

BUCKINGHAM REPORT

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



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How Much Is Too Much?

While pastors may feel they are worth more than they are paid, and while the Bible may teach that shepherds should receive "double honor," the vast majority of Americans disagree. A new Gallup Poll shows that 74 percent of Americans believe a pastor who receives more than \$40,000 a year is overpaid. On the other hand, despite all the jokes about high-priced attorneys, the poll shows 76 percent of Americans believe lawyers should receive annual compensation of \$40,000 or more.

THE WAGES OF SIN PAY THE ATTORNEYS

An interesting lawsuit in the state of Washington uncovers the corruption that has infected many church leaders who are struggling to hold on to power rather than minister in power. The case study was presented in Richard Hammar's *Church Law & Tax Report*.

In 1967, a pastor organized a church. The church bylaws provided that the pastor was "recognized as the spiritual overseer of the church, ordained and appointed by God for the ministry and to shepherd the flock." The church's articles of incorporation specified that (1) the church would not have voting members; (2) the affairs of the church would be managed by a board of elders; (3) the church board would consist of three elders, plus the pastor—who was designated the permanent chairman (he could not be removed from office while living); and (4) neither the articles nor the bylaws could be amended without the pastor's approval. The bylaws specified that the pastor would serve for life unless he decided to leave and that he could veto any action of the board.

For 20 years, there were no problems with this arrangement. But in 1987, allegations of sexual misconduct on the part of the pastor surfaced. One elder testified that the pastor admitted to 27 acts of adultery over a period of 16 months. These alleged incidents resulted in lawsuits being filed

against the church. In the midst of this turmoil, the pastor signed a statement agreeing to step aside as pastor while the board conducted hearings into the allegations.

The board (without the pastor) conducted a series of hearings that lasted for five hours a day for several weeks. At the conclusion of these hearings, the board adopted a resolution placing the pastor on "special status." This meant he could resume his duties as pastor of the church, but he would not be permitted to be alone with any females. The board explained its action by stating that it was attempting to protect the church—and themselves—against additional lawsuits. This decision was announced to the church congregation in a special meeting.

The pastor refused to accept this special status or to honor the board's decision. Instead, he announced to the congregation that he was not under the authority of the elders and that he would resume his role of pastor without restriction. He also denied that any of the alleged acts occurred as a result of his "spiritual condition."

The board convened a meeting with the pastor in an attempt to reach a compromise. When it was clear that no agreement was possible, the three board members met without the pastor at another location and voted to amend the articles by removing the provision requiring the pastor to approve all amendments to the articles. They also voted to remove the pastor from office because of his breach of his "fiduciary duties" to the corporation.

The pastor immediately filed a lawsuit asking a civil court to determine whether or not the elders had the authority to amend the articles without his approval. A trial court ruled in favor of the elders, and the pastor appealed. The state Supreme Court ruled in favor of the pastor. It reasoned that

the articles clearly specified that they could not be amended without the pastor's approval, and that as a result the elders' attempt to amend the articles without his approval was null and void.

The court did acknowledge that, while it rejected the elders' attempt to amend the articles without the pastor's approval, it did not reject the attempt to remove the pastor from office: "We point out that this does not necessarily defeat the effort by the board to oust the pastor since the issue of breach of fiduciary duty still remains to be considered by the trial court."

Two justices dissented from the court's ruling. They lamented that the court's ruling "eliminates the board's authority to protect the interests of the church and makes the board inoperative. The pastor's veto power of the actions of the board impermissibly allows one director to grind the wheels of the corporation to a halt."

The dissenters also claimed that the pastor's written agreement to let the board conduct hearings into his alleged sexual misconduct amounted to a "waiver" of his veto power over the board's decision. For now, the case will proceed to trial on the issue of the board's authority to remove the pastor because of the alleged breach of his fiduciary duties to the corporation.

No mention was made of the pastor's sin against God and his flock, nor of the application of the principles of 1 Corinthians 6:1-8, which seem to have been forgotten by all parties.

Small wonder the Gallup Poll found that Americans think pastors are overpaid (and attorneys should be paid more). Prayer request: May God have mercy on us and save us from ourselves.

SEARCH COMMITTEE REPORT

Michael D. Thomas of Logos Language Institute wrote to say their church has been investigating candidates for pastor. They found only one to be suitable. He sent me the scratch sheets used by the committee with their comments on the other candidates—in case your church is interested in investigating any of them for future jobs.

