



ESSENTIAL DISCIPLINE

"Where this is lacking, there is certainly no Church", wrote a 17th Century Anabaptist and he wasn't talking about gospel preaching, or episcopacy - he was talking about Church discipline. Of course, we don't have to agree with him, but many people today are uneasily conscious that Church discipline is something sadly lacking from our Churches, even while they go on to add that it is very difficult to practise rightly.

One reason it is difficult is that there is usually no agreement in the local Church as to what is being expected of those who become Church members. Instruction given to new members often represents no more than a pious wish because everybody knows that many of the existing members are not doing what we teach the new members to do. Yet, if there is no explicit covenant, there are certainly several unspoken assumptions, so that often when we blunder into disciplinary action, we find ourselves taking as agreed what in fact has only been tacitly assumed.

In point of fact, the obligations involved in belonging to the Church are of three kinds:

the first is to abstain from evil - "Everyone who names the name of the Lord must depart from iniquity" - this includes theft, adultery, and everything in our life in the world that breaks God's laws - but also, everything that threatens the life of the Church, such as gossip, slander, contentiousness and refusal to forgive. David Coffey's article in this issue deals with that sort of thing.

The second is surely to live by certain values. What has made people hesitate about Church discipline is the feeling that it is too narrowly concerned with provable offences, and too negative. A person may lead a technically blameless life, yet be far from the spirit of Christ. Nigel Wright's article on the values by which a Church lives bears on this. We need to agree together, not just what sins we will not tolerate but what values we will live by, and what sort of conduct expresses this.

There is also a third obligation - it is to perform certain duties inherent in belonging to the body of Christ. Our fear of legalism and distrust of rules makes us undervalue this, when in fact it is vital to our life.

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I have in mind regular attendance at whatever meetings for worship, fellowship, prayer and planning your Church may have. We need to remind ourselves the word 'ecclesia' means meeting - people who do not meet have really ceased to be the Church. If we do not come together, if we cannot count on one another to come together, the leaders cannot lead because no-one is listening. Worse still, if we do not come together, we cannot hear God, because God's prophetic voice is promised to the local congregation as a whole.

What is needed, surely, before there can be effective discipline, is a clear covenant of membership in which a person makes promises sufficiently concrete to it to be a matter of observable fact whether he has done them or not. Such a covenant might contain:-

- a) Statements of belief; for example, I agree with the basis of faith of this Church. I commit myself to live by its values (whatever those may be).
- b) Statements of intent; for example, I intend to pray regularly, read God's word, help and give according to the policy of the fellowship.
- c) Promises; for example, I promise to attend both meetings for worship on Sunday unless unavoidably prevented. I promise to abide by the decisions of the Elders concerning the life of the Church, and to listen carefully to the advice of the Elders concerning my own life.

Church discipline is about the credibility of the Church. If a Church's proclamation of new life in Jesus is not seen to be worked out in the lives of believers, we are not credible. If the Church instead of being a friend of sinners is seen as cold, loveless and self-concerned, we are not credible. But also, if the members of the Church are undisciplined in the performance of their obligations to one another, only coming when it is convenient, acting as though the Church were another Club, rather than something essential to their lives, then also we are not credible. We do well to wrestle with these issues together so that once again we shall have the right to call ourselves God's holy people.

The Editor.

DOCTRINES, PRINCIPLES and VALUES

How do we characterise what it means to be a Baptist Church? The normal way is to look for the presence of certain doctrines and the expression of certain principles, and where these are present we may say with a degree of definition - here is a Baptist church. The doctrines usually relate to the authority of Scripture, the need for regeneration and believer's baptism; the principles usually relate to the way the church is ordered and manages its affairs, particularly focussing in the church meeting. A Baptist church has certain things e.g. it has a membership and a church meeting, and without these we would doubt its credentials as a Baptist church.

Leaving doctrinal issues aside (purely for the purpose of this article, you understand) the shortcoming of the above approach lies in the fact that a church is considered to be Baptist if it manifests certain institutional phenomena. Thus when there is apprehension that Baptist distinctives may be eroded (as for instance by the pressures of the housechurch movement) the tendency is to defend these institutional phenomena as if they were the essence of what we are about. The church meeting becomes the shibboleth. It

must be defended at all cost. The only problem with all of this is the hollowness with which many of us receive it. Because the fact is that: (1) in the perception of many ministers, the church meeting, far from being the high point of church life (which all agree it should be), is in fact the low point - the time when 'members' who participate in precious little of a spiritual nature in the church turn out to exercise their "constitutional rights" and usually against what God is wanting to do. (I recognise this to be a gross caricature but like it or not it is more true than we think and is in fact the way many ministers do perceive it).

