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LEADERSHIP AND DISCIPLESHIP

Part 13: When Kingdoms Are in Conflict

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And the officers of the children of Israel did see that they were in evil case, after it was said, Ye shall not minish ought from your bricks of your daily task. And they met Moses and Aaron, who stood in the way, as they came forth from Pharaoh: And they said unto them, The LORD look upon you, and judge; because ye have made our savour to be abhorred in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of his servants, to put a sword in their hand to slay us. And Moses returned unto the LORD, and said, Lord, wherefore hast thou so evil entreated this people? why is it that thou hast sent me? (Ex. 5:19-22).

Moses had not wanted this assignment from God (Ex. 3:11). He had been perfectly content herding sheep in the hinterlands for four decades. But God chose him to herd a different breed of sheep for an additional four decades.

Sheep must have shepherds. In Egypt, the senior shepherd was the Pharaoh, but he had subordinate shepherds: Egyptian taskmasters with Israelite agents under them. In this chain of command, the common Israelite was at the bottom. It was the cries of common Israelites that God had heard. (Ex. 3:7).

Moses was instructed to return to Egypt and ask the Pharaoh to allow the Israelites to sacrifice to God. Officially, Moses did not ask for their release from bondage; unofficially, he did, for Egyptian religion acknowledged no god in history higher than Pharaoh. The Pharaoh would have to turn down the request. The public confrontation between two kingdoms would begin: God's vs. Pharaoh's.

Leadership and Spokesmanship

The Israelite representatives who approached Moses and Aaron with their complaints had attained their positions as leaders over Israel in terms of their faithfulness to the Egyptian taskmasters and the Egyptian social order. They were leaders over Israel because they were servants under Pharaoh. They were intermediaries in a covenant-breaking chain of command.

They came to Moses and Aaron in the name of the Israelite people. But in a slave society, those who speak officially on behalf of the slaves necessarily speak ultimately on behalf of the slave owner. They serve, not on the authority of the slaves, but on the authority of the slave owner. The sovereign imposes his will over the slaves by means of representatives who serve at his pleasure. Although the spokesmen for the slaves speak the slaves' language, they speak the authoritative word of the sovereign. They make requests to the sovereign on behalf of the slaves, but only because they can be trusted by the sovereign to enforce his decisions over the slaves.

The Pharaoh understood that Moses had come to him in

the name of a different taskmaster, a new sovereign. This meant that Pharaoh owed his allegiance to that sovereign in all matters regarding the slaves. Moses was outside the Pharaoh's chain of command. While Moses spoke on behalf of the enslaved Israelites, he did so because he had been authorized by another God to speak on their behalf. Another God was claiming final ownership of the Israelites. Thus, Moses was in fact demanding a revision in the chain of command: from God to Moses to the Israelites. Pharaoh was not being asked to give up the services of these slaves, but he was being asked to acknowledge that these slaves owed another God their ultimate allegiance. This meant that Pharaoh was being asked, with respect to the Israelites, to subordinate himself to the authority of their owner, God, who was represented by Moses and Aaron. If he accepted Moses and Aaron as the spokesmen of Israel, he would have to forfeit his claims of final sovereignty over Israel. This he was unwilling to do.

The rulers of Israel were in fact slaves of Pharaoh. They had attained their positions of authority by means of their faithful subordination. Their prominence in Israel was based on their devotion to the Egyptian Establishment. But what of their loyalty to God? What of their responsibility to speak God's word to the people, to bring their requests to God in the name of the people? How could they be faithful simultaneously to God, the people, and the Pharaoh? This was their dilemma, and the unexpected arrival of Moses made this dilemma visible to all, especially the Establishment. They served the Old Order; Moses was calling them to serve in a New Order. They had to choose which order they would serve. This meant that they had to forecast the outcome of the confrontation between God's kingdom and Pharaoh's. If they sided with the loser, they would lose their positions of authority and maybe even their lives. They chose to defend the interests of the Old Order. They chose to subordinate the long-term covenantal interests of the people to their own short-term personal interests. They chose to defend the interests of the tyrannical, covenant-breaking Establishment that had hired them to represent its interests rather than serve the New Order of liberation under God by way of Moses.

