

BUCKINGHAM

REPORT

AN IN-DEPTH CRITIQUE OF THE ISSUES, PEOPLE &
EVENTS AFFECTING TODAY'S CHRISTIAN LEADERS

OVERCOMING THE WELFARE MENTALITY

Many successful churches attribute their success to the ability of their members to feel a sense of ownership. Similarly, many large American corporations such as Chrysler, IBM and Time magazine have been working hard to make sure all employees, from floorsweepers to vice presidents, feel they are a vital part of the company. This causes development of pride. Employees want their company to succeed, not just so they can benefit financially, but because it is **THEIR** company. Whatever project they are working on they feel they own a part of it.

The larger a church grows the easier it is for members to look to someone other than self to meet their need. Industry is the same. The recent problems at Eastern Airlines have been caused purely and simply by greed. Management wanted more for themselves. The mechanics, pilots and stewardess unions demanded more for self. The result almost sent the company into bankruptcy. The attitude on the part of a number of employees I talked to was "So what. Let the company fail. I can always get a job somewhere else."

Whose Responsibility?

"That's not my responsibility" is a common phrase in industry. "Picking up trash off the sidewalk is not in my union contract." But when an employee sees the company president stooping to pick up a cigarette butt from the front steps, it causes him to feel that maybe he should do something extra also—even if he's not paid for it.

In my own life I don't think I've ever caught a great spiritual truth through a sermon or by what anyone else has ever taught. The truths which have changed my life have come out of example and/or from my own personal study of the Word. When that has happened the preaching and teaching of others have fortified, or adjusted, what I have discovered.

Pasted in the front of my Bible is a quote from Boris Pasternak's **Doctor Zhivago**. You may want to clip it and paste it in the front of your Bible also.

I think that if the beast who sleeps in man could be held down by threats—any kind of threat, whether of jail or of retribution after death—then the highest emblem of humanity would be the lion tamer in the circus with his whip, not the prophet who sacrificed himself. Don't you see, this is just the point—what has for centuries raised man above the beast is not the cudgel but an inward music: the irresistible power of unarmed truth, the power attraction of its example.

There is a constant danger, as the church grows larger, for it to slip into a welfare mentality. "You owe me" is the way many think about the church. The responsibility of the leader is to challenge his people, week after week, to see that each one is responsible for his own spiritual growth. The paradox, of course, is that real motivation must be internalized. In other words: I must feel it is important in order for me to act on it.

Who Gets the Credit?

For instance, what if you or someone in leadership made a colossal mistake? Say the offering bags were stolen after an usher put them in the vestibule while he answered the phone. If the church is a genuine family, rather than an organization, the entire church would feel responsible. Unfortunately, many churches would simply blame the usher. The same question applies to an enormous success. Say the music director composes a song which is sung all over the world. Does the church feel it is "their" song or "his"?

Each book I have written—and there have been 37 over the last 18 years—has been a joint project between me and my church. To be sure, I did the research and writing and negotiated the publishing and sales. But because I am part of a church family, they not only take pride in my work, but actually feel I could not have done it without them. They are correct. This is true not only because I have deliberately involved them. I have not taken a single writing project without involving the elders, my home group, some close friends and to a great degree the entire church body. I have kept them posted on

progress and problems—and when the book is published they receive the first copies—at the publisher's discount. I've never tried to make a dime off any books sold to members of my church, any more than I would sell at a profit to my own children. The result is a sense of ownership of anything I produce—at all levels in the church. That's family, where children share in the success of their daddy—and the daddy feels pride when one of his children is honored.

The ownership mentality means no member can ever fail because he is part of a much larger body which will support him, buoy him up and guarantee his success. Because the body is successful, all members are successful also. That cannot be translated into a church where the attitude is "so-what," or "I'll just go somewhere else if things don't work out to suit me." It boils down to a definition of covenant I picked up from Minnie Coleman who recently conducted a workshop in our church. Minnie says covenant means: "abandoning the option to quit" and "your welfare at my sacrifice."

WHO'S IN CHARGE HERE?

If you were to be approached by a church or Christian organization which wanted you to assume the top leadership position, and you were interested, what would be the most important question you could ask?

According to Philip Yancey in a soon-to-be-published article in **Leadership**, David Hubbard faced this when approached by Fuller Theological Seminary about the president's position. His basic question was this: "What is your philosophy of power?"

It is imperative for the leader to determine where final authority lies. In some cases it will be with the congregation. In others it will be with a board, a vestry, a session or with the elders. Some churches vest final authority in the leader himself. Others see the authority base as trans-local; that is, it resides in a bishop, a presbytery, an apostle or the denomination.

