

Hypocrisy

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In 1948, the United States Air Force formed the Strategic Air Command for the purpose of nuclear deterrence. The weapon then available was the long-range bomber. The barely year-old Air Force chose a particularly able man to command this new arm of the Air Force. That man was General Curtis E. LeMay.

When General LeMay took charge of the fledgling command, one of his first actions was to evaluate this force in the light of reality. The question asked of every Bomb Group and Wing in the command was "Can you find and destroy the targets given you?"

General LeMay was no stranger to the concept and practice of heavy bombardment. It was General LeMay that developed the highly effective "Combat Box" formation to provide protection to the B-17 and B-24 formations during daylight raids over Europe. He was also responsible for turning around a totally ineffective bombing campaign against Japan. Transferred to the Pacific theater after his success in Europe, he totally changed the tactics and weapons used against Japanese cities. As a result, incredible devastation was visited upon the Japanese homeland. His tactics resulted in a firestorm that consumed 25 square miles of Tokyo in one raid in a single night. When his bomber formations visited other Japanese cities the results were similar. General LeMay understood war, particularly air war. He also understood something else. Having been in the military since 1928, he understood that how a unit performs on a formal inspection with advance notice, is not necessarily a reflection of the true abilities and condition of that unit. Indeed, unit commanders are not above "whitewashing" a unit in preparation for an upcoming

inspection. For the military this can, and does have devastating consequences when a unit is called into action without warning. Often, units cannot, and do not perform well in combat because they do not practice what they preach. Because General LeMay knew this, he was determined that this would not be the case with America's first line of defense.

Thus the general's first command to his units was to perform a mock bombing raid on a target located in Dayton, Ohio. This seemed simple enough. However, not a single aircrew either found the target, or arrived on time. All crews were either off target by miles, or were late over the target. Both of which are a death knell to bombing effectiveness. Not a single crew, SAC-wide, flew the mission as briefed.

This did not please the General, nevertheless he had a solution: Place the entire command on a war footing. Yes, every single day of the year, at every SAC base, every individual would carry out their duties as if there were an active war in-progress. The reality of what this meant hit home when, for the first time ever, units were subject to no-notice inspections. Moreover, the inspections began whenever the inspection team arrived on-base. If that meant it began at 3:00 AM, then so be it. Aircrews were also commanded to fly at all hours, every day, in all weather.

Within just a few months the results began to show. Units that could not perform the mission before, were now able to find targets – on-time. Instead of “whitewashed” inspection results, the true condition of each and every unit was known. In the end, General LeMay's efforts paid huge dividends to the United States. The Soviet Union could not, and would not match the combat readiness of the Strategic Air Command. The Soviets were never able to be assured that they stood a chance of beginning a nuclear conflict with the United States without incredible devastation being visited upon them by SAC.

What was the secret of General LeMay's success? Is it that

military members have no choice but to comply with directives given from above? Not hardly. Even in the military, people rebel against authority. Not outwardly, rather in small ways that normally go undetected except under the stress of critical inspections, or combat. The secret of General LeMay's success is found in one thing and one thing only. He practiced what he preached.

In an interview with the Public Broadcasting System, Lt. General James Edmundson made the following comment concerning General LeMay's success.

"He was about the only man that had the knowledge of bombardment operation, the leadership ability to put together an organization like SAC [Strategic Air Command] and make it work, and the personal honor and dignity to do it properly, for the good of his country, and to instill the people that worked for him – instill in them the agreement with what he's doing, the understanding of what he's doing..."

In short, General LeMay was not a hypocrite. One can have great ability and knowledge, and yet not be followed. One can be the best organizer that the world has ever seen, and yet no one will follow them. One can be placed in a leadership role and those under them commanded to follow. In the military this happens all the time. Yet those in leadership positions are not respected and willingly followed because they do not practice what they preach to their subordinates. General LeMay believed in, and practiced no-notice preparedness. It is often recorded in SAC that he never sought to circumvent the regulations, no matter how inconvenient they were to him personally. The following was taken from a webpage dedicated to SAC and General LeMay.

"Be prepared. Get something straight, he told them: "We are at war now." The security on SAC bases was so tight that LeMay's own wife was once held at bayonet point. She had

ventured into her back yard without her ID."

Having been in SAC for 5 years, I believe it. Even as late as 1991, the effects of General LeMay's leadership on Strategic Air Command during its formative years were still being felt. Of all the major commands in the Air Force, SAC still had a warrior mentality.

When I consider this, I think of the Rechabites written of in the 35th chapter of Jeremiah. Where the Rechabites answered Jeremiah's challenge as given from the LORD God.

And I set before the sons of the house of the Rechabites pots full of wine, and cups, and I said unto them, Drink ye wine. But they said, We will drink no wine: for Jonadab the son of Rechab our father commanded us, saying, Ye shall drink no wine, neither ye, nor your sons for ever: Neither shall ye build house, nor sow seed, nor plant vineyard, nor have any: but all your days ye shall dwell in tents; that ye may live many days in the land where ye be strangers. Thus have we obeyed the voice of Jonadab the son of Rechab our father in all that he hath charged us, to drink no wine all our days, we, our wives, our sons, nor our daughters; Nor to build houses for us to dwell in: neither have we vineyard, nor field, nor seed: But we have dwelt in tents, and have obeyed, and done according to all that Jonadab our father commanded us. (*Jeremiah 35:5-10*)

It strikes me that Jonadab was not a hypocrite, and that he trained up his children properly. Those children believed because it became real to them through the life of their father. As a result, they lived what they were taught. It is the only explanation that can account for the continuance of the Rechabites in Jeremiah 35.

So that we may not get confused, hypocrisy needs to be defined. The Oxford Dictionary of the English Language gives the following definition:

“From Old French ypocrisie, Latin hypocrisis and Greek ὑπόκρισις, the acting part on a stage, feigning, pretence. .

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Assuming of a false appearance of virtue or goodness with dissimulation of real character or inclinations, esp. in respect of religious life or beliefs; hence in a general sense, dissimulation, pretence, sham.”*

Thus hypocrisy cannot be the incidental failings of an individual, but rather it is a practiced character trait. It must be, by definition, a continued pattern of action in contrast to the avowed statements of the individual. This, of course, leaves the LORD God completely out of the picture when it comes to responsibility for the fall of others. Only God is righteous, and never to be found at fault for turning someone away. It is not so with us. We cannot say “Even the Lord had the angels turn against Him.” and use that example to say we are not at fault. This is worse than an “apples to oranges” comparison. Do we even come close to being like the LORD God? Of course not. Therefore we cannot say we play no role in someone being turned against the Lord, of whom we say we represent. The best we can say, if we are honest, is “I am not sure of the part I have played in someone else’s rebellion.”

Finally, in considering General LeMay, I cannot but be drawn to the conclusion that he held appearance to be nothing – except that it came out of real substance. General Curtis LeMay understood modern warfare and the high cost of being hypocritical when it came to readiness.

Do we, as the Lord’s children truly understand spiritual warfare and the effect of our testimony?

And the lord commended the unjust steward, because

he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light. (*Luke 16:8*)

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