

# **PATTERNS OF MINISTRY IN EAST AFRICA**

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in the Third World

For Prof. Harvie Conn

## **SECTION ONE: INTRODUCTORY AND BACKGROUND CONSIDERATIONS**

### **1. Purpose and Scope of Study**

Since it is necessary, because of spatial limitations, to consider only part of this subject, it has arbitrarily been decided to exclude the very large Roman Catholic Church from this study. Only the major Protestant and some Independent groups will be considered. The most important reason for this is that the Catholic Church has to be considered by itself, having its own peculiar patterns.

When referring to the concept of ministry in the church today, the common emphasis is to insist on the involvement of the laity as well as the clerics.<sup>1</sup> It is to be admitted that this is also a Biblical emphasis,<sup>2</sup> but the Bible also teaches that there are special functions to be performed, such as pastor, teacher and evangelist (see Ephesians 4:11). This study will be largely concerned with what has been traditionally called the “full-time” ministry in the service of the church.

Part of the impetus for the study comes from over two years teaching experience in a secondary school in Meru District, Kenya. This has given me first-hand experience, particularly in the Methodist Church and East African Revival Fellowship. If there seems to be undue emphasis in these areas, the reason will therefore be readily apparent.

There are two specially important books in the area under consideration and much factual material has been gleaned from them. They are, *Training for the Ministry in East Africa*, by F. G. Welch, a report on theological education in East Africa commissioned by the Association of East African Theological Colleges, and made in 1962; and Paul M. Miller’s research study, *Equipping for Ministry in East Africa*, completed under the direction of the same Association in 1968.

### **2. The Ministry: Biblical Perspective**

Today, it is not unusual for even those who profess to bow to the authority of Scripture to give up “the notion that the Bible outlines one specific pattern of ministry for all time.”<sup>3</sup> While the Bible is not a manual of church order, it does contain certain principles, examples and specific teaching on these matters, which the church is duty bound to follow. The Bible, as God’s completed word for these last days, is authoritative, not just for the apostolic church, but for every time in everything God has been pleased to reveal.

What is “the ministry” from a Biblical viewpoint?<sup>4</sup> The ministry of God’s people today is patterned on the ministry of Jesus Christ. He came as the servant to minister (Mark 10:45), so that those who minister in His name are also servants (Mark 10:42-44, 10:35, cf. John 13:1-17, Matthew 23:8-12). They are stewards entrusted with a deposit from Christ, and commanded to be faithful (1 Corinthians 4:1, Ephesians 4:7,11, cf. Luke 12:41-48). The offices of pastor, teacher and evangelist are intimately related in that each has gifts for teaching with

<sup>1</sup> Mackie, Stephen, *Patterns of Ministry* (London: Collins, 1969), p. 69. Miller, Paul, *Equipping for Ministry in East Africa* (Dodoma, Tanzania: Central Tanganyika Press, 1969), emphasized throughout. Oosthuizen, G. C., *Post-Christianity in Africa* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1968), pp. 255-256.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Ephesians 4:12-13, Hebrews 3:13.

<sup>3</sup> Miller says that this is a very common attitude in East Africa, *op cit*, pp. 11,123-124,195,197,199-200.

<sup>4</sup> Based upon Clowney, Edmund P., *Called to the Ministry* (Chicago, Illinois: I.V.P., 1964), especially pp. 41-67.

authority the word of Christ. It is within this very narrow definition of “ministry” that this paper is concerned, those steward-servants appointed by Christ in the church with relation to His word. The following Biblical passages are important in this context following on from this general description:

- (i) Acts 6:4. Like the apostles, the minister’s function is peculiarly in relation to prayer and preaching. These are his main responsibilities and the bodily needs of the people of God must not keep him from his appointed task (cf. verses 1-3).
- (ii) Ephesians 4:11-14. The gifts given by Christ are not for the benefit of the minister, but for the sake of the people of God, that being built up into the likeness of Christ, they too might perform the ministry God has given them. Much attention will be drawn to this later.
- (iii) Titus 1:9. The Bible lays great emphasis on the character of the life of the minister (or elder/bishop), and in relation to the Scriptures, he must both be able to exhort and rebuke. He must be a student of the word of God, therefore.

It is around these simple biblical statements that the patterns of ministry in East Africa which have emerged and which are emerging, must be evaluated.

### 3. The Ministry: Historical Patterns

As an introduction to the present pattern of ministry in East Africa, it is necessary to consider both historical patterns and the problem of the numbers of ordained workers.

(a) **Patterns.** What is true of East Africa is true of the whole of sub-Saharan Africa, that from the time when the missionaries first entered, it was often a long time before the first African pastor was ordained,<sup>5</sup> or at least until local (as opposed to missionary) pastors were seriously considered. Sundkler gives a brief description of the way that Africans have taken over the leadership and notes the following reasons why the movement has been slow: the fear of separatist movements, and the fact that the African church was not yet self-supporting.<sup>6</sup> So the general practice was that only proven and older men would be eligible for the ministry. It is true that the minister was one of the most respected members of society, and then being a well-paid job, men were prepared to use other vocations as a ladder up to the ministry.

