



Part 1

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| Introduction

Administration in the church is concerned with providing wise counsel, knowledge and insight, direction and leadership. It makes things happen, planning, organizing, supervising and helping, and equipping and releasing others.

The biblical model is one where the administrator (Kubernesis) supports the apostle to build and establish the church and in so doing to extend the kingdom of God.

The administrator's role, and the Gospel of Jesus, cannot be properly understood without an adequate understanding of the Kingdom of God. The kingdom of God was the topic that Jesus spoke most about. Without an understanding of the kingdom of God, an administrator may labour and build a work that is superficially impressive (e.g. with a smart, new building and a large congregation) but which fails in its mission of advancing the kingdom.

| A Kingdom not made by human hands

Daniel 2 records a dream that God gave to Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. In the dream, Nebuchadnezzar saw “an enormous, dazzling statue, awesome in appearance” ([Dan 2:31](#)). The head of the statue was made of gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron and partly baked clay. The head of gold represented Nebuchadnezzar’s kingdom and each of the other parts of the statue represented kingdoms that were to come. It was an awesome and imposing sight.

As Nebuchadnezzar watched, “a rock was cut out, but not by human hands” ([Dan 2:34](#)). The rock struck the statue and completely destroyed it. The rock then grew to become “a huge mountain that filled the whole earth” ([Dan 2:35](#)).

After Jesus’ arrest, Pilate asked him whether he was the king of the Jews. Jesus replied “My Kingdom is not of this world” - i.e. not made by human hands ([John 18:36](#)).

The Kingdom of God stands in total contrast to the “kingdom of the world”. As Nebuchadnezzar’s dream indicates, the kingdom of the world can come in many different shapes and sizes. It may be dictatorial and despotic or it may appear relatively benign seeking to establish justice, democracy and human rights. However, even the “better” forms of kingdom of the world rule can never establish the kingdom of God; this is a kingdom that is “not built by human hands” and which cannot be advanced by human effort and endeavor, earthly wisdom or insight. It’s an “upside down” kingdom that turns human wisdom on its head.

| The kingdom of the world

The kingdom of the world operates in accordance with human wisdom. It may manifest itself in many different forms but the one attribute that all of these forms have in common is the exercise of power over others. Historically, this power has typically been wielded by nation states – kings, governments and dictators, etc. – for the purpose of conquest and control. This is still the case today although in modern times corporate organisations have arguably risen to be the most dominant kingdom of the world entities in existence. They may use the legal system, financial muscle, intellectual property rights, corporate takeovers and political influence to achieve their objective but the basic effect is the same – the exercise of power by one group over others. This power is used to coerce, enforce, manipulate and influence others’ behavior – i.e. it’s used to control other people.

This isn’t necessarily always a bad thing. For example, power may be exercised to ensure law and order in society. The UK is a good example of this: we live in a relatively safe and free country thanks primarily to a legal system that is enforced by the police and judiciary. However, whilst this system controls behavior it doesn’t transform hearts. Last year’s riots are a case in point. The police were ill-equipped to deal with the first riots when they erupted in London (i.e. they exercised insufficient power to control behavior) and the riots quickly spread across the city and the country like a contagion, reflecting the lawlessness *within* those who participated.

The fact that different versions of the kingdom of the world can do good should not surprise us. Paul noted in his letter to the Romans that God orders/directs/institutes governments. Paul went on to write “But if you do what is wrong you should be afraid for the authority does not bear the sword in vain” (**Rom 13: 2-3**). In other words, God directs authorities to prevent societies (comprised of fallen people) from descending into anarchy and chaos. Whilst God intervenes in this way, it does not mean that He creates these kingdoms of the world governments – rather, He orders them and shapes them to do His will. However, they remain part of the fallen order.

The bible makes clear that the fallen world and kingdom of the world governments, corporations, institutes and other power wielding bodies are under the power of the devil (**1 John 5:19**). Jesus referred to the devil as the “ruler of this world” and Paul referred to Satan as the “God of this age” (**2 Cor 4:4**).

Consequently, the exercise of power is frequently accompanied by violence, war, exploitation and abuse. The history of fallen mankind is one of confrontation and conquest. In the 20th century, an estimated 231 million people were killed in wars and conflicts¹. According to *Foreign Policy* magazine, there were 33 wars raging

¹ Deaths in Wars and Conflicts in the 20th Century, Milton Leitenberg

worldwide in 2010. *Ethical Consumer* rated 38 nation states as “oppressive regimes” in 2011. In issuing their report, *Ethical Consumer* also noted the following:

“Companies benefit from the very conditions which contribute to oppression, such as harsh labour conditions, lax environmental regulations and an economic environment conducive to corruption and tax avoidance. Furthermore, trading with a regime helps to make it financially viable. Oppressive regimes are supported by a series of economic ties without which they would not survive. Foreign investment is a crucial element of this.”²

We live in a tribal world riven by conflict where the primary aim is to advance one’s own interests or the interests of one’s “tribe” – be that a race, ethnic group, nation, religion, ideology, political group or even a corporation. The interests of these groups are advanced by exercising power over others.

