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Church Discipline As Restoration: Guidelines For Its Implementation In The Seventh-Day Adventist Churches In The Caribbean Union

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ABSTRACT

CHURCH DISCIPLINE AS RESTORATION: GUIDELINES FOR ITS IMPLEMENTATION IN THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCHES IN THE CARIBBEAN UNION

by

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ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH
Project Report

Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: CHURCH DISCIPLINE AS RESTORATION: GUIDELINES FOR ITS IMPLEMENTATION IN THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCHES IN THE CARIBBEAN UNION

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Problem

Church discipline is an important function of the church. In the Caribbean Union of Seventh-day Adventists there is the need to administer discipline in such a way that the restoration of the erring member is ensured. This is expressed by the presidents and some ministers of the conferences there. It was the purpose of this study to develop some guidelines that will facilitate the restoration process. It is hoped that this study will assist in the development of an understanding of discipline as restoration and the providing of guidelines for its implementation, especially in the Caribbean Union.
Method

A comprehensive study was made of discipline in the New Testament--identifying incidents and admonitions regarding church disciplinary actions. The information obtained was used to develop the concept of discipline as restoration. This is a view of the church as a teaching, caring, and reforming community.

A letter was sent to the presidents of the five conferences of the Caribbean Union, to assist in determining the pastoral attitudes toward discipline. For purposes of illustration, a sampling of three case studies was taken from the Caribbean Union. The information was obtained by interviewing three pastors. They were asked to give an example of church discipline in which they were involved, a rationale for their decision, and an idea of their concept of church discipline then and now. The case studies were evaluated by the New Testament teaching on church discipline. The aim was to draw up some guidelines that will facilitate the restoration of disciplined members.

Conclusion

An approach to "church discipline as restoration" can benefit the Seventh-day Adventist churches in the Caribbean Union because it emphasizes dealing with the member in a loving and caring way in order to facilitate his repentance. It is people-oriented. Therefore, when the church and the pastor see their mission as a caring community, the emphasis in church discipline will be the restoration of the member.
CHURCH DISCIPLINE AS RESTORATION: GUIDELINES FOR ITS IMPLEMENTATION IN THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCHES IN THE CARIBBEAN UNION

A project report presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Ministry

by

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NOTE

This Doctor of Ministry Project falls in a category described in the Andrews University Theological Seminary Bulletin as "Project II" in fulfillment of requirements for an alternate curriculum plan under which the candidate prepares two related papers—a theological position paper that addresses some issue or problem that exists in the church in a theological setting and a professional paper that addresses that issue or problem from a standpoint of ministerial practice.
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DEDICATED TO

all Seventh-day Adventist pastors and churches whose objective in discipline is to restore and strengthen the member and at the same time uphold the mission of the church.
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INTRODUCTION

Church discipline is an important function of the church, a function that must be implemented in a caring and loving manner if its impact is to have a positive effect. The church and its leaders must be liberated from the view that sees church discipline only as a punitive measure. As projected in the New Testament a balance approach must be cultivated—an approach that emphasizes the care and restoration of the erring member.

The Task

The following pages will develop the position that church discipline should be understood as including the emphasis on restoration and applied by Seventh-day Adventist ministers and churches according to the principles expounded in the New Testament. In pursuing this contention, the task is undertaken to articulate a Biblically-based approach to church discipline in the Seventh-day Adventist church. The Caribbean Union will be our point of reference.

Justification of the Study

As a member of the Seventh-day Adventist church in the Caribbean Union, I have had many bad memories of unloving acts of discipline, cases of authoritarian legalistic actions by church leaders on issues which in my opinion turned out to have no connection with the spiritual life. There seems to be a need for
another approach to church discipline.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual (p. 244) states that "if a member falls into sin, sincere efforts must be made to reclaim him." There is no outlined approach of how this must be done. This study is an attempt to do that in the context of the Caribbean Union because the leaders concede that there is a need for it.

With a large number of apostasies in the Seventh-day Adventist church and the apparent failure in reclaiming the majority, the church can benefit from an approach to church discipline that aims at the restoration of the members.

Present-day observers of the church appear to see a tendency to avoid disciplinary actions. It is feared that discipline will divide and destroy the church. This study is considered needful in order to advance the view that wise biblical discipline can be used to unite the church and revive its spirit.

Organization of the Study

This study consists of two papers: a theological position paper and a "professional" paper. The first paper will seek to discover the theological implications of church discipline in the New Testament. In order to accomplish this objective, chapter I is devoted to the discussion of "discipline in the New Testament community." The emphasis here is to establish the different approaches to church discipline. To culminate the first paper, chapter II discusses the concepts of restoration, caring, and teaching as they relate to church discipline.
My primary task in the second paper is to establish the need for Seventh-day Adventist ministers and churches, especially in the Caribbean Union, to conceptualize and administer church discipline as restoration. This proposal is an outgrowth of the first section of the paper which dealt with discipline in the New Testament. The study revealed that the primary aim of church discipline is the restoration of the member. An all out effort should be made to bring the erring member to repentance. It is only when the member persists in his sins that the church should publicly disassociate itself from him.

My thesis in this paper is that if church discipline is understood as including the emphasis on restoration and applied according to the principles expounded in the New Testament, its implementation will preserve the character of the church and be a catalyst for the growth of the members. Unfortunately, this approach, in my opinion, is not the norm in the Caribbean Union.

The Seventh-day Adventist churches in the Caribbean Union belong to a world-wide brotherhood of churches. Therefore, my aim is to first establish the beliefs and counsels of the denomination on the subject of church discipline. To give it a local flavor I will examine the attitude of the pastors towards church discipline in the Caribbean Union. This will be done by reviewing the comments given on the subject by the five presidents of the conferences, and the recording of three cases of discipline involving pastors in the Caribbean Union.

The final chapter will present some guidelines that can form a systematic approach to discipline as restoration. It is
hoped that this approach to discipline will contribute to the spiritual life of the Seventh-day Adventist churches in the Caribbean Union.
PART ONE

DISCIPLINE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT
CHAPTER I
DISCIPLINE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT
COMMUNITY

As with many other subjects the Christian world seems to be divided in its understanding of church discipline. To many the word suggests something distasteful and conjures up bad memories. Others see the church as having no other alternative but to rid itself of the offender. Some are saying that unless discipline is restored to a position of respect and vital influence, the Christian church may well be doomed to an insignificant existence or eventually to total oblivion.¹ A price will be paid, according to others, if church discipline is abandoned:

To abandon discipline because it has sometime been ill-administered is as unwarranted as it would be to abandon worship on the ground that it has sometimes been ill-conducted. The relaxation of discipline has often more absurd results than ever attended its excess.²

Such assumptions may be correct, but we must also be warned against replacing "no discipline" with "excessive discipline."

Nevertheless, "if the church is to walk worthily of the gospel,

part of its duty will be to maintain ecclesiastical discipline."¹

An examination of the word discipline in the NT shows that the Greek word that comes closest to our English word is "paideuo."² It occurs twenty-one times in its various forms. Of these it is translated as discipline fifteen times in the New English Bible. Originally the word usually referred to the training of children and, therefore, denotes education. It is used in that sense, for example, in Eph 6:4 and Rom 2:20.³ Another Greek word that can be translated discipline is "manthano." Its root meaning is "to increase one's knowledge," with a derivative meaning of making a disciple.⁴ Possibly, then, it could be said that discipline has a part in or is a continuation of discipling.

Historically, church discipline had its origin in Judaism.⁵ There was discipline in the synagogues, and at Qumran the Essenes had a rigid disciplinary system. Initiation into this community involved the members' acceptance of a covenant with God and the community. They were disciplined when they violated the rules of the community. The discipline was mainly corrective and called for separation from the community for a certain number of days or months, depending on the nature of the infraction.⁶

³Klassen, p. 182.
⁴Kettel, 3:624.
In the NT the emphasis is on formative discipline. The Sermon on the Mount offers positive guidance for the Christian lifestyle. Jesus, Paul, and others lived lives worthy of imitation. The letters of Paul were designed to nurture and encourage the churches. Such preventive discipline was designed to preclude the need for corrective action by early Christian churches. Yet, the NT says much about reformative, remedial, and corrective discipline.

There are many evidences of discipline in the NT community. Specific counsel is offered in Matthew 18:15-18 and its parallel in Luke 17:3, 4 on how to deal with the erring brother. The counsel is to confront him: if he repents, forgive him; if he does not, consider him as a gentile or tax collector. The book of Acts shows instances of discipline in the early Christian community. In 1 Cor 5, Paul advocates excommunication of an unrepentant offender, while in 2 Cor 2:5-9 he encourages the readmission of the excommunicated. In Gal 6:1 he asks the spiritual brethren to restore the fallen brother. In addition, the pastoral letters contain many references to discipline, calling upon the faithful to avoid the disobedient, the hypocrites, and the factious (2 Thess 3:6-14; 2 Tim 3:2-5; Titus 3:10), while Rev 2 and 3 refer to sanctions against heretics. This is the picture of discipline in the NT—a picture that demands further discussion.

When the subject of discipline is discussed from the viewpoint of the Gospels, three passages are generally considered. The first, Matt 16:13-20, concerns Peter's confession of the divinity of Christ and the apparent delegation of the power of binding and loosing to Peter. The second, Matt 18:15-18, concerns fraternal correction and indicates that the power of binding and loosing belongs not simply to Peter but to the entire church. The third passage, John 20:21-23, also indicates that the whole church participates in the "power of the keys." These passages have shared a long association in the history of interpretation and have constituted the basis for the church's authority to discipline. But do they actually provide a basis for church discipline? If so, what is the nature of the discipline they support?

The Authority to Discipline

First, let us consider what it means to bind and loose in the context of the Gospels. The passages under consideration (Matt 16:19; 18:18; and John 20:21-23) suggest that the power of Christian discipline and forgiveness is a gift of Jesus to the church. John Driver, in an effort to explain the concept of binding and loosing, comes up with a twofold meaning: "To bind meant to withhold pardon, to retain (sins) and, therefore, to exclude from the fellowship of

the community. To loose meant to absolve, to pardon, to forgive (sins)."¹

This meaning is associated with Luke 17:3, 4 and John 20:23. By comparing these passages it can be concluded that a person who is offended is admonished to rebuke and forgive his brother. But these terms (binding and loosing) suggest another meaning.

To bind meant to forbid, or to make obligatory or to order a certain course of moral behavior. To loose meant to permit, or to leave a person free to make an ethical choice among various alternatives.²

The Jewish rabbis of Jesus' time used the terms in this manner. In their interpretations of the law of Israel they bound or loosed (forbade or permitted) certain moral alternatives, depending on the nature of each case. When Jesus used these terms, He was in effect granting to his disciples the moral authority which until then had been the prerogative only of the great teachers of Israel.³ A look at Matt 16:19 reveals that there is a close connection between the keys of the Kingdom and the power of binding and loosing. This power belonged to the office of the scribe or teacher, who received "the keys of knowledge" (Luke 11:32) upon his admittance into office. Thus Peter was qualified to function as a scribe, fully instructed in the Kingdom of heaven, ordained to transmit the spiritual knowledge that would unlock the Kingdom to those who accepted his preaching or bar entrance into the Kingdom to those who reject the gospel.

¹John Driver, Community and Commitment (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1976), p. 44.
²Ibid., p. 44. (See Matt 16:19.) ³Ibid., p. 45.
From Matt 10:5-15 it can be seen that the power to bind or loose had already been exercised by the apostles during their missionary work. Jesus told them to preach that "the Kingdom of heaven is at hand." Those who accepted the apostles' ministry were to find peace and entrance into the Kingdom. Those who rejected their words were excluded from the Kingdom, as was symbolized by the apostles wiping the dust of the city from their feet.

In his discussion on this subject, John Calvin writes:

This command concerning remitting and retaining sins, and that promise made to Peter concerning binding and loosing, ought to be referred to nothing but the ministry of the word. . . . For what is the sum of the Gospel, but just that all being the slaves to sin and death, are loosed and set free by the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, while those who do not receive and acknowledge Christ as a deliverer and redeemer are condemned and doomed to eternal chains.¹

The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary seems to concur with Calvin:

The "keys" of the Kingdom of heaven are the words of Christ. . . . The saving power of the Gospel is the only thing that admits men and women into the Kingdom of heaven. Christ simply bestowed upon Peter and all the other disciples (Matt 18:18; John 20:23) the authority and power to bring men into the kingdom. It was Peter's perception of the truth that Jesus is indeed the Christ that placed the "keys" of the kingdom in his possession and let him into the kingdom, and the same may be said of all Christ's followers to the very close of time.²

George Ladd adds that in biblical idiom, knowledge is more than intellectual perception. It has a spiritual dimension. The authority given to Peter is grounded upon spiritual knowledge, which he shared with the other disciples.³ He concluded that,

¹John Calvin, Institute, 4. 9. 1.
The keys of the Kingdom are therefore "spiritual insight which will enable Peter to lead others in through the door of revelation through which he has passed himself." The authority to bind and loose involves the admission or exclusion of men from the realm of the Kingdom of God. Christ will build his ekklesia upon Peter and upon those who share the divine revelation of Jesus' messiahship. To them also is committed by virtue of this same revelation the means of permitting men to enter the realm of the blessings of the Kingdom or of excluding men from such participation.¹

These comments seem to imply that there is inadequate support for the argument that Peter was singled out for greater authority. All of the disciples were entrusted with the responsibility of caring for the spiritual interests and needs of one another. This is now the responsibility of the entire church. Eduard Schweizer, in answering the question as to whether Peter has a successor to whom such a unique position was transferred, rightly says that "the apostle has, in fact, successors, namely, the whole church. As the apostolic church it succeeds to the authority to teach, though in such a way that it must always listen to what Peter says."²

In Matt 18:18 we have the instruction of how to handle discipline. Here the sense of "bind" and "loose" appears to have developed differently than in 16:19 when seen in context. A member of the congregation who is unrepentant of an offence against his brother is to be excluded from the fellowship. Verses 15-17 as well as verses 19-20 indicate that the new society is regarded as possessing powers of self-government from God, and that its decisions

¹Ibid., p. 118.
will be ratified by God. Mozley concludes:

The most that we can say is that in Matt 18:18 the context seems to show that the power of binding and loosing implies, among other things, the power of treating sin as pardonable or the reverse, with reference to admission into, or exclusion from, the community.

Much can be said for the arguments advanced so far. It is a fact that the promise to bind and loose was directly given to one person in Matt 16:19, to the twelve in Matt 18:18, and the whole company who were present in John 20:22, 23. This does not preclude the conclusion that the emphasis here is not so much on the function of the pastor in his unique office, as he exercises his authorities of order and jurisdiction, but rather on the function of Christians in general as they corporately engage in the proclamation of the Gospel, thus opening the doors of the Kingdom for all who choose to enter (Matt 16:19), and corporately engage in church discipline (Matt 18:18; Jn 20:23).

An indeth look at Matt 18:15-17 will answer the question of how church discipline is to be administered.

