

The quality of modern church leaders

Introduction

This is going to be a completely subjective essay based upon over 50 years of observation; I will do no research to supplement this paper. Be prepared; it is very critical!

The Biblical model

The shepherd of the sheep. Jn 10:2

For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand. Ps 95:7

Know that the LORD, He is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people and the sheep of His pasture. Ps 100:3

Jesus is called the good shepherd of the sheep; we are the sheep being pastured (fed) and pastored (led) by him. The model of the eastern shepherd is set before us as an example for church leadership and this is important.

I once visited a church in Birmingham in the 1980s where the pastor was driving the congregation. He constantly spoke, was overbearing, he did all the jobs – even reading the notices and no one was allowed to participate in any meaningful way. His demeanour was to push and to drive. I believe God told me to admonish him after the service. All I said was that God wanted him to lead the people like an eastern shepherd and not a western one. He was shocked and silent. Within weeks I heard that this man was forced to resign for adultery and left the ministry. I have witnessed this many times since.

Western shepherds drive the sheep, often with dogs. They use fear to make the sheep comply. If someone starts to go in a different direction, the dog will threaten the sheep with growls and force them to comply. This model is used in bad churches.

To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. Jn 10:3-4

I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own. Jn 10:14

Eastern shepherds are very different. They know all the sheep by name for a start. They lead the sheep and the sheep follow. The sheep have a degree of independence but will always follow the shepherd when he moves on. They know the shepherd and desire to follow him voluntarily. The sheep know the voice of the shepherd and follow him even if they cannot immediately see him.

Then Jesus said to them again, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep'. Jn 10:7

I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. Jn 10:9

The shepherd protects the sheep with his own life. He stayed with the sheep for long periods in all weathers. At night he would make a makeshift corral of brambles and thickets leaving a gap for the gate. He would then sleep in that gap, becoming the gate.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You *are* with me; Your rod [shepherd's club] and Your staff, they comfort me. Ps 23:4

I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. Jn 10:11

But David said to Saul, 'Your servant used to keep his father's sheep, and when a lion or a bear came and took a lamb out of the flock, I went out after it and struck it, and delivered the lamb from its mouth; and when it arose against me, I caught it by its beard, and struck and killed it. Your servant has killed both lion and bear; and this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, seeing he has defied the armies of the living God.' 1 Sam 17:34-36

The shepherd risked his life to deliver the sheep from predators. Armed only with a staff and perhaps a club, he would take on bears, lions and wolves to protect the sheep.

He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. Ps 23:2

In the day the shepherd would personally take the sheep to water and good pasture. He led them to feed.

This is a good model for church leadership.

Historical church leaders

There were many godly church leaders in church history; too many to mention by name here (see 'resources').

Such men were more concerned about shepherding the people and fearing God than anything else. They often lived frugal lives and many lived through outright persecution. Some were burned at the stake, drowned or martyred in other ways.

These men were not focused upon plans, strategies, money, how do grow numbers, marketing, advertising, credibility, reputation, personal authority and many more such things. They only lived to serve the people; to shepherd the people.

Some with an evangelistic heart went out and converted their own churches, sometimes in difficult circumstances. David Brainerd went out to the Native American Indians and saw many conversions, then formed churches. Some went overseas and did the same. Even women alone in some deserted wilderness saw many conversions and formed churches, such as Mary Slessor of Calabar. Where men feared to tread in lands ruled by warring native tribes, Mary Slessor brought tribes together and converted them. Hudson Taylor and his colleagues went into interior China amongst the poor villages and not only brought the Gospel but also modern medicine.

Those that ministered inland in Britain deserve no less praise for their godly deeds. Some led revivals and nurtured the flock in Britain and then led missionary works afterwards, such as WC Burns or CT Studd.

Many spent their whole life ministering in a simple church in a rural area such as Christmas Evans while others were in the centre of an international capital with large congregations, such as John Calvin or Charles Spurgeon. Some became bishops in large urban churches such as JC Ryle. Some led church movements as well as pastoring the local church, like Martin Luther. Some wrote major confessions and catechisms of faith, such as Guido de Bres, Benjamin Keach, Zacharias Ursinus, John Calvin, Dr. William Whitaker or James Ussher.

All such people feared God and focused their work on edifying the people of God; being shepherds. They cared nothing for their reputation, good or bad. They worked through personal attacks and ignored opportunities for self-aggrandisement. John Calvin even asked for his salary to be reduced. None of them ever centred on money.

As well as shepherding the flock, some undertook huge amounts of tireless work in preparing resources for God's people, such as the Greek manuscript work of Theodore Beza, the theological works of John Owen, the 1879 Analytical Concordance of Robert Young,¹ the commentaries of Albert Barnes or the allegories of John Bunyan (some written in prison). This is an aspect of feeding the flock.

These men, and many more, are truly God's worthies.

These are the characteristics of such men.

- Complete obedience to God.
- Worship of God.
- Following the Lord Jesus Christ.
- Being full of the Holy Spirit.
- A desire to grow in the knowledge of God.
- A heart for the lost.
- Self sacrifice.
- Self-denial.

¹ Can you imagine years compiling and editing over 300,000 references writing with a quill pen by candlelight in order to help people find Bible texts?

- Compassion for the Lord's people.
- Tireless care for the Lord's people.
- Fearlessness in the face of opposition.
- Frugality.
- Fruitfulness.

Modern leaders

The modern era has seen some godly men ministering to the church and also writing to help church members. We could mention AW Pink for example, who believed that the church had become corrupted even in his own day (he died in 1952). Martyn Lloyd-Jones is another (though he was less of a pastor and more of a teacher). However, we struggle to find many examples of great, godly church leaders. Many cry, 'Where are the men?'

If we take 1950 as a cut-off point (roughly my lifetime) and survey the period after that, it is truly a sad spectacle. No doubt various church movements are part of the reason for that. Movements such as: the Healing Movement, the Charismatic Movement, the Signs and Wonders Movement, the Ecumenical Movement, the Higher Life Movement, the UK Restoration Movement, the Radical Charismatic Movement (e.g. New Apostolic Reformation, Word of Faith etc.), the Kansas City Prophets, the Toronto Blessing, revivalist movements (e.g. Lakeland, Pensacola), and so on. All these have done immense damage to the church. In many cases they brought in a syncretism of the church and occultism / mysticism / oriental religion. Many leaders today don't even see that these were problems.

The quality of leadership exhibited in the past is almost no longer to be found anywhere. Men who are acclaimed today do not pass the test of godliness and gifting, or even understanding, compared to past worthies. Some have churches of thousands of people and followers hang on their every word in print or in audio – yet they preach unorthodox doctrines, engage in aberrant practices and show frailties of character and judgment.

One very famous supposedly evangelical pastor, with a church of 5,000 and author of many books and a study-Bible, preached an unorthodox doctrine of Christ, a universal view of the doctrines of grace as opposed to particularism, as well as teaching Dispensationalism – yet he claimed to be a Calvinist!² After I confronted him many years ago, he eventually recanted his wrong Christology but not his Dispensationalism and Amyraldian universalism. Yet he is adored by thousands.

One of the reasons why modern church leaders are so poor is that there is a very real but hidden attack on Christianity everywhere by the global Elite cabal that controls nations. This attack begins in schools, continues in universities and undergirds every aspect of social life. There are huge pressures upon people that are working against God.

However, in the past, godly men saw through such pressures (such as placed upon people by the Roman Church in medieval times) even when it could cost them their lives. They stood against the tide counting their lives as nothing in order to serve the Lord's people.

² Universalism and Dispensationalism are opposed to the principles of Calvinism and Reformed Doctrine.

They had courage of conviction and gave their lives to obey God's call. Today few church leaders demonstrate this, or even have the wisdom to see the problem.

Sadly modern church leaders simply do not have the character of a man of God. They are unqualified to lead the church.

They do not have understanding or conviction of what is right.

I once wrote a long letter to a leader of a very famous UK Charismatic church who constantly claimed to be a Calvinist. He was nothing of the sort but was Amyraldian (though I doubt he knew what that was) and radically Charismatic. I gently explained these inconsistencies in great detail (and sent him Calvin on these matters in a book) and he confirmed to me that I had made a good argument explaining the matter – but he refused to change. I had showed him that his teaching and ministry were unbiblical but he would not change course. It was more important to stay in his denominational stream and keep his minister friends and reputation.

Examples of character failings

Committing adultery

Certainly leaders in the past were guilty of this but within the evangelical church there are very few examples of it. Indeed I cannot think of one case (that may be my ignorance). I know of many examples of fornication by church leaders in institutional churches, sects, cults and revivalist movements, whether it be Abelard's affair with Heloise, the fornication within Roman Catholicism (especially by popes), the fornication at the Cane Ridge revival, or the fornication committed by many Pentecostal leaders. But adultery within truly Biblical churches in history is hard to discover.

I grieve about the quality of the leaders I see today. I am still shocked about the collapse of many leaders that I have witnessed first hand. I am appalled by the number of men that succumbed to adultery; sometimes multiple adultery.

I remind readers that I don't care how great a pastor was claimed to be; if he was committing adultery during the years he rose in fame, then his ministry had no spiritual value whatsoever. He only ministered in his old nature and that was worthless, no matter how winsome it was. I have seen deluded people still praise the former ministry of some pastor-star even though he was outed as an adulterer during that time. Grossly sinful men, especially those spurning their wives and children, cannot glorify God in ministry. A bad tree cannot bear good fruit.

The sheer scale of fornication and adultery in the modern church is shocking in the extreme. Here are just a few examples.

- I sat under the ministry once of a very famous British church leader who quit the ministry and left his wife and family in order to run off with another man.
- I have personally known three wives of prominent church members who run off with another woman.
- A former pastor of mine (after I had left the church) committed multiple adultery with numerous women in the church over a long period before being discovered and the church collapse.
- A rising star in an affluent Anglican church quit the ministry because he was committing adultery.

- Another rising star in the Grace Baptist circuit, who led a famous church and ministers' fellowship, also quit the ministry due to his long-time adultery.
- A famous British author and church leader with an international influence committed adultery and quit the ministry to become a poet / singer.
- A minor church leader ran off with the wife of the church's organist.
- An elder in a FIEC church abandoned his wife and family to run off with one of the church singers.
- A famous UK Charismatic 'prophet' and hymn-writer had an affair and was forced to resign from ministry.

