

AN EVANGELICAL CONFLICT: LEADERSHIP IN THE CHURCH

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## Introduction

This paper grew out of concern for the spiritual growth and development of Christian education leaders in the local church. Through personal observations and interviews it seemed that many of them performed their jobs in the church without a sense of ministry or personal fulfillment. Their tasks appeared out of harmony with those of their alleged counterparts in the church of the New Testament. Why? What should Christian leadership be like? Is there a Biblical pattern for leadership?

These are questions that started me on a quest for a theological understanding of leadership. This paper represents the first leg of my journey. It is an effort to gain an Evangelical perspective on leadership. Consequently it is primarily a critique of current evangelical thought on leadership.

The thesis that is herein developed and defended is: Evangelical religious education in America is currently in conflict over an understanding of leadership that calls for a rethinking of the theological foundations of ministry.

### A Quest for Integrity

Evangelical religious education in America has for over two decades been in a quest for a better understanding of the church and its mission with the focus of attention coming to rest on conflicting concepts of leadership and authority in mission.<sup>1</sup> It is a theological conflict that grows out of differing approaches to the Scriptures. One approach considers the Bible to be the source of the church's message but not its methods. This view suggests that theories of leadership and administration must be taken from extra-Biblical sources. A second approach suggests that the Bible is a methods book as well as a message book. This view stresses that the church must live out its message as well as proclaim it.

### Renewal Through Ministry

During the first half of this century Evangelical religious educators were primarily concerned with preserving and proclaiming the Biblical message of salvation.<sup>2</sup> The rise of the Evangelical Teacher Training Association (ETTA) most clearly depicts this concern. ETTA's teacher training series contained two major thrusts: 1) Bible survey courses were foundational, and 2) courses on teaching methodology

were stressed.<sup>3</sup> Scripture Press and Gospel Light publishers were founded in this period to provide Bible based curriculum for evangelical churches. Emphasis was placed on knowing the fundamentals of the faith. Two scholars who came out of this early tradition to chart a new course are Lois LeBar and Findley Edge.

Lois LeBar: In 1952 Lois LeBar published Children in the Bible School. It was an expansion of her doctoral thesis at New York University and reflected some of her developing thoughts as Professor of Christian Education at Wheaton College. The thrust of the book is the development of the organization and methodology needed for a good teaching program for children in the church. As a testimony of the caliber of this work it has remained in print without revisions for almost three decades.<sup>4</sup>

Findley B. Edge: In 1956 Teaching for Results by Findley B. Edge was published.<sup>5</sup> It too has become a classic in the methods approach to Christian education, offering a clear and simple guide to the process of teaching the Bible to adults.

In 1958 LeBar broke the ground for a new direction in Evangelical education with the publication of Education That Is Christian.<sup>6</sup> In the preface of this work she says:

This book is written for all Christian

workers who wish to work seriously and intelligently with the Divine Teacher, who alone is able to achieve results for eternity. Divine methods are essentially simple rather than complicated, but they require insight into the nature of God, the nature of man, the purpose of the Scriptures, and the means of getting pupils into the written Word<sup>7</sup> and through the Book to the Living Word.

Furthermore, she is clear in identifying theological grounds for rejecting a "methods" approach to education stating:

A chief reason for the lack of life and power and reality in our evangelical teaching is that we have been content to borrow man-made systems of education instead of discovering God's system.<sup>8</sup>

In 1963, Dr. Edge's A Quest for Vitality in Religion also proposed this new direction for Christian education. The sub-title identifies the thrust of his thinking: "A Theological Approach to Religious Education." Edge was writing out of a concern for the rising institutionalism of the church. He asked the question: "Can we stem this tide toward institutionalism and recapture experiential religion?"<sup>9</sup> His solution is "radical" and "daring," calling on Christian leaders and church members "to clarify afresh what we as the 'people of God' are to be and do in the modern world in the light of the teachings of the Scriptures."<sup>10</sup>

Within a decade and a half LeBar and Edge were independently addressing themselves to the qualities of the church that are needed to maintain the Biblical ministry of Jesus Christ. For LeBar the answer lay in a Focus on People in Church Education (1968).<sup>11</sup> Edge's plea is for The Greening of the Church (1971).<sup>12</sup> Both follow the same pattern of thought only with different emphasis. First they see the major problem of the church as being a derth of relationships with God and one another. LeBar writes:

The most important thing in life is personal relations: being rightly related to God, to oneself, to others. At the heart of the universe is a Person, not natural forces, a Creator who reveals Himself to persons who became a human Person in Christ, who seeks to redeem estranged, sinful persons back to himself.<sup>13</sup>

Edge's emphasis is that

the basic problem in today's church is personal and spiritual. As Charlie Shedd has said, 'The problem is not that the churches are filled with empty pews, but that the pews are filled with empty people'...One fundamental aspect of the problem is that a majority of church members have no clear understanding of who they are or what they are called to be as the 'People of God.' It is my feeling that the average church member's understanding of 'what it means to be a Christian' is so shallow and superficial as to constitute a major perversion of the gospel.<sup>14</sup>

