

## Leadership in the Churches

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**To lead or not to lead** — An examination of styles of leadership in our churches today

There is a leadership crisis within our assemblies — so runs a commonly heard statement. What is the nature of the leadership crisis? Are we still suffering from a lack of late middle-aged men because of the effects of the second world war? If so, have we looked at the younger middle-aged men that have grown up in the post-war period of accelerating change? Do we still retain a belief that eldership is commensurate with advanced age? Or that office-holding without proper functioning is adequate? Are there those in positions of leadership for the wrong reasons? Is there a lack of pastoral care — and who should do it anyway? Are we giving the wrong type of teaching for the needs of the people living in today's world? Are the leaders more concerned with maintenance than mission, with buildings more than Bibles, with fabric more than faith, with finding something wrong rather than doing something right, with secondary issues rather than primary functions?

A letter in *The Harvester* (February 1977) runs:

'A nation, organisation or society, ship's company or regiment, is always and only as good as its leadership. This must also apply to a local church. Brethren assemblies more than any other group of churches suffer in very many cases from enfeebled leadership. We have those, who as men and brethren in the Lord may be delightful to know, but as elders and leaders of a local church are quite unsuitable. If ever there was a time when the Lord's people need inspired, informed, imaginative and energetic leadership it is now. We are confronted by materialism, permissiveness, doctrinal confusion, insipid Christianity and very determined powers of darkness. We need powerful leadership.'

Lest we think that leadership within our churches, to be successful, must produce well-run activities, let us heed this warning from a missionary.

'What if our assembly seems to be lively and thriving? Be sure that this liveliness is the life of God and not just a well organised man-enthused system. A crowd attracts a crowd and it is possible for a period of time to have a work that is growing in numbers, activities and enthusiasm but which is not Spirit-generated. If this growth is from God, there will be growing humility, love for one another despite difference of view, the burying of long-standing hatchets, the dealing with stubborn points in our personalities as well as the outward manifestation of power in our witness.'

### Leadership today

In society generally the complaint is frequently heard that there are few 'notable leaders' — men who are strong, couràgeous, exemplary in character, wise and positive, and inspiring to others. As the ills in society are usually reflected in the Church, it would hardly be surprising if there were a shortage of such leadership in our churches. And yet this ought not to be, if our leadership is truly Spirit-led, Spirit-filled and Spirit-endowed.

If there is a lack of leadership in the assemblies what are the causative factors, what is its nature, what lessons are there in other church groups for us, and how can it be remedied?

With the general decline in assembly membership, there has been a corresponding drop in the number of people with obvious leadership capabilities.

(a) There has been a '*brain drain*'. Some complain that the 'great men of the book' of yesteryear have no counterpart in our churches today, and suggest that because of this, the quality of leadership throughout the Brethren movement has suffered. Others point to the lack of solid Bible study and dedicated service which was a hallmark of everyone in the past. Not only has there been a clear lessening of personal and corporate Bible study, there has also been a drain of some of our best potential leaders away from assemblies into other church groups.

An obvious reason why so many other denominational groups have ex-assembly men in their full-time ministry is that they have been unable to find any outlet for their obvious gifts and training within the fellowships in which they have been reared because of the lack of opportunity or demand for a full-time ministry of a teaching or pastoral kind. Others have too little or no encouragement to exercise their abilities, if known, for the corporate benefit of the fellowship to which they belong; if showing zeal or initiative, they are instead positively discouraged or allowed to find opportunities elsewhere. Some would say that they have had insufficient grounding in 'assembly principles', whilst others would argue that it has been the enforcement of those 'principles' that has actually driven some away. There may have been an element of doubt on the part of some elder, not so well educated, leaders, about their younger better educated men; suspicion that education *per se* does not reflect spirituality (which it doesn't) and therefore is not a criterion in choosing leadership; suspicion that perhaps the younger ones know more than their elders in many realms and if encouraged might constitute a threat to their leadership.

