

Christian Reconstruction

Isaiah 61:4

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Shepherds and Sheep

by Gary North

Any successful strategy of conquest must employ a two-pronged attack: the grand design and specific tactics. We need to formulate a co-ordinated program of conquest. This is what Christians have never succeeded in producing. The various Christian churches, not to mention independent groups not directly connected to denominations, have always arrogated to themselves almost total authority. They have not been able to co-operate in the realm of first principles, nor in the area of strategy. They have thought they could "go it alone."

The result has been fragmentation. This, however, is only part of the story. It is not just that denominations have not co-operated well. It is also that the individual churches have fragmented internally. The centralists have tended to become full-time bureaucrats seeking power, and the decentralized pastors, teachers, and other Christian workers have tended to go their own way, leaving the tedious affairs of central administration to those with a taste for it. Those with a taste for bureaucratic administration seldom have a taste for creeds, theology, and (nonhumanistic) innovation, all of which are controversial, and all of which tend to reduce the powers of bureaucracies. **Hierarchies have strangled culture-altering Christian innovation.**

What is needed is a working **federalism**, among Christian groups and within each group. What is needed is **decentralization**, yet with sufficient willingness on the part of the "eyes" to recognize the importance of the "feet," and with all acknowledging the authority of the "head," Jesus Christ (I Corinthians 12). We need **multiple responsibilities** governed by biblical revelation and the leading of the Holy Spirit. What is needed is a **vision of conquest so great that we must co-operate.**

The cost of gaining co-operation institutionally has proven prohibitively high for centuries. Churches cannot co-operate very often. They cannot agree on policy, organization, and the assignment of tasks. Unquestionably, this has been an institutional failure on the part of institutional Christianity. The hands and feet have looked to an earthly head, and the Bible teaches that there is no head, except Christ. Roman Catholics cannot convince Protestants that the Pope is that head, and premillennialists cannot convince the others that Christ will return to earth for a thousand years prior to final judgment to

serve as the earthly head. Almost everyone else has given up the vision of conquest because there is no earthly head. The fact must be faced: in time and on earth, as of 1979, there is no acceptable source of institutional strategy, no organizing general who is followed by all Christians. But never forget: the Satanists and humanists have no visible, earthly general, either.

The Common Enemy

Christians are supposed to love each other. Communists are supposed to share bonds with all proletarians and other communists. Every ideological group proclaims universality, and all of them bicker internally, never displaying unity except in the face of a common enemy.

Humanism today is the common enemy of Christians. The Pentecostals see it more and more clearly. The Roman Catholics who take the faith seriously cannot afford to waste time and energy worrying about heretical protestants; they have too many apostate clerics and theologians to contend with. The Baptists, the Lutherans, and the handful of believing Episcopalians who are still inside their churches are besieged on every side by the enemy. The fact is simple: the enemy of all orthodoxy has surrounded the churches, and in most cases is already inside the gates. In too many instances, humanists are in the temple itself, setting policy in the seminaries, colleges, and Sunday school editorial committees. On all sides, Christians are surrounded by Unitarians (who may call themselves something else for the sake of their strategy).

What we find, therefore, is that those who are the great proponents of institutional centralization are almost always those who hold to a theology of political salvation. They want to centralize institutional power because they believe that mankind will be regenerated, and society purified, by means of the exercise of external force. In the division of labor, these people tend to get on top, for they do best what they are committed to, namely, exercising power.

What we are seeing today is a steady increase in awareness among thoughtful Christians that the common enemy, secular humanism, is a greater threat than the shades of theological emphasis separating them from other besieged Christians. They are beginning to understand that there have to be

alternatives to the centralizing rot of political theology, humanism. They feel the impending doom of humanism's eroding civilization, and they are convinced that they must not go down with humanism's ship. A few—a very few, sadly—are trying to construct alternative vessels.

What are these alternative vessels? Prayer groups, missionary boards, Christian professional associations, tape libraries, publishing houses, and special interest associations, most notably the right-to-life societies. But one vessel stands out as the pre-eminent one: the independent Christian day school.

Alternative Education

The serious Christians who are convinced that the battle against humanism is the crucial battle of our age are taking their children out of the only established church in America, the government school system. Those who are making the crucial stand are those who take this step. It is this step, institutionally speaking, which is separating, not the sheep from the goats, but the shepherds of the future from the about-to-be sheared flocks who will not follow them.