A second concern for both authors is a recapturing of the mission of the church. LeBar's focus is on the internal mission of the church. She sees it as a "suprahuman organism," "a unique combination of the human and the divine, with its own life style."<sup>15</sup> Thus, the local assemble is truly a church only if is in "living relationship" with its living Lord. The mission of the church is to be the body and bride of Christ. "God's call is not for the purpose of keeping us safe and comfortable, but for enabling us to assume the humble role of servant."<sup>16</sup>

Edge speaks of the church's mission in terms of a balance between evangelism and social involvement. The challenge of our generation is "to demonstrate again that both evangelism and social involvement can be vigorously and unapologetically pursued."<sup>17</sup> For him, renewal of the church is a means and not an end.

While differing in the emphasis they placed on internal and external mission both LeBar and Edge see a primary need of the church to be a restructuring of the way people relate to one another in mission. Both call for a reorganization that maximizes on the small group experience but within existing forms.



For LeBar the mission of the church is fulfilled only when there is a balance of concern for the needs of the group and those of individuals.

Because each individual must receive Christ for himself, and because the Lord often puts His hand upon individuals for specific tasks, the corporate life of the church has not been receiving the ~~the~~ emphasis that Scripture gives it. Do we think of the church as an organization to be promoted, or as a fellowship to be lived? Does our world see the local church as an illustration of responsible, creative individuals working together in oneness of purpose, or has the fellowship of the Holy Spirit been replaced by programming and organization?...Since in Christ Christians have organic unity-the closer we get to Him, the closer we are to each other-our responsibility is to achieve community... In the Christian framework, group dynamics means finding the mind of the Spirit in a group.<sup>18</sup>

For Edge, groups take on a different meaning:

The organization of the church should be a reflection of the nature and purpose of the church...The People of God are a unique people, and the essence of their uniqueness is that they have been called by God to a redemptive mission. This redemption is both personal and social. When a person responds to the call of God, he gives himself to the 'ministry' of fulfilling this personal, social redemption. Thus the People of God are so committed to him that the purpose of their lives is to be involved in the redemptive mission which God is working out in the world.<sup>19</sup>

Summary: It has been seen that Lois LeBar and Findley Edge are two Evangelical religious educators whose

books represent a progressive development of an understanding of the church and its ministry.<sup>20</sup> Their major works span a period from 1952 to 1971. During this time each made a transition from a methods-transmission approach to Christian education to an approach that recognizes the dynamics of interpersonal relationships. Both are evangelical and maintained a distinctive emphasis on the Scriptures as inspired throughout their quest. In fact, both understood the Scriptures as being the source of their understanding of the church.<sup>21</sup>

There are some major differences between the two. One, LeBar, is Free Methodist, the other Southern Baptist. LeBar defines the mission of the church as teaching, preaching, and healing. Edge speaks in terms of redemption through evangelism and social concern. One is primarily concerned with the internal development of the Body of Christ; the other with its external witness. Each has a healthy appreciation of the priesthood of all believers but for differing reasons.

Finally, it is significant to note their differing approaches to Scripture as revealed in their more theological works, Education That Is Christian and A Quest for Vitality in Religion. LeBar recognizes the strengths of studies in historical-theology<sup>22</sup> but relies primarily upon

inductive studies of the Scriptures.<sup>23</sup> She analyzes carefully a variety of incidents of ministry as they appear in both the Old and New Testaments. Her quest is to identify the factors (principles) that contributed to their success so as to cooperate with them. Edge, on the other hand, uses the Scriptures as a means of support for his theological positions. He argues eloquently and theologically, demonstrating his ideas to be in harmony with the Word.<sup>24</sup>

#### Renewal Through Restructuring

The early 1970's saw a proliferation of writings by Evangelical religious educators on some of the issues LeBar and Edge had articulated.<sup>25</sup> Two writers in particular expounded upon the themes they had presented: Lawrence Richards and Gene Getz.

Lawrence Richards: Richards had been a student of LeBar's at Wheaton before going on to receive a Th.M. from Dallas Theological Seminary and a Ph.D. from Northwestern University. Having returned to Wheaton to teach and having authored a best-selling series of books for teens (the Youth Asks series) and edited Keys to Sunday School Achievement, Richards was by 1970 a recognized innovator in the field of Christian Education. In that year he published A New Face for the Church. It was in many ways a logical extension of LeBar's Focus on People (she had served as co-director of the leadership

retreat that spawned the book).<sup>26</sup> However, his focus is on the church's need for total change and not mere revitalization of existing forms. In fact, he considers many of the church's present structures antithetical to its Scriptural purpose and nature. The church must cease to be a society (organization) and become a community (family).<sup>27</sup>