Old Order and New Order

In the modern world, every covenant-keeper whose talents and opportunities allow him to rise in some existing chain of command faces this problem. These various chains of command have achieved their success in terms of the Old Order and the existing Establishment. The top of the hierarchy is rarely commanded by a covenant-keeper. Even if it is, he is dependent upon the continuing allegiance of those whose covenantal commitment is Adamic.

A Christian may run a successful business, but a majority of his customers probably are not committed Christians. If he serves only Christians, his income will probably be small because Christians are not the dominant force in today's society. They exist on hand-me-downs, scraps that fall from humanism's table: in education (licensing and accreditation), the professions (licensing and regulation), business (regulation), and politics.

A civil magistrate is elected or appointed in terms of a non-Christian oath of allegiance. The West's legal foundations are covenantally neutral, which is to say polytheistic: political pluralism. A Christian can be elected, but it is considered extremely bad form for him to appeal to Christians for electoral support. He is supposed to represent all of the people, and since they are not all formally covenanted to God in their private lives, he is not supposed to be formally covenanted to God in his public life. The political system mandates this.

Article VI, Section III of the U.S. Constitution makes illegal the imposition of a religious test oath to hold Federal office. With this little-known amendment, the humanists took control of the American political system. Over the years, this law has been extended to cover every judicial office. In 1961, the U.S. Supreme Court extended this prohibition to the lowest public office in the U.S., a local office, not Federal: notary public (*Torcaso v. Watkins*).

The anti-Christian reality of American political life is enforced by the electoral screening process for the nation's highest political office: President of the United States. From George Washington until the present, no President has ever openly proclaimed his commitment to evangelical Christianity, a religion that openly proclaims that God sends all non-Christians to hell. No Presidential candidate is allowed by political etiquette to say in public that the majority of those who are being asked to vote for him are in fact covenant-breakers deserving of eternal damnation. Only one President ever spent part of his life as an evangelist, but by the time he went into politics, he had abandoned this public confession. He is one of the least known of all Presidents, for he was assassinated a few months after he was elected: James A. Garfield. That was over a century ago.

A political system that is supposedly open to men of all faiths, but which always screens out evangelical Christians for the highest office, is not a Christian political system. It is an anti-Christian political system, despite the fact that the society may presently be culturally Christian. An oath establishes the terms of the covenant, and the American civil oath is neutral. But neutrality is a myth. This is why all the fundamentalist rhetoric about America as a Christian nation has to ignore the history of the Presidency. The American political system closes off the highest political office to those who profess faith in Christ as the only way to heaven.

What is true of the Presidency is true of the U.S. Supreme Court. The Court self-consciously has always avoided all mention of the Bible as the ultimate source of law, whether moral or judicial. In this sense, the Court remains faithful to Blackstone's *Commentaries* (1765), which also avoided all citations of specific biblical laws as judicially binding. While aspects of the common law have been based on biblical law, this dependence is unstated. Anglo-American civil government has refused to covenant itself judicially to the God of the Bible. This has been increasingly true ever since Charles II's restoration to the English throne in 1660. Reinforcing this shift was the triumph of Newtonianism with the publication of Newton's *Principia* in 1687. John Locke's *Two Treatises on Government* followed in 1690. Newton was a closet Unitarian, and his system invoked only a Deistic God, and then only occasionally. Locke's famous second treatise invoked this same God, also occasionally. Anglo-American political theory

and social theory in general became Unitarian after 1700.

Christian political leaders today are by oath consigned to a covenant-breaking master: the People. Meanwhile, virtually every leader in every occupation is the product of a government-subsidized and humanist-accredited educational system. The higher a person rises in this educational system, the more self-consciously anti-Christian his training becomes. From its origins in the late eleventh century, higher education in the West was based philosophically on Greek and Roman secularism until it became Darwinian in the late nineteenth century. This academic rite of passage has guaranteed that most of those who have passed through it have been brainwashed to remove all traces of biblical covenantal thinking. Very few students have begun with such intellectual categories, and fewer still have retained them. Today, with all levels of government-funded education made in the ideological image of higher education, very few students have survived this filtering process.

Political Schizophrenia

Christians have been committed to ethical dualism: one legal order for Christians – conveniently undefined and not tied to biblical law – and a different legal order for the world. First, the church abandons its defense of some biblical law against evil. Second, the State legalizes this anti-biblical practice. Third, the church either grows silent or imitates the State. As time passes, the church adopts the ethics of the world far more often than the world adopts the ethics of the church. Consider abortion on demand. Consider no-fault divorce ("divorce on demand").

