

# Christian Reconstruction

Isaiah 61:4

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## THE PRESSING NEED FOR REVIVAL

by Gary North

God calls His people back to Him in two ways: revival or judgment. In the days of Josiah and Hezekiah, it was revival. In the days of Zedekiah, it was judgment. But He always calls His people back.

The problem with revival in our era—indeed, going back to the 1730's—is that revival has been viewed by its practitioners and advocates as a narrow experience of the soul, rather than the foundation of a total reconstruction of the social order. Revival has been understood as personal rather than covenantal. It has been seen as a way of lifting men's spirits rather than tearing down Satan's earthly strongholds. It has seen the conflict between Satan and God as a war for the souls of men rather than the war for all creation. It has ignored the dominion covenant (Gen. 1:27-28). It has sought to subdue men's souls to God without calling men to subdue the earth to the glory of God. It has called the gardeners out of their gardens rather than equipping them for better service in their gardens.

### Comprehensive Redemption

The question we must ask ourselves is this: **Is there any neutrality?** If our answer is no, there can be no neutral territory between God and Satan, that men must serve God or mammon, then we logically must come to a crucial conclusion: **redemption is comprehensive.** When God calls men to repent—to turn around—He means for them to turn around from sin in every area of life. It is not that sinners are sinners only in a few narrow areas of their lives. Men are not going to hell because they are off God's path in one or two key areas. It is not that they drink too much booze, or listen to too much rock music, or attend too many R-rated movies (rated R because of sex, of course, not violence), or sleep late on Sunday morning and then watch pro football games, rather than get up earlier to go to church Sunday morning, and then watch pro football games in the afternoon, the way Christians do. They are going to hell because they are not covenanted with God, who calls them to restructure the whole of their lives.

Which area of life cannot be corrupted by sin? Show me that area, prove from the Bible that it is immune from sin, and I will then show you an area of life that God does not need to redeem. Which area of life was untainted by Adam's rebellion? Which area has Satan honored as "God's exclusive territory." There, and there alone, do we have a candidate for exclusion in God's program of redemption. Which area is outside of the cleansing effects of the cross? Which area of life is automatically under the dominion of redeemed man but never naturally under the dominion of sinful man? There is the place to begin our discussion of limited redemption. Calvinists have always had the greatest trouble with the fifth point of Calvinism, sometimes called "limited atonement," and sometimes called "particular redemption." The

critics are correct; both phrases are misleading. **There is nothing limited about Christ's atonement.** He redeems everything that man touches. He preserves the life of sinners as well as saints. Paul writes: "... we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those who believe" (I Tim. 4:10b).

We should therefore speak of **special atonement** or **special redemption**, and contrast it with **general atonement** or **general redemption**. Christ died that all men might have physical life and blessings. This is **common grace**. But He also died specially for those whom He has chosen to be His people. This is **special grace**. But special grace must be understood in terms of **total redemption**. He bought back the whole world. He took the whole world out from under the comprehensive curse of God. Now He assigns to His people the dominion task of **progressively buying back this world**, in time and on earth, day by day, righteous act by righteous act, successful venture after successful venture, discovery after discovery, until the whole world is delivered up by Christ to His Father. "And when all things shall be subdued by him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all" (I Cor. 15:28).

Jesus Christ is in effect a senior military commander who operates under the chief civil magistrate. He has been assigned the task of dominion, as the Second Adam, to achieve what the first Adam could not achieve in sin. He has the task of subduing everything to God the Father. He must first subdue us, His people, and then place us in charge of our respective territories. From top to bottom, from Christ to new recruits (converts), there is a chain of command, a court of appeals, and a program of conquest. He has assembled an army. This army must complete its assignment before it is disbanded, and we all become civilians again.

### A Positive Mission

The sign of Christ's authority over all creation is the completion of His full ethical subordination to God the Father as the perfect man who fulfils biblical law. This completion of Jesus Christ's task was **definitively** achieved at Calvary, is being **progressively** achieved in time, and will be made fully manifest **finally** on the day of judgment.

This brings us to a fundamental biblical principle: **power through ethical subordination.** We are required by Christ to attain power, just as Christ was required by God the Father to attain power. Christ did attain total definitive power at the resurrection, as He announced to His disciples (Matt. 28:18). He is not supposed to serve as the all-powerful commander of an impotent army. His subordinates are to capture their assigned territory. This territory, when captured, then belongs to Christ **visibly and historically**, who will eventually bring it before the Father in victory, **visibly and**

**historically.** At that point, pre-resurrection history will end.

Sin corrupted everything it touched prior to the New Covenant era. Death spread like a plague. This is why there were so many cultural restrictions in Israel. Sin is like leaven. But righteousness also is leaven, which is why leavened offerings were required in some of the Old Testament sacrifices (Lev. 7:13; 23:17). Righteousness heals that which was corrupt. The gospel has broken the old defensive wineskins of Israel. The "touch not, taste not" prohibition no longer affects His people (Col. 2:21), especially those who are ethically mature. We have been delivered from the Old Testament's dietary laws, the clothing laws, and the other Old Testament laws of cultural separation (Acts 10; 1 Cor. 8), and no man can lawfully place us under those restrictions in New Testament times. We can therefore concentrate on removing the effects of sin in the important areas of life. We have not been delivered from the old restrictions in order to sin with abandon; we have been delivered in order to heal every area of life in terms of His **continuing positive laws**. We have a **positive mission**, not a defensive one.