These are just people that I know. The cases of adultery and fornication in the church at large are numerous. They include so-called prophets guilty of multiple sexual abuse of women. A famous prophet and church leader guilty of long-term alcoholism and homosexuality. A prophet-revivalist guilty of adultery while leading the revival. Leaders of a famous healing ministry that sexually abused women to heal them. Two internationally famous Pentecostal female leaders were caught in adultery. A Charismatic Anglican vicar that rose to fame with a powerful youth ministry was found guilty of multiple fornication. A famous leader and author was convicted of sexual abuse and witness tampering. And so it goes on.

Adultery is selfish and cruel because it sends ripples of suffering out far beyond the couple involved. It causes grief to the spouse left behind. It causes psychological damage to the children involved; scars that often last a lifetime. It causes pain to the parents involved. It hurts close friends of the couple. It ruins the reputation of the church.

Adultery is truly a great evil.

Alcoholism

It astonishes me that alcoholism could capture church leaders; but it has.

Famous church leaders guilty of alcoholism include the leader of a Brethren denomination and a very famous Pentecostal healer and church leader.

What is shocking is that while these people were under the influence of alcohol, thousands of people followed them thinking that they were godly church leaders speaking the word of God.

Violence

There have sadly been many cases of this but I will mention two.

Smith Wigglesworth, in 'ministering' exorcism, punched a man so hard in the stomach that he died from the effects three days later. Wigglesworth was held in too much fear and esteem to be charged with a crime.

Todd Bentley, while leading at the Lakeland Revival, boasted about kicking a man in the face with his 'big biker boot' so that the man's teeth fell out; the audience laughed.

Stories of Pentecostals punching, kicking, wrestling and otherwise violently hurting people, are a common theme in delivering certain types of Pentecostal 'ministry'. I was once told by a friend who saw it that a Pentecostal leader in Wales not only wrestled a man to the floor, in order to exorcise a demon, but he then rolled down a hill with the man.

Jim Jones, the leader of the cult that committed mass suicide in Guyana, had officers in his American church that slapped the faces of congregants deemed to be disruptive in his meetings. This was accepted practice and no one complained!

Arrogance

That none of you may be puffed up on behalf of one against the other. 1
Cor 4:5

History is replete with examples of arrogant church leaders. In the past, many people considered church leadership to be a position of authority and respect in the community with little effort required, hence a desirable career choice. Leadership jobs (clerical preferments) were often given as a reward, such as by a high official in a denomination (simony). Those taking such clerical jobs often became puffed up. This is viewing church leadership as a job, a title, an honour, and a career.

In fact, church leadership is, firstly, a vocation that one is called to by God and, secondly, a calling and desire to serve the people of God sacrificially.

Sadly arrogant church leaders are not relegated to the pages of history and Catholic power plays. Modern churches are filled with arrogant leaders; though they would deny this.

Here are some examples:

- Arrogating to oneself a special title of authority to appear more pompous, such as: apostle, prophet, moderator, superintendent, or one of the many denominational clerical titles. [Note that the Charismatic churches, which rose up to be a reform movement opposed to denominational hierarchies and formality, soon developed their own system of formal leadership titles that exactly copied the previous hierarchy but with new titles.]³
- Insisting on taking a front seat in the meeting or being seated on a platform above the people. [The idea of a platform above the people is anathema.]
- Claiming that God speaks to you first and then you tell the congregation what to do. [Charismatic 'apostles' claimed this. It is blasphemy.]
- Gathering a coterie of 'yes-men' sub-leaders around you above the people. [Due to the insecurity of leaders.]
- Dominating over a clergy / laity split. [Causing a satanic separation of the people of God.]
- Refusing to let your decisions be questioned. [Authoritarianism caused by insecurity.]
- Making it difficult for people to get to you after the meeting or in the week.
- 'Prophets' who declare church strategies out of their own minds.
- Wearing vestments to appear to have priestly authority (in denominations) or academic qualifications (in Reformed churches).
- Demanding that the congregation gives you money for some cause supposedly led by God.
- Arranging for church members to do a rota of household chores because the leader and his wife have more important things to do.
- Insisting that certain titles are used for the leader; such as the people always calling the leader 'pastor' and never using his first name.

Examples from real life.

³ E.g. Apostle = archbishop. Apostolic team = archbishop's council / bishops. Leader's conferences = synod. Senior pastor = vicar. Elders = church officers.

- One well-known schismatic church leader (and a few others) let the meeting start with hymns then at some point paraded in vestments, marching ceremonially through the people (who are standing to attention) before getting to the pulpit.
- One Charismatic ‘apostle’ was due to have his brand new car delivered to the Bible week he was leading in a rural area. He stopped this and arranged for the delivery to be to his house many miles away so that people would not see his new car.
- One British ‘apostle’ actually told his sub-leaders that God spoke to him but not to the church.
- One locally famous FIEC pastor never let his congregants call him by name but only by his title ‘pastor’; this even applied to elders that had known him for decades and some that were older than him.

Meanness of spirit, unkindness, anger, malice

Christian leaders, though they can be strenuous in confronting evil and heresies within reason, must generally be the following: righteous, loving, virtuous, godly, peaceable, kind, good, gentle, self-controlled.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those *who are* Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Gal 5:22-25

Being filled with the fruits of righteousness. Phil 1:11

But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. 2 Pt 1:5-7

Now many modern leaders not only lack these things but are proud, arrogant, angry, vindictive, cruel, attack dogs. Not only that but some actively boast about being such things and their followers revel in the fact that they are ruthless in castigating good or even vulnerable people.

One famous leader, that represented a faction of Christian Zionist teaching, was so fiery in his denunciations of other Christians that his publisher told me to my face that he was surprised that these pages of his writing did not burst into flames. The publisher (a minister) also said that he edited his drafts and toned down his worst exuberances, but what remained was still ruthlessly arrogant, cruel, vindictive, mean, shabby slurs on people's character.

In an audio of one of his speeches he actually called on God to kill someone that disagreed with him. This was a Christian that dared to speak the truth. In an attack on myself he told his audience that I was mentally unsound and numerous other denunciations. His castigation of a certain famous church historian were ridiculous since this person knew far more about the subject in question than he did. Many other leaders and even innocent individuals were attacked in the most ruthless, bigoted, disgusting manner.

The attacks were used to bolster the reputation of this evil false teacher; i.e. because he attacked other leaders and denounced them as heretics, that meant that he was a righteous avenger of the truth; a powerful leader. In fact he was a major heretic, a deceiver and a wicked man. I confronted him directly and suffered slander and libel for it.

His attacks on people were so vociferous that some poor people were left in shock, especially isolated women that he put down in wicked fashion. I have no doubt that some were medically affected.

Allegations arose that he was profiteering, that he was guilty of abuse, that he abused his wife and so on – yet his ministry continued to thrive. Eventually a Christian charity was so provoked by victims of abuse (especially women) that they began a formal investigative examination of him and his ministry and published the data with a view to litigation.

In another case, a famous Charismatic leader and author called for the extermination of Christians that were opposed to his particular radical Charismatic agenda. He likened this to the warfare between the blue coat Union Army and their grey coat Confederate brethren in the US Civil War. Another famous Charismatic tele-evangelist stated that he wished he had a machine gun to kill those Christians that opposed his teaching on healing and prosperity. Needless to say that neither of these church leaders can possibly be Christians at all, let alone godly men.

Now there are historical examples of strenuous attacks on heresies, and the heretics behind the teachings, that characteristic were of their time. We could mention Jerome's critique of Pelagius or Calvin's attack against Pighius. These are quite bold to the modern ear. Nevertheless there was no sin in them and the error was the focal point of the attack. Modern leaders, like the ones exemplified, were not attacking leaders of serious errors but people that disagreed with them, which included women and ordinary people not in ministry at all. This violent language is wicked.

There is never a reason to excuse unrighteous behaviour.

Lacking in knowledge

Now I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another. Rm 15:14

One of the problems of modern leadership is that leaders are so lacking in knowledge.

I have sat under highly qualified theologians and the ministry was riveting (such as JI Packer expounding Augustinianism) – but this is a rare example. Today preachers pack their sermons with chaff, superficialities, disconnected illustrations, unseemly jokes, rambling anecdotes, questionable language and even swearing. Their best content is data plagiarised from some commentary. I have even known leaders get their whole sermon from an online source. This is shocking.

The job of leaders is to instruct the flock and this means imparting knowledge from a heart that has spent years acquiring knowledge first hand through experience and testing. The teacher gives of himself and applies knowledge and wisdom directly to the souls of the people before him, whom he knows intimately. Thus the teacher gives his people exactly what they need to know in the way that they can appreciate it. There is no need to impress

anyone with a speech; the only important factor is instructing the people the Biblical doctrine that they need at that time.

Shockingly, the level of superficiality in church exposition is of such poor quality that it beggars belief. No wonder God's people are drifting, listless and lacking discernment. Only a very undeveloped flock could ever fall for the nonsense, depravity and demonic masquerades of the last 30 years including: the Toronto Blessing, the Lakeland Revival, the Pensacola Revival, Charismatic mysticism, antinomianism, fake spiritual gifts, and closing all churches down during Covid. No godly church leader in history would have tolerated such things.

Failures to follow the example of Biblical shepherding

I will take the shepherd idiom as a basis for my points here; bad leaders do the opposite.

The characteristics of a Biblical shepherd are:

- Pastoring, i.e. shepherding leadership: gathering, nurturing, cherishing, feeding, watering, directing and protecting.
- Leading sheep to pasture.
- Leading, not driving, the sheep. Good directing. The shepherd knows where to go.
- The sheep follow; inculcating sheep to follow you based upon merit.
- The shepherd knows the sheep. Therefore, there are not too many sheep.
- The sheep know the shepherd. The shepherd is open and approachable.
- The shepherd is the door of the sheep; nothing gets past him first. The shepherd protects the sheep.
- The shepherd gives his life for the sheep. Principle of self-sacrifice in leadership.

Pastoring

There are many failures in this regard. They include:

- Failing to gather the people - koinonia is crucial in church life. Establishing rigid liturgical protocols rather than encouraging mutual edification.
- Developing strategies that actually divide the people instead of gathering them.
- Focusing on evangelism to the detriment of fellowship so that people are constantly looking outwards in mission rather than fellowshiping and edifying.
- Failing to nurture the sheep. Failure to know what the sheep want and need. Forcing unnecessary structures and programmes upon the flock. Overburdening the people with too much work. Creating too many programmes and projects.
- Failing to teach (feed) the people. Centring upon agendas instead of Biblical doctrine and exposition. Failure to teach didactically.
- Failure to truly rely upon the Holy Spirit in the fellowship and instead directing the people with strategies from the mind of the leader.