- Noah: has 120 years of preaching experience but no converts.
- Moses: stutters; former congregation says he loses his temper over trivialities.
- Abraham: took off to Egypt during hard times. We heard he got into trouble with the authorities

and tried to lie his way out.

- David: unacceptable moral character; might have been considered for minister of music had he not "fallen."
- Solomon: reputation for wisdom, but doesn't practice what he preaches.
- Elijah: inconsistent, known to fold under pressure.
- Hosea: home in shambles; divorced, remarried to prostitute.
- Jeremiah: too emotional, alarmist; a "real pain in the neck," some say.
- Amos: no training; suited only as a fig-picker.
- John: calls himself a Baptist but lacks tact and dresses like a hippie; would not feel comfortable at a church potluck supper.
- Peter: horrible temper; was overheard denying Christ.
- Paul: writings lack tact, too harsh; appearance contemptible; preaches too long.
- Timothy: has potential, but too young for the job.
- Jesus: often offends church members with his preaching, especially Bible scholars; too controversial; even offended the search committee with pointed questions.
- Judas: practical, cooperative, good with money, cares for the poor. Search committee agrees he's just the man for our church.

RECOMMENDED CONFERENCES

● Restoring Fallen Leaders

Ministries Today and the Tabernacle Church in Melbourne, Florida, will sponsor a conference on restoring fallen leaders. Dates: September 19-21. Jackie and I will join with Don and Helen Crossland and other pastors and teachers who have been "restored" to deal with the principles, problems and practicalities of restoration. Write Don Crossland at P.O. Box 489, Melbourne, FL 32901.

● Management Seminar

Regent University will hold a top-level workshop for pastors of large churches, CEOs of parachurch ministries and headmasters of larger Christian academies. Theme: "The Maturing Leader: A Biblical Approach to Management." Location: CBN Conference Center, Virginia Beach, Virginia. Dates: June 24-26. Speakers: Bill Bright, Paul Kienel and myself. Call Carle Hunt at (804) 523-7063.

● Prophecy

The National Leadership Conference, one of the nation's best, will hold its annual conference at Ridgecrest, North Carolina. Theme: "A Prophetic Word for Changing Times." Dates: May 20-22. Speakers: John Wimber, Paul Cain, Bob Mumford and myself. Call (704) 669-6900.

● Writers' Conference

Author/editor David Manuel and I will direct a Christian writers' conference at the Community of Jesus on Cape Cod—to take advantage of autumn in New England. Dates: September 30-October 4. A manuscript submission is required. Besides lectures on the various phases of writing, individual time will be given to each manuscript. Poetess Barry French will teach on modern poetry. The conference is open to both published and non-published writers. For registration forms and manuscript requirements, write Lee Brownson, Community of Living Water, P.O. Box 443, Cornville, AZ 86325.

RUSSIAN REFUGEES

In the last Buckingham Report, I copied Jewish columnist Si Frumkin's article in which he told how Jews helped with the relocation of Christian Russian refugees. A letter from Billy Melvin, executive director of the National Association of Evangelicals, tells the other side of the story:

"Si Frumkin's assertion that American Christians didn't much care what happened' to Christians fleeing religious persecution in the Soviet Union does not correctly describe the response of U.S. evangelicals to these Soviet refugees.

"When Soviet believers first began to leave the U.S.S.R., World Relief of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) provided assistance in Europe and worked with hundreds of American evangelical churches to resettle these refugees in the United States. To make known the needs of these refugees, World Relief representatives met many times with the U.S. State Department and Immigration Bureau...and U.S.S.R. officials to resolve this situation.

"When U.S. policy change stranded 6,000 Christian refugees in the U.S.S.R. without homes or work, World Relief staff first brought this problem to the attention of U.S. policy-makers and the media. John White, president of NAE at that time, testified before Congress regarding the persecution facing

these Christians. Sen. William Armstrong, a committed evangelical, introduced legislation calling for the immediate resettlement of 2,000 of these refugees. Denominational leaders associated with the Pentecostal Fellowship of North America discussed this issue and agreed to support the efforts of World Relief. Our staff appeared on 'The 700 Club' to alert American believers to this need.

"Mr. Frumkin reports that he learned of the arrival of the first group of these stranded refugees from the September 22, 1990, issue of *The New York Times*. He neglects to report that this same article stated that 'the airlift is being directed by the National Association of Evangelicals through its refugee assistance arm, World Relief.' In fact, World Relief arranged for these flights, which were funded by several evangelical denominations, and sent representatives to the U.S.S.R. to resolve last-minute problems related to the departure of these refugees. Over 75 percent of these 6,000 stranded refugees will be sponsored by NAE member churches and denominations when they arrive in the States.

