

Faith, Policy and Liberation Theology in the Church and State

I speak today as a person whose grandmother was noted by one newspaper as the first ordained female Hispanic minister in New York City history, whose immediate family vacillated between being, at times, economically poor to lower-middle class. My particular ministry evolved out of serving hundreds of poor, at-risk Hispanic children in the Sunset Park area of Brooklyn, and my main influence in public theology came from an urban missiologist who typically votes as a Democrat and has politically progressive views. My doctorate in biblical worldview is from Bakke Graduate University.

Our local church of 29 years has had a large percentage of predominately low-income Hispanics that we have empowered with the gospel of the kingdom to be more economically prosperous. Also, I was the first person with a Caucasian background to be a member of the Joint College of African-American Pentecostal Bishops. Also, City Action Coalition, which helped lead the fight for biblical marriage for 10 years in New York City, had approximately 50% of our board members vote for Barack Obama in 2008. Thus we are bipartisan in our politics. Morally, many would consider me a social conservative; regarding policy I probably have mixed views some may consider moderate or center-right.

In my service as a leader, I am an urban practitioner with a call to expound on matters related to public theology by applying the principles of the kingdom of God to present-day church and culture.

The local church I founded 29 years ago has always been a multi-ethnic congregation—with approximately 40-plus

nationalities—and has had great success in contributing to the dramatic quality of life transformation that Sunset Park, Brooklyn, a predominantly Hispanic and Chinese community, has undergone since the mid 1980s.

Thus my theology has been informed by a concern for the poor, and with a goal to break the cycles of poverty in the lives of the hundreds of families that we minister to in both our church and in our nongovernmental organization (NGO).

That being said, my conviction is that biblically, there are five primary jurisdictions God has set up in society through His common grace which must be understood in order to understand politics and policy.

The five jurisdictions are:

- 1. Personal Government** (see the book of Proverbs; laws of sowing and reaping)
- 2. Family Government** (see Ephesians chapters 5 and 6)
- 3. Voluntary associations** (including business) (see the book of Proverbs; Is. 65; 1 Kin. 4)
- 4. Civic Government** (Politics) (see Prov. 8; Rom. 13; 1 Tim. 2)
- 5. Religion** (the faith-based community and/or the church) (see -18)

All of these jurisdictions were meant to work together in harmony, without any of them overreaching and imposing itself unlawfully on the other jurisdictions or realms.

Since the book of Genesis, when Cain fled from the presence of the Lord after killing Abel (Gen. 4); through the tower of Babel (Gen. 11); and the four major kingdoms of the earth highlighted in the book of Daniel chapters 2, 4, and 7, we have seen humankind attempt to build an autonomous human government in which the state is all-powerful and overreaching, either under a tyrant (e.g. Nebuchadnezzar) or under collective wit and power (e.g. the Tower of Babel).

It seems as though whenever power is centralized too much into one of these five jurisdictions, it brings harm to the other four. Sometimes, as in the case of a criminal, one of the jurisdictions (the first as related to personal responsibility) abdicates its right to govern to another one of the jurisdictions (as when a person is arrested and held by the state, or when parents neglect or abuse their children, or when a church or business commits fraud or exhibits racist acts), then the state has an obligation to keep the peace, promote justice and punish the guilty party.

The word of God warns us in 1 Sam. 8 about what would happen when the king and/or the state becomes too powerful. As we can see, some of the warnings are relevant today in regard to the king and/or the state bringing our children into unjust wars and taxing the people 10 percent of their income. Whenever an entity charges as much or more than God, then it is setting itself up as a messianic state that wants to be lord over all of life and control every aspect, as we see today.

From the reading of the Old Testament books of Kings—in which there was a separation between political, religious and family life—as well as from reading passages such as 1 Timothy 2 and Romans 13:1-7, we come away with the understanding that the primary responsibility of civic government is to protect its citizens by upholding biblical civic law, as well as protecting its borders from foreign enemies.