Pasture

It is vital to pasture the sheep – they must be fed and watered constantly. This is a leader's top priority.

Firstly, sermons are not the Biblical method of teaching the sheep. Sermons were the means of proclaiming the Gospel to outsiders; but not to teach those inside. There is no text telling leaders to preach a sermon to the gathered church; not one. In Acts 20:7 'preach' in the KJV is actually the Greek word *dialogomai* – to discuss, debate.

Teaching in the gathered church is by dialogue; just like Jesus taught the disciples. It involves teaching a proposition and then allowing questions, answers and discussion. This method is far more effective than sermonising, which RL Dabney considered that only 4% of his sermons were ever retained by his congregations.

Worse than sermonising, most modern sermons are just gathered thoughts on some topic that have little depth. Worse still is when these thoughts are beefed up by jokes and pointless illustrations.

Teaching must be didactic; it must involve instruction in doctrine. Biblical exposition is good, but it must involve doctrinal instruction. The Puritan method was to give an exegesis of a passage; then interpret the passage; then give a doctrinal explanation of the passage and then apply it practically to the people. This is a good method, as long as it is followed by discussion (which was not usual in Puritan churches).

There is very little didactic teaching in churches today. Indeed, most of what passes for teaching is not even teaching, but blessed thoughts at best or driving some agenda at worst. In Charismatic circles it is not even that but just fiery, passionate rambling generation of emotion leading to some hypnotic phenomena.

Direction

The pastor leads the sheep and takes them where they need to go. He leads the people; he does not drive them.

Far too many modern leaders drive the flock; some do this with vehement language and emotional blackmail. This is shocking; these are God's people.

The sheep will follow the godly leader who knows where he is going. The leader will explain the situation and the goal and then use encouragement. Gentle exhortation is only necessary where some are going off course.

In some churches there is no direction at all and the church wanders in the wind because the leader does not know what he is doing. The cause of this is lack of fellowship with God. The leader that communes with God knows what to do all the time.

Fellowship with the leader

The shepherd knows the sheep.

This means that there are not too many sheep.

The local church is small enough for the leader to know all of the people by name, and all of their circumstances. He will know their birthday and the various members of their families. He will know if they are well, sick, or tired due to overwork and will try to help them. He will never put too many burdens upon them.

The sheep know the shepherd.

The shepherd is open and approachable. The leader must be a friend to all the church members. He must fellowship with them outside of the meeting and seek to counsel them one to one regularly.

This level of fellowship – though Biblically vital and normal – is rare in modern churches. Leaders are usually one step higher than members and are rarely in conversation with them. In large churches, leaders don't even know the names of half of the congregants.

Protection

The shepherd is the door of the sheep; nothing gets past him first. The shepherd protects the sheep. The shepherd gives his life for the sheep.

Protection from deception and evil is a huge priority for the leader. It is the other half of didactic teaching. Instruction first explains what the truth is so that people are doctrinally educated. But then the teacher must identify errors and heresies so that the people know what to avoid and can identify error for themselves.

Part of teaching and protection will be to recommend good books and resources so that studious people can help themselves and perhaps grow in ministry.

Principle of self-sacrifice in leadership

The need to protect the people means that the leader will make many sacrifices, especially of his time and sometimes his family and personal desires, in order to help the sheep grow safely.

This is another reason why churches are small. If there are too many people, the zealous leader will wear himself out if he spreads himself too thin amongst the people.

It is my observation that very few churches properly attend to protecting the people from deception. Indeed, some leaders seem afraid to even confront certain issues not wishing to offend anyone. No! Leaders must identify the errors and the false teachers by name in order to protect the people. Note the example set by Paul: 1 Tim 1:20; 2 Tim 2:17.

Examples of church failings

The issue of big churches

These are a vanity of bad leadership. Anyone leading a church of 5,000 is a bad leader.

There is no reason whatsoever to build a large church of even hundreds of people, let alone thousands. These are a monstrosity.

People don't know what church is for; they think it is some big celebration. It is not.

Church is the place of one-anothering;⁴ of fellowship (koinonia);⁵ of mutual edification;⁶ of encouragement and exhortation;⁷ of breaking bread.⁸ Thus it must be small in number.

This is why the Biblical precedent is meeting in homes and nowhere else (Acts 6:3; Rm 16:5; 1 Cor 16:19; Col 4:15; Phm 1:2). Arguments for large dedicated buildings are facile. Biblical churches meet in homes. They must be small so that they can be effectively shepherded and that koinonia can rule.

⁴ Rm 15:7, 14; 1 Cor 12:25, 16:20; Gal 5:14; Eph 4:2 etc.

⁵ Acts 2:42; 1 Cor 1:9; 2 Cor 13:14. Koinonia means: fellowship, association, community, communion, joint participation, intercourse; the share which one has in anything, participation, intimacy; a gift jointly contributed, a collection, a contribution, as exhibiting an embodiment and proof of fellowship.

⁶ Rm 14:19; 1 Thess 5:11.

⁷ 1 Cor 14:31; Col 2:2; 2 Tim 4:2; Titus 2:15; Heb 3:13.

⁸ Acts 2:42, 20:7; 1 Cor 10:16.

Everyone meeting in a huge church is deceived, plain and simple. They have been deceived to think like the world (the enemy of God) and not like the Holy Spirit who inspired the Biblical text which, multiple times, mentions meeting in houses and never anywhere else.⁹

A cause of many problems – the building

Having established that small churches meet in homes we must consider other problems caused by dedicated buildings.

Money

The money given by the Lord's people is sacred and must be used wisely. The prime purpose of giving money in churches is to meet the needs of the poor, frail and vulnerable.

Buildings are money traps; they waste the resources of the Lord's people on frivolities that serve no purpose. Huge amounts of money are spent on building purchase or rent; maintenance, refurbishment, repairs and so on. This is a waste of thousands, and in some cases millions. All of that money should have gone to the poor and needy.

I know of one local church that spent £1.5 million on purchasing a former town centre retail warehouse followed by extensive redesign and refurbishment. The ongoing costs are enormous in business rates, maintenance, fire safety and repairs. The 'apostle' of this building proudly showed me around the premises; I was not impressed. After some time the huge costs of this building required renting it out for local functions, especially council functions. Inevitably this meant that the building was used to host conferences dedicated to sin, such as homosexuality meetings. No one seemed bothered by this.

Having followed the world in requiring a dedicated building and developing a hierarchical leadership structure, modern churches need money (just like the world) to keep the whole demonic project going. God's work done God's way does not require constantly asking people for money.

This is why leaders have to develop false interpretations of Scripture in order to substantiate claims upon the people for money, then more money. They utilise the Old Covenant tithe demanding that everyone give 10% of his salary to the work of the church. Some even demand that this 10% is taken from gross wages. In inflationary times low-paid workers simply cannot afford this and feed their families.

The tithe was one of the very few taxes that OT Israelites paid. Essentially it was similar to modern income tax being the foundational tax for the nation. So Israel had a low-tax system. This nation cannot be compared to modern times when people are taxed to the hilt by multiple state taxes. Various taxes can add up to 60% of wages. In the past left-wing governments in Britain demanded 95% in tax from rich people.

The tithe was specifically to pay for the Tabernacle worship system. Levites were fully utilised in all the aspects of the Tabernacle and offerings. This involved: maintenance of the Tabernacle; breaking down and carrying the Tabernacle in the wanderings; preparing all the offerings (washing, skinning, butchering, burning, storing for food); attending to all

⁹ The Hall of Tyrannus was for evangelistic outreach via debates. Solomon's Portico was a temporary gathering for prayer, as the Jewish Christians were used to, until they understood better. Worship of Jesus in the temple was forbidden anyway. Basilicas only became the pattern after the Erastian churches of Constantine.

the rituals; maintaining the vessels, and so on. This is not comparable to a modern church leader whose main job is to prepare a sermon.

There is no repetition of the command to tithe under the New Covenant because there is no Tabernacle, no priesthood and no offerings. Giving is required as one sees fit under God; 'let each one give as he purposes in his heart' (2 Cor 9:7). This giving is to provide for the needs of the poor and frail in the church¹⁰ and then in the local community.¹¹ Only leaders that cannot work due to itinerant ministry are to be given money but this is by faith; there is no precedent for a salary system. The giving of the people was never intended to be spent on leadership salaries, buildings and maintenance.

Structure

The structure of such a building dominates the atmosphere of the meetings in it. Of necessity it requires a large platform to house leaders, and musicians to direct the large gathering and this enforces the idea of a clergy / laity split.

Lost in the midst of hundreds of people, any meaningful fellowship or encouraging participation is completely impossible. The very structure militates against conducting the meeting in a Biblical manner.

Such structures carry responsibilities to laws. The building example I just mentioned contravened fire safety laws. The seriousness of this meant that if a fire broke out all the children in the crèche room would have died. One church member was a fire safety officer and he complained about this over and over again for three years. Nothing was done, despite the threat of a fine of hundreds of thousands of pounds. In the end this member, who had been with the church for thirty years, left.

Another law undergirded the responsibility to let the church building out to homosexuals. To refuse meant discrimination and contravened hate (equality) laws.

A sign to outsiders

Such a large building is a sign to outsiders of what the church stands for and means. It means a large gathering focused upon a certain style of celebratory event. It means dominating leaders from a platform. It means musicians performing a certain style of music dominating worship. It means following the world in adopting all these things. This church is no different from worldly gatherings.

Thus it does not speak of the Biblical principles of what a church is.

But the church should be hidden from the world. The church is a steward of the mystery of Christ. It is a mystery to the world. The church is not of the world. This is why the church meets in homes away from the public eye. The primary focus of the local church is spiritual; it is not of this world; it is the kingdom of God.

Modern churches are fully of the world. Their leadership structure is hierarchical like the world. The main leader is authoritarian like the world. It demands money to survive like

¹⁰ 2 Cor 9:12, 'the administration of this service ... supplies the needs of the saints'. 2 Cor 8:2-4, 'in the riches of their liberality ... that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints'.

¹¹ Gal 6:10, 'Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith'.

the world. It gathers in large dedicated buildings like the world. It performs marketing surveys to determine mission programmes like the world. It utilises rock bands to entertain audiences like the world. It is worldly.