The best of the Christian leaders, in whatever field, have been philosophically schizophrenic. This has been true from the days of the early church's apologists, who invoked Greek categories of rationality in order to defend the faith. The humanists are well aware of the political dilemma of their opponents and delight in calling attention to the schizophrenic nature of the Christian right.

In recent years, there has been a slight but significant change. Christian leaders are becoming more openly schizophrenic than in the past. A few American evangelical leaders – by no means a majority – are now willing to affirm that God's laws (vaguely defined as "principles") govern all men. On the other hand, they are unwilling to say that Christians should actually appeal to the Old Testament as the final authority in determining the judicial content of God's law. The Bible – mainly the New Testament – is "for Christians only," not the world. It has no universal judicial authority in history, we are told; only in eternity. But, on the other hand, it is universally true. But, on the other hand, it is not universally true in the sense of being legally binding. But, on the other hand, it is universally morally binding. But, on the other hand, "We're under grace, not law." But, on the other hand, homosexuality is wrong. But, on the other hand, "we can't legislate Christian morality on non-Christians." And so forth.

Fundamentalist leaders say that Christians can legitimately seek political office. This is a major change. American politics from 1925 to about 1975 was seen by most fundamentalists as dirty, i.e., worldly. Nevertheless, fundamentalist leaders insist, Christians are not supposed to pass laws that would in any way inhibit covenant-breakers from winning the next election and vote down all Bible-based (yet not *officially* Bible-based) legislation. On the one hand, Christians oppose "gay rights." On the other hand, Christians affirm the absolute right of gays to vote and therefore to pass laws favoring gay rights.

In short, a growing minority of Christian leaders in the United States (but nowhere else) is increasingly ready to deny the myth of neutrality, while at the same time they confidently

affirm the incontestable legitimacy of a supposedly neutral electoral process. This is political schizophrenia.

Colson's Dilemma

Occasionally, we see a leader articulating both positions in the same document. A representative example is Charles Colson's *Kingdoms in Conflict*. It ought to be titled *Colson in Conflict*. It was co-published by William Morrow & Company (secular) and Zondervan (fundamentalist, but now owned by Rupert Murdoch, surely not a fundamentalist!). Colson affirms Christian political relevance in one chapter, and then he denies the exclusivity of Christianity in politics in the next. He is like a ping-pong player playing by himself. He rushes from one side of the table to the other: "Christian values . . . neutral secular process. . . Christian values. . . neutral secular process. . ."

He asks rhetorically: "Are there mutual interests for both the religious and the secular?" (p. 48). Of course there are: making money, as testified to by the dual publishers of his book. But he means mutual political interests. "Is it possible to find common ground?" (p. 48). He thinks it is, and his book is a quest for such common ground: neutral secular process.

But there is a problem here: *Roe v. Wade* (1973), which legalized abortion on demand. What is the common ground between abortion and anti-abortion? What is the common ground between the abortionist's knife and the baby's birth? Colson's dilemma is the dilemma of the modern evangelical world. For the vast majority of those who call themselves Christians, the personal solution to this dilemma is to ignore its existence.

Colson acknowledges the problem. He identifies *Roe v. Wade* as "the final blow for traditionalists" (p. 45). It has mobilized them. But notice the placement of this observation: three pages before he suggests a quest for common ground. His book never mentions abortion after page 46 (anyway, I don't remember it, and the index does not reveal it). On page 46, he bewails the situation: "The real tragedy is that both sides are so deeply entrenched that neither can listen to the other." Dialogue: murder vs. life! The real tragedy is that the vast majority of those American voters who call themselves Christians are unwilling to pass a constitutional amendment - they have the votes to do it - making abortion illegal. Then they should pass state laws mandating the death penalty for mothers, physicians, nurses, and office receptionists who participate in a violation of this Constitutional law.

