

The Challenge of Leadership (I)

By Andrew McColl, 18/5/2010

Leadership is always an important issue in the family, the Church and every nation of the world. Every father and mother must understand that their parental role is one of considerable leadership responsibility. Whether they planned it or not, or whether they like it or not, they are standard setters; others will follow them.

This applies to elders and ministers, along with managers and owners of companies, and political leaders. The standard you set is implicitly one that those you are responsible for, will assume is probably legitimate, and is one that they should safely follow.

It is a show of false modesty for a parent to say, “Well, my role is not a very important.” You are important, because you will spend a significant portion of your adult years modelling a lifestyle to your children, and then perhaps your grandchildren. Saying, “I don’t model anything,” is not facing the facts; you may not deliberately do so, but it will just happen in the day to day affairs of home and family, as others observe your speech, attitudes, behaviour and decisions.

Even evil leaders understand the importance of leadership. Abimelech said to his followers, “what you have seen me do, hurry and do likewise. All the people also cut down each one his branch and followed Abimelech ... (Judges 9:48-49).

Godly Gideon was similar. He said to his three hundred men, “Look at me and do likewise. And behold, when I come to the outskirts of the camp, do as I do” (Judges 7:17).

Leadership by example is God’s way. The Bible says that “...God demonstrates His own love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Ro.5:8). Jesus commanded us to “take My yoke upon you and learn from Me...” (Mat.11:29), and He also said that “when he [the good shepherd] puts forth all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice” (Jn.10:4).

When Paul explained to Timothy the requirements of an overseer (see I Tim.3:1-7), implicit in his description is that the overseer is to be an example to those he leads, while Peter explicitly says that the elders are to be “examples to the flock” (I Pet.5:3). Paul said, “the things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you” (Phil.4:6). He also said, “be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ” (I Cor.11:1).

Because the modern world (and often the Church) has emphasised academic or intellectual qualifications of leadership, or it’s supposed “charisma,” and neglected the primary Biblical obligation of leaders to be people of character and integrity (see Ex.18:21-23), this has led to all manner of distortions and abuse. It was Spurgeon who wrote that

I have long, long ago given up estimating character by the amount of intelligence, for I sometimes find that the most intelligent are the best able to deceive me. How

often in daily life we find that the most knowing are the most cunning, and the greatest scholars are the biggest rogues.

So, the important question is not whether we are leading or not. It is whether our leadership is reflective of Jesus Christ and the kingdom of God. How can we be confident about this?

Firstly, start with the really simple things. Paul talks about these in Phil.2:3-5:

Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus...

Jesus Christ, the greatest leader in human history, said of Himself, "...I am gentle and humble of heart..." (Mat.11:29). So depth of leadership is essentially one of attitude; our attitude towards God, and then towards others. Is my attitude concerning God, one of obedience and complete dependence, or do I sometimes think that I can make it on my own?

In relation to others, do I see them as people to consistently show love, care and service towards (see I Cor.13), or am I intent like Diotrephes (see III Jn.9) on showing everyone that I am the most pre-eminent person around? The reason Paul could confidently commend Timothy to the Philippians, was because he saw him as one "who will genuinely be concerned for your welfare" (Phil.2:20).

This is why it is always important to be developing in ourselves and those we are responsible for, a willing and joyful attitude in serving others. One preacher who helped me used to encourage budding leaders that "all authority is given to serve." Based on the life of Jesus Himself, I consider that to be a most accurate and profound comment. Jesus said "I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep" (Jn.10:11).

The greatest leader of men, was also the greatest Servant. The Last Supper (Jn.13) certainly showed that.

So leadership is important, and it is actually dependent more than anything, on our attitude. As God by His Holy Spirit and His Word steadily refines our attitudes, we become better able to represent Him, and lead.

And isn't that a privilege we all should want to share in?

The Challenge of Leadership (II)

Good leadership is essential in all aspects of human endeavour. For the Christian, we commence with the Bible's three most important institutions: the Family, the Church and the State. These three are by no means exhaustive. Leadership in business and other areas of society is important.

What are some essentials of good leadership? Gary North mentions some of these:

- 1. A willingness to accept responsibility.*
- 2. A broad awareness of what is happening around him.*
- 3. Detailed knowledge of who can do what.*
- 4. Detailed knowledge of the immediate facts.*
- 5. Trust: shown and received.*
- 6. The willingness to take risks.*

It also helps to have a track record. In a crisis, however, this may not be necessary. It helps to be a compelling speaker. It is not necessary.¹

I have some others:

1. The fear of the Lord:

The Bible frequently includes this as an essential mark of a godly leader (see Ex.18:21; Neh.5:9, 15; 7:2). It says that "he who rules over men righteously, who rules in the fear of God, is as the light of the morning when the sun rises, a morning without clouds..." (II Sam.23:3-4).

Without the fear of God, the human heart quickly displays its original sin; it degenerates to folly and absurdity, and leaders turn to abuse and tyranny. But with the fear of God, "one keeps away from evil" (Prov.16:6).

2. Humility:

It is the humble person who is aware of their weakness as a human being. He knows that because of sin, "we all stumble in many ways" (James 3:2), and that none can stand before God apart from His grace. God says "to this one I will look, to him that is humble..." (Isa.66:2). The humble person is most likely to receive God's grace (James 4:6).

For the humble person, serving others rather than themselves come quite naturally, and is not a strain. He has no desire for the lime-light, though he is willing to stand in it if that is necessary. For him, the interests and well-being of others is most important, and his greatest joy is to see others blessed.

This was Josiah's attitude. He knew that his nation was ripe to be judged because of her many sins against God. But God spoke through a prophetess to him:

¹ Gary North, "Are You the 'Go-To' Person in any Area of Your Life? If Not, Why Not?" 27/1/2011.

Because your heart was tender and you humbled yourself before the Lord when you heard what I spoke against this place that they should become a desolation and a curse, and you have torn your clothes and wept before Me, I truly have heard you, declares the Lord. Therefore, behold I will gather you to your fathers, and you will go to your grave in peace, and your eyes will not see all the evil I will bring on this place (II Kings 22:19-20).

