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LEADERSHIP AND DISCIPLESHIP

Part 11: Articulate the Goals

by Gary North

And Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, which were of them that searched the land, rent their clothes: And they spake unto all the company of the children of Israel, saying, The land, which we passed through to search it, is an exceeding good land. If the LORD delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey. Only rebel not ye against the LORD, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread for us: their defence is departed from them, and the LORD is with us: fear them not (Num. 14:6-9).

Moses sent a dozen spies into the land. Why? Surely not to learn whether God wanted the Israelites to invade the land. God wanted them to invade, but it was clear from His original prophecy to Abraham that the exodus generation could not be the generation to complete the conquest. "But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full" (Gen. 15:16). Moses' generation was the third generation after Jacob's exodus from Canaan to Egypt. Levi's son was Kohath (Ex. 6:16); Kohath's son was Amram (v. 18); Amram's sons were Moses and Aaron (v. 20). The fourth generation was the generation born in the wilderness.

Then why did God have Moses send in spies as soon as they had left Egypt? The answer becomes clear only in retrospect: to condemn the third generation through the words of their tribal representatives. God knew their hearts and minds. They were double-minded rebellious slaves. They did not want to exercise leadership; they preferred to return in Egypt. They were a stiffnecked people, with their heads stiffly turned to the rear, looking back toward Egypt.

Moses selected a representative spy from each of the tribes except Levi (Num. 13:4-15). This, too, was strange: the tribe of Levi was the tribe that spoke authoritatively in God's name. Moses was the chief civil representative of this tribe, yet God did not have him go into the land or send a representative. Instead, a group of tribal rulers was sent (Num. 13:2-3). It would be the task of these tribal authorities to assess the readiness of the Israelites to conquer the land.

The spies were instructed by Moses to assess the strength of the nations and the wealth of the land: "And see the land, what it is, and the people that dwelleth therein, whether they be strong or weak, few or many; And what the land is that they dwell in, whether it be good or bad; and what cities they be that they dwell in, whether in tents, or in strong holds; And what the land is, whether it be fat or lean, whether there be wood therein, or not. And be ye of good courage, and bring of the fruit of the land. Now the time was the time of the firstripe

grapes" (Num. 13:18-20). In short, **count the costs and count the rewards.**

Ten of the spies returned bearing good news and bad news. The good news was that the land flowed with milk and honey (Num. 13:27). The bad news was that the people were strong (v. 28). Then Caleb spoke up: "And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it" (v. 30). This suggestion so horrified his fellow spies that they switched their report from good news and bad news to exclusively bad news: "But the men that went up with him said, We be not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we. And they brought up an evil report of the land which they had searched unto the children of Israel, saying, The land, through which we have gone to search it, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it are men of a great stature" (vv. 31-32). The land was a hard land, eating up the inhabitants; only the toughest people could survive. In short, high costs, few rewards. The Israelites did not want to hear about the benefits of victory. They wanted to hear about the benefits of surrender. When it looked as though the price of claiming the good land was the bad news of war, the good land became the badlands.

The conclusion was obvious to one and all: let us return to Egypt. "And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron: and the whole congregation said unto them, Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! or would God we had died in this wilderness! And wherefore hath the LORD brought us unto this land, to fall by the sword, that our wives and our children should be a prey? were it not better for us to return into Egypt? And they said one to another, Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt" (Num. 14:2-4).

The Silence of the Lambs

It is in this context that Caleb and Joshua issued their dissenting opinion: good news and more good news. The land was good and ripe for the picking; so were its inhabitants. The issue was the obedience of Israel, not the stature of Canaan's inhabitants. "If the LORD delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it us" (Num. 14:8a). Therefore, "rebel not ye against the LORD, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread for us: their defence is departed from them, and the LORD is with us: fear them not" (v. 9). The issue was ethics, not military tactics.

The people's assessment of costs and benefits, risks and rewards, was governed by fear. To silence the two lone courageous voices among them, they took up stones to impose the sanction of execution (v. 10). The lambs preferred

silence to war.

But of course there could be no silence. There has to be a voice of authority. Men in history must decide what to do: wander in the wilderness, return to slavery, or engage the enemy in battle. The lambs preferred to be sheared in Egypt to the possibility of being slaughtered in Canaan. God gave them neither. They would wander in the wilderness for another generation.