Historically, there has always been a war between the large, centralized messianic state and the Kingdom of God because humankind—being rebellious—wants autonomy from its Creator. Thus, these messianic states want to take away freedom of speech (e.g. the Roman Empire suppressing the preaching of the gospel during the early church era) and freedom to worship (e.g. Pharaoh against Moses and the children of Israel). This means that, when civic government is unchecked and obtains too much power it tends to overreach and oppress any rivals or

gods that may threaten their total control, as we have seen with the Lord Jesus Christ, who was crucified because He was a political threat to the worship of Caesar, because the people were proclaiming Him to be the true Caesar (see Acts 17:5-7).

The fact that when we say the word “government” we automatically think of political rulers shows how much we in the church and society have been brainwashed to think that we need to have some elite group of philosopher-kings (e.g. Plato’s Republic) to set up a nanny state that takes care of every aspect of our lives!

The framers of our nation, unlike Marxists and socialists who attempt to build a utopia based on the forced redistribution of wealth and class warfare, understood the fallen nature of human beings. Thus they set up the U.S. Constitution with three equal branches of government: the executive, the judicial, and the legislative, so that each component would countenance the others so as to prevent any one branch of government from centralizing too much power. Furthermore, states were supposed to have a semi-autonomous relationship with the federal government, with their own state constitutions, as long as those constitutions did not violate the principles of the national constitution.

In regard to the state controlling every aspect of life for its citizens:

- In the area of education, I contend that parents are the primary ones responsible for their children’s education and should have the right to choose which school their kids attend, or if they want to homeschool them (see Deut. 6:6-9).
- I contest that the economic policies of the Great Society have hurt the families of minorities, as we have seen the divorce rate multiply exponentially amongst

people of color since the presidency of Lyndon Johnson.

Furthermore, after four years under the current administration, black unemployment is over 16% and unemployment for black youth is over 22 percent nationally, and probably much worse in urban cities.

The U.S. Department of Education has allotted multiple billions of dollars towards public education, yet the dropout rate for high school students is hovering near 50% in our poorest communities, and our nation is scoring lower and lower in comparison to the rest of the world. When education is taken out of the hands of parental rule then it becomes more about teachers' unions than what is best for the kids!

In regard to private property: Individuals need incentives to be motivated and are much more inclined to have a sense of stewardship if they have ownership of something. Case in point: Go to any public park or housing tenement and see how the people treat property that is not their own. Then, go to a private company or private house and see how well it is taken care of! This is precisely why Marxism has failed in the Soviet Union, Cuba, East Germany as well as in Latin America and Africa. When you take the incentive of earning, based on merit, away from people, then you take ownership away from them. And when you give them unearned benefits and/or entitlements you strip them of their self-esteem and actually perpetuate the cycle of poverty by making them dependent instead of self-sufficient.

There are some in the camp of the Evangelical Left who espouse a form of socialism based on a faulty interpretation of the year of Jubilee in Leviticus 25 (I will defer people to the chapter on Kingdom Politics in my book *Kingdom Awakening* when it comes to the Jubilee year) and by misapplying Acts 2:44 and 4:32, where it says that the believers didn't own anything and

had all things in common. But I would counter that communal living was never made normative because it was never repeated as a command in other parts of Scripture, including the book of Acts, but it was an extraordinary event due to the fact that thousands of people visiting Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost got saved and needed emergency housing and food in order for them to prolong their stay and sit under the apostles' feet and become disciples of Christ.

Where I disagree with some of my conservative brethren in regard to government involvement is that I believe that, because the Evangelical church has largely abandoned holistic ministry in the twentieth century, the government has had to stand in the gap. However, I believe a better method for the betterment of our communities would be for the civil government to partner with the church and faith-based initiatives in regard to financial aid, wealth creation, education, gun and drug related violence, etc. because the clergy know and understand the communities better than most political leaders. This is why I have co-chaired an initiative called "My Community and Us" with a Democratic New York state senator. I have worked extensively with Democratic elected officials, even though I don't vote Democratic in national elections, because I believe on a local level we can make a huge difference if we put aside some ideological differences for the sake of our communities and cities and function as salt and light.