(2) many of us find it hard to reconcile the obsession with procedure and correctness and propositions and voting that prevails in many churches with anything we read in the New Testament where they simply seemed to do "what seemed good to them and the Holy Spirit".

(3) as an institution, the church meeting seems to have very little Biblical foundation. Where, after all, do we find it clearly stated either in the teaching or the practice of the N.T. church that this is how they actually did things?

The purpose of this article is to suggest that when it comes to defining what it means to be Baptist we should avoid thinking in institutional terms. Institutional expressions of the church vary according to culture, situation and temperament. What is of the essence are the values which underlie those institutions. Baptists are people who believe certain doctrines and are committed to certain values which are capable of being expressed through differing institutional structures. To have the superstructure but not the living vitality of the values which should underlie it is as non-Baptist as to reject the values outright and altogether.

Every church has doctrines and values but as a matter of fact the values are less obvious than the doctrines, perhaps because we have not learnt to give them the same prominence as other things. Values tend to remain unexpressed and unacknowledged among us. Two churches may have identical doctrinal positions but move in divergent directions because one values prosperity and another values simplicity. For many Baptist churches respectability is a dominant value inhibiting identification with the needy and oppressed. For others (particularly in America), great value is attached to success. For yet others orthodoxy is greatly prized, leading to an obsession with correctness. Our values can liberate or oppress us and it is important to learn to assess them with the same devotion with which we pursue our theology. So what are the distinctive Baptist Values? What would we go to the stake for? A study of Anabaptist and Baptist history is valuable in that it brings into focus the issues that gave rise to our movement, issues which we very easily lose sight of when we are no longer threatened by the same forces with which our forbears contended.

For my money it all more or less comes back to one single issue - freedom. We value freedom. We value it in relation to faith, because we maintain that the only faith which has value and meaning is faith which is uncompelled; baptism is only of significance if voluntarily entered into to express and seal one's own commitment. Religious duties and activities cannot be compelled by decree of government and ecclesiastical hierarchy but only by faith working through love. We value freedom as it relates to conscience. Men must be left free to discern right and wrong for themselves. They must have access to the Word of God and the right to judge what the Word of God says and how it applies. They must be given respect as adults in Christ and not dictated to as children or inferiors. We are Borean in our attitude to

preaching: "They received the word with all eagerness, examining the scriptures daily to see if these things were so." (Acts 17:11). We value freedom as it relates to authority. We believe in authority but authority of a certain kind, authority which leaves free while demanding to be heard: it is not imposed but voluntarily received, it does not oppress but serves, it does not bring into bondage but leaves the individual responsible for their own thoughts and life. It is true spiritual authority. For freedom Christ has set us free and out of love for Christ we stand in freedom. To stand in freedom is risky because license lies close at hand; to stand in freedom makes us vulnerable because responsibility cannot be sloped off onto someone else.

But here's a question for Baptists. What happens when Baptist church life makes not for freedom but for oppression? As we defend the church meeting, does it occur to us that this institution may in itself become from time to time an instrument of oppression? What happens when in any given church a minority who are keen to obey God and obey Scripture (in other words, to obey the Baptist vision) find themselves continually stymied, hindered, opposed and limited by a majority whose major concern is to perpetuate the old order? How 'Baptist' is this? How true is it to our values of freedom? Of course, precisely the same could be said of elders who become a ruling clique, a powerful elite or possibly even a gaggle of geriatric generals. But when the church meeting is so often called into the witness box to bear testimony to what we are supposed to be about, how much more important it is that this institution stand in the dock itself accused of limiting the freedom of the Spirit and of the people of God and be required to give account of itself.

What is required of us (among other things) is that we enter into a renewal of true freedom. If we do so, we should recognise that such a renewal could change the institutional face of our churches quite profoundly.

Nigel G. Wright

CHURCH DISCIPLINE

Introduction

The title of our subject will arouse for some an image of ecclesiastical courts and heresy trials, punishment cells and documents of excommunication. The words "Church Discipline" sound harsh and rigid, loveless and coldly vindictive.

For others the subject will be a poignant reminder of the personal pain experienced as a result of the misapplication of church discipline. However, the excesses of those who have misapplied church discipline should not prevent us from an honest examination of a topic which holds a central place in the writings of the New Testament.

WHY BOTHER WITH CHURCH DISCIPLINE?