3.Accountability to God and Man:

The godly leader knows his days are numbered. He knows that like all other men, “each one of us will give account of himself to God” (Ro.14:13). Thus his time, and the proper use of his God-given talents and gifts is important to him.

Samuel was called and anointed of God as a prophet, but he did not consider that his calling from God precluded him from being accountable to men (I Sam.12:1-5). He was very particular about protecting the private property of others, and about fraud, bribes and oppression, so that he could confidently declare to Israel that “you have found nothing [of others] in my hand.” Good leadership is authoritative, but never authoritarian.

Paul was the same. He wrote to the Corinthians, concerned about his presentation of a sizeable gift of money for the poor in Jerusalem. He was “taking precaution so that no one will discredit us in the administration of this generous gift; for we have regard for what is honourable, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men” (II Cor.8:20-21).

Thus a calling from God to leadership is never a licence to act in a cavalier way with people, and what is theirs. Furthermore, we are obligated to never take people for granted, and thus we must avoid being unnecessarily offensive to people, their culture and traditions.

Conclusion:

Leadership is a call to greater responsibility before God. It means not merely being responsible for yourself, but making wise decisions that will ultimately benefit others. Thus it is imperative that Christian leaders operate in the fear of the Lord, humility, and a sense of accountability to God and others. This leads to blessing for everyone.

The reward of humility and the fear of the Lord, are riches, honour and life (Prov.22:4).

The Challenge of Leadership (III)

By Andrew McColl

What are the dangers for good leadership? Clearly, they are very often the opposite of the desirable attributes.

I.Egotism:

The first danger of leadership is egotism. In history, the classic case is Lucifer, who boasted that “I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High” (Isa.14:14).

Lucifer had a position of responsibility and authority under God, and with that came a certain amount of importance and prestige—perhaps even splendour: he was called the “star of the morning, son of the dawn” (Isa.14:12).

God does this with leaders. They have a role to perform, and often they have a position of respect and authority. What do they do with it?

God had elevated Lucifer to a high position with a task to accomplish, but Lucifer saw this in a self-centred context, as an opportunity for self-promotion and self-glorification; perhaps even an opportunity to receive worship. He would have known that the glory should have been reserved for God alone, but this was his fatal conceit: he wanted it for himself.

It is significant that this is the very nature of the original temptation given to Adam and Eve. Satan promised them, that “you will be like God...” (Gen.3:5).

Egotism knows no bounds. We don’t have to look far in political history in almost any nation to see individuals whose ego really had the better of them. And invariably, it brings them down in some way, and very frequently other individuals and their nation itself are harmed in the process.

Why does this happen? The Bible says that “the fear of the Lord is to hate evil; pride and arrogance and the evil way and the perverted mouth, I hate” (Prov.8:13). It also says that “God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble” (James 4:6).

What is the best response to the temptation to egotism? In Moses’ day, God instructed that if ever Israel chose to utilise kingship, that king would need to write down a copy of the law of God, so that “it shall be with him and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the Lord his God...that his heart may not be lifted up above his countrymen” (Deut.17:20).

Paul warned each of us “not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think...” (Ro.12:3), and to “do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves” (Phil.2:3).

If we are humble and wise enough, others can help us in this, when we are prepared to refer our decisions to others, and accept advice and correction. Naaman was willing to accept the suggestion of a little servant girl from Israel, who knew what he needed to be cured from his leprosy (II Kings 5:1-14).

But Nabal was different. The fearful thing about him was that when a crisis came, his servant told Abigail (Nabal's wife), that he was "such a worthless man no one can speak to him" (I Sam.25:17). The Bible says, "let the righteous smite me in kindness and reprove me; it is oil upon my head; do not let my head refuse it..." (Ps.141:5).

II.Failure to Take Responsibility:

Perhaps one of the most common dangers for any leader is the failure to take responsibility for his actions. After he had sinned, Adam excused his actions to God: "the woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate" (Gen.3:12). This was true; but Adam had conveniently omitted from his response that he had disobeyed God in the process of eating from the tree. He implicitly passed some of the responsibility back to God, and to Eve: "*My fault? No way!*"

Thus blameshifting has become an integral part of man's justification of his rebellion against God, ever since the Garden. The problems are always somebody else's fault. The Christian leader must avoid this. He must say as David did, "against You, You only have I sinned and done what is evil in Your sight..." (Ps.51:4).

To some degree, this was Eisenhower's attitude. Before the D-Day invasion of June 1944, he reputedly carried with him in his breast-pocket a note designed to be read on the radio in the event that the D-Day invasion failed: "The troops did all that heroism and devotion to duty could do. If any blame and fault attaches to the attempt it is mine alone."² This attitude is refreshing, and needed.

It is critical that someone not only is willing to take the credit for success, but also the responsibility for failure. Why? Well, we all know that we are human, and can fail at any time. Leaders who are freely able to acknowledge their faults are always respected.

III.Ambition:

James warns us that "where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing" (James 3:16).

To some degree, ambition is legitimate for the believer. Paul encourages us that "if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do" (I Tim.3:1). The dominion of Jesus Christ in the world, which we have been called to share in (see Ps.110:1-3; Mat.28:18-20), is a great and glorious undertaking requiring our willing participation.

If a person has a desire to serve God in a high office, that can be a perfectly legitimate thing, but this must be coupled with a willingness to accept seemingly mundane, subordinate tasks, until God's promotion is evident. The person who is always chafing at the bit, who is

² David Burchell, The Australian, "Regrettably, Christine Nixon was no Eisenhower," 31/5/2010.

impatient to get to the best job in the company, only shows that he is not really ready to be promoted.

Indirectly, Jesus warned the disciples about an unhealthy level of ambition in Mat.20:20-28. After the mother of the sons of Zebedee came to Jesus, requesting that her boys get the top jobs in His kingdom, He said that “whoever wishes to be great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave.”