Regarding the use of the federal and state governments as the primary solution to societal ills, I ask the following question: Have the socialistic policies of LBJ and the War on Poverty since the Great Society Programs of the 1960s worked? The following is from a book by Jay W. Richards, entitled *Money, Greed, and God*:

-The war on poverty has become a war on the poor! Before LBJ's policies, poverty was on the decline and dropped from 22 percent to 15 percent from 1959 to 1965. Since then, it has settled in between 12 to 15 percent. Thus, the trillions of dollars we have spent with government programs to alleviate poverty didn't work!

-Not only did it fail, but it created social problems worse than it was meant to solve! In the 1920s, when racism was much more overt, there was little statistical difference in out-of-wedlock births between blacks and whites. A federal welfare system designed to help the poor had unintended consequences in that it ended up rewarding destructive behavior! In 1960, before the Great Society programs, out-of-wedlock births for black infants were about 24 percent. By 2005 it had risen to more than 70 percent!

-Data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth shows that a 10% increase in welfare benefits resulted in a 12 percent increase in out-of-wedlock births. Another study by the U.S Dept. of Health and Human Services showed that a 50 percent increase in the value of AFDC and food stamp payments led to a 43 percent increase in the number of out-of-wedlock births.

-Welfare is a disincentive to work. Husbands reduced their work hours by 9 percent; wives by 20 percent; young males by 33 percent; singles by 43 percent.

Despite all of these facts, Christian activists still think the federal government ought to be the primary agent for helping the poor, according to Jay W. Richards.

Regarding liberation theology's marriage with Marxist-socialist ideology to aid the poor:

I agree with the Vatican's response to liberation theology

(regarding its "Instruction on Certain Aspects of the 'Theology of Liberation'" issued by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in 1984). In it, liberation theology is strongly criticized for its uncritically borrowed Marxist ideology. This Marxist ideology of class is accused of bringing forth a dangerous new hermeneutic that colors all reality in terms of class struggle and reduces the Bible to politics, so that sin becomes economic and worldly oppression and is only secondarily cosmic evil. It is also further critical of liberation theology for tending to identify the Kingdom of God and its growth with human liberation movements almost to the point of a self-redemption of man by means of class struggle.

The Roman Catholic Church called for a new stage of liberation theology to include liberation from coercive institutions, private and public, that stifle the lives and entrepreneurship of the poor while further impoverishing them and society. It calls for the preferential option for the poor to mean advocacy on behalf of the poor for their freedom as economic actors in a properly regulated market. It also understands the need to recast dependency theory to include exploration of the role dependency on the state has played in perpetuating poverty (see page 239 in *Kingdom of God and the Teaching of Jesus* by Mark Saucy).

The great weakness of liberation theology is its reduction of biblical hermeneutics to the lens of victimology and its teaching that the only viable interpretation of the Scriptures is through the eyes of the poor—which isn't true because Moses, Daniel, Abraham and the patriarchs, Nehemiah, Mordecai, Paul and others did not come out of poverty, yet they interpreted the Bible accurately. They reject theologies from the West as coming from a perspective and motivation that serves their own cultural agenda of oppressing the poor and perpetuating the cycles of poverty.

Because it gives deference to the poor in its reading of Scripture, liberation theology leaves itself open to the charge of unbalanced exegesis and unbiblical results. Some liberation theologians have said that the economically poor are the elect of God and sole heirs of the kingdom (see Pixley and Walsh, *God's Kingdom*, page 104).

The doctrine of the kingdom in liberation theology is developed primarily from the Exodus event, the prophets, and the gospels, leaving out the epistles because this literature is notably more passive and obedient relative to the existing political and social orders and thus contrary to the political agenda of liberation theology. Couple this with the fact that Jesus, for all His political machinations, did not join with the Zealot movement of His day, an obvious parallel to liberation theology. All of this points again to liberation theology's myopic view of Scripture and the kingdom (Saucy, page 257). This position of the kingdom and the gospels is not shared by the apostolic literature of the Epistles or book of Acts. While we cannot separate redemption and salvation from a manifestation of the kingdom on the earth involving politics and economics, we also cannot separate the Christ of redemption from the Christ of history and thus only see Jesus as a model of liberation, thus reducing Christology to anthropology.