1. The emphasis of scripture

For many believers the importance of discipline is settled when they discover the numerous examples of the NT for the maintenance of church order. A variety of situations are mentioned including the authority of the church to move in this realm (Matt. 16.18-20), the importance of putting things right before worship (Matt. 5.23-24), the settlement of serious disputes (Matt. 18.15-20), the teaching of wrong doctrine (Rom.16.17; 1

Tim.5.20-21; Titus 3.8-11), the challenge to someone who is immoral (Gal.6.1 NB and verse 2), the challenge concerning giving to church funds? (Acts.5.1-11 - still relevant?) Other passages will be considered as we come to them.

2. The character of God

God is light and we must take our darkness seriously (1 John 1.5-10), God is Holy and calls us to be holy (1 Peter 1. 15-16). We are invited to share now in the holiness that provides (Col.1.12-23).

3. The History of Revivals

All important periods of church history have been marked by a time of spiritual renewal. Accompanying features of revival include the restoration of broken relationships - the uncovering and acknowledgment of forgotten sin - the recovery and application of neglected truths. Sin never goes away by simply ignoring it. We aid the work of God's Spirit and answer our own prayers for revival when church discipline is functioning properly.

WHAT PURPOSE IS SERVED BY CHURCH DISCIPLINE?

1. Preservation

One of Paul's concerns in writing on discipline was the effect disorder had upon a fellowship. A bit of leaven soon affects the whole loaf (1 Cor. 5.6-7). We are not solitary individuals. We share together a moral responsibility for the health of the whole family. This is why a careless approach to the Lord's Supper is judged (1 Cor.11.29-30). The spiritual health and vitality of the local fellowship is preserved by administering church discipline.

2. Proclamation

We gain the respect of the world when the affairs of our own household are conducted in an orderly fashion. The Church acts against sin within itself in order to continue an effective witness to sinners outside the Church (Titus 2.1-5). Church Discipline puts the biting quality into salt, the piercing radiance into light (Matt. 5.13-16), the heady aroma into perfume (2 Cor.2.14-17).

3. Prevention

Where Church discipline is seen to be practised it acts as a deterrent. When members know the church will take action to maintain order they are discouraged from sinning. This is the purpose of Paul's advice to Timothy in Tim.5.20. The Scottish Confession of 1560 says "By the faithful practice of discipline vice is repressed and virtue nourished".

4. Restoration

This is the most important purpose in all church discipline (read Matt.18.15; 1 Cor.5.5. 2 Cor. 2.5-8 and Gal. 6.1 and 2). None of these verses promise that restoration will take place. Our task is to obey God's Direction in these matters of restoring sinners to repentance.

Our Attitude is a key factor in administering discipline.

Art Gish comments:

"We discipline because we love Jesus and because we love each other..... The Concern is not with the person's mistakes, but for the person's spiritual health. The idea of punishment or revenge must always be rejected".

Eberhard Arnold:

"Woe to us if we become correct without having love. Woe to us if we say the right thing without having love. Then let us be silent: that would be better. One ought not to tell a person the truth until the Holy Spirit gives one this certainty. You love him with your whole heart, therefore you may say it. Woe to anyone who would say the truth to his brother or to his sister if he does not love them with his whole heart. He is a murderer. For truth without love kills.... it is not the truth to set forth a polished dazzling theory with a cold heart. Nor is it the truth to smite men with a hard, stony orthodoxy that comes from a stern mind".

WHICH OCCASIONS DEMAND THE USE OF CHURCH DISCIPLINE?

1. When the love and harmony of the fellowship is threatened

Jesus laid down the principles for settling private disputes in Matt. 18.15-18. Where there is an unsanctified stubbornness and refusal to repent, what may have begun as a private matter becomes an issue for the whole church.

2. When the unity of the church is threatened

Those who seek to form divisive factions which destroy the peace of the church are to be dealt with firmly (Rom. 16.17-18 and Titus 3.9-11). Paul gives important advice to Timothy in 1 Tim. 5.19: "never admit any charge against an Elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses".

We should never listen to any negative criticism unless the critic is willing to repeat the charge in the Elder's presence..... then there must be at least two or three witnesses.

Even then we only receive the charge: we do not believe it or act upon it until further investigation has been made. Slander or false accusation is one of the commonest works of the devil, to divide Christians from one another. This is not a mandate for Baptist Popery! Hebrews 13.17 lays down the responsibility of a fellowship to its leaders. Equally, it belongs to leaders to remember the marks of their service include the humility to accept and act upon advice and admonition.