Matthew 18:15-17 in its Matthean Context

The teaching and application of Matt 18:15-17 must be understood in relation to the context of the chapter. The context reveals that the disciples were aiming at power not service. In answer to the question "Who is the greatest?", then, Jesus tells them that those who would desire to be his disciples must seek true

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2 Ibid.
greatness in self-abasement (vss. 1-4) and employ all diligence in
efforts to avoid leading another to sin (vss. 5-7). They are to
exercise individual care for one another and, with painstaking
and unwearied love, seek to reclaim those who have strayed from
God (vss. 12-14). Furthermore, the disciples were given great
power for this cause (vss. 18-20 and, united in the strong bonds
of brotherly love, they were to show the willingness to forgive
without limits (vss. 21-35).\(^1\)

Looking at the context, one cannot escape the consideration
that should be given to the particular Jewish background against
which Jesus spoke. Jesus lived in a community in which the elders
of the congregation exercised a discipline which was a combination
of ecclesiastical and civil punishment, and whose aim was to cause
the offender to repent. A. Cohen makes a significant contribution
by pointing out that when a brother wrongs another, "the party who
is in the wrong should be eager to admit his fault and beg the
pardon of the person he has offended."\(^2\) He goes on to say:

The Talmud is very firm on this point and even describes the
procedure which should be followed. "One who has sinned against
his fellow-man must say to him, I have acted wrongly against
you." If he accept him, well and good; if not, he brings
persons and concilates with him in their presence. . . .\(^3\)

Here the initiative is with the offender, but in Matt 18:15-17
Jesus reverses the procedure. It can be said that what Jesus now
tells his disciples was not a common practice in the Jewish

\(^1\)Driver, p. 42.
\(^2\)A. Cohen, Everyman's Talmud (New York: E. P. Dutton and
\(^3\)Ibid., pp. 228, 229.
community. A look at Matt 18:10-14 reveals the tender concern and intense longing that Jesus extends to the lost sheep. He did not wait for the sheep to come to him; he went in search of it. Although uncertain of the results, he made an all-out effort to rescue the sheep. This approach was different from that of the Jews.¹

Against this background, one can conclude that in Matt 18:15-17, Jesus was rejecting any legalistic, mechanistic, and loveless approach to the brother. His disciples were to function from a different principle. Not a principle that says, I must wait on my brother to confess his wrongs. But a principle that avoids legalism and emphasizes genuine love and concern for the weak members. Therefore, instead of going to the courts and demanding one's rights and receiving redress, the offended person seeks the salvation of the offender. This allows the offended person to be personally involved with the offender, thus becoming a co-worker with Jesus, the Good Shepherd, in rescuing one who has sinned.

Steps to Save the Offender

The question remains, how does one interpret Matt 18:15-17? William Barclay represents those who hesitate to treat this passage as a genuine saying of Jesus.² As challenging as this view might

¹J. A. Bouman, "Biblical Presupposition of Church Discipline," Concordia Theological Monthly 30 (1959):511

²Barclay holds that in many ways this is one of the most difficult passages to interpret. He lists these reasons: (1) It does not sound like Jesus; it sounds much more like the regulations of an ecclesiastical committee than like the words of Christ.
be, the emphasis at this point is to focus not on presuppositions but on the substance of the passage.

Matt 18:15-17 is a series of specific regulations which begin with a concrete case of a brother who has sinned and the command that he is to be convinced in private of his mistake. If he will not listen, the second injunction is to take others to counsel with the brother. If these two approaches fail then the entire church must be involved in the discipline.

To understand this approach it is important for us to examine the following steps:

Step one: "Go and tell him his fault between you and him alone" (v. 15a). The first step is fraternal correction. When a fellow-disciple sins, he must be brought to the realization of what it means both for his life and for the life of the church. Initially, the offender is treated as a brother in Christ. The focus of concern is not on the hurt inflicted but on the fact that the brother is in danger if he does not change. So the individual disciple is commanded to approach his brother and attempt to expose his guilt in such a way as to persuade him of his sin.  

(2) What does it mean "to take things to the church?" The word ekklesia as used by Jesus is recorded only twice. (3) The passage seems to speak of tax collectors and Gentiles as irreclaimable outsiders, but Jesus never labeled them so. (4) The whole tone of the passage seems to indicate that there is a limit to forgiveness, that there comes a time when a man may be abandoned by his fellowmen as beyond hope, but it is impossible to think of Jesus as making such a statement. The Gospel of Matthew, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1958), p. 206.


2 Ibid., p. 178.
The correction should be private. This approach is rather difficult because of the insecurities of many Christians. The fact of our mutual sinfulness and our inability to correct the brother without causing some discomfort makes us hesitant. Yet the initiative rests with the offended. Actually sin is a force that withdraws a person from the community. Therefore, as fellow-disciples, we are to seek him out, bearing in mind that the goal of fraternal correction is to win back the brother.¹

Whatever we do, the aim is to convince the brother of the forgiving word of Christ, not to degrade him, expose him, or pass judgment on him. This approach can be a positive step in winning the brother back to the community.

Step two: "But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses" (Matt 18:16 RSV). The brother who sinned may refuse to accept private counsel. In this case, a renewed effort should be made with one or two others as witnesses. This approach ensures that the brother is being dealt with impartially.² But what is the role of the "two or three witnesses?" In Deuteronomy, they were required to testify in a formal judicial process. Some exegetes see a similar situation in Matthew. The witnesses are introduced at this point so that in a more formal

¹Ibid., p. 180.

²Matthew quotes from Deut 19:15, "One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth; at the mouth of two witnesses, shall the matter be established." Matthew's text parallels the Septuagint and resembles a similar citation of Paul in 1 Tim 5:19. Cf. John 8:17; 2 Cor 13:1.
process before the church they may be summoned to testify that previous efforts to reconcile the sinner had failed because of his unwillingness to listen.¹

This interpretation creates a tension between the pastoral concern reflected in the renewed effort to win back the brother who has sinned and the more legal function of the one or two witnesses. In any case, the point should be made that in Deuteronomy the witnesses testify to a man's guilt before the judges and people, in Matthew they accompany an individual disciple and take an active part in convincing the sinning brother.² The aim is not to go to the brother in order to testify before the church but to go because of the possibility that the witnesses can help the church to understand the case, should further steps be necessary.

Step three: "If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church" (Matt 18:17a RSV). If the efforts of the two or three fail to convince the brother, the matter is to be brought before the church. The role of the church is not to condemn but rather to support the individual disciple in his final attempt to convince and reconcile his brother.³ Harry G. Coiner holds: "Tell the church' implies marshaling the help of the church, but it can hardly mean the exposure in detail of the sin involved."⁴

²Thompson, p. 183.
³Ibid., p. 184.
⁴Harry G. Coiner, "Living toward One Another with the Word of God; A Study of Mutual Care and Discipline in the Church," Concordia Theological Monthly 36 (1965):630.
It is important to note, at this juncture, that Matthew's concern is not with the authority invested in the church hierarchy, but with the role of the church in the final attempt at reconciliation. There is no prescribed procedure for the church to follow in this final step. Therefore, it seems to suggest that the members of the church must decide what is the best procedure in each individual case. The important thing is that the church must speak with a united voice to convince the offender of his misdeed.¹

Matt 18:17b shows that even the testimony of the church can be ignored. When this happens, a judgment is to be made against the brother who has refused to listen. He is to be considered as a "Gentile and a tax collector." The first impression is that the brother must be abandoned as hopeless and irreclaimable. One can say that the gentile was outside of Israel and that the publican was expelled from the commonwealth of Israel and was regarded as one who had separated himself from God's people; therefore, the sinning brother should be treated in the same way. However, this interpretation is not clearly presented in the text.²

In his quest to resolve this problem, Hein puts it succinctly:

The emphasis in Matt 18:15-18 is on leading the offender to repentance. Therefore, the images of the pagan and tax-collector only serve to express the state of one who has become hardened in his sins and has de facto formed himself into a class apart from the Christian, who, although a sinner himself, never fully gives up the struggle against his own failings. Excommunication in this case is not so much an active exclusion

¹Ibid., p. 631.

²Thompson, p. 185, notes "that the dative (SOI) refers to the individual disciple rather than to the community. The one who has failed in his attempt to correct his brother should treat him as a Gentile and a tax-collector."
of the offender from the church as it is a declaration of what has already come to pass in the offender's relationship with the church.¹

Much can be said for the argument expounded here, in view of the Matthean context.² But it is not clear in Matt 18:15-18 whether the offender is to be excommunicated from the community as Hein suggests, or whether the offended disciple should simply avoid further contact with him. This should not, however, exclude the view that the sinner is to be regarded as one who is not a true member of the church and, therefore, should be the object of the church's missionary concern.

What the study of Matt 18:15-17 makes very clear is this: when someone has committed a sin, the individual disciple should approach his brother in private and expose his fault in such a way as to lead him to recognize his sin. Should this attempt fail, he must try again with witnesses to substantiate the validity of his complaint against his brother and add greater weight to his arguments. Then, he must appeal to the church to help him convince his brother. When this procedure has been followed and the sinner still refuses to listen, he can do nothing more than avoid further contact with him. This approach signals an attempt at reconciliation rather than a juridical process of excommunication. However, Lenski

¹Hein, pp. 70, 71.

²Alexander B. Bruce, The Expositor's Greek New Testament, ed. W. Robertson Nicoll (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1910), 1:240. It defines the action the church should take when all its influence fails. He says, "The offender puts himself outside the society, and there is nothing for it to do but to treat him as a heathen or a publican; which does not mean with indifference or abhorrence, but carefully avoiding fellowship with him in sin, and seeking his good only as one without. There is no reference in this passage to ecclesiastical discipline and church censure."
suggests that the church body must be seen as acting in unison. Therefore, although the "you" in Matt 18:17b is singular (soi) and refers to the offended brother, the church body, at this point, acts as one in support of the offended brother.¹

The final comment must be that the Gospels posit a kind of discipline whose aim is the care of the fallen brother and the dignity of the church.

The Practice of Discipline in Acts

The Acts of the Apostles interprets life in the first century church. It emphasizes a church that is seriously carving out its existence in the world. In doing this it unfolds the entire drama of the first generation of Christians. Our purpose at this juncture is to investigate the discipline meted out to individuals and groups in the context of the book of Acts. It is also important to note that because the church was not organizationally mature, the leaders assumed the major responsibility for discipline. This is borne out as the section unfolds.

Discipline of Individuals

The first case of discipline in the book of Acts involves Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11). The narrative clearly shows that they lied to the Lord and his church. The consequence was sudden death. This vivid illustration showed that the new community of God could not be defrauded even in material matters and served as a reminder to the church to avoid pretense and hypocrisy. In

this case, God acted directly and the discipline was administered by him and not by men. 1

This action by God has prompted one exegete to declare, "Let God do the work of separation." 2 He does not see this as meaning that the church is to lose its moral standards. Rather, the church must confirm God's standards but God will deal with the tares, as wheat and tares grow together until the harvest. 3

When the parable of the wheat and the tares (Matt 13:24-30) is applied to the church, it tends to contradict the church's mandate to exercise discipline. But a close look shows that the emphasis here is on method. The parable focuses on the church as it grows and gains strength, leaving the problem of the tares to God. 4

In Acts 8:18-24, the apostle Peter administers discipline to Simon the Magician who was attempting to buy spiritual powers. Although Peter's words to Simon take the form of a curse, the intent was not to excommunicate him, but to bring to repentance this

1 Hein, p. 79; R. S. T. Haslehurst, Penitential Discipline of the Early Church (London: Society Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1921), p. 73.


3 Ibid., p. 77.

4 Jeschke, p. 146, holds that a little reflection shows that the traditional problem of reconciling the parable with church discipline arises from a faulty interpretation. To begin with, the parable never implies that saints cannot be distinguished from sinners. In fact, the very meaning of the entire parable rests upon the assumption that they clearly can be. The problem is not inability to discern the tares, because discerning them only too well is what gives rise to the problem. The central question in the parable which, even a cursory reading shows, is what to do with this existing problem.
recent Samaritan convert. Although it is not entirely clear, it seems that Peter's harsh statement effected a positive change in Simon.2

Some see the blindness of the sorcerer Elymas as a case of discipline (Acts 13:6-12). Here Paul encountered Elymas who was instructing Sergius Paulus against making a decision for Jesus. Paul announced that the Lord would strike the opponent with blindness. Instantly, Elymas was struck blind (v. 11) and Sergius Paulus was converted (v. 12). This significant episode shows that the Lord acts through his church not only upon those within but also upon those without.3

Discipline of Groups

The missionary zeal of the converted Paul brought new strength to the church but created new problems as well. Paul's ministry resulted in a large number of conversions among the Gentiles. This presented the problem of Jews co-existing with a rapidly increasing Gentile Christian population. The first-century Christian church had to deal with both groups.

According to Acts 15:1, the Judaizing party insisted that the new gentile Christians should be circumcised before admission into the church.4 The dispute which grew out of this claim

1Hein, p. 79.


3Haslerhurst, p. 13.

4Gal 2:11-14 points out that another problem existed in Antioch, for the Jewish and Gentile Christians were having problems
eventually led to the Council of Jerusalem. The aim was to reach a consensus concerning the gospel's demands on both groups.

After listening to the different arguments, James cast his decision in favor of the position of Peter, Barnabas, and Paul: "that we trouble not . . . the Gentiles" (v. 19b) with the burden of the Mosaic ceremonial law. This was against the Jewish position. But to facilitate Jewish-gentile social and religious relationships, James advanced four prohibitions to be observed by gentile Christians. Charles W. Carter sees these prohibitions as falling into these categories:

1. A Religious Prohibition: "that they abstain from the pollution of idols" (v. 20).

2. A Moral Prohibition: "that they abstain from . . . fornication" (v. 20b).

3. A Hygienic Prohibition: "that they abstain from . . . what is strangled" (v. 20b).

4. A Civil Prohibition: "that they abstain from . . . blood" (v. 20b).1

The implied solution to the problem is that Jewish Christians should serve the law of Moses in full, while gentile Christians should observe the law of Moses as it relates to the "stranger within the gate" (Lev 17:18).2

relating socially. This was brought to a head by the inconsistency of Peter. George Buttrick, ed., The Interpreter's Bible, 12 vols. (New York: Abingdon Press, 1954), 9:195.


The meeting of the Jerusalem Council was significant in that it established a mile-stone in the church's understanding of itself and how it should conduct its affairs. Most important in a study on church discipline is the authority that Luke claims for the Council's decisions. This authority, the Holy Spirit, communicated the message "that no further burden be placed upon you" (v. 28). Lenski sees this as conveying "that at no time is a peculiar burden to be placed on Gentile believers because they are of Gentile origin."¹ Hein adds that

. . . in making this statement, Luke uses a formula . . . that is structured along the lines which the ancient POLIS used in formulating its resolutions and decrees. . . . Just as POLIS claimed 'divine right' to legislate, so now the EKKLESIA (originally, a secular institution of the POLIS) of Christians applies this right to itself in order to give 'divine legitimacy' to its conciliar legislation.²

By doing this, Luke pictures the church as a concrete organization through whom the Holy Spirit speaks. Although the church was in its formative stage, Luke indicates that the church, as the new people of God, had the right and duty to exclude from her membership all those who refused to accept Jesus as the Christ.³

The problem in Acts 15 is not the rejection of Jesus, but what should be required of gentile converts upon entering the church. Therefore, the Council at Jerusalem sought to deal with each group in such a way that they could maintain their cultural identity and yet be united in Christ and have a oneness within the Christian church.  

²Hein, p. 85.  
³Acts 3:23 indicates that those who now refuse to listen to and obey this prophet "will be destroyed from the people."
The Pauline epistles are very important to the discussion because they furnish a direct insight into the actual life of the church at the time of their writing. From the Pauline perspective we will focus on discipline as it relates to moral-ethical and doctrinal problems. This can be done only along very general lines since moral-ethical and doctrinal instructions tend to merge in many of Paul's writings. The hope is that this approach will lead to a better understanding of discipline within the Christian church.

Discipline with Respect to Moral-Ethical Problems

The Letters to the Thessalonians

The letters to the Thessalonians are the earliest complete compositions found in the New Testament. Paul was concerned with certain parties who were causing disorder in the community. The problem was lightly touched upon in 1 Thess 4:11-12; 5:14, but it is clear that the gentle prodding did not produce the desired results. Stronger measures were required. 2 Thess 3:6-15 describes the measures the church must take.

Paul commanded the church to withdraw from those who were disorderly (v. 6) and supports his demand by referring to his own example; he did not conduct himself in an undisciplined manner.

