

BUCKINGHAM REPORT

**AN IN-DEPTH CRITIQUE BY AMERICA'S FOREMOST
CHRISTIAN ANALYZER OF THE ISSUES, PEOPLE, &
EVENTS AFFECTING TODAY'S SPIRIT-LED LEADERS**

FACING CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

The bombings of three abortion clinics early Christmas morning in Pensacola, Florida, come as a warning to all pastors preaching against abortion. The warning: some folks in your congregation are going to take your preaching seriously.

In Pensacola, four young people--all members of an Assembly of God church--said they planted the bombs as a "birthday present for Jesus on His birthday."

While the immediate reaction on the part of most anti-abortion preachers was to decry violence as "unChristian," a more thoughtful approach forces us to ask: is civil disobedience ever justified? Have we reached the time in 20th century America when some of us will have to say with Peter and John, "I must obey God, not man"?

These are tough questions, for they put the relevancy of Christianity right on the line. Are we to simply sit back, preach, write letters to congressmen, lead the congregation in prayer and even advocate non-violent demonstrations? Or do we take action to literally destroy the death camps where the unborn innocents are being murdered--last year at the rate of 1.7 million annually?

If, as some pastors are saying, abortion in America is as evil as the killing of Jews and Christians in the Nazi Holocaust, then you better be ready to answer this question. If you lived next door to a Nazi gas chamber where innocent people were being put to death every day, would you be justified in destroying it to save lives? Or, as one Pensacola attorney asked, "Are buildings more important than babies?"

We're forced to answer the question--or to back down on our preaching.

I, for one, am not prepared to say the bombings of abortion clinics are morally wrong--although obviously they are legally wrong. But is it wrong to smuggle Bibles into Russia? Is it wrong to assemble in a basement for a church service in Bulgaria? Is it wrong to witness to Moslems in Iraq? Or own a Bible in Albania? The law says it's wrong. But many Christians have died and others are rotting in prisons, preferring to "obey God rather than man."

Phyllis Schlafly is right: "The more people learn, the more they say, 'We can't allow this to continue.'"

Jerry Falwell said of the Pensacola bombing, "This criminal activity. . .sets us back to the Stone Age."

Did it? Or did it set us back to the 1st century? I'm not endorsing the bombings nor advocating the purchase of dynamite in the church budget, but because of those clean-cut, Pentecostal young

people in Pensacola, every pastor must now hear from God in a new way. When is civil disobedience necessary--and right before God?

TONGUES IN THE CHURCH

Thank you for returning the Charter Subscriber Survey sheets. Although the office people will tabulate them later, I asked to see them first so I could begin to get a "feel" of the people who had subscribed and what areas/topics they wanted me to discuss. A number of subscribers are from non-Pentecostal traditions but are eager to allow the Holy Spirit freedom in their services. Several, I noticed, asked me to address the use of tongues/interpretation in the worship services.

Space prevents an in-depth study. But remember this: problems with tongues in the church only develop when we forbid them or attempt to make the Bible a book of procedural rules.

In his classic little book The Spirit Bade Me Go, David du Plessis says that tongues is basically prayer. In fact, every incident of tongues in the Bible is prayer--that is, man to God. In other words, there is no such thing as a "message in tongues" from a scriptural perspective. Prophecy, on the other hand, is God to man--which is why Paul says in I Corinthians 14:4-5 that prophecy builds the church while tongues benefits, basically, the individual. Working on the premise that tongues is prayer, then for tongues to benefit the church there should be interpretation. However, tongues plus interpretation does not necessarily become prophecy--although prayer can have prophetic overtones. True interpretation, I believe, will for the most part be some sort of prayer. However, what we usually hear is not tongues and interpretation, but tongues followed by prophecy (which may be God's response to the prayer just offered by the Spirit in tongues).

To keep down confusion Paul suggests (not orders) that, after several utterances in tongues, if there is no interpretation the tongue-speakers should keep quiet--for they are the only ones being blessed. There are exceptions, of course. I have been in meetings where the Holy Spirit moved in such power that the entire congregation began to speak in tongues. In this case there was no need for interpretation, for all were praising God much as they did in Acts 2:4 and Acts 10:46. Perhaps, when we do this musically (singing in the Spirit), it is what Paul meant by "spiritual songs" in Ephesians 5:19.

There is much, much more of course. In subsequent issues we'll explore other areas. The important things for the pastor to do is to stay open to the leading of the Holy Spirit and not be afraid to exercise authority over any in the flock who may be out of order. In our worship services we encourage both tongues and prophecy, but make it plain that any utterances will be judged by those in authority.

ARE YOU SITTING THERE WAITING FOR INSPIRATION?

Pastors faced with the two-and-three-sermons-deadline each week should take heart.