Two of the most important such “ladders” have been the catechist’s ladder and the teacher’s ladder.<sup>7</sup> Amongst the Acholi in Uganda it was the policy to find a church teacher or catechist for every village, and he was paid a small wage by the pastor.<sup>8</sup> The importance of the catechist up to 1950 has been well summed up by Bishop Neil.

... With his slender qualifications and very modest pay, he is the real hero of the Christian situation in Africa.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Sundkler, Bengt, *The Christian Ministry in Africa* (Uppsala: Swedish Institute of Missionary Research, 1960), pp. 62-65, where he illustrates this fact with concrete figures.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 44ff., especially pp. 50,52.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 38-42. See also Hastings, Adrian, *Church and Mission in Modern Africa* (Fordham University Press, 1967), pp. 83ff. for the historical pattern of catechist and teacher.

<sup>8</sup> Russell, J. K., *Men Without God? A Study of the Impact of the Christian Message in the North of Uganda* (London: Highway Press, 1966), p. 66

<sup>9</sup> Quoted in Sundkler, Bengt, *Historical Factors in the Development of the Various Forms of Ministry in Africa*, p. 3, which is one lecture in the volume edited by Hoffman, Paul E., *Theological Education in Today’s Africa* (Geneva: Lutheran World Federation, 1969).

So it is the catechist who has been the man at the grass-roots level, but with rising educational standards the churches have been moving more in the direction of voluntary lay workers. This is true in an even more pronounced way with the teacher's ladder, now that teachers' salaries are far higher than that of the minister.

The pattern until about 1950, therefore, is one of dependence on the catechist or village teacher to build up the local churches, thereupon being a decline and substitution of voluntary workers.

(b) **Numbers.** The slow growth of the number of African pastors has already been noted. There exists an acute shortage of ordained ministers to this present day. Any way that the situation can be considered statistically shows the seriousness of the shortage, whether by numbers of ministers per ecclesiastical unit, per communicant members, per "Christian" community, or per total population. The following examples will highlight this point.

i. Writing in 1966 Russell notes:

There are approximately 45,000 Anglican Christians in Acholi, divided into 15 parishes, with 16 pastors and about 100 congregations.<sup>10</sup>

Here, the average pastor has 6 to 7 congregations and almost 3,000 Christians!

ii. Under the circuit system of the Methodist Church, there are some circuits today with one or two pastors and between 40 and 50 churches in the circuit.<sup>11</sup>

iii. About 1965 there were 1,000 congregations of the African Inland Church, 30,000 baptized members and an estimated 130,000 in the total "Christian" community. Ministering to these people were 45 African pastors and 66 ordained missionaries. It was unlikely that any of the missionaries were pastors, except perhaps in the remoter areas under the process of evangelization. Therefore it is probable that each one of the African pastors has to minister to at least 750 church members. How can he do this effectively? Although each congregation is supposed to have its own pastor, it is the rare case where he is a trained and ordained man.

<sup>12</sup> This is even more clearly seen in the fact that in the same year there were only another 270 official church workers other than pastors.<sup>13</sup>

iv. The situation seems a little different in Independent churches. One of the largest in Kenya is the Church of Christ in Africa with 56,780 communicant members in 1967 in 425 congregations. Serving these were 70 clergy, one to about every 800 members.<sup>14</sup>

The words of Welch are an adequate summary of this disturbing situation:

The geographical area of parishes varies considerably because of the differences between areas of density of population, and in the extent of "Christianization". There are town parishes of two or three square miles, and there are rural parishes of several thousand square miles. But generally it may be said that the average parish is far too large for its minister in charge to handle properly.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Russell, *op cit*, p. 69.

<sup>11</sup> This is my own observation. From the figures quoted in the 1968 World Christian Handbook the situation in other Methodist areas is not quite so bad.

<sup>12</sup> Welch, F. G., *Training for the Ministry in East Africa* (Limuru, Kenya: Association of East African Theological Colleges, 1963), pp. 29ff.

<sup>13</sup> These figures have been obtained from Coxhill, H. W. & Grubb, K. eds., *World Christian Handbook* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1968), pp. 72-73.

<sup>14</sup> Barrett, David B., *Schism and Renewal in Africa* (Nairobi: O.U.P., 1968), p. 13.

<sup>15</sup> Welch, *op cit*, p. 27.

The reasons for this situation will be taken up later, as they illustrate what seems to be the prevailing conception of the work of the ministry.

