



Servants, Leaders, and Tyrants¹

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From the topic, “Servants, Leaders, and Tyrants,” you might surmise that I intend to deal with either of two areas of concern, both of which happen to be very close to my professional role and to my consciousness as a Christian involved with the development of the church. The emphasis could be on leaders and tyrants in the sense of the politics of the state for, indeed, I do have substantial involvement in the majority world, where one of the greatest problems is political tyranny. Or the emphasis could be on the task of American Christians in raising an ever more steady voice in matters of social justice. But no, it is not my intention to discuss leaders and tyrants in the sense of the politics of the state, but in reference to leadership in the church. Indeed, of the three words: servants, leaders, and tyrants, the greatest concern is for the first two—servants and leaders—and through the servant/leader relationship, the avoidance of the third—tyranny.

The church is the institution through which God provides for the redemptive development of human beings—particularly of those who are called by his name and, through them, of all humankind. Therefore, we need constantly to ask questions about where we are in history and what is happening to the church in our time; what is its social context, within itself and within its larger human circumstances? All of this can tell us something about leadership in and for the church, what it is and what it must confront.

Problems

Servanthood and leadership are basic concepts in Biblical Christianity. How servanthood and leadership relate to each other is an especially important issue in the development of the church in our time. But discussion of servants and leaders sometimes leads to consideration of tyrants; indeed, tyranny within the church is one of the historical and contemporary problems of Christianity. Much that we assume and much that we tolerate (and sometimes embrace) within the church, and especially within the educational functions of the church, is tyrannical.

The criticism is that of a sympathetic “insider” and a member of the family; it is not intended as a diatribe to send you reeling in revulsion. I wish to share the concerns that are very deep, concerns that can be accepted in a spirit of community. There are many ways of viewing the particulars that are described following, and I do not claim to see the evidence in its most clear light. But if I am even partly right, in light of the Scriptures, there are some things here about which Christians need to take action. These are matters of importance, with implications especially for Christian education for the near future, if the Lord should tarry and if the church should hold firm in this era.

Five problems are identified; each of the five relates to leadership. What the problems may mean is suggested in the two propositions that follow:

1. Passivity:

One of the characteristics of certain sectors of the church today, speaking primarily of symptoms in North American Christianity, is passivity of the laity. This issue is commonly discussed; it is generally accepted to be a problem. Why should it be that some Christians

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are so willing to delegate—to let others take care of responsibilities—while being so passive and apparently so disinterested in the things of God? We hear such criticisms as, “The people push responsibility onto their pastors;” and “They hire pastors in order to get certain jobs done that they themselves are not willing to carry out.” This problem of passivity of the laity seems to be widely recognized by the clergy and is acknowledged by the laity.

2. Hierarchy:

Much of the church today is essentially as hierarchical as any secular organization. Some clergy are sensitive to this. Laymen are even more sensitive and concerned about it. There is mounting criticism that the church, established as a community of God’s children has fallen into hierarchical structures. Historically, we can be more accurate than that; we can observe that it hasn’t *fallen* into it, at least certainly not in recent times. It just never reformed out of it. The hierarchical structure of the church was one of the earliest secular “innovations” within Christianity; at the time of the Reformation, it was not significantly altered. The Reformers brought over into Protestantism much of the hierarchical organization that was characteristic of the Roman Church up until that time. This complaint does not argue against the doctrines of offices in the church. Biblically, the offices are not hierarchical but are functional. They are described in terms of the needs of the particular church. The offices are intrinsically related to the gifts of the Holy Spirit to the church. And the gifts are broadly distributed among the people of God—not concentrated on a prestigious hierarchy.

This particular criticism is focused on the ranking systems that exist in the church. The assumed legitimacy of ranking, itself, and the resulting notion that there are some people who are more important and other people who are less important is debilitating, undercutting the work of the Holy Spirit.

