develop the co-operative and shared practice of formation.

Third, the congregation-based pattern of ministerial formation is now firmly established as the dominant pattern among the British Baptist colleges. For Regent's, as the other Baptist colleges, there can be no significant return to residential formation, which remains a possibility but in reality only for those who are commended for ministry at a young age before they have been to University. Some form of congregation-based pattern will continue to be dominant in the years ahead and this is an additional aspect of the wider context. Yet while our espoused theology has been of two centres, and on the partnership in formation between college and placement church, the focus of attention has been on the college centre, with the expectation, or trust, that formation is somehow happening in the church context.

The challenge we face, especially in the light of our changes to one core day together with extended block weeks, is how to develop further this pattern so that the placement is more than the exercising of ministry, or providing the material for reflection at college, but is itself increasingly a genuine centre of formation. This will require a greater partnership, one I suggested will need to be understood in terms of covenant, with a concomitant time commitment, between college and church, and for tutors to work more closely with churches so they can reflect together on how the church experience can be formative.

As part of this development I wrote, in 2015, a new *Formation Handbook for Churches* and this sets out how we understood this partnership and how the placement church is a centre of formation. But this needs further development, particularly looking at ways that the experience and understanding college has gained can be shared with churches so that they can develop more as a centre of

formation. For a number of years, predating my appointment, we have used 'partnership agreements' which the college, the placement church and the student sign. I have felt some pressure from church placements to make this a more contractual document that sets out in more detail exactly what students and churches are expected to do, Yet my desire would be, in contrast, to make them more explicitly theological, so that the implicit covenantal understanding they contain can be made more explicit as the theological basis for formation in two centres. Working this covenant out in practice will then require more direct contact between college and partner churches, through writing and in visits.

Fourth, there has been much recent discussion within the Baptist Union of the need for bi-vocational ministry prepared for by bi-vocational formation. For some there appears to be a clear theological commitment to bi-vocational ministry as the most appropriate form of ministry in principle, whereas others experience this not as two distinct vocations, but as a practical necessity in the current ecclesial and economic climate. Up until now, in both our college-based and congregation-based patterns of formation, the whole process is seen as requiring full-time commitment, partly to stress the integration of placement and college. The world outside the church has not been entirely absent, as Michael Taylor's original vision in Manchester was that some placements would be 'secular', although the expectation was that such a placement would take a student into a new and unfamiliar context, and that it could be combined with church and study in one integrated approach.

The challenge here is to create the right and the sufficient space, liturgically, educationally and relationally, for the overall process of formation, and not to be pushed towards a model based on a training paradigm that simply develops sufficient skills. Our own re-shaping of the programme around one core day had this challenge in mind, alongside financial pressures, and it would be possible to re-work the block weeks over weekends and these could be spread out over a longer period of time, allowing the possibility of a student combining formation with working, for example, for three days a week.

But my experience one year on is that these changes have placed even greater time constraints on the curriculum, have moved ministerial formation to a more dispersed model, and place an even greater emphasis on the church to be involved in the whole formation. Although this is still a very new development the benefits of opening up bi-vocational possibilities are balanced with what appears so far to be some loss of 'space' for the whole process of formation. Institution C offers an interesting non-Baptist model for a gathered and dispersed pattern with no 'college' buildings and making more use of weekends. The way they use technology and pattern residential periods may offer helpful models, but I feel apprehensive that the changes, which may be unavoidable, are diminishing the space and possibility of formation and developing a pastoral imagination.

Fifth, the reshaping of the patterns of formation at Regent's means that for congregation-based students on the BTh suite there is very little student choice within the curriculum, essentially limited to choices about assessment rather than areas of study. The empirical research showed a variety of practice among the different institutions, and student choice can increase a sense of ownership and motivation and also allow some degrees of specialism to develop. The changes in the pattern of formation last year have in fact diminished choice further, removing the stream of short elective courses that were not directly connected to academic modules. Such choice will not be able to be offered in the foreseeable future, which puts a greater stress on the need for wide consultation and feedback on the whole of the curriculum in order that a shared ownership is maintained.

