

The GOOD news: Humanity can't stand too much darkness.
The BAD news: Humanity can't stand too much light.
So what's between the newses? LEADERSHIP

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MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. was a GREAT LEADER though an immoral man

It's MLK Jr Day, & in our church--& in hundreds of thousands other American churches--we thanked God for him & for what those of us who were in it simply called "The Movement." This Thinksheet reflects on him vis-a-vis another great though also flawed American leader, WJC, not yet a permanent resident of the town whence Loree & I came to Cape Cod, viz. Chappaqua, NY. In the process, I'll be responding to some friends who, in conversation & in writing, believe--as I do not--that Clinton should have resigned or been impeached.

1 One of the things King has to teach us is that in a leader, morality ("character")--no matter how desirable--is not necessary. He was a spectacular sinner in violation of truth (in how he got his PhD) & of loyalty (as his wife's sexual partner). Washington & Lincoln, men of honor to truth & their commitments, were dropped off the American calendar: no longer their names, but only the name of King (who was not a man of honor) now remains among our national holidays. Yes, nobody's perfect --but why this spectacular adulation for a man whose imperfections were spectacular?

2 Let's take, 1st, the fraud by which he got his PhD. Before the fraud was discovered, I read his dissertation in manuscript & remember it's unevenness, some parts better written than others. As one who had to guide many through their doctoral dissertations, I'd give King's a gentleman's C: low quality, but passing. When it came out that King's dissertation had some plagiarism, I hoped it would be minor. It was major: virtually whole chapters were stolen: the theft & deception were major, clearly sufficient for Boston U. to withdraw the PhD (which it didn't do: he was a bad man, but symbolic of a good cause, so why [the argument must have run] smear him?).

Now let's take his other dishonor, sexual promiscuity. On FBI-tapped phonelines he would make hotel reservations to bed down various groupies. The FBI preceded him to the hotels & bugged his rooms, thus acquiring a stack of tapes with the orgasmic breathings of King & bimbo. Why didn't FBI-director J.Edgar Hoover, hating King as he did, call in the press to hear the tapes? Because Bobby Kennedy blocked him by the threat of exposing Hoover's homosexuality.

The Ten Commandments? Note that King spectacularly violated the bottom four (Ex.20.13-17 NRSV: "[7] You shall not commit adultery"; CEV [8] "Do not steal"; [9] "Do not tell lies about others"; [10] "Do not want anything that belongs to someone else.")...NOTES on the four vis-a-vis King: (1) I don't know if the information is available, but doubtless at least one of his many bedpartners was another man's wife--to proscribe which is the "original intent" of the 7th commandment. (8) Plagiarism is the highest/lowest form of academic stealing. (9) With all that bedding down in hotels, just think of how slick a liar he came to be if he wasn't already! (10) Ethicists have long commented on how intimately related commandments 7-10 are. Here, I'll only indicate that King's coveting of juicy passages in other authors led to his theft of those passages. He had a low threshold of resistance to the temptations to grab women & paragraphs (even whole chapters!). Maybe not a bad man on the whole, but certainly not a good man, an honorable man. Love may cover a multitude of sins; oratory (his great speaking-gift) certainly does. And in leaders, the people's need of great oratory is even greater than its need of good people. (In the history of the American presidency, once the two greats came together: Lincoln.)

3 In the above §, "original intent" is in quotes (1) to signal this principle in the history of Constitutional hermeneutics & (2) to suggest Robt.Bork, who so failed to make the U.S.Supreme Court because of this principle that our language has acquired a word for his emphasis, viz. "Borkian." The Borkian interpretation of the 7th commandment is not in doubt. The commandment was (to use an analogy from Medieval Europe) a chastity belt to keep other men's semen out of one's wife. Here we must realistically face a superiority in women, viz., they are always sure of maternity (i.e., that the baby coming out of them is really theirs,* really bears their genes): a man can only believe, not know, that the baby is his, bears his genes. According-

* Goodwife-&-editor Loree, bringing me up to medtech speed, adds "or another woman's."