Perhaps another reason for the departure of men with gift is that during their periods of training they come into contact with Christians of differing backgrounds whom, they discover, have as much, if not more, life than they, and sometimes more light. Their personal knowledge of God from a position of reasoned commitment, and their zeal for the

advance of his kingdom is so different from what has been known and experienced in some assemblies.

(b) There has been a growing *shortage of people regarded as suitable* for leadership office. Unlike other denominations, very few present leaders within assemblies have had any form of training for such responsibility — indeed in some instances those leaders have little understanding of the responsibility that is theirs. Some are born leaders, some are trained leaders and some have leadership thrust upon them! In some of our smaller assemblies those who find themselves in positions of leadership through sheer necessity have no desire to be in such a role, so is it any wonder if, through feeling trapped by circumstances they exercise their necessary duties with something less than enthusiasm? In other assemblies in recent years younger men have acceded to the office of elder, who although having natural qualities that make them an obvious choice have had no training or help from any source to fit them for such office and on their own admission have little Bible knowledge or spiritual awareness. Although willingness to serve the assembly may not be in question, many confessedly have no idea what their function should be, except to follow the example of those already in office. The average assembly has a membership of 50 people, only a third of whom will be men. Thus the field from which potential office-holders are to be chosen is very limited.

(c) Our churches are populated by an increasingly *mobile population*. The average family moves every five to eight years. Elders and leaders, by virtue sometimes of their church responsibility, tend to move less. But by not moving and therefore by not being informed enough, do they not tend to become more set in their local church ways, resistant to change, unaware of practice elsewhere, more parochial and perhaps denominational? Elders and leaders who do move, however, can create some instability within the fellowship with which they were or will be associated; a lack of continuity occurs where leadership movement is more noticeable. There are today so many varieties of Brethren assemblies that people who do move do not easily settle into a new one which might be radically different from any they have been used to.

(d) There are a variety of *functional deficiencies* in leadership which illustrate the kind of crisis which contributes to the decline of a church — quantitatively and qualitatively. In nearly forty per cent of all assemblies the structured leadership meets at intervals of more than a month — such laxity can produce paralysis in decision-making and in responding to need. Most of the leadership given relates firstly to *activities* — their proper functioning, manning — but seldom to a realistic questioning of the effect, efficiency or necessity of such activities. Secondly to *maintenance* — the thousand and one jobs to do with the material and financial needs of the building and its use — without asking if a single church member could be trusted to serve as facilities supervisor, for

example. Thirdly to *issues* — discussion and sometimes prolonged deliberation about matters of doctrine, morality and certain practices from a desire to decide what is allowable for their church, without taking into consideration the personal and spiritual needs of the people involved. Leadership works through relationships with followers. But too little, if any, time is devoted to building and cementing those relationships, to preventive as well as curative counselling and care, to identifying gifts and abilities and to encouraging those gifts to be utilised for the common good.

(e) There is an acute *lack of spiritual leadership and pastoral care*. Some suggest that with increasing demands being made on our elders by their secular responsibilities (more time is needed for extensive travel, evening work commitments, etc.) they have no time for the study they would like to do and for the pastoral care they ought to give (although that does not seem to be the case in some other churches). Others have important and far-reaching responsibilities in other Christian works or in fulfilling a spare-time preaching ministry in churches other than their own local one, so that they have little time to be elders in the fullest sense of the word in their own fellowships. Because of this many fellowships are inadequately led and fed. The warnings of Ezekiel 34 must be taken to heart. The lack of such spiritual and caring leadership is a direct contributory cause of the exodus of people to other fellowships where their spiritual needs are met.

(f) There is a general *lack of vision*, enterprise, or strategic thinking about the assembly's function. Most are concerned with survival rather than expansion. The smaller an assembly the more acutely this is felt. Little thought is given about the role of the church in the community, the distinctive contribution that the church as God's community can make, the need for evangelism, and how the needs of the fellowship can best be catered for. There is little sense of direction and very little idea of aims and objectives; goal-setting, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is almost unknown.