#### **4. Present-Day Conditions in East Africa**

While the pattern of the ministry in East Africa must have a firm Biblical foundation, it cannot ignore the political, social and cultural climate in which it must function.<sup>16</sup>

(a) Education is no longer for the privileged few. In Kenya, for example, primary education is open to all (although fees are still charged). So in most areas the greater proportion of young people have had or are going through seven years of primary education. Some form of secondary education is available to increasing numbers, either in fee-paying “Harambee” schools, or the now non-fee-paying government schools. In Meru District, Kenya, for example, there were only a handful of secondary schools in 1960, but now there are 50 or more.

(b) Educational progress and western materialism often go hand-in-hand. The new status symbols are the radio, the watch and even the umbrella in the more rural areas. With the cutting away of traditional values, drinking and smoking are all too often seen as the main pleasures in life and the marks of true manhood. Thus there is a constant secularization of life in all its aspects, and the minister has to address himself to this tendency.

(c) Urban centres are very rapidly growing in population as young people in particular seek the better opportunities the city is supposed to give them. About 10% of the population of East Africa is now urbanized, and in areas where conditions tend to be more squalid, there is little Christian work. The problem for the church, which is not unrelated to the standard of the ministry given, is the drift of most of the educated away from the rural areas.

(d) Racial and tribal tensions, while often underground, are nevertheless present. The reaction against white colonial rule and the exaltation of anything traditionally African (even in the Christian church) is gaining powerful momentum. Will the Christian ministry become first African then Christian? Or will it be the focal point for the uniting of the people?

The ministry which ignores, or is ignorant of these tendencies and developments is not a ministry according to the biblical pattern. It becomes an irrelevant ministry, for the word of God addresses people where they are. The Christian faith is far from divorced from the stuff of life. This by no means implies an advocacy of the social gospel; rather that all things must be brought to the feet of Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of sinful men. The gospel is relevant only to the pressing problems and particular sins in which the individual is found.<sup>17</sup>

## **SECTION TWO: PATTERNS OF MINISTRY**

### **1. Why is there a Lack of Ministers?**

The minister no longer occupies that privileged place in society that he used to. There are at least three reasons for this change in attitude towards the work of the ministry.

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<sup>16</sup> Miller deals with this, op cit, pp. 13-15.

<sup>17</sup> See especially Paul’s speech at Athens in Acts 17.

(a) **Attitude of the educated elite.** In 1962 Welch wrote in response to the question as to why educated men do not enter the ministry:

Educated young men do not feel that the ministry is a work of importance, nor that it is a work that requires education, intelligence and initiative, nor that they are wanted in that kind of work.<sup>18</sup>

Sundkler, in the same vein, concludes:

More and more young teachers, secondary school students and graduates refuse to consider the possibility of entering the ministry, since it is generally accepted that theological studies are only for those who have failed to achieve some other academic ambition in secondary of teachers' education.<sup>19</sup>

These two representative statements show that the main reason why the work of the minister tends to be despised by the educated elite is because the ministry is full of men much less well educated than they are. This is so important to people where education is becoming the mark of respectability. The educated will say that the sermons they heard while at school were boring and uninformative and that the church therefore has little to contribute to their lives. In some places there is even a tendency for the older Christians to look down upon the young and educated as arrogant.

The picture is not all one of gloom, however. Increasingly men who have completed 11 years of education are undergoing training for the ministry and the secondary school Christian Unions with their emphasis on conversion and total dedication are playing a significant role.

(b) **Low educational standards.** It is sadly true that where once the minister used to be amongst the best educated in society because education was only available through the church, now he is one of the most poorly educated among the "professionals". Miller noted in 1969 that in one major denomination, the average educational level of all ordained men, besides ordination training, was six years in primary school.<sup>20</sup> It should not be thought that this inevitably means that all who are poorly educated are incapable. There are many fine exceptions, such as the leader of one of the big denominational churches in Kenya. Not does it imply that the ministry is only for the best educated. Yet to minister to the growing proportion of educated people, a similarly educated minister is desirable. It is not enough to emphasize the spiritual qualifications alone. Education and training are presupposed in a ministry which includes teaching and preaching, and the combatting of error.

Referring again to the situation among the Acholi in Uganda, a situation which could be paralleled in many other places, not one of the 16 ministers in 1966 had even reached school certificate level (11 years of education).<sup>21</sup> Until very recently well-educated young men have been much in demand and so often the pull of better paid jobs has either caused them to drop the idea of ministry, or to be blinded from ever considering it in the first place.<sup>22</sup> In particular, the teaching profession is now much more well paid than the ministry, so whereas teachers used to become ministers, now this step is considered a down-grade.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Welch, F. G., *Towards an African Church* (Nairobi: Mercury Press), p. 25.

<sup>19</sup> Sundkler, Bengt, *The Christian Ministry in Africa*, p. 40.

<sup>20</sup> Miller, *op cit*, p. 17.

<sup>21</sup> Russell, *op cit*, p. 71.