Sixth, one of the key questions identified in the empirical research was the space created for liturgical formation. Although Baptist colleges following a majority congregation-based model cannot emulate the residential colleges of the past or present, the liturgical formation that shapes some of the non-Baptist institutions challenges us to explore more creative possibilities, particularly around a gathered-dispersed model. In this past year we have experimented with patterns of prayers, drawing on material from the Order of Baptist Ministers and the

Northumbria Community as well as writing our own material, used in college together and offered and encouraged as resources for the week apart. This dispersed model of liturgical community around the concept of covenant has had some success but has been appreciated much more by those who had already experimented with and benefited from a daily office. The challenges for the coming year will be to work on how the gathered and dispersed elements in this pattern can encourage and shape each other, and how the whole cohort of students can be encouraged and enabled to inhabit this liturgical space.

A Pastoral Imagination

In chapters 5 and 6 I attempted to identify the pastoral imagination that the other Baptist colleges and a sample of non-Baptist institutions were seeking to develop in their students. This was based on both the espoused self-understanding and also the operant practice of the institution in their explicit and implicit curricula. Regent's Park, in the same way, has always had at least an implicit pastoral imagination that it has been seeking to develop in students.

This research has afforded me the opportunity to recognise the pastoral imagination that has been implicitly at the heart of our practice of preparation, but also to stand back and reformulate this more explicitly. Drawing together my wider research I would propose the following three aspects to our pastoral imagination. These are certainly not new concepts to Regent's, and they find echoes and support, to varying degrees, in all the Institutions investigated and as such they are both affirming and challenging to current practice.

Reflective and Reflexive

This may be considered to have a focus on the way that a minister as a disciple relates to her or himself before God.

Reflective practice has been shown to be at the heart of a common practice of preparation, key to the pedagogical task of integration and central to the

developing understanding of ministers as reflective practitioners. Further, the differences between being reflective, able to relate theory and practice together in contextual ways, and reflexive, being deeply self-aware, are minimised by the understanding of theological reflection as a virtue as much as a skill. This must be highlighted as at the heart of any pastoral imagination. Clearly the pattern of theological reflection in college will help form on-going patterns in the ministers who leave, so a clear understanding of the purpose and practice of theological reflection in a college is necessary.

In common, it appears, with many places,⁴⁹⁵ while such reflection has inspired and enthused some, it has been difficult for many students, who have struggled to grasp both its overall purpose and appropriate practices. This has led us to reframe the way theological reflection happens in the course on a number of occasions. Currently, after some initial teaching theological reflection happens as an integrated aspect of the whole course, through specific theological reflection groups and through the weekly term time reflective journal students are asked to complete. Further, the reformed syllabus of the BTh now explicitly introduces theological reflection in two of the level 4 modules, and allows for a wider range of assessment that includes explicit reflective elements.

Given the need for continuing practice in developing the virtue of theological reflection all the different elements of current practice remain important. There may be possibilities for incorporating aspects of the reflective journals into assessment for some modules, and this may be a helpful stimulus to the value of the practice. We need to continue to work together at how the theological reflection groups are run, perhaps more explicitly using different models of reflection through the year. It will also be important for us to reflect on the amount of time specifically devoted to theological reflection in the curriculum. Perhaps most significant would be to consider the challenge of rethinking the whole of the curriculum contextually so that more particular methodologies associated with some of the traditional sub-disciplines are taught and explored,

⁴⁹⁵ See Graham *et al.*, *Theological Reflection*, pp. 6-7.

but within the wider belief that all theology is practical theology. This would be a significant piece of work, difficult in the current context and which would require a cogent theological rationale for the benefits of a fully contextual degree given the comments I have made earlier.

Collaborative

This might have a focus on the way that a minister, as a disciple, relates to others, especially in the church, before God.

Central to my argument is that a dialectical approach to ministry in which ministry and oversight are exercised by the whole congregation but also by a 'few' set aside by the church is both the representative Baptist understanding and also the most appropriate theological position. While the notion of collaborative ministry is of course not peculiarly Baptist,⁴⁹⁶ I suggested that there remains a particular Baptist understanding of ministry, in this dialectical model, which is particularly well expressed in the language of collaboration. This is more than structural polity but is rooted deeply in an understanding of the nature of God as well as the nature of the church. This stress appears in a number of ways in the pastoral imaginations of the Baptist colleges.

Understanding that all formation is contextual, within a tradition, the practice of preparation at a Baptist college must be necessarily and unashamedly a process of Baptist formation. This will certainly have elements of 'ecumenical formation' and will share much with those preparing for ministry in other traditions, but it will also be distinct, and this collaborative approach arising from a dialectical understanding of ministry is central to a Baptist distinctive.