Adonijah was ambitious. He said to himself, “I will be king,” even with his father king David still alive. If he had made a cursory enquiry, he would have found out that Solomon had been nominated by David to succeed him. When his first attempt to subvert the kingdom from his brother Solomon failed (I Kings 1), he still couldn’t give up the idea. He should have known he was essentially on probation for his foolish scheme, but he tried again, only to be exposed and executed by Solomon for what clearly was a conspiracy (I Kings 2:10-25).

So you want to be the President or the CEO? Fine, but what if today, God wants you to be sweeping the floor, cleaning the windows and taking out the rubbish for some poor, frail widow who may not even thank you? We all must learn to “bloom where we’re planted,” because the Bible teaches us that “godliness actually is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment” (I Tim.6:6).

Of Joseph, the Bible says that “until the time that his word came to pass, the word of the Lord tested him” (Ps.105:19). This shows us that “...there is an appointed time for everything. And there is a time for every event under heaven” (Eccles.3:1). Joseph was more interested in serving and obeying God than being promoted; in fact, he sacrificed a desirable position as Potiphar’s steward, rather than sleep with Potiphar’s wife, and was willing to leave his ultimate promotion to God.

IV.Insecurity:

Saul was anointed by God to be king over Israel, but when David came on the scene and was dramatically successful against the Philistines, the Bible says that it “displeased Saul” (I Sam.18:8). He was threatened by David’s success, and only had one solution: kill him.

This showed that Saul was an insecure person. He was insecure because he knew he had failed to obey the Lord, that God through Samuel had pronounced judgment on his kingship (“...the Lord has rejected you from being king over Israel...”- I Sam.15:26), and now he was unhappy, jealous, frustrated and depressed.

What are the best cures for a leader struggling with insecurity?

- a) Trust in Jesus Christ the Lord, that He has all things under His providential control, including our state and status in life. God “...puts down one and exalts another” (Ps.75:7), according to His predestined plan.
- b) Be glad for the successes of others. The Bible tells us that “love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous...” (I Cor.13:4), and that we are to “rejoice with those that rejoice...” (Ro.12:15). If others have had an unexpected promotion or blessing, we can and should be

happy about that, even if we seem to be missing out. So what? Ours will come in due course, if we are faithful to God. As Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, Hannah, the Shunammite woman and Elizabeth discovered to their joy, God can open the womb of the barren.

V. The Fear of Man:

The Bible warns us that “the fear of man is a snare, but he who trusts in the Lord will be exalted” (Prov.29:25).

Jesus spoke of this. He said that “whoever is ashamed of Me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when he comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels” (Mk.8:38).

This was one of king Saul’s major weaknesses. When Samuel confronted him concerning his unwillingness to completely slay the Amalekites at God’s command, and destroy all that belonged to them, he admitted that “I feared the people and listened to their voice” (I Sam.15:24).

People who are excessively conscious of what people will think of them will always be intimidated by those people. Their ability to obey Jesus Christ will be constrained by their perception of “what people will think of me.”

Gregory Peck made this clear in “A Big Country” (1958). When his fiancée was disappointed when he avoided an unnecessary fist-fight, she intimated he was a coward. But he said to her, “*I’m not responsible for what other people think, only for what I am.*”

Does that give leaders a licence to ignore the wishes of people? On the contrary. The elders who had served Solomon in his life and now were to serve Rehoboam, knew that ill-feeling had grown under Solomon because of his high taxing regime. “Jeroboam and all the assembly of Israel came and spoke to Rehoboam, saying, ‘your father made our yoke hard...’ (I Kings 12:4).

The elders thus encouraged Rehoboam, saying that “if you will be a servant to this people today, and will serve them and grant them their petition, and speak good words to them, then they will be your servants forever” (I Kings 12:7). The king’s demise happened because he “did not listen to the people” (I Kings 12:15).

Conclusion:

Being a leader has its challenges, as does all of life. The challenges of leadership are a part of God’s plan, to refine and purify us, so that we can cope with greater responsibility, and serve God and His people more effectively.

That’s what every good leader should want. Don’t you want it too?

Leadership (4): Wolves in Sheep's Clothing

By Andrew McColl, 1/2/2011.

Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. (Mat.7:15-16).

There have always been predators, and too often these predators have been in the Church. This happened in Biblical times (see Rev.2:20), and there is little evidence that it has changed. We have often been slow to respond to these people, and they have wrought incalculable damage. Paul warned in his day that "savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock" (Acts 20:29).

There were a lot of wolves in the Bible. Think of the Pharaoh of Exodus, Abimelech (Judges 9), King Saul (I Samuel), Herod (Mat.2), and the beast of Revelation, Nero. All were evil, destructive people.

People have highlighted the corrupting influences of money, sex and power. It was Lord Acton who claimed that "Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely." But Acton was wrong. Opportunities with money, sex or power don't corrupt: they merely reveal what is in people's hearts.

Hitler and the Nazis (like all the totalitarians), were wolves - political predators. In 1928, Joseph Goebbels, who later became Hitler's Minister for Propaganda, said that "one should not believe that parliamentarianism will be our Damascus...We come as enemies! Like the wolf tearing into a flock of sheep, that is how we will come."³ But they were deadly people, BEFORE they had political power. Power merely magnified their destructive opportunities.

What are the Signs of a Wolf?

1. Self-Centred:

Is my motivation for Christian leadership self-centred, or is my interest primarily because of my love for God, and for His people? Jesus severely rebuked Peter (Mat.16:21-25) for believing that men could be Jesus' disciples without denying themselves. The Bible commands us, "we who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength and not just please ourselves" (Ro.15:1), and that elders were to shepherd the flock of God "voluntarily...not for sordid gain" (I Pet.5:2). The fact is, as Rushdoony points out,

...there are thieves and robbers. These are many, and the appeal of the flock is the possibility of self-enrichment. By calling Himself the Good Shepherd, our Lord contrast Himself to all careless ones, men whose care for the sheep is lacking. The animal-enemies of the sheep are predatory creatures, and neither the sheep nor the Good Shepherd are predatory.⁴

³ Cohen, M., and Major, J., "History in Quotations," 2006, p.753.

