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The Ministry A Review and An Assessment

TO MEET a request to review and reflect on currents of theological thought on the Ministry over the last fifteen years is no easy task. Part of the difficulty is that the theological contributions are not on the whole impressive. It is also and inevitably true that any arbitrary starting point is likely to involve breaking in on some debate already under way. It may be best to settle for a selective presentation, and to look back initially to the immediate post-war period.

Dom Gregory dixit — and all that

In 1946 *The Apostolic Ministry* edited by Kenneth Kirk burst upon a wondering ecclesiastical world. It was the ultimate Anglo-Catholic blockbuster, designed to establish the historic episcopate once for all as of the *esse* of the Church, and to draw a line between this essential Ministry and all other derivative ministries. For the first time for many a long year massive theological undergirding was provided for a conception of the Ministry and of apostolic succession, in the light of which non-episcopal ministries might be adjudged spiritually efficacious but totally invalid. Amid a mass of solid scholarship the exegetical pyrotechnics of Austin Farrer and Lionel Thornton compelled attention; but brightest of all flamed the rockets of Dom Gregory who, with characteristically Dixian flair, plundered Jewish sources (via Kittel's *Wörterbuch*) and early christian liturgy to portray the Apostolate in terms of *shaliach*

and to interpret the New Testament from the standpoint of a selective reading of Hippolytus.

The counter-attacks, once mounted, were trenchant and in the end overwhelming. In *The Ministry of the Church* (1947) progressive Anglican evangelicals fired their review salvos, refusing to recognise as christian the doctrine of God that the offending viewpoint expressed. T. W. Manson in *The Church's Ministry* (1948) undertook to demonstrate that the only essential Ministry was that of the Risen Lord Himself; and in *The Scottish Journal of Theology* (Sept. 1948) the mighty cannons of the Church of Scotland volleyed and thundered through twenty two learned pages. By 1949 Oxford undergraduates were buying up unwanted copies of *The Apostolic Ministry* from W. H. Smith and Son for 7/6 each and selling them to Blackwell's secondhand department for 15/- a copy. *Sic transit gloria mundi.*

The controversy spluttered on into the 1950s. The *coup de grace* was given to the argument from *shaliach* by Ehrhardt in *The Apostolic Succession* (1953). Yet questions remained. Was episcopacy of the *esse* or of the *bene esse* of the Church? Or had the whole discussion gone off down a blind alley? Westcott House, Cambridge believed that it had. The result was *The Historic Episcopate* (1954) edited by Kenneth Carey. Its contributors unveiled a third option. Episcopacy was of the *plene esse* of the Church. It was a necessary mark of the fulness and wholeness of the Body of Christ. This view was itself savaged by Eugene Fairweather in *Episcopacy Re-asserted* (1955); but by then the debate was running out of steam. Other concerns were becoming prominent. When a chastened Gabriel Hebert in *Apostle and Bishop* (1963) offered some second thoughts on the work of 1946 the ecclesiastical world strode on unheeding.

Some unfinished business

It is salutary to enquire in what way all this is still relevant. Not only does the whole discussion seem to belong to a bygone age. It also seems remote from nonconformist concern. Yet such a judgement would be too hasty and superficial. Significant questions have been thrown up. Issues have been tabled that cannot finally be bypassed or ignored.

In the first instance, it is important to remind ourselves that the controversy thus reviewed was prompted and maintained by the progress of union negotiations in the Indian sub-continent, notably in the formation of the Church of South India, secondarily in the movement towards united Churches in Ceylon and North India. It cannot be taken for granted that reunion schemes can for ever be kept at so discreet a distance.

Methodism in this land may be able to court the Church of England on the basis of a studied ambiguity in the doctrine of the Ministry, but if classic English nonconformity ever gets to grips with the Anglican negotiators all the fundamental issues will again be on the table. It accordingly behoves all who are not wedded to separate denominational existence as an article of the orthodox Faith to discern more clearly where they stand and why they stand there.

It is also important to remember that however inconclusive the debate of the 1940s and 1950s may have been, the passing of the years did see some significant shifts in ground. The movement of biblical theology transposed a good many party refrains into a new and more singable key. One of the timeless books of the twentieth century, which still in unseen and unrecognised ways fertilises the contemporary situation, was A. M. Ramsey's *The Gospel and the Catholic Church* (1936). Here Church order was seen as rooted in the substance of the Faith, and the episcopate was set forward as in some sense an implication of the Gospel. Such a position was and is vastly more open to constructive debate than arguments based on the silences of the New Testament and the ambiguities of the early tradition.