"Abortion is murder," the anti-abortion placards proclaim. But what is the civil penalty for murder that is specified in the Bible? Ask all but a tiny handful of Christian anti-abortion protesters this question, and you have positioned yourself as a fanatic. They all know the answer: execution. "And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man" (Gen. 9:5). But they are still political pluralists. They reject biblical law. So, even here, among the hardest core of Christian activists, we find rampant political schizophrenia. These schizophrenics are willing to call the local abortionist a murderer, and do so publicly in God's name, but when they are reminded of God's Bible-mandated penalty for murder, they freeze up in shock and outrage - against the person who asks the question. They are afraid of offending today's Pharaoh: the People.

The Fork in the Road

The question of civil sanctions brings them to the inescapable fork in the road: one marked "Biblical Theocracy" and the other marked "Humanist Neutrality." They do not want to choose, yet they must choose. For reminding them of their responsibility before God to make this choice, they respond to

the challenger, as Ahab responded to Elijah: "Art thou he that troubleth Israel?" (1 Ki. 18:17b).

If pressured to choose between biblical theocracy, with its death penalty for abortionists (mother and physician), and the legalization of abortion, a majority of anti-abortion activists would today choose the legalization of abortion. This is why the leaders of anti-abortion organizations refuse to discuss Genesis 9:5 in public. They know what would happen to their organizations if they spoke clearly as representatives of God, as revealed by His word: mass defection. So, they mumble. Or they remain mute.

Colson is typical. He does not charge the abortionist with first-degree murder. He has even on occasion said that the State should not impose the death penalty on anyone. So, he warns his readers against those who call for a revival of biblical law, "such as those in the theonomist movement" who "even want to reinstate Old Testament civil codes, ignoring Christ's teaching in the parable of the wheat and tares in which He warns that we live with both good (the wheat) and evil (the tares), and cannot root out the tares" (p. 117).

I ask: "What about the tares convicted in public trial of having committed murder? Should they be rooted out through execution?" The Bible says yes; Colson says no. He hates biblical law's ultimate civil sanction more than he hates humanism. He hates theonomy more than he hates legalized abortion. In this respect, he speaks representatively for most Christian leaders. They agree with him.

What is Colson's solution to the dilemma of the conflict between kingdoms: Old Humanist Order vs. New Christian Order? He recommends the traditional Christian alliance with the Newtonian-Lockean-Madisonian Old Order, the alliance that led to *Roe v. Wade*. He sees the U.S. Constitution as the final solution to the age-old covenantal dilemma that confronted Israel's officers in Egypt. "Thus two typically mortal enemies, the Enlightenment and the Christian faith, found a patch of common ground on American soil" (p. 119). He recommends this judicial settlement, or something like it, for the whole world. This is his covenantal solution to kingdoms in conflict.

To which I respond, one more time: "What is the common ground between abortion and anti-abortion? What is the common ground between the abortionist's knife and the baby's birth?" In the name of the U.S. Constitution, the Supreme Court has spoken: "There is no common ground; so, the mother may lawfully sacrifice her child." This, however, is only the immediate pressing version of a more fundamental question:

To what authoritative source should society commit itself by civil oath in the search for an answer to the question regarding abortion (and every other divisive political issue)? The Bible or *Vox Populi*?

Those favoring the "grand alliance" with humanism prefer not to answer this. They know that if they answer "the Bible," they will undermine the legal foundation of the grand alliance. On the other hand, if they answer *Vox Populi*, they will declare themselves to be on the side of those who have broken covenant with God. So, they seek to silence the testimony of anyone who places God's word above man's word.

The Grand Alliance in Jesus' Era

The Pharisees took this strategy with Jesus when He asked them questions in public that they could not answer without endangering their grand alliance with Rome. But let us not forget what became of Israel's grand alliance. In A.D. 70, it broke down. Jerusalem was surrounded by Roman legions. Those who fled from the city were crucified by the Romans.

Those who remained in the city starved. Those who did not starve were either killed or captured and dispersed when the city fell. Such is the fate of every covenantal grand alliance between the two kingdoms.

It was ultimately a question of representation. It always is. "And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not" (John 11:49-50). Nevertheless, in A.D. 70, the nation perished. What saved the Christian remnant was a prior exodus, for they had been warned a generation earlier: "Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter therein. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled" (Luke 21:21-22).

A local leader must have warned the church to flee. They took his warning seriously. But they had been given a warning a generation earlier. They knew the signs of judgment: "And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh" (Luke 21:20). The Roman legions had come in A.D. 69 but had departed for a season. In that brief window of opportunity, church tradition tells us, the Jerusalem church fled to the city of Pella.