3. Intellectual Meritocracy:

The third criticism is more widely heard among the laity than among the clergy: an intellectual meritocracy dominates leadership education for the church. In the church, status is earned by knowing; what is required for leadership is the possession of a magic bag of merits. These magic bags of merits are systematically dealt out only to relatively few players in the game. The dealers are the theological seminaries. Once a magic bag of merit is in one’s possession, it can be traded for honor and prestige (plus a salary) at the friendly local church, and thus, one maintains oneself, career, and salary, more in terms of what one knows than what one *is*. The Bible suggests relatively few criteria for the elder or the pastor (or for the deacon) that relate to what one knows. Many more criteria relate to what a person is and how a person is functioning within the community of Christ. Yet Christians today seem reluctant to challenge the sort of ordination that is dictated by the educational establishment. Intellectual meritocracy is a kind of aristocracy; it should be challenged within the church because it falls short of the standards for community that are described Biblically as the community of Christ.

4. Pride and Status:

The fourth of the criticisms is also heard mostly among the laity: leadership in the church itself has become something of a proud self-serving status in which one takes pride in the leadership role and serves oneself through the various kinds of privileges and prerequisites of leadership. In other words, leadership has become something of an end in itself. Leadership is a cause for pride and self-service much more than a cause for service to the community. The teachings of Christ about servanthood are confused in some minds with the Horatio Alger Americanism: one begins low in order to become great.

Servanthood becomes a temporary or transient period of initiation or demonstration of eligibility.

5. Manipulative Tactics:

The fifth criticism is of the style of leadership—a style increasingly characterized by manipulative leadership tactics. It takes no diligent search to find the use of manipulative strategies and procedures on the part of leadership people, particularly the manipulation of guilt in order to get certain kinds of conformity, the use of fear, the playing upon “divisions” that occur within the household of faith, and the old-fashioned technique of manipulated gossip. These concerns are rarely voiced among the clergy, but they are discussed increasingly among the laity.

The new wave of “management skills” in church leadership may be partly responsible, since management technology takes as its basic value pragmatic goal-seeking. But there is an easier explanation: at least some of the problems of manipulative leadership can be traced to an impoverishment of leadership logic and leadership skills. Just as a person who swears a lot is probably a person with a very limited vocabulary, some leaders are manipulative because they have a limited “vocabulary,” or understanding of leadership. They lack awareness of the possible range of approaches to people and, therefore, they resort to tactics that are impudent and, in the final analysis, childish. They resort more to manipulation than to true leadership.

Why?

Consider these five problems again:

1. Passivity of the laity.
2. Hierarchical organization.
3. Domination by intellectual meritocracy.
4. Proud and self-serving valuing of leadership, and
5. Manipulative leadership style.

The problems all can be traced to the first: passivity of the laity. It is both cause and result. So long as any of the other four persist, it will produce passivity; and so long as passivity persists, the others cannot be effectively solved.

How do the people of God get out of their lethargy and into action? There are two ways to view the problem:

1. There is something wrong with the people, or
2. There is something wrong with the leadership.

We are much more likely to see the gifts of the Spirit develop in God’s people if the latter view is taken. The question to be posed is, “What is wrong with leadership that results in passivity in the laity?”

1. Proposition One:

These five characteristics (above) are cyclical. In the sense that they each feed each other and the whole thing keeps coming back onto the first problem, it is a self-perpetuating cycle and is extremely difficult to break into.

2. Proposition Two:

The conditions in the church today are a reflection of conditions in the secular society. Many people in the church demonstrate the same needs felt by people in the secular society. In other words, these needs—to be dominated, to be manipulated, to be passive, to let somebody else do it, and to transfer obligation and responsibility—are symptomatic of our secular society. Ours is a society of largely passive participation. Americans have an intense interest in sports, for example, but it is mostly at the observational level. From

time to time, there are upsurges of handball, racquetball, tennis, golf, and whatever, but the persistence of the beer can and the television tells us what the real interest in sports is; it is not athletics so much as it is observation. To be part of something by simply watching it is characteristic of our society.

Some of the needs to which the church is catering are basically non-Christian needs; when the church is catering (or pandering) to non-Christian needs, the church is on dangerous ground. For example, among the non-Christian and sick, needs of fallen humankind are needs for status, needs for individualism, needs for being powerful or being dominated by power. The psychological condition of a person who has the need to be dominated is not really all that far from the person who has the need to dominate. These are sick needs; they are unredeemed needs. They are not characteristic of the people of God in any normative, Biblical way. Instead, they are characteristic of the secular society; and yet the church has accepted them as normal.

