

BIBLICAL ECONOMICS TODAY

Vol. XVI, No. 2

©Gary North, 1994

February/March, 1994

LEADERSHIP AND DISCIPLESHIP

Part 8: Masters Lead, Journeymen Follow

by Gary North

And he hath put in his [Bezaleel's] heart that he may teach, both he, and Aholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan. Them hath he filled with wisdom of heart [skill, NASB], to work all manner of work, of the engraver, and of the cunning workman [designers], and of the embroiderer, in blue, and in purple, in scarlet, and in fine linen, and of the weaver, even of them that do any work, and of those that devise cunning work [designs]. . . . And Moses called Bezaleel and Aholiab, and every wise hearted man, in whose heart the LORD had put wisdom [skill] even every one whose heart stirred him up to come unto the work to do it (Ex. 35:34-35; Ex. 36:2).

The children of Israel had not been out of Egypt more than a month when God gave two men, Bezaleel and Aholiab, the craftsmanship skills required to execute God's design for the tabernacle. Not only did Bezaleel have the skills of craftsmanship, he had the skill of teaching. This made possible the division of labor. They would not have to work alone. Then God raised up others inside the camp to work under these two men to build the tabernacle.

This required a miracle by God. These people had been slaves. They had worked as low-skilled laborers making bricks, not as skilled craftsmen and designers of lovely artistic works. God inspired two men in a special way, so that they could teach others and direct the construction of the tabernacle. God wanted His movable house built rapidly. The people were not to wait a generation before God's proscribed worship was established. This made mandatory a miracle.

Consider the nature of this miracle. God raised up one main teacher and an assistant. This was analogous to the leadership of Moses and Aaron, although not precisely, since Aaron was the verbal spokesman despite his position as second in command in the direct confrontation with Pharaoh. There was a hierarchy: Bezaleel, Aholiab, and the core group of skilled workmen. The people brought their valuable possessions, taken from the Egyptians (Ex. 12:35-36), to these craftsmen (Ex. 36:3). The craftsmen had been given skills by God and capital by the people. They went to work.

Consider the authority of the two men. They were in charge of what would be Israel's most important construction project until the building of the temple was begun 480 years later (1 Ki. 6:1). Through God's unique act of grace to them, they possessed the required skills. Because of their skills, they had been elevated above the crowd. The other workers were subordinate to them, and the wealth of the people had been put at their disposal.

Their authority was not based on their unique judicial position as covenant-keepers. They were two among two

million in a nation set apart by God for His special purposes. No priest had anointed them as political rulers. They were not leaders based on a public election; almost no one had known about them prior to God's grant of skill to them. They were not priests, for they were not members of the tribe of Levi. Yet the remainder of the Book of Exodus is devoted to a highly detailed description of the results of their work.

Were they leaders? Beyond question. Were they office-holders? No. How long did their work survive? For half a millennium. Their story is recorded permanently in Exodus.

The Authority of the Master

Their story is representative. It is not representative of an age of miracles, which the exodus generation surely was: the ultimate miraculous era. Those miracles began to be withdrawn by God as soon as the nation crossed the Jordan into Canaan and the men were circumcised: the manna ceased forever (Josh. 5:12). What, then, does this story represent? It represents the authority of the master craftsman. The skills they possessed were their tokens of authority within the confines of the task at hand. Other craftsmen trusted them; so did the people who brought their wealth to them. They were at the top of a hierarchical chain of command because they had skills, and also because they could impart these skills to others. They were teachers. The teacher always possesses authority over those whom he instructs.

Leonard Read, the founder of the Foundation for Economic Education, used to illustrate his argument for the need for continual self-improvement by referring to his skills at golf. Read loved to play golf. He made six holes-in-one in his lifetime. But on the whole, he was off the hole. He was not an impressive golfer, as he freely admitted. He would tell his audience that if he and Arnold Palmer were on the same golf course, people would not come to him for advice on how to improve their games. It would not matter how articulately he spoke or how much money he paid to advertise his skills, people would go to Palmer for advice. Palmer had the requisite skills to be worth asking; Read did not.