But what was the episcopate in question? It was not necessary the gaitered dignitaries of the Church of England. That was universally agreed. In any event, the practical problem for nonconformists was increasingly located not in the practice of the bishops but in the theories of their supporters. Not only in the seventeenth century did the ranks emerge as "more zealous for episcopacy than the bishops". Wrote Nathaniel Micklem (*British Weekly*, 15th Nov. 1951): "I cannot help wishing that Anglican enthusiasts for bishops would leave their bishops alone and accept their lead; for we unprofitable Free Churchmen could, I suspect, enjoy many happy picnics with the bishops, if the ecclesiastical footpads in the Lower House of Convocation did not always hold us up".

However that might be, the shift in the 1950s lay not only in the closer theological relating of Gospel, Church Order, and Ministry but also in the exchanging of preoccupation with the episcopate for concern with oversight or *episcopate*. Not the pedigree of bishops but the reality of *episcopate* became the dominant question. At worst this shift could represent an evasion of the problem; but at best it could offer new hope by refraining an intractable issue in more basic and more theological terms. The Joint Report from the Anglican-Presbyterian Conversations (1957) accordingly provided the most significant approach to emerge from reunion discussions in Britain. The Church of Scotland might find its conclusions anathema. It was

by no means as certain that the New Testament would entirely disown them.

A cluster of commissions.

By this time, however, the prevailing winds had changed. Attention was increasingly being focused not upon the Church but upon the world, and therefore upon the purpose and effectiveness of the Ministry. A new range of issues were broached in the W.S.C.F. Greybook *Theological Training in the Modern World*, produced by Keith Bridston in 1954. In that report I find myself quoted in the following terms: "There is a considerable and growing feeling . . . that the Christian Ministry . . . is an irrelevant profession". That cry was to echo through the remaining years of the fifties and becoming a deafening shout in the sixties. It was against this background of perplexity and confusion that *The Purpose of the Church and its Ministry* by H. R. Niebuhr attempted in 1956 to speak to the American situation. Yet its reframing of the ministerial task in terms of "pastoral direction" signalled the end of an era rather than plotting the contours of the future.

The pressures multiplied. As the world displaced the Church in theological preoccupation, a rediscovery of the laity began to take place. In 1957 Yvres Congar's *Lay People in the Church* was captivating the English-speaking world. It was followed in 1958 by *A Theology of the Laity* from Hendrik Kraemer. New concepts were abroad. The Church existed for mission. Therefore Church order must serve that fundamental calling. Therefore "ministry" was not primarily to the Church but to the world, and it was exercised by the laity. Did the Ministry then find justification as an "enabling" agency, equipping the laity to be the Church in the world?

So matters stood at the beginning of the 1960s. The story of the last decade has been mainly one of "occasional" studies and reports. But it was left to Karl Barth to speak the definitive prologue in the *Church Dogmatics IV. 3. Part 2*. Here was provided the systematic theological articulation of a thrust of understanding that was to govern, in often unacknowledged ways, contemporary answers as well as contemporary questions. The preeminence of mission, the significance of the world, the centrality of the laity—all these insights met and mingled, were given christological setting and coherence, and were set forth with characteristic relevance and power. The foundations of understanding, on which continuing discussion on the Ministry would be based, were well and truly laid.

Such discussion was most obviously pursued under the aegis of the World Council of Churches, which proceeded to spawn working groups and enquiries in almost reckless profusion.

First in the field was the Division of World Mission and Evangelism whose enquiry, initiated in the context of the crisis over missions which marked the 1950s, bore fruit in a statement on *A Tent-Making Ministry* (1962) and a pamphlet edited by David Paton under the title *New Forms of Ministry* (1965). Over this whole enterprise brooded the spirit of a rediscovered Roland Allen.

At this point the Division of Studies took a hand. In 1964 it initiated a four year project devoted to Patterns of Ministry and Theological Education. An interim statement, laying down the central task of the Ministry as being concerned with the equipping of the whole People of God for service, was made available in 1965. A final report, stemming from the Northwood Consultation of 1967, was presented to the W.C.C. Assembly in Uppsala (1968). An incidental bonus of this enquiry was a book from Steven Mackie: *Patterns of Ministry* (1969).

