

New coalition of black churches offers nothing new



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Parker

A new organization, the Conference of National Black Churches, held its first annual meeting a few weeks ago in Washington, DC. The organization's stated goal is "to improve the quality of life for African Americans." But looking over the group's [website](#), it's not the goal but how they claim they will achieve it that appears dubious.

The group is an umbrella organization. It claims to provide a "single voice" unifying nine of the largest black denominations, which they say constitute 30 million individuals and more than 50,000 congregations.

"CNBC will fill the void for a unified voice of faith which will be translated into advocacy efforts in the area of education, health, public policy/social justice, and economic empowerment."

Rev. W. Franklyn Richardson, chairman of the board of the conference, correctly observes that the black population still has disproportionate social problems and lags economically. He states his concern that the general public thinks "everything is fine" now with blacks because we have a black president.

What's hard to discern is where Richardson is proposing any new course of action that is not simply a rehash of the same kinds of unproductive initiatives that have always defined the black left.

Plans for "economic empowerment," for example, which the website describes as the organization's "centerpiece," have the usual language of proposing collective action to pressure corporations to develop practices and policies that "favor justice, equality, and environmental responsibility."

Isn't this exactly what Jesse Jackson did for years?

Is it really the absence of social action or a "unified voice" in the black community that accounts for a black poverty rate little different now from where it was 40 years ago?

On the contrary, it seems to me that the problem is not a dearth of organizations or social initiatives, but the mysterious allergy in black America to the words that defined what the civil rights movement was allegedly about -- individual freedom.

One can only hope that at some point black clergy will grasp that freedom means a culture of responsibility, not a culture of entitlement. And that individuals cannot be empowered by others or by forced transfer of what belongs to others. It can only come by individuals taking responsibility for their own lives.

Today our whole nation is debilitated by the culture of entitlement and dependence that has caused horrible problems over the last half century in black communities.

A new article by American Enterprise Institute economist Mark Perry shows six areas of improper use of government that caused this last major recession. And we know that blacks have suffered disproportionately by this terrible economic slowdown.

The credit card law passed last year to allegedly protect consumers has simply driven up card fees and interest and limited credit, again disproportionately hurting low-income communities.

The black clergy lining up behind Richardson's initiative would do well to consider the definition of statism provided by theologian R.C. Sproul:

"Statism involves a philosophy of government by which the state is viewed not only as the final ruling authority but as the ultimate agency of redemption. In this sense the state does not simply co-exist with the church, it supplants the church."

There is no better tool for individual empowerment than the Ten Commandments. The rules to respect the property of others -- Thou Shalt Not Steal -- and prohibiting spurious concern about what others have -- Thou Shalt Not Covet -- are simple and clear.

Let's pray that 2011 will be a year of recovery for Americans of all colors. And that there will be a renewed appreciation that American prosperity comes from American freedom and that this freedom is rooted in free and personally responsible citizens.

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