A major section of A New Face deals with "The Church in Scripture."<sup>28</sup> In chapters seven, eight and nine of this section, "The Mutuality of the Ministry," "Leadership in the Church," and "The Structure of the Church," respectively, Richards portrays his basic understanding of leadership in the church. Here he criticizes the modern church's dependency upon called pastors as <sup>an</sup>inherent contradiction to God's revealed way of doing things in His church in looking for help to any one person. When the New Testament speaks of ministry in a local church, it is a ministry of all believers to each other."<sup>29</sup> For him, "ministry" is simply to serve one another with the particular gifts God has given to each one individually.<sup>30</sup> "It is the members of Christ's body being with each other, and in their shared love and shared life discovering that the Spirit within each flows out."<sup>31</sup> He then relies upon five New Testament passages for a description of "the Biblical concept of Leadership:" Matthew 23:1-12, Matthew 20:25-28, I Timothy

3:1-13, II Thessalonians 2:1-13, and I Peter 5:1-4. He concludes that 1) there is a sharp contrast between the normal way of thinking about leadership as superiority and the implications of servanthood in Christ's teaching, 2) leadership in the church is not related to authority, 3) character is a more important criteria for leadership than accomplishments, and 4) Scriptural leadership requires that the leader be completely open in his relationships with others and that he become deeply involved in their lives.<sup>32</sup>

But what about authority in servant- leadership?

He states that,

It seems to me that our problem in understanding any apparent conflict lies in the unfortunate connotations of 'authority' based on its exercise in the world. Authority exercised in the church of God is distinctively different. And the difference lies in the way the leader exercises authority, not in the fact of his authority.<sup>33</sup>

The Christian leader's authority lies in his example and his teaching which makes his a "self-authenticating" leadership.<sup>34</sup>

Finally, this style of leadership requires "joint decision-making." All who are affected must share equally in the decision because it is a concern of the Body and not of individuals.<sup>35</sup>

Gene Getz: In the early 70's Gene Getz was associate professor of Christian Education at Dallas Theological Seminary. He received his Ph.D. at New York University. At Dallas Seminary he used Richards' A New Face for the Church as a text for one of the courses he taught and was greatly influenced by it. With the encouragement of his students Getz started a house church to apply some of Richards' ideas with his own.<sup>36</sup> The process resulted in his own book, Sharpening the Focus of the Church.

Getz's thesis is that the focus of the church on a contemporary strategy of ministry can be sharp only if it uses three lenses: Scripture (eternal), Church History (past), and Culture (present). The bulk of the book deals with the first. Like Richards, his understanding of the New Testament church in ministry centers on concepts of leadership.<sup>37</sup> Unlike Richards, Getz went to great lengths to demonstrate the methods of Bible study he used to draw his principles out of Scripture. For the most part they involve inductive analysis through charts and diagrams of "all" relevant passages of Scripture. The significance of his method is enhanced by two appendixes that are designed to give the reader an opportunity to make his own inductive study of the passages he has considered in the book.<sup>38</sup>

The results of his study reveal striking similarities and yet some major differences from Richards' conclusions. These are most clearly seen in the "Principles and Purposes of Leadership"<sup>39</sup> and the "Principles and Purposes of Administration and Organization"<sup>40</sup> that Getz has deduced from his study. In harmony with Richards he says:

1. The most important criterion for selecting church leadership is spiritual qualification.
2. The true test of a man's qualification for church leadership must be based on 'quality'-not 'quantity.'
3. Multiple leadership in the church is a New Testament principle.
4. Local church leaders are to truly fulfill a pastoral and teaching role-particularly those who are the spiritual leaders of the church.<sup>41</sup>

He further states a number of principles that seem to have no parallel in New Face for the Church but includes one that hints at a fundamental disagreement with Richards. Biblical administration calls for the leadership to "delegate responsibility to qualified people."<sup>42</sup> This concept seems to run contrary to Richards' call for "joint decision-making." A related issue is seen in that Getz does not address himself in this work to the question of authority. In a recent debate between the two men, Getz identified these two issues, delegation and authority, as being major points of departure of his thoughts from Richards'.<sup>43</sup> That debate will be considered more fully later.

Summary: The purpose of this section has been to demonstrate first of all that there was in the early 1970's a willingness if not desire among some Evangelical Christian education writers to restructure the church according to Biblical patterns of ministry. Secondly, it has been demonstrated that that concern for restructuring was directly related to an earlier desire by some Evangelicals for a renewal of spiritual awareness in ministry. Finally, it has been suggested that, at least for the two writers considered, Biblical leadership is the key issue in determining the renewal of the church both spiritually and structurally.

#### A Quest For Competency

Leadership also came to the forefront of Evangelical Christian education in the 1970's on grounds other than church renewal. There were those who continued to view the church as "organization" and not "organism;" who saw "competent leadership" as a tool for the preservation of the institutional church.<sup>44</sup> This group unapologetically looked at the church through the lens of managerial and human relations theories.<sup>45</sup> For them Christian administration was not different; it was only better. It was better because of the Christian distinctive it brought to leadership. They echo the words of Gaines Dobbins,



Here then is the Christian distinctive: leadership is not getting above others in prestige and power. It is servanthip-getting down under the load of human need to bear it sacrificially and redemptively. According to this standard, the measure of greatness is not prominence but humility, not excellence but faithfulness, not authority but obedience, not being served but service. Eventually these men and their successors learned that leadership is servanthip.<sup>46</sup>

Two leaders in this school of thought have been Kenneth Gangel and Ted Engstrom.

