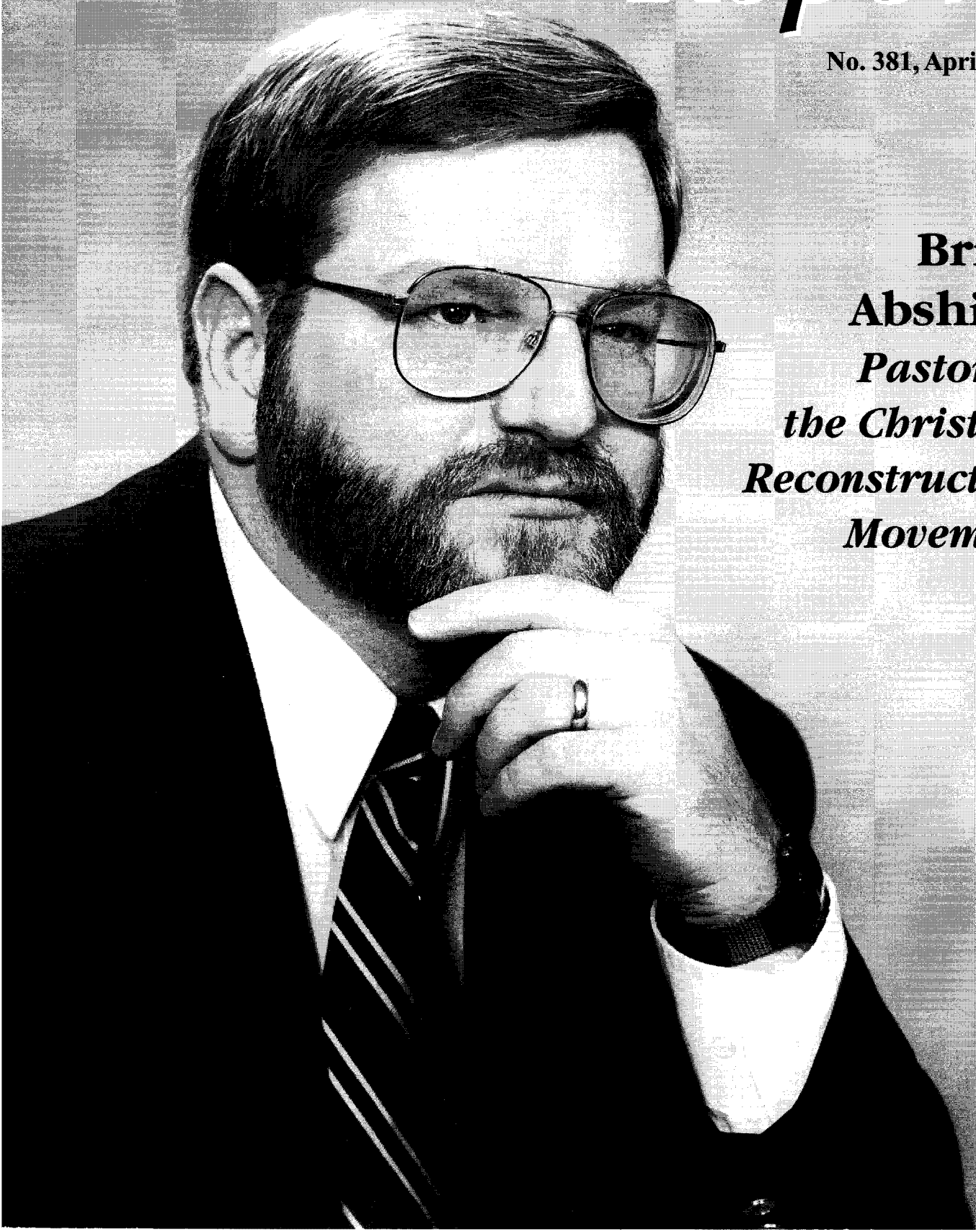
CHALCEDON Report

No. 381, April 1997



Brian Abshire: *Pastor of the Christian Reconstruction Movement*

The Creed of Christian Reconstruction

Rev. Andrew Sandlin

A Christian Reconstructionist is a **Calvinist**. He holds to historic, orthodox, catholic Christianity and the great Reformed confessions. He believes God, not man, is the center of the universe—and beyond; God, not man, controls whatever comes to pass; God, not man, must be pleased and obeyed. He believes God saves sinners—He does not help them save themselves. A Christian Reconstructionist believes the Faith should apply to all of life, not just the "spiritual" side. It applies to art, education, technology, and politics no less than to church, prayer, evangelism, and Bible study.

A Christian Reconstructionist is a **Theonomist**. Theonomy means "God's law." A Christian Reconstructionist believes God's law is found in the Bible. It has not been abolished as a standard of righteousness. It no longer accuses the Christian, since Christ bore its penalty on the cross for him. But the law is a statement of God's righteous character. It cannot change any more than God can change. God's law is used for three main purposes: First, to drive the sinner to trust in Christ alone, the only perfect law-keeper. Second, to provide a standard of obedience for the Christian, by which he may judge his progress in sanctification. And third, to maintain order in society, restraining and arresting civil evil.

A Christian Reconstructionist is a **Presuppositionalist**. He does not try to "prove" that God exists or that the Bible is true. He holds to the Faith because the Bible says so, not because he can "prove" it. He does not try to convince the unconverted that the gospel is true. They already know it is true when they hear it. They need repentance, not evidence. Of course, the Christian Reconstructionist believes there is evidence for the Faith—in fact there is nothing *but* evidence for the Faith. The problem for the unconverted, though, is not a lack of evidence, but a lack of submission. The Christian Reconstructionist begins and ends with the Bible. He does not defend "natural theology," and other inventions designed to find some agreement with covenant-breaking, apostate mankind.

A Christian Reconstructionist is a **Postmillennialist**. He believes Christ will return to earth only after the Holy Spirit has empowered the church to advance Christ's kingdom in time and history. He has faith that God's purposes to bring all nations—though not every individual—in subjection to Christ cannot fail. The Christian Reconstructionist is not utopian. He does not believe the kingdom will advance quickly or painlessly. He knows that we enter the kingdom through much tribulation. He knows Christians are in the fight for the "long haul." He believes the church may yet be in her infancy. But he believes the Faith will triumph. Under the power of the Spirit of God, it cannot *but* triumph.

A Christian Reconstructionist is a **Dominionist**. He takes seriously the Bible's commands to the godly to take dominion in the earth. This is the goal of the gospel and the Great Commission. The Christian Reconstructionist believes the earth and all its fulness is the Lord's—that every area dominated by sin must be "reconstructed" in terms of the Bible. This includes, first, the individual; second, the family; third, the church; and fourth, the wider society, including the state. The Christian Reconstructionist therefore believes fervently in Christian civilization. He firmly believes in the separation of church and state, but not the separation of the state—or anything else—from God. He is not a revolutionary; he does not believe in the militant, forced overthrow of human government. He has infinitely more powerful weapons than guns and bombs—he has the invincible Spirit of God, the infallible word of God, and the incomparable gospel of God, none of which can fail.

He presses the crown rights of the Lord Jesus Christ in every sphere, expecting eventual triumph.

CHALCEDON *Report*

A Monthly Report Dealing With the Relationship of Christian Faith to the World

Chalcedon Scholars:

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May Preview:

In May's *Chalcedon Report: Historic Chalcedon Conference in Zambia*

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EDITORIAL OFFICES:
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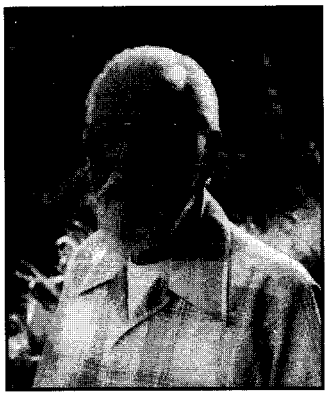
e-mail: chalced@goldrush.com
http://www.mother.com/~dlh/chalcedon

Circulation: Rebecca Rouse
Printing: Calaveras Press

PUBLISHER'S FOREWORD

The Church

By Rev. R. J. Rushdoony



It is sad that Christians have forgotten the meaning of the word *church* in the New Testament. It translates *ecclessia,* an unusual word which meant then the town or ruling council or government for an area.

This means that the church was called into being to become in time the true ruling body for its given area. It was not to attain this position by means of revolution, nor by political activity, but by obedience to the law of God.

As a result, very early Paul called upon the church to create its own courts of law to adjudicate all problems by means of God's law word (*1 Cor. 6*). In terms of this law, Paul summons Christians to give generously to assist those in need. A variety of activities marked the early church—law, charity, education, health, and more. The church was an empire within the empire, providing government for a growing number of people. Worship was the energizing point: it sent out a people with marching orders for discipling all nations (*Mt. 28:18-20*).

Once again, the church is beginning to see itself in these terms. Christian Schools and home schooling are areas where the church has again resumed governing. More and more churches are assuming other duties: feeding the homeless, clothing the poor, going into other countries to care for the sick, the blind, and the needy, building shelters, and more.

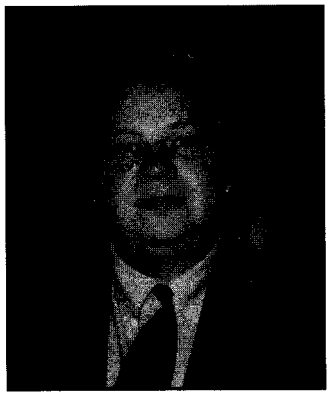
The church is a kingdom whose monarch is the King, Jesus Christ. It has a plan for the peaceful conquest of all things, and for the regeneration of fallen men. Instead of hostility towards men and nations, we in Christ's name offer peace.

Those who counsel aggression, or who want to pass judgment on the nation to justify hostile actions, are wrong. Ours is the Prince of Peace, and we are called to serve Him, not to supplement or alter His strategy. When men set aside God's law or any part of His word, they then assume the right to use more "appropriate" means, and they thereby pervert the Faith. Neither the church, nor the Faith, nor the Bible are man's property, and man has no right to alter, subtract, or to add to what is God's, not his. As an instrument of God's government, the church must be faithful to its King. It has a mandate to obey, not to supplement, His word.

EDITORIALS

The Old-Time Religion

By Rev. Andrew Sandlin



Introduction

The pressures and changes of modern life in both the church and world regularly elicit from naive conservatives in every generation impassioned appeals for a return to "the old-time religion." These appeals are frequently laced with criticisms of modern practices (many of the criticisms sound), as well as exhortations to restore "old-time" practices that have been abandoned. There is a yearning for the "good old days" of yore, a longing about which the sage Solomon warned millennia ago (*Ec. 7:10*). In the first place, the "good old days" were never quite as good as depicted—one thinks immediately of the faithless craving of Israel for the leeks and garlic, and therefore, of necessity, the *slavery*—of Egypt (*Num. 11:4-6*). It just so happens, though, that the piners for the "good old days" are not usually historically astute, or at least they have poor memories, or, like the "mixed multitude" of Israel, their romantic notions cloud those memories that are not poor.

Including the Biblical element creates a second problem. It is instanced most noticeably by a prominent Christian institution which selects for its slogan, "Standing for the Old-Time Religion and the Absolute Authority of the Bible." It does not occur to them that the "old-time religion" could ever conflict with the Bible. Of course, the Protestant Reformation was anchored in the conviction that the Bible could indeed conflict with the "old-time religion"—not the religion of

Chalcedon Report, published monthly by Chalcedon, a tax-exempt Christian foundation, is sent to all who request it. All editorial correspondence should be sent to the editor-in-chief, Box 158, Vallecito, CA 95251 or faxed to 209-736-0536. Laser-print hard copy and electronic disk submissions firmly encouraged. The editors are not responsible for the return of unsolicited manuscripts. Opinions expressed in this magazine do not necessarily reflect the views of Chalcedon. Chalcedon depends on the contributions of its readers, and all gifts to Chalcedon are tax-deductible.

ancient catholic orthodoxy, which all the reformers endorsed,[1] but the centuries-old medieval religion of the Western church, which they were convinced conflicted with the Bible at key points. Had the reformers merely maintained the *status quo* of what was at the time the "old-time religion," the Reformation would possibly never have occurred. We sometimes are obliged to scrutinize the "old-time religion," especially our individual or denominational interpretation of it, in light of God's infallible word.

The *New* "Old-Time Religion"

But the problem—the irony—cuts deeper still. The institution "Standing for the Old-Time Religion and the Absolute Authority of the Bible" (and many like it, including thousands of churches) happens to endorse dispensationalism, revivalistic "altar calls," the "pretribulational rapture of the church," and "gospel music," all of which it naturally equates with the "old-time religion," despite the fact that not one of the views or practices is yet three hundred years old (and some much more recent). We might wish to conclude that the trademark "old-time religion" lacks credibility when issuing from the lips and pens of people with short-term memories.

A leading Christian Reconstructionist in England, to mention another example, received a visit from an evangelical minister who berated him for advocating the application of the Faith to the state in the form of Biblical law. The evangelical identified this view with "new doctrine," objectionable both for its novelty and error. That a conservative minister in England, the home of the Puritans, could equate the application of Biblical law in the state with novelty exhibits not only how far conservatives have come from (and how far they need to return to) comprehensive, Biblical religion, but also how lamentably a- and anti-historical they have become. For these people, a revival of any Biblical view or practice of the past is equivalent to embracing "novelty."

Absolutizing the Past

A third problem associated with the "old-time religion" is the temptation to absolutize the past in the attempt to recover an era or age one identifies as truly Christian or Biblical (it is the opposite error of those who worship at the shrine of change for the sake of change, like modern liberals, for whom change, ironically, becomes the *unchangeable* orthodoxy from which there may be no dissent). The craving for the past, however, is a craving for a world that no longer can—or should—exist. It wants to repristinate the human (and therefore creaturely and limited) interpretation and expression of God's word from an earlier age, not realizing that human interpretation was *itself* at the time an attempt to express God's truth in the contemporary situation, and that to absolutize that human interpretation and expression for all time is not only to substitute man's limited creaturely word for God's unlimited Creator-Word, but to dilute the contemporary relevance of the living, inspired, infallible word of God.

Usually accompanied by the ancient pagan lust for timelessness within history,[2] it erroneously romanticizes the past and assumes it was not the product of the very sorts of historical forces its supporters today eschew (new ideas, technological advances, and other historical changes). Roman Catholics, for example, often pine for the patristic and medieval era, though that period constituted anything but a stable, immutable preservation of Biblical Faith.[3] Many Protestants long for the epoch of High Reformation Orthodoxy as the acme of Christian doctrine and life on which one could never improve, despite the fact that some of its key tenets were borrowed from Renaissance humanism.[4] Cultists and radical reformers perceive a timelessness in any new bare reading of Scripture, which pointedly refuses to account for the church historic;[5] and thus, despite their distaste for historic orthodoxy, their own historically conditioned interpretation and practice (usually far inferior to that of historic Christianity) becomes for them a *new* tradition, the "old-time religion."

The Biblical Approach

Biblically and historically aware Christians value our forebears and their forebears's beliefs and practices not because those doctrine and practices represent the final word of Biblical orthodoxy (as though God wiped his hands of theological progress in A. D. 325, 1054, 1517, 1647, 1870, or 1997), but because these individuals had a deep love for God, his word, and the Christian Faith, and therefore can lead *us* to a better understanding of God, his word and the Christian Faith. In a conversation once over the topic of baptism, I quoted several times from Calvin's *Institutes*. My clearly exasperated friend finally remarked (and somewhat patronizingly), "You're quoting Calvin, but I quote the Bible; your view is based on what man says; mine is based on what God says."