There is much more to be said about economic policy. But for now, let's move on to God's Top Ten List for a society, which is found in the Ten Commandments (see Ex. 20), which served as a moral code for a whole nation, not just an individual moral standard, and which were also either quoted verbatim or in principle numerous times in the New Covenant.

For the sake of brevity, we will only deal with the last six of the Ten Commandments, which deal with our horizontal

responsibility to our neighbor.

The first of these is the Fifth Commandment, which regards honoring fathers and mothers.

It is no coincidence this is first because marriage between one man and one woman is the building block of all of society. This is why in Gen. 1:27 we see how God created men and women in His image and He joined them together as one flesh in the next chapter. Marriage was before human government, the Law of Moses, and every other human institution because, as we see in Gen. 1:28, marriage is the building block of all of society which is inevitably supposed to lead to God's kingdom having cultural dominion on the earth.

Because of this, biblical marriage has to be upheld as the norm because males and females committed to one another, as one flesh in holy matrimony, is the primary expression of God's image on the earth to the next generation of humans. When the president endorsed same-sex marriage, he was attempting to shift God's primary building block for society. A weakened nuclear family gives more responsibility and power to the state in the long run, because fragmented families produce more children who are used to being dependent upon entitlements. Marriage, at the end of the day, trumps immigration reform—by the way, the Obama administration has deported more undocumented people than the previous administration—economic policy, issues of justice, gun control laws and poverty because, without intact families, children will not have God's complete image reflected to them, which will actually cause more poverty, crime, abortions, and incarceration in the long run. Marriage and family built upon faith in God is the primary foundation of a healthy society; If marriage goes down the tubes, then it will be almost impossible for the church to preach the gospel, disciple future generations and have healthy churches because alternative families sow confusion in young people leading to

them lose their sense of identity, normal sexuality and purpose.

President Obama not only supports same-sex marriage but he has instructed the Justice Department not to enforce the Defense of Marriage Act and is pressuring developing nations to legalize same-sex marriage and abortion in return for foreign aid.

The Sixth Commandment (which is the second in importance in regard to God's moral law dealing with our neighbor) is related to not murdering another human being. Since 1973, our nation has legally terminated the lives of about 50 million children and our president is the most pro-abortion president in the history of our nation based on his voting record, starting as an Illinois State Senator.

Quoting Rick Lowry: "In the Illinois legislature, he opposed the 'Born-Alive Infants Protection Act' three times. The bill recognized babies born after attempted abortions as persons and required doctors to give them care. About a year after his final vote against the bill, Obama gave his famous 2004 Democratic convention speech extolling post-partisan moderation.

"But he couldn't even bring himself to protect infants brutalized and utterly alone in some medical facility taking what might be only a few fragile breaths on this Earth. Some moderation. The federal version of the bill that he opposed in Illinois passed the U.S. Senate unanimously. Some post-partisanship.

"President Obama is an extremist on abortion. He has never supported any meaningful restriction on it, and never will.

"He opposed a partial-birth abortion bill in Illinois, even as the federal version passed the House with 282 votes and the

Senate with 64 votes and was signed into law by President Bush in 2003. He arrived in the U.S. Senate in time to denounce the Supreme Court's ruling upholding the ban." (see Barack Obama the Abortion Extremist,)

I laugh when people disregard abortion by saying they are not a one-issue voter; I ask you this question: If you agreed with a candidate in 90% of their policy but found out they were a member of the KKK would you vote for them? Of course not, because as a racist all of their judgments and policies would be negatively affected as part of the link of a chain. Well, abortion is worse than racism because with abortion the innocent child is a victim of the ultimate prejudice and/or bias because they are never given a chance to enter the world! At least during slavery and Jim Crow many oppressed blacks still managed to make an incredible mark on the world in spite of their challenges. Some say that poverty is more important than abortion because poverty is the primary cause of abortion. However, even if that were true, when you don't respect life and support elected officials that support abortion, then you are teaching the poor that terminating their children is OK under the right circumstances. Thus, you are holding up abortion as an acceptable norm which will continue to perpetuate this culture of death even after they come out of poverty and will then abort their children out of a need for personal convenience!