Kenneth Gangel: Kenneth Gangel became President of Miami Christian College in July 1974, after serving as director of the School of Christian Education at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. Prior to that time he held the position of Vice-President for Academic Affairs at Calvary Bible College. He holds a number of degrees including a Ph.D. in college administration from the University of Missouri, a S.T.M. in practical theology from Concordia Seminary, an M.Div. in pastoral theology from Grace Theological Seminary, an M.A. in Christian Education from Fuller Summer Seminary and a B.A. in business administration from Taylor University.<sup>47</sup> It is out of that background that he wrote two books on Christian leadership.

In 1970, the year Richards wrote A New Face for the Church, Gangel published Leadership for Church Education.

The book grew out of a concern for two recurring problems he saw in the hundreds of churches he had visited in the last decade. "The first concerns a lack of genuine Bible knowledge on the part of adults in evangelical churches in America."<sup>48</sup> The solution he sees is "the development and organization of a properly functioning program of Christian education in the local church."<sup>49</sup>

The second problem Gangel addresses is a lack of leadership in local churches. In his opinion:

At the time of the writing of this book, no evangelical author has produced a work which comes to grips with the technical aspects of leadership. The attempt in the following pages is to begin with absolute biblical truth concerning church leadership and fit into the concept relevant secular research. The author's concern in these chapters is to explore the nature of leadership, describe the duties of the leader within the context of the church, and deal with the problem of training local church leadership.<sup>50</sup>

In actuality, the text contains many theological presuppositions but relatively little Biblical and theological analysis of leadership.

In 1974 Gangel published a smaller volume titled Competent to Lead: A Guide to Management in Christian Organizations. In spite of its title, this work addresses itself more directly to some theological issues than does

his earlier work (but only slightly so). In chapter one he tries to establish a New Testament view of leadership. Building on Christ's admonition to the disciples in Luke 22:24-27 he argues that New Testament leadership is not 1) political power-play, 2) authoritarian attitude, or 3) cultic control.<sup>51</sup> Then turning to the second chapter of I Thessalonians he proposes what New Testament leadership is. It is 1) nurture, 2) example, and 3) fatherhood.<sup>52</sup> In chapter two he does a Biblical word study of "administration" (kubernētēs) to conclude that the gift of administration is "a capacity for learning executive skills, not a package of already developed skills."<sup>53</sup>

Concerning the unity and community of the church he says:

the local church is a body of confessed believers joining together for worship, fellowship, instruction, and evangelism; led in their efforts by biblical officers (pastors and deacons); sovereign in polity; and including, as a part of its life and ministry, observance of the ordinances, discipline, and mutual edification...What is of concern is that the reader recognize the validity and essentiality of the local church as a visible, contemporaneous demonstration of the universal church and the primary importance that unity and community be demonstrated in its interpersonal relations.<sup>54</sup>

This principle he draws from the theological concept of the priesthood of believers but with little clarity.

Finally, concerning the leadership of Christ, Gangel declares a four-fold focus of his ministry: 1) our Lord focused on individuals, 2) our Lord focused on the Scriptures, 3) our Lord focused on Himself, 4) our Lord focused on purpose.<sup>55</sup>

Gangel offers only broad generalizations based mostly on theological presuppositions. His search for Biblical and theological foundations for leadership is limited to a few word studies and Biblical recitations. The source of his ideas lies more in his background in theories of human relations than in theology. The bulk of his material is drawn from those sources as is his definition of leadership as:

the exercise by a member of a group of certain qualities, character and ability which at any given time will result in his changing group behavior in the direction of mutually acceptable goals.<sup>56</sup>

Ted W. Engstrom: Ted Engstrom was Executive Director and President of Youth for Christ International before becoming Executive Vice-President of World Vision International. He has written several books on management and leadership, the one most relevant for this study being The Making of a Christian Leader (1976). Engstrom

is a significant figure in this study of theological aspects of leadership for three reasons: 1) he is in close association with Gangel,<sup>57</sup> 2) he has achieved significant influence among Evangelicals and 3) his conclusions are most antithetical to those of Larry Richards in his recent book, A Theology of Leadership.<sup>58</sup>

The Making of a Christian Leader contains four chapters on Biblical understandings of leadership. Much of this information he borrows from Gangel, but there are some noted additions in that he includes a chapter on "The Old Testament and Leadership." In that chapter he asserts that any view of leadership must be based upon one's view of man. From Isaiah 53:6 he draws a picture of man as being like sheep who go astray. Thus, like sheep, "groups of people need direction so that their efforts and energies will be directed toward a common goal."<sup>59</sup> That direction always comes from the top so that,<sup>as</sup> in the pattern of Moses in Exodus 18:13-27, "it is important to recognize that authority flows from the higher levels to the lower in God's plan."<sup>60</sup>