3. When the Moral Beauty of the fellowship is threatened

The call to holiness is quite clear (Eph.4.17-6.20) God expects certain standards of His people. Where there is blatant immorality or even a "hint of sexual immorality" (Eph.5.3), dishonesty (Eph.4.28) false business practices (Eph.4.25), anything that belongs to the works of darkness then we must expect there will be pastoral action.

Repentance and recompense will be sought. If the failure was known to the whole community, then a public testimony in a church meeting would be profitable that all may know of the change of heart and extend the forgiveness of the whole community.

Art Gish: "Never under any circumstances may anyone bring up anything critical related to this from the past after there has been forgiveness. This has been forgiven and taken away". Those who refuse to repent lay themselves open to more serious censure (1 Cor.5).

4. When the truth of the Gospel is Threatened

Most Christians are capable of misunderstanding the revealed doctrines of the word of God. Sometimes in their prayers they reveal this misunderstanding. This is not to be guilty of heresy. Gentle instruction and pastoral care is an aid to growing Christians. NT passages like 2 John 7-11 and 1 Tim. 6.3-15 refer to those who knowingly and deliberately reject the truth. This is to be taken with utter seriousness by the membership.

5. When the Commitment to God's people is threatened

Church membership is a serious aspect of Discipleship. We join a church voluntarily and in becoming a member accept the privilege and responsibilities as laid down in Acts 2.41 ff. Since we willingly agree to this membership the church has the right to rebuke us when these responsibilities are violated.

WHAT METHODS SHOULD WE EMPLOY?

In one sense our question is misleading. It seems to emphasise our discipline whereas it is really His discipline.

The Lord chastens those he loves and our methods belong to his delegated authority.

1. PREACH THE WORD

The Bible says that 'man cannot live by bread alone but needs every word that God speaks'. This is one of our fundamental needs as a fellowship. We need teaching that includes detailed instructions on Christian's standards at personal, church, and social levels. It is helpful to be reminded of the job description for a Pastor as found in 2 Tim. 4.2 Note the four instructions given to the young preacher:

i. Preach the Word

The grammatical structure of the verse has the mood of solemnity, positive action, definite resolve. Timothy is facing a crisis and must preach the word as never before.

Apply the scripture to the pastoral situation.

ii. Be Prepared

In and out of season implies 'always on duty'. On occasions the preacher will feel unworthy to apply a hard word because he knows his own heart and is aware the congregation knows him too! Sometimes the word will be 'preached' in private as it was in Galatians 6.1. when a member who had stumbled needed to be reminded of the truth

iii. Reprove and Rebuke

Pastor Timothy and Pastor Titus are both strongly urged to rebuke and reprove their people: 1 Tim. 5.20 "Rebuke publicly"; Titus 1.13 "rebuke them sharply"; Titus 2.11 "rebuke with all authority". The Greek word 'elencho' means to rebuke with truth as to bring if not to confession, to conviction of sin. The same word is used of the work of the Holy Spirit in John 16.8 and the ministry of the Ascended Lord in Revelation 3.19. Your Pastors need to be encouraged not to shirk this responsibility for the health of the fellowship suffers when we are not reprovved.

iv. Encourage

Woe to the preacher who temperamentally enjoys thrashing the people! The encouraging appeal to the reason, conscience and will is that the sinner will turn from his ways and be restored. Note how the verse ends:

* 'with great patience' - preaching which rebukes without grace leads to a hard censoriousness.

* 'careful instruction' - it is not enough for the Pastor to get a burden off his chest and go home feeling satisfied. Correction and discipline must be intelligently understood "To rebuke without instruction is to leave the root cause of the error untouched".

2. SPEAK THE TRUTH

As Ephesians 4.15 instructs, it is important that all Christians practice a loving admonition in their relationships. In order to grow as Christians we need love, strength, guidance and encouragement. God often chooses to provide these qualities through our fellow believers.

Now sharing the truth with a fellow Christian has twin dangers. We can be so hard on a friend to crush them, or we can be so soft as to leave them unstrengthened:

"Some are conspicuously lacking in love. When they think they smell heresy their nose begins to twitch, their muscles ripple, and the light of battle enters their eye. They seem to enjoy nothing more than a fight. Others make the opposite mistake. They are determined at all costs to maintain and exhibit brotherly love but in order to do so, are prepared to sacrifice the central truths of revelation." (John Stott).