<sup>22</sup> Russell describes this pull among the Acholi, *op cit*, p. 74.

<sup>23</sup> See Sundkler, *op cit*, pp. 115-120.

So all too often today, it is the educational “failure” who is the one who tends to seek ministerial training. Even if he managed to reach the fourth year of secondary education, he did not do well enough to continue his education or do professional training. The situation is even worse among Bible schools where the standards are even lower.<sup>24</sup>

(c) **Poor wages.** The low wages that the minister continues to receive remains a sad indication of the poor estimate the Christian community continues to have of the ministry. Thus many ministers are effectively hindered from doing their work properly: either they regard the ministry as full-time work and remain poor; or they try to supplement by farming and thus can hardly begin to complete their appointed tasks.<sup>25</sup> As many prospective candidates look into the situation that results, they are quickly deterred. It might be argued that this effectively eliminates any who would enter the ministry for purely financial motives, but it is putting temptation in the way of those who are really called of the Lord.

One of the obligations which is often necessary to honestly face is that to clan or family. This is the situation in Acholi, for example:

... each one ... has a whole nexus of family obligations which he will train behind him for much of his life, an old relative to be helped here, school fees to be paid there ... And the higher up the educational ladder he gets the greater the share of the communal burden he will be expected to bear.<sup>26</sup>

It is very hard on a young man, whose parents have really sacrificed themselves in order that he might be educated, to accept a job which does not come up to the expectations of his parents. The materialistic pressure should never be under-estimated. While the wage paid is more than the average domestic product (gross),<sup>27</sup> it is not enough to attract better educated men. And it must be born in mind that most other people live off the land and are therefore self-sufficient. That the pastor should not be fully involved in agriculture as others are, will be amplified later.

This debilitating situation for the church of God, where there are insufficient ministers and not enough who are well-trained, demands the earnest prayers of God’s people. There is little hope for the church if these conditions are perpetuated. Christian young people must be openly challenged with the needs on the basis of the word of God. The churches must remember that the labourer is worthy of his hire (1 Timothy 5:18). New forms of theological education must be envisaged. If these and other measures are taken, maybe the church can expect He who rules the church and who apportions gifts according to His own will, to see that His body is adequately nurtured.

## 2. A Typical Pattern of Ministerial Life

The most striking and relevant factor determining the pattern of ministerial life is the fact that one minister invariably oversees, not one congregation, but a group of churches (except

<sup>24</sup> Consult Welch, *op cit*, p. 24, and Welch, F. G., *Training for the Ministry in East Africa*, pp. 103-104.

<sup>25</sup> “Not more than 20% of all African pastors are paid a salary adequate to enable them to feed and clothe themselves and their wives and children, and to educate the children and entertain guests whom they need to entertain as part of their ministry. The rest are forced to have other sources of income although normally the church frowns on (and sometimes actually forbids) their having any other source of income except peasant farming. The present system thus tends to produce not a professional ministry but a ministry of peasant farmers paid a small sum for work done in their spare time.” Welch, *op cit*, p. 168. See Miller, *op cit*, p. 17.

<sup>26</sup> Russell, *op cit*, p. 75. Sundkler gives individual examples, *op cit*, p. 30.

<sup>27</sup> Russell gives figures for Uganda in 1966, *op cit*, p. 73.

sometimes in the cities). The poor pay already referred to and the large area of responsibility tends to limit the amount of effective work that can be done.<sup>28</sup>

(a) How does the average church member view the essential task of the minister? Both Sundkler and Miller have found repeated evidence of clericalism, the looking to the minister as a sort of mediator between God and man, one who will do everything by proxy for the initiated.<sup>29</sup> Thus few people seem to consider the real and effective place of the ministry of the laity. Among the Christian youth (and the ones questioned appear to be the more informed and dedicated), Miller noted that the typical Protestant pattern emerges:

... he represents the church, preaches, administers the sacraments, counsels members in times of crisis, and ministers to their spiritual needs.<sup>30</sup>

It must be noted that this ideal is far from lived up to!

The three main tasks of the minister will now be described, but the problem of the execution of these tasks must again be emphasized:

The African ordained minister, whether known as pastor or priest has fallen heir to the missionary's precedent. He is expected to be an itinerant administrator of both programme and sacraments.<sup>31</sup>

Miller goes on to describe how poorly one man thought he was trained for the tasks he actually finds himself doing:

What I was trained for (teaching-preaching the faith), I can never find time to do, and for what I actually must do (administer church business and sacraments), I received no specific training.<sup>32</sup>

(b) The sacraments. The ordained minister is usually the only person qualified for this task. It is a large one when the number of congregations under his care is taken into consideration. How easy for the visits of the minister to so degenerate, that he becomes known not as "pastor", but as "a commercial traveller in sacraments".<sup>33</sup> Much will depend upon the emphasis given to the sacraments. In the Anglican Church of the U.M.C.A mission in S. Tanzania, the minister journeys to each congregation, and the whole time spent there is centred around Holy Communion and preparation for it.<sup>34</sup> In any case the sacraments will in practice be partaken of far too occasionally.