Furthermore, when blacks and Hispanics vote for pro-choice candidates they are supporting policies committed to their own genocide as blacks now abort more of their children than are born (1,600 abortions for every 1,000 births). Thus their political voice and clout is dissipating because their death rate exceeds their birth rate. Black women are four times more likely to have an abortion and Hispanics are three times more likely to do so than Caucasian women. This plays into the

hands of Planned Parenthood founder Margaret Sanger who started abortion clinics in poor urban communities because she said the Negroid race were like weeds that needed to be weeded out of the earth; she openly spoke about using abortion to exterminate them.

Here are some quotes from Planned Parenthood founder Margaret Sanger which show her white supremacist goals related to exterminating the black race through abortion:

"The most merciful thing that a family does to one of its infant members is to kill it." Margaret Sanger (editor). *The Woman Rebel*, Volume I, Number 1. Reprinted in *Woman and the New Race*. New York: Brentanos Publishers, 1922.

"Birth control must lead ultimately to a cleaner race."
Margaret Sanger. *Woman, Morality, and Birth Control*. New York: New York Publishing Company, 1922. Page 12.

"We should hire three or four colored ministers, preferably with social-service backgrounds, and with engaging personalities. The most successful educational approach to the Negro is through a religious appeal. We don't want the word to go out that we want to exterminate the Negro population. And the minister is the man who can straighten out that idea if it ever occurs to any of their more rebellious members."

Margaret Sanger's December 19, 1939 letter to Dr. Clarence Gamble, 255 Adams Street, Milton, Massachusetts. Original source: Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, North Hampton, Massachusetts. Also described in Linda Gordon's *Woman's Body, Woman's Right: A Social History of Birth Control in America*. New York: Grossman Publishers, 1976.

"Eugenic sterilization is an urgent need ... We must prevent multiplication of this bad stock."

Margaret Sanger, April 1933 *Birth Control Review*.

"Eugenics is the most adequate and thorough avenue to the solution of racial, political and social problems."

Margaret Sanger. "The Eugenic Value of Birth Control Propaganda." *Birth Control Review*, October 1921, page 5.

Also, check out Barack Obama's voting record related to infants born alive after botched abortions in an article by Rich Lowry (source:)

If that is not enough I have heard from reliable sources who work with heads of nations in developing countries that the Obama administration is pressuring nations in Africa and beyond to legalize same-sex marriage and abortion in return for foreign aid. I recently returned from ministering to more than one thousand pastors and leaders in Uganda, as I do extensive teaching in several developing countries on different continents.

Historically the church has always preached against abortion because if you don't protect the life of an innocent child, then nothing else in life is sacred and it insults the gospel of Christ because God sacrificed His only begotten Son for the life of all humans, including those vulnerable innocent babies whose blood their parents shed for the sake of their own lives and convenience. The early church document written perhaps even before A.D. 70, the Didache, which deals with the rules of life and ministry for the early church, even speaks against abortion, as well as many significant fathers of the church from the first to the third centuries. I refer you to the book by George Grant, *Third Time Around: The History of the Pro-Life Movement from the First Century to the Present*, which documents the pro-life movement in the church starting with the first century.

The pre-birth baby is considered a human, as we see in such passages as Jer. 1:5, Gal. 1:15, Psalm 139:13-16, and Luke 1:44. Also, in Ex. 21:22-25, a person who causes the death of

an unborn baby gets the death penalty, which is the same penalty as a post-birth death: "If men fight and hit a pregnant woman and her child is born prematurely, but there is no serious injury, he will surely be punished in accordance with what the woman's husband demands of him, and he will pay what the court decides. But if there is serious injury, then you will give a life for a life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise."

I also totally disagree with my brothers who separate abortion from social justice. What greater injustice in the earth is there than terminating the life of the most innocent and vulnerable humans in the earth, all in the name of freedom and women's rights! What about the rights of the unborn!

The Seventh Commandment deals with adultery.

As I previously stated, each of the Ten Commandments is a category that is extrapolated out into 613 laws. In the case of adultery, we see it expounded in Leviticus 18 as including same-sex relations. This means that, of the first three horizontal laws dealing with how we are to behave with our neighbor, two of the three can be applied as against the principle of same-sex marriage!