Consider what the issue is and what the issue isn't. In reference to the Biblical teachings on leadership, the issue is not whether or not there should be leadership. Indeed, the Scripture is very clear that there are leadership roles in which to serve and leadership tasks to be performed. The salutations in the New Testament indicate that, at the time of the Apostles, there were leaders and they were recognized as such. In Hebrews 13:24, for example, "Greet all your leaders and all the saints." (The reader is anxious that already there was a distinction between leaders and saints!) The leadership persons were identified. Thus, the issue is not whether there should be leadership, but the issue is what *kind* of leadership. What kind of leadership furthers the cause of Christ, honors the cause of Christ, honors the name of Christ, furthers Christ's church?

Further, the issue is not that the seminaries are creating this problem, but whether or not the seminaries today can serve to relieve the problem. There is little to be gained by pinning the blame somewhere. Instead, we need to face up to the situation as we find it, and to ask what we can do, what the various institutions that serve the church can do, and, particularly, what higher education and seminaries can do to relieve these problems. Christian higher education in general may, indeed, be culpable; but far more important is its potentiality for helping to get the church out of the current leadership crises.

Despite the positive orientation toward education and a preference for constructive propositions, one word of warning must be sounded at this point. We should not rely too much on formal education. (I am uneasy about Christian higher education, in general, and the Christian liberal arts college, in particular; but that is another story.) In this discussion, it is enough to warn that, since the time of Thomas Aquinas, Christianity has been holding hands with formal education, largely oblivious of the dangers it poses, especially in relation to the development of the church. The dangers are inherent. When you accept the schooling model, its assumptions about knowledge, learning, and human relationships, you get some non-Christian values in the bargain. Much that is secular in the church can be traced to its drawing of crucial values from the academy of pre-Christian Greece.

The issue is not that the secular society induces the sort of leadership that we find in the church. Indeed, it does, but that's not the issue. Instead, it is our productive task to seek ways that will help the church to withstand secular perversion, and to be about its tasks of confronting culture. *Semper Reformanda*. Are we, indeed, about the business of reforming? If we are, the question of the secular perversions in the church must be raised. "Secular perversions" does not refer to going to the movies, not even to chopping wood on Sunday; instead, it refers to those things that are organismic and more deeply functional in our institutional forms—violations of justice, truth, responsibility, and unity. Whatever is secular in its origin, and whatever is justified (rationalized) in secular terms, must be disciplined against the Word and against the reforming work of God in the world. The complaint is not so much against the secular society, but is in reference to ourselves, as those who stand against the worldly order to see that the work of Christ is carried out in the power of the Holy Spirit.

A New Frontier

The issue is not that the church is confronting some new problem, but that the church historically has never dealt adequately with an old problem: institutionalism, especially formal education. Jesus' teaching on servanthood has rarely cut through institutionalism in historical Christianity. Take a look from the earliest times. The warnings of Matthew 23 were laid down in order that there could be some advice available at the very beginning of the church. Jesus said, in effect, "Beware of the dangers of institutionalism." And yet through the years of Christendom, we have seen institutionalism dominating Christianity. In our time, the problem is becoming acute or, at least, more deeply felt. God may be sharpening the focus on leadership as servanthood.

Several factors underscore this possibility:

1. First of all, pragmatism is replacing more principled sorts of valuing in historical Christendom. The Western cultural, moral, and legal traditions since the time of Christ, have, on the whole, held to a kind of principalized valuing. Thus, even the secular society has reflected something of the teachings of the Scriptures in reference to morality. But today that has degenerated to the point where almost all valuing is pragmatic. Pragmatic valuing has crept into the church—creeping in somewhat as an elephant creeps. And the pragmatism in even such important elements and movements as evangelism, missions, and "church growth" is often frightening. Concern over the issue of pragmatism is forcing the re-examination of the values underlying leadership. These are questions that the church historically has not had to focus quite that sharply. Other issues were bigger. In our time, the questions of what constitutes valid leadership in the church seem to be a transcendently important issue.
2. There is today a widespread denial of God. Secular people no longer simply curse God; they deny God. God does not need to be cursed, because God is irrelevant. God is either not there or not at all in the process of thought. In such a state, even the church is left with a humanism that is becoming rapidly more absolute, a humanism that even lends itself to a congregational democracy which is more rational than spiritual. Authority is not thought to come from God. Thus, leadership of the church is as relative as anything else. The denial of God may thus be raising the question of leadership to a higher level of importance among the various matters of concern to the church.
3. Confidence in institutions, in general, in Western civilization is waning rapidly. The various sorts of anarchy that have been sporadic and localized in the past are now becoming international and societal in the largest sense. Institutions have lost credibility. In the 1960s, we saw it in our own nation: a tremendous loss of confidence in institutions. All sorts of institutions were affected: the military, government, educational institutions, the justice system, even our health institutions, everything came to suspicion or disrepute. This rampant individualism, nurtured by the American psyche, is still advancing, replacing institutional trust with a kind of egocentric acquisitiveness. So you don't need to trust institutions or to see them as having an important place; you just reach out for what's yours. Surely this is not socially cohesive; perhaps it is the threshold of widespread anarchy.