(c) Administration. Over ten years ago it was reported that some ministers spend from between one-third to one-half of their time attending meetings.<sup>35</sup> It appears that there has been some inheritance of the supposed European ideal of the efficient executive. This is particularly true with Methodist Church and its Quarterly Plan. All men licensed to preach in the circuit are put on this plan every three months to preach one or more times at any of the churches in the circuit. There become a large number of groups to arrange for, and so the

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<sup>28</sup> "Is it the poor pay **and** the large area of responsibility that limits, or the poor pay **for** the large amount of responsibility? I tend to want to define pay in some senses in relationship to responsibility. Are they so isolated?" (Conn).

<sup>29</sup> Sundkler, *op cit*, p. 129, and Miller, *op cit*, p. 205.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid*, p. 84, and see pp. 84-87.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*, p. 16.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>33</sup> Sundkler, *op cit*, p. 166 with reference to West Africa. See also p. 190.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid*, p. 144.

<sup>35</sup> Welch, *Towards an African Church*, p. 35.



paraphernalia of church organization proliferates.<sup>36</sup> This is a particular problem where there has been a mass entrance into the church and no corresponding rise in the number of ordained clergy. Instead of face-to-face contact the minister can become a cog in a big administrative machine. What then becomes of the nature of the ministry in the church?

(d) The pastoral and teaching ministry. In his contacts with East African Christians, Miller found that:

The strong emphasis of the Pastorals that the ordained minister should be a teacher above all else, was not readily received or affirmed. Discussion groups seemed reluctant to give up the notion that the fully trained and fully ordained leader serves primarily as an administrator of programme and sacraments even though this meant leaving much of the teaching to men with little training.<sup>37</sup>

This is undoubtedly the most alarming pattern to emerge and it is encouraging that Miller pays much attention to this very serious deficiency.<sup>38</sup> What has happened to the proper Scriptural emphasis on the centrality of preaching? It is through the preaching of the word of God that the Lord has purposed to save sinners (Romans 1:16, 10:14-15, Ephesians 1:13, James 1:18, 1 Peter 1:23-25) and to sanctify His people (Acts 20:32, Romans 16:25). There is no more important task for the minister than this. This central task tends, then, to be left to the untrained, the local preacher, the school teacher, the evangelist. Only occasionally is the pastor able to show up at each local congregation, particularly if meetings are only arranged for once a Sunday. The problem is compounded when it is realized what a poor grasp of the word of God most ministers have, and thus what poor preacher-teachers most of them are. Adjustments there have to be made on a series of levels: the educational standard, the training received, and most importantly, the spiritual character of the man ordained.

(e) Other tasks. Where the congregation takes it for granted that the whole burden of ministry is for the ordained minister, then many other tasks wrongly fall upon his shoulders. He becomes involved with work amongst the young people, and in the schools. Some recent graduates from theological colleges in East Africa reported that they spent 21% of their time on administration, correspondence and keeping records. Often this descends to the trivial, like flower arranging,<sup>39</sup> but these are all things in which the congregation, under the direction of the deacons, must be involved. The example of the apostles must be assiduously followed (Acts 6:1-6), especially where ministerial gifts are at a premium.

### 3. Part-time and Voluntary Ministries

The church in East Africa has not generally been a place where the whole people of God have taken upon themselves their respective ministries. Of course, this has only added to the responsibilities and problems of the minister. There has been a recognition among many church leaders that there should be a shift in emphasis from the paid catechist to the voluntary lay worker. The church is now in a transition stage, so many hope that the emerging patterns of ministry will be the ministry of the total people of God. There are at least two reasons at present why Christians are not taking upon themselves their full responsibility, on the assumption that they are genuine believers.

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<sup>36</sup> Sundkler, *op cit*, pp. 164-165.

<sup>37</sup> Miller, *op cit*, pp. 196-197.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 128, 133, 136, 172.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid*, p. 138.

(i) The nature of the church according to the Scriptures has not been properly taught. There is general attitude of getting rather than giving, and the minister is too often conceived of the one at whose feet all the responsibility lies. The pattern varies from area to area and church to church, and perhaps the Methodist system of local preachers has best encouraged lay participation. It is however a different question as to the value of this participation, particularly when the person concerned has had little teaching himself. The congregation must have explained the priesthood of all believers (e.g. 1 Peter 2:9), the church as the body of Christ serving God, ministering to each other and to the world, and the function of the minister as the equipper of the saints.

