



M^CCHURCHED!

*300 Million Served
& Still Hungry*

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SECTION 4

WHEN THE CHURCH TIRES OF THE DESERT

CHAPTER 9

THE ENEMY WITHIN

Thus far, we have explored the non-Christian beliefs of the Christian Right. While Christ is central to their faith, the Holy Spirit, instead of being the active, reforming presence of Christ, is the One who visits from time to time if the setting is just right.

God the Father, the Eternal Spirit at whose side the Second Person, Christ, is seated, fails to act in history in a timely fashion. He waits for His children to exhibit enough courage to tackle on their own the corruption of their

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world. He waits in order that we might prepare the world for the Christ who longs to return.

I think of this as a form of Christian Atheism—belief in Christ but failing to believe in the sovereignty of God the Father.

The era of the Invitational System of altar calls at evangelistic rallies seems to be winding down, leaving one to wonder how God can now be understood to act in our day and age. The Christian Right does not wonder about this. They know the answer.

Inasmuch as God is not acting dramatically enough through His church these days, the only plausible route to revelation is establishing America as the Christ designate to a corrupt and waiting world.

The only way by which America can assume that role is to clean up its politics, clean up its liberalism and clean up its rejection of the God who no longer seems critical to the very people wishing to return America to its Christian roots. The vehicle for such a new world order is the Republican Party.

That same vehicle was once, however, the Nationalist Socialist Party of Germany.

NEVER IN AMERICA

The Founding Fathers, specifically Jefferson, carefully constructed a wall of separation between church and State. It is a wall that prevents the State from making any law that would establish a religion.

That the State has gone too far in its effort to make illegal any practice that would even remotely identify a religion with the State (such as government-fostered prayer in school) has been successfully addressed by a number of Christian legal foundations and is still under refinement.

But the mantra that America was founded as a “Christian nation” is a direct attack on the rights of people of any

and all religions to worship freely. It is the intention of the Republican Christian Right to adorn the public square with Christian symbolism, to the exclusion of all other religions.

This is to be done on the grounds that it is our national heritage.

Our national heritage, however, is something quite removed from Christian symbolism.

We began this great Enlightenment experiment in governance with a call to equality of races, religion and creeds, but the call differed from the practice. As a result, the practice has successfully been challenged over the years to abolish slavery, grant women the right to vote, grant blacks the right to vote and grant minority religions the right to worship freely without interference.

If this nation was founded on Christian principles, we have to ask ourselves why it took over one-hundred and fifty years to enforce these basic Christian principles that some minorities have enjoyed for only about fifty years.

While the practice of freedom has been something quite different from Constitutional protections of freedom, it has become quite clear that our Republic has been moving inexorably toward protection of minorities.

The moral absolutes that Christians promote find a receptive ear among great numbers of nonbelievers because they are based on fear of the unknown.

Hear the message, "We were founded as a Christian nation," and you will hear, "The majority rules."

The majority does indeed rule in elections and in referenda, but the majority does not rule in basic human rights. In fact, the Constitution protects the minority from majority rule.

In that sense, the Christian Right does not believe in our Constitutional form of government. It believes in government by referenda. It is quite willing to sacrifice its religious convictions on the altar of populist ethics and morality.

You will be embraced by the Christian Right if you en-

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dorse their social agenda, even though you may be a non-believer. That social agenda is to link arms with conservatives of any religious beliefs to impose majority rule principally concerning matters of sexual orientation. The means of achieving the goal is to reject the Constitution of the United States as a safeguard for minorities. Quickly forgotten is the person and work of Jesus Christ, who defied nations, parties and authorities in His fight for mercy and justice for the downtrodden.

Can the United States ever become a theocracy? Can the State establish a religious preference and base its laws on that premise?

Brace yourself. That is exactly the agenda of the Republican Christian Right. That is exactly what the Christian Right in America is intending to implement.

THE PATRIOTIC CHURCH

Failure to study history will, indeed, consign us to repeat it.

Do not think for one minute that America would not turn on its wretched minorities who witness its opulence from the outside of a dirty window. It happened in Rome; it happened in the so-called Third Reich, and it could happen here, albeit incrementally.

Do not think for one minute that America would not turn on Christians who reject a moralistic, legalistic religion that makes social conventions the litmus test of faith. It happened to Christian converts in the first three centuries and in the Middle Ages.

Do not think for one minute that America would not silence the voice of dissent against a State religion. It happened in the 1960s, when we were dislodged from our self-righteous religious comfort zones by an angry youth that was then pummeled into the ground by the heavy boot of the State.

Do not think for one minute that a Christian government in America will reflect the love of Christ to its citizens. You have only to look at the history of racism in the Southern Baptist Church to know better—altar calls; creeds of moral absolutes; pure, unadulterated hatred of nonwhites.

Do not think for one minute that the agenda of the Christian Right is not a New World Order under the law of the Christian God. Witness the wholesale lack of concern among the Christian Right for some 100,000 Iraqi casualties in the exportation of freedom by the American government.

And do not think for one minute that Adolph Hitler's Germany was a Satanic anomaly in recent history. It was not; it was founded on the principle of something called "Positive Christianity."