Leadership, in general, is in disrepute. Even among the people of God and within the community of Christ, there is a challenging of leadership that promises to go far deeper than at any time before. The question of what is *proper* leadership in the church has probably never been a more dynamic question.

Biblical Leadership

The Bible deals with leadership in a peculiar way. Especially in the New Testament, the contrast with secular leadership is sharp. The Old Testament is not quite so precise, except for the inescapable God-presence shown through his selected leaders. Models of leadership can be drawn from Noah, Abraham, Joseph, Nehemiah, Moses, and other illustrious characters of the Old Testament. These are pre-Christian, some are even pre-Scriptural, and they can send us off on the wrong foot. It is alarming how many Christian education textbooks draw an out-of-context model of leadership from Moses. Until Sinai, Moses did not have the Word of God except in oral form. Moses is seen as leading through his adjudication. Of course! People came to Moses for adjudication because they lacked objective testimony. But is there need for Moses-style leadership today?

In the New Testament, leadership is less dramatic. It is seen as less concerned with the huge and momentous movements of history and more with the step-by-step development of the people of God. What is most striking is the attunement between the leader and the community.

In Hebrews 13, for example, leadership is more than knowing and telling: “Remember your leaders, those who share the Word of God, consider the outcome of their life and imitate their faith (v. 7). Leadership is a behavior—a lifestyle—that is worthy of being inspected; it is even worthy of being emulated. Leadership is not just what a person knows, not just what a person says. Consider Matthew 23. Note how contrasting is Jesus’ criticism of the secular (Greek) model of leadership demonstrated by those who have seated themselves in the seat of Moses: “. . . therefore, do whatever they teach you and follow it; but do not do as they do, for they do not practice what they teach” (Matthew 23:3). In Hebrews 13:17: “Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls and will give an account.” Leadership, in New Testament terms, is reckoned in terms of accountability, not just in terms of authority. It gets its authority as it has accountability. Taken as a whole, Biblical teaching on leadership deals more with criteria than with privilege; and beyond responsibility is accountability.

Leaders

Who are leaders? Who are tyrants? Who are servants? First of all, in reference to leaders of the church, the model of leadership must not be drawn from secular sources: it must be drawn from the Scripture and evaluated in terms of accountability to the Lordship of Christ. Among the various pragmatic incursions into the planning of church development, church policy, and Christian life, in general, is the American Management Association—coming through like a rhinoceros on an escalator. The AMA tells us that leadership is “Getting work done through people.” And there are plenty of people in almost all denominations today doing a slightly baptized version of pragmatic manipulation and calling it “Christian management.” Selling at a fairly nice price, leadership seminars for the clergy are available at many local motels. These are dangerous when, in the cause of efficiency, answers to human development and human relationship questions are drawn from secular sources.

When leadership is disciplined to the Lordship of Christ, there are some different conclusions. For example, a leader is one who ministers; a leader *serves* through the gifts of the Holy Spirit, not in terms of prowess, not in terms of accomplishments or acquired knowledge, but in terms of what God is doing through his or her life. Leadership in the church is servanthood.

