

God's word in context: how power needs to be held to account

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This is the morning study program Matthew Huish put together for our morning program at our pastors and church leaders meeting with a little bit of help from William Haines and myself (Simon Cooper).

It starts off with a quote about how you should always read with your newspaper in one hand and your bible in the other....

Very good content for a small group study and discussion:

God's Word in Context:

Time Magazine piece on Karl Barth
Published on Friday 31 May 1963

“[Barth] recalls that 40 years ago he advised young theologians ‘to take your Bible and take your newspaper, and read both. But interpret newspapers from your Bible.’”

Questions

- How can you read the news through the lens of the Principle?
- Are there any news stories you have read recently that led to you respond with some action inspired by your understanding of the Principle?

The Sunday Times
Published: 3 March 2013

Back in 2007, Lord Darzi commissioned three reports into the culture and practice of the NHS for the government, to be ready in time for the 60th birthday of the health service. When the reports were presented to ministers, they revealed an alarming reality. “Although there is an emerging aspirational tone across the Department of Health — ‘world-class commissioning’, ‘clinical excellence pathways’ — there are few indications of sufficient attention being paid to basic performance improvement efforts.”

Three separate reports spoke of “a pervasive culture of fear in the NHS”, saying that “virtually everyone in the system is looking up (to satisfy an inspector or manager) rather than looking out (to satisfy patients and families)”; a culture of “hitting the target but missing the point”. The reports revealed “significant flaws in the current quality oversight mechanisms”.

They found a massive rift between managers and doctors, with one interviewee saying, angrily: “Far too many managers and policy leaders in the NHS are incompetent, unethical or worse.” These reports formalised concerns that had been expressed by medical staff in hospital corridors since the early 2000s — that doctors were being forced to put political priorities ahead of patient interests. They also backed up the rising voice of patient groups who were shouting into a vacuum that all was not well in the NHS. But this concern was crushed by a system that gave zero tolerance to whistleblowers, and by Sir David Nicholson himself, who dismissed patients raising the alarm in 2008 over Mid Staffordshire as “simply lobbying, as opposed to widespread concern”.

Questions

- What does this excerpt tell you about the culture within the NHS?
- Are these institutional challenges something that we experience?

3.2 Exposition of the Divine Principle:
The Significance of the Separation of Powers

From the beginning, the separation of powers was to be characteristic of the political structure of the ideal society which God has been working to realize. Yet here again, as we observe throughout the course of the providence, Satan was defectively mimicking an aspect of the Principle ahead of its realization by God. Let us then briefly examine the political structure of the ideal world.

The universe, as we have seen, is patterned after the structure of a perfect human being. By the same token, the ideal world to be built by fully mature people is also to resemble the structure and functions of a perfect individual. By analogy with the human body, whose organs function in accordance with the subtle commands of the brain, all the institutions of the ideal global society are to abide by the desires of God. Just as the commands of the brain are transmitted to every part of the body through the peripheral nervous system branching out from the spinal cord, in the ideal world God's guidance is conveyed to the entire society through Christ, who corresponds to the spinal cord, and God-loving leaders, who correspond to the peripheral nervous system. The peripheral nervous system branching out from the spinal cord corresponds to a nation's political parties. Thus, in the ideal world, people of God led by Christ will form organizations analogous to today's political parties.

In the human body, the lungs, heart and stomach maintain harmonious interaction in accord with the directions of the brain, transmitted through the spinal cord and the peripheral nervous system. By analogy, the three branches of government in the ideal world – the legislative, judicial and executive branches – will interact in harmonious and principled relationships when they follow God's guidance as conveyed through Christ and people of God. Just as the four limbs of the body move according to the commands of the brain for the welfare of the individual as a whole, the economic institutions of the ideal world, corresponding to the limbs, will uphold the desire of God and promote the welfare of the entire world. Just as the liver stores nourishment for the entire body, in the ideal world there will always be a certain reserve to be tapped as needed for the public good.

Since every part of the human body has a vertical relationship with the brain, horizontal relationships are naturally established between the different organs to form an integrated organism. Likewise, in the ideal world, because people's horizontal relationships with each other are rooted in their vertical relationship with God, they will form one integrated and interdependent society in which they share all their joys and sorrows. In this society, to hurt someone else will be experienced as hurting one's own self. Hence, its citizens simply will not want to commit crime.

Let us now examine how, in the providence of restoration, God has been working to restore this ideal social structure. In the course of Western history, there was a time when the functions of the three branches of government and the political parties were concentrated in one individual, the king. This was modified from time to time when the king dominated the government, while the Church under the leadership of the papacy played a role similar to that of a political party. The political system underwent a fundamental change at the time of the French and American Revolutions when the government was divided into the three branches – legislative, judicial and executive – and political parties took on distinct roles. With the establishment of constitutional democracy, the framework for the ideal political system was set up.