Leadership structure

Modern church leadership structures are essentially worldly and thus demonic. Worldly leadership structures follow demonic principles whether it is government, military or corporate.

The Devil works through his fallen angel agencies and these are organised in strict hierarchical patterns. We could mention principalities, powers (Eph 3:10; Col 1:16, 2:15), rulers of darkness and spiritual hosts of wickedness (Eph 6:12).

Satan needs an organised hierarchical network in order to function because he does not have divine powers. For example, when spiritualists and mediums try to contact the dead they communicate with demons; the dead cannot contact the living (Heb 9:27; Lk 16:26-31). But sometimes information is passed to the medium that is true and this gives the impression that Satan is omniscient. In fact what is happening is that information is passed from one demon to another in a network so that the spiritist seems to have prescience. This network can operate at the speed of thought. So one demon can see what a certain person is doing somewhere in the world and passes this data to another demon masquerading as a dead person. The network gives the impression of power.

Maintaining the hierarchy is vital to keeping the machine operative. The power network gives operational power.

Because the world is dominated by Satan so it copies the hierarchy of the demonic realm. It also works. Demonic hierarchies maintain power structures. Thus all militaries have commanders-in-chief, major Generals, generals, colonels, majors, captains, sergeants and so on. Corporations have Chairmen, CEOs, executive directors, directors, heads of departments, managers, clerks etc. Government has Prime Ministers, Cabinet officers, chiefs of staff, private secretaries, civil service heads, advisors, and so on.

Following this pattern, all modern denominational churches have power structures that are demonic. Institutional churches have popes, cardinals, bishops, priests or archbishops, bishops, deans, vicars, lay readers, etc. Dissenting churches have pastors or ministers in charge, elders, deacons, and church workers. Some have moderators, superintendents, pastors, elders, deacons etc. Charismatic churches have an apostle, a prophet, an apostolic team, the local eldership team, general managers, house-group leaders, worship leaders, children's workers, and so on.

All of this is a far cry from the Biblical pattern of a family. There are the people (the flock or the family) and the elders (shepherds or fathers) and no one else. Deacons only perform administrative roles, chiefly giving money to the poor. Godly simplicity is effective.

There is no need for leadership salaries, pension plans, healthcare plans, annual leave, assistance to buy cars and houses, leadership meetings, higher leader's meetings (e.g. apostolic team meetings), leadership conferences and all the rest of the demonic rigmarole.

One of the big problems with hierarchical leadership is that it promotes an atmosphere of 'us' and 'them'. It creates distance between the people and the leadership strata. Younger

zealous people then aspire to become a leader in order to wield authority (for good of course) instead of seeking to serve God naturally.

This is worsened by the characteristics of leadership. For example, leaders get Mondays off to relax (poor things, though often their Saturday is free also) but ordinary members have to be busy on their only real day off (Sunday). Many members work on Saturday.

When I was in a famous Charismatic church I was working in an office 11 hours a day Mon-Fri and also Saturday morning. Saturday afternoon I would often be involved in some church activity, like a leadership conference. Sunday I would be at as many as three meetings. In addition I was rebuilding my crumbling Victorian house from top to bottom (being broke meant that I even made my own doors and windows). But I had three children to care for. Needless to say I was often burned out and ill.

Leaders tend to have no idea of the pressures that members are under and demand this or that church effort. This is due to the gap between leadership and the people. They have little real fellowship with ordinary people and live in an ivory tower. This is never challenged because the people are programmed to believe that leaders are God's chosen authority and to challenge them would be to challenge God. This is similar to the ideology of the divine right of kings held by the Stuarts with all its evil consequences that eventually led to civil war.

Many denominations have all the trappings of the corporate business world: a management suite of offices, multiple departments of work, a general manager controlling office staff, departmental managers, accountants, and so on. This in turn generates its own additional work force: clerks dealing with salaries and annual leave, typists, secretaries, building managers, maintenance workers, etc.

All this means that leadership functions in the church become nothing less than worldly systems and worldly systems are the enemies of God: 'friendship with the world is enmity with God?' (Jm 4:4). The churches have literally added layer upon layer of demonic worldly systems to church administration to suppress the Lord's people from the freedom of the ekklesia. This is a travesty.

The ekklesia is a body called out from the mass; the called-out ones representing God on Earth. The ekklesia is the body of Christ; all those elect people in Christ. God's representative on Earth is the body; the people united together. Elders are simply called men to ensure good order, support and encourage ministry from all, protect from wolves and teach the people. There is no need for authoritarian layers of hierarchical formal leadership, let alone a corporate business.

As soon as a church develops a hierarchical leadership structure, it eliminates the testimony. Authoritarian leaders kill the local church.

Leadership titles

Jesus warned the church not to establish leadership titles of honour to appear to give men authority over others.

But you, do not be called 'Rabbi'; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren. Matt 23:8

Do not **call** anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. And do not be called teachers [masters]; for One is your Teacher, the Christ. But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humble. Matt 23:9-12

'Rabbi' means 'great one', honourable sir' and is used of Jewish teachers with authority.

The principle established here is that church elders (there are no other leaders) should not adopt titles of honour, prestige and authority over others. This would include: apostle, prophet, pope, archbishop, vicar, cardinal, priest, dean, bishop (in the modern sense), and so on.

Certain titles are specifically forbidden. 'Father' as a church leader is forbidden by Jesus yet is used throughout Romanism. 'Pope' is a variant of 'father'.

'Vicar' is a blasphemous term for a church leader because there is only one mediator – Jesus (1 Tim 2:5).

The early church used several titles for church leaders that equated to an elder (*presbuteros*). These included: 'overseer' (*episkopos*; bishop; 1 Tim 3:2); 'shepherd' (*poimen*; pastor, Eph 4:11); 'steersman' or 'pilot', 'governor' in the sense of guiding (*kubernesis*; 1 Cor 12:28); 'leader' or 'superintendent' (*proistemi*; Rm 12:8); 'guide' or 'to go before' or 'spokesman' (*hegeomai*; Acts 15:22). But they all were synonyms of 'elder'. Jews preferred the term 'elder'; but Greeks preferred the word 'overseer'. That they are the same is shown from Acts 20:17 (*presbuteros*) with Acts 20:28 (*episkopos*).

Leadership titles that could be translated as having inherent authority (e.g. *proistemi* - the first in line or *hegeomai* - governor) are to be interpreted as equivalent to an elder and therefore first in line as a guide, governing as a father in a family, leader as in shepherding (leading towards pasture) etc. The limitations of language must not be an excuse to adopt authoritarian titles, such as ruler, prince, chief etc. with the implication of a person of higher rank or inherent honour than others.

Authoritarian titles for leadership are never used for elders in the church [e.g. *protos* (chief), *archieus* (one above all others), *archon* (ruler)].

The point is that all formal titles used today for church leaders are wrong. Every church leader using a formal title of authority is unbiblical. If he cannot even get his own station right, how can he lead the church in wisdom?

Leadership is male

The Bible is very clear on this; women are not allowed to lead the church or have any authority over men. It could not be clearer.

And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was

not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression. Nevertheless she will be saved in childbearing if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with self-control. 1 Tim 2:12-15

No amount of sophistry can avoid the fact that women cannot lead the church.

Teaching is a function of leadership. Thus Paul states that a woman cannot teach men (a woman can teach other women and children).

I will not evaluate the claims and interpretations of Feminists to twist this simple passage. They are all spurious. *Gune* does not mean just a wife; it means a woman, whether a virgin, betrothed or married or a widow. Paul is talking about females. 'I do not permit' is authoritative. Paul is emphasising this point with authority as an apostle.

The reason why women cannot lead is because they are (like Eve) more prone to deception. The Bible states this and history proves it.

The OT also shows that women in charge of the nation (even indirectly) led to disaster such as Jezebel or Athaliah.

Dedicated deliverance leadership

This type of leader just does not exist in the NT church.

Jesus and the apostles performed exorcisms, on occasion, when confronted with the need in evangelistic ministry. This was directed at unbelievers coming for help. The exorcism was a preparation for conversion under the guidance of God. Thus the Gerasene demoniac was delivered of many demons and then became a servant of the Gospel witnessing to his friends.

No apostle ever exorcised a believer of demons. There was no ministry delivering Christians from evil spirits; this is never recorded even once.

Genuine Christians have God dwelling inside them. The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit dwell in the spirit of believers. How could a demon possibly dwell alongside God in a person? It is impossible. The fundamental point of conversion is a deliverance from the power of darkness, from Satan, to light, to the kingdom of the Son of His love (Acts 26:18; Col 1:13). How can that true deliverance be overturned?

Any supposed 'Christian' that was genuinely exorcised of a demon was never a true Christian in the first place. Those Christians that claim that they were delivered from a demon are saying that they were never true Christians.

This means that all those Charismatic and Pentecostal leaders claiming to exorcise believers from demons are lying; they are false leaders. There is no such ministry.

So what is going on here?

This 'ministry' is all part of the modern capitulation of people to mysticism in all its forms. It is easy to captivate people with weak wills or those who are traumatised, anxious or depressed, by applying certain psychological tricks. Someone assuming an authoritarian

guise inculcates passivity and submission in a patient until they are softened up enough for an exorcism to take place. It is psychological manipulation.

The patient is then told that they have been delivered of a spirit of this or that made up taxonomy which never appears in the Bible. This includes: a spirit of smoking, a spirit of rejection, a spirit of cancer or a spirit of death.

This whole ministry is a deception.

Meetings

Meetings were designed by God to operate in the freedom of the Holy Spirit. There was to be nothing in the way of complete freedom under God led intuitively by the Spirit. The real leader of the local church is the Holy Spirit. Godly elders are fathers of the local church to oversee¹² the group under God (as under-shepherds) like fathers in a family. Their main task in the meeting is to enable and allow the Spirit to do what pleases him, inspiring this one and that one to minister as he sees fit.

This is *koinonia*; every member having a part and taking a part – giving and taking. This is what 1 Cor 12 plainly teaches:

Now concerning spiritual *gifts*, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant: ... There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit *of all* ... But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills. For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also *is* Christ. 1 Cor 12:1-12

Despite this being crystal clear, almost no church on Earth does this. All church leaders are terrified of letting the Holy Spirit take control of the meeting making them redundant.