To this I responded, "No, the difference between us is not that I hold Calvin's view while you hold the Bible's, but that I am not arrogant enough to think I understand the Bible better than anyone else ever has . . . ."

With this recognition there are two errors to avoid: the anti-historical provincialism that reinvents orthodoxy on the anvil of its own inferior (and usually heretical) speculation (liberals and charismatics are the most notorious), and, on the other hand, a static historicism that absolutizes one era of the past, not recognizing the change that era represented, and thus threatens to substitute the authority of the Bible with the authority of the products of a romanticized past (conservative Protestants, Roman Catholics, and Eastern Orthodox can be almost equally guilty).

We must constantly go back to the Bible (recognizing, of course, the fact of own creaturely and sinful limitations, and not only our forebears') and mine its divinely inspired richness to discover the eternal truth—the only infallible answers—for our generation, recognizing all the while that it is the Bible—and not our belief about the Bible—that is infallible.

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[1] Jaroslav Pelikan, *Obedient Rebels* (New York and Evanston, 1964).

[2] Rousas John Rushdoony, *Salvation and Godly Rule* (Vallecito, CA, 1983), 144, 145.

[3] Gerhard Ebeling, *The Problem of Historicity* (Philadelphia, 1967), 56-60.

[4] Henning Graf Reventlow, *The Authority of the Bible and the Rise of the Modern World* (Philadelphia, 1985), 126.

[5] George W. Dollar, *A History of Fundamentalism in America* (Orlando, 1983), 4.

The Heresy of "New Testament Christianity"

By Rev. Andrew Sandlin

Recently a California minister exhorted his radio audience, "This Sunday you need to attend a local New Testament church which lifts up Christ." The utterance was not a slip of the tongue. Nor was he merely denoting that the New Testament is the infallible culmination of God's inspired revelation. He was not implying merely that the sacrificial system of the old covenant fulfilled in Christ to whom its shadows pointed, as well as the regulations that erected a racial barrier between ethnic Jews and Gentile, are both suspended in the new covenant era. He was not only insinuating, moreover, that the church today is superior to its old covenant predecessor in its a multiracial character and special empowering by the Holy Spirit. All orthodox Christians believe these things. Rather, the minister, an ardent dispensationalist, was implying that the church is an exclusively New Testament phenomenon, and that it somehow stands on a higher ethical plane than the old covenant.

An Early Source of "New Testament Christianity"

This sentiment is not new. One of the earliest heresies afflicting the church was Marcionism, which, like most early heresies, was sharply anti-Jewish.[1] Marcion held that the gospel's glory eclipsed the rest of the Bible—including the creation and the whole of the Old Testament. Marcion taught that God's plan of the salvation of men was the supreme message of Scripture to which all else must be subordinate. He despised sex and childbirth, since they especially smacked of the material world. Like most other heretics, Marcion was obsessed with idea of the origin of evil and (again, like most other heretics) found it necessary in buttressing his system to posit two deities, "'one judicial, harsh, mighty in war, the other mild, placid, simply good and excellent.' The former was the Creator of the world, the God of the Old Testament; the latter was the Father of Jesus Christ, who had descended to earth for the first time in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberias Caesar."[2] Marcion was, however, one of the first patristic heretics to sever redemption from creation, as all constant dualists eventually must. Naturally, his novel hermeneutical axiom led him to deny that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ is in any sense just in dealing with sin. He denied Christ had an actual body, for then the body would necessarily have been "stuffed with excrement."[3]

In ostensibly exalting the gospel, Marcion stressed it absolute newness. To speak of Old Testament authority was to deny the newness of the gospel, which dispels the law as light does darkness. To Marcion, only Paul the apostle had correctly presented the gospel, allegedly purging it from all Jewish elements. Like many after him (even Luther) he established a rationalistic theological construct to which the rest of revelation must conform; if it does not, it had to be jettisoned. He was one of the early textual critics who deleted portions of Scripture under the guise of restoring the primitive revelation of Jesus and the gospel (whose message, of course, just coincidentally reinforced Marcion's reductionist theological presupposition!).

They all saw the Old Testament as a Christian *revelation fulfilled in the* Christian *church, not a racially Jewish revelation to be fulfilled in a future apocalyptic era: the Bible is a book both for and about Jewish and Gentile* Christians.

The Orthodox Response

The church's response was to excommunicate Marcion, condemn his dogma, and tighten up her own theology. She did this by reaffirming the inspiration and authority of the Old Testament (while not always consistently applying its authority), and by spiritualizing its promises: "There was no early Christian who simultaneously acknowledged the doctrinal authority of the Old Testament and interrupted it literally."[4] They all saw the Old Testament as a *Christian* revelation fulfilled in the *Christian* church, not a racially Jewish revelation to be fulfilled in a future apocalyptic era: the Bible is a book both for and about Jewish and Gentile *Christians.* Indeed, the early church assumed the Jewish view of the origin and reliability of the Scriptures, as Osterhaven notes: "For the apostles no question is possible about the origin of the Word: it is from God. Human instruments in its writing added nothing to its content. This view corresponds with the general Jewish opinion of Scripture as coming from God. Moses and the prophets were reckoned to have divine authority because God was believed to have spoken through them; their word was the Word of God. Their writings were holy writings, the rule for faith and life, with a superhuman content. Nothing in them was superfluous; everything was there for a purpose."[5]

The Christian church affirms the eternal authority of the entire canon and will admit no severance within the revelation. While divine truth comes to its crescendo in the New Testament with the revelation of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the New Testament is not qualitatively superior to the Old either in doctrine or morality.

The Re-emergent Heresy

Many of today's professed Christians, by contrast, are ensnared in a strange way of thinking that perceives the message

of the Old Testament as theologically and ethically abolished by the Christ-revelation. This is a common notion of the modern church, and it, no less than Marcionism, is heresy. It is expressed baldly by evangelical luminary Clark Pinnock:

> The Scripture principle proper to Christianity ... is not just identical to the Judaic Scripture principle. Most importantly, the bipartite Bible is structured in such a way as to identify the Old Testament as prefiguring narrative, not the last word on the purposes of God. The messianic age has dawned in Jesus the Christ, and the revelation associated with that age takes precedence over premessianic material. Scripture, thus, is not leveled in the way it is in the Judaic Scripture principle but is searched and interpreted in terms of Christological presupposition. Naive rhetoric about biblical infallibility could easily lead to a tragic Judaizing of the Christian faith.[6]

This conclusion is quite ironic, for, if anything, many Jews during Christ's earthy sojourn did *not* hold Scripture in sufficiently high esteem (Jn. 5:45-47). It was not that they were "biblicists"; they were not *sufficiently* Biblical. Christ, by contrast, upheld the eternal authority of the Old Testament even in its minutia: "From the manner in which Christ quotes Scripture we find that he recognizes and accepts the Old Testament in its entirety as possessing a normative authority, as the true word of God, valid for all time."[7] The manner in which Christ and the apostles, not to mention the united orthodox Christian church for eighteen centuries, reverence the Holy Scriptures of both Testaments as the inspired, infallible, and authoritative word of God contrasts starkly not only with the skeptical attitude toward Scripture engendered by Enlightenment rationalism, but also the truncated version of the Bible supported by so much modern evangelicalism, devotees of "New Testament Christianity."

Antinomianism

Two prime corollaries flow from the heresy of "New Testament Christianity." Both are deadly to the cause of Biblical Faith. Perhaps the most prominent (and pernicious) is the cancellation of Biblical law. An early evangelical committed to this cancellation, Lewis Sperry Chafer stated flatly, "These actual written commandments, either of Moses or the kingdom, are not the rule of the believer's life under grace, any more than these systems are the basis of his salvation. The complete withdrawal of the authority of these two systems will now be examined."[8] Like Marcion, Chafer's scheme sees the religious system of the Old Testament Jews as vastly different from and inferior to the glorious and gracious life of the New Testament:

> It is often inferred that Christianity is an outgrowth or product of Judaism. In reality these two systems are as independent of each other as the two opposing principles of law and grace. Being this so widely different in their essential elements, they are, like the principles which they embody, as far removed the one from the other as heaven is higher than the earth. One is of the earth, of the old creation, of the flesh; the other is of heaven, of the new creation, and the Spirit .... [I]t does not ... follow that God's purposes and ways are the same with Israel and the church.[9]

Not surprisingly, therefore, Chafer, like Marcion, posits a new ethical standard for Christians:[10] the leading of the Spirit, and absolute freedom from Biblical law: "Is it not imperative that the children of God should be placed within the bounds of reasonable law? *Absolutely No!* The Christian's liberty to do precisely as he chooses is as limitless and perfect as any other aspect of grace. . . . God can propose *absolute* liberty to the one in whom He is so working that the innermost choice is only that which he wills for him."[11] In this dispensational scheme, law is unnecessary because man is governed by the Spirit. This is antinomianism with a vengeance: man is no longer subject to divine revelation because of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. In other words, the presence of the Spirit is so powerful that the Bible as an ethical standard is rendered unnecessary. This is, functionally, *the deification of man.* He, like God, is "above the law."

Lewis Sperry Chafer stated flatly, "These actual written commandments, either of Moses or the kingdom, are not the rule of the believer's life under grace, any more than these systems are the basis of his salvation."

Retreatism

The second chief corollary of "New Testament Christianity" is retreatism: a reversal from any active engagement in the world's structures and attempt to exert dominion in the earth under Christ's authority using his word as the basis.[12] This trait does not flow logically from a denial of the relevance of Old Testament authority, since the New Testament no less than the Old Testament requires the dominion task of Christians.[13] In reality, however, "New Testament Christianity" subsists in tandem with a retreatist mode.

"New Testament Christians" are led to this retreatism by the sharp discontinuity thy posit between the old covenant church, comprised principally (though not exclusively) of ethnic Israel, and the new covenant church, which consists of the multiracial Christian community. In fact, the "New Testament Christians" often deny the church existed at all in the Old Testament![14] Kenneth Good, speaking for some (though certainly not all) Baptists, declares:

> Baptists ... observe that the church is a *radical departure* from the previous program of God for Israel rather than a continuation of the same entity under a new title and a revived life. While there was a continuum with respect

> to the plan of God, there was a *drastic change* in His program for testimony in the earth. The church was not Israel continued in time, but an *entirely new undertaking* of God which began in connection with the ministry of Christ, and not before.[15]

Because "New Testament Christians" see ethnic Israel as an "earthly," kingdom people and the multiracial church of the new covenant as a "heavenly," non-kingdom people (recall the Chafer citation above), they see the tasks and domains of both groups to be almost opposite.[16]

If, however, we acknowledge the Biblical teaching that the multiracial church of the new covenant assumes the place of ethnic Israel and her promises (*Rom. 2:28, 29; 9:6, 7; 11:17-24; Gal. 3:6-29; Eph. 2:11-22; Heb. 8:6-13; 12:18-24*)[17] who forfeited her exalted position by covenant-breaking (Mt. 21:33-*43; 22:1-14*), we recognize equally God's plan for his children to serve as vicegerents of the earth and inherit it under his authority (*Gen. 1:27-29; Ps. 8:4-6; 37; Mt. 28:18-20; Rom. 4:13; 2 Cor. 5:20, 21; Rev. 2:26, 27*). Rushdoony summarizes:

> St. Paul says [Rom. 9:6-8], *first*, that there are two Israels, the outward entity, the nation, which claims, despite its rejection of God the Son, to be still Israel. There is, on the other hand, God's true Israel, the *ecclesia*, the kingdom of God. *Second*, membership in God's Israel is not nor ever was by birth. It is always and only by God's grace, received by faith. Only those who share in Abraham's faith are members of Christ, the chosen seed. *Third*, those with a hereditary claim to the covenant by blood or birth, the Jews and church members, are the children of the flesh of unredeemed human nature, not the regenerate children of God. "The children of promise" are alone counted as the true seed of Christ, who is the seed of Abraham. *Fourth*, in Romans 11 Paul makes clear that, whereas the true Israel of God shall be saved, blessed, and triumphant, the Israel which is Israel by name only shall be cut off until it becomes the regenerate Israel of God.
>
> Thus, on the one hand we have judgment, on the other, blessing. The true Israel of God is *a ruling people*.... They must learn to rule themselves, conquer their sins, obey God's law, resolve their conflicts, and maintain, in every area of life, their struggle to dominion.[18]

The unity of the covenants, of the people of God, and of God's promises dictates the recognition and execution of the dominion commission.

To "New Testament Christians," no such unity exists. The revelation and plan of God are severely and irreparably fragmented. These individuals are therefore "principled retreatists." They assume they have discharged their obligation with the practices of Bible-reading (mostly the New Testament!), prayer, church attendance, personal evangelism, and (to borrow Rushdoony's parlance), "pious gush." They retreat into their increasingly ineffectual churches, ineffectual families, ineffectual vacation Bible schools, ineffectual seminaries, ineffectual missions programs, ineffectual AWANA clubs, ineffectual lives. Because a large sector of "New Testament Christians" are "pretribulational rapturists," their retreatism is eminently logical: **Jesus will be back soon to "rapture out" the "New Testament Church," and we'll leave this filthy, corrupt world to its rightful owner, the Devil. So *there*.**

Conclusion

The most potent and consistent corrective to "New Testament Christianity" is *Biblical* Christianity: a full-orbed Christian Faith affirming the plenary and eternal authority and applicability of *both* the Old *and* New Testaments. The seeds of this full-orbed Faith appeared in the Reformed tradition,[19] germinated with the Puritans,[20] bloomed with the Dutch School of the Cosmonomic Idea,[21] and is flowering in Christian Reconstruction.[22]

The Christian Reconstructionists' is a world-conquering Faith in the name of the King. Will you join Chalcedon in working for and reaping the full harvest?

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[1] Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition* (Chicago, 1971), 71-81.
[2] *ibid.*, 74.
[3] *ibid.*, 75.
[4] *ibid.*, 81.
[5] M. Eugene Osterhaven, *The Faith of the Capital Church* (Grand Rapids, 1982), 62.
[6] Clark Pinnock, *The Scripture Principle* (San Francisco, 1984), 62.
[7] Pierre C. Marcel, "Our Lord's Use of Scripture," in ed., Carl F. H. Henry, *Revelation and the Bible* (Grand Rapids, 1958), 133.
[8] Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Grace* (Findlay, OH, 1922), 216.
[9] *ibid.*, 238, 239.
[10] Just as "New Testament Christianity" denies the authority of God's inscripturated revelation in the sphere of individual sanctification, so it denies it in the sphere of civil regulation. See Norman Geisler, "A Premillennial View of Law and Government," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Vol. 142, No. 567 [July-September, 1985], 250-266. Geisler, dispensationalist, supports "natural law" as the basis of civil government. For a critical assessment, see Andrew Sandlin, "A Critique of Christian Non-Theonomic Conceptions of Civil Government," *Calvinism Today*, Vol. 2, No. 2 [April, 1992], 10-14.
[11] Chafer, *op. cit.*, 345, emphasis original.
[12] Rushdoony, Institutes of Biblical Law (Nutley, NJ, 1973).
[13] Kenneth Gentry, *The Greatness of the Great Commission* (Tyler, TX, 1990).
[14] John F. Walvoord, *The Rapture Question* (Grand Rapids, 1979 ed.), 25.
[15] Kenneth Good, "The Conflict Between Reformed Theology and Baptist Distinctives," in *1987 National Conference of Calvinistic Baptists: Compilation of Messages* (Olmstead, OH, 1987), E-2, emphasis supplied.
[16] J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things To Come* (Grand Rapids [1958], 1964), 201, 202.
[17] For additional Biblical evidence, see Charles Provan, *The Church is Israel Now* (Vallecito, CA, 1987), and Roderick Campbell, *Israel and the New Covenant* (Philadelphia, 1984).
[18] R. J. Rushdoony, *Law and Society* (Vallecito, CA, 1982), 429.
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Brian Abshire: Emerging Christian Reconstructionist Leader

By Rev. Andrew Sandlin

It's about time somebody verified publicly the excited whisperings in the Christian Reconstructionist world. It is generally recognized that Brian Abshire, frequent Chalcedon contributor, is a rapidly emerging Christian Reconstructionist leader destined to play an indispensable role in Chalcedon's reconstructive task as we enter the next century. We may as well state publicly what almost everyone knows: *Brian Abshire is a mighty warrior for the Faith poised to do exploits for Christ the King.*

> *I suspect that Abshire will soon earn the title "Pastor of the Christian Reconstruction Movement."*

Abshire is currently a staunch Presbyterian pastor, leading his congregation (Lakeside PCA in Milwaukee) in applying the Faith in family and community. His December, 1996 article in the *Chalcedon Report* describes extensively the comprehensive Christian vision and practice of the congregation.