⁴ Rushdoony, R., "The Gospel of John," 2000, p.132.

The true Christian leader should “do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit...” (Phil.2:3). He sees himself like Jesus, as being expendable in the hands of the Father. Jesus said that “the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep” (Jn.10:11). The job of the good shepherd is to get between the flock, and danger. The protection and well-being of the sheep is his primary concern.

2. A Taker:

Jesus instructed the disciples that “it is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35). The prophet Samuel warned Israel that the king they had chosen would bring them into pain and judgment. Why? Because in six ways he said that Saul would be a “taker” from Israel (I Sam.8:10-17).

...the wolf's only purpose with respect to the faithful is to destroy them. They are his prey. Christ's flock is seen only in terms of exploitation, and the wolf's purpose is openly evil. Implicit in what our Lord here says [Jn.10:1-16] is the warning not to trust ourselves to evil men, to human wolves. If our trust in Christ is at all abated, we will trust in men who are actual or potential wolves.⁵

3. Not a Team Player:

The Bible never legitimises “Lone Ranger Christianity.” On the contrary, it tells us that “he that separates himself seeks his own desire, he quarrels against all sound wisdom” (Prov.18:1). The Bible instructs us that we are to “be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honour” (Ro.12:10). Furthermore, we are to “be subject to one another in the fear of Christ” (Eph.5:21).

It is significant that the inability to work with others characterised Karl Marx. One of his contemporary revolutionaries described him as

a destructive spirit whose heart was filled with hatred rather than love of mankind ...extraordinarily sly, shifty and taciturn. Marx is very jealous of his authority as leader of the Party; against his political rivals and opponents he is vindictive and implacable; he does not rest until he has beaten them down; his overriding characteristic is boundless ambition and thirst for power.

Despite the communist egalitarianism which he preaches he is the absolute ruler of his party; admittedly he does everything himself but he is also the only one to give orders and he tolerates no opposition.⁶

When people explain that their refusal to be a part of any church is because of the faults of the leaders or the people there, they are often really saying that they are unwilling to be shaped and adjusted by the attitudes of others. In all probability they are rebels against authority, and the Bible's comment on this is that “...the rebellious dwell in a parched land” (Ps.68:6).

⁵ Rushdoony, *ibid*, p.131-2.

⁶ Giuseppe Mazzini, the Italian revolutionary, quoted in North, G., “Marx's Religion of Revolution,” 1994, p.xxxiv.

Paul commended the Philippian church because they were “standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel” (Phil.1:27).

4. Centralises Control in Himself:

The Bible implicitly teaches decentralisation, and it is difficult to overstate this. Power is necessary for progress in any structure, but it must be distributed amongst many. As Rushdoony has noted,

inheritance makes possible the accumulation not only of wealth within a family but of social power. Power is inescapable in any social order: it can either be concentrated in the state, or it can be allowed to flourish wherever ability makes it possible among the people.

This decentralized wealth means also decentralised and independent power. Instead of a concentration of power in the state, there is instead a decentralization of power which moves in terms of varying and independent goals.⁷

History shows us that much power with one person or institution is dangerous, and likely to be abused. When the Nazis were consolidating their grip on power in Germany in 1933, they managed (by a process of intimidation, manipulation and deceit) to gain control of the media.

The Nazi Minister for Propaganda, Joseph Goebbels, wrote in his diary on February 3, 1933 that

Now it will be easy to carry on the fight, for we can call on all the resources of the State. Radio and press are at our disposal. We shall stage a masterpiece of propaganda. And this time, naturally, there is no lack of money.⁸

God Himself is a community of three persons. His way of dealing with people is always holy. But men are not the same.

Centralization is always risky. It is much more risky that what the educators, politicians, and tenured bureaucrats tell the public. "Too big to fail" is always sustained by the taxpayers. The more protection that a civil government can extend, the larger the catastrophes are when they hit.

Decentralization is the method of liberty. It works in private industry. It works in civil government. When it comes to centralization, less is better than more in the vast majority of cases...decentralization is a nearly universal cure-all.⁹

5.Unable to be Corrected:

Two of the things that characterised Israel when she was in rebellion against God in Zephaniah’s day, was that “she heeded no voice, she accepted no instruction” (Zeph.3:2). Sadly, this had been the case in Saul’s time as well (I Sam.8:18-20). A wolf bent on predatory activities will listen to no one.

⁷ Rousas Rushdoony, “The Politics of Guilt and Pity,” 1995, p.236-237.

⁸ Quoted in William Shirer, “The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich,” 1968, p.265.

⁹ Gary North, 2011.

When men refuse to accept correction, it shows they are stubborn. Naaman's willingness to take the advice of a little girl from Israel (II Kings 5:1-14) led to him being healed from leprosy through a prophet. But Nabal was different. One of his servants commented that "he is such a worthless man that no one can speak to him" (I Sam.25:17). Any individual in this state is heading for a fall.

6. A Tyrant:

Tyranny is in fact simply government without God. True tyranny does not refer to the harshness of a rule but to its humanistic, man-made doctrine of justice. No higher court of God is recognised, and man has no appeal against human injustices.¹⁰

Our Lord specifically warned against those who seek to use their position to lord it over others (Mat.20:25). He explained that He came to serve others, not to seek others' service of Him. Jordan's comments here are helpful:

The point of the parable [of Judges 9:7-21] is that good men do not desire to lord it over others. Good men are happy being productive for God and for their fellowmen. They realize that the road to greatness is the way of the servant, as their Lord taught (Mk.10:42-45). The only kind of men who desire political authority for its own sake are bramble men — unproductive men who seek to attain fame and fortune by taking it from others who are productive...

