

# Christian Reconstruction

Isaiah 61:4

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## CRITICAL MASS

### Part Vi: Diapered for Jesus

by Gary North

*When I became a pastor, I had hoped to equip an army. What I found was a nursery.*

- Rev. Mel Hodges

Hodges hit the mark. But why are churches little more than spiritual nurseries today? Why are churches not the primary agencies for positive, kingdom-expanding social change in every community? Why are there so many nurseries and so few armories? Because Christians prefer it that way. They don't want to change; they only want to be changed.

Rev. Hodges is black. In black communities from the days of Reconstruction (1865-77), churches were the primary community agency. The public school has steadily replaced the church in both white and black communities in the twentieth century, but this replacement process took place much faster among the whites, who thought they controlled the local schools, and so were willing to invest more trust in them. In an earlier era, black churches were the closest thing to an army that blacks had. Today, the role of black churches has been replaced by various government agencies, to the detriment of black communities everywhere. (This happened to the American Indians first, whose religions were pagan, and who never had a church to fall back on in times of great distress, or worse, in times of everyday distress and extensive bureaucratic controls.)

#### The Sources of the Problem

Three things have undermined the black community: liberal theology, government schools, and government welfare checks, in that order. The whites are only one or two generations behind. In 1965, when Daniel P. Moynihan wrote his famous essay on the breakdown of the black family, about 20% of all black American children were born bastards. Today, the rate of white American bastardy is over 20%, while black bastardy is in the two-thirds range. Similar causes produce similar effects.

When the vast majority of a subculture is composed of bastards or parents of bastards, that subculture becomes part of the underclass. This is what is happening to American blacks under the age of 30. If trends continue, this will also be true of American whites within two generations or less. Either this trend will be reversed, or this nation is doomed. Simple. Factual. And ignored by commentators everywhere.

What do most Christians do about it? Mostly, nothing. They send their children to public schools where the teenagers will be given free condoms. And they assure us: "Our local school district is OK." (Sure it is . . . with Federally funded textbooks.) This is a code phrase for: "We are unwilling to sacrifice for Christian education."

If Christian Reconstructionists in 1972 had predicted

free condom distribution by 1992, and had also predicted that there would be no mass exodus by Christians from the public schools when this happened, we would have been written off as extremists. Out of touch with reality. Gloom and doomers. Weirdos. "We can safely ignore those nuts!" Ignored we were. Not safely.

Liberals cannot identify the true causes of the decline of modern culture because they promote the three major causes: liberal theology, public education, and government welfare. Conservatives are so enamored with the public schools as a legitimate ideal (though not ideal in actual practice), and are so heavily influenced by liberal theology, that they can only point to government welfare checks as the primary problem. Government checks are only part of the problem – the least important part.

This overemphasis on the welfare State as the cause of black poverty has transformed conservatism into a reactionary movement. Conservatives have not understood: you can't beat something with nothing. The American family will not be restored merely by the cutting off of State welfare. It is far too late for such partial measures. The family needs moral support first and foremost, and then judicial support, not the mere removal of government financial support. The church used to provide such moral support. The State used to provide judicial support. No longer. The family cannot serve as the engine of Christian Reconstruction, nor can its support agency, the Christian school.

#### There Is War On

American Christians sing "Onward, Christian soldiers," but they do not really mean it. An army can be kept in the field only through a vision of victory. Once its commanding generals lose faith in the positive outcome of the war, and say so publicly, the war is as good as lost. Only a new set of generals can forestall the inevitable rout.

Verbal surrender is exactly what has taken place in the twentieth-century church. From the church's most distinguished theologians to its non-tithing layman, those who profess faith in Jesus as Savior (and even as Lord) have abandoned confidence that the gospel can and will transform a fallen world in history. They do not believe that the bodily ascension of Christ to heaven has cosmic implications for church history. They are members of a militant church in the same way that members of the reserves are members of a military unit during peacetime: well-paid, underworked, weekend warriors. There's a war on, but nobody has called up the reserves. Yet the enemy is at the gates. In many oases, his agents (or collaborators) are in the pulpits.

There are those in the pews today – the Remnant

– who know full well that there is a war on. The problem they face is that their fellow pew-sitters don't understand this, yet the slumberers contribute the bulk of the funds that support the pastor. This is why we hear few sermons on the moral evil of abortion. This is why abortionists can sit unafraid in the pews of supposedly conservative churches. The pastors have forgotten the Bible's warning: "Thou shalt not bring the hire of a whore, or the price of a dog, into the house of the LORD thy God for any vow: for even both these are abomination unto the LORD thy God" (Deut. 23:18). The tithes of murderers are welcome in debt-ridden congregations.