The best atmosphere for speaking the truth in love is that of friendship. You will be closer to certain members of the fellowship. Within certain boundaries this is part of the Lord's provision for you. The hour following public gatherings for worship is very important. You are not simply to catch up on the news of the week, you need to develop the freedom to say to each other: "What has the Lord been saying to you through his word?" Remember the lesson from Romans 14.14 and don't interfere with the Master-Servant relationship that a disciple has with his Lord.

3. CENSURE THE CARELESS

A major area of responsibility in church discipline concerns the responsibilities of church membership. Our Church Rules state simply "That the Church Roll should be revised annually". There will be occasions when we feel it right to submit a name to the whole fellowship at a church meeting. It is the responsibility of the church to decide whether a member should be removed from the membership. This is never an easy task and many members shrink from the corporate exercise of discipline. Hebrews 10.25 exhorts us to encourage those who lapse. As Raymond Brown says in his commentary:

"We are brothers in the same family (3.1), partners in the same enterprise (3.14), members of the same family (3.6). When we censure someone for not walking with us in membership responsibilities, we not only say to them: 'we miss you'; 'the organisation isn't the same without you'; 'you would love our new buildings'. We discipline in the light of the second coming of Christ (Heb.10.25). "When the day is here rather than near, we shall all wish we had done so much more" (RB). Any visitation of the lapsed must lovingly include this ethical challenge. The Lord's return is near, what will you say to Him when he returns?"

4. EXCOMMUNICATION

Bearing in mind the fact we stand alongside the fallen as a fellow sinner and brother (Gal. 6.1-3 and 2 Thess. 3.15) there does come the time for severe disciplinary measure (Titus 1.13 and 1 Tim.5.20). This final form of discipline is clearly stated in Matt. 18.17-18 and 2 Cor. 5.11-13.

AT THE END OF A LONG AND LOVING PROCESS the church may have to declare that a person is no longer part of the fellowship.

1) It is for the impenitent

Yes, the church is for sinners, but repentant sinners. In 1 Cor.5 it was not the immoral relationship so much as the open and blatant attitude to the point of boastfulness. We don't excommunicate for sin, but for an unwillingness to repent. The marks of repentance are as follows:-

A willingness to recognise the wrong committed.

An openness to the Holy Spirit's correction.

A resolve to be loved and forgiven, not to be bitter.

A concerted effort to make changes.

ii) It is remedial

Excommunication is an awesome thing as 1 Cor.5.5 and 1 Tim 1.20 indicate. "Delivered to Satan" "seems to refer to turning people over to the forces of the world without the support of the church hoping that really experiencing the horror of life apart from the church will bring them to their senses and help them recognise their state". The same principle is at work in 1 John 5.16-18 where we refuse to pray with someone. It is an extreme way to confront a person with the truth.

iii) It is a fellowship decision

No Pastor or group of leaders have the authority to exercise this form of discipline. It is the function of the local fellowship at a church meeting.

iv) It is consistent

The following passages make it plain that friendship with the excommunicated can never be the same again until they return. Rom.16.17; 2 Thess. 3.6/14; 2 Tim.3.5 and Titus 3.10. There are sad examples where people have misapplied these references to family life and separate eating and sleeping arrangements have been practised.

v) It is reversible

Love is still to be shown to the excommunicated (2 Cor.2.6-10) and we are to pray for their restoration. When they are restored then all is forgiven and the past must never be referred to - God has buried it with a 'No Fishing' sign. At all levels, Church discipline is the expression of love and concern for one another. It is a mark of our kingdom citizenship that "we engage to watch over one another in love".

David Coffey.

The following is reproduced from the April/May issue of RENEWAL magazine, by kind permission of the Editor, the Reverend Michael Harper.

GOD'S HOLY PEOPLE ?

On 2nd January, 1983, at six o'clock in the morning, I was fully awake lying in my bed when I was overcome by the almighty power of God sweeping through the room in a series of waves. The reality of his presence gradually came to light in the course of a long message given to me during more than half an hour. The essence of the message is as follows:-

"I am God, the Lord most holy, and I want to prepare the bride so that she may be pure, blameless and without spot. But I see her putting on more and more rags and other torn garments which give nothing but the illusion of being clothed.

You believe yourself clothed with the gifts of the Spirit and with his power, but in fact you are pathetically naked because you have turned away from my counsel. You have made the renewal an end in itself so that the renewal which I was expecting has not come.

I am sending among you the most faithful of my faithful servants, because I can no longer wait for your eyes to open. My heart bleeds to see you self-satisfied and revelling in a renewal that is no more.