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1 This is about A.D. 51 or 52. Hein, p. 90.

while he was with the Thessalonians. He refers to the reports which
prompted him to issue the command (v. 11); gives an explicit order
concerning the disorderly, i.e., they eat their own bread in peace
and quiet (v. 12); and adds that the faithful member should treat
the disorderly not as enemies but as brothers (vss. 13-15). One
theologian summarizes it:

Those who fail to heed Paul's admonitions are to be noted; that
is, their names are to be announced to the entire community so
that corrective steps can be taken. They are to be avoided and
shamed (3:6, 14) and, if necessary, deprived of the community's
food (3:10). But they are to be admonished as brothers rather
than enemies (3:16).¹

The command to withdraw from the disorderly. Paul's counsel
to the Thessalonians solemnly urged the community to take certain
measures against those who walked disorderly. Since the order was
given in "the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thess 3:6), it implied
that Paul was acting as the representative of Jesus, and the
Thessalonians must carry out the disciplinary responsibility as
those who acknowledge His lordship.²

The specific command is "that ye withdraw yourselves from
every brother that walketh disorderly" (2 Thess 3:6). The treatment
demanded here is in addition to 1 Thess 5:14. At first they were
asked to "admonish the disorderly;" now they are commanded, "with­
draw yourselves from them." Apparently the logic is that since the
admonition has failed, social pressure in the form of a limited ex­
pulsion must be applied. This limited expulsion can be defined as a
sort of isolation of the wayward ones by the rest of the congregation.³

¹Hein, p. 91. ²Hiebert, p. 338.
³William Hendriksen, New Testament Commentary--1 & 2
Hiebert in his discussion of 2 Thessalonians 3:6 says:

The root meaning of the verb withdraw (stellesthai) was "to set or place," and came to mean "to bring together" as in the furling of sails, and then more generally it meant "to restrain, to check." In the middle voice it means "to draw or shrink back from" anything, whether from fear or some other motive. The present tense denotes that they are to make it their practice to withdraw themselves from, personally separate themselves from, the disorderly by withholding fellowship from them. They must continue "to hold aloof from" (Way) the offenders to impress upon them that their undesirable conduct produces a gap between themselves and the other members. This command implies that they were to be refused participation in the love feasts of the congregation as well as the Lord's Supper.¹

What have the offenders done that such a drastic step should be taken against them? Obviously, Paul was not impressed with their demeanor. He reproached the disorderly for not walking "according to the tradition they received from us." Their undisciplined approach to life was not becoming for Christians. Their laziness put undue pressure on the rest of the community, and for that they should be disciplined.

Apparently the discipline here is not truly religious in nature because the pronouncement in verse 10 states: "The man who will not work shall not eat."² Nevertheless, the character of the discipline seems to follow the same course prescribed in Matt 18: 15-17: 1 Thess 5:14 indicates that Paul asks that a warning be given to the disorderly.

Measures to be taken by the church. Paul sets forth his own example of industry and admonishes the Thessalonian community to follow this model (vss. 7-10). He also gives a command that the community is to separate itself from those who are disorderly and

¹Hiebert, p. 339. ²Forkman, p. 135.
refuse to work (v. 6). Paul gives further advice to the community for dealing with the disorderly. This additional counsel will now be examined in detail.

First, the community has a mandate to do well in all its deliberations (v. 13). It is urged to never tire in doing good. What does "be not weary in well doing" actually mean? Some believe it may refer to the community's continued efforts to bring the disorderly into line. Still others interpret it to mean exercising charity toward the disorderly--to the extent that the community continue to feed them and not let them go hungry. Calvin holds that Paul was warning the community that its experience with idlers who were abusing its liberality should not be allowed to make it uncharitable toward deserving members of the church.

From the context it is reasonable to assume that the exhortation applies to the community's relationship to those who are disorderly. The community should show a loving spirit, especially toward those who desire to change. Christians must always be ready to forgive and assist others as much as possible.

Second, Paul says, "if any man obeyeth not our word by this epistle, note that man, that ye have no company with him, to the end that he may be ashamed. And yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother" (vss. 14, 15).

Verse 14 refers then to the man who has brought himself

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1 Hiebert, p. 343.
under the direct attention of the church by his refusal to obey. The church should not ignore him. How the congregation is to note or mark the individual is not stated. Lenski observes that the verb "does not imply that the congregation had a blackboard on which it wrote the names of its black sheep." It may simply mean that they are to take note of his behavior and show their disapproval by refusing to associate with him. However, some form of public censure is implied. Whatever the form of disciplinary action is imposed, to be effective it would have to be the united act of the congregation--an act that would disassociate the church from the actions of the disorderly.

Whatever discipline is applied it should be remedial. It should cause the disorderly to be ashamed of his behavior and give him the opportunity to examine his life. The intent of the church's action is to help him realize the enormity of his rebellion and his need for change.

Added to this is the counsel that the disorderly should be treated as a brother, not as an enemy. There should be no hostile feelings toward him, and with brotherly concern and tenderness they should actively admonish him. While refusing intimate association

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1 Lenski, p. 477.

2 Hiebert, p. 350, states: "That ye have no company with him," (mē sunanamigusthai autō) expresses the contemplated result of their action against the man. The negative infinitive is quite literally, "not to be mixing yourselves up with Him." The simple meaning "to mix, mingle" is prefixed with prepositions which add the thought of accompaniment (sin) and interchange (ana). The expressive compound thus has the meaning of intimate association with an individual as a close and receptive friend. The negative (mē) with the present tense demands that such an association must be discontinued.
with him, the offended person puts him in mind of his duty by
calling attention to his failing. They must deal with him as a
brother because he is still a brother, though misguided and failing.
The concern here is to protect each man's status as a Christian
brother and to restore him to usefulness in the community.

The Principle of Church Discipline
in 1 Corinthians 5

The context. In 1 Cor 5, and adjacent chapters, Paul is
interested in the eradication of evil from the community. He is
not elucidating general question on doctrine. Neither is Paul
addressing the individual sinner. Chapters 1-4 reveal his criticism
of the community for its schisms and pretense of wisdom; chaps. 5
and 6 show how he deplores the custom of allowing fornication within
the ranks of the community of believers.

Some exegetes connect chaps. 1-4 with chaps. 5 and 6 and
show that throughout Paul desired to put right the various mani-
festations of the attitude of complacency in the community.¹

In 6:19 Paul repels fornication by calling the Christian's
body the temple of the Holy Spirit. In 3:16 he emphasizes that the
community is the dwelling place for the spirit of God. Therefore,
he points out that the community and its members are holy because
of the presence of God's spirit.

In 5:2 Paul criticizes the community for not driving out
the sinner who was committing fornication. Community members were
characterized as being "puffed up." This expression is found in

¹Forkman, p. 139.
several passages of 1 Cor as a self-righteous characteristic of Paul's adversaries. In chap. 4 it is those who formed cliques who Paul attacks as being "puffed up"; while in chaps. 8 and 13 being "puffed up" is described as the result of too much gnosis and too littel love.¹

In 1 Cor 5, therefore, we can see a similar problem of arrogance on the part of the Corinthian church. On the other hand, the chapter also constitutes a special unit which is dominated by the thought of the expulsion of the fornicator from the community. Paul begins the chapter with the concrete case of the fornicator (vss. 1-2). After giving instructions as to what measures the community should take (vss. 3-5), the apostle gives the theological motivation for the proceedings (vss. 6-8). He refers to his earlier instruction and then draws conclusions about how the community must separate itself from fornicators and, in general, from all who have grossly transgressed (vss. 9-13).

The problem. The Corinthian church was plagued with a serious problem of immorality. One member apparently was living incestuously with his stepmother. It developed into a scandal and the church was doing nothing about it. John S. Glen, in his discussion of the nature of the complacency, suggests that the Corinthians thought that no sin was sufficiently serious, nor any case so hopeless, to expel the sinner from the church. They thought that if they were spiritually rich, why should they fear the presence of one incestuous man? How could he harm them when

¹Ibid., p. 140.
they were so clearly delivered from the sin that enslaved him?
The important consideration was their influence upon him, not his
upon them.¹

Paul did not agree with this point of view. Incest in the
church shocked him, but even worse was the attitude of the congregation. Instead of mourning at the thought of the offense, they
were "puffed up" (v. 2), haughty and proud, convinced of the high
quality of their own religious life. C. Peter Wagner asks the
question, "But of what could they possibly be proud?" He answers:

Obviously they were not boasting that they had a case of incest. They could not be proud of the sin itself. Rather, their pride undoubtedly centered in their concept of "broadmindedness." The elders had probably said to one another as they discussed the case: "What our good brother does in his private life is entirely his affair. His doctrine is straight. He attends church regularly. He is pleasant and friendly. He obeys the golden rule. Furthermore, this affair with his stepmother might be a meaningful relationship for both of them. Our obligation is to love him. Let's not be Pharisaical about the thing!"²

The solution. Paul's reaction to this kind of attitude was quick and decisive. He saw the man and the church as having the wrong attitude—an attitude that must be corrected. Therefore, he urged the Corinthians to remove the sinning brother (v. 2), deliver him to Satan (v. 5), purge the community of his evil influence (v. 7), avoid eating with him (v. 11), and even expel him from their company (v. 13).³ Paul's aim was to point out the duty

³F. Godet, Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1957), p. 242, says that the verb EPENTHESATE (mourn) indicates an
of the church and to insist that it be carried out. "Let him who has done this be removed from among you . . . you are to deliver this man to Satan . . . drive out the wicked person among you" (vss. 2, 5, 13).

Verse 5—"Let such a person be handed over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh"—is a difficult text to interpret.¹ Hein postulates that the term does not mean to be possessed by Satan but rather to be afflicted by him (Luke 13:16). In the case of excommunication it means "to be excluded from the sphere in which Christ's work was operative" and "to be thrust back into that which Satan still exercised authority."² Whatever the interpretation, it is apparent that "it teaches that the brother should be excluded from the fellowship of the congregation."³ Paul sees this action as necessary for the salvation of the sinner. Lenski believes that attitude that should have resulted spontaneously from the shameful deed of the fornication. The root verb often means "to conduct a mourning" and the aorist form cannot merely indicate a feeling of inward grief but a positive solemn deed of something like a day of repentance and fasting on which all the church members acknowledge their faults and implore the Lord to forgive them.

¹"To deliver to Satan" is found in only one other passage in the NT (1 Tim 1:20). Theodore Zahn, Introduction to the New Testament (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1909), p. 278, holds that "as shown by the relation of vv. 2 and 13 to Deut 17:7, 12; 24:7, the only atonement which Paul deemed adequate was the extermination of the offender at the hand of the church." J. N. D. Kelly, A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), p. 58, indicates that "the formula was a technical one, probably derived from Job 2:6, and connoted excommunication, that is, the expulsion of the sinner from the church, the realm of God's care and protection, and the formal handing over to the power of Satan." John Calvin (p. 185) comments: "Delivering over to Satan is an appropriate expression for denoting excommunication; for as Christ reigns in the Church so Satan reigns out of the Church."

²Hein, p. 94. ³Wagner, p. 53.
in this difficult passage Paul may be saying:

Hand him over to Satan before whose authority he has been surrendering. Let the law have him in order that it may work its therapy. Cut him off from Christian fellowship and remove him from any false feeling of security within it. Expose him to the dreadfulness and loneliness of his sin. Put him out for the destruction of carnality, until he, like the prodigal son, sickens of evil when he has enough of it.¹

Forkman holds that "the concrete results of the curse were thought to be put into effect by Satan. But Satan is conceived as a servant of God, which is why even the worst misfortunes can lead to something good."²

In spite of the difficulty inherent in this text, one can conclude that Paul believed the drastic remedy would benefit both the man and the community--the man because his present condemnation would prevent his ultimate rejection; the church because its purity would be preserved.³

However, the question remains, was this drastic action successful? Did the sinner repent? In the early centuries, it was generally believed that the incestuous man was the same person whom Paul later urged the Corinthians to forgive and comfort (2 Cor. 2:5-11). Many modern scholars tend to disagree. They see the offender in this passage as a personal opponent of Paul rather than a scandalous sinner; and his restoration appears to be relatively easy in comparison with the extreme severity of the condemnation pronounced in 1 Cor 5:5. If it was the incestuous man who was restored, then the "destruction of the flesh" must have stopped short of the death


²Forkman, p. 147.

³Hein, p. 96.
which this phrase itself seems to indicate. Modern scholars also argue that 2 Cor 2:5-11 seems to be echoed in 2 Cor 7:11-12, and the allusion there to "the one who did the wrong" and "the one who suffered the wrong" suits a situation in which Paul or one of his associates had been insulted by someone in Corinth rather than to the circumstances of the incestuous man.¹

Conversely, the case for the ancient interpretation is strong. Such proponents hold that the phraseology of 2 Cor 2:9-11 strongly recalls the account in 1 Cor 5, particularly the reference to Satan. The danger of Satan "gaining the advantage over us" (v. 11) is most easily understood if it means that whereas the offender had been handed over to Satan for chastisement until he should repent, leaving him in Satan's power after he had once shown penitence would be to allow Satan to exceed the limits of his permitted task. To give him more scope would be to allow him a victory.

The restoration of the sinner in 2 Cor 2:7-11 is a corporate act of the church accomplished through the power of Christ. This procedure therefore is closely parallel to the condemnation of 1 Cor 5 and seems too formal and ecclesiastical to be appropriate to the forgiveness by Paul of a personal insult. The language of 2 Cor 7:11--"See what earnestness this godly grief has produced in you . . . what zeal, what punishment! At every point you have proved yourselves to be pure in the matter"--would suit a situation in which, obeying Paul's rebukes and injunctions in 1 Cor 5, the

Corinthians had punished the sinner and he had now repented. Reference to 1 Cor 5 would also be a very natural explanation for the allusions in 2 Cor 2:9 and 7:12 to previous correspondence. Therefore, the probability is quite strong that in 2 Cor 2:5-11 we have evidence that the severe sentence passed in 1 Cor 5:5 was not only intended to be, but was actually remedial.¹

This being the case, it would seem that although Paul advocates strict discipline, he also sees no one as standing beyond the hope of repentance and restoration. It is vitally important then that discipline be exercised. To tolerate the presence of an impenitent offender would indicate a false and presumptuous sense of security and would lead to the moral contamination of the brotherhood. Here Paul is primarily concerned with the reactions of the Corinthian congregation and with the paramount need for them to realize their duty to purge out the leaven of malice and evil from among them.

One can understand why Paul desired to protect the congregation not only from the man but also from its own placid acceptance of sexual license and perversion. The lack of disciplinary action on the part of the church was detrimental not only to the offender but to the entire community. The sin of one member was the sin of the whole body; yet the church felt no responsibility. Paul realized the impact that this kind of attitude could have on the church. Forkman suggests:

... the immorality Paul turns against does not seem to consist only of a relapse into a pagan way of life (cf. v. 1). The

¹Ibid., p. 354.
connection with the rest of the chapter also implies that it is here a question of oppositional libertinism. The people against whom the measures are to be taken are those who show by their lives that they consciously and intentionally set themselves up against the teaching and the way of life the apostle has proclaimed.¹

This explains why Paul was calling upon the church to react to open sin within its rank. "In insisting on severe treatment of gross immorality, Paul is not demanding that the church go out of the world, but that the world go out of the church."² Paul sees excommunication as helping to accomplish this. The emphasis is not to get rid of the member but to maintain God's law within the community.

Discipline with Respect to Doctrinal Problems

Along with its moral problems, the NT church faced doctrinal dissension. There were people who actively propagated doctrines different from those being taught by the church leaders. For example, the letter to the Philippians contains warnings against evil men. The first indication that the church at Philippi was encountering difficulties with dissenters may be the statement found in 1:28 where Paul encouraged the church to remain firm and united in their resistance to the adversaries. However, the context does not make it clear as to who the adversaries are. Chapter 3:2 is more precise, the Philippians are told to "beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the concision."

¹Forkman, p. 150.
Here the Judaizing Christian were confronted with their divisive behavior. In 3:17-19 they are told to be aware of the practices and influences of the gentile world around them and to remember that their citizenship is in heaven, that the things of God are more important than the things of Caesar. The doctrinal problems are more graphically illustrated in 1 Tim 1:18-20; 2 Tim 3:5; 4:14; and Titus 3:10-11. These texts are used as the basis for the discussion in this section.

Letters to Timothy

In 1 Tim 1:3-5 Paul reminded Timothy of his mandate to remain at Ephesus to check certain false teachers. These people deviated from the truth into empty speculation of a Jewish Gnostic character typified by the study of Gnostic mythology and long genealogies.¹

This way of thinking caused some Christians, like Hymenaeus and Alexander, to disregard their consciences and to be "delivered unto Satan, that they might be taught not to blaspheme (1 Tim 1:20).