Action then moved to the Faith and Order Commission whose Working Committee on Christ, the Holy Spirit and the Ministry decided in 1967 that a detailed examination of the problem of Ordination was overdue. A statement on *The Meaning of Ordination* (1968) rehashed the New Testament evidence and attempted to reframe traditional controversies in less intractable terms. A consultation in 1970 travelled over a wide range of specially prepared "papers". A final report was presented in 1971 to the Faith and Order Commission.

The erratic pilgrimage of the World Council of Churches' multifarious operations can be traced through the pages of the *International Review of Missions, Study Encounter, Ministry, Laity, et al.* He that endures to the end can at least claim full marks for doggedness and application. Meanwhile, however, the British Council of Churches had been stirring the pot. Its Consultative Committee on Training for the Ministry sponsored an investigation which resulted in a report on *The Shape of the Ministry* (1965). Here the pattern of the future was bravely and constructively charted — though later work commissioned by the Consultative Committee proved somewhat disappointing. Set alongside such heady ecumenical potions, the Baptist report on *The Doctrine of the Ministry* (1961) seemed a trifle flat and insipidly parochial.

The biblical agenda.

What does it all amount to? Where do we go from here? Back to the New Testament perhaps. But if so, it has to be with a much keener recognition that there are no solutions to be had for the asking. "Everybody has won and all must have prizes". So Streeter laid it down a generation ago. All denominations could locate their pattern of Church order within the pages of

the New Testament and thus legitimate their Ministries on the highest authority.

Perhaps. But the fundamental question is thereby already evaded. What if the real truth is that there are no prizes? What if the New Testament just does not sponsor this particular marathon, and we have all entered a race that scripture forgot to organise? It is easy enough for nonconformists to search through the "gifts" of Ephesian 4 until they reach "pastors and teachers" and conclude that they have identified their contemporary Ministry. It is however open to question whether we are in fact dealing here with functionaries set apart to specialised tasks. The situation is much more fluid and flexible than that. We may have to conclude that the New Testament does not provide a blueprint for the Church's Ministry. Perhaps a *doctrine* of the Ministry is all it has to offer.

Where would that conclusion take us? In *The Pioneer Ministry* (1961) A. T. Hanson re-examined the Pauline evidence, giving special attention to the Corinthian epistles. He concluded that the Ministry is the *pioneer* Church. The apostles were the faithful Remnant, the bridge between Christ and the New Testament communities; and the Ministry which is truly apostolic continues the apostolic task of being pioneers of the christian life in order that the Church itself may be led in its turn to live that same life. This is clearly Ministry understood in a functional and representative way.

This may or may not be the Pauline view of the Ministry. Even if it is, a more basic question still remains to be answered. In what precise sense can we say that the New Testament is concerned to provide even a *doctrine* of the Ministry? How far are its conclusions sociologically governed? How far are they designed to be of eternal significance? How far are they the answer only for the cultural milieu of the first century A.D.? How exclusively do they arise from and relate to an expanding missionary situation?

Once that issue is raised, the options seem intolerably wide open? How is a judgement to be made as to what is permanent and what is changing? How to avoid being blown to and fro by every new cultural wind? How locate the landmarks and the criteria? The problem is a serious one. It is not however new. It is simply a variant of the age-old question of the relationship of the Son and the Spirit. The Spirit is not the spirit of the age but the Spirit of Jesus Christ and therefore identifiable by reference to historic revelation mediated through scripture. That frail craft which is the Church is always exposed to the danger of being blown helplessly in any direction by hurricane winds. If she is to catch the wind of the Spirit she must always

hoist the christological sail.

Not that it is ever a simple task. It constantly demands the making and remaking of delicate distinctions between order and organisation which themselves are dependent on a much more penetrating use of scripture than has been customary. Yet at least a compass and a direction are afforded. Order and organisation, form and flexibility, are both inescapably required. Order is christologically determined. Organisation is the changing expression of order under the movement of the Spirit in terms of the contemporary world. So it is that Church order can never be treated as a secondary, trifling, inessential question. The Church must be ordered by the Gospel. If there is failure here, the result is the disobedience of dis-order. What does this imply for an understanding of the Ministry?

It means that T. W. Manson was right. There is only one essential Ministry and that is the Ministry of the Risen Lord. It is into *that* Ministry that the whole Church enters; it is *that* Ministry in which she shares. The ascended Lord continues *his* Ministry through his Body. The ministry of the Church is therefore, first and foremost, a corporate ministry, rooted in baptismal incorporation into Christ. Only within that corporate ministry does the ordained Ministry arise.