"While we are grateful for the assistance provided to Soviet Christian refugees from any group, it is simply not true that American believers have stood by and done nothing to help."

BURNING THE DEADWOOD IN THE CHURCH ORGANIZATION

When a pastor decides to clear out the deadwood in his church organization—or his staff—he had better ask how all that deadwood got there. In many cases, the problem is not really incompetent leaders, but inadequate job descriptions and performance appraisals.

Ask yourself: Why were these people selected? Probably for previous performance, loyalty and patience, enthusiasm, experience and seniority. But those aren't necessarily the best reasons to put someone in leadership. Consider:

- A leader may have done well in a previous position, but that alone does not qualify him for a new responsibility.
- Loyalty and patience are important qualities in a leader. But they are passive traits, and tell you nothing about the person's ability to take action and to lead.
- Proven willingness to attack problems is also important, but enthusiasm has to be managed in a more subtle fashion as one is given more responsibility.

● As for experience and seniority, they tell you where and how long the person has worked—but not how well.

Thus, while a person may have good qualities and a sterling character, you still need to ask: Are they getting the job done? If not, you need to ask: Have I spelled out for them in the form of a job description what is expected, and have I given proper oversight and supervision to help them assess their performance? Remember: It is the job of the boss to make sure competent people don't become deadwood in the first place.

MENDING BROKEN LEADERS

Last January, physically, emotionally and spiritually exhausted, Cal Huge "crashed." Huge, then coordinator for a large missionary organization, was living in Switzerland. He reached a point where he could no longer carry out his responsibilities of overseeing the work in Europe, the Middle East and Africa. One day, as he was considering running away from everything—including his family—he picked up a back issue of *Ministries Today* that his church sent to its missionaries. The cover story was about the Christian Training Center (formerly Inn of the Last Resort) in Franklin, North Carolina. Huge called the director, Larry Pons, and enrolled in a three-month program starting the following month.

"The program made me face up to my responsibilities as a husband and father," says Huge, a former attorney. "Because of my forceful personality, no one I knew had ever been able to be really frank with me and tell me things I needed to hear. Larry Pons was the first man I had ever met who actually stood up to me and told me where I was blowing it and what I needed to do to change. He helped me walk out what I had been preaching to others for years."

Days for the Huge family included private and corporate devotions, daily physical exercise, family-style meals with the others in the program, and group sessions. There were also afternoon chores: garden work, child care, washing dishes, baking and intercessory prayer. The physical work was designed to "get us to rub off each other's raw edges," Huge said. Of course, there was personal counseling with Pons and the center's founder, Jay Fesperman, whom Huge calls a "tough old bird."

Says Huge: "I now see my primary respon-

sibility as being a husband and father and I seek my fulfillment in those roles, not in my career. If our focus is on our career, we will tend to worry more about what we do than who we are. The most important thing I have to do in this life is to be a godly husband and father...My life is now restructured around my family rather than around my ministry and my personal desires."

When asked the most important thing he learned during his stint at CTC, Huge replies: "Life is relationships, not doing things."

It's tragic that it takes a breakdown (or a heart attack or cancer surgery or a divorce) for some of us to realize the importance of relationships. On the other hand, I'm grateful for places like Christian Training Center—and the growing number of other facilities around the nation—designed to put us back together when we fall down and break. More information on CTC is yours by calling or faxing the center at (704) 524-5741.

PERSONAL

I have known, ever since the healing miracle last summer, that there would be some kind of counterattack. I had just read in Luke 4 where, after Jesus defeated Satan on the Mount of Temptation, that Satan "withdrew until a more opportune time." If Jesus was not exempt from second attacks, why not me?

Thus I was not too surprised, just dazed, when the doctor found a new cancer in my body. This time it was a tumor that had attached itself to my lower spine. It showed up on an MRI scan after I had complained of increasing pain in my left hip and leg—the same side where they had removed the kidney last July.

By the time you read this, I will have almost completed the first round of radiation treatments. We stand where we stood—that healing was accomplished at Calvary. We have cursed this new invasion and believe it is dead from its root. I have also used the month of April to withdraw from the millrace of activity that I had fallen back into. Aside from treatment, I've been alone with my wife, and with God, seeking His face. We are learning, through trials, to magnify Him, not what He has done.

We cherish your prayers.