The bramble is not oriented toward productive work. Rather, he is oriented toward tyrannical rule. He represents the ungodly man who builds up a society based on taking what other people have laboured to produce. His is a socialistic society, based on massive confiscation of the wealth of other people, their hard earned savings and capital. His is an imperialistic society, based on the conquest of weaker people and of their production. His is a slave society, based on the forced labour of other people. The bramble society is indeed the society of the curse.

Those who greatly desire to be kings are usually the least qualified for the post. Far wiser government generally comes from those who only reluctantly shoulder the heavy burdens of office. The good, wise trees were reluctant; the bramble was anxious to rule.¹¹

Peter directed that elders in the church were to serve "with eagerness, nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge" (I Pet.5:3). But if men are motivated by a thirst for power, pre-eminence or control, their "care and oversight" will be ruthless, exploiting and manipulative. Such men have no place as leaders of the flock of God.

What distinguishes Biblical dominion religion from satanic power religion is ethics. Is the person who seeks power doing so primarily for the glory of God, and secondarily for himself, and only to the extent that he is God's lawful and covenantally faithful representative? If so, he will act in terms of God's ethical standards and in terms of a profession of faith in God.¹²

¹⁰ Rousas Rushdoony, "Deuteronomy," 2008, p.507.

¹¹ James Jordan, "Judges," 1985, p.165-166.

¹² Gary North, "Is the World Running Down?" 1988, p.42.

Conclusion:

The quality of leadership in the family, the Church, in business and the nation is vital. Jesus warned us to beware of wolves. Why? They are dangerous people, who will prey on trusting, sincere individuals, and misuse their position at the expense of the innocent.

Every leader (be it a husband, father, a minister, an employer or a parliamentarian) is either a good shepherd, a hireling or a wolf. Wise people should do everything possible to examine candidates for leadership, so that dangerous people can be avoided. Jesus explained that we would know them by their fruit.

Good shepherds try to embody the attitudes of Jesus Christ towards His people. Yes, we must examine the fruit of those that are leading us. But even more importantly, we have to examine ourselves and say, "Has my leadership really been about honouring Jesus Christ?"

Leadership (V): Avoiding Authoritarianism (A)

By Andrew McColl, 19/7/2011.

...I saw the tears of the oppressed and that they had no one to comfort them; and on the side of their oppressors was power, but they had no one to comfort them (Eccles.4:1).

Oppression is a mark of authoritarianism, and the only lasting solution to authoritarianism is God's law. God said that when the children of Israel chose a king after possessing Canaan,

...when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself a copy of this law on a scroll in the presence of the Levitical priests. It shall be with him and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, by carefully observing all the words of this law and these statutes, that his heart may not be lifted up above his countrymen and that he may not turn aside from the commandment... (Deut.17:18-20).

This passage hints at something: leaders must watch that they avoid authoritarianism. What is that? The dictionary defines authoritarian behaviour as *"favouring absolute obedience to authority, as against individual freedom."*

But it's really more than that. It's acting as though authority can be held autonomously, without accountability to God and others. This was implicit in Satan's promise to Adam and Eve in the Garden. He said "you shall be like God, knowing good and evil" (Gen.3:5).

Our Lord had to face this issue head-on in the wilderness temptations. The devil tried to lure him with the offer of autonomous power, rather than the ethics of submission to God. "...If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread" (Mat.4:3).

Jesus reminded the devil of the requirement for maintaining the kingdom grant: obedience. Prosperity is not a matter of power; it is a matter of covenantal obedience. His power over the stones was unquestioned. The devil did not suggest otherwise. In fact, the temptation rested on the presupposition that Jesus possessed such power. The nature of this temptation was an appeal to power. This was one more example of the power religion vs. the dominion religion. Jesus refused to invoke power rather than ethics.¹³

God is the perfect authority, and all authority is derived from Him. It was the resurrected Jesus Christ Who declared to His disciples that "all authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth" (Mat.28:18). Whatever authority men hold is derived from God, and is to be held in a representative way, according to His law. Our Lord explained to Pilate, "you would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above..." (Jn.18:11).

The primary obligation of a king (or any leader, for that matter) to be accountable to God was where King Saul fell down. What did Saul do wrong? He confiscated property, introduced income tax,

¹³ Gary North, "Priorities and Dominion," 2000, ch.1.

murdered people and consulted a medium. These were breaches of the First, the Sixth, the Eighth and the Tenth Commandments. Thus the Bible says that

Saul died for his trespass which he committed against the Lord, because of the word of the Lord which he did not keep; and also because he asked counsel of a medium, making enquiry of it, and did not enquire of the Lord. Therefore He killed him and turned the kingdom over to David the son of Jesse (I Chron.10:13-14).

Rehoboam was warned by the elders that served his father Solomon, “if you will be a servant to this people today, and will serve them and grant them their petition, and speak good words to them, they will be your servants forever” (I Kings 12:7). This was Rehoboam’s opportunity to avoid authoritarianism, but he didn’t have the heart. He wanted those taxes! Consequently he lost most of his kingdom (v.16), and suffered invasion (II Chron.12:1-8).

Ahab and his wife Jezebel conspired to murder Naboth and confiscate his vineyard. But God commanded Elijah to say to Ahab, “have you murdered and taken possession?” (I Kings 21:19). Elijah went on to predict the destruction of Ahab’s household, which later occurred. The common pattern of the evil kings of Israel and Judah was theft and murder, leading to both individual judgment and collective captivity. This shows us that

Power therefore is a product of ethical actions that are inconformity to Biblical law. Weakness therefore is the product of ethical action not in conformity to Biblical law...Biblical law is a tool of dominion.¹⁴

Will we be any different? The pattern of massive taxation of Saul and Rehoboam is repeated today in Australia, on a scale never dreamed of in Saul’s day, when it exceeded 10%. Furthermore, when Governor Generals and Prime Ministers retire they receive a vast sum annually, along with a full-time secretary and free travel, all of course at taxpayers’ expense. With godly reconstruction, this will have to change.