Nor is this all. To affirm that the Church must be ordered by the Gospel indeed dictates the confession that there is but one essential Ministry which is that of the Risen Lord. It also prompts the recognition that all ministry, being a reflection of the one Ministry, must from first to last be conformed to the pattern of the ministry of the incarnate Christ. As the Word made flesh, crucified and risen, He is a true prophet and true priest in the kingliness of his servant-ministry. On the ground of baptismal incorporation into his death and resurrection, his Body the Church shares in the eternal Ministry of her Head, preaching the word, offering the sacraments, shouldering the cross. And any ordained Ministry arising within that corporate priesthood must betray the same cruciform pattern, proclaiming the word, carrying the sacraments, living out the atonement in travail of love for the world.

If this is so, it may be possible to move, at least provisionally, to a conclusion as to the crucial function of the ordained Ministry. In what sense does the Ministry belong to the order rather than the organisation of the Church? In what sense is the Ministry necessary rather than optional? If the Ministry of the Lord is exercised through the ministry of the whole People of God, why an ordained Ministry at all? Perhaps the central answer of the New Testament can be simply stated. The Ministry is given by the Lord of the Church to his People

so that the Church may be the Church.

The statement sounds impressive. What does it mean? Surely this. The Church which is faithful and obedient is conformed to Christ, ordered by the Gospel. All her members are indeed called to contribute to this conformation and to accept responsibility for this obedience. Yet upon the Ministry a central, focal, and representative responsibility is laid. It is to promote the christological ordering of the whole Body by constantly recalling it to its apostolic foundations, exposing it to the arriving Kingdom, setting it under the Cross and Resurrection, that it may ever and again be re-formed by the Spirit. That is why the ordained Ministry that is crucial to the People of God is and can be nothing other than a Ministry of Word of Sacrament. For it is the Word and Sacrament that prise open the Church for the coming of her Lord.

Reshaping the Ministry.

To define the nature of the Ministry theologically is to take a momentous step. Whatever decision is made at this point will and must govern ensuing discussion. It is futile to talk about the Ministry until a clear definition of its essential nature has been tabled. It is failure here that has condemned no small part of the contemporary debate to confusion and fatuity.

Yet once a conclusion has been reached at this profound level the movement from order to organisation can and must take place, and in this sphere most of the options are necessarily open. In the facing of the vast diversity of questions that arise, two criteria of decision become operative. One is the Gospel, its thrust and its demand. The other is the contemporary world, its shape and need. Patterns of ministry must express and not deny the Gospel. They must also be deeply relevant to modern society. Here theology and sociology join hands, and we enter the recent debate on a whole range of issues.

We begin by asking as to the task of the Ministry. Is it to build up a gathered congregation? Is it to train the laity so that they may effectively bear witness in the world? Is it to equip them so that they may truly discharge their own ministry and mission? Such a view has been increasingly under attack. If the preoccupations of the Ministry are almost exclusively ecclesiastical, is it to be wondered that the Church conforms itself to this pattern? Is it surprising if the modern Church is structured for anything rather than mission? What may have been at least partly defensible in so-called Ages of Faith surely becomes intolerable in a missionary situation. In any event, how can a Ministry removed from the secular world effectively prepare others to be Christ's People in it? Must not the Ministry be, in Hanson's phrase, "the spearhead of the

Church", leading from in front rather than prompting from behind?

Here at all costs it is important to try and keep our sights clear. The Minister serves the Church in Word and Sacrament in order that the Church may be ordered by the Gospel. To imagine that this by definition removes him from the world into some ecclesiastical greenhouse or relegates him from the battleground into the army cookhouse is to misunderstand completely the nature of the Gospel which he is commissioned to bear. The Gospel is for the world. The Church is in the world. The Ministry that is faithful cannot be other than in the world and for the world. It lives on the boundaries. It is called to stand on the frontiers. To stand in any other place is to ensure that the Word can neither be heard nor communicated, that the Sacrament becomes emptied of significance. But none of this in any way affects the truth that the Ministry is *to* the Church, and *therefore* and *thereby* for the world.

Of course the Minister may shrink from the implications of his calling and shelter within the "religious" spheres. Of course the community he serves may by its structures press him into the confines of ecclesiasticism. Of course Church and Ministry can connive together to keep the world at safe distance and bar the doors against the disturbance of the Gospel. What is not so clear is that the proper response lies in reframing understanding of the essential nature of the Ministry. In any event, the conflict of interpretation may not be as basic as might appear. To define the task of the Ministry in terms of "building up the congregation", "training the laity", "equipping the Church for mission", is subtly to distort its fundamental role. The Ministry that is called to serve the Church in Word and Sacrament that the Church may be ordered by the Gospel is something more than a group of "resource" personnel.