There are many arguments against pulling your children out of the camp of the enemy, and I have heard all of them. But they all boil down to this: Christian schools really don't make that much difference.

As far as the actual schools go, today, it may be true that the secularization of the schools is considerable, even when they are supposedly Christian. What do we expect? We require pastors to attend accredited colleges in order to be ordained, we require college teachers in Christian schools to attend secular universities in order to get their academic degrees, and we require our day school teachers to be certified by some humanist-certified, Ph.D.-holding instructor (or worse, a whole committee of them). We use cast-off State textbooks in the schools. And then we complain because the Christian schools really don't seem so very different from government schools.

One thing is wrong with this argument, at least. At the very least, **we** are financing our own schools, and with financing comes authority. Authority possessed is authority to be used. We can change our Christian schools. We cannot change the government schools, so there is no hope there. Protestants who wouldn't think of spending time and effort to convert Notre Dame to Protestantism spend lots of time trying to mould a far more secular, government-financed public school system. It makes no sense. At least there is hope for Christian schools. We must labor where there is hope.

Curricula

Here is where the fight must be made. Here is where our dollars must go. Here is where little is being done. The minds who produce the school curricula for the next generation of Christian youth will provide what has been missing for so long: an integrated program, an intellectual strategy. But to meet a market, these materials must reflect the Christian contributions of many ecclesiastical traditions. We do not have enough potential buyers today to finance a narrow, denominational type of curriculum. Not those of us, at least, in those churches that have not abdicated by allowing secular humanists to write our denominational school textbooks.

The broad Christian tradition, which is our alternative to

humanism, will provide much material for battling the common enemy. The crying need for good, conservative, accurate, principled, readable, and half-way literate curricula will cover many minor disagreements. If love covers a multitude of sins, think what the need for Christian textbooks will cover. And to get the costs down, we have to write for a broad market.

We have a broad position to defend—a position which must be separated from the dying culture of secular humanism. Yet at the same time, we have diverse strands in this Christian tradition, unique elements provided by many Christian groups. We are offering a dying culture a rival, comprehensive culture, meaning a culture broad enough to conquer every nook and cranny on earth. No single ecclesiastical tradition can provide everything needed to replace the humanist system which is disintegrating before our eyes.

Therefore, the Christian school, and the economics of the marketplace, provide the goal and the means of co-operating. Christians cannot afford to be too exclusive today. We simply don't have the funds to be hyper-exclusive. We simply don't have the bodies. Like the chaplaincy, we have to put up with diverse ecclesiastical traditions precisely because we are at war, we expect to win, and we cannot ignore help where it is offered.

Now, for those who do not think they are at war, who would not expect to win if they did understand it, and who cannot distinguish a Christian day school from a government day school, all of this may appear silly. After all, they think they have to defend their total institutional purity on questions of dress, drink, prayer, architecture, flip-around collars, or whatever. That's what really counts before God. And if it means shoving the next generation into the training camps of secular humanism, well, then, that's what's necessary. After all, not many people can finance both their ecclesiastical quirks and simultaneously gain full market support for a comprehensive Christian school program. And even among those denominations that have built up their schools, their textbooks have a distressing tendency to resemble secular humanist tracts—baptized by the proper mode, of course.

The parents who care enough to get their children into their—the parents'—schools, by financing those schools, will not be so ready to swallow secular humanism, whether presented by men with the proper vestments or not. They are paying for the future, and their vision is in the future.

The man who sends his children into the public school system is present-oriented, no matter how much he protests. The war against the common enemy of Christ, secular humanism, will not be won through the leadership provided by present-oriented defenders of the government school system.

The battle for Christian reconstruction is many-faceted, but there is a single "litmus test" to separate the shepherds from the soon-to-be-sheared sheep in this battle: their support, financial, familistic, and verbal, of the Christian day school movement. Anyone who fails this test may still be a regenerate sheep, but he should be recognized as one about to be sheared. If you choose to lead men away from humanism's shearing, rather than follow the flock into the shearing room, then start doing something to build up an independent Christian school, even if the headmaster wears funny collars or no collar at all. And if you can't put up with that, then start your own. But stay out of the camp of the soon-to-be-sheared.