The prophet Samuel was different. He challenged Israel mid-way through his ministry,

Bear witness against me before the Lord and His anointed. Whose ox have I taken, or whose donkey have I taken, or whom have I defrauded? Whom have I oppressed, or from whose hand have I taken a bribe to blind my eyes with it? I will restore it to you. They said, ‘You have not defrauded us or oppressed us or taken anything from any man’s hand’ (I Sam.12:3-4).

¹⁴ Gary North, “Wisdom and Dominion,” 2012, p.80.

Leadership (VI): Avoiding Authoritarianism (B)

By Andrew McColl, 26/7/2011

Despite holding all authority in the universe, God Himself is not authoritarian in His dealings with people.

What do I mean by this? He is not arbitrary or capricious with us. On the contrary, His dealings with His people are based on His covenant with us, along with His total awareness of our frailties and needs, for He made us. The Bible says that “He Himself knows our frame; He is mindful that we are but dust” (Ps.103:14).

Numbers 11 tells us of one of the tough times Moses was having leading the children of Israel. He said to the Lord,

Why have You been so hard on Your servant? And why have I not found favour in your sight, that You have laid the burden of all this people on me? Was it I who conceived all this people? Was it I who brought them forth, that You should say to me, ‘Carry them in your bosom as a nurse carries a nursing infant, to the land which you swore to their fathers’? Where am I to get meat to give to all this people? For they weep before me, saying, ‘Give us meat that we may eat!’ I alone am not able to carry all this people, because it is too burdensome for me. So if You are going to deal thus with me, please kill me at once, if I have found favour in Your sight, and do not let me see my wretchedness (Nu.11:11-15).

What is God’s response? God doesn’t rebuke Moses for his complaint. God understands Moses’ situation perfectly. Firstly, He commands Moses to gather seventy men from the elders of Israel, and promises to come down and take of the Spirit that is upon Moses, and put it on these men, so Moses will not have to bear the burden of two to three million people alone. Then, He tells Moses that He will come tomorrow, and send a meat supply that will be more than enough for the people.

Is this a mean authoritarian figure in heaven, angry with a struggling delegate? Hardly.

Secondly, we read in Numbers 27 that the five daughters of Zelophehad came to Moses with a complaint, relating to the law God had given concerning the distribution of inheritances. Their father had died and they had no brothers, and it was sons who normally received the inheritance. So they complained to Moses, “why should the name of our father be withdrawn because he had no son? Give us a possession among our father’s brothers” (Nu.27:4).

Now it could be argued that these women were finding fault with God’s law. They were certainly drawing attention to an injustice that they would suffer, if the Mosaic law as it stood was followed inflexibly.

But observe God’s response to Moses’ query. God did not say,

Well, that's the way it is girls. The law's been decided now, don't you know? Life can be tough, and you will have to live with this. Don't bring your legal anomaly problems to me, because I can't be bothered.

No. He said,

The daughters of Zelophehad are right in their statements. You shall surely give them a hereditary possession among their father's brothers, and you shall transfer the inheritance of their father to them (v.7).

God dealt with these women with perfect understanding of their situation, and perfect justice. Their legitimate complaint led to God instructing Moses to change His law (v.8-11).

God is different to human, authoritarian despots. Their behaviour is completely alien to Him. He commands us to “vindicate the weak and fatherless; do justice to the afflicted and destitute” (Ps.82:3), because that is what He does, even if justice means a change in the law He had instituted.

Thirdly, the example of the Shunammite woman (II Kings 4:8-37) is very significant. After she showed hospitality to Elisha, he promised her that she would bear a son, which she in fact did (v.17). But when her son who had been given to her miraculously through a prophet's intervention died, she was left with a broken promise not just from the prophet, but indirectly from God, and she held that prophet accountable!

She found the prophet Elisha and said, “Did I ask for a son from my Lord? Did I not say, ‘Do not deceive me’?” (v.28) Elisha's response is immediate: he knows that not only is his reputation on the line; so is God's. He goes straight to that woman's home where the boy was laid dead on his bed, and through the power of God raised him from the dead (v.34-36).

The Bible says,

Who is like the Lord our God, Who is enthroned on high, Who humbles Himself to behold the things that are in heaven and in the earth? He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap, to make them sit with princes, with the princes of His people (Ps.113:5-8).

God Himself is our best example of how not to be authoritarian. His promise is clear:

He who rules over men righteously, who rules in the fear of God, is as the light of the morning when the sun rises, a morning without clouds, when the tender grass springs out of the earth, through sunshine after rain (II Sam.23:3-4).

Conclusion:

The goal of good leadership is to represent God, according to His Word. That means justice, integrity and accountability, according to His law. The misuse of power is abhorrent to God and leads to His judgment, but godly leadership leads to blessing (Ps.112:1-3).

God is on the side of those who oppose and avoid authoritarianism, because the Bible says that “the one who despises the word will be in debt to it, but the one who fears the commandment will be rewarded” (Prov.13:13). Rehoboam ignored this advice from his father, to his loss.

Jesus commanded us to “take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble of heart, and you shall find rest for your souls” (Mat.11:29).

Wouldn't you rather your leadership to be like His?

Leadership (VII)

By Andrew McColl, 2/8/2011.

...never do harm... the Hippocratic Oath

Most people are cynical about leaders, and there is a reason for this. Leaders have often been self-serving. They have said one thing, and done another.

People think that leaders are insincere. Often they are right. I went to the boss of a company that I worked for many years ago with a complaint about my pay, and he said, "I'll get back to you." He never did.

*When the boss (not the owner of a company) awards himself a pay rise, and an overseas trip at company expense that no one else gets.

* When the boss regularly comes into work late, and thinks it's OK for him and his office staff to go home early on Friday, but no one else is offered that privilege.

* When the pretty young females in the boss' office get privileges no one else does.

* When the boss decides that the recommendations and requests from the Occupational Health and Safety Officer can be ignored, where they apply to him.

People then make their observations and draw conclusions. Later the boss says, "Why are people cynical about me?"

Do the patient no harm.