In the past 15 years, an interesting development has been taking place within mission-sponsored pastoral training. The trend, Theological Education by Extension (TEE) has been an encouragement, although one wonders about the direction it is going at present. (It has become, for some missions, an excuse for sending more missionaries to do jobs that really should be done by national persons. I have nothing against sending out missionaries, but I am very uneasy about missionaries who replicate American institutional forms and values without even a dim consciousness of the damage they do.) One of the most valuable outcomes of the TEE movement is the question it

has raised about how broadly distributed the benefits of theological education ought to be. This is an important question. It leads us in the direction of broadening access to theological education. It is unwise for any seminary—whether missionary or in the U.S.—to focus exclusively on a small number of people.

1. The seminary ought to include in its teaching ministries (and some seminaries do) both clergy and laypersons (so long as that non-Biblical distinction holds.) A seminary ought to make its expertise broadly available to the people of God.
2. With reference to the people who are being trained in a seminary, the emphasis should be on those who *are* in church leadership more than those who think they *might* be. In majority world situations, especially in TEE, one sees how much more vital educational ministries become if they are focused on people who are already in leadership roles in the church. In other words, the TEE models that seem most promising and most faithful to the church are focused on functioning pastors, not on pre-pastors. The educational institution should not be in the business of *creating* preachers, ministers, church leadership people, but of *equipping* leaders. To serve the church, education should be broadly committed to equipping the saints in the roles, tasks, and ministries to which they are called.

If, instead, theological education is going to devote itself exclusively to providing magic bags of merit for the relatively select few and then to imposing those selected few on the churches with a “take ‘em or leave ‘em” attitude, the church has lost something important. If this is what theological education is to be, the groundwork is laid for a model of leadership that will become easily tyrannical.

Tyrants

Who are the tyrants? In simplest terms, a tyrant is a leader who aspires. Admittedly, this is less a definition than it is a harsh criterion. A leader who aspires tends to misuse others; such a leader attempts to manage things by manipulating events. This aspiration to leadership was exactly what Jesus was dealing with in Matthew 20, when the dear mother was deeply concerned about where her sons would be when they sat down in the glorious Kingdom. Jesus firmly explained that the value system of God’s Kingdom is not like the value system that her question was expressing. A fundamental clash in value systems was evident: “You don’t know what you’re asking.” In other words, she was not on the wavelength of the Kingdom of God. In the Kingdom of God, aspirations to leadership are not valued unless they arise from commitment to servanthood. In the North American frame of mind, I’m afraid the commitment to servanthood is seen quite often as a sort of apprenticeship. If you are willing to clean toilets for three weeks, God’s people will see that you are willing to be a servant, glorify you, and make you a leader. Such thinking is wholly inconsistent with the Scriptural view of leadership. Our Lord taught that Christian servanthood is a servanthood of a low order and it is that for life. Not as an apprenticeship, but for life. “And after this, the glorification,” said the Apostle Paul in Philippians. After what? After the crucifixion, after the giving of one’s life, *then* the glorification. Make no mistake; *anyone who aspires to leadership within the Christian community is essentially a tyrant.*

Tyranny can also be seen in a person’s accepting privilege and the separate distinction that comes from privileged status. Sooner or later, a tyrant comes to believe in his or her own worthiness (the “divine right.”) The vulnerability is not confined to kings and dictators. Pastors and congregational persons are easily ensnared. Any of the people of God who aspire to leadership, who accept privileges and the distinctiveness based upon what they see as their own merit, are in our midst as tyrants. “Whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your servant” (Matthew 20:26) is less an invitation to sign up as a leader than it is an action test that we can apply to ourselves when we hear the call to leadership tasks within the body of Christ.

Servants

Who are the servants? Servants are those who share and, thus, lead. Servants are those who give and, thus, receive. Servants bear one another's burdens. How can leaders discipline themselves to be servants? Becoming a servant on the do-it-yourself basis can become a big problem for the Christian. It is only by God's transforming work that we get far enough from human tendency to dominate. We must examine our motives as individuals, and we must examine the motives of institutions. Certainly as institutional faculty and administrators, we should examine our so-called "professional" motives. Are we motivated to serve, or are we motivated to dominate? So easily comes the answer, "Of course we're motivated to serve." Then comes the next question: Is that the way we are living, or do we slide toward a posture of domination? Do we rejoice in servanthood, or do we bear the burden of servanthood? It requires the grace of God to remain faithful to the servant role.