He further enumerates several secrets to David's success, including his wise diplomacy and strong leadership in leading his people in praising the Lord. Nehemiah also stands out as a great administrator. He had a clear goal,

a sound technique, and a good enlistment program. His function included the ability to "analyze." He also achieved "total mobilization" after he determined the plan, revealing his ability to "deputize" and "delegate." Finally we see in Nehemiah an example of perfect "coordination" ~~in~~ <sup>or the</sup> ability to "supervise."<sup>61</sup>

There is another aspect of The Making of a Christian Leader that makes it a significant work for this study. Many of Engstrom's managerial statements about church leadership are heavily weighted with theological overtones. That is to say he addresses many theological issues without <sup>recognizing them as such or</sup> supplying support from theological sources.

One example is his treatment of "authority." When discussing the "Acceptance of Authority" he says

A common but well-reasoned definition is this: 'Authority is whatever you possess at the moment that causes someone else to do what you want him to do at the moment.' In other words, any leader who is able to get done what he wants has all the authority he needs at the moment.<sup>62</sup>

In another place he points out the complex nature of authority as involving forces within the leader, within the followers, and those within the situation. "Desirable authority is not viewed as being unwillingly imposed, all-powerful, insensitive and unenlightened."<sup>63</sup>

Another example is the image he portrays of the leader as one who possesses the "inherent capacity" to take the necessary and right actions.

To summarize, the concept of leader in this book means one who guides activities of others and who himself acts and performs to bring those activities about. He is capable of performing acts which will guide a group in achieving objectives. He takes the capacities of vision and faith, has the ability to be concerned and to comprehend, exercises action through effective and personal influence in the direction of an enterprise and the development of the potential into the practical and/or profitable means.<sup>64</sup>

Furthermore,

Today's effective leader gets things done because he utilizes a workable style and has the ability to motivate others highly. He also becomes successful when he is task-oriented. This means he must learn the resources available to his organization and study the means to arrive at goals. He must have the ability to define policies and procedures to organize the activities of his people toward the common goal.<sup>65</sup>

Summary: Gangel and Engstrom hold to almost identical views of leadership in the church. They consider the church to be an organization as well as an organism. For them the leader is the person who makes things happen. They claim to offer a Biblical position but give little indepth analysis of the Scriptures. Both rely heavily on human-relations theory considering a proper approach to

be a merger of theory and Scripture. Ultimately, they identify the major problem of the modern church as being the absence of competent leaders.

### The Current Debate

We have seen that Evangelical religious educators have frequently held to contrasting views on the mission and nature of the church and that those contrasting views have contributed to a diversity of opinions on the nature of Christian leadership. Much, if not all, of the disagreement is directly related to differences of opinion on how the Scriptures should be used. It will now be seen that recent developments clarify the issues and call for a broader theological approach to the problem.

In 1980 A Theology of Church Leadership, co-authored by Lawrence O. Richards and Clyde Hoeldtke, was published. Since it represents largely an extension of Richards' A New Face for the Church,<sup>66</sup> and for the sake of brevity, it will herein be referred to as Richards' work.

Richards clarifies from the outset that he views the Scriptures as his primary source in developing an understanding.

And so too we are forced into Scripture for an understanding of leadership in Christ's church. Here in the written Word we find a unique description of



the church and a clear explanation of how leaders function in it. Our goal must be to see the biblical perspective. Our commitment must be to let that perspective shape us and our ministries.<sup>67</sup>

Briefly, he has concluded that the church must be viewed as an organism, a body whose head is Jesus Christ. Thus, it is inappropriate to speak of the church in terms of organization or in any way to imply that it is an institution. All authority rests in Christ, the head, so that it is inappropriate to invest authority in persons or positions. The mission of the church is the edification of the Body. "Enterprise" describes task oriented activities which must always flow out of the decision making process of those who will use it and is never imposed from above. Finally, leadership is the result of allegiance given to the leader. We have already seen most of these positions in A New Face for the Church. A Theology of Leadership differs primarily in its intensity, aggressiveness, clarity, and extent of application.<sup>68</sup>

### The Attack

A Theology of Church Leadership makes a frontal assault on The Making of a Christian Leader. In four different chapters Richards quotes Engstrom as an illustration of a position antithetical to his own. First,

he attacks Engstrom's view of the leader as the person who gets things done through people.<sup>69</sup> For Richards this is the issue.

If we are a body, and Jesus is head over all things for us, then policy making, goal setting, organizing, decision making, and all the other roles of management cannot be the responsibility of the human leadership of the body. We may not yet know how spiritual leaders do function. But if we are committed to Scripture's portrait of what the church is, we know that somehow the usual approach to leadership fails to reflect the realities portrayed in the Word of God.<sup>70</sup>

A second attack on Engstrom has to do with his understanding of authority as something that causes another person to "do what you want him to do."<sup>71</sup> Richards proclaims that "this is never the goal of the spiritual leader in the body of Christ."<sup>72</sup>

Richards raises another conflict in his interpretation of Engstrom as suggesting that organizations are Christian or non-Christian and can take on a moral or immoral quality.<sup>73</sup> His response is that

In point of fact, it is only persons who are Christian or non-Christian, moral or immoral. "Organizations" have no moral or Christian qualities; the people who run them do. Organizations have no objectives; the objectives are those of the leaders. Management is neither moral nor immoral. It

is the manager to whom such terms can apply. Organization and management are in essence amoral.<sup>74</sup>

Finally, Richards blasts Engstrom's description of effective communication<sup>75</sup> as being excellent for an institution but not for an organism.