Abshire's genius transcends the intellectual. I once told him, "Brains are a dime a dozen, though you certainly have them; but intellect with Christian wisdom and pastoral sense — now there's a rare quality you possess." Abshire's mental gifts are almost self-evident. The veteran of several colleges and seminaries, including doctoral work in England, he will soon complete his Ph.D. dissertation in the field of sociology of religion. It is titled "Theology of Social Philosophy: The Significant Contributions of Puritan Theonomic Theology to the Development of Distinctive American Cultural Values" (to be published by Ross House Books). In addition, Chalcedon will soon publish three important essays of his in its pathbreaking Chalcedon Monograph Series. His writings will help to shape the Christian Reconstructionist landscape in the next millennium.

But Abshire is more than a scholar — much more; he brings to Christian Reconstruction a pastoral element too often missing from many professed Christian Reconstructionists over the last fifteen years or so. It is this balance of qualities that is distinctive; it mixes in a realistic practicality that flawlessly weds theological theory to daily practice. His is no arcane, egg-headed Faith designed to impress the ivory-towered literati. It is a vigorous interpretation and application of the historic Christian religion intensely relevant to the modern world. It involves reconstructing everything from the family to the church to the Internet to hunting.

In fact, I suspect that Abshire will soon earn the title "Pastor of the Christian Reconstruction Movement." His heart-felt shepherd's wisdom and empathy coupled with profound theological astuteness qualify him as a leader among men, far superior to the merely mentally gifted whose character flaws often render them not only ineffectual in, but often detrimental to, the kingdom's work.

Dr. Rushdoony and I, in addition, were talking recently about another impressive trait of Abshire's: an utter single-mindedness of life and purpose, a heart given unreservedly to God and his law-word, to historic orthodoxy, confessional Calvinism, and the extension of Christ's earthly kingdom. In an era of religious and ecclesiastical vacillation and vacillators that paralyze godly action, Abshire's refreshing single-mindedness equips him for whole-hearted obedience, world-conquering exploits for the King.

Abshire is already solidly aligned with Chalcedon as a board member and scholar. He will play an increasingly active role in the future.

Rousas John Rushdoony has brilliantly and methodically laid the conceptual and practical groundwork for the re-Christianization of modern life. Rushdoony's disciples are solemnly charged with the task of erecting on that foundation an impregnable superstructure of Christian civilization springing from Biblical law.

By God's grace, for the next forty years Brian Abshire will be a key figure in that momentous but exciting task.

Brian Abshire will, along with Steve Schlissel, write a regular monthy column. Abshire's will be titled "Counter-Cultural Christianity," and Schlissel's, "My Back Pages."

ERRATA

The caption under the cover photo on the January issue should have read: "Black, Jewish, Caribbean, Puerto Rican at Messiah's Congregation." Messiah's oversees the work of Urban Nation's. They are related but distinct ministries.

COUNTER-CULTURAL CHRISTIANITY

The Future of Christian Reconstruction: Some Challenges for the Next Few Decades

By Rev. Brian M. Abshire

In the closing years of the second millennium since the ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ, His church stands at an unprecedented cross roads in human history. Seldom has the Church of Christ possessed such opportunities to advance the Kingdom. With the death of humanism, the fall of Communism, and the utter hopelessness of modern life, a vigorous Christian Faith, rooted in the unchanging truths of God's infallible Word, could usher in a great new era of covenantal blessings.

Yet, at this providential opportunity, the church of Christ is largely ineffectual, impotent and irrelevant. Sapped by pietism, undermined by liberalism, tainted with sensationalism and experientialism, when the church ought to be gathering her resources for the great counter-attack, an attack that could render the Adversary's forces a resounding defeat in history, instead we are either licking our wounds, or worse yet, giving aid and comfort to the enemy.

The long-term prospects for Christian Reconstruction are, of course, sure. Christ does reign, and over time, the Gospel will advance, the nations will be discipled, the effects of the curse will be rolled back, and the blessings of Almighty God will cover the earth. But the question is whether we who live at this crossroads will take the steps necessary to advance the Greater Reformation, or whether it will fall to another generation to reap the blessings from obedience to God's Law. Jan Hus and John Wycliffe lit the torch of the Reformation, and were burnt for their troubles. It was in God's providence for Luther and Calvin a century later to build upon their work and usher in one of the greatest periods of Kingdom advance in history.

Therefore, it behooves those who call themselves Christian Reconstructionists carefully to consider their strategy and tactics over the next fifty years. God is sovereign; He will do according to His will whatever contributes to His own glory. But it may be that in His providence, He has set before us an open door that no one can shut if we wisely use the opportunities and resources He has given us to meet the needs of the next millennium. With that in mind, I would like to identify several key areas that Christian Reconstructionists need to consider for the next few decades.

Government begins with Self-Government

There is perhaps no more slanderous canard repeated against Christian Reconstruction than that our goal is a top down take-over of the political system. Many, many people, both Christian and pagan alike, fear that Christian Reconstructionists advocate a heavy-handed dictatorship based on Old Testament Law, with secret police lurking in everyone's bedroom, executing adulterers, homosexuals and disobedient teenagers at the drop of a hat. Since this is an antinomian age, characterized by sin, vice and rebellion to God in every sphere, they intuitively know that as law-breakers, they are under judgment. Right now, they can safely ignore God's judgment because His minister of justice, the state, caters to their whims. They therefore rightly fear a time when the state assumes its proper role as a minister of God to inhibit evil.

Christian Reconstruction has lost the propaganda war because too many of our authors, speakers and teachers have wistfully looked to a future time when the present wickedness would be punished by the state. But we are not there yet; and we won't be there for a long time to come. Therefore, let me be really radical and troublesome; let's refocus our efforts and attentions to other areas.

The fundamental sphere of government, as Rushdoony has repeatedly taught us, is self-government. The world will be Christianized, and society reconstructed, not by some top-down imposition of Mosaic Law by a police state, but rather from the bottom up as God gives grace, men embrace the Gospel and are discipled to live stable, responsible, godly lives. The state will become Christian, when the people become Christian. People get the sort of state they deserve. If the state is oppressive and lawless today, it is because the people are slaves to sin. Therefore the challenge is for Christians to work consistently on the little things in life, the small "r" of Christian Reconstruction. We need to separate in the public mind, Christian Reconstruction and the police state by focusing on how dominion comes through a godly life lived self-governed under God's Law. It is significant that in the first few centuries of the church, Christians did not openly oppose Caesar, engage in civil disobedience, form militias, and threaten violence against the state. We won the Empire by faithful men and women's doing the work of dominion on a day-by-day, person-by-person basis.

Therefore, we need more practical teaching on how to live self-governed lives under God's Law. If we cannot deal with our own petty sins, foibles, idiosyncrasies and failings, how can we ever expect to see God's blessing in the broader areas of life? When we have learned how successfully to deal with temptation, put our brother before ourselves, become men and women of prayer, be gracious in our manner, gentle and kind to one another, taking personal responsibility for the areas God has already given to us, then we can expect God to open new

areas of dominion. And if we become a movement known and respected for the way we treat one another, and serve one another and offer practical ways of implementing the Christian Faith to real-world problems, at least two things will happen. First, the pagans will ask us why we are different. Rather than fearing us, they will be drawn to us (*cf. 1 Pet. 3:15ff*).

Second, if they do not fear us, they are unlikely to be very consistent in their persecution of us. They will need us because we are doing the work they cannot and will not do. This is both the experience of the early church, and the modern one under Communism. Furthermore, by focusing on what all Christians agree is important, Christian character, we open the door for them to consider the broader application of the Christian Faith.

Dominion Comes Through Service

Jesus is quite clear that those who would be great in the Kingdom must become servants (*Mk. 10:45*). Biblical leadership in the home, church, community, etc., must be based on the self-sacrificial example of the King of kings Himself, who emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant (*Phil. 2:8ff*). God will entrust Christians with power and dominion, when we demonstrate that we can handle that power responsibly. And we are not there yet. When the most common characteristic of church leaders in this age is personal empire-building, the Greater Reformation is still a long way off. To facilitate reconstruction, Christians must demonstrate that we have answers, real answers for the very real problems that come from godlessness and rebellion and that we are willing to work, sacrifice and serve God's people by putting those answers to work.

Rushdoony has pointed the way by demonstrating in the *Institutes of Biblical Law* the very practical application the Law has for every-day life and by giving us a picture of a Christian social order. The next generation needs to build on that foundation by extending his work in every area of life. Therefore we must create parallel institutions to the humanists' dying ones. We need to offer practical programs for the poor, build Christian schools that work, train men to live self-governed under God's Law. Many broad evangelical Christians do not like to admit it, but they are desperate for the kind of theoretical and practical instruction that only Christian Reconstructionists are offering. They may not like the theology that undergirds it, but they need the answers that only we are providing. Therefore the challenge is to look at our culture through the lens of God's Word and continue to offer practical demonstrations of the efficacy of God's Law.

Reconstructing Families

We are now living in the third generation of dysfunctional, accommodated families. Our culture was so heavily influenced by Christian presuppositions for so long, that we had an enormous amount of spiritual capital upon which to draw. That capital is now almost gone, our culture is now consistently humanistic in its orientation, and the family is under increasing attack. Since the family is the most basic unit of any society, when the family falls, the culture falls soon after. The problem, of course, is that even when God brings pagans to faith, most still continue to live like pagans in many fundamental areas because they have not been trained how to live godly lives. Many Christians unconsciously continue to think and act like pagans in many ways (*cf. Eph 4:17ff*). What we should have learned at home, we now have to learn somewhere else; and meanwhile, the work of dominion is impeded. Men no longer live responsibly because their culture has taught them the exact opposite. Women do not find their Biblical roles fulfilling because the culture has given them conflicting values. Christian children are often not raised in a loving, disciplined environment because their parents don't know how to teach and train them.

Christian Reconstruction has lost the propaganda war because too many of our authors, speakers and teachers have wistfully looked to a future time when the present wickedness would be punished by the state. But we are not there yet; and we won't be there for a long time to come.

Therefore, for Christian Reconstruction to advance, for the next half century we are going to have to go back to the basics. The home is a child's first school, church and state. Men cannot be proper leaders in the community or church unless they can rule their homes according to Biblical criteria. Therefore we have got to train up husbands and fathers especially in basic domestic skills. It is not enough to give a man a couple of good books and tell him to change his life. Granted, some men can do that. But most of us will need the practical model of a godly figure (that our own fathers should have been, but were not) to train us in living.

This is a crucial task. Take any 20 Christian Reconstructionists and examine their personal lives. Often they are well-educated, brilliant, articulate and passionate about God's Law. But a significant number will also be cantankerous, rude, critical, judgmental, divisive, rebellious, self-righteous and ego-centric, unable to get along with others. The reason is that often, even the ones that came from Christian families had fathers who did not understand how properly to govern their homes. Consequently, their children are more influenced by the world than the Word. This is perhaps the greatest challenge we face; to raise up dominion-oriented children. The Puritans,

in part, lost New England just because they failed in this area. We have their experience to learn from, and we must do better.

Alternative Christian Education

Because of the seminal work by Rushdoony and others, Christian education, both in private and home schools, is now well-established in this country. And in the earliest grades, we have developed an excellent curriculum. Christians of every theological stripe are increasingly getting on the Christian and home school bandwagon; this is a very hopeful and exciting development. The problem comes when our children finish their grammar-school education and attend high school and college. We need to rethink our whole approach to upper-level Christian education. Why invest 12 years in a child's life to give him a sound Christian education, only to make him run the humanist gauntlet in college?

Most of us still think of a college education as a ticket into the upper middle class. And for most of this century this was true. But the flood of college graduates, the enormous amount of time and money college education requires, the vehement anti-Christian bias of almost all secular universities, and the worldly accommodation of even the best Christian ones ought to make us consider other options.

First, for most children, a college education may not be necessary. Living in the Information Age requires new skills. The old mid-level management jobs that made up the middle class are no longer available. Instead, for the average Christian, some sort of technical skills are now necessary. Therefore trade schools may well be a better alternative for most students. We need to recapture the practice of apprenticeship, giving children real-world skills, taught by accomplished masters in a craft.

Secondly, we need Christians who can think logically and Biblically. If further education after high school is necessary, then we are going to have to offer a thoroughly Christian alternative. Rather than build buildings and institutions that cost fortunes to construct, and make it necessary for a child to move away from home (and be quickly taken over by humanists and liberals), the computer revolution now makes it possible to offer a high-quality education right through graduate school at home. Therefore Christian Reconstructionists need to design, develop and start Christian colleges using the Internet. The kids stay at home, are not exposed to needless temptation, save a fortune in living expenses, receive a high-quality education and can therefore advance the Kingdom in their own lives. This is an idea whose time has come.

Taking Advantage of New Technology

One of the reasons why in God's providence, Hus and Wycliffe were unable to start the Reformation in their own time (even though their ideas were instrumental a hundred years later) was due to technology. When Luther posted his 95 Theses, a new invention, the printing press, was all the rage in Europe. The printing press allowed both Luther and Calvin to publish their ideas throughout Christendom. Thousands eagerly read their books and pamphlets regarding the state of the church, and the Great Reformation began.

Today, the computer offers the same kind of technological advance. The Internet can be used for a variety of publishing purposes. Every Christian with a word processor and a few clip-art files can now produce his own newsletter. But computers can do even more. With the right software and a little savvy, multi-media presentations of basic Christian Reconstructionst doctrines can be professionally developed and packaged cheaply and easily. The possibilities are endless, especially in light of the fact that many modern men will not read the huge tomes that we love to write and publish. The need for big books will always be there, but now, entire libraries can be put on CD-ROM, with fantastic search capabilities. Computers and the cheap publishing costs will also allow us to target specific niches in the market. We can identify specific needs, create multimedia presentations aimed at that need, and put the information directly into people's hands.

The Importance of Christians "Networking"

Right now, those committed to Christian Reconstruction are in a tiny minority. We are separated by time and distance. Most Christian Reconstructionists do not attend, and most Reconstructionist pastors do not minister in, Reconstructionist churches (of the 100 teaching and ruling elders that expressed an interest in a seminar on "Theonomy and the PCA," not one could offer his church as a place to meet!). The *Chalcedon Report* is one of the most important theological publications available and does a fine job. But the task is too great for any one publication or organization. We need seminars in every major city where the troops can be encouraged and trained for their task. We need Reconstructionist societies operating in every state, targeting specific issues and ministries. We need ways of networking together, sharing the vision, assisting one another. At the present time, God has spread us out. One way to keep the fire hot is to create myriad lines of communication and keep them going.