Now by this I do not mean the sort of anarchistic free-for-all of Charismatic delusion, such as evidenced in the Signs and Wonders Movement or the Toronto Blessing. Neither do I imply a Quaker sit and wait for the Spirit to inspire a prophetic word. Though I don't advocate all that the Brethren churches did, at their best Brethren churches came closer to the divine design than any other stream. They met in small chapels (originally houses). Elders led them and they allowed open body participation. As the Spirit led a person they contributed according to their gifting in a natural manner, such as with a prayer, hymn, encouragement, teaching or testimony.

Essentially, being led by the Holy Spirit means not being dominated by men from a platform; or even worse, a single domineering man.

¹² Acts 20:28, 'Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood'. 1 Pt 5:2, 'Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly'. Oversee = to look after, to care for.

This means developing the members through good teaching to function in their ministry and encouraging open participation; such as by reading a passage, praying, intercession for a specific person or situation, giving an encouraging word, perhaps giving an exhortation, giving a short teaching, giving a thankful testimony and such like. The job of elders is to ensure that this is done decently and in good order: 'Let all things be done decently and in order' (1 Cor 14:40). 'In order' means: an arrangement based upon a person's talents and experience, an orderly or right condition, a fixed succession. In other words, the elders control the contributions so that they are suitable, orderly, edifying and follow logically.

The great problem with a single person's ministry (no matter how talented) is that it is still one person's ministry. It is limited. That person can only give from the inner spiritual resources they have at that moment; and this may be very little bolstered by chaff. Since most ministry is prepared using textbooks, then there is very little of spiritual quality in such sermons; very little indeed. Most is just superfluous data (no matter how interesting). Jesus and Paul never used prepared ministry (neither did John Calvin).

Another problem is that it doesn't scratch where people itch. It arises from thoughts generated the week before. A minister may go to the meeting and the Spirit may identify a serious issue that needs teaching about. That is what the teacher should give exposition of.

What is even worse practice in modern churches is that famous preachers are just good technicians. They spend days preparing a flawless sermon crafted by copying information from really good sources (historic preachers, commentators, creeds, historical data, books of illustrations, dictionaries, encyclopaedias and so on).

Many hours are spent tying this together in a seamless pattern. This data is then spoken to an audience (that is what it is, it is not a proper congregation) and the people are very impressed because of the learning that is demonstrated from the platform. Even the height of the platform adds to the weight of authority above the people.

This is not Biblical ministry. Ministry applied by the Holy Spirit comes straight out of the heart without any preparation or craft. The preparation of good ministry is the years of discipleship that preceded giving any teaching to people.

The Lord's Supper

There are two key points in gathering together. The first is fellowship and mutual edification. The second is to break bread. The purpose of gathering is fellowship but the centre of the meeting is the Supper. Leaders must be focused upon these two things.

Needless to say, huge numbers of churches today do not even practice the Supper every Sunday, or even every month. Some never (e.g. the Salvation Army). Any church leader that fails to ensure celebrating the Lord's Supper every Sunday should resign immediately; he has no idea what church is.

The Supper is a memorial to Christ's death; like any funeral it should be treated with respect, honour and reverence.

Now it is true that church meetings should incorporate a family communal meal if possible. This may be a lunch before the meeting or a supper after the meeting. Such feasts help to cement fellowship. As Paul explained (1 Cor 11), feasting should never be allowed to impact the Lord's Supper. However, some modern churches that are trying to be a proper

ekklesia have mixed the Lord's Supper with eating together and this is wrong. It fails to treat the memorial with reverence.

The Lord's Supper is a serious matter and should never be treated lightly. Paul explained that by doing this some members were sick and some died in God's judgment (1 Cor 11:27-31).

Just one fellowship meeting

I have explained the essence of the local Sunday church meeting led by elders as the norm. As well as the gathered church on Sunday we also see prayer meetings (Acts 1:14, 4:24, 12:5) and Bible study teaching meetings in the NT (Acts 20:7). These are acceptable. This means that all the many other types of meetings practised by modern churches, with multiple types of church leader involved, are all unbiblical.

The sorts of meetings established by modern churches include the following: men's meeting, women's meeting, Gospel meeting, teenager meetings, healing meetings, celebration meetings and so on. All these arose from men's agendas to achieve certain goals. For example, celebration meetings were a fishing expedition to attract people from other churches to boost numbers. Their local churches could not hope to generate the emotion and atmosphere of a rock band, worship leader, altered state of consciousness, and powerful speaker exhibited in those celebrations.

Worse still, each meeting type developed all sorts of errors of its own, usually dominated by the leader. For example, teenager meetings would be anarchistic, have a loud rock band, have a domineering young leader, often dressed in shorts, a T-shirt and bandanna (unbiblical – 1 Cor 11:7), encouraging exhibitionism which led to uncontrolled behaviour.

The focus

We have established that the focus of the Sunday meeting is fellowship; mutual edification; being instructed and encouraged in doctrine and faith. The centre of the meeting is the Lord's Supper. Within the general edification the saints are focused upon Christ and his sacrifice as a memorial.

This means that multiple foci of modern church meetings are false. These include focusing the meeting on unbelievers to attract sinners (seeker-sensitive meetings) or centring the meeting on healing and attracting outsiders who want curing. The concept of celebrations is also false. This centres on exciting the emotions through a front-led programme of vibrant rock music, hypnotic leading and a powerful emotive speech to induce passivity, control and mysticism. Another wrong focus is entertainment where the programme is all about stimulation of the emotions to a high level, mainly through instrumental music, stage lighting and worship leading, perhaps with drama and dancing.

Anything that directs attention away from Christ crucified and one-anothering is wrong.

Meeting aberrations

The Pentecostal and Charismatic movements have created (or rehashed from heathenism) multiple types of meeting or events to take the Lord's people into deception and sin. A list of these would require a book. A few include the following:

- Practising a rain dance in the centre of a Welsh town by members of a Restoration church.

- A frenzied church service led by a leader acting like a whirling dervish, complete with a staff decorated with paint and feathers and looking like a Native American witch doctor. The church involved was part of a national Restoration stream in the south of England.
- Taking the church up the South Downs and blowing a ram's horn (shofar) in order to precipitate revival in England.
- Creating a replica of the golden altar of the Tabernacle and getting multiple church leaders to come to it and burn notes representing their problems in order to find solutions.
- Getting church members to make a pile of stones at the front of the meeting representing their repentance from sin.
- Waving a sword in a meeting to demonstrate power over demons.
- Knighting a person with a sword to call down gifting in leadership.
- Getting the whole church to march around the room shouting loudly in order to defeat demons.
- Getting a whole conference of 3,000 to scream loudly in a tent to scare away demons. Hundreds of babies were sleeping in tents nearby.
- Enabling whole congregations to cry, scream, laugh, rage, jump, dance, pogo, fall down, slither, jive etc. as a response to being impacted by the Spirit (what spirit?).
- Two leaders talking to each other in gibberish tongues until one makes the other collapse and who then goes to the congregation making many others collapse.
- Getting the whole congregation to collapse on the floor.
- A leader blowing at people so that they were thrust several feet against a wall.
- Leaders dancing and jigging in supposed worship.

Overpaid leaders

There was a time, probably before 1970, when small British independent churches were led by godly men that lived on subsistence-level payments. Because their church had small congregations, and because they lived by faith, they had little to live on. Many were forced to get second jobs to pay the bills.

Observing this phenomena the Charismatic and especially Restorationist churches that came afterwards were determined to change this with their focus on authoritarian leadership. No longer would leaders be impecunious but all would receive salaries, pension plans, and benefits equivalent to teachers and headmasters in schools.

Now if churches followed Biblical principles none of this would be necessary. Small churches meeting in homes led by a team of equal elders do not necessitate paying salaries to leaders. In the vast majority of cases elders should be normally employed. Having more than one ensures that the numbers that fit into a home (say 30 or less) do not need leaders to be full-time. Only those with itinerant ministries need to be full-time and these should live by faith. These include teachers that minister to several churches, travelling evangelists and missionaries (apostles).

But in their zeal for worldly patterns, Charismatic and other churches established the principle of fixed salaries for church leaders with graduated scales depending upon church authority. An apostle would receive a headmaster's salary, get a free car, free medical insurance, assistance with buying a house and other perks. A senior church pastor would get a head of department salary with all its benefits. Other elders would get a senior teacher's salary.

What developed was that, in most cases, the leadership of a church was paid a bigger salary than most of the congregation. They would have a better car and a bigger house. This led to serious anomalies and a great schism between the clergy and the laity – just as in medieval times. In some cases the divide was extravagant.

A very famous British Charismatic Restorationist leader was a classic case of undeserved affluence. Originally a humble postman he led a famous but very erroneous Restoration church and became an apostle of a certain stream. He lived in an aristocratic mansion in a wealthy area. In fact his house once belonged to Lord Clive of India. Now this man was so lacking in talent it beggared belief. His teaching was so superficial that it was as thin as a coat of paint. Worse than that his speaking (and publications) was full of errors and led to dangerous conclusions. He was Arminian, Charismatic (in fact close to Latter Rain Pentecostalism), authoritarian, unethical close to licentiousness, confused, worldly, sometimes close to paganism and occultism, and ecumenical. Obviously he fully embraced the whole Toronto Blessing madness and formally supported the erroneous Kansas City Prophets that preceded it plus the Pensacola Revival insanity that followed it. Yet he lived a stockbroker belt lifestyle, in a mansion, in one of the richest places in Britain – all on the giving of deluded, gullible people.

In church history pastors and missionaries often lived in very straightened circumstances. David Brainerd lived with the Native American Indians in poverty, was constantly ill and died young. JO Fraser slept on the floor in tribal huts surrounded by idols in Lisuland.¹³ David Livingstone slept in mud huts in tribal Africa. John Paton slept in grass huts in the South Sea Islands. On speaking tours in Europe to raise money for the mission he sometimes slept under hedges to save money being wasted on hotels. Many Welsh pastors lived in poor conditions with their poor parishioners. GH Lang, on mission work in Eastern Europe, frequently slept in appalling conditions with no food. During the 'killing times' in Scotland many church leaders slept in barns, in forests and in caves. In the early church some leaders lived for decades in caves; a few ascetics lived for years on top of a pillar. Celtic leaders would live frugally and bathe in freezing cold mountain pools.

Many historic church leaders deliberately avoided riches. Martin Luther lived modestly, though he could have chosen to live a wealthy lifestyle, being qualified as a professor and being favoured by princes. Calvin famously lived frugally and resisted council offers to improve his lifestyle. CT Studd gave his inheritance away to be a missionary. George Muller spent every penny he received supporting orphanages he established in Bristol as well as supporting missionaries like the China Inland Mission (Hudson Taylor) instead of living a privileged lifestyle.