In the institution, communication is focused on tasks. The use of the word employee implies that communication is designed to get them to 'do it this way.' Reference to 'gaining acceptance' and 'persuasion' and 'flowing down' all imply a controlling of authoritative structure of organization. It's clear that once again the concept of leadership is really that of getting people to do something you have determined you want done.

But all these things have been abandoned by servant leaders in the body. We do not pass commands 'down' through a structure. We are not, as spiritual leaders, primarily concerned with 'getting things done.' That responsibility belongs to those who 'own' the ministries to which they have been called. Our responsibility is to develop the close and supportive relationships within the the body that through meaningful interaction with each other and with God lead to the growth of allegiance.

We want forms of communication that will help people share their lives with each other, encourage the sharing of burdens and prayer, and engage the body in worship and in a mutual ministry centered around the Word of the Lord. In essence, communication within the body is developed not by structuring the kinds of communications channels that Engstrom talks about but by<sup>76</sup> establishing interpersonal networks.

### A Rebuttal

Recently Leadership magazine brought Larry Richards and Gene Getz together for a published debate on their ideas about church leadership. The results are insightful and pointed. Getz presents the following weaknesses in Richards' thought:

1. He has not differentiated between form and function, principles and patterns, organism and organization. He should view the church as both an organism and organization.
2. He should draw principles of leadership from both the Old and the New Testaments. (Richards insists on drawing only from the New Testament for principles of church leadership.)
3. Richards' shared decision-making process can work only in small house-churches and among people on the same level of maturity.
4. His trust of people is unrealistic.
5. His decision-making process does in fact exercise control which is administered by elders which equals authority. (At this

point Richards asserted that "You have  
to let me work within my own definitions.")<sup>77</sup>

### Some Observations

The following are a few observations taken from this debate and Richards' attack on Engstrom:

1. There are a number of flaws in Richards' argumentations:
  - a. He is operating out of his own set of definitions and yet consistently attacks others on fine distinctions of terminology.
  - b. He makes a "straw man" out of Engstrom by attacking his ideas as being contrary to the nature of the local church when he was in actuality addressing himself to leaders in a variety of religious-type organizations.<sup>78</sup>
  - c. His insistence on the local church model and subsequent refusal to find patterns of ministry in the Old Testament raises serious questions about his view of Scripture.
2. Some main issues may be pinpointed as central

to this debate on leadership in the church.

- a. How is Scripture to be approached and interpreted?
- b. What is the mission and nature of the church?
- c. What is authority and how is it to be manifested?
- d. How are decisions to be made within the church?
- e. What kinds of communication are needed in the church?

3. One's approach to Scripture is a determining factor in one's understanding of the church, mission, and leadership.

### Conclusions and Implications

#### Conclusions

This study has served to demonstrate that diverse understandings of the meaning of "Christian leadership" have emerged as major points of disagreement in the circle of evangelical religious educators. It is evident that these differences are theological in nature and are closely associated with one's utilitarian approach to the Scriptures. For instance, Richards and Getz both view the Bible as their primary source for direction in church ministry. But

Richards draws his principles only from the New Testament while Getz searches all of Scripture. Consequently they reached conflicting views on the use of authority in leadership. Similarly, Engstrom goes to all of Scripture but considers it only one (Divinely Inspired as Message but still only one) source among many in determining how the church is to minister. Unlike Getz he sees little need for restructuring the church. For him (Engstrom) it is quality and not form that counts.

Differences may also be rooted in more general theological presuppositions. Indeed, these will determine how one approaches Scripture. Consider this, what were the factors that led LeBar to stress nurture as the mission of the church and what led Edge to stress evangelism and social action? Basic understandings of God and man will inevitably color ideas on leadership.

In the mist of diversity there is also unity. Each of the authors considered is devoutly Evangelical, holding to a high view of the Bible as the inspired Word of God. Interesting is the high view of man that they all share (especially when one considers the Calvinistic leanings of many of the institutions they were associated with). Outside of Engstrom's likening of man with dumb sheep, their lowest opinion of man is his need for salvation,

They speak of man in terms of "gifted" and, which all proclaim. Concerning the church, they all agree that it must be characterized by meaningful interpersonal relationships and that this calls for more small group experiences. Despite opposing interpretations, they all agree that Christian leadership must be modeled after Christ as "servant-leader" and that He is the head and authority of the church.