Most of the identified leadership lacks — and there are probably more — reflect on a deficient expression of spiritual life and of the spiritual gifts listed in scripture. When seen in their context and understood from the original operation of those gifts in the early church, it becomes apparent that our fellowships are a long way from the vibrant, active, spiritual communities (problems and all) of the first century A.D. (cf. Michael Griffiths in *Where do we go from here?*).

### **Leadership patterns**

It is said that we in the assemblies adhere to the New Testament pattern of church government. *What is that pattern?* I am told that there are nine discernible authority structures within the early church. Which one are

we supposed to adhere to? Is it the Ephesian pattern, where elders were responsible for overseeing and feeding the flock? (Acts 20:28) Is it the pattern in Lystra, Iconium and Antioch where Paul and Barnabas 'ordained elders in every church' (i.e. leadership chosen by itinerant preachers, albeit apostles in this case)? Is it the pattern in Jerusalem where the apostles, realising their limitations to do everything, asked the church to appoint seven men of God — generally known as deacons — to assist them? Is it the pattern at Corinth, where Paul stayed as the resident Bible teacher for eighteen months? Perhaps we need to turn away from a generally accepted view that the pattern adhered to in your local church for decades is the biblical norm and ask, 'Is there a norm?' If there is, let us find afresh what the scriptures have to teach us, and then boldly seek to interpret our understanding of those norms in our own local setting. If there are variables, then let us stop 'knocking' other churches because they may have a different system of government and style of leadership, or criticising those assemblies which have before God sought to adjust to the changing needs of their fellowship and location.

When we look at the assembly scene today we find a wide variety in styles of leadership.

(a) There are local churches where there is an *absence of leadership*. The male members would say that 'the Holy Spirit leads us'. One has to ask seriously — does He? If He does, where are the evidences? In many churches where this statement is made there is lack of life, activity, leadership, care, cohesion, and growth. Little gets done by anyone. Nobody is responsible for anything. A flock that is unled is unled.

(b) In others, the 'running' of the affairs is ostensibly in the hands of a '*brethren meeting*'. This is probably the nearest we get to a communist-type system of 'government for the workers, by the workers and through the workers!' All are equally involved in decision-making and discussion, although these meetings tend to deal with business affairs only. Pastoral problems are seldom raised since family loyalties would be involved. Decision-making in such an environment tends to be painful if induced, sometimes disruptive or divisive. Or it tends to be the view of the minority which prevails — that is a negative view against a certain course of action; out of a sometimes misguided sense of charity to the opposing minority, nothing is done by the majority. So the power of the veto predominates in arriving at an undivided decision.

A variation on this would be the quarterly church meeting where all members of the church, male and female, have — in theory — equal say in what happens.

(c) Then there are churches, and we each probably can quote our own example, where a *one-man rule* is maintained in a dictatorial fashion, although the public view would vehemently be opposed to clerisy. The intransigence of such a person has sometimes contributed to division, or occurred as a result of division. Occasionally, there exists a throw-back

to the Victorian era when the local Christian landowner or factory owner built the chapel for his employees so it was natural to expect his position in employment to be the same in church affairs. Today the same kind of regard for the prominent businessman can be found.

Because of the unstructured system of church government, assemblies particularly are vulnerable to the power-conscious strong natural leader who seeks to take control. Unfortunately some people find it congenial to be in such a fellowship and develop or reinforce a dependency syndrome that puts man in the place of God. The Taylor party's former leader, and the Diotrephes of John's second letter, are classic examples. To such Peter's exhortation comes: 'not as arrogant, dictatorial and overbearing, domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock' (1 Peter 5:3).