It is generally recognised that an aspect of our current 'post denominational' and consumer age is the willingness of Christians to choose the most suitable local church regardless of its denominational links, leading to many within Baptist congregations who have been formed in particular practices and understandings

⁴⁹⁶ See, for example, Stephen Pickard, *Theological Foundations for Collaborative Ministry* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009).

in a whole variety of church traditions. Anecdotally the consequence of this has been the increasing numbers of students coming to college to prepare for ministry with much less Baptist experience than in the past, and often in Baptist churches that have struggled with their own understanding of ecclesiology.

This then poses a challenge to the way that a college both teaches and models a particular understanding of collaborative and dialectical ministry. Regent's has tended not to take 'positions' theologically but to draw on an educational model deeply rooted in Oxford's tutorial system in which the tutor seeks to expose the student to a variety of opinions and facilitate them in developing their own views. The reality, of course, is that there will always be some shaping of the process through the tutor's own beliefs, their teaching and the bibliographies they set – in this way the practice of a particular tutor will include both formative and critical education. Yet as a Baptist college, with those preparing for ministry in Baptist churches, we are engaging, unapologetically, in formative education within a particular tradition, which we own and celebrate, and while the Union struggles with a normative theology I have suggested there is a very clear representative theology. My own belief is that we should be explicitly seeking in all we do to develop a pastoral imagination based on a ministry rather than leadership *habitus*, drawing on the dialectical model of ministry and which is deeply collaborative. It is perhaps NBLC which currently develops this pastoral imagination the most.

This prompts a further, though more tangential issue, which is the practice of accepting onto the Register of Nationally Accredited Ministers those who have not prepared for ministry in a Baptist college. A course on Baptist history and principles is mandatory, and the Residential Selection Conference can insist a candidate engage in further formation, although this seems to be understood more generally in terms of character, maturity and spirituality. Yet this does not seem sufficient. Given our previous arguments for integrated formation which cannot be a-contextual, a course of study which can be taken by distance learning may provide some helpful information but can never be Baptist formation, which can only happen in a Baptist context, however ecumenically

that context is shaped. As a denomination we should be looking to ensure that all those who are accredited as ministers have been truly formed in a Baptist context, although this may raise ecclesiological tensions between the local church that calls a minister and the wider Union that accredits.

Hospitable

This might have a focus on the way that a minister relates to the wider world before God.

Rooted in an understanding of God who is deeply committed to the whole of creation as the partner of divine love, and who opens the divine life to welcome the other into God's trinitarian community, hospitality has been used as a metaphor that encompasses the church's participation in the mission of God and for the nature of theological education. To describe a minister, or disciple, as hospitable, means being committed to the whole world in a missional sense, but not simply as a function to perform but as an essential part of one's character or disposition, which will both lead to and be shaped by specific hospitable practices. Such language also has the benefit of not separating out that which is missional and pastoral but holding them together in an understanding of God. It is also language that has deep resonances with spirituality and would be a key way in which the pastoral imagination is shaped by the whole of the broad curriculum, as more formal modules on spirituality, as well as shared worship and community life all contribute alongside an emphasis on mission.

Mission is a significant area of the curriculum at Regent's. Up until this year a significant part of the mission teaching has not been part of the validated BTh suite of courses but has happened as part of the wider curriculum often in block weeks. The reforming of the BTh has allowed us some space to reframe this. As these courses are further developed an important task will be to reflect on the overall coherence of this aspect of the curriculum including the ways that placements, especially an overseas mission placement contribute to the whole.

Equally the college is in the on-going process of reflecting how more pioneering approaches to church and mission can be incorporated into the curriculum.

Yet hospitality is more than missional practice or an aspect of the explicit curriculum, but describes a way of life. A further challenge in making hospitality a central aspect of the pastoral imagination is for me to reflect on my own practice of hospitality, in the classroom, in my office and in my home, as I seek to pursue practices, in availability and vulnerability, that help model and develop this in others.

Conclusion

This suggests, quite naturally, that the practice of preparation itself must be significantly shaped by the intended pastoral imagination. In significant ways the pastoral imagination proposed here already deeply shapes the understanding and practice of preparation as tutors seek to model reflection in their teaching and in their own approach to study, act collaboratively as a staff team and with the student body, and develop pedagogical practices shaped by the virtue of hospitality. Yet these practices and virtues rightly remain challenges for the on-going work of the college.