One other similarity stands out. LeBar, Edge, Richards, Getz, Gangel, and Engstrom all operate on the a priori assumption that Christianity is an experiential-relational religion. The Christian leader is one who is led by Christ. <sup>79</sup>

It must be concluded that the current misunderstandings about leadership have arisen from three sources: 1) legitimate theological differences between these evangelical scholars, 2) poor communication, and 3) a failure to integrate views of leadership with a more comprehensive theology. It would seem that the latter is the primary culprit.

### Implications

Evangelical religious education must strive for theological integrity by rethinking its views of leadership from a more comprehensive theological base. First, there must be a reorientation to Scripture as the revealed



Word of God. Evangelical educators must choose a comprehensive approach to Bible study; one that surfaces the most possible factors for proper understanding. A variety of methods of study must be incorporated.

Secondly, a theological understanding of leadership must start with an understanding of God, not the church. To begin this study with the church is to begin from a near-sighted position. As LeBar has pointed out the church has for its head a divine Person, not an abstract principle.<sup>80</sup> Christian leadership must be rooted in an understanding of God as Person and not in mere imitation of the methods he used while on earth.

Thirdly, Christian leadership can only be understood if the church addresses itself to a more comprehensive understanding of man. One that is thoroughly Biblical in perspective. Man the leader is first and always man the creature. What does his being created in the image of God mean for leadership? How does the fall affect leadership? How does redemption affect leadership?

Lastly, a comprehensive theology of leadership will address itself to the distinctive nature of leadership in the church. But this can be done only after the church is placed in proper perspective in the total economy of God. Now is the time for a rethinking of the theological foundations of ministry.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>This is not meant to suggest that leadership is the only issue evangelical religious educators are currently addressing. It is to suggest, as is defended in this paper, that evangelical differences in ecclesiology are surfacing as conflicts in theories of leadership. It is to be lamented that there is no literary organ for continued public dialogue among evangelical religious educators.

<sup>2</sup>Consider the evangelistic tone of Benson's A Popular History of Christian Education and Eavey's History of Christian Education.

<sup>3</sup>C.B. Eavey, History of Christian Education (Chicago: Moody Press, 1964), pp. 412-415.

<sup>4</sup>Mary LeBar, Lois's sister and fellow educator has stated that she and her sister have requested to revise the text but have been rejected by the publishers repeatedly on the grounds that sales remain too high to risk a revision. That statement was made to the author when he was a student of the LeBars at Wheaton in 1975.

<sup>5</sup>Findley B. Edge, Teaching For Results (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1963).

<sup>6</sup>Lois LeBar, Education That is Christian (Westwood, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1958). A revised and updated version of this text has just been released by LeBar.

<sup>7</sup>LeBar, Education That is Christian, p. 5.

<sup>8</sup>LeBar, Education That is Christian, p. 19.

<sup>9</sup>Findley B. Edge, A Quest for Vitality in Religion (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1963), p. 10.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

<sup>11</sup>Lois LeBar, Focus on People in Church Education (Westwood, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1968).

<sup>12</sup> Findley B. Edge, The Greening of the Church ( Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1971).

<sup>13</sup> LeBar, Focus on People, p. 11.

<sup>14</sup> Edge, The Greening of the Church, p.9.

<sup>15</sup> LeBar, Focus on People, p. 16.

<sup>16</sup> LeBar, Focus on People, p. 18.

<sup>17</sup> Edge, The Greening of the Church, p. 10.

<sup>18</sup> LeBar, Focus on People, pp. 236-237.

<sup>19</sup> Edge, The Greening of the Church, p. 167.

<sup>20</sup> There has been no effort to analyze the factors that influenced the development of either or to consider the possibility of inter-dependence. Both authors list each other in their bibliographies but seem to have developed their ideas independent of each other.

<sup>21</sup> Edge says, "My quest took me to the Bible. As much as I could, I wanted to find out what God had to say in answer to these questions." The Greening of the Church, p.31.

<sup>22</sup> LeBar, Education That is Christian, pp. 169-172.

<sup>23</sup> LeBar, Education That is Christian, pp. 49-133.

<sup>24</sup> These differences clearly go beyond styles of writing. Edge is decidedly more "theological" in his terms and methods while LeBar adheres closely to Scripture in approach and terminology.

<sup>25</sup> It is of little consequence that The Greening of The Church was not published until 1971 which is a year after two of the works about to be considered. A Quest For Vitality in Religion had already presented the heart of the issues discussed in the later volume.

<sup>26</sup> Larry Richards, A New Face for the Church (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970) p. 8.

<sup>27</sup> Richards, New Face, p. 8.

<sup>28</sup> Part 2, "The Church in Scripture," contains six chapters, 5-10, of the 20 chapters of the book, Richards, A New Face, pp. 75-181.

<sup>29</sup> Richards, New Face, p. 98.

<sup>30</sup> Richards, New Face, p. 99.

<sup>31</sup> Richards, New Face, p. 101.

<sup>32</sup> Richards, New Face, pp. 111-115.

<sup>33</sup> Richards, New Face, p. 116.