(ii) Church workers have been traditionally paid and even where culture permitted it, any who engaged in such work expected remuneration.<sup>40</sup> So there tends to be the lack of voluntary service since in the past all such work has been paid. If such voluntary work was undertaken all the people of God would see the essential part they have been given in God's kingdom, their God-given gifts could be utilized and more money be released to pay the ministers a reasonable wage and on this level enable him to do a better job.<sup>41</sup> These thoughts will be further developed under the section on emerging patterns (7).

#### 4. East African Revival Fellowship

Beginning in Rwanda and S. W. Uganda in the 1920's and eventually spreading in all directions particularly in 1948-9 is the movement known as the East African Revival. It is a very distinctive movement, remaining in the churches today, in that it is African, although missionaries have been very much a part of it also. It began as a reaction to what was seen as formalism and clericalism in the Anglican Church, and thus has emphasized a conversion experience, holiness and the priesthood of all believers. In this context distinctive forms have emerged, particularly the fellowship meeting with not only the ministry of the word, but also public testimony and confession.

The movement has had such an impact on the church of God in East Africa, that no consideration of patterns of ministry would be complete without its influence being studied. Perhaps the greatest impact has been in terms of encouraging the exercise of the gifts of ministry of all believers.

The Revival provides the laity, men and women, with scope to exercise their share in the priesthood of all believers. The significance of 'testimony' in the Revival is precisely this: that it represents an attempt by the laity to speak in the name of the Lord, to bear witness to His grace, and to persuade men to receive it.<sup>42</sup>

Both in Uganda and central Kenya there seems to have been an initial anti-clerical attitude, often because of the opposition of the clergy,<sup>43</sup> but the unity of the body eventually found

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<sup>40</sup> Russell notes that in northern Uganda there is nothing that can be called a tradition of voluntary service which can be built upon, *op cit*, p. 65.

<sup>41</sup> Welch, *Training for Ministry in East Africa*, p. 171.

<sup>42</sup> Warren, Max, *Revival: An Enquiry* (London: S.C.M. 1954), p. 108.

<sup>43</sup> Taylor, John V., *The Growth of the Church in Buganda* (London: S.C.M. 1958), p. 102. "In the early days of the revival there was undoubtedly an undercurrent of anti-clericalism, the natural response of a living element in the church to years of underestimation of the laity." Macpherson, R., *The Presbyterian Church in Kenya* (Nairobi: P.C.E.A. 1970), p. 127, described some of the charges levelled against the revivalists: "and they belittled or denied the standing of the ordained ministry, elders, and church courts which were not of their persuasion, sometimes, even the efficiency of the sacraments."

expression so that minister and congregation were considered as equals. Thus the revival movement has largely been confined within the existing church structures rather than forming separatist groups.<sup>44</sup> It is probably true, however, that the movement considers itself as a church within the church. Its own organizational hierarchy exists and offerings are made for its own benefit. Yet many ministers are very much part of the movement, but are not automatically its leaders. In fact leadership is in terms of the group or “team brethren”, usually the most respected and long-standing members.

The revival through its use of the team as a medium for its activity provides a meeting place for the layman and the parson to their mutual benefit. There is no necessary challenge to the authority of the clergy involved in this, nor any questioning of the specialist service they are called upon to render.<sup>45</sup>

This movement, then, illustrates the truth of the fact that the minister is seen primarily as an administrator and sacramental dispenser. The E.A.R.F. intensely desires a greater understanding of the Scriptures which very few of their members can impart to them. Yet, sadly, all too often the minister is not able to fulfil his function as teacher and shepherd of souls. While the weakening effect of clericalism is avoided, the rightful place of the God-gifted and church-ordained pastor must be maintained in order to be true to the Scriptural demands.

One of the liberating influences of the revival has been the acknowledgement of a sort of charismatic leadership with the brotherhood groups, producing particularly strong ties between leader and followers.<sup>46</sup> Thus there has begun to be a recognition of spiritual gifts for ministry given by the risen Christ, rather than just some mental abilities being present. It is against this whole background of spiritual deadness and formalism that the revival must inevitably be seen.

The following pattern of ministry is thus revealed: great emphasis on the preaching of the word; mutual fellowship between believers; the ministry of the whole body of Christ; and looking to leaders on the basis of spiritual gifts.<sup>47</sup>

## 5. Independent Movements

About 95% of the total membership of the Independent Church movements of East Africa in 1967 was in Kenya, that is, about 600,000. While this figure also includes groups which have broken away from the Catholic Church, the numerical importance of the Independent movements is shown when compared with the total “Protestant” population, which was about 800,000 in the same year.<sup>48</sup> Despite the fact that these people desire a church in the mould of East African culture, in terms of the ordained minister, no unique patterns seem to have emerged.<sup>49</sup> The minister is considered more in terms of a charismatic leader, so that it his gifts for building up a fellowship that are stressed. Accordingly:

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<sup>44</sup> The largest breakaway has been from the Anglican Church in western Kenya, when in 1957 16,000 were involved in the JoHera schism. This is described in Welbourn, F. B. & Ogot, B. A., *A Place to Feel at Home: A Study of Two Independent Churches in Western Kenya* (London: O.U.P. 1966).