These reflections suggest the kind of *habitus* or structuring structure appropriate for Regent's Park College, which is shared and cooperative with others as something distinctly Baptist, but also creative and distinct, and rightly remains a unique context in which to prepare for ministry. There is, of course, an element in which this is still structured from the past and in which context and history produce its own sense of inertia. There is a sense that the operant lags behind the espoused rather than reflecting it completely. Our challenge is to continue the creative improvisation that honours history and works within the contemporary context to continue to develop this shared representative voice expressed in our own espoused theology and operant practices.

9.

Conclusion

This research has been a piece of reflection on practice and professional development, as I sought to explore in greater depth some of the changes I was already making in my role as Tutor in Pastoral Studies. It began with and was prompted by a number of changes and challenges within my work at Regent's Park College, which themselves have changed and developed during this time. The wider review of ministry in the Baptist Union, the Church of England Project around resourcing theological education and the Oxford University report are yet to be finalised and implemented and these are likely to mean that further changes in my work are necessary.

The title of the thesis already had a particular bias to it. As a practitioner I was instinctively embracing more fully the language of formation, but in doing so I became increasingly aware of both the debate about the practice of preparation and the persistent description of this as training. Equally, while seeking to teach classes on the nature of ministry with a stress on a collaborative approach I was routinely confronted with a strong leadership model presented by students. The research I have undertaken has confirmed, for me, the instinctive approach I was taking around the issues of both formation and ministry, but also has allowed me to develop these more fully and defend them more strongly. For me then it is clear that both my own practice and, I have argued, the practice of preparation among Baptists, is better described as forming ministers rather than training leaders.

Within a methodology that sought to generate knowledge, which would impact my practice, as well as affirming that my own practice is best understood as forming ministers, I have sought to offer a number of new insights and perspectives.

In setting out a theoretical and methodical basis in chapter 1 I offer an understanding of practice and a more refined and developed concept of the

pastoral imagination. I suggest that Dykstra offers a more theological, and so helpful understanding of practice by rooting it in the pursuit of a good beyond itself within God's self-giving grace.⁴⁹⁷ While this understanding of practice has shaped the thesis, I would want to further develop this definition, in the light of the trinitarian theology developed in this thesis. A trinitarian practice pursues a good beyond itself by participating in God's vulnerable and risk-taking self-giving grace, through which it develops trinitarian virtues.

Similarly, while offering in chapter 1 a new and refined understanding of the pastoral imagination, first set out by Dykstra and developed by Foster *et al.*, I would also want to further refine this definition within a trinitarian perspective. The interplays it suggests both between the structured tradition, the shared co-operative approach and creative and individual agency, and between practice and theology are rooted in the fundamental interplay between trinitarian practices and virtues. A pastoral imagination is then the fundamental way of understanding and experiencing their participating in the triune God that shapes everything a pastor thinks and does.

In chapter 2 I explored the way that contemporary Baptists understand the practice of ministry, highlighting the tension that currently exists between two distinct paradigms, named as ministry and leadership and arguing for a coherent historic and contemporary Baptist approach, which I have labelled as a dialectical model. Whereas there are certainly elements of this model in other writers I have brought this material in the literature together and articulated it in a way that has not been done before.

In chapter 3 I explored the history of the practice of preparation among Baptists over the last forty years and the way that it is currently understood. Whereas the development of a formation paradigm in other denominations has been narrated, this had not been offered before within a British Baptist context and therefore this is a distinct contribution to knowledge. I have already published a version of this chapter in a peer-reviewed journal resulting in a number of

⁴⁹⁷ Bass and Dykstra, *For Life Abundant*, p. 30.

further conversations. These two chapters, by engaging with current and historic literature, have offered a *representative* understanding of the practice of preparation for Baptists – as formation for ministry – which is already theologically rich.

Building on this theoretical basis I engaged in research to explore the espoused and operant understanding of the practice of preparation in the other Baptist colleges, by focussing on the first of two empirical research questions:

what is the pastoral imagination which the Baptist colleges individually are seeking to inculcate in their students?

Although there have been anecdotal discussions of the perceived biases and differences within the five Baptist colleges, no sustained empirical research had been done in this area. Chapter 5, then, offers the most comprehensive research and clearest insight available into the practice of the other four Baptist colleges. In this chapter I have shown both significant similarities with a shared structured understanding and some particular creative differences. Future discussion about the work of the five Baptist colleges can now happen on a much firmer empirical basis.