Leadership as a Sacrificial Art

Christian leaders are required by God to understand the times. For well over two centuries, they have not done this successfully. Instead, they have entered a grand alliance with the Enlightenment. This alliance has lasted because Christians have steadily surrendered to their temporary allies. Christian leadership has long required giving this alliance verbal support. But from the beginning, a permanent alliance has been an impossible dream. It has led to two forms of false religion: a religion of heart and hearth – Christian pietism – and a civil religion of common-ground patriotism, political pluralism, and ultimately cultural polytheism.

Christianity and humanism are at war today, just as they were in Old Covenant Israel. Pietism seeks to evade the conflict by drawing a boundary around the kingdom of God. The Bible is said to apply only inside the boundary, and politics is outside. For humanism, no such boundary can exist. Politics has no boundary; all things are political for humanism. So, the alliance leads to the extension of politics at the expense of pietism. The pietists keep reducing the radius of the circle, but it can never be drawn small enough for humanists.

Christian leadership is a difficult art. It demands long-term commitment and personal self-discipline in terms of fixed judicial standards. It demands character. The leader must not leave his assignment before God relieves him of command. "And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62). Lot's wife had not understood this principle, and she paid a heavy price.

Ultimately, leadership is a risk-filled art. He who would lead must assess the times in general and timing in particular. If he assesses the times incorrectly, he will be like the blind man who leads others into the ditch. If he assesses timing incorrectly, he risks becoming like the shepherd boy who cried "Wolf!" once too often.

In a day like today, when the grand alliance between a compromised Christianity and the Enlightenment is breaking down in the United States, and has long since broken down in Europe, the Christian leader must decide how far out on the edges of the political and theological spectrum he should place himself. If he goes too far, he will lose most of his followers. If he is supported financially by his followers – and most Christian leaders are – then he faces a very difficult choice: losing his support vs. maintaining the grand alliance.

There is a conflict of kingdoms. This conflict is inescapable. It takes place in history. It must be resolved in history: the discontinuity of victory for one side and defeat for the other. But the grand alliance was built and then marketed to Christians with a false promise, namely, that there can be permanent continuity between them in history. Now that the alliance is visibly breaking down – the catalyst was the legalization of abortion – those who have built their ministries and their worldview in terms of the grand alliance face a harsh reality. They became defenders of the Old Order, and the Old Order is now breaking apart. When the grand alliance collapses, either through the breakdown of humanism's debt-ridden social order or by the humanists' persecution of Christians, their ministries will either collapse or be salvaged by a last-minute shift in emphasis: the abandonment of political pluralism, Newtonian natural law, and the American civil religion.

One practical solution for the radical Christian leader who refuses to affirm the legitimacy of the grand alliance is to choose small battles that can be won by an application of biblical law and Christian service. Instead of publicly confronting the Old Order, as Elijah did, a person can do a good work in private, as Obadiah did: hiding the prophets in a cave and feeding them (1 Ki. 18:3-4). A ministry can feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and care for the sick. Such ministries are difficult to challenge. In this way, Christians make the world a little better. They gain skills in service. They learn to sacrifice for others. But in doing such things, they build up an alternative to the welfare State. This testifies against the welfare State. It offers a better way. We cannot beat something with nothing. We cannot expect to de-fund the welfare State if we refuse to fund alternatives to replace it. Political power flows to those who take responsibility. When the welfare State goes bankrupt, as it will, these "small victory" Christians will be in a better position to exercise political leadership.

Conclusion

In a time of imminent breakdown, a prospective Christian leader must choose: lead in terms of the Old Order, or lead in terms of a New Order which has not yet arrived in power. Money, influence, respectability, and power are all tied to the Old Order. But in times of crisis, all this changes. When money (or money's value) dries up, the Old Order begins to dry up, as surely as Israel dried up while Elijah was in Zerephath.

In our day, Gorbachev led the USSR in terms of the Old Order. He called merely for peripheral reforms. Yeltsin called for a break with the Old Order. Gorbachev threw him out of office. But Yeltsin understood the times, and by standing on that tank during the attempted *coup* in late August, 1991, he showed that he understood timing. He won.

Better to be the Christian equivalent of Yeltsin rather than Gorbachev, let alone Chernenko.

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