Yet to grant a definition of the Ministry in terms of Word and Sacrament by no means obviously settles all difficulties. Many voices have been raised denying the relevance of such an understanding to the actualities of mission in the modern world. The Minister in pastoral charge of a local congregation could be seen as relevant in an age when men and women lived, worked, played, and slept in one place. Today society is mobile. Men sleep in one place, work in another, find their recreation in yet another. If mission is to be to the whole man, the concepts of the parish and the gathered congregation seem outmoded. The unit of total living is increasingly not a locality but an area, a "human zone" in Boulard's phrase. How does the Ministry relate to this new situation? The problem indeed goes deeper. If the growing points of society lie outside the local

congregation, in complex structures of education, industry, science, medicine, communications, in the specialised areas of life, are not specialist Ministers required to bear the Gospel effectively to them and in them. Is the Ministry of Word and Sacrament meaningful here? If so, how? Or is some wider concept of the Ministry required?

The debate on such issues continues. Perhaps some of the answers must elude us unless and until we move towards a more solidly grounded understanding of the distinction between the Ministry and the laity. The inheritance of the past still haunts us, leaving its false equations to flavour thinking in unexamined ways. Minister=professional, full-time, paid. Laity=non-professional, part-time, unpaid. The dichotomy is complete. Scripture and theology are nowhere to be seen. All the real issues have been neatly obscured.

Is a *paid* Ministry of the *esse* of the Gospel? Clearly it is not. Exit Distinction One. Is a *full-time* Ministry mandatory? At the bar of scripture and theology the proposition falls. Exit Distinction Two. Should the Ministry be understood as a *profession*? At least the point is worthy of discussion. Professionalism developed in modern times as life became increasingly fragmented and specialisation grew. A professional is concerned with one aspect of existence, one department of living; he is an expert, but only within his own limited field. Therefore, when the Ministry is cast as a profession two things happen. On the one hand, the Minister is confined to a limited area of activity where he may be presumed to have competence. On the other hand, the laity are encouraged in the view that their christian responsibility resides exclusively in that one part of their living where they are not amateurs. The gulf between Ministry and laity is complete. And both are confronted by narrowly limited christian challenges.

Just here the measured words of Justus Freytag must be taken seriously: "If responsibility is the response of the whole man to the whole of reality, then it can no longer be confined in society today to the narrow range of rationalized professional duties". (*New Forms of Ministry*, ed. D. Paton). Put beside that the comment of Erik Routley. The Minister "remains, in a specialised and therefore spiritually self-indulgent world, one of the very few people who is obliged consistently and regularly and faithfully to do things which he does not regard himself as good at, and which, if he goes on doing them until he is seventy, he will never find easy". (*British Weekly*, 7th Apr. 1966). In the light of such considerations as these, current enthusiasms for a specialised Ministry and teams of professionals may require some hefty theological and sociological deflation.

Is it, then, Exit Distinction Three? Basically, yes. Yet one significant qualification needs to be entered. When professionalism is too lightly banished, learning is devalued and standards sag. It becomes fatally easy to conclude that because spiritual maturity and faithfulness are primary requirements everything beyond a modicum of competence is inessential. If the Ministry is truly to fulfil its specific calling in the modern world, theological awareness in increasing range and depth may be adjudged indispensable.

If the conventional but superficial distinctions between Ministry and laity fall, what is the differentia? In terms of our concern it may be more helpful to reframe the question. What is the distinction between the ordained Ministry and lay ministries? The answer would then be that there belong to the Ministry all, whether part-time or whole-time, paid or unpaid, who have been set apart to the specific task of ordering the Church under the Gospel through Word and Sacrament. All other ministries are lay ministries, whether they be whole-time or part-time, paid or unpaid.

It is however on this point that a good deal of contemporary discussion is focused. If it be agreed that the twentieth century world calls for a multitude of ministries, many of them of a specialist kind, how are these to be related to the ordained Ministry? Are they to be seen as falling within its scope, as new variations on an old theme? Or are they to be seen as fresh facets of lay ministry? Argued in such terms, the debate might seem like a mere haggle over terminology. Yet it does force upon the Church some clearer and sharper thinking about the meaning of ordination, and it does concentrate attention upon a sensitive area that cannot be by-passed in any broad discussions on reunion. Nowhere in official negotiations has the issue been handled more flexibly and boldly than in the COCU *Principles of Church Union* and *Plan of Union* tabled in the United States.

