

Christian Reconstruction

Isaiah 61:4

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CRITICAL MASS

Part XII: Organizing a Successful Reformation

by Gary North

For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him (1 Cor. 12:12-18).

Adam Smith began his classic study, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1776), with a chapter on the division of labor. He opened the chapter with these words:

The greatest improvement in the productive powers of labour, and the greater part of the skill, and judgment with which it is any where directed, or applied, seem to have been the effects of the division of labour.

The question is: How is this division of labor organized? In a factory, we can see the results of a chain of command. We can examine the hierarchy of the organization by examining its rules and regulations. We can understand a military organization in terms of a hierarchy. In a society, however, we see nothing equally objective. What holds it together?

It was Smith's brilliant insights into the nature of competition in a free market that set the standard for subsequent economic analysis. Yet even Smith, the defender of an unplanned free market economy, resorted to a famous metaphor: the invisible hand. (Cannan edition, *Modern Library*, p. 423) Like Charles Darwin, who spoke of nature metaphorically as if it were a planning agency, even though his book was an attempt to deny the existence of any ends-directed planning nature—except insofar as man plans it—so did Smith find it impossible to escape the language of sovereignty.

Baptized by the Holy Spirit

Christ is the head of the church, Paul said. We can also say that Christ is the judicial head of every agency, but this was not Paul's intention. Paul meant that the church is unique among mankind's institutions. The church has been given the Holy Spirit in a special way: "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." The language

of the sacrament of baptism is crucial to Paul's metaphor of the church as Christ's body. By placing its members under the covenantal sign of baptism, the church extends its authority and influence in history.

The Holy Spirit is Christ's agent of communication and direction in history. Paul used a metaphor to describe the church—the body—but he did not rest his case on a mere metaphor. He rested it rather on the historical action of the Holy Spirit within the church. This action is judicial: the sacramental act of baptism. The church is a **sacramentally unified institution**. No other institution possesses this judicial mark of God's delegated authority.

Church Members

We speak of church members judicially. Paul spoke of church members metaphorically: hands and feet, eyes and ears. His point was that the body is a functioning entity. Its existence is inseparable from the division of labor. To function, it must coordinate these members. Eyes do not make good ears. Feet do not make good hands. While there are times when feet must substitute for hands, this arrangement takes a lot of practice. It is not a normal situation. If hands are available for handicrafts, they should be used, even though feet can sometime be substituted. The Irish poet Christy Brown ("My Left Foot") typed with his toe the way I type with my right index finger, but I type a lot faster than he did. Typing with eight fingers and two thumbs is even more efficient. Or so I'm told.

The modern church faces a problem: it's almost all thumbs, usually pointed downward. When the church isn't all thumbs, it's mostly tongues, constantly wagging. The only fingers visible in most churches are index fingers, used to point the blame. The problem for the energetic reformer is that those who have specialized in turning thumbs down are in the majority. How can he overcome this resistance to church growth? I have dealt with several techniques in previous segments of **Critical Mass**. The problem is getting these techniques implemented. This always takes people who are willing to donate time and effort. It usually takes people who are willing to bear the sight of thumbs turning downward and also bear the sound of tongues clucking.

Word-and-Deed Evangelism

What is the secret of successful, God-honoring ecclesiastical reformation? Word-and-deed evangelism. There must be straight speaking (orthodoxy) coupled judicially with straight actions (orthopraxy). James was clear about this. He did not write an epistle of straw; he wrote God's inspired word. He called for righteous deeds. Protestants need to be reminded of this tight judicial fit between our

words and our deeds, lest they drift into antinomianism in the name of orthodoxy:

What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works. Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way? For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also (James 2:14-26).

This is not "works religion." This is God's inspired word. Reformation should begin with a recognition that **God's predestinating grace underlies both our faith and our works.** "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:8-10). It is not surprising that modern fundamentalists memorize verses 8 and 9, but then neglect to memorize verse 10, a verse which announces both God's predestination and our mandatory ethical response.

A person who wants to advance the kingdom of God through church growth and the extension of church influence must demonstrate his commitment to orthodoxy by means of his orthopraxy. What men **see in us** is more important initially than what they **hear from us**. The Bible is very clear about this temporal relationship between sight and sound, both personally (as we read in James) and institutionally:

Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the LORD my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the land whither ye go to possess it. Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people. For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the LORD our God is in all things that we call upon him for? And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day? (Deut. 4:5-8).

John Mitchell, President Richard Nixon's Attorney General (1969-1974), the senior judicial officer of the Executive branch of American government, once warned American voters: "Watch what we do, not what we say." He had in mind the rhetoric of politics, but his words came true judicially. As a participant in the Watergate cover-up, Mitchell was later sent to jail because of a discrepancy between what he said publicly and what he did privately while in office. His warning had been biblically correct; it came back to haunt him when newspapermen and a grand jury did exactly what he had recommended.

The First Step of Reform

The reformer must discipline his life in terms of the ethical and judicial imperatives his recommended reform. That is to say, point three of the biblical covenant model (law) must govern point four (sanctions). All government begins with self-government. The restraining sanctions should be applied internally before they are imposed externally.

The reformer needs to recruit people who are self-disciplined. He must encourage all of them to identify those tasks for which their individual skills are uniquely suited. He must draw from them the productivity that others have not recognized – in some cases, not even themselves. He must recruit eyes and encourage them to stand watch – first over their own acts. He must recruit ears and encourage them to listen carefully – first to their own words, unspoken as well as spoken. He must recruit many hands and feet. The point is, **he must serve as a recruiting officer before he serves as a general.** Men and women must be recruited to serve.

Unlike biblical civil government, an institution of exclusively negative sanctions, the church is an agency that extends both positive and negative sanctions. Beyond collecting the tithe from voting members, the institutional church can extend positive sanctions in history only by recruiting and mobilizing those members who will voluntarily donate their time and money. The church cannot lawfully draft members into particular forms of service. This is the challenge of effective church leadership: providing a vision of victory, a plan of action based on a strategy of service, and specific assignments.

Conclusion

The successful reformer should begin with a vision of victory for both time and eternity. He needs a strategy of service: a broad vision of what needs to be done by his local congregation, which is a member of the Church International. He needs a step-by-step program for volunteers to commit to for at least one year. This program must be governed by the U.S. Army's number-one rule governing all tactics, KISS: "Keep it simple, stupid." That is to say, he needs the division of labor. He cannot be a leader without followers. He cannot logically expect to mobilize followers without a list of assignments. He must match assignments with available volunteers. A full year's service will show all those concerned whether the match between a volunteer and his assignment has worked.

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