I am sending them to tell you again that I am a holy God, which is why, when my Spirit blows, he brings with him a persistent call for holiness, set-apartness, without compromise. This is the message from which you have turned away and you have clothed yourself with the renewal as though it were a fine garment. How did you come to this, how could you forget that it is holiness, transparency to my light, which is the true garment? Will you know how to listen this time to those who bring my message, the challenge of Calvary, calling you to holiness? Will you know how to cast off your rags at the foot of the cross? Will you know at last how to take up this cross and follow me earnestly in the way which I have prepared for you? The time is coming when the powers of darkness will tremble, because I will expose on earth, in a striking manner, the illusion in which these powers have kept the world and those of my people who have prostituted themselves in it. My Spirit will scour the earth in an awesome blaze of light to convict the world of sin, justice and judgment. He will expose the great lie so relentlessly perpetrated. Souls in their many thousands will turn towards the cross and eternal salvation. But this will not be possible unless you come back to me, shedding your illusory garments by dying to your deceitful practices and your shallow and empty teachings. If you truly wake up, you who slumber wrapped in a renewal which is no more, then and only then, the doors will open wide and because you will have recovered this transparency of holiness that is the true renewal, these heavenly doors will let out the mighty dazzling waves of a revival such as has never been witnessed before".

LIFE and LEADERSHIP SEMINARS

Twenty years ago a quiet revolution began in the Church of Guatemala in the area of leadership training. It became known as the TEE programme, or Theological Education by Extension. Rather than taking leaders into residential schools it is designed to bring teaching to leaders where they are. Today most of the churches of the great developing nations are involved in courses of this sort. Its theological basis is in the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers and the consequently false dichotomy between a clerical elite and a so-called laity. It treats Ephesians 4:11-16 seriously. And its aim is "to encourage and enable would-be leaders to develop gifts and ministries without leaving homes, jobs, communities and local congregations" (F. Ross Kinchin "A Call to the Renewal of the Ministry"). Not for the first time it presents us with an interesting paradox. The sophisticated churches of the West are hearing important spiritual lessons out of the mouths of the suckling churches on matters to do with spiritual principles, adaptation and methodology.

In this country we now find ourselves in a situation in which the idea of the one-man ministry has reluctantly succumbed to a much more biblical stress on corporate leadership. One of the consequences that follows is that with many more leaders being appointed and recognised there is an increasing need for forms of training which will meet their requirements. Most of the leaders who are being appointed are among the mature and tested, for whom residential courses are impractical. Valuable as the more familiar academic training is for those of us who exercise regular teaching ministries, it is doubtful whether the average Elder or house group Leader has his mind set on these horizons. My experience in a travelling ministry over these past two years confirms to me that courses held in good regional centres with maximum geographical accessibility and also attainable faith-building programmes are a high priority just now.

So the first aim in Life and Leadership seminars will be to give attention to vocational training. We want to teach some of the life-changing principles on which Jesus concentrated for the 3-year course He first offered to The Twelve. The curriculum therefore includes teaching of prayer and holiness, faith and discipleship, repentance and forgiveness and the power of the Holy Spirit. Then there are those areas of Church life which are so central to healthy growth today. We need teaching on the exercise of spiritual gifts and the ministries of healing, deliverance and prophecy. There is evangelism undertaken in the power of the Holy Spirit, leadership training, Church planting and building biblical Church structures among many others.

Whenever I have arranged weekend or mid-week training sessions for leaders and pastors there has usually been a larger response than we have been able to cope with. In April, May and June of 1984 we are setting aside three special training weekends in Streatham, Haywood and Bedford. Later in the autumn longer courses will be ready. Students will need the approval of their own Church leaders before we accept them, but to encourage them we are preparing attractively presented teaching material on the style of the Dale Carnegie Seminars.

There is just space to mention three other priorities.

1. Each student will be attached to a Pastoral Director who will be committed to the ministry of encouragement.
2. The mix of the training will be individually designed to fit each student's need.
3. We are planning to expose each student to varied practical situations in which they can apply some of the ministry principles they are learning.

Churches seldom move faster than the speed that is set by their leaders. As Churches grow so the diversity of their ministries will also increase and the need for training for them. None of what we are offering is designed to replace the courses already on offer through the various denominational and interdenominational institutions. But perhaps in a limited way Life and Leadership Seminars may complement what is already available and add an otherwise neglected dimension to today's leadership training.

Douglas McBaïn.