<sup>34</sup> For Richards, this concept of the self-authenticating nature of leadership in the church solves any question raised by juxtaposition of the concepts of servant-leaders and authority. New Face, p. 117-120.

<sup>35</sup> Richards, New Face, pp. 121-131.

<sup>36</sup> The information concerning Getz's relation to Richards was taken from a recent article in Leadership. Gene Getz and Lawrence Richards, "A Biblical Style of Leadership," Leadership, Spring Quarter, 1981, pp. 68-78.

<sup>37</sup> Gene Getz, Sharpening the Focus of the Church, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1974), pp. 75-192.

<sup>38</sup> Getz, Sharpening the Focus, pp. 269-316.

<sup>39</sup> Getz, Sharpening the Focus, pp. 118-129, also listed in chart form on page 246.

<sup>40</sup> Getz, Sharpening the Focus, pp. 147-163, also listed in chart form on pages 246-247.

<sup>41</sup> This list contains the first four of seven items concerning "Principles and Purposes of Leadership," Getz, Sharpening the Focus, p. 246.

<sup>42</sup> Getz, Sharpening the Focus, p. 247.

<sup>43</sup>Getz and Richards, "A Biblical Style of Leadership," pp. 68-74.

<sup>44</sup>Kenneth O. Gangel, Competent to Lead, p. 7.

<sup>45</sup>Ted Engstrom, The Making of a Christian Leader (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), p. 13.

<sup>46</sup>Gains Dobbins, Learning to Lead (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1968), p. 36.

<sup>47</sup>Biographical data for this section was taken from the dust covers of various texts.

<sup>48</sup>Kenneth O. Gangel, Leadership for Church Education (Chicago: Moody Press, 1970), p. 9.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid.

<sup>51</sup>Gangel, Competent to Lead, pp. 11-13.

<sup>52</sup>Gangel, Competent to Lead, pp. 13-16.

<sup>53</sup>Gangel offers here what seems to be an a priori assumption of his managerial training with little expertise in exegesis. His theology is clearly colored by managerial presuppositions. Competent, p. 25.

<sup>54</sup>Gangel, Competent to Lead, p. 27.

<sup>55</sup>Gangel, Competent to Lead, p. 14.

<sup>56</sup>Gangel, Leadership for Church Education, p. 13.

<sup>57</sup>Engstrom wrote the forward to Competent to Lead and Gangel's review of The Making of a Christian Leader is printed as promotional data on the back cover of that text. Also, Engstrom refers to Gangel as "my good friend" in the body of that text; The Making of a Christian Leader, p. 39.

<sup>58</sup>As will be seen later, Richards openly contrasts his views with those of Engstrom.

<sup>59</sup>Engstrom, The Making of a Christian Leader, p. 26.

- <sup>60</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>61</sup> Engstrom, The Making of a Christian Leader, pp. 32-35.
- <sup>62</sup> Engstrom, The Making of a Christian Leader, p. 112.
- <sup>63</sup> Engstrom, The Making of a Christian Leader, p. 27.
- <sup>64</sup> Engstrom, The Making of a Christian Leader, p. 24.
- <sup>65</sup> Engstrom, The Making of a Christian Leader, p. 137.
- <sup>66</sup> There is no substantial difference in the treatment of leadership in these two texts except for a new section in the later on "Understanding Enterprise"; Richards, A Theology of Church Leadership (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1980), pp. 151-208.
- <sup>67</sup> Richards, A Theology of Church Leadership, p. 10.
- <sup>68</sup> A New Face is laced with apologetic defences clearly intended to lessen the offensiveness of Richards' ideas to more traditional readers. These are absent in his latest work.
- <sup>69</sup> Engstrom, The Making of a Christian Leader, p. 20.
- <sup>70</sup> Richards, A Theology of Church Leadership, p. 90.
- <sup>71</sup> Engstrom, The Making of a Christian Leader, p. 112.
- <sup>72</sup> Richards, A Theology of Church Leadership, p. 138.
- <sup>73</sup> Engstrom gives the same statement on p. 13 of The Making of a Christian Leader and on p. 15 of The Art of Management for Christian Leaders (Waco, Texas: Word, 1976). Richards is here making a straw man out of Engstrom's position on the grounds of terminology. Engstrom has stated his audience to be broader than the local church so that he must be more inclusive in his terminology. He has at another place in the same text fully agreed with Richards' view that leadership is neither moral nor immoral; The Making of a Christian Leader, p. 25.
- <sup>74</sup> Richards, A Theology of Church Leadership, pp. 191-192.
- <sup>75</sup> Engstrom, The Making of a Christian Leader, p. 156.

- <sup>76</sup>Richards, A Theology of Church Leadership, pp. 337-338.
- <sup>77</sup>Gene Getz and Lawrence Richards, "A Biblical Style of Leadership," pp. 68-78.
- <sup>78</sup>Engstrom, The Making of a Christian Leader, p. 15.
- <sup>79</sup>Gangel, Leadership for Church Education, p. 187.
- <sup>80</sup>LeBar, Focus on People, p. 11.

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