I worked in a bakery for nine months in 1988. Sometimes, I needed to take hot trays of bread out of the oven, from chest height. To do this, all that was provided were pieces of worn-out hessian cloth. When you got a tray half out of the oven, and suddenly your hand grasped the hot tray through the hessian, you would burn yourself, easily dropping the tray and the bread. Drop the tray and the boss would be angry. Why not some oven mitts?

It is these basic things that leave people disenchanted with bosses. They detect a double standard, and when it becomes a habitual process, they become cynical about leadership.

Real leaders hate this, and make every effort to change this. They say to their subordinates, "tell me if you think I'm doing wrong. I may not see it myself."

Paul could say to the Corinthians, "...we wronged no one, we corrupted no one, we took advantage of no one" (II Cor.7:2). He echoed Samuel, a thousand years earlier: "Whose ox have I taken, or whose donkey have I taken, or whom have I defrauded? Whom have I oppressed, or from whose hand have I taken a bribe to blind my eyes with it? I will restore it to you" (I Sam.12:3).

Leadership (VIII): Righteous Boldness

...the righteous are bold as a lion (Prov.28:1).

One of the signal failures of modern church leadership has been an apparent emphasis on inoffensiveness. I believe this is because the church has been feminised, and it is an indictment upon us.

Now it is true, that no person should set out to offend people. But one mark of a godly leader is that he's not afraid to offend people when there's a moral principle at stake.

Godly leadership is to represent God, not man. The godly leader knows that he represents God, Whose judgments are "...righteous altogether" (Ps.19:9).

The Bible tells us that "an unjust man is abominable to the righteous, and he who is upright in the way is abominable to the wicked" (Prov.29:27).

Pharoah intensely disliked Moses, but that was really an indication of Pharoah's evil, and Moses' willingness to serve God. Jezebel swore to kill Elijah. Why? Because he was thwarting her evil plans. John the Baptist incurred the wrath of Herodias, because he represented God, light and truth, when she was in evil, darkness and adultery.

"...what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship have light with darkness?" (II Cor.6:14)

Between darkness and light, is no common ground. If godly leadership leads to some people being offended, that's life, and *you can't always do anything about it.*

John Knox confronted Mary Queen of Scots, and she didn't like it. She was adulterous, had murdered her husband, and was trying everything to thwart Knox's plans for the godly reform of Scotland.¹⁵ Could the tension between them have been lessened on his part? Yes, by compromising with her, and Knox would have no part of it.

I believe some form of moral challenge comes to most, if not all leaders, from time to time. It must be dealt with quickly. He will either compromise and tolerate evil (which will only prolong and encourage the problem), or deal with the issue firmly and promptly.

God's people generally want to see fearless leaders. The more discerning among them know what is at stake when there are issues of integrity to be dealt with. They appreciate it when they see their leaders protecting the flock from abuse. The Psalmist wrote that "he that practices deceit shall not dwell within my house; he who speaks falsehood shall not maintain his position before me" (Ps.101:7).

In the Psalms, the Bible says that "God takes his stand in His own congregation; He judges in the midst of the rulers. How long will you judge unjustly and show partiality to the wicked?" (Ps.82:1-2)

¹⁵ See Otto Scott, "The Fool as King," 1986.

Paul lays out qualifications for leadership in I Tim.3:1-10, and twice he points out that an overseer or a deacon must be “beyond reproach” (v.2 & 10). Leadership begins with godly example.

When Paul was confronted with the incest evident in the Corinthian church, he wrote to them. He said that “for I, on my part, though absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged him who has committed this, as though I were present” (I Cor.5:3). He went on to say, “..do you not judge those who are within the church? But those who are outside, God judges. Remove the wicked man from among yourselves” (v.12-13)

How can the church expect to be taken seriously on vital aspects of society, if it cannot properly deal with its own fundamental issues of ethics? It is the ability of any hierarchy to deal proficiently with its staff problems that brings confidence to members of that institution.

There are rules in the Bible for private and public behaviour, beginning with the Ten Commandments. Those that show themselves unwilling to abide by these rules should have no hope of leading God’s people, for Jesus said that “You are my friends if you do what I command you” (Jn.15:14).

And if church leaders who purport to be shepherds are unwilling or unable to properly lead and protect God’s people, they only expose themselves to God’s judgment.

It’s not loving towards anybody, to tolerate sin; it’s weak. It’s not loving towards God, or God’s people for a leader to be left in his position who has disqualified himself morally; it is actually expressing contempt for God’s people to do so. It’s saying they’re not worth protecting.

Well, Jesus thought they were important enough to die for. When it comes to the crunch, the welfare of the people of God is more important than any leader or individual. That’s the message of the Bible, and specifically of John 10:1-18.

Leadership (IX): The Need for Church Elders

By Andrew McColl, 13/11/2012

For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains and appoint elders in every city as I directed you (Titus 1:5).

Elders are the fundamental local church government in the Bible. With deacons at the second level of government, the elders are responsible for the church and its activities.

The New Testament is predicated on the idea that local elders will rule the local church (see Mat.18:15-20; I Cor.6:1-7; III Jn. 9-10). Biblical leadership has always been about corporate responsibility under God, since Jethro advised Moses to “select out of all the people able men who fear God...” (Ex.18:21). This practice was confirmed when God said to Moses, “Choose wise and discerning and experienced men from your tribes, and I will appoint them as your heads” (Deut.1:13).

Because God is omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent, complexity is not a threat to Him. He can decentralize authority to man without any fear of losing His sovereignty. The same pattern is mandated for man: the willingness to decentralize, to delegate authority. By delegating authority, men reap the benefits of the division of labour. Others are given opportunities to serve in a leadership capacity. The talents of more men are called forth by a system of rules that allows those with skills to rise in the hierarchy.¹⁶

The pastoral “one-man-band” so common today (and frequently a means of inefficiency, nepotism and abuse) is an historical anomaly, not a scriptural pattern. In my experience, these pastors frequently rush from one half-finished challenge to the next. They are experiencing the very problem Moses encountered, and need to quickly accept Jethro’s ancient advice (see Ex.18:12-27), appointing elders to lead the church. Elders are to function in corporate transparency and accountability, “submitting to one another in the fear of Christ” (Eph. 5:21).