Tell Them What They Don't Want to Hear

Caleb and Joshua told them what they did not want to hear. Their forthrightness almost cost them their lives. God intervened directly in order to save them. Then He announced the defeat of that generation: "Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice; Surely they shall not see the land which I swear unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it" (Num. 14:22-23). He announced the military victory of the next generation as the corollary of the spiritual victory of Caleb: "But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went; and his seed shall possess it" (v. 24). Caleb had spoken of victory even before Joshua did, so he would live to see the fruit of his words.

This is the mark of the leader. He is willing to tell one generation what it does not want to hear so that a future generation will learn the truth and act in terms of it. In this sense, **the leader acts as the representative of a future generation.** He is willing to forfeit his leadership role in the present generation for the sake of the future generation.

This presumes that the truth survives, generation after generation. Some future generation will recall the truth of the leader's warning and assessment. That future generation will act in terms of this truth. The message therefore survives the test of time; those who refuse to accept it perish.

Ten spies told the Israelites what they wanted to hear: the Canaanites were too strong for Israel to conquer. That generation did not want to fight. It wanted to surrender. The Israelites would not listen to anyone who called them into battle, even if the spoils of victory would be great. Better to deny the greatness of these spoils rather than to fight.

The spies were rulers of their tribes. This was true of Caleb and Joshua. Yet the whole congregation attempted to stone them (Num. 14:10a), which included the tribes that were represented by Caleb and Joshua. These two yea-sayers even forfeited leadership within their own tribes. The nay-sayers were dominant. To speak yea in that day was to be politically incorrect.

Prophetic Articulation

The Bible does not mention the career of Caleb from the time of the spying until the conquest. Whatever authority he exercised produced nothing sufficiently significant to refer to in the history of the wilderness era. We know only two things about him: (1) he opposed the spies' message of defeatism; (2) God promised that Caleb would enter the land. His life expectancy placed a temporal boundary on the era of wandering.

Because Caleb and Joshua had articulated the message of inevitable victory during an era of psychological defeat, God designated them as the leaders of the next generation. But even if God had not done this publicly, they would have become leaders by default when the nation changed its collective mind regarding the risk-reward ratio of invading Canaan. The inescapable fact of God's prophecy to Abraham guaranteed that Joshua and Caleb would lead if they lived

long enough, for they had articulated a vision of victory in an era of defeatism. They had challenged the climate of opinion early in their careers. This willingness to call majority opinion to account established them as the leaders of the next generation.

Their opponents did not recognize any of this. They were willing to bring public sanctions against the two deviants. Majority opinion was highly respected, then as now. There was no way, their opponents believed, that such visible nonsense could ever be taken seriously. Giants occupied the land. The entire congregation was absolutely convinced of their own collective wisdom. Yet they all died in the wilderness. Joshua and Caleb marched into Canaan and oversaw the victory.

Churchill

Consider the political career of Winston Churchill. He was in his 60's in the 1930's. His political career was in tatters. Although elected to Commons, he was not invited to join the Tory Cabinet of Neville Chamberlain. He was a voice crying in the wilderness. He warned constantly against Hitler's build-up of military power. No one in government believed him.

It should be recognized, however, that Churchill was being well paid to say this. Almost bankrupted by the U.S. stock market crash in 1929 and again in 1937, he accepted large checks in the late 1930's from a secret group called The Focus, which was funded by England's wealthiest Jewish leaders. He also in the pay of the government of Czechoslovakia. Both sources of this funding were strongly anti-Hitler. (For having carefully documented this flow of funds in his 1987 biography of Churchill, the non-academically employed historian David Irving has become persona non grata in the historical guild.)

Chamberlain did not invite Churchill into his Cabinet until the evening of September 1, the day Germany invaded Poland. But it was too late for Chamberlain, whose 1938 promise of "peace in our time" now rang exceedingly hollow. His government fell the following May, and Churchill replaced him as Prime Minister.