<sup>45</sup> Warren, *op cit*, pp. 108-109.

<sup>46</sup> Sundkler, *op cit*, p. 72.

<sup>47</sup> Much of this section on the E.A.R.F. comes from my deep involvement with the revival brethren while in Kenya 1968-70..

<sup>48</sup> Coxhill, H. W. & Grubb, K., eds., *op cit*, pp. 72-73.

<sup>49</sup> Miller, *op cit*, p. 41.

Several of the independent churches decided to ordain middle-aged men, of proven integrity, experience, and ability, to be their ministers. Such men can rally the group around its values and can symbolize its standards.<sup>50</sup>

It is often the case that the charismatic leader is exalted to a very high position, particularly when he is the originator of the movement. This is apparent in the names given to him. For example, Zakayo Kivuli is known as the High Priest of the African Israel Church Nineveh.<sup>51</sup> Without such a leader the group would probably not have broken away in the first place, but having done so, such a leader fulfils the desire of the people to have a new kind of Christian community firmly based on African concepts. This is not a phenomena isolated to East Africa, as the same general pattern is to be found throughout the continent.<sup>52</sup>

## 6. Theological Training

What conception of ministry in the church is theological education in East Africa designed to train men for? This is an important consideration as it will reveal the theoretical side of what the ministry is conceived of being. That the western pattern has emerged is almost inevitable, as even at present, at the higher levels, the vast majority of teachers are missionaries. Miller made a survey of the twelve theological colleges in East Africa and the following are some of his conclusions:<sup>53</sup>

- (i) Only 18 out of the 62 instructors are African.
- (ii) The courses of instruction seem to be patterned after the traditional western theological curriculum.
- (iii) The course of study for the University of East Africa Diploma in Theology does not emphasize practical theology or the social or life sciences.
- (iv) The over-use of the lecture method, almost to the exclusion of any other method of education. (Note: We must not over react against this indiscriminate use of what often is a valid way of teaching.)
- (v) Little in the programme which bears the stamp of Africa, and gives evidence of a creative response to the unique needs of the church in Africa.
- (vi) The programme does not seem to be carefully designed to equip equippers, or to train the trainers of a ministering laity.

If these observations really approximate reality, then it is easier to see how existing patterns have been perpetuated. Undue concentration on the attainment of high academic standards has tended to neglect consideration of pastoral problems of a society in process of rapid social change.<sup>54</sup> It is not surprising that young ministers so easily adjust to the mould of administration and sacraments. A man who has not been confronted with the deep spiritual causes underlying the events in the lives of the people to whom he is ministering, is not a person who will appreciate this overwhelming need and seek to alleviate it by preaching the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27). East Africa does not need an African theology, but it does

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid*, p. 47.

<sup>51</sup> Barrett, *op cit*, explanations of illustration 12 (p. 75) and 19b (p. 171).

<sup>52</sup> See for example the study of Sundkler, Bengt G. M., *Bantu Prophets in South Africa* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1948).

<sup>53</sup> Miller, *op cit*, ch. 6, pp. 109-121.

<sup>54</sup> Macpherson, *op cit*, p. 140.

need the Biblical truths addressed to the peculiar East African situation.<sup>55</sup> How can a student, whose only training and qualification is in terms of passing verbal exams become a pastor and equipper of God's people? Where are the men being trained as Spirit-filled exegetes and preachers of the word of God, in order to edify God's people and the evangelize the lost? Clearly the present theological training is grossly inadequate and has added to the continuation of an unbiblical pattern of ministry. It appears that students are being trained to keep the church machine well-oiled, but where are the men of God, with that fire in their bones that they just cannot keep silent (Jeremiah 20:9, cf. 1 Corinthians 9:16)?

## 7. Emerging Patterns of Ministry

The ministry in East Africa is in a precarious position. On the one hand the few ministers are overworked; on the other hand their educational standard is not high enough. What is to be done in this situation? The solution is not to be found in requiring lower standards (educationally and certainly not spiritually) for ministerial candidates. Church leaders look favourably on the following two ideas, suggestions which are being implemented world-wide. Therefore, these can be expected to be the emerging patterns.