For further details contact Manna Ministries 01.677 4853
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"HALF THE DENOMINATION" - PROVOCATIVE BUT MISLEADING!

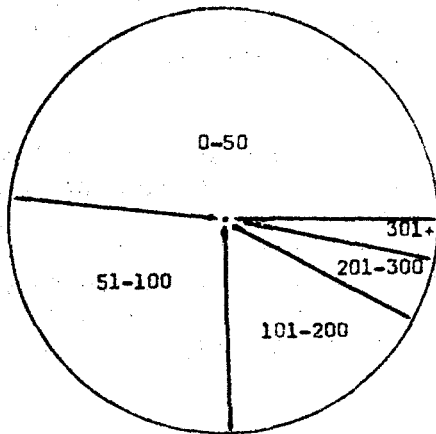
Yes, we need to care for the numerous small churches of our denomination, but to call the 48% of B.U. churches which have 0-50 members "half the denomination" is not helpful!

I want to know how many members, i.e. people, are in each membership sector. Someone else can do the accurate statistical work, but a rough and ready method produces the following:

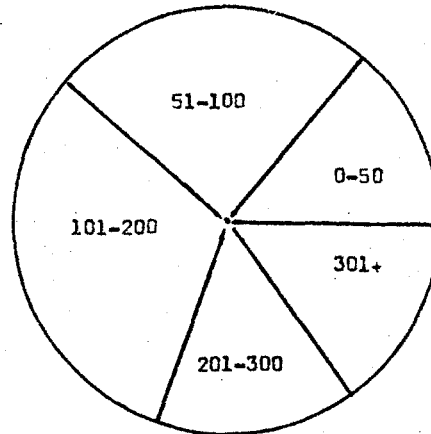
Number of members	% of Churches	Average No. of Members	(Factor)	% of Members
0-50	48	25	1200	14.6
51-100	27	75	2025	24.6
101-200	17	150	2550	31.0
201-300	5	250	1250	15.2
300+	3	400	1200	14.6
			<u>8225</u>	<u>(100.0)</u>

A comparison of the pie-chart previously given with a new chart based on the above is very interesting, and will hopefully help us to keep the "care of smaller churches" in proper perspective.

number of churches
of these sizes



number of members in
churches of these sizes
(computed, not accurate)



48% of our churches may have under 51 members, but 85% of our membership is in churches with over 50 members!

David Poley (Harrow)

BOOK REVIEWS

CHRISTIANS AND THE THIRD WORLD by David Edgington : Paternoster Press : 142 pp : £4.00

This is an important book which brings sharply into focus how stereotyped and out of date are the views of many Christians and many churches regarding the meaning of mission and perception of the Third World. It challenges many of our assumptions and should be required reading for ministers and church leaders concerned both with the wider fellowship of the church in the global village in which we live and also with the implications of Christian discipleship in our part of that global village.

The book is addressed particularly to evangelical Christians. The first and shortest chapter sets out the author's aim to "provide a clearer understanding, not only of the realities of the contemporary Third World, but also of some of the complexities and challenges of living in a multi-cultural society here in Britain". This the book admirably achieves. The context is provided by a number of statistics in the second chapter together with an analysis of post-Independence politics in the Third World and some of the problems and possible solutions. These give a necessary framework to the remaining chapters.

These include a review of the missionary scene which may well be something of an eye-opener to many but which will certainly deepen our understanding of the situation in which missionary societies work, both at home and abroad, and challenge many of our concepts of missionary work. There is also a description of the church in the Third World which draws attention to its rapid and exciting growth, the development of its worship and the contribution in life and vitality which it may make to the West, again adding to our understanding by setting these in their context and probably challenging some of our over-simplistic views.

The final chapter is chiefly concerned with biblical principles which should underlie a Christian response to the question of the sharing of resources. These principles, while obviously relating to the subject matter of the book, could equally well be regarded more widely as a part of Christian discipleship to which we may give intellectual assent but which less often inform our daily Christian walk. As such they are part of the fulness of the Gospel to which serious Christians will wish to give heed.

This is a book for the eighties which will shed light and deepen the understanding of thoughtful Church members and should be available on Church bookstalls and/or libraries. It is an important resource book for school teachers who are found in so many of our churches and who have a crucial role to play in our society and it could with profit form the basis for a study group. Its insights are important to our view of the world-wide Church and our place in it, and its challenges are real and relevant to all who would be free of an introspective and parochial view of the Church and the Lord at work in our day and in our world.

Margaret White.