If the Ministry is given for the ordering of the Church by the Gospel, and if it ministers *in* Word and Sacrament, how far can its bounds be properly extended? When does the relationship to Word and Sacrament become so tenuous, strained, and indirect, that it ceases to have reality? It will not be easy to give confident answers to such questions. We may have to live with the provisional for a long time. What seems certain is that any confining of the ordained Ministry to the pastoral charge of a local church will be indefensible.

The denominational agenda.

No denomination can insulate itself from the questions posed in recent decades, for the most significant of such questions

well up from the pressures of our time. The option is simply this. Shall we merely react to the forces that play upon us? Or shall we in some measure seize the initiative? If the response is to be active rather than passive, then policies are required and an agenda becomes necessary. What are some of the basic issues that now confront us?

It would be folly to imagine that any radical reshaping of the Ministry can take place apart from a reshaping of church life. The call is still for a Church shaped in obedience to the Gospel and responsive to the needs of the world. We have to ask how far existing forms of the ordained Ministry are adequate, and what new forms are or might be required. We cannot assume that the Ministry of Word and Sacrament given to the Church by her Lord can be equated with the conventional pastoral ministry in a local situation. We have carefully to scrutinise all suggestions for a supplementary Ministry to see precisely what they mean and imply, lest we saddle ourselves with yet another device for perpetuating existing church situations.

In the second place, we have to attempt to determine what forms of ministry to the world may be demanded. What gifts is God giving to his People in our time that his mission may go forward? The ministries may be itinerant, specialist, experimental, part-time. Which ministries have to be supported by some larger unit than a local church? If so, on what basis should denominational financial resources be allocated? Can the channelling of such resources almost exclusively into the maintenance of local pastoral ministries be any longer justified?

If God purposes for his Church a diversity of ministries, we have to ask, in the third place, how such ministries shall be elicited and trained. What implications emerge for theological education? Is it any longer possible to tolerate a situation in which a call to "ministry" tends to mean only one thing, and that a preparation for a paid pastoral ministry in a local church, with a few later deviations perhaps permitted?

Finally, the question of our denominational role inescapably imposes itself. We may maintain a separate denominational existence if we will. What we cannot do is to ignore the existence of other christian bodies who also share in the mission of God. Unless we are prepared to take on Britain in the name of Christ, looking neither to the right nor to the left, then we have to face the issue of our proper denominational role in the light of the total christian forces of our land. And then the question becomes: what is the contribution that we denominationally are called to make? Where does our genius point us? Where must our resources be committed? What gifts has the

Spirit given to *us* and how best do we release and deploy them? Grandiose plans to be everywhere and do everything can be both as insidious and as appealing as comforting preparations for doing a little more efficiently what we have always done. We need faithfulness. We need openness. Perhaps most of all we need humility.

NEVILLE CLARKE.

Baptists and Discipline in the 17th Century

ALTHOUGH a large proportion of space in Church Books and Church Minute Books is occupied with matters of discipline I have found very little published material dealing with this aspect of early Baptist procedure. I suggest that there are at least two reasons for this. It seems probable, in the first place, that those who have undertaken the writing of the history of their own church have refrained from dealing with instances of discipline in a desire to accord with the principle of not washing their dirty linen in public. As for the writers of more general Baptist history, I would suggest that perhaps constant reference to early Baptist records has made them so familiar with matters of discipline that they have forgotten that this is a characteristic feature of early Baptist life.

Method of entry to a Baptist congregation. Applications for entry to a Baptist congregation were treated with considerable care. It was incumbent upon the applicant to be able to recount his conversion experience, and his subsequent conduct had to be such as befitted a 'professor'. Application for, and acceptance into, membership were matters of weight and seriousness. Doubtless one reason for the safeguards placed around membership applications was protection against taunts from opponents that the Baptists were resurrecting the anarchy of Münster, and encouraging disorder. But of greater importance was the single-minded effort to adhere closely to what were seen as the New Testament standards for the Church. Similar factors would seem to apply to the efforts to maintain purity within the congregation by means of disciplinary sanctions.

The Practice Of Discipline. 'If our snuf(f)s are our superfluities of naughtiness; our snuffers then are those righteous reproofs, rebukes, and admonitions which Christ has ordained to be in his House for good . . . ' so said John Bunyan, referring to the snuffers which accompanied the candlesticks in Solomon's temple.¹