(d) A number of brethren churches today, as through the history of the movement, have a *part-time or full-time minister*. His role and function varies according to local need, but generally his ministry would be that of pastor/evangelist/teacher. His main ministry is with the single local church, or in a few cases, with a group of churches. Seldom is his leadership given as 'the father' of all — more often it is as 'the servant' of all. In most instances he would be recognised as one among a plurality of elders. But his function would be specifically to lead the church in one of the aspects mentioned above, and to 'equip the saints for the work of the ministry, for building up the body of Christ'. Those churches with an established worker of this kind are generally healthy, showing signs of growth, and stable. In some cases the full-time worker has been God's instrument for bringing the church into being, so he has something of what might be termed 'an apostolic interest' in its development. Full-time single-church ministry has been practised for decades in the mission fields of the world, is well established in America and Canada and has undoubtedly been a major contributory factor in the strength of those assemblies in Britain who have had a history of such (as in Barnstaple, Bristol, the Blackdown Hills and elsewhere).

(e) By far the majority of assemblies have recognised elders or *oversight*. In structure nearly all are self-perpetuating oligarchies. But the way in which they function varies enormously. Members of oversights generally see themselves in a supervisory role; this would probably be a better description of the activities engaged in by some so-called elders, whose function is frequently limited to business matters. Their concern is with fabric, finance, and following precept. Perhaps it is because this supervisory role has been accepted as the norm by so many for so long that strong leadership or pastoral care is insufficiently exercised. Theirs is a diaconate-type function; a short, often limited, strictly controlled or hastily called meeting that is more reminiscent of a company board meeting or a shop stewards' committee than the spiritually aware, biblically-based gathering that it ought to be. Some elders corporately

'rule with a rod of iron'. To those in fellowship it seems that they are remote from the flock and their needs; they make public pronouncements which sometimes cause more problems than they solve. In other cases elders are elderly, or over-worked or over-active; or they may be unused to leadership responsibility in any other realm, so find it difficult to cope with the responsibility that it brings. The sheer pressure of their responsibility inevitably means that the inner life of waiting and meditating on God is neglected. Such is the danger, of course, with any who hold onerous responsibilities in any work of God. To neglect the inner life results in a neglect of the corporate life. It must be said that in some cases elders hold on to office beyond the age when they can cope adequately; to have retired gracefully would have meant that they were available for counsel to all, and from the wealth of their communion with God could have contributed immeasurably to the health of the assembly. Others hold to position for the power it supposedly gives or for the status-symbol that in their view goes with the office. Whatever the reason for holding office, let us who are elders ask God to sanctify us so that we shall not be elders in name only, but also function as he wants, for his church and to his glory.

The vast majority probably take their responsibility seriously, as much as they know how. They spend long hours in doing a variety of things, visiting many people for counselling (generally of a curative kind, rather than preventive), attending many weekly meetings, writing numerous letters, and delivering sermons. But with the kind of leadership crisis which we face, we have to ask whether they could function more efficiently for the growth, quantitatively and qualitatively, of the church and for the glory of God.

(f) Increasingly, a style of leadership most prevalent in assemblies today involves *elders and deacons*, although there is a great deal of variety in determining the choice and function of a deacon, and difference in determining the qualifications. In essence, however, where the two offices exist the responsibility is generally clearly defined between spiritual and practical. For some elders it has been a way of involving younger men in some of the practical responsibilities, perhaps as preparation for eventual eldership. Most have had teething problems in introducing a diaconate; some through it have created what they sought to avoid — a body whose expertise and gift has constituted an imagined threat to an eldership whose shared gifts may not be so conspicuous. In other cases it has been a means of recognising within the church those who already function in a leadership capacity, such as Sunday school superintendent, youth leader, women's meeting leader.