ly, societies that care about paternity (as most societies have & do) will try, positively & negatively, to keep impure (i.e., extramarital) semen out of wives. Killing the adulteress is the only sure prevention of bastards, & it was the Jewish way (a fact which makes Jesus' behavior all the more shocking: that woman whose execution he prevented may have subsequently produced a bastard [Jn.7.54-8.11, a dubious passage but, in my view, probably authentic]). Note two natural inequalities: (1) Males are unequal in not being certain of paternity, an inequality custom & law strive to compensate for; (2) Females are biologically unequal, in societies caring about paternity (as ours does), in that society has more investment in guarding itself against the loose womb (which can produce bastards) than the loose penis (which cannot). The '60s silly myth of genital gender-equality has had sad & continuing consequences. In sub/cultures approaching genital equality, such as black Africans & African-Americans, bastardy is normal: more than $\frac{1}{2}$ of American blacks are born bastards. And AIDS is especially disastrous: (1) 40% of the citizens of Harare will die of it; (2) Though blacks are only 13% of the U.S. population, 49% dying of AIDS last year were blacks. (Go ahead, if you like; call me a racist! And while you're at it, why not call me a sexist for what this Thinksheet's saying about sex? Now look again at this Thinksheet's 2nd line: "too much light" offends the public. I hope not you.)

4 Stay with "original intent": The o.i. of the 7th commandment was paternity protection, so it's sex "between a married woman and a man other than her husband" (THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF THE JEWISH RELIGION, 14). Monica wasn't a married woman, so Monicagate was not about adultery (in the 7th commandment's original-intent sense). Yet "they" (these friends who, in wanting Clinton out of the White House before the end of his 8th year, disagree with me) call upon the 7th to accuse C. of adultery. The accusation is doubly false: (1) Monica wasn't married; (2) No C. semen got into her vagina. On the Linda Tripp tapes, three times M. complains about C.'s uptightness (from, she says, too strict an upbringing): she could never seduce him into putting it in her vagina (though, as Starr assured that the world would know, she did put it in her mouth). Again: no penetration, no adultery. That's by strict interpretation of the commandment: for various purposes, including Jesus' radical expansion of it (which made Jimmy Carter an adulterer!), loose interpretations came later.

5 How important is whether or not C. put it into M.? If the situation definition is (as "they" claim) that he did, then he (1) committed adultery (in the strict sense) & (2) lied about it. If not, then he didn't lie when he said "I never had sexual relations with that woman." For some years (while studying at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary) I was a Southern Baptist, as C. always has been. I know that among them, "sexual relations" means sex & "sex" means (as indeed it does to most Americans) penetration. I accuse "them," then, of false situation-definition (which, in any analytic or planning process, warps the whole process, skewing the conclusions).

6 COMPARISONS/CONTRASTS: (1) K. & C., both public figures whose private misbehavior was bracketed off from their public contributions. (2) K. never publicly repented either of his academic deception or of his spectacular sexual athleticism, but C. repented of his comparatively minor dalliance. Again, K. never publicly apologized to his wife for betraying Coretta, but C. did his for betraying Hillary. (As penance, fruits of repentance, C. pledged "to work twice as hard for the people," & his subsequent labors deserve to be called herculean.) (3) Not being cornered as C. was by Starr's entrapment, K. was not tempted to lie his way out (his private lies being the usual smoke to cover his sex trail). (Understandably, the public, imagining itself in like entrapment for sex, gave C. a pass. This pass I attribute not to public moral degeneracy but to public commonsensical decency. "They" accuse me--me, the contrarian independent!--of conformity to the crowd in agreeing with the people. Like Reinhold Niebuhr, whom I knew & admired, I am a partisan of one, sometimes allying myself on one matter with one party & on another matter with another, & sometimes siding with the crown, the general populace.) (4) K. was a chosen leader, C. is an elected leader. Don't exaggerate the differences.

7 IRONY: One of the ecumenical readings in the churches this morning* was 1Cor.6.12-20, on clean (marital) sex & dirty (all other) sex. The sanction of purity/sanctity: Don't pollute the Holy Spirit's temple, your body, by impure/dirty sex.