Though not a paranoid sort of person, I believe the church may well be in for some persecution in the coming decades (it's happened before in other lands and other times, and there is no good reason to think it cannot happen here). The more effective the church becomes in challenging the false gods of this age, the more virulent and nasty will be the attack by statists and humanists. Creating and maintaining these lines of communications may well be the means of keeping the Adversary at arm's length. Wickedness loves darkness and hates the light.

Reconstructing the Local Church

Reconstructing the local church, especially in terms of self-sacrificial love, resolving problems and conflicts with each other, effective diaconal ministries, personal works of charity, etc., is absolutely fundamental to our future. Christianity must work in our own lives, and it must work in our churches. That means that churches have got to become less social clubs and more training centers for warfare. If we have answers, and we can apply those answers, broad evangelicalism will eventually have to come to us.

If I may prognosticate for a moment, I see the death of denominationalism and the rebirth of a new way of relating to

other local churches. Without sacrificing crucial doctrines, local churches can form associations with each other to adjudicate problems, work together for common causes, without giving up their unique differences. I have stood on a picket line with Roman Catholics, Pentecostals, Baptists, etc., to protest abortion. I would stand with them to exert pressure on local civil governments to remove pornography, outlaw sodomy, or clean up a vice-ridden street corner. And by encouraging our Christian brothers, and working with them, they might not know that the operating theology that helped them get out of their pews and into some kind of activism had its origins in weighty theological books written thirty years ago by an Armenian immigrant. They don't need to know yet. It is sufficient that we have them acting like postmillennialists. Eventually they'll come around.

In the mean time, they allow me to train their pastors to do Biblical counseling. They call me in to help them adjudicate touchy problems in their churches. They ask me to lecture them on the Christian basis of our national history. And I get a chance to put a few good books into some very dedicated men's hands. And they read those books and start putting into practice what Rushdoony has so eloquently studied. Nope, I haven't managed to make a single Presbyterian out of any of them yet. But some have come to embrace the Reformed Faith, some have reconsidered the doctrine of the rapture, many are teaching the Reformed doctrine of sanctification in their churches (often far larger churches than I have ever pastored!). We build bridges and allow God the time to work on them according to His decree, not ours.

Conclusion

The fundamental principle of dominion is that power comes through service. Thus there is a great future for this present movement of God if we focus on glorifying Him and serving His people. Right now, much of the exegetical and theoretical work has been done. Other men will build on the foundation that Rushdoony has given us, extending his thinking and advancing his work. But I see the real challenge of Christian Reconstruction to promote the practical application. When we give answers to the questions men are asking, and can demonstrate that we sincerely want to serve the broader church by helping them obey God, then I believe we are on the verge of the Greater Reformation. The task is too grand, too wonderful, too life- and world-transforming to be restricted to one man, one institution, one movement.

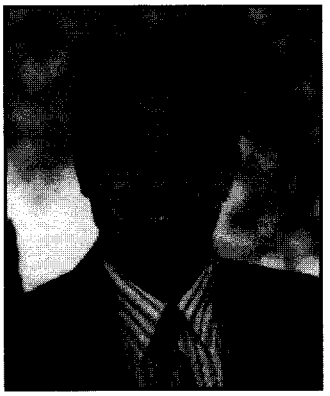
But I believe that Chalcedon will continue to be influential in the next millennium if we provide practical, workable answers to real-life problems.

Therefore let us cultivate a gracious, kind, gentle manner, not swerving from the truth, clearly and boldly confronting sin, but demonstrating our commitment to Christ by our love for one another and obedience to His Law. Let us not be dismayed by the futile schemes and foolish conspiracies of wicked men and evil angels, for their time is short. Let us look beyond the immediate problems, controversies, and trials to the glorious day to come, when the whole earth will be full of His grace and glory. Though there is much hard work ahead of us, and undoubtedly pain and grief and self-sacrifice, the future belongs to us, and our children, because God Almighty Himself has promised.

BIBLICAL STUDY

"Teach No Other Doctrine"

By Rev. Mark Rushdoony



Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God our Savior, and Lord Jesus Christ, which is our hope;

Unto Timothy, my own son in the faith: Grace, mercy and peace, from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord.

As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightiest charge some that they teach no other doctrine,

Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do. (1 Tim. 1:1-4)

When Paul went into Macedonia he left Timothy at Ephesus to resist those who preached "other doctrine." Paul here identifies himself as an apostle with authority from both the Father and the Son — not for Timothy's sake, who would not have doubted such, but for those to whom this letter would be delivered after Timothy. Paul's name represented the authority conferred on him by the Father and the Son. Paul's name not only conferred authority on his own words, but on Timothy, his "son in the faith," to whom he had given instruction to warn against "other doctrine."

> *What was important in Ephesus was not one's birth, but one's* rebirth. *It was not the covenant to Abraham that was essential but the new covenant in Jesus Christ. It was not the history of the old man in Adam, but the regenerate new man in Christ.*

The admonition against "other doctrine" could have a double meaning. It can mean new doctrine and refer to the

substance of what was actually taught. New teachings have often had as their intended purpose the redirection of the Faith when denial would be unacceptable. The term can also mean to teach in a different way. This would be a wider application. It is to say that there is not only one truth but one way to teach it. The problem with the doctrine in Ephesus may have likely come from the church officers themselves, as Acts 20:30 anticipated. "Some," not all, were at fault; and Timothy's presence and the apostle's influence was apparently to insure orthodoxy prevailed.

It is important to realize the necessity of orthodoxy. Heresy is not a rejection or denial of the Faith. That would be unbelief or apostasy, and can be easily identified. Heresy will be found only in the professing church. False doctrines can be far more pernicious than denied doctrines. False doctrines added to the Faith can give new priorities, new emphases, and lead to new and false assumptions or conclusions. Ideas have consequences, and many of both are not doctrinally legitimate.

The greatest problems Christianity has faced have been from within. Without we expect unbelief, denial, and even challenges. Within the church we often are urged to consider the wolves in sheep's clothing as "good, well-meaning Christians, too." As long as they look like sheep, sound like sheep, and profess to be sheep, we wrongly tend to consider the wolves in our midst to be "good, well-meaning sheep, too."

But wolves are never sheep. They are not interested in the good of the sheep, and if not recognized and challenged by those who are responsible for the flock will soon turn and devour. It is not without reason that Christians are called sheep in Scripture. Sheep are helpless and have no natural defenses. When predators sense the helplessness and panic of sheep, especially in confined quarters, they tend to kill repeatedly until the whole fold is destroyed. Exhausted by their killing spree, they sometimes leave the carcasses without so much as feeding on their kill.

False doctrines can be far more pernicious than denied doctrines. False doctrines added to the Faith can give new priorities, new emphases, and lead to new and false assumptions or conclusions.

Timothy that men have a tendency to have "itching ears" and to give themselves to fables (*2 Tim. 4:3-4*).

But fables may also refer to that which is good in its proper place and usage but which is easily abused by using it to detract from the Faith and the Word. Water is necessary and vital to life but we cannot overemphasize its importance to the exclusion of food. Likewise, when men take God's Word selectively and attribute to its parts an improper use, significance, or emphasis, it becomes falsified into the doctrines and commandments of men. Paul warned against "words to no profit" and "profane and vain babblings" (*2 Tim. 2:14, 16; 1 Tim. 6:20*). It is *God's* Word that we must heed and preach. When we distort it into our own message, God's truth is falsified into a fable.

Paul also warns of endless genealogies. Various Gentile groups delved into genealogies at great length. He more likely refers here to the practice of the Jews. We know in our Lord's day they were falsely confident of their descent from Abraham, as though their race made them righteous in God's sight. But it was also important to trace one's ancestry to the great men of the Old Testament, to rabbis, and to leaders of the synagogues. But many of the tribal distinctions were lost by the time of Ezra. At the return from captivity some families were declared to be pure and others mixed or even bastard (note *Ezra 2:62*). Still, they went to great length to keep careful records of ancestry and marriage. Families could be shamed by being declared of illegitimate origin. A prominent man could be brought to shame or specially favored by having his history either revealed or concealed. Herod made a point of having genealogical writings burned in order to hide his origins.

With pride or shame riding on geneologies, it is apparent how they would lead to endless questions and debates. But what was important in Ephesus was not one's birth, but one's *re*birth. It was not the covenant to Abraham that was essential but the new covenant in Jesus Christ. It was not the history of the old man in Adam, but the regenerate new man in Christ.

Geneologies are not without their merit. Those in Scripture show us the faithfulness of our covenant God who fulfills all His promises. They are not there for vain or personal reasons. Geneologies may also strengthen the godly family, especially if they can see a heritage of faithfulness.

Too often such things detract from our service to God or they only serve to "minister questions." Paul says such love of questions and controversy over words leads to "envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputing of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth" (*1 Tim. 6:4-5*). We are to avoid that which leads to such foolish questions (*2 Tim. 2:23; Titus 3:9*) and to withdraw ourselves from those who engender them (*1 Tim. 6:5*).

Our goal is "godly edifying which is in faith." It is true doctrine, the Word, which builds us up in the Faith. Men are not sanctified by means of human words but by God's Word. That is to be the source of our message to one another. This edifying is in faith, both the grace of faith which saves us, and the doctrine of faith in the Word. We cannot improve on the Word of God, though, if we are not careful, we may detract from its presentation by polluting it with "other doctrines."

Urban Nations Update: Loving or Resenting the Alien?

By Steve M. Schlissel

As Israel was about to enter the promised land God was emphatic that they were "to love those who are aliens" (*Deut. 10:19*). He also gave them a reason: "for you yourselves were aliens in Egypt."

Even a glance commends this statute as one which fits our American situation very well — most of us are born of immigrant stock not more than three American-generations old. Stories of the struggles and trials of adaptation endured by our near ancestors ought to make Americans keenly sensitive to the plight of the newly arrived. Even Bob Dylan (third-generation American, a Minnesotan whose paternal grandfather had emigrated from Russia in the 20s) sang: "I pity the poor immigrant."

Looked at more closely in 1997, however, complying with God's statute means jumping hurdles. That you should care for immigrants because your grandparents were immigrants is a logic that eludes people today. Existential philosophy coupled with secular prosperity have encouraged an obsession with the "now" that makes it too easy to forget even our not-too-distant past. Our grandparents' pains are of little or no concern, if we've ever even thought of them at all.

Add to this our current intellectual and moral schizophrenia. In rejecting not just our personal past but our collective history, we have become a nation in search of meaning, in search of law and, perhaps soon, in search of life. We affirm or disavow our Christian heritage at will & whim. We think we can pick and choose our history, rip, revise or relegate according to suit. Our revisionism reveals that our default faith is certainly not in the God of our fathers, nor are we particularly interested in living by His laws, except insofar as they might happen to conform to our prejudices.

And that thing called multiculturalism has made unacceptable the concept of welcoming immigrants from all nations to this Christian nation.

Our public policies reveal the strains caused by the above elements: We are a *de facto* nation of immigrants; we continue to regard and advertise America as the haven for immigrants (and, incontestably, it is); but we no longer know who "we" are.

Who is it that ought to be welcoming the immigrants and in whose name? At one time this was a task of the church: to welcome people to America in the Name of Christ. But contemporary immigration policy, as in most other policies of our time, assumes that the "neutral" state is our point of common identity, our law maker (not administrator) and our savior.

Consequently, "we" no longer want, as a matter of policy, immigrants to be welcomed by Christians or Christian tithe-agencies, we certainly don't want them to be taught anything of our Christian history, and we don't want them to be indebted to God through His church. Rather, we invite multitudes of the world's inhabitants to come to America and become immediately reliant upon the state, our new god.

These public policy tensions, in turn, confuse genuine Christians about their obligations under God to the aliens among us. It is a very great temptation to go with the flow and simply accept the status quo of directing new arrivals to the Great American Breast (or is that Beast?), *i.e.*, to the federal government with its vast array of socialist programs. It is tempting to simply kick back and passively believe that it is the feds' job to care for the immigrants.

That thing called multiculturalism has made unacceptable the concept of welcoming immigrants from all nations to this Christian nation.

Adding to the confusion in our thinking is the very real provocation brought about by some immigrants' use of "government" funds. While it must be borne in mind that, statistically, most immigrants do not go on welfare nor take other direct redistributions of wealth, there is certainly (and properly) a good deal of attention drawn to the great numbers who do. But beware: This very easily leads to an attitude, not of love, but of pure resentment toward the immigrant.

It is quite common in Brooklyn to see immigrants on line at the grocery store, decked out in fine clothing and expensive outerwear, paying in food stamps at the check-out counter, then wheeling their carts to a Mercedes-Benz or other fine car. We see many immigrants eating up a variety of the so-called "entitlements," we know of those collecting double checks through name-fraud schemes, we hear of some getting preferential treatment at schools and universities, buying houses with cash after 5 or 10 years in the States, and surpassing (because of statist "help") the standard of living of those who welcomed them here.

Even more offensive, we see those who glibly take every dollar they can from productive Americans while they themselves regard American ideals with virtual disdain. There is often no loyalty *whatsoever*. This should not surprise anyone, however, for as indulgent daddies and others have learned through sad experience, you cannot buy loyalty. Unlike the policies of a day when we feared not to think of ourselves as Christian, current policies encourage an immigrant population (generally speaking, now!) unwilling to fight or die for anything beyond their own stomachs.

And so we find that we're not quite sure how to — or

whether we even should — apply the law of God. We begin by cutting off our past, then by thinking of "we" as the state. We encourage immigration, not to a Christian land, but to a land of subsidies and demeaning handouts. Then, when we are confronted by in-our-face "abuses" of our adopted socialist system (which are often just clever uses on the immigrants' part), we abound in reasons to *resent* the new arrivals, certainly not to love them.

As St. James said in another context, "My brothers, this should not be." It is the Lord who issued the obligation "to love those who are aliens," *not* the state. The state's abuse of power does not relieve us of this obligation, any more than Social (In)Security relieves us of our obligation to honor our parents.

So then, we Christians must love the newcomers. But we need to understand what God means when He tells us to love them. He does *not* mean to subsidize lazy, wicked, good-for-nothing bums. Not at all. In Psalm 146, the Lord says of Himself, "The LORD watches over the alien and sustains the fatherless and the widow, but he frustrates the ways of the wicked." Clearly, then, God is aligning Himself with the vulnerable righteous over against the exploitative wicked. Therefore, just as Paul could properly restrict distribution of funds to certain widows only, so also may we put a Biblical grid governing the outlay of funds aimed to help immigrants. Thus, for example, at Urban Nations we do not provide help learning English to those who refuse to have it taught to them using the Bible.

Secondly, we have to discipline ourselves to discriminate — not against but between. We must discriminate between those who show themselves to be abusers of a merciful disposition and those who do not. We must not be so soft-headed as to take the wide road which resents all immigrants because of the sins of some.

Third, we have to bear in mind that it is a *joy* to fulfill God's commands. Helping immigrants in the Name of our Savior is a privilege and delight, as is the doing of all God's Word.

Fourth, this command from Deuteronomy 10:19 is a timely one to focus on, especially for those of us in larger cities. One-in-three New Yorkers is foreign-born. And dwell on this: New Yorkers who are either foreign-born or the children of foreign-born comprise 53% of this city's population.