Leaders should ask God for grace to trust the people of God. Through contacts with pastors in various conferences and workshops, I'm impressed how little trust there is, especially from the pastorate toward the laity. Instead of trust, the tendency is to say, "*they*," "*them*," "*their* problems," "*they* give me these problems," *they*-us, *they*-us. Greater and greater is the distinction between *them*, the laity; and *us*, the clergy. The church's programs are for *them*—doing things for *them*. I wonder . . . wouldn't it be better to do things *with* them?

Another suggestion: leaders should get in tune with the work of the Holy Spirit in the congregation. Let the gifts of the Spirit be recognized *in all* and *for all*. Perhaps pastors experience an occupational anxiety: if people discover that the gifts of God to the church are widely distributed, the pastors will be out of work and then their children will be hungry. Is it anxiety or just plain pride?

The remedy lies in accepting the breadth and variety of the works of the Holy Spirit. Where exciting things are happening, quite often the pastor is an important part of it—but not necessarily the spark plug or the steering wheel. If leaders can keep clear of rank and privilege, which are vanities, their ministry will be more pleasing to God and more edifying for the saints.

Jesus Christ has provided a set of evaluative criteria for leadership that each of us can use in self-evaluation and by which we should evaluate every institution. In the first 12 verses of Matthew 23, Jesus described for his disciples what had gone wrong in the synagogue. He presents the list of factors as a set of warnings about what should be avoided in the church. Clearer understanding of the secular origin of faulty leadership can come from a look at the history of pre-Christian Greek culture and philosophy. In this light, Matthew 23:1-12 reveals not the Old Testament synagogue, which the church is going to improve upon, but a faulted synagogue, gone wrong because of the introduction of Greek (Hellenistic) models of leadership education.

Hellenistic Influences—Then and Now

Prior to the time of Christ, the Greek (Hellenistic) culture had developed social models and definitional concepts that can be seen deeply entrenched in the church today. The Hellenists made their move toward Judaism in the time of Christ; he warned against it explicitly. It seems evident that the Greek model of school and schooling, which, in turn, shaped the relationship of leaders and followers—the dominant social configuration of Western people—has become the characteristic human relationship within the church.

What are the characteristics of the Greek concepts of school and schooling?

1. First of all, hierarchy is basic. There are those who *know*, and there are those who *need to know*. Our church buildings are monuments to the pre-Christian proposition that the source is a person, and that the masses are receivers. In the New Testament, the church is people. Today, it is a building to which people go to hear—to learn, to get information—about the things of God.

2. Social distance and its artifacts are characteristic of the Greek assumptions about human relationships. Yes, social distance is more than social circumstances and relational characteristics; it creates and thrives on its artifacts. A lectern is such an artifact; a platform is such an artifact. A public address system, sitting below in order to look up to authority, robes for the elite, all these common artifacts facilitate the superior/inferior relationship that we accept toward one another. It is a relationship in which one gives and others receive. This assumption found its way into modern times, especially in the distinction between the educated and the “uneducated.”
3. The third element of the Greek model of school and schooling is one-way communication: from the authority to those who are assumed to be in need of hearing. Obviously, we all share in a common vulnerability to these criticisms. To a greater or lesser extent, we are each a product of the very things we’re talking about. We conform very nicely because we have been brought up in it. I speak, you listen; I write, you read. It is a hard pattern to alter. But today, the new emphasis on dialogue and sharing remind us that deliberation and exchange were characteristic of the human transaction of the Old Testament times, when God’s people saw him as speaking both to and *with* them.
4. The fourth facet of the Greek model has to do with social privilege and how one gains social privilege. Education is essentially a social privilege. One gains further social privilege through educational competition. Education is a matter of competitively acquiring and proving one’s worth and ability, by demonstrating it in meritocratic sorts of ways. This, too, is inherently Hellenistic and, thus, pre-Christian.