Thus, political systems have changed over the course of history because fallen human society was being restored to the ideal society, the structure and functions of which will be patterned after a perfected individual. Today's democracies, characterized by the three separate branches of government and a proliferation of political parties, resemble the structure of a healthy human body to some extent. Nevertheless, because of the Fall, today's democracies in fact bear more of a likeness to the body of a sick or injured person. They cannot fully display their original qualities and functions in their full potential. Since the political parties are ignorant of the Will of God, they may be compared to a nervous system which is unable to transmit directions from the brain. Since constitutions are not written in accordance with the Word of God, the three branches of government currently function like internal organs which cannot sense or respond to the commands of the brain because the peripheral nerves have been severed. They lack order and harmony, and suffer continual conflicts among themselves.

Therefore, Christ at the Second Advent will remedy the illness of the present political system that it may reflect God's design by restoring people's vertical relationship with God. This will unleash society's true potential.

Questions

- What do you understand about the political structure of the ideal society God wanted to realise?
- How does this understanding help us shape our response to the crisis in the NHS?
- How could we apply this understanding to good governance for our international Unification Movement?

Mencius Chapter 18

1. Wan Chang said, 'Was it the case that Yâo gave the throne to Shun?' Mencius said, 'No. The sovereign cannot give the throne to another.'

2. ‘Yes;– but Shun had the throne. Who gave it to him?’ ‘Heaven gave it to him,’ was the answer.
3. ‘” Heaven gave it to him:”– did Heaven confer its appointment on him with specific injunctions?’
4. Mencius replied, ‘No. Heaven does not speak. It simply showed its will by his personal conduct and his conduct of affairs.’
5. ‘”It showed its will by his personal conduct and his conduct of affairs:”– how was this?’ Mencius’ answer was, ‘The sovereign can present a man to Heaven, but he cannot make Heaven give that man the throne. A prince can present a man to the sovereign, but he cannot cause the sovereign to make that man a prince. A great officer can present a man to his prince, but he cannot cause the prince to make that man a great officer. Yáo presented Shun to Heaven, and Heaven accepted him. He presented him to the people, and the people accepted him. Therefore I say, “Heaven does not speak. It simply indicated its will by his personal conduct and his conduct of affairs.”’
6. Chang said, ‘I presume to ask how it was that Yáo presented Shun to Heaven, and Heaven accepted him; and that he exhibited him to the people, and the people accepted him.’ Mencius replied, ‘He caused him to preside over the sacrifices, and all the spirits were well pleased with them;– thus Heaven accepted him. He caused him to preside over the conduct of affairs, and affairs were well administered, so that the people reposed under him;– thus the people accepted him. Heaven gave the throne to him. The people gave it to him. Therefore I said, “The sovereign cannot give the throne to another.”’
7. ‘Shun assisted Yáo in the government for twenty and eight years;– this was more than man could have done, and was from Heaven. After the death of Yáo, when the three years’ mourning was completed, Shun withdrew from the son of Yáo to the south of South river. The princes of the kingdom, however, repairing to court, went not to the son of Yáo, but they went to Shun. Litigants went not to the son of Yáo, but they went to Shun. Singers sang not the son of Yáo, but they sang Shun. Therefore I said, “Heaven gave him the throne.” It was after these things that he went to the Middle Kingdom, and occupied the seat of the Son of Heaven. If he had, before these things, taken up his residence in the palace of Yáo, and had applied pressure to the son of Yáo, it would have been an act of usurpation, and not the gift of Heaven.
8. ‘This sentiment is expressed in the words of The Great Declaration,– “Heaven sees according as my people see; Heaven hears according as my people hear.”’

Question

- What is your reflection on the way leadership evolves according to this passage?

Cheon Seong Gyeong 2.4.4. There will be no conflict in the future (24th November 1991)

The kingship that proceeds from God will be established. That is why the nation where such a kingship is formed will have the three main components of a nation: sovereignty, territory, and citizenry. Without sovereignty, territory, and citizenry, kingship cannot be established. I am now calling for global citizens. We now have sovereignty, but lack people and territory. Consequently, a citizen that brings unification to North and South Korea, as a citizen of heaven and earth, should go on to establish kingship in alignment with the Unification Church.

In the future there will be no conflict. The struggles until this time have been self-centered and pointless. They were struggles to take something from someone else. A unified world, on the other hand, is a world where God’s kingship is established and where people live for the sake of others. Then there is no need for war. There is no need for brothers to deprive each other of their possessions. Instead they may run away because the other is trying to give too much to them! That is why, if you live unselfishly in your town, everything will be offered to you. You can receive a room in that town. With the utmost devotion people will prepare breakfast, lunch and dinner for you. You will be able to sleep there on your way. Such an age is coming.

In the future, the separation of the three powers will not be needed. Laws and everything else will disappear. When the autonomous realm of love is fully established, the law will automatically be fulfilled. In the place where living for others is realized, no problems arise: upper and lower, front and back, and left and right are one.

Question

- How can we understand True Father’s words here about the non-necessity of the separation of powers in light of what is written in the Exposition of the Divine Principle?