(g) To people whose view of the strict autonomy of the local church is sacrosanct, the idea of *area leadership* may seem to be anathema. Some point to the dangers of imposed leadership as illustrated in certain areas by expressions of 'needed truth' teaching. But it depends on your con-

cept of leadership as to how this is handled. In certain types of assemblies and areas of the country where leadership is viewed as that of direction and not navigation, there would be dangers in any co-operation. But where the sense of tolerant fellowship and area identity is manifest, there can be immense value in sharing common burdens and ways of working at area level. In north Devon for example, there has since the time of Robert Chapman been a 'preaching plan' in operation, rather like the system adopted by the Methodist lay preachers. In the Blackdown Hills the assemblies are closely linked in all the work that takes place in that farming community. In the Aldershot/Camberley/Woking area elders from nearly all the local assemblies (open and not so open) have met three or four times a year to pray, share burdens, investigate methods of church growth, invite specialists in various fields to share their vision, and discuss controversial issues current in their church life and practice. In no case need the sense of autonomy feel threatened. For the last ten years or so the Counties Regional Fellowship structure has brought together assemblies on a county basis to co-operate in evangelism with the county evangelist, and in few cases that co-operation has extended to embrace other interests. The value of area meetings for church leaders provides the opportunity to look objectively and biblically at certain problems with others, away from the environment where emotions get aroused and personalities become involved. We learn by sharing; we can change our rather parochial and isolationist view by sharing; our vision of God and his church is expanded by sharing in this manner. Common enterprises, better organised if on a shared basis, and perhaps more valuable for the church, can be initiated, with mutual trust and co-operation.

### *Leadership in other churches*

Just as in our assemblies there are many varieties of leadership in practice, so in other churches — though more ambitious innovations characterise some. Let us share a little of some of the more recent changes.

(a) *Plurality of elders*: In all denominations the 'amazing' discovery is being made that the New Testament teaches shared eldership. So today many churches have introduced a system where the minister is one of the elders, or under the elders. The elders have functional responsibilities — teaching elders, pastoral elders, evangelistic elders, etc. In some cases the eldership is large and arises out of a growing congregation and its needs. In such cases leadership is arising from function, rather than a 'gift of leadership' being identified and encouraged. The old adage, 'A man's gift makes room for him', applies in many cases.

(b) *Task leaders*: In other cases the leadership consists of those with the responsibility for leading the functions of the church (e.g. women's work, children's activities, youth fellowship, visitation programme). The



value in this approach is the sense of co-ordination that is possible, the elimination of overlapping, the integration of purpose and aim, the inter-relationship that can be established. Many of our churches are so activity-orientated that each activity can become an end in itself, and can almost create a church within a church. Any church can readily introduce a task leaders' meeting at regular intervals, providing the leadership (in whatever form it exists) is prepared to respond to suggestions and burdens emanating from those doing the work.

(c) *House group leaders:* Undoubtedly the most exciting development today is the multiplication of house groups in churches which have adopted some form of house group system. Every growing church in the United Kingdom has a house group system working. Only a few assemblies, to my knowledge, have adopted some form of this system, but those that have can see the benefits. Mid-week meeting attendances have risen from 25% of the membership to 75%. All members of the family and the church (young and old, married and single, children and adults) benefit. Most housegroups commence as a means of improving corporate fellowship (*koinonia*), and develop into becoming a most important means of providing teaching and pastoral care at the level on which it is required. So it is adapted according to the needs that exist in each housegroup. Some have a recognised elder as leader; some are organised on a geographical or street basis; in a few cases they exist for certain homogeneous needs, in which case they may initially be more evangelistic than pastoral.

In some churches the pastoral/teaching housegroup has become a most fruitful means of evangelism. As individuals talk about 'the group' to neighbours, they start to come. A number of churches have had to re-structure and choose new leaders to cope with the ever-increasing numbers who want to come. The leaders therefore emerge from the established housegroups. Spiritual and leadership qualities must be prominently in evidence.