The search committee may not be able to answer this question. Thus the wise leader knows he should look at the track record of the organization. Is the pastor really in charge, or is he a figurehead authority—such as the queen of England? Does the pastor have the authority to make critical decisions? Can he fire a staff member? Can he hire one? Can he set salaries? Or, perhaps even more critical, does he have the authority to keep a staff member who some of the power-figures in the church feel should be fired? He needs to know who is in charge. If the elders are the final authority, do they have to report to the congregation? To the denomination?

More and more pastors are switching from congregational to apostolic authority. Yet there is a real danger here, for the unsubmitted pastor can become a law unto himself. Apostolic authority, while ideal, needs to be adjusted by having an eldership to which the apostle submits. They, in turn, recognize their leader as God's man. This allows the pastor the privilege of submitting to a group of men who honor both him and his office. Such a government maintains the autonomy of the local church, the authority of the elders and the oversight of the pastor and leaves room for the leadership to submit to an extra-local presbytery for oversight if that is part of their framework.

One thing is apparent. There is no set "New Testament" order for church government. But in all government structure, authority is the key issue. Until that is defined and accepted, no one will be secure.

DOING NOTHING

At a recent meeting of the National Leadership Conference in Ridgecrest, North Carolina, New York pastor Paul Garlington—sounding and looking every bit like Bill Cosby—gently chastised pastors who do not know how to say no to people who want to consume their time. He illustrated it by setting up the common scenario of the person who calls the pastor and asks, "What are you going to be doing next Saturday night?"

The pastor looks at his calendar.

Pastor: "Hmmm, next Saturday night I'm doing nothing."

Person: "Wonderful, will you come speak to our Full Gospel Business Men's meeting?"

Pastor: "You must have misunderstood me. I said I was doing nothing next Saturday night."

Person: "I heard you. That means you are available, doesn't it?"

Pastor: "No, it means I am not available. I have already planned to **do nothing**. I have it written on my calendar, 'Do nothing!'"

Garlington says unless we plan leisure time and insist that nothing interrupt that time, someone will always find something to keep us busy. "Doing nothing" is just as important as "doing something."

ORGANIZATIONAL DRY ROT

Ever so often every Christian organization—be it a national ministry, a local church or even a home group—needs to pull back and ask the question, "Where do we go from here in the light of our goals and priorities?"

David Cummings relates a story of a meeting he had in Singapore with a representative of the Wilkinson razor blade company. The represen-

tative said several years ago Wilkinson came to a critical decision in trying to decide who they were and what they did. At that time the Gillette razor company was going through the same process of self-examination. Gillette believed they were in the shaving business. That meant they were to make shaving cream and other shaving paraphernalia as well as razor blades. Wilkinson, on the other hand, said they were in the business of providing cutting tools. That eliminated shaving cream, after-shave lotion and hair-remover for women's legs, but it opened the door for them to manufacture knives, shears and all sorts of cutting edges. Both companies started with razor blades but because of different goals went in different directions.

Which way is your organization going?
Which way is it supposed to go?

In an article entitled "How to Prevent Organizational Dry Rot," John W. Gardner lists 11 ways to detect dry rot in your group.

1. The organization begins to be more important than the people.
2. People begin to function as cogs in a machine.
3. There is a loss of creative thinking.
4. One is not free to ask uncomfortable questions any more.
5. People begin to serve the organization rather than the objectives of the organization.
6. The structure becomes rigid and inflexible.
7. The communication breakdown breaks down more and more—resulting in red tape and a repressive spirit.
8. The policy manual gets thicker.
9. People begin to develop special interest groups. Unity is polarized.
10. There is loss of initiative and involvement. And there is open criticism of the leadership.
11. The organization becomes large and the hierarchy thickens.

Second John 8 is the key. "Watch yourselves, that you might not lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward."

GOD AND POLITICS

There is a considerable amount of debate these days as to whether God still ordains people into public office. One of the nation's foremost Pentecostal television evangelists recently said he was not going to vote for Pat Robertson for president because he didn't want a "religious nut" in the White House.

When I suggested that it is possible God put Ronald Reagan in office—and may be ready to

"ordain" his successor—some of my friends warned me not to mix God and politics. There are dangers here, of course. Congressman Mark Siljander recently lost his bid for re-nomination in Michigan because he sent a tape to all pastors in his district the night before his election asking them to pray and "break the back of Satan." It was the same ploy which defeated Congressman John Conlan in Arizona several years ago. People reacted, and as a result Congress has lost an outspoken Christian.

Yet when it comes to national leadership, is it possible that God sometimes ordains certain people into office?

Case in point: the Philippines. On July 15 Emanuel Pelaez, Philippine ambassador to the United States, spoke at an informal dinner hosted by Wycliffe Bible Translators in Washington, D.C. Among the 84 guests who heard his talk were ambassadors from Indonesia, South Korea, Chad, Peru, Ecuador and Papua New Guinea, plus members of Ambassador Pelaez's staff. I am quoting directly from Pelaez's remarks. As you read them, think of the upcoming presidential campaign in the United States.