### Comprehensive Revival

If redemption is comprehensive, then revival must be equally comprehensive. If men are to be revived through special grace, then special grace must lead to comprehensive redemption. When Christ gathers recruits into His army, He is not calling them to retreat from the battlefields of life. To quote Rev. Melvin Hodges, the church is supposed to be an **armory**, not a nursery.

Obviously, recruits must not be thrown into the front lines overnight. There is a learning process that must go on first. They are not to be promoted immediately to field grade officers. Nevertheless, they are not to be told that by joining the army of Jesus Christ, they will spend most of their time in rest and recreation. On Sundays, yes; not on Monday through Saturday. The new recruit is supposed to go into basic training. It will either be boot camp for him, or boot hill. He will immediately come under attack, as Christ's parable of the four soils indicates (Matt. 13:3-8).

Any revival which is not an explicit call to join an army is a fraud. Everyone is already in an army. We are drafted into Satan's forces at conception. A revival must point out to rebellious men that it is time to change sides. They must be made to see the consequences of remaining in Satan's definitively defeated army. The rival military commanders are not equal. Satan has been delivered a mortal wound. Calvary was a definitive victory, though it is not yet finally revealed to be such. Satan is alive on planet earth, but contrary to Hal Lindsey, he is not well. He is dying. This is why he is so dangerous. Like a wounded beast, he searches for victims. Misery loves company. So does death. He is like the German Army at the Battle of the Bulge: dangerous because desperate, and close to visible defeat. And like Hitler, he will not sue for peace.

The closer we get to the year 2000, the more visible the clash will be. The battle lines are being drawn more sharply. C. S. Lewis puts these words in the mouth of one of the characters in his monumental novel, *That Hideous Strength*: "If you dip into any college, or school, or parish, or family—anything you like—at a given point in its history, you always find that there was a time before that point when there was more elbow room, and contrasts weren't quite as sharp; and that there's going to be a time after that point when there is even less room for indecision, and choices are even more momentous. Good is always getting better, and bad is always getting worse: the possibilities of even apparent neutrality are always diminishing. The whole thing is sorting itself out all the time, coming to a point, getting sharper and harder" (p. 283).

This is why a program of revival, if it is to be considered biblical, must become a program of **comprehensive revival**. We dare not call men to switch sides without telling them of both the costs and the benefits. We dare not fail to

inform them of the sins they are committing in their capacity as soldiers in the opposition forces. We dare not fail to inform them of the comprehensive changes God is calling them to make in their lives.

### Counterfeit Revival

In each century since the Reformation, Satan has raised up counterfeits. And as my friend Donald Heath said of the cults 25 years ago, if you plan to be a counterfeiter, you are not going to print up triangular orange bills with a picture of Bob Hope on them. The counterfeits are supposed to look real. They do mislead people.

In the Reformation, the counterfeit was the revolutionary Anabaptist movement: antinomian, utopian, sometimes tyrannical and violent, sometimes retreatist and pacifistic, and sometimes polygamist. Then in the next century it was the pietist movement: retreatist, quietistic, and internalizers of the faith. In the eighteenth century, it was the Great Awakening's itinerant preachers: antinomian, undisciplined, anti-intellectual, anti-ecclesiastical. In the nineteenth century, the second Great Awakening produced similar deviants: antinomians, utopians, perfectionists, moralists without biblical law.

In this century, there have been diluted and generally ineffective imitations of the first two Great Awakenings: antinomian, pietistic, bland, non-confrontational, generally anti-ecclesiastical, sometimes anti-intellectual (1900-1925: fundamentalist and early charismatic) and later pseudo-intellectual (1949-1980: neo-evangelical, neutralist, compromised, and humanistic). From 1925 through 1949, there was just about nothing that Christians really got excited about except Prohibition and then the anti-Prohibitionist New Deal.

Since about 1973 we have a late replay of the original conflict between the Reformers and the radical Anabaptists. The battle for the minds of Christians is now going on, with Francis Schaeffer's forces, the anti-abortionists, the six-day creationists, the new charismatics, and the Reconstructionists loosely allied on one side, and the equally loosely allied forces of Ron Sider and the radical Anabaptists (Evangelicals for Social Action, Sojourners), the non-six-day creationists (American Scientific Affiliation), and the *Christianity Today* - *Eternity* crowd on the other.

The revivalism of the 1950's did not survive the international social and cultural changes of the late 1960's. This is why **the old fundamentalism is dying of self-inflicted wounds**. Having preached social irrelevance as a way of life, it has at last achieved its goal. Does anyone remember *Expo-72* or *Key-73*? Can anyone point to the social, economic, and political effects of either? Some former fundamentalists have joined the New Christian Right; others have joined the radical Anabaptists. Most, however, have stayed in the historical shadows, waiting for Jesus to return to set them up as field grade officers in the millennium.

### Conclusion

We need a revival. We do not need more revivalism. We need a comprehensive call to lost men to join an army that has been assigned the task of men to join an army that has been assigned the task of comprehensive redemption. We need a trained corps of field grade officers who understand the nature of the war. We need battle plans, a strategy of victory, tactics of confrontation, a team of recruiters, and specialists in every battle zone who know the terrain and have accurate maps. We need a comprehensive world-and-life view which is explicitly Christian. No more baptized humanism. No more neutrality. No more compulsory State-certified anything. And with respect to the humanist camp, no more Mr. Nice Guy.

[If you agree with me, then you should get involved with the newly formed **Coalition on Revival**, 2011 Fallen Leaf Lane, Los Altos, CA 94022. It is open to pastors and laymen.]

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