¹Alfred Plummer, "The Pastoral Epistles," The Expositor's Bible, ed. W. Robertson Nicoll (New York: George H. Doran Company), p. 36, suggests that Paul condemns such speculations on four grounds. (1) "They are fables, myths, mere imaginings of the human intellect in its attempt to account for the origin of the world and the origin of evil. (2) They are endless and interminable. From the nature of things there is no limit to mere guesswork of this kind. Every new speculator may invent a fresh genealogy of emanations in his theory of creation, and make it any length that he pleases. . . . (3) As a natural consequence of this (AITIVES) they minister questionings and nothing better. It is all barren speculation and fruitless controversy. Where any one may assert without proof, anyone else may contradict without proof; and nothing comes of this see-saw of affirmation and negation. (4) Lastly, these vain imaginings are a different doctrine. They are not only empty but untrue, and are a hindrance to the truth. They occupy the ground which ought to be filled with the dispensation of God which is in faith."
Hymenaeus and Alexander apparently were false teachers. They were accused of heresy and not immorality, as in the case of the incestuous man (1 Cor 5:5). In both cases the offenders were given over to Satan. But there seems to be a difference. The process at Corinth was more democratic, in that the church was involved in the excommunication (1 Cor 5:3-5). In 1 Timothy, the procedure was more autocratic, in that only the leaders were involved. "Whom I delivered unto Satan" suggests this idea but it need not imply that the apostle ruled out consultation with members in the case of doctrinal discipline.¹

In reference to the term blasphemy it is suggested that it is probably not simply a matter of using irreligious words but that "it describes the act of resisting the salvation found in Christ. Therefore, the two men in question should be excommunicated for as long as it takes them to repent and to discontinue their false doctrine."² This interpretation implies hope for the return to a proper Christian life.³

Another controversial passage is, "Lay hands hastily on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself pure" ¹Haslehurst, p. 27. ²Hein, p. 122.

³"The verb PAIDEUO can be used to express all the phases or intensities of ecclesial discipline. In 1 Cor 11:32 it can refer to the death of an unworthy communicant. In 2 Cor 6:9, it indicates some sort of ecclesial censure, but obviously not death. 1 Tim 1:20 is perhaps a bit more severe due to the curse character, but still similar to 2 Cor 6:9. In 2 Tim 2:25, it means to correct by way of admonishment and instruction so as to rescue those already caught in the snare of the devil. Finally, in Titus 2:12, it refers to edification through grace and is similar to Heb 12:6, which, however, includes the trials and ills that the Lord may choose to send upon even those whom he loves." Cf. Hein, p. 122.
(1 Tim 5:22). Does the laying on of hands here refer to ordination to some ecclesiastical office as is often the case elsewhere in the NT? Or does it mean reconciliation of the sinner to Christ? Hein holds that there are many good indications that 1 Tim 5:22 refers to the reacceptance of a repentant person into the church.\(^1\)

To support his proposition he adds:

In 5:17, the writer mentions that the PRESBUTEReII should receive proper honor. Verse 19 says that Timothy should not accept a complaint made against one of the elders unless there are two or three persons to testify to the elder's misconduct. Those (elders?) who have sinned should be reprimanded in the presence of all so that the others will come to fear to commit an offence (v. 20). This procedure is to be followed without prejudice or respect of persons (v. 21). Thus, the immediate context of verse 22 concerns the process of ecclesial discipline.\(^2\)

Plummer argues that "of any such custom in the Apostolic age there is no trace. There is nothing improbable in the hypothesis, imposition of hands being a common symbolical act. But it is a mere hypothesis unsupported by evidence."\(^3\)

However, Hein sees added support for his interpretation. He posits that the expression ME K0IN0NEI (v. 22) was a common expression in the early church, indicating a rupture of communion with a transgressor. He sees this interpretation as being further supported by the remark that Timothy should keep himself pure (v. 22). Here AGNOS is best understood to mean "uncontaminated" or "blameless" rather than "chaste." He argues that if AGNOS means chaste here in the literal sense, then it would have no direct relationship to the context and it would imply at least a suspicion on the part of the writer that Timothy had need of such a reminder. But this is most unlikely.\(^4\)

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\(^1\)Ibid., p. 123. \(^2\)Ibid. \(^3\)Plummer, p. 166. \(^4\)Hein, p. 124.
Instead, it is more reasonable to take the expression to mean that as long as a sinner is not fully repentant, Timothy should refuse to reconcile him to the community lest he himself becomes guilty of sin.

The book of 2 Timothy is devoted mainly to personal advice and exhortation to Timothy (1:3). Among other things, he was told how to deal with the immediate danger presented by the false teachers, Hymenaeus and Philetus, who claimed that the resurrection had already taken place. These two men provided a vivid illustration of those who get caught up in pointless philosophical discussions which lead away from the truth. Paul counsels Timothy that "the Christian leader must not get involved in senseless controversies which are the curse of the Church." Any person who wants to dispute what he says should be corrected in such a way that makes it easy for him to change his mind.

The problem here was enormous because the heretics were

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1 John R. W. Stott, *Guard the Gospel* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 1973), p. 69, suggests that the false teachers were denying any bodily resurrection to come. They were perhaps early Gnostics to whom the body was an evil encumbrance, and the concept of any bodily resurrection was as inconceivable as it was undesirable.


3 Stott, p. 77, describes the approach as being "kind to everyone . . . forbearing" and characterized by "gentleness." The first word EPIOS means "mild" and is used by Paul to describe the attitude of "a nurse taking care of children." The second word ANEXIKAKOS means literally "bearing evil without resentment," and so forbearing of people's unkindness, patient towards their foolishness, and tolerant of their weakness. The last word of the three PRAUTES adds to the gentleness portrayed by the other two: humility, courtesy, consideration, and meekness. Its opposite is to be harsh, haughty, and rude.
doing their best to wreck the church (2 Tim 3:6-9). They were working with great zeal to mislead some of the women of the church. They perceived this as the best strategy. They were compared to Jannes and Jambres, two Egyptian magicians who pretended they were converts to Judaism at the time of the Exodus. However, the intent of Jannes and Jambres was to provoke Moses and to lead the Israelites into various sins, especially the sin of idolatry. The implication of what Paul writes here is extremely important. He draws a historical parallel between Jannes and Jambres who had opposed Moses centuries ago and "these men," the false teachers of his day, who also opposed the truth. Jannes and Jambres were magicians; the false teachers also were impostors and deceivers (2 Tim 3:13). It is apparent that these false teachers were within the church. Paul denounced them as men who were corrupt in their minds despite their claim to knowledge. He was confident that they "will not get very far." They were destined to "go from bad to worse" (2 Tim 2:13). Their false teaching may spread for a while and "eat its way like gangrene" (2:17), but its success would be

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1 Barclay, p. 195.
2 Stott, p. 89, suggests that the women chosen as victims are described as GYNAIKARIA, "little women," a term of contempt for women who were idle, silly, and weak. Their weakness was double. "First, they were morally weak, burdened with sins and swayed by various impulses. Their sins were to them both a burden and a tyrant, and the false teachers, worming their way into their home, played upon their feeling of guilt and of infirmity. Second, they were intellectually weak, unstable, gullible." They were the kind of women who would "listen to anybody," while at the same time they could "never arrive at a knowledge of the truth." Such women, weak in character and intellect, are an easy prey for these men.
3 Hein, p. 126.
4 Stott, p. 90.
limited and transient. The picture which Paul conjures up is clear.

Every house is equipped with vessels of different kinds. In a "great house" or stately mansion they are many and varied. They may be divided approximately into two groups—the "vessels of gold and silver" which are "for noble use," possibly "for special occasions" (JB) and particularly for personal service of the master of the house; and vessels "of wood and earthenware" which, apart from being cheaper in quality, are reserved for ignoble or menial use. In his quest to explain this metaphor, Stott states:

There can be little doubt that the 'great house' is God's house, the visible or professing church. But what are the 'vessels?' The use of the term elsewhere in the New Testament suggests that they stand not simply for members of the church, but for the church's teachers. For example, Jesus had said to Ananias about the newly converted Saul of Tarsus: "he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel" (Acts 9:15). Years later Paul described himself and his fellow-workers by a similar image when he wrote: "We have this treasure in earthen vessels" (2 Cor 4:7). In these verses "instrument" and 'vessel' translate the same Greek word (SKEUOS) as Paul is now using in his letter to Timothy. . . . As a 'vessel' Paul's function was to carry Christ's name before unbelievers, and in the earthenware vessel he carried the treasure of the Gospel, as a fragile pottery lamp carries the light.1

Therefore, Stott comes to the conclusion that the two sets of vessels in the great house "represent not genuine and spurious members of the church, but true and false teachers in the church."2 Some commentators disagree with this interpretation.3 However, in relation to discipline the important thing here is that Paul considers the false teachers as being divisive in the church and as

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1Ibid., p. 71.  
2Ibid., p. 72.  
3Barclay, p. 176, and Hein, p. 127, think that the vessels refer to the entire church.
needing correction. The leader Timothy was to correct them and make sure that the church was aware of these teachers.

**Letter to Titus**

In 1:10-16, Paul speaks of those who were teaching false doctrine for money or some other profit. They were mostly, though not exclusively, Jews who were teaching the Cretan converts "that they needed more than Christ and more than grace in order to be saved."\(^1\) Corrupted in mind and conscience, these false teachers were leading men away from the truth. They were undisciplined, disobedient, deceitful, and divisive. Hence a sharp tone is evident in this letter.

Titus was advised to be uncompromising in presenting all the instructions prescribed in the letter (3:8) and any factious person.\(^2\)  

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1Barclay, p. 240.

2Hein, p. 128, discusses Titus 3:10. He holds that "this is the only place where the term AIRETIKOS appears in the Bible, and it is the first time that any derivative of AIREO is used in connection with a clear case or definition of excommunication in reference to an (unnamed) individual. Here it has special relevance to the Christian (i.e., baptized) state of the person—an aspect which now belongs to the formal definition of "heretic." In the religious terminology of the NT, such words are used first of all to distinguish the parties or sects within Judaism; cf. Acts 5:17; 15:5; 26:5. In this sense, it is employed to describe the first Christian community; cf. Acts 24:5-14; 28:22. Paul applies the term to the undesirable divisions in the Corinthian community; cf. 1 Cor 11:19. But here it has nothing to do with formal excommunication. The same tendency is present in Gal 5:20 where ALKESEIS is listed among the "workers of the flesh." Titus 3:10 refers to an individual rather than a sect. But the process of development is completed in 2 Peter 2:1, where the Christian church can now speak of fully heretical sects—that is, baptized groups of Christians following a "confession of faith" other than that which the main body of the church represents. At this point, Christianity is in a relationship to its sects in a way that is analogous to Judaism's relationship to Christianity in its expulsion from the synagogue. Cf. Jn. 9:22; 12:42 and esp. 6:12."
who disputed was to be avoided as a self-condemned sinner after one or two warnings (3:11). Does this mean permanent excommunication? The exact disciplinary effect labeled "self-condemnation" cannot be fully determined from the text. But by examining the opposite meaning of KATAKRINEIN, one can get a better understanding of AUTOKATAKRITOS. The opposite concept of KATAKRINEIN (condemnation) is eternal life, salvation, redemption, and justification, words that carry an eschatological emphasis and a meaning that suggests the giving over of a person for punishment. "Self-condemnation is an intensification of the basic concept of condemnation."

Titus 3:11 makes it very clear that the "self-condemned" person was aware of the seriousness of his sin, because he had been admonished before. Paul therefore looks upon the factious man's stubborn refusal to reform himself as a hardened state of sinfulness and nonrepentance.

In addition, the full meaning and force of self-condemnation in Titus 3:11 can only be derived from the Jewish and New Testament theology of judgment, condemnation, and forgiveness. Accordingly, the world is to be judged, and salvation will depend on who is the advocate in the courts of heaven. Jesus promised to perform this task for his faithful followers (Matt 10:32; 2 Tim 2:12). The Christian who rejects Christ has no one for his advocate and is, for all practical purposes, self-condemned. However, Titus 3:11 could mean that such a person is excommunicated from the church. In this instance, the self-condemned offender is not handed over to Satan.

\(^{1}\text{Ibid., p. 129.}\)  \(^{2}\text{Haselhurst, p. 30.}\)
Rather, his excommunication accent the possibility of the final loss of salvation; for self-condemnation clearly implies that there is no real reason to hope that the person undergoes a change of mind or heart. This seemed to be the view of the Cretan Church. Like the incestuous man, the false teachers could be re-accepted into the Christian community, but not before they renounced their false doctrines.
CHAPTER II

RESTORATION AS A PURPOSE OF DISCIPLINE

The previous chapter discussed different approaches to church discipline in the NT, particularly, the approaches of excommunication and avoidance.\(^1\) Several passages were shown to advocate avoidance in the context of church discipline. Avoidance is not tantamount to abandonment, but it is, rather, an act whereby restoration is anticipated. Jesus' attitude towards the Gentiles and tax collectors is the model to be followed by Christians in dealing with those who are being disciplined. He advocates that the offending brother should be treated like "a Gentile and tax collector" (Matt 18:17). Jesus' ministry shows an active concern for these people and a desire to make them true children of God.

This chapter will discuss the concepts of restoration, caring, and teaching as they relate to church discipline.

Restoration

Whatever the form of disciplinary action taken against a brother, its aim should be his restoration (1 Cor 5:5; 1 Tim 1:19,

\(^1\)Jeschke, p. 129: "It means refusing to pretend that a person is a Christian after he has ceased to be one. It means respecting his decision and honestly treating him once more like a man of the world. But like excommunication it constitutes a form of continuing to present the gospel.

Avoidance must clearly say two things simultaneously, first, that a given individual has forsaken the way of discipleship, and second, that he has a standing invitation to return to it."
20; 2 Thess 3:13-15). "Discipline is designed as a means of grace, not of destruction; as an evidence of love, not of hate or of fear."^1

In Matt 18:15-17, the steps taken to save the offender are motivated by love. This indicates that Jesus expects the church to work diligently in private to restore the brother before any public procedure is undertaken. In effect he is saying, "let your discipline be preventative." Matt 18:10-14 suggests that Jesus places the emphasis on restoration. The lesson here is that just as Jesus restored the lost sheep, the church should seek to restore the fallen brother. The sheep did not ask Jesus to come and rescue him; neither did Jesus allow him to become irretrievable. Jesus saw his lost condition and reached out and saved him. This should be the attitude of the church.

Paul's counsel to the Galatians was, "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in his fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted" (Gal 6:1). He also instructed the Corinthian church to restore a person with whom church discipline has achieved its purpose (2 Cor 2:5-11). We may "mark" and "avoid" (Rom 16:17); keep no company with (1 Cor 5:11) and "note that man, and have no company with him" (2 Thess 3:14); and even refuse to eat "with such an one" (1 Cor 5:11), but these actions are not the end of discipline; they are only a part of the process. Whatever action is taken by the church, its intent should be redemptive. "He is

not to be regarded as cut off from the mercy of God. Let him not be despised or neglected by his former brethren, but be treated with tenderness and compassion, as one of the lost sheep that Christ is still seeking to bring to his fold.¹

From the gospel perspective the restoration and reconciliation of the offending brother is the only legitimate purpose for the exercise of discipline. Of course, other reasons are cited: the concern for church purity, the desire to protect the reputation of the church before the world, the wish to bear witness of the high demands of God's righteousness through the vindication of his justice, the attempt to safeguard the church against the danger of conforming to the world and losing its high standards.²

Inspite of the reality of these concerns, they are secondary in the NT concept of discipline. While the church is often concerned about its public image, the NT speaks of a concern for the restoration and reconciliation in the community through sincere repentance and healing forgiveness.

However, there is always the possibility that the sin of an unrepentant member may become a "leaven" which affects the entire body (1 Cor 5). If persistent disobedience of the individuals within the church goes unchallenged by the community, this persistence may become a collective fault shared by the entire body. Unless we become agents of our offending brother's restoration, he may well become an agent of our collective guilt. It is

²Driver, p. 48.
therefore important that the church become a caring community where love and concern will cause the majority of Christians with strong tendencies to err to be strengthened in the Lord before their sins become a problem to the community.