There had been two messages: "peace in our time" and "re-arm the nation." There was now one overwhelming reality: war. In the post-war world, Chamberlain has become the Anglo-American symbol of defeatism. His umbrella has become a symbol of surrender. Meanwhile, Churchill's bulldog face and his fingers raised in a "V" have become the symbols of victory. Even the self-inflicted caricature of Richard Nixon's upraised "V's" with both hands could not wholly erase the power of this symbol.

There was another factor in Churchill's retroactive apotheosis: the enormous power of his rhetoric. More than any other English-speaking leader in history, he was the master of the spoken and written word. His wartime phrases electrified the Anglo-American world. His "blood, sweat, toil, and tears" lost little as the popular "blood sweat and tears." His acclamation of the Royal Air Force after the Battle of Britain still stirs the soul: "Never have so many owed so much to so few." And "we shall fight them on the beaches. . . ." rallied the nation.

Hitler

He wrote *Mein Kampf* in a prison cell in 1923. A decade later, he was Chancellor of Germany. He had set forth his agenda for all to see; then he worked hard and ruthlessly to achieve it. He was a nobody in 1923. In 1943, he was the most hated man in the non-German West - and the most feared everywhere.

He, too, was a master of rhetoric. Listening to his non-stop screaming does not impress us today, but it impressed his German listeners in the late 1930's. He, like Roosevelt in the

1930's and Churchill in the 1940's, understood the power of radio. He also had the tape recorder, a technological secret weapon of remarkable importance. Those who monitored his speeches in England never did figure out how each speech could be broadcast simultaneously in cities across Germany. He articulated the hopes and fears of the German people, and they rewarded him with their obedience. They shouted, "Heil Hitler" - literally, "salvation Hitler" - until the day he shot himself in 1945. He had been the jail-bound prophet in 1923, and for this he became the spokesman of a generation.

Who Speaks for a Generation?

Consider the public theology of American evangelical Christianity from 1865 until 1976. The American Civil War destroyed Christian leadership in the North, but above all, Calvinism's leadership. The New School Presbyterians and their Congregationalist allies, committed to revivalism and abolitionism, but not equally committed to Calvinism, had provided the shock troops of the abolitionist movement. But they had not provided the dominant articulation for abolitionism. This had been provided by the Unitarians of Massachusetts. The Calvinists went into the army; meanwhile, the Unitarians went to Congress. By overseeing the winning the war from Congress, the Unitarians gained national legitimacy.

Over the next forty years, they would extend their control over the system of higher education, especially in the land-grant public universities, just as they had already consolidated control over the New England public schools. Their theology was adopted by the leadership in most of the mainline denominations after 1900, and after the ill-fated Scopes "monkey trial" of 1925, all of the Protestant Establishment churches in the North went liberal.

The Calvinists in the South were mainly Presbyterians. They, along with the Episcopalians, were culturally dominant in 1861. They were also defenders of the legitimacy of chattel slavery. With military defeat and selective regional amnesia regarding the benefits of slavery came a transfer of leadership: from Calvinism to Arminianism. Segregationist "Jim Crow" politics became dominant after Reconstruction ended in 1877.

Accompanying this political shift was the rise of premillennialism among the Presbyterians and dispensational fundamentalism among the Baptists and Methodists, with the comforting message of the imminent return of Christ and the equally comforting message of the uselessness of political action. Southern politics became regional and defensive: holding off Northerners and holding down "Nigras."

By 1900, the New South's Baptist culture had made peace with the Unitarians of the North. The public schools became the new ecumenical church of the South. Textbooks written by religious skeptics in the North became compulsory in the South. After 1930, the football culture of tax-funded education steadily replaced the church as the focal point of the South's public ritual. "First and ten" replaced the Ten Commandments as the public articulation of the assembled congregation's goals. Field goals replaced social goals.

Ninety years after the Civil War ended, the civil rights movement began in earnest in the South: in December of 1955 in Birmingham, Alabama. Rosa Parks refused to sit in the back of a municipally operated bus. Martin Luther King soon became the spokesman of this movement. For the first time since Prohibition ended in 1933, the church began to articulate the nation's goals. But King was a theological liberal, and so were his most visible and audible colleagues. The Unitarians were still in charge. Once again, they occupied the high moral ground, just as they had in 1860. In 1955, the high moral ground was at the front of the bus.

