

Ministry, imagination, identity and culture

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CHRISTOLOGY AND THE PRACTICE OF MINISTRY IN THE BAPTIST CHURCH

I. Introduction

Christology and practice of ministry in the Baptist church is not a very straight forward in the different Baptist groups. Because specific beliefs with a few fundamental principles tying them together as Baptists. There are two broad categories of Baptists: - the Particular Baptists and the General Baptists.

The categorization based on Christology, especially on the aspect of the death of Jesus and the role it plays in the salvation plot. The Baptists hold on to the idea/doctrine of Atonement.

John Calvin taught the doctrine during the Reformation (in the 16th century). Hence particular Baptists are sometimes referred to as Calvinists. The Calvinists believe that Jesus died for a few select individuals. The General Baptists, on the other hand, believe in the general Atonement, a doctrine that Jesus died for all people and not a small chosen group.

Contrary Calvinists, the general Baptists were inspired by the teachings of Jacobus Arminius, who in the 17th century, preached against the doctrine of predestination, which had formed the building block of Calvinism. If Baptists believe in salvation by faith, then how do general Baptists qualify if they do believe that Jesus died for us all? In explaining the general Atonement, Arminianism, states that; "the general atonement is qualitatively adequate for all men but efficacious only for the men of faith".

The Baptist church's Christology anchors on Mathew chapter 18: verse 19: - "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit". According to this verse, Baptists hold that one needs to accept Jesus as personal saviour to being saved.

II. Christology and practice of ministry in the Baptist church

Jesus's condemnation and death sentence passed upon him by the Jewish leaders was a result of how he interpreted the scripture. One big debate was on his ability to forgive sin.

He was accused of blasphemy by the church leaders, who belied that only God could forgive sins.

Jesus' deity has been the centre of modern Christianity around the world, with his position in the trinity being the basis of various Christian beliefs. Where does the Baptist church stand in the debate?

An article by Dr Glenn Cummings on June, (5), gives a clear stand of the Baptist church on Jesus' deity. The report starts concerning 1 Peter chapter 1: verse 21: - "Through Jesus, you believe in God." The article points out that the church believes in Jesus as a representative of God. A line in the report says, "Jesus is central to our conception of God, of humanity and the world."

Therefore, Baptist church, being a Christian is about trust in Jesus Christ and the acceptance of salvation through Him, for Jesus is God. Philippians 2:6 is one of the verses most referenced by the Baptists in justifying the fact that Jesus is God.

Additionally, Baptist wholeheartedly believes that the human nature of Jesus. In Kenneth Baker's handbook: -Jesus Christ - The True God and True Man, incarnation and the concept of grace through redemption is discussed. The Baptist church believes in the embodiment where they base their argument mainly on Galatians chapter 4: verse 4, which says, "But when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman." And John chapter 1: verse 14, which partly says, "The word became flesh and made dwelling among us."

A. Believer's baptism

According to Greene, "The concept of believer's baptism, which is the Baptists' interpretation of Mathew 18:19 asserts that; to be Christ-like, one must not have to undergo literal baptism to get salvation or have their sins washed away" (2003, pp: 34-50). The concept of believer's baptism, which is the Baptists' adopt from Mathew chapter 18: verse 19. However, Believer's baptism has brought debates on the credibility of the Baptists' belief, where the factions opposed to it often refer to Mark 16:16. Which says: - "Whoever believes and is baptizing shall be saved, but whoever does not believe and is not baptizing shall condemn" (Ellis, 2000: pp. 43-51).

Contrary to infant baptism, believer's baptism, also known as credobaptism, asserts that salvation comes from one's declaration or annunciation of faith in Jesus Christ.

Credobaptism, directly translated from Greek, means "I believe". Baptists probably believe in believer's baptism due to their supposed Anabaptism origin. Whereas believer's baptism also encompasses the literal baptism by immersion and affusion, the Baptists hold the faith and belief of the baptism candidate in higher regard than the physical act.

B. Communion: -Lord's Supper

Baptists use 1 Corinthians 11: 23-26 as a reference text for their belief in the communion.

The holy communion, commonly referred to as Eucharist, is held in different regards in different denominations. The universal belief applies "body" and "blood" represented bread and wine. The wine, different denominations differ on the specific implications.

The Eucharist symbolizes the intimacy between the church and Christ. The partaking of the holy communion in the Baptist church is a way to show the continuous place that he occupies in their salvation, a signal that he will never forget, for he had said, "do this in the remembrance of me". The act is to be doing till the end of times when it believed that he should fulfil his promise of returning to earth.

III. The Virgin Birth

The concept of the virgin birth of Jesus is central in the debates that relate to Jesus as a person. In views, Christian faith is not about ideas propositions is rooted in the doctrine of The Person of Christ, which entails all the beliefs in and around the divinity and humanity of Jesus (Macleod, 1998).

Charles Ernest Cranfield, the British theologian and Christian minister, in his review on the various thoughts on the doctrine of the virgin birth, highlights that there has so far not been any historical or non-historical proof of the possibility of a virgin birth (Cranfield, 179). The references for the natural delivery in the various bible texts and points out some that are contradicting one another. Thus, the virgin birth could have been literal, pointing to the fact that Jesus is the son of God or it would have been used as an analogy to lead to the salvation of man and the intimate relationship between God and his people, considering them his children.

In the Baptist General Convention of Texas (BGCT) of 1963, the Baptist church's stand on the doctrine of the virgin birth was made clear. In the convention, Jesus described as "the eternal Son of God. In His incarnation as Jesus Christ, He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary."