² <http://www.ethicalconsumer.org/commentanalysis/features/oppressiveregimes.aspx>

| The church and the kingdom of the world

Tragically, the history of the church worldwide is one that has, at times, been stained by bloodshed. In the past, attempts have been made to coerce non-believers into confessions of faith, and torture and genocide have been used to supposedly further the kingdom of God. This is horrifying and may seem inconceivable to us; we know that we would never be party to such actions. However, kingdom of the world thinking can also invade the church in more subtle ways. Paul says we must not be ignorant of the devil's schemes so that he does not outwit us (**2 Cor 2:11**).

Greg Boyd notes that “Preserving the distinctness of the kingdom of God has always been the most important and most difficult task for the church – as well as the task we have most consistently failed at.”³

As the church grows in influence within a society, there are groups (e.g. governments) that will attempt to co-opt the church for their own purposes. For example, George W. Bush presented the second Iraq war in biblical terms. Supported by prominent churchmen in the US, Bush declared that America is “the light of the world” that the darkness (i.e. the forces of “terror” that the US were opposing) could not extinguish. He also referred to the US as being on a “crusade”. This was a clear attempt to present US military action as holy, righteous and in line with God's will. Bush quoted scripture that referred to Jesus and he applied it to the United States. In doing this, he identified the church with US military action in the minds of many around the globe.

For example, I have a friend who is working as a missionary and relief worker in Islamic North Africa. He was able to move and work freely until the advent of the second Iraq War. As a consequence of Bush's rhetoric and US military action, the population of the country in which my friend works sees the church as an extension of US foreign policy and regards western Christians with suspicion and, in many cases, with loathing. This has made it much more difficult for my friend's team to work within the country and he's now one of the last western Christians left there.

There are other examples of the church embracing the kingdom of the world thinking with disastrous consequences for kingdom mission. Some of the most shocking examples come from the aftermath of the Second World War when prominent Nazis such as Adolf Eichmann, administrator of the Holocaust, were helped to escape Germany by the Catholic Church. Other Nazis, such as Martin Sandberger⁴, were aided in their rehabilitation by the church and went on to play roles in West Germany in industry, the judiciary and government. Sandberger led a Nazi death squad and was the last known senior Nazi alive in Germany until his death, unrepentant, in 2010. He was sentenced to death at the Nuremberg trials but numerous pleas for clemency were made by influential individuals including

³ Page 57, *The Myth of a Christian Nation*, Greg Boyd, Zondervan

⁴ <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/0,1518,687922-4,00.html>

Bishop Martin Haug. Sandberger's death sentence was commuted to life imprisonment; he served six years.

One of the reasons why elements of the church in Germany supported Nazis was the threat of communism. Church leaders felt that the very future of the church in Germany was under threat from the Soviets and they consequently supported those who had consistently opposed communism. This kingdom of the world thinking led to the church being directly associated, in many people's minds, with one of the most monstrous and terrible regimes that have ever existed.

The clear conclusion from this is that when the church attempts to advance its mission using the kingdom of the world thinking the consequences are often disastrous and highly damaging to the testimony of Jesus.

| The Upside Down Kingdom

The kingdom of God is an upside down kingdom in that it turns conventional thinking on its head. It's not an improved version of any kingdom of the world model – it's a breathtakingly radical alternative.

It's so radical because it's characterised not by the exercise of power *over* others but by the extension of Calvary love *to* others; a love that is not self-seeking but which seeks to serve the other's interests. Calvary love looks like Jesus who, although being in very nature God, took on the nature of a servant ultimately giving himself in death for those He came to save ([Phil 2:6-8](#)).

As Greg Boyd notes, “The Kingdom of God advances by people lovingly placing themselves *under* others, in service to others, at cost to themselves”. Like Jesus, we are to “do nothing from selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility consider others above yourselves”. ([Phil 2:3-4](#)).

The kingdom of God does not expand through conquest and the exercise of power over others. Nevertheless, the kingdom of God will expand to fill the whole world as Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream. The kingdom of God grows and expands incrementally as we allow the character of Jesus to be formed in us. We are called to embody the kingdom. As the Kingdom of God manifests itself in us and through us it breaks into and displaces the kingdom of the world. The kingdom of God transforms hearts and this transformation then leads to changed behaviour.

