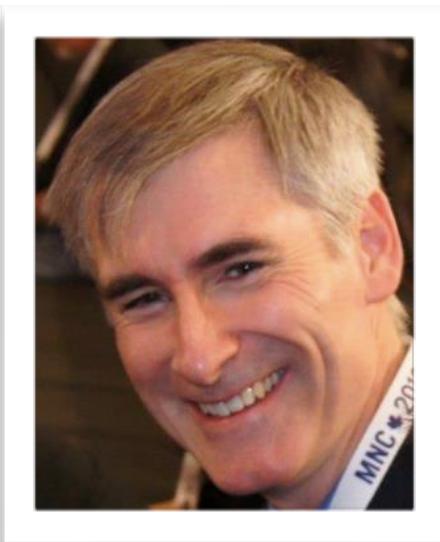


THE EVANGELICAL OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC SQUARE

Kingdom Metaphors and the Multicultural Challenge

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In the book of Judges (2:20—3:6), there exists a fascinating political parallel with modern times. This parallel is in the failure of the people to steward the inheritance of the promised land with the utmost vigilance.



Nations that Israel should have defeated—peoples that God had already delivered up to judgement— were, by apathy and intrigue, allowed to remain in the land. The Promised Land, therefore, became not the exclusive home of the people of God, but rather became, by default, a multi-cultural State.

And one isn't being merely metaphorical when one says, "multi-cultural". The Promised Land was witness to the various cults (religious practices) of the Philistines, the Canaanites, the Sidonians, the Jebusites, and the Hivites— among others.

Worship of Baal, a fertility cult deity, was widespread among these nations— a religion that many today would call vile, pornographic, and abusive. The devotees of this cult routinely practiced infanticide— which is one reason among many why God had given these nations up to judgement, and *allowed* the Israelites to take their land.

Yet, there's a sudden shift in God's geo-political priorities when the Israelites, themselves, become enamoured with the very false cults their faith is intended to replace. God decides to allow these multicultural people and practices to continue, "in order to test Israel by them"— to see whether the nation of Israel would "take care to walk in the way of the LORD... or not" (2:22).

It was a time of testing. Judges even calls it a time of war— where the LORD would allow these nations to remain in order that conflict would sharpen the resolve of Israel, and test the mettle of His people— so that God might "know whether Israel would obey the commandments of the LORD" (3:4). Multiculturalism would become the means by which the people's commitment to God would be measured.

So, here's where this editorial becomes symbolic, and where it brings the New Testament to bear. Mature Christians know, scripturally, that the early Church was not ill-disposed to allegorizing the history of the Jewish nation. Likewise, we recognize that we live in a modern multicultural State— just like ancient Israel, or the ancient empire of Rome. Humanly speaking, we know that human frailty and sin would confine all societies to bloody war if the success of any belief— ideological or religious— were simply a matter of bodily destroying one's opposition. Lastly, we Christians also realize (and thank God!) that the "weapons of our warfare" as the Apostle Paul describes them, "are **not** of the flesh" (II Corinthians 10:4). They are spiritual.

However, it should be noted; they are still called "weapons". "**We destroy arguments**". We take every thought captive to obey Christ.

Hence, in a new multicultural age, the challenge is both peaceful **and** confrontational. It is still the militant mandate of the people of God to engage in public debate. We are, in this respect, no different than the people of Judges— the contemporary test-subjects for whether God's people will be faithful to Him today even when the world is filled with "pleasant" distractions and religious counterfeits.

At the risk of sounding even more metaphorical, the Promised Land is an archetype for the Kingdom of God. It is a Divine inheritance, pre-planned and filled with blessings for which we do not labour. It is received after our deliverance from slavery, after our trek through the waters of baptism, and after much wandering in the wilderness.

Moreover, if all this symbolism is not only true, but Divinely *deliberate*, then it follows that, politically, we have much Jericho-work to do— in surrounding and destroying strongholds of the mind and heart.

All cultural realms are actually public realms of ideas and thought. Long before there was a Marxist State like China, there was Karl Marx and his arguments. Long before social Darwinism, there was Charles Darwin with his thoughts. Long before pluralism became welded to relativism, there were common ideas— lies actually— that whispered things like, “my truth isn’t your truth.”

With all due respect and charity to our worldly opponents, the followers of Christ are (still) at war. If you doubt the rhetorical reality of this war, I would invite you to read Luke 20 with “debate” in mind. Thankfully, Christians wage a “war” that is far less coercive than it is merely persuasive. Truly, the upward calling of the Kingdom of God benefits as many as *allow themselves* to be taken captive by its spirit and eternal ideals.

But what needs to be emphasized to those who would dare call themselves “Christian” in this generation, is that this is still a *war* of both wits and wills. Cultural disengagement is not an option, much less an indifference to society, or (worse yet) an amiable participation in the ideological or religious cults of the Enemy.

Even today, God still looks for a consecrated people, willing to prioritize His will and fight the necessary battles in a multicultural world.