Remarks by the Philippine Ambassador

"The Philippines today is really...I don't know, I may be fanatical...but I look at it as God's experiment in building His kingdom on earth. We have a president who is very deeply rooted Christian.

"First she is the wife of the late Senator Benigno Aquino who was my colleague in the Senate. Senator Aquino was, to tell you the truth, just another politician like me. But he was incarcerated by President Marcos for seven long years. During those seven long years he found the Lord. He started reading the Bible, and he and his wife became devotees of the Bible when he was in the USA where he came to have a cardiac operation. When he went back seven years later he was a completely transformed man. He went back to restore democracy in our country and to restore our ancient spiritual values. Unfortunately he was killed on the tarmac as he just got off the plane."

Anointed to Be President

"That started a spiritual revolution in the Philippines, because the response of Mrs. Aquino and the response of the Christians with her was not violence—was not hatred. I realized that she was presidential material, that she could be the anointed one, when they buried the late Senator Aquino. At the funeral there were more than one million pressed people. The funeral cortege took 10 hours to cover a distance of about 10 miles. One harsh word, one word of incitement to

violence by Mrs. Aquino could have turned that crowd into a raging crowd, and God knows how many would have been killed.

"But her response to the death of her husband was reconciliation. 'In spite of everything we must accept that this is God's will,' she said.

"When she was asked about vengeance, she said, 'Well, as the Lord said, "Vengeance is mine." We'll be leaving all in His hands.'

"Suddenly the people looked at Mrs. Aquino as the only one who could be the guide of the country. She was a reluctant candidate. 'I will run only if you present me with a million signatures.' Two weeks later there were 1.2 million signatures. Then she said, 'I will run only if President Marcos cuts short his term and asks for a snap election.' And President Marcos cut short his term by one year and a half. Why that happened we do not know.

"On December 11—the deadline for certification—there were 11 candidates from the opposition. Somehow these 11 divided, quarreling, fractious opposition [candidates] got together—one half hour before the deadline—and chose only one presidential standard bearer, along with Vice President Laurel. I do not know how you could attribute that to human ingenuity or wisdom.

"Then came the election. What was the strength of the people? The people found strength in the calm of Mrs. Aquino. And all the churches—not only the Catholic church, but the evangelicals—called upon the people to defend the sanctity of the ballot. And they did, and some of them were killed in the process.

"And so Mrs. Aquino won; but even in the counting there was cheating. In the computer center of the government were some government leaders who were feeding false returns. Thirty women, Christian women, got up. (They were computer operators.) They said, 'We cannot be party to this fraud. They went to a church and denounced the fraudulence of the counting. The churches came out denouncing the fraud. This forced two of the most trusted people of the president to declare themselves against the president. 'We cannot recognize you as president, because we recognize Cory Aquino as having been elected by the people.'

"So came the revolution which you have seen. I have heard it said that 'the trouble with Christians is they do not use the most powerful weapon in their arsenal—the weapon of Christian love.' When the people surrounded this group of Enrile and Ramos who had declared

themselves against Marcos, they did so with a prayer on their lips. Cardinal Sin called for the people to go and rally. Within 20 hours he had over a million people out in the streets stopping the tanks of the soldiers of President Marcos. Not by talking, not by force of arms, not by violence, but by coming to them and telling them: 'We are Christian brothers. Do not shoot your brothers.' Nuns, women, mothers went to the soldiers with flowers and sandwiches. It was a festival of love. The soldiers joined the people, and Marcos, fearful for his life, fled."

Charismatic Revival

"Why has this happened? I say this has to do with the tremendous renewal that is going on in the Philippines today. The charismatic movement is everywhere. People are praying, whether it is in the hovels of the poor or in the mansions of the rich. Families are getting together. And everywhere you hear people say, 'The family that prays together stays together.'

"I became a Christian as a result of an attempt against my life. I had five bullet wounds in my back; 68 bullet holes were found in my car. My driver was killed. God miraculously spared me. When I was in the operating room one of my daughters, who is in the charismatic movement, prayed. Her Bible opened to Psalm 30, which in the Catholic New American Bible is entitled 'A prayer for deliverance from death.' The last part reads, 'Because of this I shall give you thanks, O Lord, forever. I shall continue singing your praise.'

"I saw that as a message for me to proclaim His Word. I left public life and started working with the Philippine Bible Society. Now I am here with you.

"When I left Manila my friends gave me a mission. They said, 'You go to the United States as a missionary of Christ disguised as an ambassador.' This afternoon I am throwing away the disguise and I am very happy to be associated with you. And to Wycliffe Bible Translators I say thank you for the really wonderful work you are doing for the Lord and for my people. May you continue to be in the Philippines for years and years to come."