If we accept that no set pattern of leadership exists in the New Testament, then we have to ask 'Is the leadership pattern currently in force in our local church the best for the area, the congregation and the type of leadership available?' If not, then perhaps it is time to examine afresh what the scriptures can teach us, and be prepared to adapt method to suit need. There may be no set pattern, but surely the principle of elders leading and feeding the flock of God is of paramount importance. It is his flock, we are his under-shepherds; we must then, in his name, and with his mind lead and feed. If that leadership is not adequately being given, if the flock are not getting fed by current means and at the set times, then we must adapt our leadership pattern to ensure that they do get fed and led.

### *Qualities of leadership*

What should we look for in a leader? A successful businessman? A man with a string of qualifications in the academic field? Someone who has no evidence of educational attainment? Someone who is old in years, faithful in the meetings and ought not to be passed over? Someone who is young and inexperienced, but who can be trained? If we are primarily looking at these criteria then our leadership will inevitably not be for the good of the flock and the glory of God. Of course some of these criteria may need to be weighed and considered, but the prime need undoubtedly is for 'men full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom' (Acts 6:3), 'full of faith and the Holy Ghost' (Acts 6:5). 'The Holy Spirit has made you overseers' (Acts 20:28), 'as God's steward . . . must be blameless . . . he must hold firm to the sure word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to confute those who contradict it' (Titus 1:7, 9). The list of social requirements is comprehensively given in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1, but the spiritual must be paramount.

In his book *'Let my people grow'*, Michael Harper distinguishes between office and function. We tend to be too 'office-conscious'. Our position or responsibility determines our attitudes and actions. In the New Testament the terms pastor and teacher do not seem to have been applied to definite offices. Harper pleads for us to see 'five spheres of ministry rather than five "offices" to which men are appointed or ordained . . . rather like the Olympic symbol, all inter-related to each other.' The local church needs a combination of all these callings (referring to the gifts to the church in Ephesians 4), and they should especially be seen in Christian leadership. 'The pooling of the gifts of a body of people who present great variety in terms of age, income, background, culture, race and education, is the work of master craftsmen. It is the creation by God's grace of a single work of art. When ministry fails there is division, a spirit of competitiveness, pride and prejudice, jealousy and private interests — all too common, alas, in our churches. But when the Spirit is in command and the ministry is functioning properly, then a bunch of individuals is set free from their individualism, united into a body, and liberated to function as individuals in a team of people.'

There is a great deal to be done by all leaders in identifying gifts — natural and spiritual — recognising their existence, encouraging them to be put to use for the corporate benefit of the church as the body of Christ . . . 'to equip the saints for the work of the ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain . . .' (Eph. 4:12, 13). All includes every member of the local church — strong and weak, male and female, young and old, marrieds and singles. 'The whole body joined and knit together by every joint with which it is supplied, when each part is working properly, makes bodily growth and upbuilds itself in love.' (Eph. 4:16) Every word in that sentence is vitally important in the wholesome func-

tion of church leadership. That is their prime responsibility — to encourage every member of the body to function normally. Have we ever sat down and made a list — even a card index — of graces, gifts, and abilities (charismata — spiritual gifts, and domata — natural gifts) of each church member, and then purposefully tried to ensure that they were functioning in an inter-related fashion for the benefit of the whole church?

In his excellent book on *Pastoral care*, R. E. O. White identifies the following qualities as being essential for spiritual leadership, and in each case there are ample illustrations from the scriptures.

(a) *Energy*: This is the quality we call boldness or zeal when it works well, and impetuosity or fanaticism when it works badly. There can be no leadership without energy, dedication and drive. (Consider the life of Peter.) ‘The leader who is content to keep things quietly ticking over, to conserve the past and postpone the future is in a rut. Instead of finding initiative, we find inertia.’

(b) *Judgement*: James is quoted as the classic example. ‘If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God.’ (Jas. 1:5) It was his wise judgement at Jerusalem that gave direction and made leadership safe to follow. Steadfast and wise counsel, careful decisions that bear lasting fruit, a deep reflection on the things of God and a far-seeing understanding of people — these win trust and confidence.