Exploring further the similarities found among the Baptist colleges I pursued a second empirical research question:

is there a particular combination of practices and elements of a pastoral imagination that could be considered distinctly Baptist?

In the light of this, Chapter 6 sets out in some detail the practice of five non-Baptist institutions. Some of the information contained here may be less useful in its own right because of its anonymised nature, but this aspect of the empirical research suggests that there is a distinctive combination of emphases that could be described as ‘Baptist’, and so it broadens and deepens the knowledge of Baptist practice.

The empirical research focussed on the intentions of the colleges and the pastoral imagination that they were seeking to develop, and did so by comparing

Baptist and non-Baptist institutions. One of the consequences of this research decision is that the data gathered is stronger on the espoused theology of the colleges within their documentation and the operant theology of a college expressed in its explicit curriculum than on the wider implicit curriculum of the college. The research could then be extended in a number of ways.

Further research could take a more intensive immersive experience of participant observation into the life of the other four Baptist colleges, not simply considering documents and one key interview, but sharing in classes, meals and worship with the community over a period of time, interviewing a broad spectrum of staff and thus building a fuller and richer picture of each college. Alternatively, or additionally, a broader sample of non-Baptist institutions could be included, which would then test further some of the conclusions of this research. A much broader sample would also be able to test Baptist practice against institutions, for example, of a particular denomination or churchmanship. These options would pursue the same kind of questions in greater depth.

A different kind of agenda for further research would take a student-centred approach and explore the impact of the practice of a college on its ministerial students, so moving beyond the intentions of the college in its practice to exploring the actual pastoral imagination expressed in the ministry of its students. Such research could, further, explore the ways that different models of ministerial formation might impact upon student experience, for example, focussing on those who take a college-based or a congregation-based or a bi-vocational route. In addition, the impact of church contexts on formation could be explored with empirical evidence offered about the differences entailed in, for example, being placed in a small church as sole minister or a larger church as part of a team. All these would be valuable further research, but at present chapters 5 and 6 offer the frontier of empirical research on the practice of the Baptist colleges of the Baptist Union of Great Britain.

The representative voice from the literature review and the espoused and operant voices from the empirical research are both already theologically

extensive, but I combined them with a third strand, the work of leading Baptist theologian Paul Fiddes, in order to extend the theological depth by explicitly engaging theory and practice with the doctrine of God.

In Chapter 7 I have offered a clear and explicit theology of formation for Baptists, which has sought to combine these three sources of knowledge. I am not aware of any other attempt to offer such a theology of ministerial formation and this is one of the distinct contributions to knowledge within the thesis, and as such is offered to the wider Baptist church. Some of the theology here has also already been explored in a published article, which develops a trinitarian theology of ministerial formation in dialogue with Paul Fiddes, and in the paper I drafted for the Baptist Colleges' Partnership, *Ministerial Formation in the British Baptist Colleges: A Commitment to Shared Practice*. What is unique about this chapter is the way it has sought to bring together the finished empirical research together with a wider review of the literature and the work of Fiddes.

Finally in Chapter 8 I have indicated some of my own learning and some of the ways that the practice of the college might continue to change. So, for example, alongside the rewriting of documents the outline of the pastoral imagination set out here now forms the basis for sessions in our first year Introductory Week in order to make these intentions and underlying values explicit for students.

At the conclusion, then, of this research I am more committed both to a dialectical understanding of the practice of ministry and to an understanding of the practice of preparation as best expressed by the language of formation. My role at college is to form ministers. The nature of my practice has grown and developed during the research project as each year I have reworked material in the light for further understanding. There are significant challenges ahead for my own work, the work of the college and practice in the wider Union, but this thesis offers a comprehensive and rich theological understanding of the role of a tutor in pastoral studies.

Appendix 1:

Sample Letter about Empirical Research

Dear

I am currently involved in a piece of research which will be submitted as a DMin for the University of Chester, through Spurgeon's College, London. The title of the thesis is **Forming Ministers or Training Leaders? An Exploration of Practice and the Pastoral Imagination**.