EVANGELISM AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY - The Grand Rapids Report : Paternoster Press : 64 pp : £1.00

The shorter of these two books is also addressed to evangelical Christians and is a report on the consultation on the Relationship between Evangelism and Social Responsibility held at Grand Rapids in 1982 in which evangelical leaders sought to bring together the emphasis on Evangelism in paragraph 4 and on Social Responsibility in paragraph 5 of the Lausanne Covenant. It is a heart-warming document which faces the tensions which are inevitably felt to exist between the two emphases honestly and with charity, and finds the fundamental basis for action in both in the character of God himself. Indeed, the Report concludes that the two should be in as close partnership as two blades of a pair of scissors and that the one must involve the other as they did in the ministry of Jesus. The new community of the kingdom should constitute a challenge to the world and present it with a radically alternative society.

Following the Biblical and theological study comes a chapter on Guidelines for Action which should challenge the life of many churches and individuals. It commences with a useful definition of the difference between "social service" which is the expression of Christian compassion and "social action" which is the quest for justice, and their relation to evangelism. The evangelistic and social responsibilities of the local church are then listed and churches are called upon to take much more seriously the period of intercession in public worship; to evidence in society the distinctive Christian quality of love; to enter the debate about current issues by affirming what the Bible teaches to many of our members who are bewildered by contemporary problems; to train and support church members so that they may serve in their vocations as salt and light; to delegate particular responsibilities to different groups which relate closely to the church but diversify its ministry; and to take seriously the question of Christian lifestyle and the use of Christian resources. The Report ends with a call to obedience both to Christ's commission to preach the gospel and to the great commandment to love one another with all that implies.

Margaret White.

Book Review - DISCIPLING THE BROTHER by Marlin Jeschke - Herald Press 204 pp
: £1.65

(available from Metanoia Bookshop, 14 Shepherd's Hill, Highgate, London N6 5QA)

This book is essential reading for anyone wanting to form a balanced approach to Church discipline. It will make you think again if you are inclined to dismiss the subject altogether, while, at the same time, steering you away from the traps into which discipline has so often fallen in the past.

The author's thesis is that Discipline is the corollary of Evangelism and is the form that the presentation of the Gospel takes to one who has accepted the Gospel and is in danger of renouncing it. Both Evangelism and Discipline are acts of Discipling. In Evangelism we invite people to follow Christ and we take seriously their refusal to do so by not including them in the Church. In Discipline we continue to confront an erring brother with the Gospel and we take seriously his refusal of it by reckoning him not to be part of the Church.

Church Discipline is not to be a judicial proceeding - there are no especially serious offences that incur fixed penalties - the aim is restoration and the repentance and faith that are sufficient to include a person in the Church in the first place, regardless of what they may once have done, are sufficient to restore them to the fellowship, whatever their lapse. But repentance must be real, and the admonition of a brother in sin is a solemn and urgent duty towards him. To those who say - Who are we to judge? - the writer replies: If we cannot judge who may continue in the Church, we cannot judge who may join the Church, e.g. by baptism.

This book is mainly about principles and ways of looking at the subject, rather than practical guidance in how to go about it, and it is not clear whether it comes out of extensive pastoral practice. However, it concludes with four practical suggestions for getting from where we are to where we want to be, and these steps are within the reach of all of us.

Alastair Campbell.

Video Review - VIVA CHRISTO REV (55 minutes) - available for hire in VHS or Betamax from Manna Ministries, 52 Prentice Road, London SW16 1QD at £10 per week

A very moving and utterly convincing testimony to the power of God in the world today. This film tells the story of what happened when two Catholic prayer groups began to listen seriously to God in Scripture and prophecy. In simple obedience, they went to the local rubbish dump on Christmas morning to share their Christmas dinner and when far more people turned up than were expected, the food was miraculously multiplied. Miracles of healing followed, joyful evangelism led to many conversions, a programme of practical aid improved the quality of peoples' lives, but as the film says, there was healing for those who shared with the poor, as well as those who received, and the conversion of tax collectors and skivers into Christian leaders is as much a miracle as any physical healing.

This film will have a ministry of reconciliation. It bridges the gulf between Catholic and Protestant, between Evangelism and social action, between conversion and healing, between Scripture and prophecy. It portrays an amazing wholeness - the whole Gospel for the whole person. It poses a tremendous challenge to Evangelicals, Charismatics and Radicals alike, making us all ask whether we have ever really believed our own message or valued our own treasures, let alone been open to those of others.

Alastair Campbell.