

# Christian Reconstruction

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## BLAMING THE SYSTEM

by R. J. Rushdoony

On July 26, 1969, it was my privilege to attend Dr. Hans Sennholz's seminar on "The Dollar Crisis." As Dr. Sennholz concluded his very able and intensely interesting account of our problem, he analyzed the decline of the paper dollar and the grim future and then concluded thus (to cite my summary notes): The people are to blame; the government is their tool. People make demands on the government for a growing list of services, demanding aids, services, grants, which create an inflationary economy. Peter has been taxed to pay Paul. The end of the road is in sight, but the pressures on the government by the people continue. Price controls and a dictator loom ahead on this road, and economic destruction. The people must change, before the trend can change.

These admirable words reflect a Christian perspective; they echo the faith in personal responsibility which is basic to Christian western civilization.

Yet within a week, as I reported these words to a number of Christian and conservative ministers and laymen, I received a large number of objections. I was told: Not true, the people have been misled. Not true, it has been a conspiracy against the innocent public. Wrong, let me give you a book proving who has fooled the public . . . and so on. During the same time I also saw a leftist analysis of the tight money situation: it was described as a capitalistic conspiracy against the people!

The leftist analysis alone was logical, although wrong. The Marxist perspective is that not individual responsibility but environment is the source of sin, wrong, and evil. Men are victims, not sinners. Change the environment, and you change man. Dr. Sennholz had echoed the Christian presupposition: change the man, and you change the environment. These "Christians" and "conservatives" who criticized Dr. Sennholz were revealing the extent to which they had absorbed Marxist premises; they were carrying the old banners but marching in an alien army.

Let us analyze the matter more carefully, **first**, the matter of **conspiracy**. Most simply defined by the dictionary, a conspiracy is a "Combination of men for a single end"; in law, it is a combination for either unlawful ends or to use unlawful means towards an end in view. The Christian must take the conspiracy view of history seriously, because Scripture teaches throughout that history is a struggle with the forces of evil conspiring against God and his anointed (Ps. 2). History is not a blind, impersonal force, as for the Marxists, but a very personal work of God primarily and secondarily of men. Thus, conspiracies are real, because men are very real forces in history.

But, **second**, because the Bible denies that history is the product of unconscious, impersonal forces and drives, it asserts **individual responsibility**. In Genesis 3, it made clear that the essence of sin is to blame other persons or the environment for one's own guilt. Adam, by blaming his

environment (God), and his wife (Eve), for his sin only aggravated his guilt.

It follows, therefore, that we can alert people to what various conspiracies are doing to undermine or subvert a nation, but we cannot as Christians blame **any** conspiracy for our weakness or fall. Men stand or fall in terms of their faith and character. True, man's faith and character is subjected to attack, but so was Adam's; in this world, there is **always** testing, temptation, and trial. The question is, "DO we submit to it or overcome it?" Dr. Sennholz was right: The people must change, before the trend can change. Any conclusion other than individual responsibility is a denial of Christianity and is implicit Marxism.

Because so many ostensible Christians and conservatives lack a Biblically grounded faith, their actions and statements often end up in an unconscious anti-Christianity. As a result, some so-called conservative movements are moving into strange waters and revealing **anti-Christian** and **anti-conservative** tendencies.

Take, for example, an article in the Summer, 1969, issue of *American Mercury*, by Revilo P. Oliver, Ph. D., "Christianity - Religion of the West." The editorial heading indicates that the editors regard the article to be very good and of "major importance." The thesis of the article is that only Western (or European) man is congenial to Christianity. (The Bible says no man naturally is congenial to it, whatever his race; only God's supernatural grace conforms him to it, but, for Oliver, the natural Christian, and only real one, is the Western, racial man.) According to Oliver, missionaries only succeeded where imperialistic guns backed them, and failed where there was no such backing. (This is, of course, the Marxist line on the relationship of imperialism and missions. This does not mean that Oliver is a Marxist, but his non-Biblical thought places him in a common camp at this point.) Oliver chooses to ignore the vast evidence of native faith in Asia and Africa in the face of persecutions, nor does he acknowledge the frequent opposition of imperial agents to missionaries as "meddlers." His evidence is negligible and his total picture anti-Christian. True, in recent years Christianity has had serious setbacks in many parts of Asia and Africa, but not because imperialism has waned. The decline has been due to the same reasons for the decline of Christianity in Europe and America: men have turned to alien and humanistic faiths.

Oliver, *The American Mercury*, W. A. Carto, and others who are regarded as strong conservatives are also great admirers of the late Francis Parker Yockey and his work *Imperium, The Philosophy of History and Politics* (1948). Yockey's position is atheistic and anti-Christian. Yockey was also a strong champion of race, and especially of what he called "Ethical Socialism" (p. 617). (Ethical Socialism is the socialism you operate; the other man's socialism is always **unethical**!) Yockey's work has **overtones** of Nietzsche and

an inferior echo of **Spengler**. Incidentally, his complaint against Marxism is not that it is socialistic **but** that "the ethical and social foundations of Marxism are capitalistic" (p. 80). Yockey's book is a pompous, turgid restatement of every kind of **immoralistic** philosophy of the last century which said, "Somebody did this to us, not we ourselves." Like Adam, who said, "**The** woman whom thou **gavest** to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat" (**Gen. 3:12**), so Yockey worked to absolve Western man of guilt, even as he compounded it with unbelief and moral irresponsibility.

**The people must change before the trend can change.** This is not a popular program. People want an enemy to blame, not themselves. How much easier to expose and blame than to reconstruct! Marxism has a simple, sure appeal: "The bad guys did it to us." People, as sinners, love this. Biblical faith has an unpopular message: whatever anyone else has done, and as sinners they will sin, what about your responsibility and guilt? The greatness of David was that he did not blame **Bathsheba** or anyone else: he acknowledged that it was his guilt, his act, his sin.

But most people today will not acknowledge their guilt. They attend churches which preach another gospel, and they will not break with them. They claim that they are trying to reform the church from within, but each year these churches become more openly anti-Christian, and they still remain. These people profess loyalty to Christ, but the only loyalty they manifest is to an anti-Christian church. Are they not guilty?

These people have money for new cars, vacations, and

every new luxury which catches their fancy, but they "cannot afford" a Christian school for their children. Are they not guilty?

We can go on indefinitely. Suffice it to say that most people find it convenient to turn to the Marxist, environmentalist answer and say, "The bad guys are responsible for all our problems." And they continue to believe that they can redeem the public schools, a socialist agency! They turn their children over to a non-Christian, socialistic school and then ask God to bless them. And they wonder why their children turn into rebels.

But to return to our point: The trend will not change until the people change. We have too many people who want to change the world, too few who admit that man **needs changing – and that only the grace of God can accomplish this. God's appointed means are Christian institutions. We must therefore begin reconstruction now, prayerfully and hopefully. We must stand on individual responsibility as against environmentalism. We cannot excuse ourselves by saying, "The woman . . . gave me . . . and I did eat," or by saying, the Communists are to blame, or the Democrats, or the capitalistic warmongers. That excuse did not work when it was first tried by Adam. What makes us think it will work with God now? Adam to Marx to men today, it has been a ticket to judgement. Dr. Sennholz is right: The people must change, before the trend can change. Do you agree? Or do you prefer to line up with Marx and blame the system?**

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