Sammy Cahn, one of America's great pop songwriters, says it's not inspiration--but pressure--which produces hits. Cahn, with four Oscars, an Emmy, and more than 50 hit classics to his credit, was recently asked: "Which comes first, words or music?"

He replied, "Neither. It's the phone call from a producer who wants a great song, preferably a hit. It isn't easy."

Question: "What's it take to deliver?"

Cahn: "The moment of truth is the demonstration of the song. That occurs when you walk into a room with a particularly ugly producer sitting there."

It's been my experience that the finest sermons are usually produced in the heat of the moment. . .there's not enough time to prepare. . .your church or your life has been ripped by tragedy. . . and suddenly, it's Sunday.

Yet out of this kind of crucible the Holy Spirit does the creating. From the overflow of much time in the Bible and struggling with life situations--ahead of time--the Holy Spirit brings the music of inspiration. Don't kick it. Deadlines keep you alive--and inspired. Without them you grow flabby and mechanical in your preaching.

TRAVEL TIPS

If you are traveling by airline, plan to pack your toilet kit, an extra pair of socks and underwear in your briefcase or in your carry-on bag. The same is true of any other important items you may need upon arrival. There are too many horror stories of preachers who arrived to speak at a meeting and needed to shave ahead of time--or even worse, needed to study their message--only to find they had packed their toilet kit and Bible in their suitcase which was on its way to Seattle, rather than waiting for them when they got off the plane in Charlotte. You can always put a tracer on your lost luggage, but that won't help if you need your stuff immediately.

LESSON: Keep your important stuff with you. It's the only guarantee you'll ever see it again.

THIS WILL PREACH

"One day in a black shantytown near Johannesburg, South Africa, primary schoolteacher Desmond Mpilo Tutu saw a white man respectfully tip his hat to a black woman. Tutu had never seen a white make such a gesture.

"The woman was Tutu's mother; the white was the Rev. Trevor Huddleston, now an Anglican bishop.

"The priest subsequently befriended the young black, and after Tutu was hospitalized in 1953 for tuberculosis, Huddleston visited him daily for 20 months. Tutu, profoundly impressed, followed his white friend into the clergy, rising rapidly in the Anglican Church in southern Africa and becoming Bishop of Lesotho in 1976. Along the way, Tutu also became a leading voice in the battle against apartheid." (Time magazine.)

The little gesture paid big dividends. Last fall, 35 years after the tip of the hat by Huddleston, Tutu was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Then, less than two months ago, he was named Archbishop of Johannesburg. Bread cast on the waters by an Anglican priest has come back to feed an entire nation.

BURNOUT

A recent study by experts at Stanford University indicates ways to spot job burnout. Look for a sense of emotional exhaustion, continuing frustration, a constant feeling of being overwhelmed, a falloff in accomplishment, a desire to resign because they don't care about work anymore. Stanford advises that managers and others (such as a pastor who oversees a staff of people) should look for these symptoms--headaches, tiredness and nausea. Help your staff recharge their batteries by taking them out to lunch, encouraging their work, meeting with them during coffee break. Burnout often begins with mild depression caused--in part--by the feeling that you're just spinning your wheels, accomplishing nothing. Life without visible purpose forces a person--even a Christian worker--into despair. One of the jobs of the senior pastor is to keep his finger on the pulse of each staff member. If the symptoms of burnout appear, don't wait. Your help is needed.

THINK ON YOUR FEET

When my brother Clay, who retired as a U.S. Army major general, was stationed at the Pentagon he used a stand-up desk rather than the conventional kind of sitting desk. His desk stood on its own and was fitted against a wall. It was slightly slanted (like the top of a pulpit) and had a hinged top with an inside storage compartment. It was adjusted to about the height of his sternum, just below his chest. His philosophy was you get more work done when you have to stand. Not only that, when people came in to see him, since he was already standing, they stood too--and therefore didn't stay very long.

David Hazard, editorial director for Chosen Books in Lincoln, Virginia, uses a different version of the stand-up desk. He has taken his regular full-size oak desk and lengthened the legs by elevating them on 4 x 4 blocks to bring it up to a comfortable height to stand in front of it and work. It is, actually, a desk on stilts.

Good For Your Health

A surprising number of famous executives, including Thomas Jefferson and Winston Churchill, stood while they worked. Jefferson did it for health reasons; Churchill for the same reason used by my brother.

Recently physical therapists have been recommending the stand-up desk for relief from back problems. Ray Hedenberg, a physical therapist from Pennsylvania, says that standing up for a few hours every day relieves the backaches connected with sit-down jobs. His reasoning: standing is probably less stressful on your back than sitting. That is, if you don't do it too long. "Any prolonged position can be bad for your back," he says. "But changing positions frequently is good. The best idea would be to use the podium desk in conjunction with a desk and chair."