All wealthy church leaders (there are many today) claim to follow the teaching and example of the Lord Jesus Christ who had no money at all (there was a communal purse based on gifts; Jn 12:6, 13:29). Who needed a miracle to pay his taxes (Matt 17:24-27). Who often went thirsty and hungry (Jn 4:7; Matt 4:2). Who relied upon charity for meals (Lk 19:5) and who had no home of his own ever (Matt 8:20).

The situation of modern church leaders living wealthy lifestyles is a scourge and a travesty. It denies the testimony of a man of God. They are a disgrace and a denial of spiritual leadership under God. They testify to worldliness.

¹³ SW China.

Underhand methods

In history, godly evangelists would preach the Gospel, get people converted and then gather the converts together in a local church, beginning in a home. Some leaders actually built their own stone church / chapel buildings in poor rural areas with their own hands, such as Billy Bray (because homes were very small). The sheep came from the world by conversion.

Today it is common for leaders to make specific plans to steal the sheep from other churches through various methods.

The leader of the original Signs and Wonder Movement had a specific method for stealing sheep. He would arrange Signs and Wonder conferences to advertise the exciting wares of such a church. This involved pop-rock bands with new songs led by worship leaders that performed as singers offering an attractive worldly foundation. Then there would be teaching on the need for miracles and healing which bolstered people up and also criticism of traditional churches for failing to perform miracles. The whole extravaganza would inculcate a positive mood, which was capitalised on by teams of disciples ministering fake 'healing' (laying on of hands) to gullible needy people.¹⁴ The whole meeting had a hypnotic effect that led to an adrenaline or dopamine hit making people feel better temporarily.

After a few such conferences attendees would feel that their home church was lacking in power and would then join the nearest Signs and Wonders church. The conferences were nothing but a deliberate plan to steal sheep. Leadership whistleblowers from the movement confirmed this.

A similar method was utilised by the British Restoration churches but instead of a healing conference a celebration was employed. This gathered people from a wide area for a monthly worship / teaching jamboree. A team of musicians and a well-known worship leader were used to provide the usual Charismatic entertainment masquerading as worship to lift the spirits of the audience. Then a famous speaker would give a speech on some topical subject that would generate excitement or teach some novelty. Perhaps the most impressive thing was the fellowship of a large number of people in a big venue, far more than in any local church. The very numbers implied authority.

Audience members would go back to their churches, which seemed lacklustre in comparison. After attending a few of these celebrations people would be enticed to join a local Charismatic church represented on the celebration platform of leaders.

Some famous Charismatic leaders had the nerve to actually preach sheep stealing from their pulpits. Typically they would say, '*Come with us and we will do you good*'; as if their current church was doing them harm. This was blatant sheep stealing. It was common to

¹⁴ Christian teams, including doctors, performed investigative surveys on the recipients of such healing conferences and found no actual healing at all. The fake healing in Charismatic / Pentecostal circles is worthy of forensic examination. It is based upon creating a hypnotic effect leading to an adrenaline rush or an emotional hit that can have analgesic properties for a few hours creating excitement in the meeting. The next day this wears off and the victim not only has the symptoms return but it is now associated with depression. Secular professionals have exactly copied this effect with no religion involved at all. Charismatic healers are mostly charlatans. There are also a few leaders that manifest demonic properties that have more power working through deception. Why do Charismatic healers never go into a hospital and heal lots of people? Where are the people resurrected from the dead? Where are the blind people or deaf people or cripples now healed?

deny charges of sheep stealing while at the same time as encouraging outsiders to join the church. Hypocrisy knows no bounds.

Focusing on building large congregations is sin

This sort of behaviour is unacceptable. No one should be encouraged, let alone exhorted, to leave their church and join yours. In fact, focusing on numbers at all is worldly and not spiritual. Numbers mean nothing. The local church, which is small in number, is merely the venue for edifying fellowship. The focus is Christ and doing people good. A true leader will do his best for five people or 50 people; the number is meaningless.

What the world needs is a testimony of many small house churches, like salt in a meal, rather than one big church of many hundreds in a central location.

SYMBOLS OF SMALL CHURCHES

- **Salt.** ‘You are the salt of the earth (Matt 5:13).’ Salt is spread over a meal in small amounts throughout the mix. This produces increased taste. One big lump of salt in a meal would be inedible.
- **Stars.** ‘That you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world’ (Phil 2:15). ‘Lights’ can be translated as the light of stars. From Earth the stars seem small points of light but the spread of them fills the heavens. The church is compared to this spread of light in small specks.
- **Flock.** ‘I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own ... and there will be one flock and one shepherd’ (Jn 10:14-16). ‘Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood’ (Acts 20:28). There is one flock to one shepherd. Of necessity a flock must be small enough for the shepherd to lead it properly. As infinite God, Jesus is the Good Shepherd of a universal, large flock; as under-shepherds of the church, elders lead a local church of a small flock.
- **Household.** ‘You are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God’ (Eph 2:19). ‘The household of faith’ (Gal 6:10). In other words a family. A household contains a limited number, usually a small number of people that intimately know each other.
- **Children.** ‘Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!’ (1 Jn 3:1). Children belong in a family. Therefore the number of children in a family is limited and usually very small. These are a compact unit of participants in a love relationship.
- **Vine.** ‘I am the vine, you *are* the branches’ (Jn 15:5). There is a limited number of branches on a single vine. The point is the interconnectedness of the branches to the vine – a deep unity. A vine also signifies fruitfulness, prosperity and joy.
- **Body.** ‘Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually’ (1 Cor 12:27). The human body only has a small set of external members: head, arms, feet, legs, eyes, ears, nose, hands, genitals. [‘Many members’ (1 Cor 12:12) is merely pointing to the fact that there is more than one, but Christ is one (Rm 12:5).]
- **Olive Tree.** ‘You, being a wild olive tree’ (Rm 11:17). Olives were full of oil – a symbol of the Holy Spirit. The church is not a forest; it is a single tree. [Zech 4:2-14 refers to two olive trees to make the point of testimony and witness (2 is the number of

testimony) in the two anointed ones – a picture of the church also taken up in Revelation.] It is an emblem of prosperity and beauty.

Modern church leaders often make up their own symbols for the church equating it to things like an army, a warship, a cruise ship full of people, crusaders, or other items representing a large force. The Bible does not do this.

The image of an army is never applied to the church. In only three places in the NT is an ‘army’ mentioned where it applies to legions of angels (Rev 9:16, 19:14, 19:19). In the plural there is also the armies of the Devil on the Earth (Rev 19:19) and reference to human armies (Matt 22:7; Lk 21:20; Heb 11:34).

Ships are infrequently mentioned in the Bible (mostly in Acts),¹⁵ usually associated with trade and conveyance. The church is never compared to a warship or a cruise ship.

Needless to say that the word ‘crusader(s)’ is never mentioned in the Bible.

It is a deceptive exercise to try to substitute worldly symbols representing a large group for Biblical symbols for the church. The local church is small.

Missing items

Note that under the New Covenant none of these items appear at all.

- Church buildings.
- A priesthood.
- Priestly vestments.
- Offerings and sacrifices.
- Instrumental musicians.
- Worship leaders.
- Choirs.
- Liturgy.
- Tithing.
- Salaried leaders.
- Gift days to buy a leader a house or car.
- A hierarchical leadership.
- Female leaders.
- Leaders having Monday off.
- A clergy / laity split.
- Sunday meetings dominated by a sermon.
- Sunday meetings that do not break bread.
- Multiple church officers and ministries.
- Meetings focused on unbelievers.
- Market research.
- Men wearing head coverings (e.g. bandannas, baseball caps).
- People falling down backwards.
- Exorcism of believers.

¹⁵ ‘Ships’ 37 times; ‘ship’ 27 times (22 in Acts). Mostly referring to transportation of goods (gold, wood, precious stones, ivory) and people (such as Paul or Jonah).

An example of a godly man with good ministry that was a bad church leader

Martyn Lloyd-Jones

I greatly respect Martyn Lloyd-Jones and have very many of his books on my study shelves. He was not only a godly man with an evangelistic heart and a (generally) sound teacher, but he had previously been a first-rank doctor, attending even to royalty.

He had a big grasp of church history and especially of the Puritan period, which he wrote a book on. He not only studied the Puritans academically, but also sought to be inspired by their ethos.

He may have seemed to be a dry pedagogical expositor but he genuinely sought to have a ministry that was filled with the Spirit. This may have led to a weakness to entertain certain Charismatic leaders that was unwise.

The abiding value of Lloyd-Jones was his expository teaching. He could famously expound a passage in such forensic detail that he once preached an entire sermon on a grammatical full-stop.

As a result of his valued expository ministry he became famous and sought after. Many people travelled long distances by train in order to attend his Bible studies on Sundays and Fridays. Banner of Truth undertook to publish almost everything he said and many valuable books were printed. These included his preaching on Romans¹⁶ and Ephesians.

The problem with his ministry, and this was accepted by him as valid, was that Westminster Chapel became a preaching centre. Though there was a faithful congregation it was still a preaching academy and not a Biblical church. The elders did what they could but many of these attending meetings had travelled there. Lloyd-Jones felt so out of place as a pastor that he sent those needing counselling to the local Baptist minister down the road.

As a result he did not lay the spiritual foundation in the local church that he should have. After his death things began to go awry. The following Nazarene leader (though beloved by some of Lloyd-Jones' friends and pupils) started to bring in Charismatic and semi-Arminian doctrines. Then, insanely, he brought on board the Latter Rain prophet Paul Cain to share the ministry – who was later proved to be a secret alcoholic and homosexual. Things began to slide downhill. Many people left. After he retired, the church sank even lower and numbers crashed. The following leader was fully signed up to a Restoration apostolic ministry (something I had counselled him into the early hours to avoid) and the numbers fell even more. Meetings began to halve and the church faded into insignificance.

I am told by a friend that Lloyd-Jones became a disappointed man in retirement, even becoming somewhat bitter. Clearly, he did not feel satisfied about his ministry.

We have to ask what is the ministry of the church leader. Is it to be a famous preacher so that people hang on every word and buy books of your expositions? Or is it to edify the

¹⁶ One of my criticisms of Lloyd-Jones is that he did not properly understand sanctification and especially what Paul taught in Romans 6. I have listened to all his sermons on doctrine and he was weak on election as well as sanctification. He was brilliant on the value of Scripture.

people of God and bring them to be able to minister themselves. I have no doubt that it is the latter.