Caring

According to the NT passages already noted, the purpose of discipline will always be the restoration and reconciliation of the offending member. The fact is that more and more Christian churches are finding this difficult to do because they have lost their vision of what a caring community is like. The independent, formal, impersonal way of the world appears to be establishing itself in many Christian congregations. People are in need of the fraternal care of fellow Christians, but so few Christians are willing or able to do anything about it.

Our obsession with quick results is producing members with minimal instruction, less understanding of God's grace, and a low level of participation in the life of the church. There is growing evidence that after a period of mutual irresponsibility and neglect the church either ignores discipline or concocts some quick, punitive procedure to get rid of the offender. In doing this the church is evading its mission.

A mere procedure of church discipline can never be substituted for the ministry of mutual love, care, and helpfulness in the church. Christians are obligated to be concerned for one another, to build up one another, to nurture one another, and to endeavor to be faithful to the Word of God in the task of mutual
growth and edification. The ministry of caring is important if church discipline is to be effective. A caring community takes seriously the concept of the "body of Christ." The failure of one affects the life of all. All feel the offender's sorrows, and all work for his/her recovery because it is important for the existence of the body. This mutual member-concern grows out of the headship of Christ:

This headship of Christ and allegiance of His people to Him is for a purpose, carried out through a constant activity: that of mutual care and love for one another. . . . Just as in the human body the members are together not simply for the sake of completing a body but for mutual usefulness, so the members of the body of Christ, the believers who are members of the church, are to function for the sake of each other's spiritual life and well-being. . . . The gifts of the Spirit to the church are not "talents" or qualities in people, but they are tasks and offices in which each member is of service to each other (1 Cor 12:4-14).¹

Christians share some common things. They are all sinners saved by grace (Rom 6:23). As long as they live they have a constant battle with sin. Their ultimate success depends upon the Holy Spirit in the life. Along with these, Christian fellowship can offer the opportunity of experiencing togetherness in victories and hardships—an experience that can strengthen one's faith in God.²

For one baptized into the body of Christ, there can no longer be an independent existence. He must live in the happy tension of having the life hidden in Christ and, at the same time,

²Driver, p. 30.
being a participant in the corporate life of all believers.\(^1\) If he is strong, he bears the burdens of the weak. If he is weak, he draws upon the strength of those who can build him up. His fears and faults are recognized, and the prayers of others plead in his behalf. He recognizes God acting through the kindness and meekness of his brothers and is motivated to reciprocate (Rom 15:1, 2, 14; 2 Thess 3:14, 15; Col 3:16; 2 Tim 2:25; 4:1-3; Titus 1:9-13).

The NT abounds with evidence that Christianity is concerned with the mutual edification and fraternal correction of the community. The need for personal exchange, the give and take, the importance of spiritual care, must of necessity cancel out the possibility of isolation in individualism. No one in the church can afford to refuse brotherly service to others, or to deny himself the service which others may offer him.\(^2\) One who cuts himself off from the admonition, comfort, encouragement, warning, and mutual conversation of the community is in danger of lagging behind

\(^1\)Barclay, The Letter to the Romans (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1975), pp. 156, 157. Here it is pointed out that in Rom 12:1 Paul employs the language of sacrifice to describe the ordinary business of being a faithful church member. The church is established "by the mercies of God" and its members are to put themselves at the disposal of one another. This is part of their reasonable service, and its full dimension is both vertical and horizontal, as the rest of the chapter reveals.

\(^2\)Lewis S. Mudge, In His Service (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1959), p. 130: "The church is the one place in society where we dare even to tell each other how we have sinned. Not only are we to share our inner doubts and conflicts with our fellow Christians; we are also to take on the burden, and the unquestionable embarrassment, of knowing about their weaknesses, complexes, and downright acts of unfaithfulness. . . . We are able to carry on this ministry only because it has been laid upon us a duty in consequence of the acceptance, understanding, and forgiveness we have received in Christ."
in Christian experience, and may eventually isolate himself.

One of the signs of a vital, caring Christian community will be that the Word of God is voluntarily offered and received by all of its members. It is a Word that comforts and reproves. The word of admonition and rebuke must be given when it is apparent that unfaithfulness is threatening the Christian fellowship. Inevitably there comes a time when one Christian will have to declare God's Word and will to another (Gal 6:1).

Peter envisions that in the last days evil will be rampant. Therefore, Christians should respond with earnest prayers, ungrudging hospitality, and unfailing love for one another (1 Peter 4:7-9). James notes the practical blessing which emanates from mutually caring Christians. "My brethren, if any one among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back the sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins" (James 5:19, 20).

Spiritual growth occurs best in a caring community. There are spiritual truths one will never grasp, Christian standards that can never be attained except as one shares in community with others.

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1Frederick E. Mayer, "The New Testament Concept of Fellowship," Concordia Theological Monthly 23 (1952):635, says that there are three aspects to KOINONIA. The first use of the term denotes a frame of mind in which two or more consider all things common. The second use of the term denotes joint participation in the same blessings. The third meaning expresses the communication of one's gifts to others. Christian fellowship is the vertical and horizontal activity of sharing. Christians share with Christ and receive from Him the gifts of the spirit which in turn are shared with others. The Christian also receives the blessings of Christ which others share with him.
believers. This is how God planned it. The Holy Spirit ministers
to us, in large measure, as we associate with one another. This
is what Paul is talking about when he says, "we will in all things
grow up into him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him the
whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament,
grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work"
(Eph 4:15-16, NIV). This interaction of the many members in one
body is important to the health and existence of the community.
Karl Barth rightly points out that when the NT speaks of upbuilding,
it "speaks always of the upbuilding of the community. I can edify
myself only as I edify the community."^1

It is God's intention that Christians encourage one another
in the faith, and let the spirit of brotherhood prevail among them.
This approach could prevent most public church discipline, and en­
hance one's Christian experience.

Teaching

Teaching is also part of the disciplinary function of the
church. Discipline is etymologically derived from the latin word
DISCERE (Discern).2 Robert A. Raines enlarges on it:

"Discipline" has the same root meaning as "disciple." A dis­
ciple is a learner, one in training. Discipline is treatment
suitable for a learner or one in training. Discipline is drill
in the habits of obedience. The Christian is a soldier of
Christ, being trained, fitted for combat, prepared for compe­
tition against a powerful enemy.3

^1 Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark,
1958), 4:627.

^2 MacGregor, p. 67.

^3 Robert A. Raines, New Life in the Church (New York:
Therefore when people become members of the church they ought to be instructed in the business of brother-keeping. A church that does not teach this can hardly be fit to administer any other sort of discipline. It is only logical that principles are adhered to when they are known. The church does not simply fulfill its function by providing the sacraments and other rituals. It must also teach the Word of God and its importance to the Christian life-style. The ministers must lead out in this endeavor.

Paul, in 2 Tim 4:2, lists four marks which are to characterize Timothy's teaching. It should be (1) urgent, (2) relevant, (3) patient, and (4) intelligent. Urgent in that the teaching or preaching should never be done in a listless or lackadaisical manner, but in a way that conveys the idea that its a life or death situation. It must be a message that announces "the sinner's plight under the judgment of God, the saving action of God through the death and resurrection of Christ, and the summons to repent and believe."¹

The instruction should be relevant in that it speaks to the needs of people. Some people are tormented by doubts and need to be convinced by arguments. Others have fallen into sin and may need to be rebuked. Others again are haunted by fears and need to be encouraged. God's word does these things and more. Our task is to apply it relevantly.

Patience is essential in teaching. Because of our orientation to quick success, we tend to resort to the use of human pressure techniques to contrive decisions. Our responsibility is

¹Stott, p. 107.
to be faithful and patiently work along with God for the best results.

Our teaching should be devoid of vain platitudes and human philosophies. Our instructions should be saturated with the Word of God. This was Paul's charge to Timothy. It is also his charge to modern Christians. As we fulfill this charge we are to be urgent in our approach, relevant in our application, patient in our manner, and intelligent in our presentation. This approach will help in the building up of the church. The members will understand what is God's will for them, and will be motivated to live according to His principles.

The leadership of the church must be aware of a definite teaching responsibility. Although most of it is discharged from the pulpit, there must be a recognition that teaching is accomplished by modeling as well as other forms of instruction.

The New Testament uses the word admonition\(^1\) as a form of instruction. Paul, in his farewell address to the Ephesian elders, reminds them that for three years he did not cease to admonish them night and day with tears (Acts 20:31). Likewise, he seeks to bring them to their senses through admonition but without any desire to shame them (1 Cor 4:14).

\(^{1}\text{Klassen, p. 198, in trying to make a distinction between teaching and admonition says, "In teaching (DIDASKÖ), the stress seems to fall upon the intellect, whereas admonition aims at a response in the realm of the emotions and the will and presupposes a degree of resistance that has to be overcome. The mind is progressing in a bad direction and therefore needs to be strengthened. That which is false needs correction and the unhealthy or unsound attitude removed." Teaching shows how something is to be done, whereas admonition shows what has been done wrongly.} \)
The fact that some are called "the ones admonishing" would suggest that Paul saw admonition as primarily a pastoral task (1 Thess 5:12). In addition, however, he advocates mutual admonition. To the Romans he indicates that he has confidence that they would carry on the task of mutual admonition (Rom 15:14). He urges the Colossians to permit the Word of Christ to dwell among them richly as they teach and admonish each other in all wisdom (Col 3:16). The Thessalonians are urged especially to admonish the idle (1 Thess 5:14), and to admonish as they would a brother the one who refuses to listen to Paul's letters (2 Thess 3:15).

In these instances, admonition is a step towards forgiveness. The sinner should be admonished and forgiven when he repents. This procedure highlights once more the redemptive function of church discipline.

The teaching ministry of the church has always been used for the edification of the member and the unity of the body. The Medieval church is an example of how the church took its mission seriously and used iconography to convey many theological ideas. The people could read all the great saving truths of the Christian faith in a hundred ways within the precincts of a church. They could see our Lord depicted as a Good Shepherd, as the crucified Redeemer, as the King of heaven, as the Supreme Judge of men. Every flower in the church garden had a symbolic meaning: "the violet for humility, the lily for purity, the rose for love, the tulip for prayer, the snowdrop for confidence, the crocus for joy,

\[1\text{Ibid., p. 199.}\]
the sunflower to express the longing of the soul for God.¹

This is not a suggestion to return to the middle ages, but I believe that symbolism is an important tool in teaching theological ideas. In many instances we are too ready to minimize the value of such educational methods and label them as idolatry. This could be an error. Religious education is not simply a matter of reading books and listening to lectures. Of the greatest importance is what we absorb from our surroundings in church and elsewhere. The world is making its impact by depicting on streets and public vehicles what our behavior should be. It is time for our church buildings and furnishings to be a positive part of our teaching ministry—a ministry that teaches love, obedience, reverence, respect, and brotherhood. This approach can enhance the effect of the church's teaching ministry.

Let the church become a caring community, teaching its members the will of God for their lives, and if at first they fail to measure up to his standards, through God's Spirit and the fellowship of a caring community they can be restored into its fellowship.

¹MacGregor, p. 69.
CONCLUSION

Our discussion indicates that the New Testament teaches that there should be church discipline, and that the ultimate discipline is the breaking of fellowship. Certain people are to be separated from the church. It is clear that the New Testament teaching of church discipline gives instruction as to who is to be disciplined, why he is to be disciplined, and how he is to be disciplined. It teaches that a person must be disciplined if he is guilty of unrepented, overt, moral delinquency (1 Cor 5:1-11), or the teaching of heresy (1 Tim 1:20; 2 Tim 3:6-9; Titus 3:10, 11).¹

In regards to moral-ethical problems, it is not the one who sins and repents who is disciplined, but the one who sins deliberately and continues without repentance. In respect to doctrinal

¹Forkman, pp. 177, 178, divides the transgressions that can lead to expulsion into three groups: "In the first group we find statements with the meaning that one must expel 'heretics', i.e., people who actively make propaganda for another doctrine or way of life than which each different NT writer stands for (Matt 18:8-9; Rom 16:17; 2 Thess 3:6-15; 1 Tim 1:18-20; 2 Tim 3:5, 4:14; Titus 3:10f.; Rev 2:14-16). . . . In the second group we find statements which amount to that only those who themselves consciously and voluntarily leave the community are to be considered as expelled. Here there is no express information given as to which concrete deviations are to be judged as open apostasy. There are different characteristics given of a person who deviates in this way. He does not want to listen (Matt 18:15-17), he blasphemes the Spirit (Luke 12:10), he does not remain in Christ (John 15:1-8), he commits sin unto death (1 John 5:16-17), he has apostatized (Heb 6:4-8) and sinned of his own free will (Heb 10:26-31). . . . In the third group we find statements indicating that certain serious sins can lead to expulsion. . . . But in these cases, the deviation is qualified, either as oppositional libertinism (1 Cor 5) or by the sinners' impenitence (2 Cor 12:20-13:2)."
problems, then, it is not the one who doubts who is disciplined, but the one who teaches heresy.

Church discipline is such an intricate and important function of the Christian community that it must be carried out with much prayer and self-examination. Matt 18:15-17 seems to come closest to the biblical pattern of church discipline, with the other texts offering some added advice.

Because the New Testament does not give instruction to be followed in the excommunication of church members, later generations of Christians had to develop their own procedures. Forkman suggests three steps in its development.

Firstly, the charismatic feature seems gradually to have paled. In 1 Cor 5:5 we find an early vehement devotion in the original. The judgments of God in Acts 5 and 8 are both placed in the early period of the church and are both connected with Peter. The curse in 1 Tim 1:20 is put into the mouth of Paul but has lost its punitive power.

Secondly, the community's collective responsibility on the expulsion question seems gradually to have been transferred to individual officers. We see in 3 John that this process did not take place without opposition.

Thirdly, the formalizing of the expulsion procedure seems to have taken place by the taking over of Jewish judicial forms. The need for reprovings, the number and role of witnesses, the Pauline partial expulsion ... all these features have been taken over from the Jewish tradition and adapted for Christian use.¹

In spite of these apparent developments in the procedure of church discipline, the important thing is the treatment of the sinner. Matthew advocates starting with the "one to one" approach and gradually moving to a public approach if private efforts are unsuccessful. This method makes it easier for the offender to repent. If a person must be excommunicated, 1 Cor 5 seems to suggest some

¹Ibid., p. 187.
prerequisites. First, there must be no doubt that the sin is really being committed. Discipline cannot be based on rumors; it must be undergirded by solid facts. If a case of discipline is based on faulty evidence the church will eventually suffer. The incest in Corinth was not just hearsay, but common knowledge. Second, the problem must be a recognized sin before anyone can be disciplined for it. Finally, the sin must be a measurable sin.¹

The purpose of church discipline is not simply to purify the church; nor is it an attempt to rid it of a troublemaker, to exact vengeance or impose penalties, to dispose quickly of an embarrassing problem. Rather its purpose is to correct, restore, and gain the brother. The emphasis is not on excommunication but forgiveness. This suggests that the methodology and the motivation in the administering of discipline should be love. A love that says, "I care, I am concerned; if I were in your place I would like you to do the same for me."

It seems to me that the principles enunciated here are basic requirements for any meaningful approach to the church's disciplinary obligation in matters of doctrine and life. Ignoring these principles can only lead to Pharisaism and legalism, or to a complete breakdown of discipline. It is hoped that the church will exercise discipline in a loving, caring, and an instructive manner, making the welfare and restoration of the fallen brother its chief aim. This kind of discipline can transform the church, renew its spirit, strengthen its members, and expand its mission.

¹Wagner, pp. 53, 54.
PART TWO

GUIDELINES OF CHURCH DISCIPLINE FOR SDA CHURCHES
IN THE CARIBBEAN UNION WITH EMPHASIS
ON RESTORATION
CHAPTER III

CHURCH DISCIPLINE IN SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISM

To understand discipline in the Seventh-day Adventist context there must be an examination of the writings of Ellen G. White\textsuperscript{1} and the Church Manual\textsuperscript{2} on the subject. These are the sources that have put into written form the church's understanding of discipline and the steps to be taken in its administration.

This chapter will attempt to analyze the counsels of Ellen G. White and the Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual, and at the same time establish the attitude of the pastors toward church discipline in the Caribbean Union. It is hoped that by taking this approach, the case for church discipline as restoration will be graphically depicted as relevant and needful in the Seventh-day Adventist churches in the Caribbean Union.