Read's point was that those with skills are sought out by those who want to learn and develop the same skills. Palmer would not have had to advertise that he was a great golfer whose opinions were worth paying attention to. His golf game was all the advertising he needed; it had gained him worldwide fame. So it is with every skill, Read said. Do not try to persuade people of the truth of your position by proclaiming verbally how good you are. Just be good enough for people to want to learn what you know. Your reputation will and should proceed you. Let your performance do your talking.

I do not think that this advice applies to a true prophet. The

Old Covenant prophet brought a covenant lawsuit against the nation. This lawsuit was public. But prophets were given special tasks and special abilities to go with them. Also, they were rarely believed. The nation did not repent. Their ministries were ministries of condemnation, not restoration. The greatest exception to this rule in the Old Covenant was Nineveh, which was outside of Israel's boundaries.

The man who seeks to gain influence for the restoration of any area of life or any organization should seek to gain the attributes of a leader in whatever field he is attempting to restore. What are these attributes? Mastery of the skills, the ability to teach, and the willingness to take risks. Superb skills mark him as a man worth listening to. His ability to teach these skills is his hook: the means of delivering to others a benefit, namely, the ability to perform closer to his level. The willingness to take risks is required because he must persuade others to change the way they do things. He calls on them to **repent**: to turn around and go in the opposite direction. He must tell them that the pathway they are treading is dangerous, that there is a better way to go. He risks personal failure: they may not listen to him, or his timing may be off, or the way he proposes to go really is not a better way to go. He puts his reputation on the line. Not many men are psychologically prepared to do this.

The Job: a Man's Best Recruiting Opportunity

Douglas Hyde was one of the leading Communists in England during the 1930's and 1940's. He was a senior member of the staff of the *Daily Worker*, the Communist newspaper. In 1948, he resigned from the staff and the Communist Party when he joined the Roman Catholic Church. In his autobiography, *I Believed* (New York: G. P. Putnam's, 1950), he tells the story of his career. It parallels the story of many other Communist Party leaders who defected. They all say how painful the transition was.

Like Frank Meyer, who wrote *The Molding of Communists* after he left the Party, Hyde also wrote a small book, *Dedication and Leadership: Learning from the Communists* (Notre Dame University Press, 1966). It is now in its tenth printing. It gives a similar account of how the Communists outside the Soviet Union trained a cadre of dedicated people who successfully changed the opinions of millions of people and influenced the decisions of governments. Hyde was one of these trainers.

He says there were several important aspects of their recruiting and training. First, They gave men a moral vision. This led the Party to a strategic conclusion: do not call people to do small things for an all-encompassing moral vision. Second, they aimed high for their own lives, and they told potential recruits to aim high. Third, they demanded, in ex-Communist Benjamin Gitlow's phrase, the whole of their lives. This is illegitimate; no human institution can lawfully demand this. Only God can. But until Communists burned out, or until the Party lost this vision, this demand was appealing to millions of dedicated people around the globe.

Chapter 7 of *Dedication and Leadership* is titled, "You Must be the Best." This is an extension of the original decision to present the Communist vision as an absolute moral vision in a relativistic world: the great contradiction in Communism, which is an evolutionist philosophy. What distinguished Communism from other evolutionary systems was its commitment to the labor theory of value. Communism saw men as the products of their labor. At the core of Communism's religious world view was a philosophy of work. Hyde writes:

For the Christian, and for most others, work is divorced from belief. This is not true of the Communist. . . . For them, their place of work provides them with an ideal opportunity of doing a job for Communism. . . . The

capitalists provide the building, they get the people together and give him [the Communist organizer] the opportunity to be with them for six, seven, maybe eight or more hours a day. . . . The most important part of the Communist's day is, or should be, that which he spends at work. He sees his work as giving him a wonderful opportunity to do a job for the cause (pp. 96-97).

Contrast this, as Hyde does, with the average Christian's attitude. He sees his day as culminating in the evening. The Catholic Actionist then devotes time to his cause. But the average Christian today watches television. A more dedicated Christian goes to a Bible study, or may even lead one. But the focus of the Bible study will rarely be on the man's work. Women may focus their Bible study meetings on their work days: family living. Men will do this only in relationship to money: how to make more of it, save more of it, and keep more of it. Money is their frame of reference, not their work. Not so with the Communists during their days of greatest success.