A key aspect of this will involve some empirical research connected with the five Baptist colleges which are members of the BUGB, alongside a number of non-Baptist colleges and courses involved in preparing people for ministry in either a denominational, ecumenical or non-denominational context. I am therefore writing to you to see if your institution and you personally, would be willing to be a part of this research.

I am seeking to explore one central question: 'What is the pastoral imagination which the college is seeking to inculcate in its students?' – particularly those students who are intending to go into ordained ministry.

This will be expressed in terms of how the college understands issues such as training, formation, education, leadership and professional practice.

I have taken the term 'pastoral imagination' from the work of C R Dykstra, and D C Bass, 'A theological understanding of Christian practices' in M Volf and D Bass *Practicing Theology: Beliefs and Practices in Christian Life* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002) and Charles Foster (Foster, C R, Dahill, L E, Goleman, L A and Tolentino, B W), *Educating Clergy: Teaching Practices and Pastoral Imagination* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006)

In essence we might describe this as the 'kind of ministers' the college seeks to form and train. There will of course be a great variety, but the 'pastoral imagination' refers to those things which would be shared and persist over time.

One aspect of the research will enquire as to whether there is any sense that a particular college has a particular 'pastoral imagination' and by looking at the Baptist colleges alongside a sample of other colleges and courses, whether there is such a thing as a 'Baptist pastoral imagination'.

I would like to explore this question in two ways:

- I would seek permission to have access to a range of written documents including: prospectuses, handbooks and timetables, which may set out both the rationale and theological undergirding of the process of education, training and formation and the detailed content of the curriculum; documents produced by a college for the process of an Inspection, where this has occurred, which express formally the position of the college in regard to the theory and practice of education, formation and training; any reports from an inspection or review.
- I would like to interview you, for about an hour, to be able to discuss further both issues raised in the documents and general questions about education formation and training.

I understand that there are some sensitivities in undertaking this research, especially as a tutor at a different college. Whereas some documents, such as prospectuses and inspection reports are in the public domain, others are private and to a degree confidential. Clearly I would keep all such documents securely and keep them confidential, not passing them or their content onto any others. My intention, with your permission, is to tape our interview so I can transcribe it. I will keep the tape and the transcript securely and the tape will be destroyed.

For the sake of the research project, I will name the five Baptist colleges but will categorise the five non-Baptist institutions by a letter (A to E) and there will be no mention of the college by name in my work. It may be necessary, though, to indicate something about the college (eg a broad denominational college) in order to make appropriate connections with the Baptist college data, which although keeping the college anonymous will give some clue as to the college

concerned. In the light of this I make two commitments: I will send a copy of those sections of the thesis which deal with the qualitative data of your college before it is submitted; and I will contact you about fresh discussions and negotiations before any material is published in the public sphere.

During the process, you may decline to supply any document I ask for, decline to answer any question and choose to withdraw from the research project at any stage.

My intention is that the research will take place over the next nine months. If you consent to be involved I will contact you first about documents and then about an interview which can take place at your institution or at an alternative venue convenient to you.

Attached is a consent form which I would need you to sign at some point before we begin, if you agree to be involved in this research project. Perhaps an initial email response would be most helpful, and then we can pursue things further.

With very best wishes,

Appendix 2:

Core Questions in Empirical Interviews:

In terms of the overall aims of the College in respect to preparing men and women for Baptist ministry: Clearly those who leave your College to be ordained will be different to each other in many ways, but what words would you use to describe that which you hope will be true of all those who are prepared for ministry here?

- Where necessary can you explain these words further, and what you mean by them?
- What leads you to these words?
- Is this a view shared by all the teaching staff here?

What do you understand by describing a Baptist minister as a 'professional'?

- Is it language that you use?
- Do the BUGB core competencies connect here for you, and if so how?

Is a particular theological understanding of ordination taught or encouraged by the College?

- If a variety of views are presented, how wide is the variety?
- Are they given equal weight?

There is much talk within church and society of the concept of leadership:

- Is a particular theological understanding of 'leadership' taught or encouraged by the College?
- If a variety of views are presented, how wide is this variety?
- Are they given equal weight?
- What 'leadership style' best describes what students may see modelled at the College?

In terms of the self-understanding of the College's work: The various documents which you have and which you have to work with, eg Inspection requests, use a number of different words, in particular: formation, training and education.

- What do you understand by these words?
- What are their relationships to each other?
- Do you have a preference for describing your work and the work of the College in preparing men and women to be Baptist ministers?

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