A tragic story of a famous church leader

I was told about a famous American church leader that led a big church and achieved great popularity. To accommodate bigger numbers he arranged for a brand new ostentatious church building to be erected with huge panels of glass and a spire. The expensive building project was an impressive design becoming a local landmark.

When the building was complete, and it became famous in and of itself, the leader spoke to God outside one day and said, 'Look at what I have built for you'. He was astonished when he strongly felt that God replied, 'You have not built this edifice for me but for yourself'. At that point the man realised that he had spent his whole ministry thus far focused upon the wrong things. He had become filled with pride in his achievements and was not acting Biblically. From that point, late in life, he repented and decided to change.

At least the man had the grace to tell his story as a warning to others.

Conclusion

Throughout history godly, self-denying men have served God faithfully in pastoring the church. Many faced great difficulties, suffering, hardship and persecution with some shedding blood in God's service. Hundreds of useful books have been written celebrating the work and character of such godly men.

On the mission field, women along with men worked tirelessly and sacrificially to bring the Gospel to heathens of all sorts. Many died in the process of this from John Williams in the South Seas (Polynesia) to the modern missionaries slain by the Auca (Huaorani) Indians in the Ecuadorian Amazonian jungle.¹⁷

These were all people of whom the world is not worthy. They will reign in heaven with Jesus and shine like the stars.

In contrast to such great men of faith and piety we have modern Western church leaders. The difference could not be more stark.

Modern leaders are full of hubris, arrogance and narcissism. They are power-mad and authoritarian, dominating the flock. They accrue wealth by fleecing the flock. Some have fleets of limousines, multiple houses and mansions and even fleets of jet aeroplanes. Several have been investigated for tax fraud.

They manifest very poor ministry and some are too superficial for words. Yet thousands fall at their feet. Many are not just superficial but actively teach gross errors and heresies. They add to this many aberrant practices that reek of occultism and mysticism.

Many have fallen into gross public sin. Some left the ministry but others re-invented themselves and claimed to repent, continuing to lord it over the flock. Some even went to jail but after release went straight back into the ministry.

These leaders contravene God's word and build churches numbering thousands of people. This means more money to aggrandise for pet projects and amass wealth.

The advances in modern technology means that these false leaders have many opportunities to waste God's money and deceive the people. In the past heretics only had the spoken word and the written word that required hand copying. After the 16th century they could utilise printing but were still fairly limited (they still did great damage) but today heretics have computers, digital media, television, radio, podcasts, e-books, paper books, videos, long-distance conferences, modern travel, zoom calls, streaming, YouTube etc., and so on.

The quality of modern leaders is thin at the most. The worst expressions are utterly appalling.

There is reason why the modern church is under God's judgment.

¹⁷ Jim Elliot, Pete Fleming, Ed McCully, Nate Saint and Roger Youderian; slain in 1956.

Resources

Godly examples referred to: missionaries

- *Behind the Ranges: Fraser of Lisuland SW China*. Mrs Howard Taylor.
- *John Elliot. Apostle to the Indians*. OE Winslow.
- *Robert Morrison. A master builder*. Marshall Broomhall.
- *Mary Slessor of Calabar. Pioneer Missionary*. WP Livingstone.
- *John G Paton: Missionary to the New Hebrides*. An autobiography.
- *Five pioneer missionaries*. John Thornbury.
- *CT Studd. Cricketer and pioneer*. Norman Grubb.
- *The life and diary of David Brainerd*.
- *The autobiography of Hudson Taylor*.
- *God's polished arrow: WC Burns; revival preacher*. Michael D McMullen.
- *The Cambridge Seven*. John Pollock.
- *To the golden shore: the life of Adoniram Judson*. Courtney Anderson.
- *The life of John Williams: missionary to the South Seas*. John Williams.
- *John Williams: the martyr missionary of Polynesia*. James J Ellis.
- *David Livingstone: missionary, explorer, abolitionist*. Vance Christie.

Godly examples referred to: church leaders

- *C H Spurgeon's autobiography*. Two volumes.
- *Spurgeon; a biography*. Arnold A Dallimore.
- *Charles Haddon Spurgeon: a biography*. WY Fullerton.
- *George Muller of Bristol and his witness to a prayer-hearing God*. AT Pierson.
- *George Muller: Delighted in God*. Roger Steer.
- *The life of John Calvin*. Theodore Beza.
- *History of the Reformation*. J Merle d'Aubigne.
- *The life and times of Martin Luther*. J Merle d'Aubigne.
- *Men of the Covenant. The story of the Scottish church in the years of persecution*. Alexander Smellie.
- *The Scots Worthies*. John Howie and WH Carslaw.
- *Early Celtic Christianity*. Brendan Lehane.
- *Modern Celtic Spirituality*. Paul Fahy.
- *Lives of the most eminent fathers of the church*. William Cave and Henry Cary.
- *Sermons and memoirs of Christmas Evans*. Christmas Evans.
- *Christmas Evans: the preacher of wild Wales: his country, his times and contemporaries*. Paxton Hood.
- *Christmas Evans – no ordinary preacher: the story of the John Bunyan of Wales*. Tim Shenton.
- *Christmas Evans*. BA Ramsbottom.
- *Three of China's mighty men: leaders of the Chinese church under persecution*. Leslie Lyall.
- *Arthur W Pink – Born to write*. Richard P Belcher.

Books referred to or implied

- *Commentaries on the Gospels*. JC Ryle.
- *Knots untied*. JC Ryle.

- *Christian leaders*. JC Ryle.
- *Works of John Owen*.
- *Biblical Theology*. John Owen.
- *Notes on the Bible*. Albert Barnes [Obtain free from e-sword.]
- *The Pilgrim's Progress*. John Bunyan.
- *The Holy War*. John Bunyan.
- *Grace Abounding*. John Bunyan.
- *NT Greek Manuscripts (Beza 1589 Greek NT)*. Theodore Beza.
- *Works of Martyn Lloyd-Jones* published by Banner of Truth.
- *Table Talk*. Martin Luther.
- *Sermons*. Martin Luther.
- *95 Theses*. Martin Luther.
- *Martin Luther's Works*.
- *Bondage of the will*. Martin Luther.
- *First principles of the Reformation or the 95 theses and the three primary works of Dr Martin Luther*. Henry Wace, CA Buccheim.
- *The Commentaries on the Bible*. John Calvin.
- *Sermons on Bible books*. John Calvin.
- *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. John Calvin.
- *Theological tracts*. John Calvin.
- *Sermons*. CH Spurgeon.
- *All of Grace*. CH Spurgeon.
- *Lectures to my students*. CH Spurgeon.
- *Morning and Evening*. CH Spurgeon.
- *Young's Analytical Concordance*. Robert Young.
- *Works of AW Pink*.

Church standards referred to or implied

- The Heidelberg Catechism.
- Benjamin Keach's Catechism.
- The Belgic Confession of Faith.
- Catechism of the church of Geneva, being a form of instruction for children. The doctrine of Christ.
- The French Confession [The Gallic Confession].
- The Lambeth Articles.
- The Irish Articles.

Missionaries worth studying

- John Williams.
- John Paton.
- WC Burns.
- CT Studd.
- Mary Slessor.
- JO Fraser.
- John Elliot.
- David Brainerd.
- Jonathan Goforth.

- Hudson Taylor.
- Adoniram Judson.
- David Livingstone.
- Amy Carmichael.
- Gladys Aylward.
- Willie Burton.
- William Carey.
- Columba.
- George Grenfell.
- James Hannington.
- Pastor Hsi.
- Isobel Kuhn.
- Henry Martin.
- Robert Morrison.
- Lord Radstock.

Church leaders and theologians worth studying

NB. Inclusion on this list does mean that I endorse everything a person said.

Church fathers

- The early church fathers (Irenaeus, Ignatius, Justin Martyr, Eusebius, Tertullian, Chrysostom, etc.).
- The Cappadocian Fathers (Basil the Great, Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory Nazianzen).
- Augustine of Hippo.
- Polycarp.
- Jerome.
- Clement.
- Athanasius.

Post Roman Celtic Britain

- Bede.
- Ninian.
- Columba.
- Aidan.
- Chad.
- Columbanus.
- Adomnan.
- Patrick.
- David.
- Boniface.
- Germanus of Auxerre. [He had a great influence in Britain.]
- Cuthbert.
- Palladius.

Medieval

- Gottschalk.
- Anselm.
- Thomas Aquinas.

- John Duns Scotus.
- John Scotus Eriugena.
- Girolamo Savonarola.
- Jan Hus.
- John Wycliffe.
- Jerome of Prague.
- Alcuin.
- Peter Abelard.
- Bernard of Clairvaux.
- Gregory of Rimini.
- William of Ockham.
- Bonaventura.

Reformation and Post Reformation

- John Calvin.
- Martin Luther.
- Ulrich Zwingli.
- Martin Bucer.
- Johann Heinrich Bullinger.
- Francis Turretin.
- John Knox.
- Jacques Lefevre d'Etapes.
- John Colet.
- Thomas Cranmer.
- Richard Hooker.
- Menno Simons.
- William Tyndale.
- Matthew Parker.
- Zacharius Ursinus.
- Peter Martyr.
- Pierre Viret.
- George Wishart.
- Giralamo Zanchi.
- Alexander Peden.
- Guido de Bres.
- Blaise Pascal.

Puritan

- John Owen,
- Thomas Goodwin.
- Richard Sibbes.
- Thomas Brooks.
- Richard Perkins.
- William Ames.
- John Bunyan.
- Anne Hutchinson.
- Richard Baxter.

- Thomas Boston.
- John Flavel.
- George Whitefield.
- John Foxe.
- William Guthrie.
- Matthew Henry.
- John Howe.
- Thomas Manton.
- Cotton Mather.
- Oliver Cromwell.
- William Twisse.
- Thomas Vincent.
- Thomas Brooks.
- Thomas Watson.
- Jonathan Edwards.
- Wilhelmus a Brakel.
- David Clarkson.
- Ezekiel Rogers.
- Hermann Witsius.
- Tobias Crisp.
- William Gurnall.
- David Dickson.
- John Trapp.

Baptists

- John Gill.
- George Smeaton.
- JL Dagg.
- CH Spurgeon.
- James P Boyce.
- Augustus Hopkins Strong.
- John A Broadus.
- Benjamin Keach.
- JC Philpot.
- Hanserd Knollys.
- William Kiffin.
- William Gadsby.
- EF Kevan.