We would *love* for the federal and other governments to get out of the way and let the church do her work in this sector. It would make our ministry infinitely easier. But we will not just rub our hands together and wait, nor sit idly by while this Providential window is opened so wide.

God has commanded us to reach the nations. He has commanded us to love the alien. Looks like we've got two mints in one.

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Classical Propositions For Pop Churches

By Monte E. Wilson

In 1972 I was defrocked by a denomination which had very ambivalent feelings about frocking. Apparently, the Southern Baptist Church, which had licensed me to preach, was not enamored of ecumenicism, long-haired low-tithers, praying for the sick, or having their dispensationalism questioned. Thus began my journey in search of what I then called, "Serious Christianity."

I took a long and arduous hike through modern Evangelicalism where I met believers who had emasculated the gospel, others who had an uncanny resemblance to New Agers, denominations who were proud of having turned the world over to the devil, and movements that seemed to think that the church was for a previous dispensation. To exacerbate this confusion, there was anti-intellectualism, pietism, escapism and individualism running rampant, so much so that these qualities could easily be referred to as the "defining attributes" of Evangelicalism, not minor problems of which we should simply be aware.

I have no intention of being unduly critical. I am immensely grateful for all the deposits of truth I received from the many denominations in which I ministered. However, I was looking for a place to "fit in," a "context for living out the truth of Scriptures"; but I did not find it in these places. It was always a case of having "this" but not "that": and the "that" was something critical.

While studying for my doctorate in Ministry, I ran across a little book by Thomas Oden, *After Modernity. . . . What?* In it he used the descriptive phrase: Classical Christianity (a.k.a., Ecumenical Orthodoxy). He was referring to that epoch during the first 1,000 years of the church's history which saw the penning of the Six Ecumenical Creeds, the development of canon law and the crafting of liturgies. My heart cried, "Eureka! I have found where I fit, where I believe the church should be headed, a paradigm on which to build." The problem was that it had ceased to exist centuries ago! Then, lo and behold, it was revived by Calvin...but then, alas, murdered by revivalists.

Where to Now?

My belief was and is that Institutional Evangelicalism is dead and will not be revived. I am not going to tell you how I think we can turn all this around because I believe God has other plans. My burden is to find a model from which we can build for the future; a paradigm which is firmly rooted in First

Things: the nature of God, the worshipping community and its mission in a pagan world. Such a paradigm can be found in *Classical Christianity.*

Classical Christianity developed within a hostile, pagan world. It wrestled with those same things we wrestle with now. It dealt with solutions to the problems we are facing. Classical Christianity emphasized communion with the Triune God and incorporation into the New Kingdom, the Family of God. It was all about Big Picture Stuff: the doctrines and practices needed to establish the church, invigorate her worship, strengthen her unity and ignite her witness: the sorts of things with which we must struggle in our present milieu.

The first millennium focused on the nature of God and the community of Christ. It took apostolic teachings and traditions and sought to develop their implications for all of life. It sought to craft a worship service which would point those who worshipped to the God of Truth, Holiness and Beauty and to the Son whom He sent to redeem the world, thus, putting the believer in a place to be filled with God the Holy Spirit. It created programs to care for the poor and the widow, established church courts to which even the pagans resorted. Accordingly, it transformed nations.

On a very practical level we must face the fact that, whatever it is modern church-ville is doing for its members, they are not increasing in holiness or in evangelistic effectiveness. Furthermore, the Evangelical church is not a city set on a hill or a light to the nations but just another night club act in suburbia fighting for its share of the market. What can we do to turn this around? What can we do to reform our local churches so that they are God-glorifying, Bible-directed, Christ-exalting and Spirit-empowered communities of servants/disciples? How can we prepare for effective service in the Third Millennium?

What I offer here is embryonic. I have no illusions about having arrived at a destination. I am, however, certain that I have arrived at a beginning place, a place from which we can move into the future and meet the challenges and opportunities which it will offer the Church of Jesus Christ.

Orthodoxy Must Be The Central Focus of Our Message

That which unites must take precedence over what distinguishes. This is not to say that other doctrines are not important or should be ignored, only that what is central must *be* central. We must go back to the Ecumenical Creeds: the Apostles', Nicene, Chalcedon, Athanasian. We must study them and consider their implications for what we believe and how we worship and live. We must raise the standard of orthodoxy before our people and be certain that First Things Are First: that what one believes about the Trinity is more important than what he believes about the gift of tongues; that the dual nature of Christ is seen as an infinitely more important doctrine than, say, the name of your "personal guardian angel."

Evangelicals are ignorant of Apostolic Traditions and, therefore, are susceptible to the errors already defeated or at least exposed by the Church Fathers.

A small thing is not a small thing when it leads to something great, and it is no small matter to forsake the ancient tradition of the church which was upheld by all those who were called before us, whose conduct we should observe, and whose faith we should imitate.

We Must War Against Heresy

Doctrinal pluralism must be washed out of our people. Tragically, many do not know the difference between heresy and orthodoxy. The attitude among many Christians seems to be "Orthodoxy is what I believe; heresy is what is contrary to my beliefs." Actually, today heresy is an inoperative notion in churches which prize the idea of every person doing and believing whatever is right in his own eyes.

In a theological battle I had with some followers of Ken Copeland, a local pastor of good spirit but questionable training asked me why it was of such moment whether or not Jesus was born-again in hell. What sort of gospel is this man going to offer? How well-equipped for battle are those persons whom this man pastors? Play with the doctrine of the Trinity and you mess with the foundations of civilization. If you do not believe this, I recommend Rushdoony's *Foundations of Social Order.* Fail to saturate church members in doctrines such as the Incarnation and the Atonement and they are left naked and defenseless before error and the sorts of over-emphasis that are threatening the unity of the church.

The Church Must be Steeped in the Word

Theology is important because we must speak to Him and witness for Him in an appropriate manner.

Our worship services should drip with Scripture. We should read it, sing it, pray it and hear it taught, as well as eat it every Sunday. We must become intoxicated on His Word.

You cannot read too much in Scripture; and what you read you cannot read too carefully, and what you read carefully you cannot understand too well, and what you understand well you cannot teach too well, and what you teach well you cannot live too well.

Observe the average Christian's decision-making process ("just hear from God"), listen to their prayers (halting and shallow), consider whom they quote the most (a spiritual guru or the Bible?). The Word of God must regain a central place in our communities; and this will necessitate a re-thinking of the psychologies, the political ideologies and various market forces which, heretofore, have been central.

What is at the center of modern Evangelicalism? Whatever the market dictates: 12-Step Programs, sermons on How To Be Successful or How To Maintain Our Comfort Zones . . . whatever the pollsters tell us is the sexiest message of the moment. With this orientation, we are failing to be the pillar and support of God's Truth. We have replaced the rock of orthodoxy with the jello of man's desires and agendas. We must stress that the church is One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.

There is One Head, so there in One Body. She is Holy because her Head is Holy and because her mission is Holy. We are Catholic because the church is universal: it includes males and females, all races, and all Christians of all times. The

church is Apostolic because her roots, her very foundation stones, are the teachings of the apostles.

We are the minority. We are outnumbered, out-maneuvered and out-financed. Are we rallying the troops? No. We are isolating ourselves into over 25,000 different denominations. When we approach other Christians do we begin with where we are in agreement or do we immediately zero in on our differences? What is more critical to us: the teachings of the Apostles or the newest wiz-bang revelation to come out of Tulsa or Toronto?

On the mission field missionaries of all denominational stripes work closely together. There's nothing like persecution, loneliness and overwhelming opportunity to bring brothers together. I believe we shall be witnessing such circumstances here in Babylon USA in the not-too-distant future.

Do we have a sense of being a part of the Catholic church; One Body, One Faith, One Lord, One God and Father of us all? The cry seems to be, "That's not good enough! We must be on the cutting edge, join the church-of-what's-happening-now, be one of God's Green Berets. A part of the Holy Catholic Church? How boring, how nondescript, how average." How *Biblical.*

Restore the Church as a Worshipping Community

Being the House of Prayer means more than turning our churches into every individual's private prayer closet, which seems to be a very popular paradigm in evangelical circles. We are to be a worshipping community. We are not a revival center; not a home group meeting in a sanctuary; not a franchise for some 12-Step Program; and not an arm of the Republican or Democratic Party. Any of these activities can be good but they are not to define us.

What is our paradigm for Sunday worship? Where do we go to learn how to craft our worship services? What are the parameters? What can we do and what must we not do in a "church gathering" (*1 Cor. 11:18*)? Is Sunday worship optional? Is worship primarily an act or an experience? What do we see as being central to special worship: the Pulpit? the Lord's Table? the Altar (prayer)? or is it the Music? Do we realize that "all the above" is the correct answer?

The apostles went to the Old Testament, sifted the practices through New Testament revelation and, Voila! New Testament Worship. The church (Classical Christianity) took what the apostles passed down and carried out the implications of their instructions. For example, the apostles celebrated Pentecost each year; therefore, the church developed a calendar which would annually take her members through the Big Events of the Christian Faith. As with the Old Testament worship service, so with the New Testament. Certain things must be done or acted upon. We must enter into His gates with thanksgiving, His courts with praise. We must pray for those in authority, for the sick, etc. We must eat the covenant meal. Worship services were crafted to see to it that we did not forget to do what we were told to do. After all, as R. J. Rushdoony has written, "Worship is not a matter of taste but of obedience."

Jesus gives us two options and only two: Either we are a House of Prayer or a Den of Thieves. We are either seeking to give Him all glory or we are, however "innocently,"robbing Him of His glory so that we can enthrone our own agendas.

Re-explain the Doctrine of the Priesthood of the Believer

Old Testament priests always operated in unity with other priests, under the direct oversight of God and God's representatives. Individualism must not go unchallenged. We have so emphasized individual accountability — every person's responsibility to hear from God — that each believer sees himself as his own magisterium, each deciding what is Truth and what is not. American Christians actually believe that a democratic form of government is Biblical until their opinions are voted against. They then will begin another in a long series of searches for "more spiritual people," *i.e.,* people who agree with them.

Where is any sense for the necessity of stewarding the deposit of Faith delivered once and for all to the church? Where is reverence for what the Catholic church has held to for century after century? There is very little appreciation for what the Spirit has been saying for 2,000 years and how He led the church. There is no idea concerning the corporate nature of the priesthood and of its responsibility to steward Truth, not create it. This anarchy must be reigned in by dealing with the root causes.

What the Reformers were saying to the church of their day was that we believers do not have to go through an ordained priest in order to seek God's blessing. All of us are priests, so we should seek out our fellow-priests. The doctrine of the Priesthood of the Believer does not say, "I need no one but Jesus." What it does say is that "I do not need a magician, a special man, God's anointed to pray for me." All believers are special. The doctrine also stressed the necessity of loving one another, serving one another, caring for one another. The Body of Christ was not summed up in the priest, but in *all* priests.

Restore Spiritual Authority to Elders

When the writer of Hebrews exhorts believers to "obey those who have the authority over you," he is not simply echoing a concept which passed away with the twelve apostles. Elders have been vested with authority in matters of theology, morality and the welfare of the communities they oversee. We must stop all the knee-jerk reaction to past abuses and get on with defining, training and releasing our elders to be elders. People must be inspired toward and instructed in their responsibilities to the church and her officers. The local church is the context of truth where we as Christians live out our confessions of faith. Do we love the family of God? Then it will show up here. Must we "submit one to another"? Such submission will demonstrate itself here in the local community.

If we are going to allow elders to be elders then we must revive the instruments of church covenants and confessions. Exactly what is it to which we are holding people accountable? What do the elders have to maintain as sound doctrine or be relieved of their office? To what are members expected to be faithful? Spell it out. Unwritten commitments and confessions are breeding grounds for manipulation, illegal expectations and anarchy.

Recommit to Apostolic Commission

We are to go out and make disciples of all nations. How shall we do this? By reaching individuals with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, seeing the Holy Spirit regenerate these individuals and then training these new converts in the teachings of Jesus Christ. However, we no longer live in a nation which is largely Christianized. In fact, we no longer live in a nation which is even friendly to Christianity. We live in Babylon and must begin to think, live and evangelize accordingly.

In post-apostolic times, when Christians were the minority and were seen as suspicious characters, they opened the eyes and ears of those they wished to reach via works of mercy, *e.g.*, caring for the poor, the widows and the orphans, providing courts where justice was honored. Confrontational evangelism (in-your-face-evangelism) was practiced, but only by a few. The vast majority acted more like "spies" in the midst of an alien culture. Of course, that is what they were. They loved God, led quiet lives, became the best servants, influenced through integrity and shared their Faith when appropriate. In the time of the Reformation, people could "hear" the message of Luther and Calvin because they were, to some degree, a God-fearing people. At least they were inculcated with a form of Christian culture. The Reformation grew out of the milieu of the medieval church. Today, we are no longer "growing out of" anything which is even remotely Biblical. We must face this fact or we will be preaching into a vacuum.

The modern audience is not familiar with concepts of law, justice or atonement. They are not even familiar with the Bible. When we appeal to them with these ideas they simply stare out into the dark. Look at our audience. Are they searching for justification? Yes, but not in terms with which we are familiar. What they are searching for is to belong, to be connected to a small family, to discover a safe place from the horrors of a disintegrating culture. In other words, they are looking for reconciliation and restoration. They want a father and a family. Our message and methodologies must speak to these real-life situations.

As we reach out to the world, we must cease supporting mission projects that were developed with a mind-set and theology that is "foreign" to the needs of our times. Why do we still send money to projects which encourage perpetual dependency on American support? Why do we support men and women who are declaring a message that is the antithesis of the one to which we adhere? Why do we support ministries which cannot seem to get it through their heads that Ozzie and Harriet are dead? That crusades, gospel-track blitzes, and Shakespearean English do not change nations?

Create Collegiums of Elders

I realize that some ministers have a support system in place . . . technically speaking. The problem is that most ministers do not have one that works. Seeking to be an authentic, Biblically-based pastor is one of the hardest, most painful jobs in America today. Such men are in for unbelievable heartache and, therefore, need the counsel, strength, gifts and wisdom of other like-minded men.

I often use the picture of the Knights of the Round Table as a help in explaining what I am envisioning here. What elders need is a Round Table of like minded and like-missioned men who give mutual support through the strengths of their gifts and life. Certainly everyone must be committed to his path whether or not he has the support of others. However, such isolation is neither ideal nor safe.

Such extra-local elders could help with the screening of ordinands, serve as counsel in time of conflicts and "be there" to help "pastor the pastor." Pastors often find themselves isolated and need to be tied into a larger family of ministers. Whether or not this configuration of men — this Round Table — has ecclesiastical authority over those involved is a question for each association to answer for itself.

Schism Must Be as Hated as Heresy

"He shall also judge those who give rise to schisms, who are destitute of the love of God, and who look to their own special advantage rather than to the unity of the Church; and who for trifling reasons . . . cut in pieces and divide the great and glorious body of Christ, and so far as in them lies, destroy it — men who prate peace while they give rise to war, and do in truth strain out a gnat, but swallow a camel." Irenaeus, *Against Heresies,* 4.33.7, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:508.

Pharisaical self-righteousness, gossip and slander, ministers who disregard the discipline of other churches without grounds for doing so, hyper-reformists who go around ostensibly ripping out tares while in reality destroying wheat and other such wrong-headed actions and people must be marked before our congregations. People must be warned of such behavior. Of course, those who do warn their flocks will be accused of divisiveness. However, we cannot be dissuaded by foolish mush heads. The church is not a club. It is the Body Of Christ. Touch it and you are touching Jesus. Factiousness is no small sin. It fractures the Body of Christ.