Moses agreed to accept Jethro's suggestion. He must have recognized the truth of Jethro's warning. There was not enough time and not enough Moses to provide justice to the entire nation. The burden of delayed justice would oppress the people. Meanwhile, Moses would waste away. And after he was dead, where would the people receive justice? Who would then render perfect justice? Better to train up a generation of judges in preparation for the transition. Better to establish a tradition of imperfect judges rendering imperfect justice on a widespread basis. Swift imperfect State justice is preferable to delayed perfect justice.¹⁷

Scriptural ambition among those that aspire to eldership (I Tim.3:1) is legitimate, but those who seek autonomous power and position in the church for their own sake are to be avoided, to protect the church from wolves. Those willing to undertake responsibility can be safely given it, for *power flows to those that take responsibility.*

¹⁶ Gary North, “Inheritance and Dominion,” 1999, ch.3

¹⁷ *ibid.*

What distinguishes Biblical dominion religion from satanic power religion is ethics. Is the person who seeks power doing so for the glory of God, and for himself secondarily, and only to the extent that he is God's lawful and covenantally faithful representative? If so, he will act in terms of God's ethical standards and in terms of profession of faith in the God of the Bible.¹⁸

Elders should generally be elected and chosen by those they represent. Paul's instructions to Titus to ensure that elders were selected, did not preclude them being chosen by local congregations. Descriptions of elders' qualifications and motivation are found in I Tim.3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9, and I Pet.5:1-4.

The office of elder has, among its qualifications, the ability to teach, and the ability to rule (I Tim.3:2-5). Significantly, the tie to the origin of the office remains. The elder was originally and always a man who ruled a household; hence, in Israel, a ruler (and all rulers were in a real sense elders) had to be a married man, a man tested in authority and government. St Paul restated this qualification as an inescapable fact, "for if a man not know how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?" (I Tim.3:5). The office of elder required a family-centred society.¹⁹

The vision of the local church, preaching and teaching, church administration, the oversight of the tithe monies and wages, property and buildings, evangelism, missions, charity and care for the poor and needy, relationship with other churches and countless other duties, are all part of the elders' tasks.

The pastoral work of the church must be overseen by the elders, and a pastor's authority must never place him above the elders. Some or all of the elders in the church may function in a pastoral capacity.

The 5-fold ministries of Eph.4:11-12, who may be trans-local or international in their scope, are commonly elders in subjection to their local brethren, for at the elders' door is a sign: *The buck stops here.*

Church courts (which Paul seems to hint at in I Cor.6:1-7) are an essential part of what the elders must oversee. The function of these courts is to primarily oversee, administer and mediate disputes between believers and churches, to prevent them having to seek judgment from unbelievers.

The fact is that there are differences between believers: there always have been.

Greek Christians struggled with Hebrew Christians (Acts 6). The New Testament church dealt with serious conflicts at a conference at Jerusalem (Acts 15). Paul challenged Peter over his prejudice in Galatians 2, and Paul and Barnabas disagreed

¹⁸ Gary North, "Moses and Pharaoh," 1985, p.2.

¹⁹Rousas Rushdoony, "The Institutes of Biblical Law," 1980, p.741.

*so seriously over John Mark that they separated (Acts 15). Tribes, brothers, cities, religious subdivisions, disciples-all had conflicts.*²⁰

The Bible warns us that “because the sentence against an evil deed is not executed quickly, therefore the hearts of the sons of men among them are given fully to do evil” (Eccles.8:11). As Matthew Poole wrote, “justice must not be denied or delayed.”²¹

There is every reason to believe that church courts could also take responsibility for rendering judgment between unbelievers, using Biblical law as a guide. This is particularly the case when the wheels of justice in society’s courts are slow, expensive, corrupt or unjust. There would also be opportunity to render judgment between unions and employers, and in many other aspects of civil life.

Many times, society’s court cases can run to phenomenal expense, and time. I know of one expensive libel case that recently ran for fourteen years, and the outcome was only a public apology; the only beneficiaries were the lawyers. Most protagonists would appreciate a quick settlement at minimal cost. Criminal cases however, would need to be heard in criminal courts.

Those seeking the judgment of the church’s court could be required to sign a document requiring them to accept the court’s decision, beforehand. There should also be an appeals mechanism; no court system has ever been infallible.

When the church is being called upon to consistently render justice in the community again, its authority will become significant indeed. This is an aspect of the Lord’s promise of Isa.2:3, and means the church has an opportunity to use Biblical law as a means of evangelism and dominion.

*God established a law in Israel that would be a beacon to the nations: “So keep and do [the statutes and judgments], for that is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear these statutes and say, ‘surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.’ For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as is the Lord our God whenever we call on Him? Or what great nation is there that has statutes and judgments as righteous as this whole law which I am setting before you today?” (Deut.4:6-8).*²²

Conclusion:

One of the ways that the authority of Jesus Christ can be seen in the world, is through the sound government, pastoral care and administration of the church, through competent church elderships.

The elders’ first responsibility is to the church, and to “shepherd the flock of God among you...” (I Pet.5:2). But the role of the church is a manifold one, including ministries of evangelism, teaching, charity, welfare, hospitality and justice in the community. Thus the elders on behalf of the church of Jesus Christ, have an almost unlimited opportunity for influence in the world.

²⁰ Buzzard, L. 7 Eck, L., “Tell it to the Church: Reconciling out of Court,” p.22. Quoted in De Mar, G., “God and Government,” Vol.3, 2001, p.179.

²¹ Poole, M., “A Commentary on the Holy Bible,” Vol.1, p.384.

²² Gary Demar, “God and Government,” Vol.2, 2001, p.210.

Because the saints were called to manage or govern the world, very quickly it became their purpose to move into positions of authority and power...the elders, as officers of a law, God's law, are thus called to apply the law of God to every sphere of life.²³

²³ Rushdoony, p.742.