Racial integration in the South became politically acceptable

after 1970. This shift in opinion came through the negative sanctions of Northern troops and lawyers and through the positive sanctions of black running backs. In both cases, it was the public schools, not the churches, where the primary battles were fought. In 1957, Governor Orval Faubus of Arkansas said "No!" to *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) in the city of Little Rock. President Eisenhower said "Yes!" Faubus lost. Governor George Wallace of Alabama said "No!" in the fall of 1963. President Kennedy said "Yes!" Wallace lost.

What is forgotten about the battle over integrated schools in Alabama is this: at West End High School in Birmingham, it was the football team and the cheerleaders who publicly supported integrated classes. It was here, not in white churches, that legitimacy came for integration in Birmingham. Black running back Jerry Lovias led Texas A&M University to a Cotton Bowl victory over the University of Alabama on New Year's Day in 1968. Every white college football coach in the South became an integrationist that day: "I gotta get me one of those!" Even today, there are very few racially integrated churches America, but there are even fewer all-white college backfields.

In the early 1980's, public support for NBA teams fell to a low level. The NBA's television revenues dropped. The shift to all-black pro basketball teams was not immediately acceptable to the viewers. But in an era in which the impersonality of urban life has undermined almost all traces of community, the nationally recognized representatives of local community are crucial to psychological survival. In most places on earth today, this representation is provided mainly by local athletic teams. Losing teams are not acceptable as local representatives. But white basketball teams lose. The public could no longer ignore pro basketball. By the late 1980's, average NBA players were making a million dollars a year. They were rarely white.

The Beginning of the Reversal

In 1976, Jimmy Carter ran for President. He was a Southern Baptist. (Also, he was called Jimmy - clearly, not a Unitarian name.) His favorite theologians were Unitarians (or worse), but he was perceived by the voters as a near-fundamentalist Christian. A lot of fundamentalist Christians voted for him, though not a lot of white Christians in the South. Bob Slosser, who would later co-author *The Secret Kingdom* with Pat Robertson, wrote a small paperback book that functioned as campaign tract, *The Miracle of Jimmy Carter*.

For the first time in memory, fundamentalist voters had become identifiable as a voting bloc. Ever since Roman Catholic candidate John F. Kennedy won the West Virginia Democratic primary, fundamentalists had ceased to be feared as a separate political force. Nationally, they had voted for Herbert Hoover against Roman Catholic Al Smith, but who hadn't? They had voted for Franklin Roosevelt, but who hadn't? They had voted for Eisenhower, but who hadn't?

What was significant in 1976 was this: for the first time in American history, a winning Presidential candidate had been publicly identified - inaccurately, as it turned out - as a self-conscious fundamentalist Christian. From George Washington until Jimmy Carter, only one President had ever been an evangelical, and even he had ceased to be public about his earlier calling as an evangelist. That President is remembered for only one thing: he was assassinated before he did anything memorable. Few Americans can identify him today: James Garfield, who died in 1881, his first year in office.

The myth of America as a Christian nation is belied by the history of the Presidency. Only one man who has publicly affirmed his commitment to faith in Jesus Christ as the only way of salvation has been elected President. Woodrow Wilson

was a Presbyterian, and his father had been the Stated Clerk of the Southern Presbyterian Church for over a quarter of a century, but Wilson had turned Princeton University into a secular institution, 1902-1910. He was a political liberal and an internationalist. If ever there was a Unitarian agent in the White House, it was Wilson.

There are those who would designate Teddy Roosevelt as a Christian, but his initiation into Harvard's Porcellian Club – a secular rite of passage – had been of one of the turning points in his life. He never spoke of his membership in the church with the fondness of his membership in the Porcellian, the predecessor of Yale's secret society, Skull & Bones. There is no trace of the gospel in *The New Nationalism* (1911). He was an agent of the Morgan banking interests and the Carnegie interests.

Then came the Carter candidacy. Fundamentalists began to think of themselves as a voting bloc. With Reagan's candidacy in 1980, fundamentalists did vote as a bloc against Carter, even though Reagan's rhetoric was more moralistic than expressly Christian. We can date this political activism: September, 1980, The National Affairs Briefing Conference held in Dallas. It brought together thousands of evangelicals to spend three days listening to the leaders of the New Right and the New Christian Right. This event was a political action extension of the Washington for Jesus rally held the previous spring. Carter, Reagan, and third-party liberal candidate John Anderson were invited to speak to the rally, but only Reagan accepted. The other two candidates knew better than to brave this officially non-partisan religious audience.