I believe it is necessary to constantly remind ourselves that there is no such thing as wheat field without tares. Perfectionism is not a Biblical concept. Paul referred to the infamous Corinthians as saints. We must stay away from an over-zealous commitment to turning the church into boot camps filled with Green Berets for Jesus.

One of the sins of youthful ministers (I know first hand!) is to think that they can speak the words and change will occur instantaneously . . . or at least in their lifetime. This is a dangerous mentality which can frustrate a substantial amount of progress. Jesus did not see a full-blown church in His earthly life. What He did see was His disciples scatter when the going got tough! Paul was executed before he could evaluate the fruit of his labor.

People who seek to bring in Utopia or the Millennium always end up either practicing some form of tyranny or succumbing to cynicism. This nation needs to see authentic Christianity, communities of believers that declare and demonstrate that This is The Way of the Lord. The church must be disenculturated and take its place as a city set on a hill. We must disentangle ourselves from modern church-o-roma and offer the nation the real thing: Classical Christianity.

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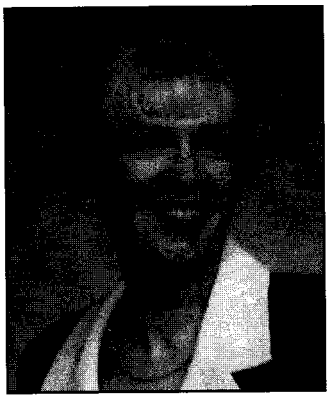
On the Great Commission

By Abby Oberst



And Jesus came and spoke unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

(Matthew 28:18-20)

Matthew 28:19 is among the "linchpin" verses of the Christian Faith. Once saved and knitted into the fellowship of the beloved, the new believer is supernaturally drawn to the Great Commission as his natural assignment. He is to go and *make disciples* — sharing with others the Gospel (the *good news*) of Jesus Christ. Perhaps more than in any other portion of Scripture, the *treatment* of this passage — its interpretation and exposition — illustrates the theological distinctives between the modern evangelical church and the historic, orthodox Faith.

If such words as "hermeneutics" and "exegesis" make you shrink in discomfort, remember that rightly dividing the Word of truth is a requirement of all of us. These high-sounding terms simply refer to the interpretation of Scripture. Alas, the "Great Commission" has been reduced to the "great omission" due to the faulty hermeneutic of a pietistic, twentieth-century church.

Rule Number One may well be: *Don't take verses out of context.* What is happening here and now? Jesus has returned, resurrected, and is giving His disciples His final admonition. Note that, just *before* he "commissions" them, He proclaims: **All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.** Christ Himself does not hint that His preeminence or reign will occur at some future date (after the church has been beaten up by the devil), but exists now. In heaven and *in earth.* Heaven and earth are rightly His (a *fait accompli,* as the French would say: an accomplished fact).

Now comes the key and most abused verse: **go ye therefore, and teach all nations;** or as some versions render it, **make disciples of all nations.** Each word here is pregnant with Bible truth, not the least of which is the word "therefore." Therefore, referring to what? *To the fact that all power is His,* that heaven and earth are His, and that we are (*therefore*) to exercise these facts as believers. Herein lies the **real** great, commission.

Coming of Age

For those of us who have come out of the unarticulated feel-good faith typical of the church today and into creedal orthodoxy, there have been some notable, new, concepts to embrace. One of these is the dawning idea of the *corporate* or *public* intent of the promises of Scripture over and above the *personal* and *private.* Thanks to the pietistic exegesis of Scripture after Scripture (by pastor after pastor, year after year), most of us viewed everything from covenant, to holiness, to evangelism, as essentially *individual* functions in the past. How did we manage to gloss over the multitude of references to "nations" and to "peoples" and to "generations"? Indeed, how can 90-something percent of the pulpits today continue to disregard the corporate nature of the Christian life, or of the very Bible itself? Once we grasp the intent of the Word to apply to *peoples* — over and above the self-centered believer — we are baffled that others choose to ignore the corporate nature of the Gospel as they do.

Mass evangelism has forgotten the greatness, the totality, of the Great commission and has been satisfied with fire insurance instead. If we were truly making disciples, we would see more fruit in the cultures "reached for Christ." Period.

Our fathers in the Faith understood the wider scope of the prerequisites and promises of God, and would be dumbfounded at the bless-us-four-and-no-more heresy of the typical Christian family today. They knew that nations were to be brought into conformity to the commandments of God, and were, typically, outward looking. It was all part-and-parcel of their understanding of covenant. Their exploits, over which we marvel, were inspired by an extroverted, corporate faith — not introverted, introspective, "personal" holiness. Read the Bible! Read the historic covenants! Read the letters, journals, documents!

The fact that our fathers also (rightly) understood that God's Word applies to *believer* and *unbeliever alike* demolished the abominable notion that we Christians have no right to "impose" our "religious beliefs" on those around us. Ralph Reed's brand of political pragmatism would be grounds for treason to the great reformers, and for certain untimely death in the Bible. We have *every right* to assert the law-word of God to the Christian *and* to the infidel, precisely *because* all power in heaven and earth belong to Him whose name we bear.

Go, Fight, Win?

The "go" in "go-ye-therefore" has meant go away, go far, and go it alone, to most of the church for two centuries. The covenant idea of succession, the passing on of the Faith by making disciples of our children (lots of them) has certainly been lost for a long time. The emphasis has been on making *converts*. While the saints who have labored in foreign and domestic mission fields for two hundred years deserve crowns for their unimaginable sacrifices and service, the commission of Christ has at least as much to do with commandments as with converts.

With all the reach-every-people-group-by-the-year-2000 goals in the church today, our missionary effectiveness is pitiful. We have dropped *the last half of the Great Commission.*

The large "evangelistic meeting" has also been a vehicle for making converts for some time. We cannot ignore the effectiveness of this tactic, insofar as the preaching of God's Word has been used for His election purposes for those who have ears to hear. The *validity* of this brand of evangelism, however, regarding the Great Commission, is in direct proportion to its fidelity to the *whole* commission. Is the culture changed with all the converts? Are the nations being reformed by the converts? Lately, mass evangelism has forgotten the greatness, the totality, of the Great commission and has been satisfied with fire insurance instead. If we were truly making disciples, we would see more fruit in the cultures "reached for Christ." Period.

We contemplate, in awe, the days of the Great Awakening on our own soil, or of the great revivals of the ages. Yet they are not so mysterious after all, when with a closer look, we see what actually happened.

Revival, Spiritual Awakening and Societal Reformation

One of the most provocative and productive studies one can undertake is to read the accounts in Scripture of the revivals among God's people. It is eminently clear that great revival (and then spiritual awakening among the heathen) is *always* preceded by the recovery and public pronouncement of God's commandments. Likewise, in historic revival through the ages, it is the Law Word — replete with the goodness *and* severity of God — that brings what the pietistic pundits would attribute to a "move of the Spirit."

There is no doubt that the third Person of the Trinity visits, manifestly, in times of conversions. He is our promised, indwelling, paraclete — as we bow our hearts to Christ. The truth, however, that "signs" *follow the reading or preaching of the Word* (*Mk. 16:20,* etc.) is undeniable. What Word? The Word of God. The unedited, unabridged, Word of God. Read the sermons of the preachers of the Great Awakening. Is it any wonder that the Holy Spirit was quick and active as these instruments of God faithfully proclaimed His Word? Did these preachers toil over "seeker-sensitive" messages, or simply obediently perform Christ's instructions: "teach all nations . . . to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you"?

It is not much of an intellectual stretch to put together what we know to be the theology of the American church for the past nearly two centuries, and then calculate her effectiveness in the Great Commission. Yes, we have sent out more missionaries than any other nation in the history of the world. Yes, we have done more "good" around the world than any other nation. But who is *winning*? Are the *nations* in Africa, India, Central and South America, Asia, or Europe for that matter, more *Christian* in the 1990s (with all of their "converts") than they were before the great mission organizations were spawned in the 1800s? Are there more *disciples*?

If the *THEOLOGY* of the sending organization is Arminian, premillennial, dispensational, pietistic and ascetic, then the preaching of its missionaries will be Arminian, premillennial, dispensational, pietistic and ascetic. They will produce Arminian, premillennial, dispensational, pietistic, ascetic *converts* — not world-changing disciples of Christ with the equipment and the guts to advance the Crown Rights of the King of kings. With all the reach-every-people-group-by-the-year-2000 goals in the church today, our missionary effectiveness is pitiful. We have *dropped* the last half of the Great Commission.

We can trace the (im)potency of our modern missionary efforts directly to the heresies that infected the church in the nineteenth century. Only God knows what proportion of the saints who are currently in Christian "vocations" are completely indoctrinated in the law-is-bad/grace-is-good error. The purpose here is not to expound on the correct Puritan views that *all* vocations and avocations are kingdom-cause related, that the Law is gracious, and that grace is law-filled. The aim is not to list the errors in the church today. The point is that error is transmitted from seminary to pulpit to believer to convert. The result is legion upon legion of infantile, cowardly converts who are only following the lead of "evangelists" who debunk the commandments of God as being contrary to grace.

All Things Whatsoever I Have Commanded You

It would be preaching to the choir to delineate the "all things" that Christ intended when He instructed His disciples to teach all nations what He had commanded. We all ought to be convinced of the unity of Scripture, and of the blessings promised to the people who keep His commandments. It remains a puzzle, however, that so much of the church can tip-toe around His meaning in Matthew 28, when it is so clearly based on the immutable, Old-and-New-Testament law. What

else, on earth (or in heaven) would it be? Our Great Commission is plain: to teach all nations to observe *all* that He commands us to do, baptizing them ("immersing" them) in the Trinity, and to bear the name of, the living Triune God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

All Nations, Under God

Finally, let's take a look at what Matthew 28 does *not* say. It does not say: go ye therefore, and teach all churches, or teach all Sunday school classes, or teach all Christians, but teach all *nations,* all that Christ has commanded us. Nations, by nature, are social entities, political entities, economic entities, cultural entities, ethnic entities. To presume that we can accomplish the Great Commission while confining our "fellowship" to those around us in the pews and prayer meetings is utter nonsense.

We can trace the (im)potency of our modern missionary efforts directly to the heresies that infected the church in the nineteenth century.

We must view the Great Commission in terms of impacting the national life of any nation we inhabit. The arts, education, technologies, political arenas, must all be reached with His commandments. How? By the vigorous participation in all of these areas by the elect of God. Our very presence, of necessity, teaches others. God *always* provides opportunities to teach others. While some of us will be commissioned to go elsewhere, most of us will fulfill or reject the call right where we live.

The "Great Commission" has been misunderstood, misdirected and misused. It is one restatement of Jesus' great conclusion to the beatitudes; that is, that we are to be salt and light to the nations — as His people, a city set on a hill. We cannot be what He wants us to be if we are embarrassed about His commandments, or apologetic about the consequences of refusing Him. When the church zealously embraces His commandments, embodied in all of Scripture — and with zeal proclaims them — then we shall see the nations baptized, awash in the blessings of the Triune God. As long as the church tries to side-step the commandments, with the despicable falsehood that "the law" is dead, the Great Commission will remain the romantic notion of a few missionaries. *With* proper esteem for the second half of Christ's instructions, "teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you," we have His promise that He is present with His church to complete the task, even unto the end of the world. *Amen.*

Abby Oberst is a member of Shiloh Christian Church, and serves as its bulletin editor. She currently teaches high school English and history at a Christian day school.

Divine Judgment, Christian Opportunity: A Christian Political Speech

By Tristan Emmanuel

If I got a vote for everyone who ever said to me "a vote for you and your party is a lost vote," I kid you not, not only would I be sitting in the House of Commons, but my seat would be secured for the next five elections. Now, you may think I'm overstating the case; but if so, I overstate it only to emphasize that the opposition to Christian politics is overwhelming. The worst part is that the majority of the criticism raised against the Christian Heritage Party comes from Christians. It seems as though Christians have a greater problem with our party, and Christian politics in general, than do the feminists, or homosexual activists, who in no way are our friends but acknowledge that a political agenda must be consistent with a world view. For instance, the feminists' world view glorifies the status of women and thus proposes a political policy sensitive to their dogma. The Christian Heritage Party does the same: we endeavor to develop political policies that coincide with an orthodox Christian view of life, so why the overwhelming criticism from fellow believers?

Without admitting that our critics are correct in their assessment of our party, perhaps part of the criticism they launch is not without merit. What I'm suggesting is that part of the reason for the overwhelming criticism exists because *we are unable to convince them that we know what we are doing.* I think that if we were honest with ourselves we'd have to admit that at times we leave people confused about our purpose. At times we are so carried away with the euphoria of optimism that we induce ourselves with visions of victory in the near future, and then we openly acknowledge that we won't win, at least any time soon. On the one hand we talk about being a political party concerned with political issues and then we turn around and act like a para-church ministry — just another branch of the institutional church. We confuse people unnecessarily and as a result we're criticized by brother and foe alike. And it's a vicious cycle, isn't it? We're laughed at, mocked and criticized to such a point that we go home questioning ourselves and wondering, What are we all about? Are we a movement, a cause, a mission, or are we a political party?

Politics and Christian Culture

Let me tell you what I think we're about. We're about re-

establishing a Christian culture in Canada. This means that we seek to be faithful to God in the political arena since we are a political party. As a political party we press the "Crown Rights" of King Jesus in the sphere of politics; we do not, however, press ecclesiastical or church matters in the political arena. We do not concern ourselves with a church's form or worship, style of government or its theological tradition. We're about being political salt and light in a world that prefers political dung and darkness. And we're about being faithful to this calling even though all around us it appears as though we are fighting a losing battle. I want to emphasize the word "appears" here. It only appears as though we are losing the battle. In actuality we're winning. Our victory is a present reality and a progressive manifestation, but I'm not here to talk about eschatology; I'm here to help us understand the nature of our calling. Jesus said to his disciples that if "a servant can be trusted with small matters, then he can be trusted with larger matters" (*Mt. 25:21*). I believe that if we remain faithful in the small political matters, if we faithfully press the "Crown Rights" of King Jesus, I am confident that one day we will be given the opportunity to be faithful in large political matters.

So how do we silence our critics who say we have no idea what we're about? How do we remain faithful in the small matters? How do we once for all time put to rest the idea that we are a church mission in politics? In answering these questions we need to address two very important issues. First, we need to be wise to our culture; we need to recognize the state of our culture. And second, we need to seize the opportunities our culture affords us.

The Foretaste of National Judgment

Someone once asked me, "Tristan, why is it that we have to pay for the injustices heaped upon our society, even though we did nothing to bring this about?" A fair question. Why do good people suffer the injustices of evil political policy? Why is it, for instance, that I have no choice but to support a school system I want nothing to do with? Why can't I just divert the funds to the school of my choice? Why, for that matter, does the civil government tax for this service in the first place since it has yet to be demonstrated to me that God has commissioned the government to educate children. Why must we suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous liberal policy, and why must we be made to pay for it? It's the political equivalent to, "Why do bad things happen to good people?" To answer these questions and many more like them let us begin by understanding the state of our culture.

The apostle Peter once said, "For judgment begins with the family of God, and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God?" (*1 Pet. 4:17*). This is a fascinating passage, and for us tonight it reveals two significant factors.

Peter tells us that when divine judgment begins, it begins with the "house of God." It begins with Christians. In effect, Peter is arguing that the evidence that a culture is experiencing divine judgment is found in the systematic persecution of Christians. Christians' suffering is the first sign that divine judgment visits a culture.