You Must Be the Best

It is not good enough just to show up at work, spend eight hours a day, and go home. Woody Allen has said that 80 percent of success is just showing up. He is probably correct, but it is that last 20 percent that makes difference between success and mediocrity. It is this which few men undertake in their lives. The Communists understood this and demanded the extra effort.

With a good deal of justification, they reason that you are most likely to be effective if you are respected. In an industry in which skilled craftsmen are employed, or in a profession, you will be respected if you are good at your job – not just because you are good at talking about your beliefs. It may be quite irrational, but the fact is that, if you are recognised as being outstanding on one thing, you will be listened to on all sorts of subjects in no way related to it.

This is particularly true in the case of the worker employed in an industry where there are still men who take a pride in their craft. Craftsmen respect a good craftsman, just as businessmen, with perhaps less justification, respect a successful businessman. In motor- and aircraft-engineering, in shipbuilding and a whole range of other skilled occupations, a man is viewed with contempt by the better workers if he is known to be poor at his job. He is a no-good, a bum. As a consequence, they are unlikely to listen to him receptively when he talks on other subjects. This may be a barrier which he can overcome, as some have done, but it is a very real barrier indeed.

And so, the Communists say, if you are going to be really effective in your place of work, you must set out to be the best man at your job. In many Communist parties this has even been made an unwritten rule. It is repeated in Communist circles over and over again – every member should aim to be the best man at his job. It is not a bad rule (pp. 98-99).

Communists appropriated the lesson of Bezaleel and Aholiab. They recognized that a man who possesses greater skill and more dedication than others in his profession will gain respect, and eventually he will gain followers. They saw that a man who is incompetent in his work is not in a good position to persuade those in his profession of the truth of his profession of faith. To have a believable profession of faith one should first have professional competence in the field where his

targeted recruits are.

The Jesuits

The Communists did not get this idea directly from the Bible. They got it from that one organization above all other organizations in the West that served as a model for Europe's revolutionary Left: the Society of Jesus. The Jesuits were the model for the Left-wing Enlightenment, members of which were often trained in Jesuit institutions. In contrast, the Scottish Presbyterians were the model for the Right-wing Enlightenment. The Jesuits have a top-down system of control; the Presbyterians a bottom-up appeals court system. Both groups are noted for their commitment to scholarship, but the Jesuits most of all.

It is one of the most remarkable facts in history that John Calvin and Ignatius of Loyola were students at the same obscure little college, the College of Montagu, at the gigantic University of Paris in the same academic year, 1528-29. Calvin was finishing his studies as a Master's candidate; Loyola was just starting out. The two men subsequently created the rival systems that were appropriated by the European Left and Right. Calvin wrote the *Institutes of the Christian Religion* and preached dozens of volumes of exegetical commentaries on the Bible. Loyola wrote his book of spiritual exercises and organized the Order. Both men re-shaped European Christianity and, through no fault of their own, European secularism.

Their respective strategies were different. The Jesuits traditionally have been devoted to scholarship above all else. That, at least, is the image they present to the public. They seek to recruit the best and the brightest. Hyde provides an example:

Of course, this approach is not exclusive to the Communists. When I think of some of the best missionaries I have seen in action, I recall men who have brought much the same approach to their work.

I think, for example, of when I was staying, early in 1962, with a group of Jesuits in Calcutta. Among them were two Belgians who, in advance of Pope John XXIII and Pope Paul VI, were already conducting a fruitful 'dialogue' with non-Christians. This was made possible by the approach they brought to their work. One had earned a reputation in Indian academic circles for being one of the foremost Bengali scholars in East Bengal. The other, a Sanskrit scholar, is particularly known for having mastered Indian classical music. This leads to his frequently being invited to attend Hindu marriages, weddings and funerals in order to sing Sanskrit hymns, of his own composition, addressed to the Holy Ghost or the Blessed Trinity. These men have the entrée to circles which would otherwise be closed to them, a world of culture in which they could play no part, were it not for the fact that they, too, have set out to be the best men at the job.

They have not gone out to crudely proselytise: they have not thrust their religion down other peoples' throats. But they have contributed to the thought of serious, cultured people interested in ideas. They are not hunting for converts like a Red Indian hunting for scalps. But one may be sure that, if any come, they will not be second-class people.