(c) *Ability to get the best out of people*: It requires a deep respect for others’ opinions and outlook, warm-hearted encouragement and support, readiness to stand back that others might progress. All spiritual gifts are bestowed not to enhance the possessor but to enrich and edify others. Barnabas is cited — the son of encouragement. He showed ‘genuine appreciation of others’ qualities and gifts’.

(d) *Clear thinking*: Paul showed that he was well-informed, apt to teach, skilful, and patient in helping others to see what he had seen. A clear-thinking man is usually the ‘visionary’ — he keeps ahead in thought and action. He sees the issues, the work, the programme, the coming changes, the possibilities. ‘He is pressing toward some new mark, knows when to break new ground, without waiting for unanimity. But he also knows when to wait and not drive, when to withdraw and not dominate.’

(e) *Ability to unify a group*: The task of a shepherd is to gather, not to scatter. What is known to be true and Christ-like will be followed. This kind of quality will value fellowship above controversy, the unity of the Spirit above pride of knowledge, appreciate the many-sided nature of truth without losing conviction or blurring vital distinctions. John’s first epistle illustrates these qualities.

(f) *Example*: This is the least dispensable of leadership qualities. The man who would lead the average Christian must live above the average level. The price of leadership is to be a little more conscientious than most, more scrupulous about doubtful things, more hard-working and

generous, a little more holy in conduct (1 Peter 1:15). 'Set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity' (1 Tim. 4:12).

We have not discussed many organisational aspects of leadership, such as decision-making, keeping confidences, delegating and organising, goal-setting, a balanced diet, and care for all (including the leaders!) but one vital necessity of leadership must be dealt with.

### *Leadership from God*

Our leadership has value for the church only if it is related to God. It is to him that all leaders have to answer — not only for their own manner of life, but for the way they have discharged the responsibility he has given them. We can never view the church as our church, our youth fellowship, our flock, ours, ours, ours. It is God's. We are to tend 'the flock of God', to care for the 'church of God'.

Leaders themselves must be led and fed. King David's shepherd psalm illustrates this. He was one of the greatest kings of Israel, yet he knew that fellowship and deep communion with God which was the source of his greatness. 'He leads me besides still waters . . . He restores my soul . . . He leads me in paths of righteousness' (Psalm 23:2, 3). Righteousness is the very character of God. We need his righteousness not only imputed to us as a doctrinal fact, but present in us as a living demonstrable reality. In Psalm 25 he prays, 'Show me thy ways, teach me thy paths, lead me in thy truth'. We need constantly to depend on God and allow his will to be done in us before it can be done through us.

Moses was the leader of the people out of Egypt and in the wilderness — but the scripture says, 'God led the people about' (Ex. 13:18), the cloud and fire being the evidence of his presence with them. He leads us by the right way today by his blessed Holy Spirit, if we are prepared to submit to his controlling presence. If you are led by the Spirit you are not under law and if we live by the Spirit let us also walk by the Spirit', says Paul (Gal. 5:18, 25) and then he starts to interpret practically what that walk should include, and by inference he is particularly thinking of leaders. 'O, lead me to the rock that is higher than I . . . I will abide in thy tabernacle for ever; I will trust in the covert of thy wings' (Psalm 61:2, 4).

We can be strong leaders, as we allow him to lead us, as we submit to his authority ourselves, as we ask him to renew a right spirit within us, as we humble ourselves, admit our faults, pray for his correction, cleansing and infilling, as we submit to one another in the fear of God, as we serve those among whom we have leadership responsibility, instead of lording it over them. Let us in true humility take the washbowl and towel. We must be prepared for God's healing work in our lives lest the flock of God is left in the wilderness.

*Further reading*

R. E. O. WHITE  
Pickering & Inglis

A. W. TOZER

S.T.L.

J. OSWALD SANDERS

Lakeland

*A guide to pastoral care*

*That incredible Christian*

*Spiritual leadership*