Pat Robertson's candidacy in 1988 galvanized the hard core of this audience even more. Since 1988, he has been training Christian political activists for a bottom-up capture of the Republican Party. The strategy is now producing visible results. It has become the liberals' worst nightmare: fundamentalists with ballots.

Justifying Such Activism

In 1980, *Newsweek* magazine identified in one short sentence the think tank of the New Christian Right: the Chalcedon Foundation. No reporter followed up on this observation for several years. Then a reporter for the religious section of the Orange County (California) *Register* called David Chilton when he was working for ICE in the early 1980's. Chilton persuaded her to become a Reconstructionist.

She subsequently received a prestigious journalism fellowship to write a report on some aspect of American religion. She told her supervisor that she wanted to write about Christian Reconstruction. "Why?" she was asked. "Because it's the source of the New Christian Right." The man was skeptical. She had to admit that the Reconstructionists had very few followers, very little money, very few publications, and no TV outlets. On the surface, her proposal made no sense. She realized that if she persuaded the man, she would "blow our cover," and so she decided to write on eschatology. That project was accepted.

Reporters for years have not been able to believe that a tiny network of squabbling Calvinist authors could be the brains behind the huge fundamentalist ministries. The fundamentalists publicly deny the connection. They reject the Old Testament law. They insist that they are good old fashioned political plur-

alists. They justify their activism in terms of Constitutional rights. But occasionally some journalist employed by some equally far-out fringe group catches the scent of our trail. Marxists, homosexuals, feminists, and Marxist homosexual feminists are willing to consider the possibility that out of some tiny fringe group like their own, socially relevant change may come. Then they write exposés that nobody reads.

Conspiracy theorists also are attracted to the scent. But a serious conspiracy theorist is committed to a specific methodological research program: **follow the money**. This strategy leads in our case to what appears to be a dead end. Reconstructionist think-tanks have almost no money, and what little they have comes from individuals, not from New Christian Right organizations. Surely, the Reconstructionists are not funding any of these huge outfits. So, the conspiracy theorist goes away, convinced that Reconstruction is a dead end.

The conspiracy theorist, like the conventional reporter, focuses on point four of the biblical covenant model: **sanctions**. Reconstructionist organizations have none, either positive or negative, money or power. The reporters conclude: **no sanctions, no significance**.

They have missed the point, namely, point two of the biblical covenant model: **representation**. There is no Reconstructionist-New Christian Right hierarchy, but there is **representation through articulation**. The Reconstructionists alone have articulated a theology of social action based on the Bible. None of the other Protestant activist groups has done this because all of them officially reject both theonomy and postmillennialism. Without theonomy, biblical civil sanctions, and a vision of eschatological victory, it is impossible to develop an exclusively biblical social theory. Every attempt to do so in American history has led either to a common-ground, natural law-based "Christian America" thesis or else to some version of the social gospel or liberation theology. Historical evidence undermines the first option, and the Bible undermines the second. So, whenever evangelical activists begin to articulate specific programs based on the Bible, they start sounding like Reconstructionists. This drives them crazy, but there is nothing they can do about it.

Conclusion

There can be no successful, long-term leadership apart from the articulation of a worldview. This is a prophetic function. The prophet warns the society of the stipulations of God's covenant and God's negative corporate sanctions for widespread disobedience. The Old Covenant prophet often knew the date of the sanctions, and often could call down mini-sanctions from on high to verify his case. The New Covenant prophet does not have access to God's timetable, nor does he have the power to impose supernatural sanctions. (There are reports of rare cases on the foreign mission field where missionaries do possess this ability when directly confronting a witch doctor.) But he does have knowledge of biblical cause and effect: "If this continues, then that will happen."

Leadership in the present comes to those who articulate the worldview of the present. Leadership in the future comes to those who articulate doubts about the present in the name of the future. He who would lead must decide when it is best to lead.

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