Such men as those Belgian Jesuits attract the best. In other words, they tend to attract people of their own type. This rule of the Communists, whether applied to work or to other activities, helps to ensure that the Party gets quality in its human material. It helps to explain why so often it is the best, not the worst, who go to Communism (pp. 103-104).

The Calvinists have not adopted this strategy. They have had to adopt a broader-based, less intensive strategy, since a Calvinist Church, being Protestant, officially seeks to assimilate all men into its covenant. This, of course, is an illusion. No church can achieve this goal of universalism. Each has its own specialties, its own message. Protestant evangelism is more activist and much simpler than Catholicism's: a simple initial message aimed at personal conversion, with active discipleship to follow. Where Protestantism falters badly is in its discipleship programs. Protestant discipleship rarely involves specialized training for those in specific professions except for those who plan to enter the pastorate.

The Church of Rome, like the Eastern Orthodox and Russian Orthodox, sees itself as a unified whole. But it has this two-fold advantage: it is very large and very old. It has separate monastic orders. These orders are allowed to specialize, but not at the expense of the Church as a whole. No single order is regarded as possessing the representative skill or message. Each is seen as a member of a body. Thus, the Jesuits can devote their training to academic topics. Its members work to earn two or three doctorates without confining the message of the Church as a whole. Whatever the actual practice, a religious order in Rome is not allowed to think of itself as the sole representative of the Church. This allows specialization.

The Division of Labor

The division of labor can be pursued more safely by a religious order than by a Protestant church, since an evangelical Protestant denomination is normally too small to gain enough recruits who possess the skills necessary to develop evangelism training programs for a hundred advanced specializations. The large mainline churches are liberal, and the Baptists and charismatics are independent and operationally congregational, not to mention poorly educated by Jesuit standards – products of the American public schools, usually without training beyond the bachelor's degree.

A Protestant church's evangelism strategies – this must be plural, not singular – must be broader-based than the Jesuit's strategy because each denomination sees itself as the true representative of God in history. The officially targeted convert of every denomination is supposedly everyman. This is true of Catholicism, too, but the Catholic Church is large enough and wealthy enough to devote money and time to target a large number of specific audiences. This is ecclesiastically suicidal for a small Protestant denomination; it must specialize more than the Catholic Church, but less than a Catholic order.

Telling Your Church's Story

In the advertising world, the kiss of death is an advertising campaign designed to sell one product to everyone. The market is too large and therefore too diffuse. The campaign cannot meet the immediate desires of a specific buyer, which means that he will not buy. A successful marketing campaign must focus on a highly specific market whose members have highly specific and highly intense desires.

A single denomination cannot and does not send its members into all the highways and byways to bring in converts. It only pretends to do this, the way Americans pretend that all men are created equal. Each church will tend to go to certain parts of town, certain highways, and ultimately certain postal zip codes. The direct-mail advertiser knows this, and has access to markets broken down by zip codes, which do reflect money, education, and interests. The churches do this, too, but never self-consciously. For example, Southern Baptists unofficially wrote off Harvard graduates a hundred and fifty years ago, just as Harvard wrote off the Southern Baptists. Harvard was the battlefield of a spiritual war between Congregationalists and Unitarians, 1800 to 1850, not between Baptists

and humanists or Presbyterians and Catholics. Catholics couldn't even get accepted as students until the twentieth century, let alone get hired by the faculty.

This means that each denomination must face its limits. It must carefully analyze its present membership base. Then it must ascertain the skills possessed by its membership. It must begin to design evangelism strategies for those professions and associations that reflect the background and skills of its membership. No denomination can afford to develop dozens of specialized programs initially. It must concentrate on half a dozen or fewer. These strategies should become models during a decade or more of implementation.

Volunteers

These programs should not be designed by committees. They must be designed by practitioners in each field. The church must present a vision of evangelism based on work or service. It then must recruit volunteers who will promise to devote at least a year of their lives to become the most accomplished servants in their circle of fellow workers. It will probably take more than a year. The volunteer must strive to become a representative model of a high-performance master of the field. He must adopt the mentality of the Jesuit who masters Sanskrit in order to gain acceptance by those who respect the mastery of Sanskrit.