Beyond the assumptions about relationships and about communication, the faulted Greek concept of knowledge and its implications for human development are seen today in the church. Three particulars illustrate the problem:

1. Knowledge as a Commodity:
Knowledge is somewhere out there. It is to be appropriated, it is to be acquired and brought in. It exists “out there” and it is to be reached out and grasped. It is a commodity to be bought and sold, to be captured and hoarded.
2. Learning as Acquisition:
Learning, itself, is a task through which one reaches out selectively and acquires. The learner must be induced, through various kinds of motivation, to reach out systematically. The purpose of the teacher is to give motivation, direction, and guidance in the reaching-out process. The Greek assumptions are in sharp contrast with Hebrew concepts of knowledge. In the latter, learning develops from within; as one applies oneself in such a way that God reveals through inner light one’s experience.
3. Knowing as the Basis of Doing:
In the Hellenistic exalting of intellect and rationality, the concern for acting on one’s knowledge was assumed to be unimportant; it was seen as virtually automatic or even irrelevant. What one *knows* was the important matter. Therefore, the matter of concern about action, and especially evaluating in terms of *doing*, was somewhat alien. Evaluating for the knowing was assumed to cover it all. Think of the academic approach to testing even today, for example: it is usually pre-occupied with what one *knows*, in the sense of recall of information. It is very Greek and not very functional.

The teachings of Christ suggest relatively little emphasis on testing of knowledge. He screens people not on what they know, but on what they do. This same priority is seen in the Epistles. In the book of James, there is a corrective teaching which suggests that the emphasis on *doing* was in danger of being lost. What was the cause of this apparent shift away from Christ’s “follow Me . . .” “walk . . .” “do . . .?” Was it because of the Hebrew influence? Hardly. The Hebrew philosophy was very much

an integration of knowing and doing—learning through doing; it was the integration of life itself. Instead, the shift James warns against was in the Greek philosophical outlook. Whereas, the Hebrew argued for the inseparability of knowing and doing, the Hellenistic view valued *knowing* over doing. These social models crashed into the church early and have survived the Reformation.

One of the truisms in education is that people tend to treat others as they, themselves, have been treated. If teachers and administrators relate to theological students in a certain way, it is likely that the students will relate to the people of God in their parishes the same way. What relationships are thus propagated by theological education? What sort of authority structure is being exemplified? What sorts of powers of life-and-death, success-or-failure are held over students? What sort of community exists? All of these patterns become models for the church. Because of the importance Christians have placed on formal education, the Greek model and its associated views of learning and knowledge have been imprinted on the church down through the centuries.

Schooling has served the church reasonably well. God has elected to use it. Nevertheless, it is possible that we are at a point when another facet of the reforming work of God is about to become manifested. If so, will it not likely alter the educational approaches to leadership development in the church?

Conclusion

Jesus warned against the secular model of leadership. Nevertheless, it invaded the church even as it had invaded the synagogue. The Pharisees did it first, having “seated themselves in the seat of Moses” (Matthew 23:2). It is the picture of an incursion, an invasion, an intrusion, or a usurpation. If all these Pharisees and scribes were Jewish people, why shouldn’t they be free to take their places in the seat of Moses? Because their approach and their values were less Hebrew than Greek. They wanted things to be crisply rational and structural in the Greek way that was sweeping the western Mediterranean at that time. It was *the* way, the *in* way, the *faddish* way to do things—to think Greek!

At the time of Christ, the invasion of the synagogue was well advanced. In the early centuries of the church, it happened to Christianity—exactly as Jesus warned too clearly.

Leadership for the church is to be non-tyrannical servanthood, evaluated in light of the teachings of our Lord. Let us, therefore, accept the evaluative criteria of Matthew 23:3-12.

- Verse 3: Let us reconcile word and deed.
- Verse 4: Let us not be delegative but participatory.
- Verse 5: Let us seek no exalted status.
- Verse 6: Let us accept no special privilege.
- Verse 7: Let us take no pride from secular recognition.
- Verse 8: Let us reject titles of authority, preferring instead a simple relationship as brothers and sisters.
- Verse 9: Let us develop *real* relationships not artificial and titular relationships.
- Verse 10: Let us share with all God’s people the recognition of one master.
- Verse 11: Let us relate as servants to the needs of others.
- Verse 12: Let us live in humble life-style.

Let us accept leadership as spiritual gifts: “His gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers for the equipping of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ” (Ephesians 4:11-12).

Let us reflect the mind of Christ: “Whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant; whoever wishes to be first among you shall become your slave. Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:28).