Ellen G. White

Ellen G. White, the most prolific and respected author of the Seventh-day Adventist church, had some definite ideas about

\textsuperscript{1}Ellen G. White is one of the founders of the Seventh-day Adventist church. The church believes that God revealed himself to her and that through her he sent inspired messages to the church.

\textsuperscript{2}The Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual was first published in 1932. Its aim was to set forth and preserve the practices and polity of the denomination. The first edition was prepared by J. L. McElhany and carefully examined by the General Conference Committee. It is revised every four years by the General Conference in session.
church discipline. She believed that it was needed in the Seventh-day Adventist church. She held that "if there were no church discipline and government, the church would go to fragments; it could not hold together as a body."¹ She strongly suggested that

The name of those who sin and refuse to repent should not be retained on the church books, lest the saints be held accountable for their evil deeds. Those who pursue a course of transgression should be visited and labored with, and if they refuse to repent, they should be separated from church fellowship, in accordance with the rules laid down in the Word of God. Those who refuse to hear the admonitions and warnings given by God's faithful messengers are not to be retained in the church. They are to be disfellowshiped; for they will be an Achan in the camp of Israel deceived and deceiving. Who, after reading the record of Achan's sin and punishment, can think it according to the will of God that those who do wickedly, refusing to repent, are to be retained in the church? To retain them would be an insult to the God of heaven.²

This seemingly uncompromising statement must be balanced with her counsel relating to efforts which are to be made for the member to bring about his/her repentance. If this fails then the church must act.

Ellen White saw church discipline as a crucial function of the church and advocated great care in its administration. We will now examine her counsel on this issue.

How to Deal with Erring Members

Ellen G. White gives considerable instruction on this subject, but primary emphasis seems to be that "in dealing with erring church members God's people are carefully to follow the instruction


given by the Savior in the eighteenth chapter of Matthew."¹ This statement emphasizes the importance she attaches to God's Word. "The Lord desires His followers to exercise great care in dealing with one another. They are to lift up, to restore, to heal."² We are further counseled:

Do not put him to shame by exposing his fault to others, nor bring dishonor upon Christ by making public the sin or error of one who bears His name. Often the truth must be plainly spoken to the erring; he must be led to see his error that he may reform. But you are not to judge or condemn.³

These statements reveal what was regarded as the real purpose of discipline. We are not to condemn and put people to shame, but we are to encourage them to turn from their sins. We are to "take him by the hand, lift him up, speak to him words of courage and hope. Help him to grasp the hand of the Savior."⁴ The emphasis is not on removing the delinquent member from fellowship, but on restoring him to full fellowship. This accomplishment requires deep involvement on a personal level. Therefore:

Let all your effort be for his recovery. In treating the wounds of the soul, there is need of the most delicate touch, the finest sensibility. . . . Let the members of the church, as representatives of Christ, unite in prayer and loving entreaty, that the offender may be restored. The Holy Spirit will speak through his servants, pleading with the wanderer to return to God.⁵

"It must be emphasized that the purpose of such discipline

¹White, Testimonies for the Church, p. 260.
²Ibid., p. 264.
³White, The Desire of Ages, p. 440.
⁵White, The Desire of Ages, p. 440.
is redemption.\(^1\) Simply dropping a member from fellowship is not redemptive. The redemption of erring members is greatly enhanced by our willingness to work with them in a loving and caring manner. Church members are "to seek earnestly to win him to repentance. And however aggravated may have been the offence, if he yields to the striving of the Holy Spirit, and by confessing and forsaking his sin he gives evidence of repentance, he is to be forgiven and welcomed to the fold again."\(^2\)

Church discipline practiced correctly will bring positive results not only to those who are in need of it, but to the entire church which will experience a renewal because of its involvement in the salvation of the erring member. All the members can enjoy their Christian life by becoming involved in the teaching and caring ministry of the church.\(^3\)

It is urged:

Go to the erring one, with a heart filled with Christ's love and sympathy, and seek to adjust the matter. Reason with him calmly and quietly. Let no angry words escape your lips. Speak in a way that will appeal to his better judgment. Remember the Words: "He which converteth a sinner from the error of his ways shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." (James 5:20)\(^4\)

All of our human resources should be used in dealing with

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\(^3\)Proper discipline also includes teaching. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 7:264: "The members are to regard themselves as pupils in a school, learning how to form characters worthy of their high calling. In the church here below, God's children are to be prepared for the great reunion in the church above."

\(^4\)Ibid., p. 261.
members who are in trouble, but Christ should be the center and focus of everything one does.

In labor for the erring, let every eye be directed to Christ. Let the shepherds have a tender care for the flock of the Lord's pasture. Let them speak to the erring of the forgiving mercy of the Savior. Let them encourage the sinner to repent, and believe in Him who can pardon.¹

Ellen White was also keenly aware how delicate the administration of church discipline is. It has to do with how one relates to a hurting member. Whatever is done is crucial to the future of the erring one. Therefore, she advocates openness and sincerity:

Go to those supposed to be in error, talk with them, not working with duplicity and hypocrisy, meeting them day by day with apparent friendship, and at the same time plotting against them in perfect unity with the Satanic agencies. . . . The Lord hates all deception, secrecy, and guile. This is Satan's work; the work of God is open and frank.²

Along with our openness, frankness, and sincerity, we need to be kind, tender, and meek in dealing with the erring.³ These counsels on church discipline are not only practical and sensible but they are theologically sound. The Biblical pattern should be closely followed—all the steps outlined there to restore the erring member should be followed before the church takes any official action.⁴ In effect she suggests that "it is far better

¹White, The Desire of Ages, p. 806.
²White, Testimonies to Ministers, p. 274.
³Ibid., suggests that "members of the church may commit errors, and often make mistakes, but they are to be dealt with kindly, tenderly, as Christ has dealt with us. But the rebuke of God is upon all those who do the work of God deceitfully, professedly friends of Christ, yet working in an undercurrent style, in darkness, against those who love God."
⁴White, Testimonies to the Church, 7:262-63: "No church
if wrongs can be righted, and injuries healed, without bringing the matter before the whole church."¹ This counsel should be followed if church discipline is to be an agent of restoration.

Reasons for Discipline

Ellen White emphasizes that the purpose of discipline is restoration. The members of the church should be loving, caring, tender, kind, and meek to the erring. But she also believes that there are times when certain persistent sins call for official action by the church.

A search of her writings reveals that Ellen White mentions specific cases where church discipline should be implemented. This section will seek to discuss these cases, which seem to fall under the headings: (1) Open Sin, (2) Profligacy, (3) Heresy.

Open Sin

Ellen White is of the opinion that "Christ has plainly taught that those who persist in open sin must be separated from the church."² "Open sin" is a general term, but it carries the connotation of constantly violating the commandments of God. This constant, open violation demands strong disciplinary action from the church. Although she speaks of separation, she also believes that officer should advise, no committee should recommend, nor should any church vote, that the name of a wrong doer shall be removed from the church books until the instruction given by Christ has been faithfully followed. When this instruction has been followed, the church has cleared herself before God.

¹White, Testimonies for the Church, 5:646.
²White, Christ Object Lesson, p. 71.
the repentant sinner should be given a new opportunity. "Let the repentance of the sinner be accepted by the church with grateful hearts."

Whether this means reacceptance through rebaptism, or reacceptance after a period of trial is not very clear. What is clear is that the church must always seek for and accept the repentance of the erring member.

Profligacy

In her discussion on 1 Cor 5, Ellen White says: "Paul had written briefly to the church, admonishing them, 'not to company' with members who should persist in profligacy." Profligacy comes from the word profligate and connotes a person who is living a life of immorality. Therefore, it can be concluded that as in the New Testament, an open, immoral act constitutes valid grounds for church discipline in Ellen White's writing.

Heresy

Ellen White was fully aware of the divisive impact of heresy upon the church. Stephenson and Hall were teaching the Age-to-Come doctrine which was against the established teaching of the Seventh-day Adventist church. The charges against them were deception, misrepresentation, and falsehood. She wrote:

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1White, The Desire of Ages, p. 806.


4White, Testimonies for the Church, 1:714. The Age-to-Come theory teaches that "during the millennium one would receive a 'second chance' for salvation."
decided efforts should be made to show those who are unchristian in life their wrongs, and if they do not reform, they should be separated from the precious and holy, that God may have a clean and pure people that He can delight in. Dis­honor Him not by linking or uniting the clean with the un­clean.\(^1\)

Thus Ellen White sees heresy as warranting disciplinary action by the church. Not an action that simply cuts off the offending member from the membership of the church, but an action that seeks to demonstrate the importance of the truth.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual

Having discussed the New Testament's position on church discipline and noted Ellen White's counsel on the subject, the other logical step is to explore the procedure advocated by the Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual.

Chapter 13 of the Church Manual discusses "Church Discipline." Our aim is not to make a page by page analysis, but, in view of our previous study, to examine its instruction on the administering of church discipline.

Administering Discipline

The Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual states that "if a member falls into sin, sincere efforts must be made to reclaim him."\(^2\) It does not state what the efforts are or how they can be carried out. Each pastor and church must determine what they will do to reclaim the member. However, it states that "when grievous

\(^1\)Ibid., p. 117.

\(^2\)The Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual (General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1976), p. 244.
sins are involved disciplinary measures must be taken. There are
two ways by which this may be done: (1) By a vote of censure.
(2) By a vote to disfellowship.\textsuperscript{1}

Censure

In defining the rationale and the purpose of the vote of
censure the church manual states:

There may be cases where the offense is not considered by
the church to be so serious as to warrant the extreme course
of disfellowshipping the offending member, yet it may be
sufficiently serious to call for an expression of disapproval.
Such disapproval may be expressed by a vote of censure.

Censure has a twofold purpose:
1. To enable the church to express its disapproval of a
grievous offense that has brought disgrace upon the cause of
God.
2. To impress the offending member with the need for
amendment of life and reformation in his conduct; also to ex­
tend to him a period of grace and probation during which these
steps might be taken.\textsuperscript{2}

The vote of censure is taken in a "duly called" church
meeting, with or without the presence of the person involved. He/
she could be censured for one, three, six, or nine months. During
this time the member cannot participate in any election in the church
nor hold any office. The member cannot be transferred to another
church while under censure, but he/she can share the privilege of
the Sabbath School and church worship, or participate in the
ordinances of the Lord's Supper.\textsuperscript{3}

If after the time prescribed, the member has changed his/
hers conduct, he may be considered in good standing without further
action. However, if he/she did not change his/her conduct, the

\textsuperscript{1}Ibid., p. 245.
\textsuperscript{2}Ibid., pp. 245, 246.
\textsuperscript{3}Ibid., p. 246.
case should be considered again, and other "discipline administered as the case requires."¹

It should be noted that the vote of censure parallels the avoidance advocated in 2 Thess 3:6, but there is a significant difference. The Bible gives no time limit. It teaches that the church should work for the restoration of the member and that as soon as he repents he should be reaccepted into full fellowship. The imposition of a time limit seems reasonable, but it also gives the impression that the church is more willing to take a "wait and see" attitude rather than an active role in the member's restoration. Also the idea of a reassessment or retrial could be devastating to the confidence of the member. The reality of being found guilty again could cause him to pay lip service rather than to seek a genuine conversion. The church should seek to convey a different message--a message that is positive, caring, and loving and says "my interest is not to see if you will make it, but to assist you in making it."

Disfellowshipping

Disfellowshipping a member is the ultimate in church discipline. It is the expulsion of the member from the fellowship of the church. The church manual advocates that the member should be disfellowshipped only when every effort to restore him has failed.

Only . . . after all possible efforts have been made to win an erring member from the evils of his ways and restore him to right paths, should this kind of discipline be used.²

Unfortunately, this appears to be untrue in many cases of

¹Ibid., p. 247. ²Ibid., p. 247.
discipline in the Caribbean Union. Instead of emphasizing the steps for restoring the member, many pastors are pressured to emphasize punitive discipline.¹

Reasons for Church Discipline

The church manual lists nine reasons for which members may be disciplined. They are:

1. Denial of faith in the fundamentals of the gospel and in the cardinal doctrines of the church or teaching doctrines contrary to the same.
2. Open violation of the law of God, such as worship of idols, murder, adultery, profanity, gambling, sabbathbreaking, willful and habitual falsehood, and the remarriage of a divorced person, except of the innocent party in a divorce for adultery.
3. Fraud or willful misrepresentation in business.
4. Disorderly conduct which brings reproach upon the cause.
5. Adhering to or taking in a divisive or disloyal movement or organization.
6. Persistent refusal to recognize properly constituted church authority or to submit to the order and discipline of the church.
7. Instigating or continuing legal action against the church or any of its organizations or institutions, contrary to Biblical and Ellen G. White counsels.
8. The use, manufacture, or sale of alcoholic beverages.
9. The use of tobacco or addiction to narcotic drugs.²

These rules are made to be followed and many pastors and churches adhere rigidly to them. But some of these reasons for discipline are vague and can therefore present interpretive problems. For instance, in number one it is not clear what is denial of faith, what are the fundamentals of the gospel, or even what constitutes the cardinal doctrines of the church.

Seeing that the first step in discipline is the restoration

¹ Appendix B, respondent C, 2a.
of the member, careful study should be given as to how it can be most effectively implemented.

Pastoral Attitudes In the Caribbean Union

In order to ascertain the pastoral attitude in the Caribbean Union towards church discipline, a questionnaire was formulated and sent to the presidents\(^1\) of the five conferences.\(^2\) This approach was decided upon because of the difficulties in contacting and receiving replies from the pastors. They live on many islands and usually serve several congregations. Their response to questionnaires in the past has not been good. The other best alternative in receiving reliable opinions on the subjects was to contact the presidents. These men of broad experience were chosen because of their intimate knowledge of all the pastors in their conference. Before becoming presidents they worked in many countries and islands of the region. Their frequent visit to the districts provide them the opportunity to learn from first hand experience how the pastors are coping with the problems of the churches. Because they are closely in touch with all the pastors of the Union, it was believed they could provide reliable information with respect to the general attitude of the pastors on a given pastoral function.

For this study, they were asked to give their views of the

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\(^1\) The term is given to the top leader of the conference.

\(^2\) A conference is a sisterhood of churches located in a given territory, as a state, states, countries, or islands. The five conferences in the Caribbean Union are: The North Caribbean Conference, the East Caribbean Conference, the South Caribbean Conference, the Guyana Conference, and the Surinam Mission.
administering of church discipline, the attitudes of their pastors toward discipline, and their personal view as to whether or not in most cases a systematic approach is followed to ensure the restoration of the disciplined member.¹

The general view appears to be that church discipline is an important part of the church's ministry and cannot be abandoned. The uniqueness of the Caribbean Union demands it. The communities are small; the pastors are very busy with many churches under their care; and the church is known in the community for its very strict stand against sin.

In response to the question, "As you interact with other Seventh-day Adventist pastors, how do you see their attitudes toward church discipline?," one conference president states categorically that "too many pastors' views on church discipline are quite rigid, while others tend to lack consistency."² Another suggests that the pastors can be divided into two groups as to their views on church discipline:

(1) The senior mature men, and (2) the fledglings--recent graduates of little experience.

Group 1: This group is rigid. Church discipline sometimes takes on the complexion of punishment. Not every senior pastor falls into this category. I believe that their long years of dealing with church problems, cast them into this austere mold after a time. Group 2: The young pastors "shy" away from church discipline. Several reasons are responsible for this. Some of them are as follows: (a) Youth is more carefree. (b) Inexperience causes them to "wink" as it were at disciplinary cases. (c) Young pastors evangelize more. The trend these days is large baptisms concomitant with just as large apostasies.

¹Appendix A is a sample of the letter and the kinds of questions asked. "Open-ended" questions were used because they give the respondents the opportunity to verbalize their findings and opinions.

²Appendix B, respondent A, answer 2.
The tendency is to go slow on church discipline among young pastors, either because of the distaste involved, inexperience, a kind of tender heartedness for "their" converts, or possibly other reasons. One of these other reasons could be the liberal attitude which comes from a "certain" view of righteousness by faith, which is now popular in the Seventh-day Adventist church vis-a-vis the yester-year legalism charge levelled against the church.