However, there has been debate on the slight twist in the Baptist belief of the virgin birth. They hold that Mary, the mother of Jesus, does not play any role in the salvation of humanity apart from just being a "vessel" used to deliver the saviour into the world. They claim that Paul (the apostle) had preached the gospel in totality and even in that, had failed to mention the role of Mary in Jesus's ministry on earth and the entire salvation plot.

IV. Baptist theology

In the 1963 BGCT, it was also made clear the modern-day Baptist belief on the role of Jesus in the salvation story. The church believes that nobody can earn salvation, apart from through Jesus Christ. It asserts that salvation work began at the beginning of times and has been God's doing all along and that Jesus, Son, was just his way of bringing salvation to everyone. Salvation story, according to the Baptist church, is during the death of Jesus at the cross, where it believed that all sins are washing away. Discovering, understanding, and transformation of convictions a convictional community, including the development and critical review the communication of their relation to one another and to whatever else there isn't revealing difference from other evangelical denomination.

A. The practice of ministry and Baptist vision

Ministerial training in the Baptist church is laying on the base of vision. McClendon, point out that and classified Baptist has five visions, so each vision describes as follows: -

1. Biblicism: - comprehended not as a scientific hypothesis of motivation, however as the last expert for (and of final Authority) of the lifestyle, atonement, confidence, and submission depicted in the scriptural story. Therefore, Baptist belief that Bible is inerrant and inerrant inspiration word of God

2. Mission or Evangelism comprehended not as an endeavour to control history for the finishes, we accept to be valuable, yet as the duty to the observer to Christ—and

acknowledge the enduring that involves. Showing the love of Christ for unbelievers is considered as evangelism. So, Baptist fulfilled this commission Through holistic ministry and different ways.

3. Freedom: - each believer has their liberty. Means comprehended not topple harsh position, yet as the ability to live without viciousness in a savage age — and to acknowledge the results. For instance, related a purposeful network with others, voluntarism service, partition of chapel etc.

4. Discipleship: - comprehended not to discretion or vital strength, yet as a control in the method for Jesus, the acknowledgement of aggregate obligation regarding the ethical triumphs and disappointments of the siblings and sisters and service to the neighbours. Fundamental doctrine like salvation through Christ and baptism are among the central teachings of the Baptist denomination.

5. community: - comprehended not as advantaged access to God or sacrosanct status, yet as partaking in a celebrated existence of loyal assistance to and with Christ.

My claim is that such an application of the New Testament itself to the present situation is characteristic of Anabaptist undertraining. And the Baptist vision wherever we find it; that this interpretation of the vision is sufficiently encompassing and sufficiently distinctive to enable us to interpret the Baptist movement. This sense of the vision includes and validates the other reasons proposed by recent scholarship; that the concept so understood is a necessary and enough organizing principle for a Baptist theology. (McClendon, 19 82: p.26)

Additionally, the practice of ministry in the Baptist church based on the Lordship of Jesus Christ. They assert that ministry is about being Christ-like, which in this context implies the adoption of the caring nature of Jesus. Jesus' work such as the healing cripples, restoring sight to the blind and healing the sick among other miracles as talked of in Mathew Chapter 11: verse 5, forms the basis of the Baptists' practice of ministry.

According to Murry, Practice of ministry in the Baptist church based on the Lordship of Jesus Christ. They assert that ministry is about being Christ-like, which in this context implies the adoption of the caring nature of Jesus. Jesus' work such as the healing cripples, restoring

sight to the blind and healing the sick among other miracles as the talked basis of the Baptists' practice of ministry. (2018d). Vol. 4. Issues28-36).

In the spirit of caring, Baptists believe that the Bible commands all humans not just to have faith but also practice as they are saying regard to love. On the topic of ministry to others, the Baptist church believes in believer priests. A believer priest is anyone who has faith and takes Jesus as his/her saviour. Such a person in the Baptist is charged with the mandate to spread the gospel to others. The church preaches that believer priests, pastors and deacons, who teach on every matter, are to listen to their calling from God and identify the specific need they are supposed to fulfil in the ministry.

The level of governance in the Baptist church is an open one through congregational church leadership. Cooperation of local churches to the programs of the more prominent churches is voluntary. However, societies, associations, conventions and unions do exist among the local churches—membership of these groups to is optional.

The structure of ministry, in this case, is aimed at eliminating any form of coercion along the line of spreading the word of God, with the belief that free will among members of the church make them better Christians than if there was a well-stipulated structure of programs to adhere. Ministry, through service to others, is the best a Christian can do to represent Jesus on earth, just like he had served his father (God) here on earth. More to the point, authentically Baptist convictions do exist they have survived the turbulent centuries we call the modern age and remain, to some degree shaping the lives of millions (McClendon, 19 82: p.25).

V. Conclusion

Baptists, general or Baptist particular, both believe in salvation by faith and acceptance of Jesus Christ as a personal saviour. The practice of ministry through free will participation and offering is a significant building block of personal involvement accountability of members in the Baptist belief.

The freewill practice of ministry in the Baptist church could be considered both good and bad. In as much as the freedom allows, the genuine conviction to follow Christ in one's accord, it makes the church lack a proper sense of direction. Christians often compare to

sheep and Jesus as their shepherd. The caring approach taken by the Baptist church helps eliminate hypocrisy among the members since what one says does not count for much if one does not walk the talk.

In this spirit, consider the suggestion that the Baptist vision is none other than from mentioned. The understanding of clear noticed Baptist tradition of ministry and doctrine of Christology is significant for previous and current churches. My recommendation for church planters is primarily Baptist vision.

My personal ministerial experience and conviction isn't far from Baptist vision and concept of ministry. Therefore, I offer for any church denominations as they used and implemented the tradition of the Baptist church. Finally, I agree with the Baptist church tradition about the concept of ministry and doctrine of Christology.

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