The volunteer must be very self-conscious in his effort to master his field. He is doing this not for money – Mammon – but for God. He is not seeking a promotion for the sake of climbing the corporate or professional ladder. He is seeking mastery of a specific area for two specific purposes: (1) to apply the Bible to his field; (2) to use his successes in doing this as a means of evangelism. When he can show that he has mastered the techniques of the field and has improved his performance, then he can come before his peers with this message: **Christ made the difference in my life as a practitioner.**

The fundamentalist never does this. He presents a different message: Christ has made a difference in my emotional life. A fundamentalist rarely mentions that Christ has made him a more productive worker. There is a good reason: he is not a more productive worker. God no longer hands out skills to His people the way He handed them out to Bezaleel and Aholiab in the wilderness. He gives them the Great Commission and tells them to go, baptizing the nations and discipling them. But fundamentalist evangelism, unlike Jesuit evangelism, is not based on personal self-discipline in a profession. Fundamentalist evangelism targets everyone with the same message: "Jesus is the answer!" To which the non-Christian answers: "To what specific question?" He really means: "How is Jesus the answer to my most pressing questions?" He evaluates the alleged comprehensiveness of Jesus' alleged answer by the specific performance of the messenger. Rarely is this performance exceptionally good.

The Costs of Discipleship

I read Bonhoeffer's book, *The Costs of Discipleship*, thirty years ago, and all I remember is that he distinguished cheap grace from free grace. On this point, I agree with him. Free grace is what Jesus Christ personally paid for before He

distributed it to His people. He paid a very high price. Cheap grace is that perversion of the doctrine of free grace which says that we need not seek to repay God because we cannot repay Him. But Christ calls us to be perfect, even as His Father in heaven is perfect. We are to strive for perfection even though we cannot achieve it in history. We do not have to achieve it, since Christ achieved it for us. The fact that He achieved it for us is supposed to be our motivation to strive to achieve perfection, not a warrant for third-rate ethics and fourth-rate work.

There is a high cost of discipleship, which Jesus paid. His performance is to be our model. We are to gain such mastery of our jobs and our callings – areas of unique service, usually not paid for by the market – that our work testifies to the reality we proclaim, namely, that Jesus is the answer, for He is the Incarnate Word. We have a written Word to direct us, and the Holy Spirit to guide us. Our self-discipline – our discipleship – never ends.

Conclusion

Techniques alone are insufficient. Communism has collapsed. The Jesuit order was taken over by radicals in 1965-66, and its vision has been deflected into humanistic paths. After 1965, the American Jesuit Order moved its premier training center, Woodstock College, out of Maryland into New York City. This was the school where John Courtney Murray, the Thomist scholar and defender of American Constitutionalism, had held forth for decades. His grave is located there. He died in 1967, and the College died with him. In New York City, the young priests shared classes and faculty with Union Theological Seminary, the modernist seminary that had undermined Calvinist Presbyterianism, 1880-1936. The Order sent these young men into Ph.D. programs at Columbia University. They returned to the cloister, doctorates in hand, to make converts to the Civil Rights movement. They had "gone native" once again – a traditional problem with Jesuit missions – but this time the natives won the contest.

The demise of the Jesuits in less than two years, after four centuries of hard-core missionary work, reminds us that no human institution is beyond the effects of history. There is always the threat of the lowered drawbridge: we go out into the world when it is down, but the world can then invade. But there is no choice: most of the time, the drawbridge must be lowered.

(There is one huge exception: the drawbridge into the public school system. It is favored by most of those who call themselves Bible-believing Christians. From 1920 to 1960, they kept their children out of movie theaters but sent them to public schools. The result was the subversion of the American Protestant culture.)

The best defense is a good offense. The gates of hell shall not stand against the Church. To serve faithfully, God requires of us regular church attendance, tithing to the church (and **only** to the local church), frequent communion, and Christian education. But such things are like training for a war: they do not constitute an offensive strategy. That requires discipleship: the pursuit of excellence. It is this which modern evangelicalism ignores because it fully understands the high and permanent personal costs of discipleship.

Biblical Economics Today is published six times a year, alternating with **Christian Reconstruction**. It is published by the Institute for Christian Economics, a non-profit, tax-exempt educational organization. A free six-month subscription is sent to those who ask to be put on the mailing list. **Subscriptions:** P.O. Box 8000, Tyler, TX 75711. Donations are fully tax deductible; checks should be made out to **Institute for Christian Economics**.