In conclusion, I would say that both groups realize that church discipline is an important function of the church, but the young pastor gives it low priority, while the senior men need to cushion their approach somewhat.¹

In answering the same question another conference president says:

There are few of our pastors who demonstrate that they have really come to terms with the real meaning, purpose and outcomes of discipline. There is a consciousness of right and wrong and in most cases a strong inclination to maintain right. There is the factor of pressure from the general church community, church board, and special interest groups within the church resulting from the combination of the pastor's background references, his awareness of duty and his response to pressures; you discover an attitudinal profile from lax to ultra rigidity. . . . On the other hand the average church board member usually demands action to keep the church clean.²

These responses indicate a group of ministers who are encountering some problems with their approach to church discipline. They are either too lax or too rigid, or are often responding to the pressures from the church. This condition could be due to the fact that, as one suggested,

within the church there is a very narrow concept of discipline, the main reason for this being the idea that discipline is for those who have fallen from grace or who are problematic. Hence, usually when we talk about discipline in the West Indian church, we are looking at some form of expression of displeasure and non-acceptance, a punitive measure which the church must exact on all those who infringe the fundamental standards of conduct.³

¹Ibid., respondent B, answer 2.
²Ibid., respondent C, answer 2.
³Ibid., answer 3.
In spite of the tendencies of the older pastors to be more rigid and the younger pastors to be more liberal, the conference presidents agree that there is the need for a more systematic approach to church discipline that will aid in the restoration of the member. One president simply states: "In most cases I do not believe that a systematic approach is followed to restore the disciplined member to full church membership."\(^1\) Another president concedes: "I think that we fall short in this respect. I am not satisfied that every effort is made to restore the disciplined ones."\(^2\)

This effort must be made. The erring member must be aware of the church's love for him/her. They must not get the impression that the church is anxious to get rid of them. It is important that the discipline of the member be done in a caring, concerned, and loving manner. The attitude of the pastor is very important if this is to be achieved.

\(^{1}\)Ibid., respondent A, answer 3.

\(^{2}\)Ibid., respondent D, answer 3. Having worked as a pastor in the Caribbean Union for many years I can identify with the opinions expressed by the presidents. They offer an accurate picture of the situation in regards to church discipline in the region. Therefore, their call for a more systematic approach to church discipline as restoration must be heeded.
CHAPTER IV

CASES OF CHURCH DISCIPLINE IN THE CARIBBEAN UNION

There are indications, as noted in chapter III, that the pastors in the Caribbean Union are concerned with church discipline, but they have varied attitudes as they perform in this capacity. Some are rigid, others are liberal, and few, if any, have a systematic approach for the restoration of the erring member.

This chapter is an attempt to illustrate the kinds of church discipline practiced in the Caribbean Union. The information was obtained by interviewing three pastors of that Union. They were asked to give an example of church discipline in which they were involved and the rationale for their actions.

Case 1

A seventy year old man was baptized in a crusade, and six months later it was discovered that he was smoking tobacco. It was brought to the attention of the pastor by some members who testified that the new member was smoking in public.

The pastor investigated and found that the allegation was true. The new member was indeed having a hard time overcoming his smoking habit. The pastor saw this as a violation of God's command and an embarrassment to the church because "people saw
him as a smoking Seventh-day Adventist."

The pastor then proceeded to lecture the new convert about his body being the temple of God, and that his smoking was a flagrant violation of Christian standards, while at the same time he was hampering the witness of the church in the village.

The new convert responded by informing the pastor of his difficulties in overcoming the habit. The pastor felt that he was not trying hard enough because of the fact that he gave it up before baptism was indicative of his ability to resist even after baptism.

The pastor visited the member occasionally to find out how he was doing. After three months there was no change, so the case was taken to the church board.

The church board decided that he was indeed letting down the standard of the church. They decided to censure him for six months. The pastor informed the member of the action taken. The six months were to give him some time to make an effort to change. If the time expired and there was no change, other actions would be taken.

After the six months the case was reviewed and the sanction was not reinforced because "it seemed as if he received the victory."

An Evaluation

Here is a man who was smoking for over fifty years and was having a difficult time overcoming his addiction. It seemed as if he wanted to do what was right and was desperately in need of help.

The pastor and the church, though aware of his problem,
were very rigid in their approach. They extended to him a period of time to work out his problem, but offered no moral or practical help. Their main interest seemed to be the protection of the church. It seems that very little consideration was given to how the church could best help to restore the member.

Fortunately, the member was not excommunicated, but even after the period of censure expired the pastor was not too sure that the member overcame his smoking problem. The successful handling of this case demanded that the member be given the priority. "What is his problem? What can I do to help him overcome? What is the church's responsibility?" The answers to these questions could have provided a framework for dealing with the member.

His problem was one of addiction. This is hard to overcome. It is a problem that most people struggle with for years. This is the case of a struggler. The man admitted his problem, therefore the church and the pastor should have seen it as an opportunity to offer some practical suggestions to enable him to overcome his problem. It is important to encourage one when he fails and to celebrate when he succeeds. Although the church must protect itself from flagrant sinners, the member should always be aware that the church is willing and able to work along with him to overcome his problem and not simply eager to deny membership if he fails.

This approach would have done a few things: it would have given the offender confidence in his new religion because of its caring posture; it would have helped the member to gain the victory
over a life-long habit; it would have saved the church from having to take any public steps in disciplining the member; and the main impact would have been the restoration of the member.

**Case 2**

The pastor was new, and he wanted to get a quick hold of the condition of the church, so he called a church board meeting. They discussed a few things and then proceeded to examine the church membership records. While taking this indepth look at the names, one name was called that engendered an involved discussion.

The young lady in question had just left the island to reside in the United States of America. The vast majority of the church board argued that before she left her lifestyle was questionable--she was living a life of immorality. They then suggested that she should be disfellowshipped. Without proper investigation, the pastor concurred, and they voted that the name be taken off the record.

Three months later the young lady requested a transfer of membership. They wrote back to her church, informing them that the young lady was no longer a member of their church.

**An Evaluation**

Unfortunate as this incident was, it is not an isolated occurrence in the Caribbean Union. When a pastor goes to a new church he routinely examines the church's record with the church board. His aim is mainly to get a true picture of the church's membership and problems. Many church board members, however, see this as an opportunity to get the new pastor to do what they think
was left undone by his predecessor. Because most pastors are vulnerable at this time, they succumb to the pressures of the board.

This was exactly what happened in this case. The pastor completely abdicated his responsibility and concurred with the church board. He made the decision without hearing from the accused. This leads one to the conclusion that the decision was not designed to help the member but to protect the church.

If the discipline had been aimed at the restoration of the member, the accusing members would have spoken privately to the member as soon as her misconduct became apparent. This kind of confrontation is advocated in Matt 18:15-17. However, since they had failed to do so, the pastor could have suggested that the person could no longer be considered a liability to the church since she had moved, so no decision should be made until they could verify that the member's present lifestyle was immoral. This could have saved the member, the pastor, and the church the embarrassment that ensued. Loving confrontation is needed to facilitate the restoration of the erring member.

Case 3

A pastor was preaching in one of his churches and perceived a lack of spirituality. He candidly told them that something was wrong with the church. There was no immediate response. But while visiting, some members told him that the church was having problems with adulterous members. He learned of a specific case when a member told him that his niece was having an affair with a prominent member of the church.
The pastor proceeded to try to solve the problem. He went first to the brother and confronted him with the problem. The brother admitted having a relationship with the young lady, but saw nothing wrong with it. He sought the advice of the pastor as to what he should do. The pastor suggested that if she were that important to him he ought to marry her.

The pastor then went to see the lady. He informed her of what he had heard. She admitted that she was having an affair with the man and promised to end the relationship if marriage was not forthcoming.

The relationship continued, and the pastor thought that he could do nothing to help the couple, so he took the case to the church board. The couple was found guilty of adultery and was disfellowshipped.

Since the couple had been members of the church for many years they continued to attend the services. Two months after the church's action the man requested baptism. The pastor rejected him because he judged the man as not being ready. The man eventually left the island for America where he rejoined the church through baptism. The pastor ended his term of ministry in that island without rebaptizing the lady.

When asked, "What would you have done differently if you had to do it over?", the pastor replied, "I would have visited them a little more."

An Evaluation

The pastor must be credited with his keen discernment for spiritual impotence, and for his willingness to confront the erring
members as soon as he heard of their misconduct. The erring members admitted their sins and asked for his suggestions, but his suggestions were too simplistic and threatening to be immediately implemented. The ultimatum was to get married or discontinue the relationship. The couple could not concede to either demand; therefore, the pastor asked that they be disfellowshipped, and they were.

Fortunately, the couple kept on attending services. This gave the pastor a splendid opportunity to work toward their complete restoration. Nevertheless, very little was done. This incident again suggests that some pastors and churches in the Caribbean Union of Seventh-day Adventists are more concerned with the status of the church than with a systematic approach to restore the member.

These examples are presented not to be unduly critical, but to illustrate how easy it is to divert the emphasis in church discipline away from its goal of restoration.
CHAPTER V

GUIDELINES FOR CHURCH DISCIPLINE IN
SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCHES IN
THE CARIBBEAN UNION

The Seventh-day Adventist pastors and churches in the Caribbean Union believe in discipline. The evidence presented above indicates that there is a tendency on the part of some pastoral leaders to protect the church and its standards rather than to make an all out, prolonged effort to restore the erring member. Several factors seem to encourage this:

1. The communities are small and the sins of the members are easily known. Many leaders believe that every wrong needs to be punished to vindicate the church in the eyes of the world.

2. The pastors have many churches and are too busy to take the time that is required to really know all the members and their problems. Frequently the pastor learns about the problems when they are common knowledge, and by then his reaction is simply to ignore it or to implement a punitive measure.¹

3. Many of the members are not educated concerning the correct approach to discipline. They see discipline primarily as public action taken by the church against the erring member, and

¹Appendix B, respondent A, answer 2.
they often pressure the pastor into taking such an action.¹

4. The churches in the Caribbean Union are evangelistic in nature. Therefore, the tendency is toward quick baptism. Many times they become aware of the person's sins or bad habits months after baptism. The local elder does not know how to deal with this and the pastor is too busy in another crusade or church to help effectively.²

These problems might not be unique to the Seventh-day Adventist churches in the Caribbean Union, but since they are present, there should be some guidelines to help pastors and churches be faithful to the Biblical view, and at the same time to assist the erring member and the church to understand and carry out their responsibilities. Their actions and decisions should always be motivated by the fact that the primary reason for discipline is the restoration of the member.

This chapter will enumerate and discuss guidelines that might aid in the restoration of erring members in the Seventh-day Adventist churches of the Caribbean Union. Below is an outline of suggestions that should be considered when dealing with (a) prospective members, (b) members, (c) erring members.

**Prospective Members**

1. Avoid haste in admitting new members.

By not rushing a person into baptism or membership the pastor has the opportunity to become better acquainted with the

¹Ibid., respondent C, answer 2.
²Ibid., answer 3.
new member. This approach has three advantages: (1) The pastor will get to know some of his problems with respect to the Christian life-style and be able to help him resolve them before baptism. (2) He will be able to establish a good relationship with the prospective member, one that will cause him to confide in the pastor during his future Christian life. (3) The pastor will stop the criticism of some members who believe that he is baptizing the unconverted.

This is not a call to take six months or a year before baptizing a person. It is a call to be sure that enough time, effort, and opportunity for relationship are given to a potential member.

2. Test the readiness and preparation of the prospective member.

I am very much aware that judging is wrong, but testing the readiness of the prospective member is essential. It is important that he/she adheres to the doctrine of the church, but equally important is his/her attitude and behavior. The candidate should not only know the doctrines but should be able to understand, express, and live the kind of life peculiar to the church. It is not simply the present content of the church's message that is important but the willingness of the prospective member to seriously search the word of God and the future messages as they unfold.¹

¹Dean M. Kelley, Why Conservative Churches are Growing (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1972), p. 125, suggests that this approach contributed to the growth of the Anabaptist and Wesleyan Churches. It can therefore give us guidance in shaping and preserving the integrity of the religious organization without violating the dignity or integrity of persons.
This could be accomplished not by simply reading the beliefs of the church to them before the church or church board, but by addressing over a period of time on a "one to one" basis their attitude and willingness to conform now and in the future to the beliefs of the church. This approach would allow the prospective member not just to answer "I do" to the beliefs of the church, but he/she would be able to verbalize his/her approval or apprehension to the pastor. This would give the pastor or layperson the opportunity to help the prospective member reexamine the steps about to be taken.

The Members

1. Teach the members how to admonish one another, how to speak the truth in love, and how to confront each other about open sin.

Members of the church must realize that the mutual care of one another is their responsibility. This is the key element in church discipline as restoration. Success in restoring the member depends on how well the entire membership carries out its function as caring brothers. This caring attitude depends upon the orientation and continued education received. Members of the church cannot afford to be indifferent about open sin in their lives or in the lives of fellow believers. There must be an ongoing process of forgiveness and loving confrontations.

This does not mean that Christians will be busy prodding, pushing, and picking on one another in order to establish a perfect community. It means that sin will rightly be seen not as acts
alone, but as the real problem of every person in the church—a problem that must be constantly worked upon, with the help of God and the support of other members.

The church is comprised of people good and bad, weak and strong, lovable and unlovable. And yet the mystery of the church is that God uses it to help prepare a people for his kingdom. Mutual care, therefore, should be more than one person going to another to tell him of his deed, more than urging the claims of the church; it is one person being humble and loving enough to assist another person in his quest for righteousness.

The church can assist in the development of such members through its teaching ministry. They must be taught how to "warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men" (1 Thess 5:14).

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1 Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Life Together (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1954), pp. 96, 97, suggests how one can effectively help a brother. "If my sinfulness appears to me to be in any way smaller or less detestable in comparison with the sins of others, I am still not recognizing my sinfulness in all. My sin is of necessity the worst, the most grievous, the most reprehensible. Brotherly love will find any number of extenuations for the sins of others; only for my sin there is no apology whatsoever. Therefore my sin is the worst... How can I possibly serve another person in unfigned humility if I seriously regard his sinfulness as worse than my own? Would I not be putting myself above him; could I have any hope for him?"

2 Barclay, The Letters to the Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1975), pp. 206, 207, points out that the word used for unruly originally described a soldier who had left ranks. It actually means "warn the quitters." The fearful are literally those whose souls are small. In every community there is the fainthearted brother who instinctively fears the worst, but in every community there should be Christians who, being brave, help others to be brave. "Cling to the weak" is a lovely piece of advice. Instead of letting the weak brother drift away and finally vanish altogether, the Christian community should make a deliberate attempt to restore him to the church in such a way that he cannot escape. It should forge bonds of
Each church must find and perfect a method that suits the character of the congregation. The deep concern should be the exposure of the entire church to ways in which they can encourage another member who is in need of their help, comfort, and love. If the members know of a way of doing this without hurting the other member, more might be willing to exercise their God-given responsibility as fellow saints. Perhaps one of the ways that this can be accomplished is to:

A. Study the scripture to gain God's view of sin, and what he regards as sin, and inculcate it in an outlook of life.

B. Teach the members to recognize their responsibility to other believers and to be aware of the fact that they are called to admonish those who sin, and then to support them.

C. Encourage them to be open with their brothers and sisters in personally admitting strength and weakness, and seeking their counsel and support.

D. Study the pertinent passages on discipline (Matt 18:15-18; 2 Thess 3:14-15; 2 Cor 5) and begin to practice them on a personal basis.

E. Never merely admonish someone; always assure individuals of love and help as they try to overcome their problems.¹

The following are some suggested topics that can help in giving the members the correct understanding and attitude as

they seek to help one another.

A. Jesus and discipline
B. The Jews and discipline
C. Paul's counsels on discipline
D. Ellen G. White's counsels on discipline
E. The church and the erring member
F. How to minister to a backslidden member

2. Bear one another up in small groups.

No man is an island. Our joys and sorrows must be shared. This is best accomplished in small groups. Small groups offer the opportunity to experience a close sharing relationship with a given group of members—people who care, listen, and help in times of need; people who offer a confidential forum where one can air their deep feelings, anxieties, fears, and joys. Such groups can add luster to the life of the church in general and that of the member in particular.