Brethren

- GH Lang.
- SP Tregelles.
- CH Mackintosh.
- George Muller.
- Henry Craik.
- RC Chapman.
- Harry Ironside.

- FF Bruce.
- George Soltau.
- AN Groves.
- John Barnardo.
- Stuart Briscoe.
- EH Broadbent.
- Erich Sauer.

Eminent Modern Anglicans

- Christopher Wordsworth.
- Augustus Toplady.
- Henry Law.
- JC Ryle.
- William Parks.
- JB Lightfoot.
- Henry Alford.
- JI Packer.
- Charles Simeon.
- John Stott.

Modern (Post Enlightenment)

- Andrew Murray.
- Louis Berkhof.
- James Buchanan.
- RCH Lenski.
- W Hendriksen.
- EJ Young.
- HC Leupold.
- FL Godet.
- JA Alexander.
- Edward Henry Bickersteth.
- Abraham Booth.
- John L Girardeau.
- Octavius Winslow.
- John Gresham Machen.
- Asahel Nettleton.
- John Murray.
- Robert Govett.
- Robert Murray M'Cheyne.
- AW Pink.
- William Cunningham.
- John Brown of Haddington.
- Robert Haldane.
- T Austin Sparks.
- Herman Hoeksema.
- BB Warfield.
- RL Dabney.

- Charles Hodge.
- AA Hodge.
- Herman Bavinck.
- James Thornwell.
- Gilbert Tennent.
- Theodorus Frelinghuysen.
- Martyn Lloyd-Jones.
- RC Sproul.
- RA Torrey.
- WGT Shedd.
- Wang Ming-Dao.
- Watchman Nee (Nee Duo-Sheng)..
- David Yang (Yang Shao-Tang).
- Bahkt Singh.
- Sadhu Sundar Singh.
- John Sung.
- AW Tozer.
- Abraham Kuyper.
- FW Krummacher.
- Zac Poonen.

Some erroneous church leaders, heretics and influencers worth studying as a warning

This is a small selection; a full list would require many books.

Ancient history

- Arius.
- Marcion.
- Montanus.
- Valentinus.
- Cerinthus.
- Eutyches.
- Sabellus.
- Apollinarius.
- Pelagius.
- Mani.

Medieval history, the Reformation and beyond

- Desiderius Erasmus. [Anti-Reformation. Anti-Total Depravity.]
- Michael Servetus. [Anti-Trinitarian.]
- Miguel de Molinos. [Quietism.]
- Luis de Molina. [Errors on God's sovereignty (Molinism).]
- Francois Fenelon. [Mystic. Teacher of Mme. Guyon.]
- Caspar Schwenckfeld. [Multiple issues inc. anti-justification by faith.]
- John Tauler. [Mystic.]
- Julian of Norwich. [Mystic.]
- Teresa of Avila. [Mystic.]
- Hildegard of Bingen. [Mystic. Charismatic.]

- Meister Eckhart. [Mystic. Combined Thomism with Neoplatonism.]
- Socinus (Lelio Sozzini). [Socinianism.]
- Thomas Aquinas. [Syncretism of Aristotelianism with Christianity.]
- Johannes Agricola. [Antinomian.]
- Moises Amyraut. [Amyraldism (Hypothetical Universalism and mediate regeneration).]
- James Arminius. [Arminianism.]
- Jan Matthys [Munster Rebellion.]
- John of Leyden. [Munster Rebellion.]
- Archbishop Laud. [Conspiracy to bring Arminianism into England.]
- The Remonstrants. [Hardened Arminians.]
- The Cevenols. [False prophecy.]
- The Jansenists. [Mystical exuberance.]
- Convulsionaires. [Ecstatic sect.]
- Thomas Muntzer. [Inspirationist. Influenced Zwickau Prophets. Mystic.]
- The Zwickau Prophets. [Proto-Anabaptist radicalism; direct revelation; schism.]
- James Davenport. [New Light Prophets.]
- Emanuel Swedenborg. [Swedenborgianism: Neoplatonic philosophy syncretism with Christianity. Denies Trinity and vicarious atonement.]

Modern

- Andrew Fuller. [Developed a Baptist form of Amyraldism, semi-Arminianism and universalism plus other errors.]
- CG Finney. [Neo-Pelagianism; revivalism.]
- John Wesley. [Denied multiple doctrines of grace; established Evangelical Arminianism and claimed to have never loved God.]
- John Glas. [Sandemanianism.]
- Edward Irving. [Proto-Charismatic. Unorthodox Christology. Authoritarianism.]
- CI Scofield. [A charlatan and criminal that popularised Dispensationalism.]
- JN Darby. [Established Dispensationalism plagiarised from Irving's church's journals. Established Arminianism, jettisoning the earlier Calvinism amongst the Brethren. Established authoritarian church leadership. Wrongly criticised and disciplined George Muller and Henry Craik. Schismatic.]
- Gene Edwards. [Arminian. Schismatic. Authoritarian.]
- Rick Warren. [Neo-Liberalism.]
- Clark Pinnock [Open Theism.]
- Brian McLaren. [Emerging Church leader. Neo-Liberal, Postmodern.]
- Soren Kierkegaard. [Existentialist.]
- Billy Graham. [New Evangelicalism. Arminian crusade evangelist.]

19th century Sectarians

- Joseph Smith [Mormonism.]
- Brigham Young. [Mormonism.]
- William Miller. [Millerites. 7th Day Adventists.]
- Ellen G White. [7th Day Adventists.]
- Charles Taze Russell. [Jehovah's Witnesses.]
- John Thomas. [Christadelphians.]
- William Booth. [Salvation Army.]
- Charles and Myrtle Fillmore. [Unity Church movement.]

- PP Quimby / Warren Felt Evans. [New Thought.]
- Ernest Holmes. [Religious Science.]
- Malinda Cramer. [Church of Divine Science.]
- Mary Baker Eddy. [Christian Science.]
- Herbert W Armstrong. [Armstrongism; Worldwide Church of God.]

Classical Pentecostals and Holiness mvt.

- Derek Prince. [Shepherding Mvt.]
- Bob Mumford. [Shepherding Mvt.]
- Charles Simpson. [Shepherding Mvt.]
- Don Basham. [Shepherding Mvt.]
- Ern Baxter. [Shepherding Mvt.]
- Cecil Cousen [UK. Latter Rain influence.].
- Buddy Cobb.
- Maria Woodworth-Etter.
- Benson Idahosa.
- Demos Shakarian.
- David du Plessis.
- AJ Tomlinson [Quaker. Holiness Mvt.]
- William Seymour.
- Charles Parham.
- Morris Cerullo.
- Oral Roberts.
- AA Allen.
- Frank Sandford.
- Frank Bartleman.
- Alma White.
- TL Osborn.
- Aimee Semple McPherson.
- Kathryn Kuhlman.
- AA Boddy.
- Smith Wigglesworth.
- Paul F Crouch.
- Gordon Lindsay.
- Jim Jones. [Schismatic. Authoritarian. Promoter of mass suicide.]
- BH Irwin. [Fire-Baptised Holiness Church.]
- JA Dowie. [Faith healer. Schismatic (Zion City).]

Latter Rain Pentecostals

- William Branham.
- Franklin Hall.
- Ernest Hawtin.
- George Warnock.
- Percy Hunt.
- Bill Britton.
- Paul Cain.
- Royal Cronquist.

- Francis Frangipane.
- Sam Fife.

Modern radical Pentecostals / mystics / charlatans

- John Wimber. [Signs and Wonders Mvt.]
- Kenneth Hagin. [Proto-Word Faith.]
- Kenneth Copeland. [Word Faith.]
- Benny Hinn. [Word Faith.]
- John Avanzini. [Word Faith.]
- Paul (David) Yonggi Cho. [Word Faith.]
- John Arnot. [Toronto Blessing.]
- Rick Joyner. [Proto-Toronto Blessing.]
- Rodney Howard-Browne. [Word Faith.]
- Todd Bentley. [Post-Toronto Blessing revivalism. Antinomian.]
- C Peter Wagner [New Apostolic Reformation.]
- Bill Johnson. [Radical Charismatic leader.]
- Witness Lee. [Mystic. Authoritarian. Shouters.]
- Sun Yung Moon. [Unification Church (Moonies). False messiah.]

UK Restorationists

- John Noble.
- Gerald Coates.
- Terry Virgo.
- Arthur Wallis.
- Bryn Jones.
- Keri Jones.
- David Mansell.
- Peter Lyne.
- Roger Forster.
- Graham Kendrick.
- Lynn Green.
- Sandy Millar.
- Note: Restorationism in Britain split into various factions: Third Wave (Signs and Wonders) churches, New Apostolic Reformation groups (radical Charismatic / authoritarian), independent radical Charismatic groups, New Calvinism churches, Emerging Church groups, and so on. Many members left to join existing churches, such as Grace Baptists, Elim churches, Assemblies of God, independent Pentecostal churches, FIEC churches and even Eastern Orthodox churches.

Messianic Christianity

- John Hagee. [Messianic Christianity / Christian Zionism.]
- Jacob Prasch. [Jewish Roots Mvt.]
- William Blackstone. [Proto-Messianic Christianity.]
- Hal Lindsey. [Proto-Messianic Christianity.]

Modern mystics / mind sciences

- PP Quimby. [Syncretism with occultism.]
- Mary Baker Eddy. [Christian Science. Syncretism with occultism.]

- EW Kenyon. [New Thought.]
- Agnes Sanford. [Proto-Inner Healing / Emotional Healing.]
- Joyce Huggett. [Inner Healing / Emotional Healing.]
- David Seamands. [Inner Healing / Emotional Healing.]
- George Fox. [Quaker mysticism.]
- Ann Lee. [Shaker mysticism / Occultism.]
- Charles and Myrtle Fillmore. [Unity Church movement.]
- PP Quimby / Warren Felt Evans. [New Thought.]
- Ernest Holmes. [Religious Science.]
- Malinda Cramer. [Church of Divine Science.]

I have no doubt missed out many worthy people (and many heretics), but time restricts me from adding more ad infinitum.

The fact that many modern Christians are ignorant of most of these people (let alone read about them or studied their works) is an indication of the poverty of spirit in today's churches. How many Christians know what New Thought is? Yet this affects what goes on in many churches today.

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