The Kingdom of God is a Mustard seed kingdom. The Mustard seed was the smallest and most insignificant of seeds, yet it grew to become one of the biggest of trees. Jesus planted the seed of the kingdom through his life, ministry, death and resurrection and he calls the church to outwork, manifest and make real this kingdom in our lives and through our lives to others. As we do this, we are to look and sound like Jesus.

Jesus was completely non-tribal. He lived in politically fraught times under Roman occupation, a time where political groupings abounded, a time of unrest and heightened tension. Despite this, Jesus avoided getting involved in the political debates of his day. However, his actions were radically political in the way they challenged and overturned the prejudices and social mores of his society. His encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well is an excellent example of this ([John 4](#)). Firstly, Jesus' Jewish contemporaries would have been shocked that he was talking to a woman in public; their society was a deeply patriarchal one and Jewish rabbis did not associate with women in this way. Secondly, the woman was a Samaritan and as such, she was from an ethnic group that was regarded as inferior - Jews did not associate with Samaritans. Thirdly, she had been married five times and she was currently living with a man who was not her husband – i.e. she was a sinful woman.

In speaking with this woman, Jesus was challenging the sexual, racial and moral conventions of his day. His actions would have been construed as provocative and offensive by the religious orthodoxy. Moreover, when he spoke to the woman He did not judge her. He exposed her sin but not in a way that condemned her. She rushed away to tell her fellow Samaritans about him testifying “He told me everything I’ve ever done”. These were the actions of a woman who had been told the truth in love, a woman who knew her sin was visible before God but who felt loved rather than condemned. Given her background and the society she lived in it’s inconceivable that this woman had not received judgement, condemnation and ostracism from her contemporaries, yet in Jesus she found love, acceptance and forgiveness. Finally, in Jesus she encountered someone who asked her for a little (water from the well) but who offered her much (the water of life).

In his encounter with the woman at the well, Jesus demonstrates the nature of kingdom love. It breaks down barriers of prejudice and convention; it reaches out without judgement to those despised by men, revealing to them their unsurpassable worth in God’s eyes. It demonstrates the nature of God’s love for us. Above all, we are to love (**Col 3:14**). Everything we do is to be done in love (**Eph 5:1-2**). Love is the currency of the kingdom of God.

| The Kingdom of God and administration

George Eldon Ladd summed up the kingdom of God as “God’s reign defeating His enemies, bringing men into the enjoyment of the blessings of the divine reign”⁵. The role of a kingdom administrator is to facilitate this. However, an administrator cannot readily achieve this without understanding what the kingdom of God is and how to distinguish it from the kingdom of the world.

As we saw at the outset, the administrator is called to provide wise counsel, knowledge and insight, direction and leadership. He makes things happen. However, care needs to be taken that he makes the *right* things happen! The temptation to use our own resources and human wisdom will come, as will the temptation to find expedient solutions to problems where they promise quicker progress and “better results”.

Even Jesus found Himself tempted in this way: “Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour. ‘All this I will give you,’ he said, ‘if you will bow down and worship me’” (**Matt 4:8-9**). The temptation, here, was a real one - to redeem the world without the cross. It was a temptation to find an expedient solution that was not God’s solution - the temptation to find an easier way through that would result in good but not God’s best.

In many small ways (and sometimes in large ones) the administrator faces the same temptation. The consequence of succumbing to such temptation is that, ultimately, we could end up administering a work that appears successful and thriving but which is, in reality, dead!

The choices we must make as kingdom administrators should be based on the character of Christ, regardless of the outcome. Our primary concern should not be ‘what brings about a desired result?’ or ‘what’s the direct impact on the ministry?’

Situations and challenges that demand godly wisdom and a kingdom of God response will frequently arise.

⁵ Page 123, *The Gospel of the Kingdom*, George Eldon Ladd, W.M.B.Eerdmans Publishing Co.

| What do I do now?

The following are some hypothetical situations that could arise. They are not too far removed from the sort of thing that actually happens. How would you respond to each situation? How would your response manifest the kingdom of God?

- A gay, lesbian and transgender pressure group starts monthly meetings at the social club in Stoney Stanton. They approach us to request use of the Site 2 car park.
- Blaby District Council offers us a £100K grant to develop Site 2 on condition that it's available as a centre for the benefit of the community.
- An unmarried girl in the church becomes pregnant. Her parents will throw her out of their home when they find out. She wants an abortion and comes to you for advice.
- The police approach you and ask if they can use the church building as a base for their operations in Stoney Stanton. They are confident that by having a presence in the town they will be able to drive down drug crime, particularly amongst the young.

| Final thought

“This is how power is wielded in the kingdom of God. If you have all the power in heaven and earth, use it to wash the feet of someone you know will betray you! In serving like this, Jesus declares to all who are willing to hear that he ‘would not rule by a sword, but by a towel’”.⁶

⁶ Boyd