When people say that Jesus never dealt with same-sex relations I tell them He never directly mentioned incest either! He said in Matt. 5:17 that He didn't come to abolish the law but to fulfill it. That being said, He spoke frequently against sexual immorality which includes gay marriage (Mark 7:21-23).

Thus, two of the first three commandments dealing with the proper relationship of neighbor to neighbor deal with the issues of marriage, family and abortion indirectly or

directly, even before economics is mentioned.

The Eighth Commandment dealing with theft implies the right to own private property, which flies in the face of the Christian Marxist sympathizers who promote the state through extreme utilitarianism, which also compromises the rights of individual liberty and private property. Christians on the left who espouse socialistic policies point to Acts chapter 2 in which the early church is said to share all things in common. But this was a rare circumstance in which 3,000 people were saved who had nowhere to live because they were visiting Jerusalem for the feast of Pentecost. The early church needed to open up their homes and share everything if those people were going to become disciples of Christ and sit under the apostles' doctrine. This example is never promoted or shared again in the book of Acts or the New Testament.

In regard to economic policy, notice this commandment came after issues of marriage, family, and life. Thus, when we vote for a candidate primarily for economic issues of justice we are putting union benefits, entitlements and money as priorities before the basic building blocks of God's kingdom. I have heard it said many times by those who espouse liberation theology that God favors the poor. I want to disagree with that statement since in the Pentateuch Moses wrote that you shall have the same judgment for both the poor and rich which was also in the context of taking care of immigrants and foreigners.

Leviticus 19:15 says: "You shall do no injustice in court. You shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great, but in righteousness shall you judge your neighbor."

Exodus 23:3, 6, 9 says: "Nor shall you be partial to a poor man in his lawsuit...You shall not pervert the justice due to your poor in his lawsuit...You shall not oppress a sojourner. You know the heart of a sojourner, for you were sojourners in

the land of Egypt.”

Jesus even said in Matthew 25:29 that He would take away from the person who has nothing and give it to faithful stewards who multiplied talents. Furthermore, the parable of the Good Samaritan shows the importance of creating wealth so that we can be a blessing to our neighbor; a poor person could have never fulfilled the mission of the Good Samaritan as they would not have had the money to lend a donkey, pay for a hotel stay and provide for medical care! When Jesus told us to preach the gospel to the poor it wasn't because He was choosing them and bypassing rich people; it was because He wanted to release them from poverty. Also, most likely the poor are usually more open to the gospel than more well-to-do people who are entrenched in their ways. In James 5, which condemns rich people, it is not a tone against having money in general, but was an indictment against a particular kind of rich person: the kind that held back wages and oppressed and took advantage of their workers.

The Ninth Commandment has more to do with not bringing false accusations in a court of law. Thus you could also say that it has to do with issues of justice, especially as it relates to how judges and civic and political leaders treat those under their authority.

The Tenth Commandment has to do with coveting, which could, in principle, be related to being against egalitarian policy issues driven by class warfare and greed, which covets the wealth of others and which attempts to legally force equality amongst the masses of people, a la Marxism. When we force equality, we bring economic bondage and, in extreme cases, even mass starvation as shown in the communist nations of the last century. But when we create equal opportunity, then we promote liberty and freedom.

The Christian left believe in a zero-sum game in which there are only so many pieces of the pie available, so if someone—or if a nation—is rich, it is at the expense of the poor. But the reality is this: If Bill Gates lost his wealth, it would not benefit the poor in this nation or the world one bit. If the USA used less energy or had less wealth it would not free up any new resources for developing nations. Actually the real question should be “why are these nations perpetually poor?” instead of why the USA is rich.

Furthermore, wealth and resources do not originate with material goods, but with the creativity of individuals. For example, now—because of advances in agrarian technology—less than 2 percent of our nation’s citizens are presently farmers, as opposed to more than 50 percent who were farmers before 1860, yet we are producing more crops than ever because of technology. It is said that the state of California can literally provide enough food to feed the whole world!

Finally, if you want more resources regarding these topics, read my books *Kingdom Revolution* (especially my chapter on kingdom economics), and *Kingdom Awakening* (especially my chapter on kingdom politics).

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