Now, it is important to note that even though Peter was writing to Christians who were experiencing great physical terror and threat at the hands of the Romans, it is incorrect to identify Christian suffering exclusively in terms of physical pain and assault. Suffering in this case does not necessarily take a physical form. When a culture systematically eradicates its Christian view of life, when it eradicates its Christian consensus of right and wrong, when it obliterates its Christian view of justice, it ought to be abundantly obvious to Christians that the birth pangs of divine judgment are on that culture. If our country systematically rejects these Christian concepts of a just society, as it has, what do you think will happen next? If our nation can reject the concept of Christian truth, we can assume that in time it can and will reject us as free citizens and do with us as so many nations in the past have done. Judgment, says Peter, begins with the suffering of Christians.

Now the lesson for us tonight is not that we should expect persecution or suffering. I don't want us to focus on the suffering of Christians. Peter's point is that if judgment begins with Christians, then, rest assured, the judgment of non-Christians is certain. If God will not spare His own from judgment, then He will certainly not spare non-Christians. When God judged Judah and Israel, did he not also judge Babylon, the Chaldeans, and Rome? And today, when Christian pro-lifers are treated with the same malicious intent that the judicial system affords a true criminal, do you think this treatment will go unanswered? And when our politicians contend daily to eradicate Christ from the state, do you think the King of kings will idly sit by? God will balance the books. But it is not merely an issue of balancing the books. It is not merely a matter of "Oh, well, tit for tat": a Christian suffers; therefore, a non-Christian must suffer. No, Peter's point is deeper then that. Not only is their judgment certain; Peter implies that their judgment will certainly be severe.

Do we glory in this? Do we revel in this? Do we leap for joy that our culture is "gonna get it and get it good!" It is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of The Angry God. No, we praise God that He is just and that He will not allow their heinous acts to go unpunished, but all in all, we pity them. I pity Prime Minister John Chretean and his sidekick Justice Minister Allan Rock. I pity them because if they do not swiftly change their course of direction, if they do not swiftly recognize the Kingship of Christ, as Psalm 2 indicates they must, then for every day they remain in office and legislate God-hating principles into law they heap divine wrath, upon wrath, upon wrath, upon wrath, upon wrath, upon wrath onto themselves. You know, it would be better for them to perish and experience God's judgment now, than to allow the principle of compounded judgment to take effect. Sad to say, they've already dug their grave; and if they don't recognize Christ now, they'll keep digging it deeper.

Peter says that when judgment begins with Christians it envelops our non-Christian culture with all the severity that God's unrestrained wrath can muster.

My friends, I think my point is obvious. Canada is a nation under the judgment of God Almighty. Canada is on a collision course with divine judgment as surely as day follows night.

What makes me so certain? The reasons are manifold; however, for those of you who are less impressed, for those of you who need evidence, I offer one issue in particular because as I see it, this issue ultimately depicts Canada's final demise. It is this issue which ultimately indicates that Canada has self-consciously rejected Christianity's social implications.

A Test Issue

Twenty years ago our country's top brass changed the nature of Canadian justice. Do you remember Mr. Pierre Elliott Trudeau, Canada's political sweetheart, the father of our modern culture? At that time he was serving as Minister of Justice. Being an "enlightened man," "a man of this age" and politically ambitious, he believed Canada's legal code was far too archaic and needed some serious revamping. There was one issue in particular that he decided needed radical alteration. For Canada to prove that it was a nation of tolerance, equality and open-mindedness, a nation that has "come of age," as he said, Canada would have to alter its position on homosexuality. As far as Trudeau was concerned, the state had no business prying into the privacy of Canadians. Whatever happened behind closed doors was the business of consenting adults, not the government. Government, he postulated, cannot dictate sexual morality. Rather it must provide an environment of toleration and freedom. Thus, with the stroke of a pen, Trudeau literally canceled a hundred years of English jurisprudence in Canada.

So that there is no confusion on our part, that part of English common law which discriminates against the practice of sodomy and found in Canada's legal code at the time was not based on human speculation or tradition. It was based upon the Old Testament maxim, "Thou shalt not lie with mankind as with womankind: it is an abomination." (*Lev. 18:22*). Up to this point in Canadian history, Canada had remained compliant; but with the stroke of a pen, Pierre "the pontiff" Elliott, in the name of Saint "Open-mindedness," rejected God's standards for social decency and rigorously enforced the doctrine of "tolerance." How unironic, isn't it?, that we find the latest Liberal government of Canada picking up where the old left off. Now they press the predecessors' gay agenda a step further by insisting that we not only stop punishing sodomites but endorse their behavior with "special rights." Oh, how the words of Paul ring so imminent when he said, "although they know God's righteous decree . . . that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them" (*Rom. 1:32*).

In the name of "Open-mindedness," our legislators have closed the Canadian mind to Christian morality and brought upon us all the condemnation of God. Our nation is on a collision course with the wrath of God as sure as night follows day because with the endorsement of sodomy, Canada has officially embraced the final phase of human depravity. Our God is a tolerant God. That is, he is slow to anger. But there is a limit to everything, including the patience of God. God will not suffer these offenses for long. He will not allow the official endorsement of sodomy to go unanswered. Canada will suffer the same fate that Canaan did. As God revealed to Moses, because of the abomination of these sexual crimes, the very land of Canaan would vomit out the inhabitants. Sodomy is the result of a nation which refuses to recognize the knowledge of God, in a social sense at least, and thus God gives its people over to a debased mind, to practice every kind of sexual perversion. But giving us over to sodomy is not the judgment in and of itself. That is, homosexuality is not the final verdict. Whether by natural disaster, economic collapse, foreign invasion or pestilence, God will deal with a nation which openly sanctions the practice of sodomy.

Christian Opportunities

I realize that this is hard statement, but we need not despair our culture's state. Though it is a sad thing, it presents us with opportunities. The issue of homosexuality allows us to press the "Crown Rights" of King Jesus in the political realm and thereby bring glory to His name. Now, I'm not talking about the church here and the role she must play. I want to be clear on this matter. The institutional church has a role to play as well, but it is completely different from ours as a political party, even though the Christian Heritage Party is explicitly Christian. Whereas the institutional church presses matters of repentance, mercy, faith and forgiveness, **we press matters of justice.** While the church shows a sinner, indeed a criminal, how he can escape God's eternal wrath by clinging to the Lamb of God and our High Priest, we seek the enforcement of God's temporal wrath, as Paul argues: that those who do evil must fear God's minister of justice for he does not bear the sword in vain but must use it against all civil evildoers (*Rom. 13:14*). The church presses Christ the High Priest; we press Christ the KING.

The Silence of the Church

Speaking of the church, tell me, what opportunities have been presented to the church as a result of the civil enforcement of the gay agenda over the last twenty years? Let me put it another way. What has been the response of the church in general over the last twenty years concerning the gay agenda? Exactly, silence.

As a political party we have the opportunity to undo twenty years of silence. We have the opportunity to present the Biblical view of homosexuality. The question remains, are we prepared to be Biblical? Are we prepared to present not only the moral truth, that homosexuality is a sin, but that the act of sodomy bears judicial consequences? Speaking as a political party, and not speaking as the church, are we prepared to call it a crime again and reunite our party with English common law, the very heritage we pride ourselves in? Are we going to be the Christian *Her-it-age* Party all the time, or only when it suits us? Are we going to make this a health issue or a judicial issue? Are we going to be Biblical or pragmatic? The choice is ours.

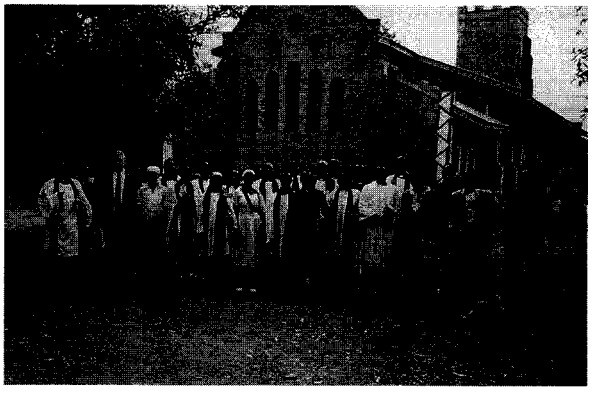
Is there merit in the criticism of our proponents? Yes, when we speak as a political church: when we talk about political mercy and forgiveness; when we talk about being a ministry of reconciliation between provinces rather than talking about being a ministry of justice; or when we talk about providing services that God has not sanctioned the state to provide. When we speak like this, then there is merit in the criticism against our party. But when we seek to press the political implications of

our Faith; when we seek justice; when we press the "Crown Rights" of the KING of kings, then let the criticism come! We have nothing to be ashamed of. We are pointing people to our legitimate calling and purpose. We are pointing our nation to the truth as it applies to politics; and if we remain faithful in this task, Jesus Christ has promised that to him who is faithful in the little that is required, much will be rewarded. My dear friends, the gates of our hellish culture cannot and will not prevail when we press the "Crown Rights" of Jesus Christ, LORD of lords and KING of kings.

Tristan Emmanuel lives in St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada with his wife Kathryn and three sons, Joshua, Michael and Jonathan. Mr. Emmanuel, a graduate of Ontario Bible College and Theological Seminary with a Bachelor in Religious Studies, has been very active in the political scene on both the provincial and federal level. He was the Deputy Leader of the Family Coalition Party of Ontario from 1995-96, as well as the Interim Leader during the later part of 1996. He has also been active as a local candidate for the Christian Heritage Party of Canada. Presently he is acting as an independent political policy consultant and is available for speaking engagements. For further information, call 800-363-4901 or fax 905-934-5171.

Namibia's "Shoot On Sight" Policy

By Peter Hammond



The Episcopal Pastors and Mothers Union leaders of Maridi Diocese outside the Cathedral

Since September 1994, Namibia's *de facto* State of Emergency along its northeastern border with Angola has resulted in at least 376 persons killed, or missing and presumed dead. At that time, Namibia tightly closed its border along Angola's Cuando-Cubango province, a key UNITA stronghold.

But now, Angola's long civil war has formally ended. UNITA and the MPLA are in the process of charting a compromise coalition government for Angola's future. In light of this, the Namibian government's refusal to reopen its northeastern border is unjustifiable. The Namibian government has unnecessarily prolonged the suffering of the people living in southeastern Angola. Humanitarian relief and assistance coming through Namibia is prevented from reaching those parts of Angola controlled by the anti-Communist UNITA movement.

Kotobi, Western Equatoria:
Since their church was burnt down by a helicopter gunship rocket attack, these children meet under the trees for school

On November 29, 1994, Namibian President Sam Nujoma, without any authority derived from the Namibian constitution, ordered Namibian police and military to *"shoot on sight"* anyone attempting to cross the Kavango River *"illegally."* The Presidential decree to *"shoot on sight"* is in violation of the Namibian constitution which stipulates in Article 6 that: *"The right to life shall be respected and protected . . . No executions shall take place in a Namibia."* Also the President, by his use of an executive order, by-passed the lawful constitutional mechanisms for declaring a state of emergency. And it should also be noted that there were no specific officially-designated border crossing posts along the river.

In December, 1994, the Namibian Defence Force (NDF) ambushed missionaries from Frontline Fellowship who were re-entering Namibia from southeastern Angola. By the grace of God, despite the large amount of ammunition expended, none of the missionaries was injured. They had also already successfully delivered a large shipment of Bibles and medicines to Southern Angola. The missionaries were eventually released by the police, after some "unscheduled opportunities" for prison ministry.

The Pretext

On September 27, 1994, three Namibian men, including Kavango businessman F. Dikuwa, were shot dead by unknown gunmen and a woman was raped in a mysterious attack blamed on *"UNITA bandits."* Two days later, and in response to this single event, Namibian President Sam Nujoma declared on national television, the attack was *"a threat to Namibia's stability."* He then declared the eastern Angolan/Namibian border closed, unilaterally imposing a *de facto* State of Emergency. Members of the NDF and police were deployed in the area to enforce the closure. Many have questioned why the Namibian government reacted so strongly to this single incident, especially considering that, since Namibian independence, numerous

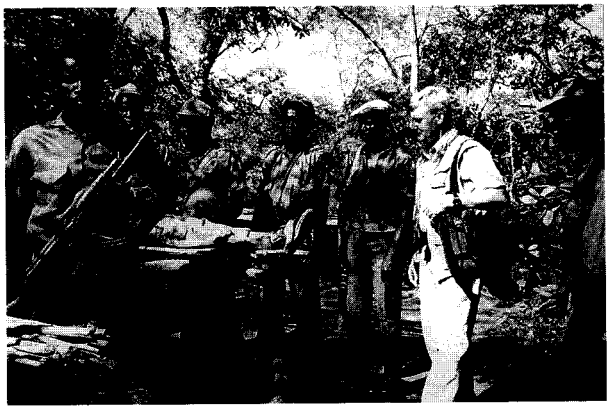
incidents of abductions, robbery, rape, torture and murder have also taken place along Namibia's northwestern border (with MPLA-controlled Angola). Yet no such suspension of movement was made there.

Atrocities Committed

Supposedly the border closure was a security measure by the government, to protect residents from "acts of banditry." However the *de facto* State of Emergency has become a source of atrocities against both Namibian and Angolan civilians. Orders to shoot at any persons crossing the border makes a mockery of the original claims by the Namibian government that the suspension of border crossing was aimed at protecting human lives and property!

On Sunday, January 29, 1995, three young women were attempting to cross the Kavango River in order to visit relatives at Calai in Angola. As they were about to cross the river, they were approached by 6 men thought to be soldiers. Panic-stricken, the young women ran for the river. Two of them managed to cross safely into Angola. The third, a certain Gloria Chilombo, was caught by the soldiers. After dragging her back onto Namibian soil, they took turns raping her. She screamed frantically and cried for help as her rapists strangled her. After Gloria lost consciousness, the soldiers supposed that she was dead and threw her into the river. But she regained consciousness in the water, so the soldiers finished her off by slitting her throat and throwing her lifeless body back into the river.

On March 27, 1995, four men were returning from Calai where they had been visiting relatives. They were paddling their dugout canoe across the Kavango River when two of them were shot dead. One of the victims was a certain Antoniao Jose Chiyengo, a catchiest of a local church which ministered on both sides of the river.



Some of the military nurses and medics trained in first aid by Frontline Fellowship

These are just two of the many eyewitness testimonies documented by the Windhoek-based National Society of Human Rights (NSHR). Since President Sam Nujoma issued his *"shoot on sight"* orders, the bodies of many who were shot dead on the river were left there until they decomposed. Bodies were also frequently seen floating in the river, some having decayed beyond recognition. As of October 1996, 376 persons have been killed, or are missing and presumed dead. Yet no member of the NDF or police has been prosecuted or convicted for any of these crimes.

Besides the immediate threat to life, the closure of the border has resulted in immeasurable suffering. Prior to the border closure Angolans residing in the vicinity of the Kavango River received much of their basic food and most, if not all, of their medical treatment from across the river in Namibia. Since the border closure, many women and children are said to have died from hunger and disease. These deaths would most likely have been prevented if it weren't for the imposition of Namibia's *de facto* State of Emergency.