"POSITIVE CHRISTIANITY"

We demand liberty for all religious denominations in the state so far as they are not a danger to it and do not mitigate against the morality and moral sense of the German race. The Party as such stands for Positive Christianity, but does not bind itself in the matter of creed to any particular confession. It is convinced that our nation can achieve permanent health from within only on the principle: the common interest before self interest. (Point 24, German Worker's Party Program, Adolph Hitler, 1920s)

The Christian public in Germany had been left with little visible witness to its faith. Suffering from WWI and a collapse of the economy, the enemy became the Weimar Republic, which was accused of being infiltrated by Socialists, Communists, Unionists, Jews, Secularists, Liberal Theologians, Gypsies, Homosexuals and a permissive entertainment industry.

They were in need of a leader with courage and ide-

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als who could pull them out of their moral mess. They needed a single target for their frustration—a focus. They found the first in Hitler and the second in the Jewish people.

The German Worker's Party, a forerunner of the Nationalist Socialist Party, saw the Christian public in Germany as a force to be cultivated. Made up primarily of Catholics and Lutheran Protestants, Hitler appealed to this group of disenfranchised believers by embracing both as one and endorsing the moral convictions of each.

His was not a superficial religion. He was deeply moved by the specter of Jesus suffering on the cross:

My Lord and Savior ... In the boundless love as a Christian ... He had to shed His blood upon the Cross. My feelings as a Christian point me to my Lord and Savior as a fighter. It points me to a man who once in loneliness, surrounded only by a few followers, recognized these Jews for what they were and summoned men to fight against them. That is God's truth! He was the greatest, not as a sufferer but as a fighter. (Berlin, October 24, 1922)

The ground upon which Hitler staked his religious fervor was Christian unity in a fight against a common enemy. It appealed to believers in Germany, who, like believers in the church in America, were embarrassed by denominational divisions and were attempting to seek unity rather than to stand on truth.

A divided church, it is felt, is a church that has no power to overcome secular conventions.

A divided church is considered to be a church that cannot stand together in the fight for freedom and must, therefore, come together on matters of morality and ethics, since they cannot seem to come together on matters of faith.

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A unified church, on the other hand, is a church that can marginalize dissenters, in the same manner that Jack Hayford has so skillfully marginalized dissenters to his theology.

A unified church can agree on matters of the law, even though they may disagree on matters of grace.

A unified church can turn moral convictions and personal ethics into a litmus test for patriotism, thereby singling out for exclusion those who are struggling with what it means to be an imperfect Christian in an imperfect world.

A unified church can find common ground in the fight for the symbolism of faith and can find the courage to “stay the course,” even if the purpose for the course has long been forgotten or abandoned.

CONSIDER ANOTHER HITLERISM

Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain ... The truth of that text was proved if one looks at the house of which the foundations were laid in 1918 and which since then has been in building ... The world will not help; the people must help itself. Its own strength is the source of life. That strength the Almighty has given us to use; that in it and through it we may wage the battle of our life ... The others in the past years have not had the blessing of the Almighty—of Him who in the last resort, whatever man may do, holds in His hands the final decision. Lord God, let us never hesitate or play the coward, let us never forget the duty which we have taken upon us ... We are all proud that through God’s powerful aid we have become once more true Germans. (March 1933)

It is not my desire to belabor the point. The God I serve is sovereign and will act in history to His own interest and glory.

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Neither is it my desire to change the paths on which the Christian Right has committed to trod. There is nothing in this book that they have not considered, nor is there anything here that would cause them much more than mild amusement.

It is, instead, my desire to support those millions of American Christians who find themselves outside the gate of this heretical teaching that the United States of America, like Ancient Israel before it, was intended by God to act as the ecclesiastical and moral authority in the world.

It is far too easy, in our frustration with God's timing, to think that nothing is happening in the eternal scheme of things. It is far too easy to craft the words of faith to lure in the unsuspecting and demonize those for whom those words of faith are meaningless.

The term "Positive Christianity," introduced by Hitler, is nothing more than the old frustration with "dead" orthodoxy that we find in Bonhoeffer, Hayford and Christians who want instant results in a time when God seems not to be listening. To talk of Positive Christianity is to reject what seems to us to be the status quo, when we have no right to declare what God is or is not doing in history.

We saw Positive Christianity at work in the McCarthy hearings on Un-American Activities.

We saw Positive Christianity at work in the Liberation Theology movement in such repressed countries as Nicaragua.

We saw Positive Christianity at work in the Vietnam War—holding back the advance of Communism.

And we see Positive Christianity at work in the push to create the New American World Order through Christian symbolism.

But we also see Christ at work as King of a victorious Kingdom that will never fade nor be destroyed. That is the

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hope for the true disciple of Christ who fears that God has left us stranded.

The Third Reich, the thousand year reign, was destroyed within twelve years. The McCarthy hearings collapsed with its hero, who slinked away, lost his next election and died a disgrace to his country.

The Vietnam War ended in defeat and remains to this day a painful memory for our nation. The American President who earlier fueled the McCarthy hearings with his own version of hate resigned in disgrace before the Congress of the United States threw him out.

Who remembers the revolution in Nicaragua and Liberation Theology?

At the end of the day God will, I am convinced, override this culture of fear that has gripped His church and will discipline us for our unfaithfulness and impatience.

You can count on it.

I am!