The Stand-a-While Desk Top allows that kind of variety. It can be put on your own desk or on a table in the room. It costs \$89.95 and is available from the S. R. Bastion Company, 5542 Parkside Ave., Chicago, IL 60630. It has a walnut finish, adjustable legs and measures 18" x 24". The legs also fold down and the unit comes with a handle, so you can take it home or along to meetings where you may

need a speaker's stand and have only a table. For office use, a larger, heavier version can also be made.

The Stand-Up Desk Company, 5207 Baltimore Ave., Bethesda, MD 20816, manufactures beautiful, permanent stand-up desks in red oak, walnut or mahogany in prices ranging from \$850 to \$1,050 if you are serious about standing while you work.

IN THIS ISSUE I AM SPOTLIGHTING. . .

FALSE EXPECTATIONS

Recently I stood in a church office beside the pastor of a 4,000-member church. An emotionally-stressed woman, in her early 30s, had come by after the evening service. "I've never been loved," she wept violently. "Everyone I know has rejected me. Each time I reach out to trust someone they let me down."

The pastor, one of the kindest men I know, smiled gently. "Why don't you try trusting me?"

Inwardly I groaned. He had just set the trap that would one day--probably sooner than later--snap shut on him.

Trust vs. Dependency

When the pastor said, "Trust me" he meant "You can depend on me to keep my word."

However, I am certain what the young woman "heard" him say was, "You can depend on me--period."

She heard that because that's what she wanted to hear. People have a great need to depend on others--and to have them depend on them. Especially is this true among singles (of any age) and those who are unhappily married. Understanding how people handle these needs is one of the most important tasks of pastoral leadership.

In the case I've mentioned, the woman--single, growing up in an adopted home, fresh out of an affair with a Christian man who came under conviction and "let her down"--was desperately looking for a father figure, a husband figure, and a lover, probably more real than figurative. When the pastor told her she could "depend" on him he meant he was dependable. She, in her emotional trauma, took it to mean he was the filling for her emptiness.

I say he set a trap for himself. Knowing this man he will not allow her to seduce him. (Nor was her intent to get him into bed either--but that is OFTEN the result when an abnormal dependency is allowed to develop.) The trap will spring, however. It will happen when the pastor, realizing the woman's expectations are entirely different from what he was offering, is forced to tell her she can no longer lean (depend) on him--but must lean on God. When that happens, and it must happen, all hell will break loose.

Predictable Options:

1. The woman may break emotionally and need professional help. If she is suicidal he may be in for real problems. Families are now suing pastors and churches who, they say, drove their relative to suicide.

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2. The woman may accuse the pastor of leading her on. She may do this in some kind of public utterances.

3. The woman may accuse the pastor of impropriety--even immorality. If she takes this course of action the "woman spurned syndrome" will certainly cause her to speak out in public.

4. The pastor, realizing too late the sense of false expectations he allowed to build in the woman's mind, may feel tremendous guilt. In this case he may weaken from his resolve to break the "relationship" and then find himself in an unwanted mess.

5. The woman will most certainly, regardless of her behavior, feel betrayed when the pastor finally explains to her he didn't mean she could call him 10 times a day, expect him to leave his office and come over to her house to jump-start her car, or that she could go around telling everyone in the church that the pastor had singled her out for special friendship.

A pastor errs when he gives the impression that people can lean on him. He must remember that people often confuse dependency with affection. The pastor must not be in the business of meeting people's needs. His job is to get them healthy so they don't need to lean on anyone but God. Unfortunately, pastors--both experienced and inexperienced--often feel they need to be all things to all people. Sometimes this is caused by pressure from church officials or the body itself. But most often it is not for the sake of the flock, but because the shepherd is insecure and needs people to need him. That becomes explosive when the empty shepherd comes into contact with an equally empty sheep. The mixing of vacuums always produces a tragic effect. Hungry sheep invariably confuse the green pastor with the green pasture--and in their need to eat, rush in, and gobble him up, they spit out only a few bones along the path as a danger sign to the man who succeeds him that the honey-coated pastor often makes himself so attractive that he is literally consumed by the needs of others.

Dependency needs are real and must be recognized. The mercy-motivated pastor is wise if he includes his wife in his impromptu counseling sessions. In most cases, she'll spot potential trouble and protect him from himself. Or he may find balance in a friend or staff member who has the motivational gift of prophecy and the spiritual gift of discernment of spirits. The problem is, of course, that the damage is too often done in the first encounter. Thus the trap is set by a well-meant but off-hand remark such as "You can depend on me. I'll not let you down."

Have a warm heart, but avoid false expectations.



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