The Seventh-day Adventist churches in the Caribbean Union have many small groups, but they are used for evangelism and other outreach programs. There is a dire need for sharing groups—groups

1Kelley, p. 127, points out that small groups helped the Wesleyans in their caring ministry. "Each society was divided into smaller companies, called classes, according to where the members live. There were about twelve persons in a class, one of whom is considered the leader. His responsibility was: (1) To see each person in his class once a week, in order: (a) to inquire how his soul prospers; (b) to advise, reprove, comfort, or exhort, as occasion may require; (c) to receive what he is willing to give toward the relief of the preachers, church and poor. (2) To meet the ministers and the stewards of the society once a week in order: (a) to inform the minister of any that are sick, or of any that walk disorderly and will not be reproved; (b) to pay the stewards what he has received of his class in the preceding week."

2William Clemmons and Harvey Hester, Growth through Groups
that can bring about a spirit of community and add quality to the life of the church. It will cause the members not only to experience a close relationship with a number of members, but if properly organized it will make the leadership of the church be more aware of the struggling and delinquent members. With this close supervision and awareness of the members' problems, the church will be carrying out its mandate to be an agent in the restoration of its members.

The following are some suggested small groups that can be operative in the church: prayer groups, Bible study groups, dialogue groups, spiritual growth groups, interest groups, fellowship groups, renewal groups, growth cells, and family groups.

3. Let the members appropriately practice the confession of sin to one another.

This can be done on a personal level, in small groups, and sometimes corporately. Confession can be personal when it involves two persons; in small groups when a few people are involved; and corporately when the sin is public.

(Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1974), p. 51, states that "sharing groups in the church serve as a preparatory structure for an exploration of growth primarily in two areas of personal and corporate Christian life: Growth in KOINONIA and growth in personal depth. . . . You enable each other by pointing out the positive traits you have observed. Then, in the atmosphere of warmth and affirmation, each person shares the thing that he would like to change about himself."

1 Ibid., p. 89, describes some of these groups.

2 Littleton, p. 32, relates an incident that emphasizes this guideline: "In one church, an elder was involved in some clandestine business practices. The pastor became aware of this, and confronted the elder. The man was repentant but did not honestly know what to do. He was brought before the elders board, which advised him to take a leave of absence until the situation
The exercise of discipline is not confined to formal assemblies in the church. It begins when two or three get together. It is at this point that the real battles are fought and won. Here the power of genuine forgiveness restores the member to a new lifestyle.

A confessing church is a forgiving church. The churches in the Caribbean Union need to practice confessing to one another. This approach would have a positive effect upon the church. The offender would be willing to confess and the offended would be willing to forgive and be supportive in the restoration of the offender.

The Erring Member

The following list of seven suggestions will guide the pastor and the church when counseling with an erring member.

1. Have a clear goal when dealing with the erring member.

   To deal rightly with an erring brother, one must have a clear picture of the problem and how the solution must be achieved. One must aim at "gaining the brother." This must be done in the proper spirit and with the proper motivation. One must be free from was worked through and corrected; when he had deomonstrated a clearly repentant spirit through change he would be restored as an elder. This attitude was most positive, and he quickly cleaned up his sinful business situation. Then he approached the pastor and asked for some form of church service--anything, even janitorial. Previously, he had been a major teacher in the church, but there still remained a problem. The whole church knew of his sin, but not necessarily of his repentance. What was to be done? The man conferred again with the pastor and together they decided a public confession was necessary. He made his confession and it was followed by worship and prayer. The pastor told me that this elder's actions built up the church and resulted in growth, both spiritually and otherwise."
selfish ambition, pride, condescension, contempt, self-righteous rigor, or self-justification. On the other hand, one must be sincerely humble, animated by a deep love for the brother, and must prayerfully apply that love so as to ensure the restoration of the brother.

The situation in the Caribbean Union demands that this approach be vigorously followed. A unified goal of restoring the erring member could eliminate the call for quick, punitive actions and facilitate a concerted effort to help the member work through his/her problem.

2. Treat the erring member as a brother.

Always remember that the erring member is a brother. Therefore, he should not be treated with indifference or disdain, but with love and concern. Jesus' methodology is applicable here (Matt 18:15-17). First, talk to him in private; then, talk to him in the presence of one or two. If unsuccessful in both, let the church deal with him, and if he fails to listed to the church, he must be considered as "a Gentile and tax collector."

The goal in all these steps is to gain the brother, i.e., to divert him from his evil way and restore him to the family of God. This is best done in the spirit of love—a love that will not be denied, that will not let the erring brother go, that will not spare him the ultimate decision of genuine repentance. This is the kind of love that should be practiced by all in the church. When this is done church discipline can be restoring because the membership in a church is regarded as responsible to love, admonish,
encourage, and build up one another. This attitude is very important if church members will avail themselves to helping the erring brother overcome his problem.

3. Make an immediate effort to effect a change as soon as a sin comes to light.

This is not a suggestion to act hastily or to be unduly confrontational. It is a suggestion to cultivate a relationship that will entitle one to speak to a member whose sin is apparent. The first word one must speak is the gospel. Tell them that God is merciful and forgiving and that he wants them to change and experience a more abundant life.

4. Forgive a brother taken in a fault as often as he truly repents.

Responding to Peter's question, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?" Jesus said, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times" (Matt 18:21-22 NIB). Our duty is to forgive the brother when he

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Ibid., p. 32: "A couple had been members of the church for several years, were involved in ministry, and seemed to be growing. Then it was rumored that the wife was seeing another man. No one confronted her. Two years later, when it began to be rumored that a divorce was imminent, the pastor confronted the woman, telling her she would be taken off the church's rolls if she went through with the divorce. The woman was understandably upset. She complained that during the two years of the problem, no one had come to her. Yet now the pastor tells her the guillotine is about to fall. The situation could have deteriorated from there, but the pastor reacted with godly integrity. He apologized to the woman for not providing the proper spiritual counsel and support, and he committed himself to helping the couple in every possible way. While the situation is still bad, there has been no divorce. But the change in the pastor and the results in the congregation have been positive. He has been teaching the biblical concepts of confrontation and discipline, and many in his church are beginning to practice them on every level."
repents and encourage him not to despair, but allow God to lead him to repentance.

It was genuine repentance that facilitated his entrance into the church, and it is the only condition for continued acceptance. Repentance will inevitably mean the forsaking of a given sin. If the brother or sister wants Jesus' forgiveness he/she must follow Jesus' lifestyle. In church discipline we help one another see that justification and discipleship are inseparable.

5. Always try to solve the problem before informing the church or someone else. The pastor should insist that this be done before discussing the name for disciplinary action.

The biblical pattern for the exercise of discipline outlined in Matt 18:15-18, makes it plain that one who goes to others, to the church, or to the general public with a brother's failure before seeking in humility and love to restore the brother on an individual and private basis has violated the biblical pattern. We can hurt the brother by our critical talk, through political activity in the church, through pressures from the pulpit, and in other ways. These are not biblical ways, and must not be employed by those who seek to restore the brother.

6. Treat each case individually.

Two people might commit the same sin, but their motives differ. Our main concern should not be the sin but the person. What is happening in his/her life? Here again the guideline of Jesus to go and speak privately to the person is crucial. One should not probe but gently inform the person that he knows that
he/she is hurting and as a loving and concerned brother he is there to help before the member becomes a victim of circumstances. It might be that the person has suffered a loss or is going through an unpleasant experience. Helping him with this problem could solve the problem that is apparent to all. The pastor or layperson can be more helpful to members if each has maintained a good relationship with them and approached them with a deep intent to help.

7. The church should have a follow-up and supportive program for those who have sinned.

Sometimes there seems to be the tendency in fields where I have labored to forsake the erring member until an evangelistic meeting is in progress. The erring member should always be part of the church's program. Although it is the responsibility of the entire church to assist the member, the interest of the congregation could be best served if a group of trained laypersons were responsible to work with the erring members. The erring members should be visited and informed about the activities of the church, invited to attend those programs that meet their needs, and provide with comfort or enjoyment. They should know that the church is willing to work with them to ensure their full restoration.

The church might provide counseling resources to help those who are caught in faults and need biblical advice to resolve their problems. People who leave the church for one reason or the other should not be completely ostracized but, like the prodigal son, should always be cognizant of the fact that the church and the Lord are eagerly waiting to welcome them back home.
CONCLUSION

It is hoped that these guidelines have provided a framework for the successful restoration of the disciplined member. This approach was worked out because it is felt that a punitive form of discipline is employed when there is a lack of information on how discipline can be best carried out. The Seventh-day Adventist church needs to be educated in a better way by being alerted to the teachings of the bible and the counsels of Ellen G. White.

By ensuring that the member is informed about his present status and future expectation as a caring community, there can be the development of a church which relates correctly and redemptively to the erring member, seeking above all things his restoration.
APPENDIX A

LETTER TO THE PRESIDENTS
Dear

I am presently engaged in the Doctor of Ministry program here at Andrews University. My Project-Dissertation will be "Church Discipline as Restoration: Guidelines for its Implementation in the Seventh-day Adventist Churches in the Caribbean Union." The aim of this paper is to articulate a theologically based approach to church discipline and to arrive at a procedure that could help in the restoration of the disciplined, especially in the Caribbean Union. Such a paper cannot be written successfully without your help. Therefore, I would appreciate it if you would respond to the following questions as soon as possible. (By the end of February because of deadline.)

1. What are your views on the administering of church discipline? Do you believe that there should be less or more church discipline in the SDA church?
2. As you interact with other SDA pastors, how do you see their attitudes toward church discipline? Do they in general see discipline as an important function of the church, or do they give it low priority?
3. Would you say that in most cases a systematic approach is followed to ensure the restoration of the disciplined member?
4. Do you have any other comments?

Your answers are very important to this study. I can assure you that your answers will not be on display, but will be confidential and will serve in alerting me to the precise needs of our Union in the area of discipline.

Thank you very much for your cooperation. I will be looking forward to a quick reply.

Sincerely yours,

George M. King
APPENDIX B

THE PRESIDENTS' REPLIES TO THE LETTER
1. Views on the administering of Church discipline
   A. Church discipline is restorative with respect to both the wrong doer and the corporate body.
   B. It simultaneously aids in preserving the actual standards, spiritual integrity, and effectiveness of the church, within and without, as it deters the persistence in overt and presumptuous wrong-doing. However, in the administering of discipline, there are two basic principles that must be applied. These two principles are mercy and justice. The exact weight of each principle that is appropriate in each case should be largely determined by the case itself under study. However, in no case should one principle entirely obliterate the other.

2. Pastoral attitudes toward church discipline
   A. Too many pastors' views on church discipline are quite rigid, while others tend to lack consistency. Pastors, however, on the whole, are apt to overlook or postpone discipline inadvertently, rather than deliberately, for one reason or another, e.g., pressure of work, the complex process of church discipline, etc.

3. The approach followed
   In most cases I do not believe that a systematic approach is followed to restore the disciplined member to full church membership.
1. Views on the administering of Church Discipline

A. I firmly believe in church discipline. I feel it should be exercised when necessary. I do not see it as a deterrent against further misdeeds by the church member because positive conduct proceeds from conscious choice, through making the will captive to Jesus Christ.

B. I do not see church discipline as a punitive measure. If it were, then a member would accept the punishment, cool his conscience for having suffered, then go on to sin again--for we are aware that sin has its sweetness.

C. Also, my view of church discipline is that it reminds the church member of the quality of the experience in Christ and that misconduct impoverishes this experience.

D. Church discipline is necessary because one's life touches other people. (1) To refrain from discipline will cause the rest of the community of saints to bear the acidity of the misdeed. (2) Those outside of the community of saints need to know that the church's fair name must be preserved. It is not the trampling of the offending member, merely, but the upholding of ethical norms and principles, biblically based.

2. Pastoral attitudes toward church discipline

I would divide the pastors into two groups. (1) The senior mature men, and (2) the fledglings, most recent graduates of little experience.
Group 1: This group is rigid. Church discipline sometimes takes on the complexion of punishment. Not every senior pastor falls into this category. I believe that their long years of dealing with church problems cast them into this austere mold after a time.

Group 2: The young pastors "shy" away from church discipline. Several reasons are responsible for this. Some of them are as follows: (a) Youth is more carefree. (b) Inexperience causes them to "wink" as it were at disciplinary cases. (c) Young pastors evangelize more. The trend these days is large baptisms concomitant with just as large apostasies. The tendency is to go slow on church discipline among young pastors, either because of the distaste involved, a kind of tender-heartedness for "their" converts, or possibly other reasons. One of these other reasons could be the liberal attitude which comes from a "certain" view of righteousness by faith, which is now popular in the Seventh-day Adventist church, vis-a-vis the yester-year legalism charge leveled against the church.

3. The approach followed

While some effort is usually made by the pastor, the church board, and the church to restore some disciplined members, in general I would not call that effort a systematic approach. Maybe, here and there, during a reclamation drive, or through the initiative of a particular pastor, church elder, officer, or member, a systematic effort might be made to restore a
disciplined one, but it is not the general thing. Consequently, I cannot say that in most cases a systematic approach is followed.
1. Views on the administering of church discipline

A. Church discipline is a positive continuous process which aims at developing Christlike characters in each member of the church.

B. The matter of discipline within the church is the undergirding of its existence. Jesus wills that His church be an orderly body of followers in whom the Holy Spirit indwells to effect God's plans, purposes, and to restore His character. Hence, the whole pastor-parishioner relationship is similar to that of Jesus and the twelve disciples. It is an encounter of discipline through the teaching of the Holy Word, and its sole aim is the development of the Christ-like man through personal submission of Jesus as Saviour and Lord.

C. Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to be His chief agent in the work of discipline. In John's gospel his function is to convict of sin, convince of righteousness, teach all truth, and lead to Jesus. This I would think is as apt a definition of church discipline to be found anywhere. It covers all the aspects and nuances of discipline. It takes the sinner and leads him into valid and objective self evaluation, revealing his real strengths and weaknesses; creates within him the need to know and grow; shows him the gestalt of the right life; and introduces him to the person who can do for him all that needs to be done.
2. Pastoral attitudes toward church discipline

A. There are few of our pastors who demonstrate that they have really come to terms with the real meaning, purpose, and outcomes of discipline. There is a consciousness of right and wrong and in most cases a strong inclination to maintain right. There is the factor of pressure from the general church community, church board, and special interest groups within the church resulting from the combination of the pastor's background references, his awareness of duty, and his response to pressures; you discover an attitudinal profile from lax to ultra-rigid. However, within this range most of our pastors are somewhere nearer laxness than ultra rigidity. On the other hand, the average church board member usually demands action to keep the church clean.

3. The approach followed

Within the church there is a very narrow concept of discipline, the main reason for this being that discipline is for those who have fallen from grace or who are problematic. Hence, usually when we talk about discipline in the West Indian church, we are looking at some form of expression of displeasure and non-acceptance, a punitive measure which the church must exact on all those who infringe the fundamental standards of conduct. This negative aspect of discipline that is practiced in our churches is usually wrongly emphasized since the redemptive purpose is seldom ever communicated. In many instances this type of discipline is legalistic, impersonal, and sometimes reeks of the inhumane.
1. View on the administering of church discipline

A. Church discipline is administered to express the disapproval of the church for careless living on the part of members that dishonor their Savior and bring a reproach on the church. The purpose of such discipline is to cause the member to change his course of action, seek pardon from the Lord, and be restored to good and regular standing in the church.

B. If God could help us to take proper preventative measures, educating our members, then there will be less need for church discipline.

2. Pastoral attitudes toward church discipline

I am happy to report that the majority of our ministers are not over-anxious to administer church discipline. They do it rather reluctantly. There are still a few who seem bent on purifying the church and do administer discipline indiscriminately, but the majority are patient and do everything possible to restore the erring ones to good fellowship rather than meting out discipline. When everything has been done and there is no response, only then do they administer discipline. I believe the majority see it as an important function of the church and are judicious in administering it.

3. The approach followed

I think that we fall short in this respect. I am not satisfied that every effort is made to restore the disciplined ones. We
have been a bit callous in our dealing with the erring and we are working towards a change.
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