(a) **Tent-making ministry.** Miller defines this person as "one who is ordained, who carries a defined responsibility as an ordained minister in a congregation or circuit of congregations, but who earns his own living through some profession."<sup>56</sup> This is the case with many of the members of the revival movement, except that they are not ordained. It has been already argued that clear teaching needs to be given concerning the ministry of the whole people of God. But giving a professional man the same status as a minister because he spends his spare time in that work does not seem warranted by Scripture. The following reasons should be noted:

- i. Paul commanded what he said the Lord Himself commanded, "that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel" (1 Corinthians 9:14). He backs up this statement by a general reference to the practice in the Old Testament where those employed in the temple service got their food from the temple (verse 14, Leviticus 7:31-36, Numbers 5:9-10, Deuteronomy 18:1). The Lord's command referred to might well be that to the twelve apostles (Matthew 10:8-11) where they were commanded to preach and heal but expect to be provided for by others. Thus the Scripture seems to expect those who preach the gospel as an office in the church to be supported by those to whom they minister.<sup>57</sup> This is confirmed by the emphasis Paul puts on the support of those who are particularly engaged in teaching and preaching (1 Timothy 5:17-18). Then why did Paul specifically not make use of this right? He himself says that it was so that his motives in preaching the gospel might not be misunderstood (1 Corinthians 9:15-18 and the whole context of the chapter). Yet he did accept gifts from other congregations (2 Corinthians 11:9) even though there were times when he supported himself (Acts 18:3, 20:33-35). As a church planter, Paul did not want his converts to think that he preached to them just because he needed a living. Rather it was because a divine necessity was laid on him.
- ii. A more practical consideration is the impossibility of a man engaged in two types of work to do all that the work of the ministry involves. Even if each tent-making pastor only had the

<sup>55</sup> "Can't we call this an African theology? What after all is hermeneutic?" (Conn)

<sup>56</sup> Miller, *op cit*, p. 60.

<sup>57</sup> "If this is so, can a missionary be content to be supported by the "home church"?" (Conn).

oversight of one congregation, to pray and preach, to study continuously, to visit and counsel takes more time than just nights and weekends can give. There would be a grave possibility of the neglect of his family responsibilities. Any congregation of ten or more dedicated families can fully support a minister at their own average standard of living if they only but tithe. How wise to utilize the gifts that the Lord has given to the full, for while the rigid distinction between the secular and religious is wrong, God's people should most highly value the distinctive spiritual gifts (see 1 Corinthians 14:1). Of course, there will be exceptions to this rule, particularly where a congregation is getting started (note the parallel with Paul's ministry here). But the second emerging pattern is a more biblical approach, one which seems to be advocated with no reservations by anyone.

(b) **New role of Minister.** Instead of being primarily an administrator and sacramental dispenser, the minister must increasingly delegate all jobs the congregation is able to do with its peculiar gifts, and concentrate on that job the Lord has peculiarly given to him; that is the function of being pastor and equipper, after the pattern of Ephesians 4:11-14.

So long as the ordained man is expected to be teacher, visitor, evangelist, healer and is in consequence thought of as the only source of activity within the body of Christ, so long will the church remain stunted and ineffective. Once the church can break out of the circle of sacerdotal professionalism ... <sup>58</sup>

The ordained minister, as preacher and teacher, must be used of God to build up the people of God so that they can do the work of witnessing, of visitation, and use all the gifts they have which are indispensable for the body (Romans 12:3-8, 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, Ephesians 4:7-11). It was to this conclusion that Miller, in his study, turned again and again, and is the most important contribution his book makes. <sup>59</sup> The total situation of the ministry in East Africa will only be improved when the ministry is seen according to the biblical pattern. Then the right sort of man will be attracted by the call of God to this task, and will be given the necessary spiritual gifts. Then he will be respected as he ought, as God's messenger, and the people will unite with him to do the work of the Lord.

## CONCLUSIONS

The following patterns of ministry should be the goal in order to attain a truly biblical ministry in East Africa. Not one of these norms can be relaxed for pragmatic reasons, for God's people can only rightly expect blessing when they do things God's way.

1. First and foremost, the minister is to be a man of God. The qualities that most basically fit him for the task are moral-spiritual ones. This is the emphasis that the Scriptures give as the qualifications are spelled out in detail (1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9).
2. He must be called of God, being convinced of this as an individual and, more importantly today, acknowledged to have the gifts by the people of God.
3. Recognizing his primary task as a preacher and teacher of the word of God, both in public and private (Acts 20:20), he will spend most of his time preparing for, and in these activities.

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<sup>58</sup> Russell, *op cit*, p. 76.

<sup>59</sup> Miller, *op cit*, pp. 207-209 for his summary.

<sup>60</sup> "Where is his ministry of prayer?" (Conn)

4. Having a biblical doctrine of the church, the minister will see his preaching-teaching ministry mostly in terms of equipping the people of God for their ministries.

5. The training given to a prospective minister will concentrate on scriptural exegesis as applied to the East African milieu. Then it will be essentially practical and truly informative.

May the Lord be pleased to increasingly raise up such men in these days, that His people might be strengthened, His kingdom extended, and the name of Jesus Christ exalted and glorified. <sup>61</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> "An excellent paper, Keith. We look with expectation to the Lord's ministry in Kenya through you." (Conn)