American Christians for the most part really do not know that there is a war on. They have participated in so many surrenders to the enemy since 1865 that they honestly believe that surrender is a legitimate strategy, "God's plan for victory." They have adopted a Christian version of George Orwell's **newspeak**: "Retreat is advance." "De-feat is victory."

#### Failure for Jesus

The evangelical church has proclaimed historical failure as God's plan for the ages. The gospel will fail to bring large numbers of people to saving faith at any point in history, we are assured. Any attempt to transform a lost world to a comprehensive civilization – to Christendom – is regarded today as wasted effort at best and heretical at worst.

If the institutional church and the gospel are destined to failure in history, then what legitimate hope can Christians have in any other godly effort, any other Christian institution? To ask this question is to answer it. This is why Christians are ready to accept failure. They have been taught that failure is God's authorized way in history. Christians have, in the division of labor, specialized in failure. Failure is consistent with their worldview.

#### The Church as a Nursery

Once an army has surrendered, it has no more use for armories. What can you do with an abandoned armory? Renovate it into a nursery.

The modern evangelical church has a lot of problems, but none is so pressing as the level of both the commitment and competence of its congregations: abysmal. Worse; there is a long tradition of what we might call lethargy for Jesus. There is no risk of excommunication for anyone's lack of commitment to the church specifically and Christendom generally. What, then, of positive sanctions for distinguished performance? In evangelical churches, they are indirect: mostly limited to good feelings inside the performer. The risk associated with receiving positive sanctions is the creation of envy. Lethargy is much safer.

This raises a question: What sacrificial activities are regarded as commendable by most Christians? Helping children is commendable. Helping old people is commendable. Children and old people do not threaten anyone in church.

What about helping the poor? At a downtown rescue mission, fine. There, not here. On your own time. With your own money. Not the church's. We're building a gymnasium ("Family Life Center"). First things first.

Thus, the focus of charitable concern for most churches is the provision of the equivalent of diapers. The legitimate social manifestations of the gospel of Christ are viewed as being limited mostly to diaper-changing. Infants are ex-

pected to grow up naturally, and the aged are expected to die naturally. Diapers are transitional. Implement. They are useful for keeping bad things in life under temporary containment until they go away by themselves.

Providing diapers is modern evangelicalism's view of the church's task of social transformation. The church is expected to intervene only in those cases where a few **diapers** will solve the problem. The church's message of **salvation** is not expected to solve the problems of this world, except insofar as this message encourages the provision of part-time diaper services. Any problem more difficult to solve than this is regarded as off-limits to the church. The secular State is expected to intervene to solve it. In this opinion, modern evangelical and modern statist are in agreement. The alliance between pietism and humanism begins here: agreement regarding the church's cultural impotence in history, namely, a diaper service.

#### Guerilla Warfare, not Frontal Assaults

Reversing this tradition is a pressing need today. But like an aircraft carrier, a church does not change directions rapidly. Also like an aircraft carrier, once it begins to sink, it is very hard to stop it. The Remnant must **work** very hard and be content with slow changes in the initial stages. We must get the local carrier turning.

There is no doubt that there is the phenomenon known as the 80-20 rule. The operation of most organizations breaks down as follows: 20% of the members produce 80% of the profits. Likewise, 20% of the members (a different group) produce 80% of the problems. There is no way that either the problems or the productivity of any large organization will ever be distributed on a 50-50 basis.

Bearing this in mind, we need to approach the problem of Christian social change with the understanding that we will never get everyone actively involved. If we can get 20% of the members of any organization actively involved in any systematic program, this is a major achievement. Getting as many as 20% involved in any long-term program of transformation is beyond the limits of reasonable expectation. It can be done, but it is rare.

We need little victories. Real estate investor John Schaub teaches a seminar, "Making It Big on Little Deals." This principle of wealth-building is biblical. It also is the basis of victory: "But the word of the LORD was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little; that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken" (Isa. 28:13).

This is why those Remnant members within a local congregation need to select a small project, whether **service-oriented** or activist, as a recruiting device. We are **dealing** with spiritual toddlers. A lot of them are not out of diapers yet. They are barely able to walk from point A to point B. They need confidence: in God, in God's law, in the church, and in themselves. Few of those in diapers can gain confidence through kamikaze attacks or problems too big to begin to overcome in 12 months.

#### Conclusion

We must win back the Bible-affirming churches **before** we can win back heretical churches and apostate churches. We must **convert** nurseries into armories **before** we attack the strongholds of the enemies outside the church.