Ironically, it was not too long ago (on May 18, 1994) that Sam Nujoma received a message from U.S. President Bill Clinton whereby he was roundly congratulated: *"Your country's successful transition to multiparty democracy is a remarkable achievement and is a model for . . . the African continent. Namibia's respect for human rights and for peaceful expression of diverse political opinion has rightly earned the admiration of many Americans."*

Smokescreen

The NSHR asserts that the real motive behind the indefinite border closure is to prevent humanitarian relief assistance from reaching the civilian population in the UNITA-controlled Cuando-Cubango province just north of the Kavango River. The Namibian SWAPO government is very sympathetic towards the Angolan MPLA government. The border closure effectively keeps continuous pressure on UNITA while they are negotiating the peace settlement with the Angolan MPLA government. A NSHR report stated it was upon the request of the Angolan MPLA government in 1993 that Namibia began to impound emergency food aid intended for Angolan civilians in southeastern Angola. This act was even in defiance of the UN Security Council which had called upon all concerned to ensure *"free and unrestricted passage"* and supply of humanitarian relief and assistance throughout Angola.

The only Christian visitors from across the border are the missionaries of Frontline Fellowship. The only Bibles and medicines they have received have had to be smuggled in — in defiance of the blockade.

Upon investigation, the September 27 shooting turned out to be quite different from the initial reports. *UNITA bandits* had been immediately blamed for the attack which resulted in the death of Mr. F. Dikuwa and two others, and the rape of a certain woman. However, the circumstances surrounding the incident suggest that neither robbery, nor *"UNITA banditry,"* was the real motive for the shooting. With the

exception of a car radio receiver, nothing else, not even cash, had been removed from Mr. Dikuwa's vehicle. Also it was known that the late Dikuwa was himself a notable sympathizer of UNITA and an ardent supporter of the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (DTA), Namibia's main parliamentary opposition to the SWAPO government.

Mr. Dikuwa's widow dismissed government claims that UNITA was responsible for the murder of her husband. Rather, she questioned the manner by which the death of her husband was used to impose a state of emergency under which many innocent people, especially women and children, were killed and property destroyed. She was of the opinion that certain local residents motivated by jealousy might have killed her husband because of his business or on account of his being an influential member of the DTA opposition.

And rather suspiciously, just one week after F. Dikuwa had been murdered, three heavily armed MPLA soldiers were apprehended in the area by the Namibian police. They were held only one night in the Rundu police cells before they were removed and spirited away, allegedly by Angolan government officials.

The people of southeastern Angola have endured great hardships on account of the border closure. Many even within the church have been greatly discouraged because of the Namibian blockade. Now the only Christian visitors from across the border are the missionaries of Frontline Fellowship. The only Bibles and medicines they have received have had to be smuggled in — in defiance of the blockade.

Pray for the Angolans struggling to survive, that in their time of need that they would diligently seek the Lord, that the Lord would encourage and strengthen the hearts of Angolan Christians, and that their testimonies would shine forth brightly in this time of trial.

Contact the Namibian Embassy nearest you and call upon their government to immediately rescind its "shoot on sight" policy along the Kavango River and to reopen its northeastern border with Angola.

For more detailed reports concerning this situation contact the National Society of Human Rights, P. O. Box 235922, Windhoek Namibia; Tel. (061) 236183; Fax: (061) 234266.

Peter Hammond is the Founder and Director of Frontline Fellowship and the Director of United Christian Action (a network of 20 Bible-based groups working for revival and reformation in Southern Africa). He is an international speaker, presenting about 400 lectures or sermons each year throughout Africa, Eastern Europe and America.

Peter is married to Lenora and they have been blessed with three children — Andrea, Daniela and Christopher.

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Chalcedon Excursion to Zambia

By Monte Wilson

An incredible opportunity has been presented to us. For a number of years, representatives of R. J. Rushdoony's *Chalcedon Report* have been involved in discipling key leaders (including those at the highest levels of government) in one of the world's major "hotspots" — Southern Africa. This labor has culminated in an unprecedented opportunity for a team of men, including Chalcedon editor Andrew Sandlin, board member Wayne Johnson and me to hold a pivotal three-day Chalcdeon Conference in Zambia, the world's only explicitly Christian nation.

We will be teaching hundreds of political leaders, pastors and businessmen; strategizing with key leaders (both White and Black); meeting with top government officials and businessmen; and conducting national TV and radio interviews. Our trip is particularly timely because the situation in these nations is approaching a critical level, as Africa undergoes a unique transition fraught with danger on all sides. The question now is: will the Black leadership turn from the discredited policies of Marxism/Leninism and Liberation Theology to embrace the truth of Biblical Reconstruction? Will White church leaders move beyond a legalistic pietism to embrace a victorious eschatology? Can White and Black leaders learn to work together to build Christ's Kingdom?

As incredible as it may seem, we actually have the opportunity to make a difference. Wouldn't it be amazing if the union of South Africa, the economic powerhouse of the African continent, turned to Biblical solutions in order to avoid a terrifying implosion, and if Zambia, emerging from 27 years of socialism, adopts Biblical principles of law and economics?

Hundreds of White and Black leaders are looking for us to provide answers — a realistic Biblical blue-print for reconstructing their nation. In Zambia, the President of the nation is open to and supportive of our message. He is so interested in what we have to say that he will open our meeting with prayer and attend a number of our seminars.

We will be teaching on the Foundations of Reconstruction with a particular emphasis upon work, economics and principles of Biblical finances. After decades of socialism, Zambians are without the necessary tools to pull their nation out of the disastrous conditions left in the wake of an economic system based on lies, thievery and envy.

In communicating on my last trip with Minister of Parliament Ngoma, who sits on the President's Cabinet and is responsible for Social Services, I was struck with the magnitude of the task before this nation. Past President Kaunda did not simply come close to destroying this nation's resources, but its will to work, as well. Yes, entire villages have been decimated by AIDS and malnutrition. But the scourge of socialism is causing even greater damage.

Think about it. A generation of people has grown up with

the belief that the state was to provide economic security for all. People in their thirties have experienced only the illusory security of an all-powerful state and know nothing of the joy and freedom of self-government. When I asked a group of ministers why people would not leave the city (where there were no jobs) for the country-side where they could at least grow enough food to provide for their families, I was told that: "This would not happen because such a move would require the individual to work."

Hundreds of White and Black leaders are looking for us to provide answers — a realistic Biblical blue-print for reconstructing their nation. In Zambia, the President of the nation is open to and supportive of our message. He is so interested in what we have to say that he will open our meeting with prayer and attend a number of our seminars.

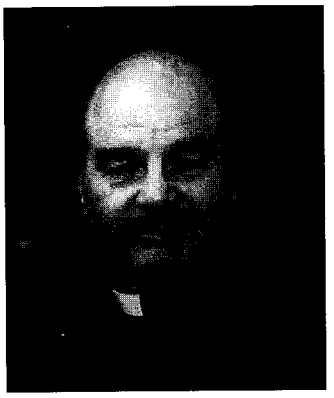
While the destitute certainly need a helping hand, if it is given in the wrong way it only serves to reinforce the idea that the average citizen is incapable of making it on his own. Many who are capable of supporting themselves look to others for support, refusing to work. Any solution offered by Christians must include the Biblical ideals of work, the command to provide for one's own family, and the church's responsibility to disciple its members in Christian character and godly behavior.

If Zambia can follow a Biblical model to become a beacon of light, justice and prosperity, it will surely serve as a model for the rest of the developing world — a most likely area for the work of reconstructing the nations to begin. We must realize that reconstruction will logically begin in nations that are teetering on the very brink of self-destruction or attempting to climb out of the bottom of the pit of an already imploded society, rather than in the world's wealthiest and most developed nations.

We need financial support for this vital Chalcedon Zambia Conference. Please send a generous dontain to Chalcedon, earmarked "Zambia Conference."

How To Train Your Child To Be Fully Literate

By Dr. Ellsworth McIntyre



The great Russian writer, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, has described the evangelical preachers of Russia as "semi-literate." At first glance, this description may seem harsh, but based on what I know of education in America, our college graduates are also certainly less than fully literate. That is, our professionals cannot read, assimilate, make applications, or write original insights based on their own opinions and research. They are captive to what other people say and think. Not only are they politically correct, they are political prisoners, never able to fully function as literate persons. Verbal communication is virtually their only source of ideas. In fairness to our preachers, the same must be said of all of our professions. To put the problem in religious context, Presbyterians are Baptists who can read and Reconstructionists are Presbyterians who can read and think. OK, maybe that's not so funny, but it helps to define the climate of literacy in America, and I suppose Russia as well. What this means to parents is this: Can you trust such people to educate your children? The purpose of this article is to outline a solution for your child's development into a fully literate adult.

Presbyterians are Baptists who can read and Reconstructionists are Presbyterians who can read and think. OK, maybe that's not so funny, but it helps to define the climate of literacy in America.

I have been a teacher for over 30 years at every level from secondary to pre-school. The most common question asked of me at pencil-and-examination time indicates literacy problems. The question is usually framed, "Do you mean this, or do you

mean that?" In other words, the student doesn't trust his interpretation of the printed word. He needs verbal assurance that he is properly reading and comprehending. Also there are problems of application. For example, if the question is: "In your opinion, can it be claimed that the Protestant Reformation was political as well as religious? Support your answer with specific examples," the semi-literate will sweat blood, because the question requires an application instead of mere memorization of information. Another example that exposes or divides the literate from the semi-literate would be, "In your opinion, does God love all men equally? Support your opinion with specific examples from the Bible and reconcile with the contemporary social-economic scale." Such questions give the discerning teacher a sneak preview of which students after graduation will be independent thinkers and able to gather information from print in the marketplace. I frequently find some "A" students mystified by such questions, because they earn their grades by virtue of burping up memorized facts. It was not unusual in my classes to find some of these "scholars" bathed in tears when asked to think, apply, and write down their own opinions and ideas. On the other hand, I discovered some "C" students delighted to get a chance to express those ideas that had personal interest to them. So what? Well, the millionaires or creative stars of our society must be able to assimilate information and create original solutions to problems. The entrepreneur, for example, must produce solutions to a constant stream of problems that may, in general, be similar but always different, because his problems are created by human souls that vary from one another like snowflakes from the sky. For this reason, schools can train economists but only the marketplace can train entrepreneurs. In God's free market, economists earn less money than business owners; teachers can make 10-50 times less than private school owners. In every field the fully literate person (if we define literacy as the ability not only to read but also to assimilate, analyze, and make application to real-life problems), earns enormous sums relative to the ordinary college graduate. As the country western song says, "Mama, don't let your child grow up to be a cowboy," I would say, "Mama, don't let your child grow up to be like his teacher, preacher, accountant or lawyer — *i.e.,* semi-literate."

Schools can train economists but only the marketplace can train entrepreneurs.

That's the problem; now, please take notes. Here is the solution! Give your home school student a constant stream of assignments that demand independent reading, independent analysis, and independent application. To begin with, use verbal feedback and then progress to written form. For example, your child is assigned to read the Ten Commandments from Exodus 20:1-17. Verbally, you ask him why the Ten Commandments are abbreviated on plaques and stained glass windows. What is left out? Are the Commandments less likely or more likely to be obeyed with warnings, punishment, and rewards omitted? Where in Exodus 20 is it warned that our great-grandchildren are likely to suffer because of our sins? Where in the Ten Commandments is long life and private property promised for obedience? Note, these questions are not open-ended. The child is not asked his opinion at this time. You are guiding the child to read and analyze. Next, you get the child to say in his own words why Exodus 20 is better doctrine than watered-down versions on plaques and stained-glass windows. Next, you get the child to write his opinion (really yours) on paper. Finally, you get him to think of why a child born in the ghetto may want and pray to obey his father, mother, teachers, or policemen better and better (Hint: Be certain the child sees personal material consequences as a direct consequence of obedience to the law.)

At Grace Community Schools, we teach many privileged and under-privileged children in the above manner. We believe teachers who spend four years in our apprenticeship program while pursuing a college degree can become fully literate. Our goal is to produce a new and larger generation who can read and appreciate R. J. Rushdoony. For that reason, we support Chalcedon with our gifts and offerings and urge future educators to start and operate Christian schools like Grace Community. We urge parents to consider sending their high school graduates to us for apprenticeship. I will pay them a salary to "steal all of my trade secrets." After three or four years, your child will know how to start and operate a private school from scratch. When the apprenticeship is complete, use the $50,000 to $100,000 college tuition that you saved to finance the new business instead of lining the pockets of "semi-literate" educators.

For information and employment applications, please write Grace Community Schools, 4405 Outer Dr., Naples, FL 34108; phone 941-793-4022; or fax 941-793-2461. My new book, *How to Become a Millionaire in Christian Education,* will be available this spring. Advance sales are only $10.00 per copy. Send orders to Nicene Press, 4405 Outer Dr., Naples, FL 34108.

Dr. Ellsworth McIntyre is founder of Grace Community Schools and one of America's leading Christian educators.

Note the Southeast Reconstruction Conference (p. 32) in Naples, Florida, May 3, 1997.

POSITION PAPER NO. 211

The Sabbath

By R. J. Rushdoony

Much confused thinking prevails concerning the Sabbath, which is commonly identified with Saturday. The day of Israel's redemption from Egypt was the Passover, and all Sabbaths dated from that event. The seventh day of creation was the pattern, but the day of observance was in terms of God's summons through Moses to separate the people from Egypt unto the Lord by observances culminating in the Passover. The Old Testament Sabbath was on particular dates of the *month,* not on the seventh day of the week, even as one's birthday is always on the same date but on a different day from year to year. After the fall of Jerusalem, some generations later when a return to Jerusalem was unlikely, the Jewish Sabbath was made to be the seventh day of the Roman calendar. Because the old Jewish calendar is still used to mark the day of resurrection, the *date* of Resurrection Day, or Easter, is variable from year to year in terms of the Roman calendar.

Our central concern must be with the meaning thereof, the meaning of the Sabbath for Christians. Our day of salvation is not the death of the firstborn of Egypt and the exodus but Christ's resurrection, His atoning death and triumph over sin and death.

Paul tells us that Jesus Christ is the first fruits of the dead and the beginning of the resurrection and the new creation (*1 Cor. 15:20, 23*). This means that the Christian Sabbath, which celebrates the resurrection of Jesus Christ on the first day of the week, is directed, not to a past event, but to a future one. It celebrates the deliverance of Christ's people from sin and death, and it looks ahead to the new creation. Older hymns celebrated the Sabbath as a type of Christ's victory over this world, His Kingdom triumphs here, and for eternity. The Sabbath is a rest from the war to "put all enemies under his feet," after which the last enemy, death, is destroyed (*1 Cor. 15:24-26*). This means that the Christian Sabbath is eschatological in its meaning, and that meaning is postmillennial.

To celebrate the Sabbath is thus to herald Christ's resurrection and our hope, His victory and ours.

In Exodus 20:8-11, the commandment concerning the Sabbath cites the pattern it follows, God's rest on the conclusion of the creation week. In Deuteronomy 5:12-15, the reason for Israel's Sabbbath observance is given, their mighty deliverance from Egypt. In the New Testament the day of resurrection, on the first day of the week, becomes the ground for the Christian Sabbath. This points ahead to the conquest of the world for Christ in terms of the Great Commission (*Mt. 28:18-20*). We observe the Sabbath best as we extend Christ's Kingdom and dominion. The future orientation of strong Christianity is faithfulness to the meaning of the Sabbath.

Deuteronomy 5:15 tells us that because God delivered Israel out of bondage to Egypt, "*therefore* the LORD thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day." Gratitude is the mark of Sabbath observance. It is to be a day of holiness, a day of sanctification, meaning set apart for the Lord. This means essentially sanctifying ourselves so that every day we can serve Him with all our heart, mind, and being. Our deliverance requires our total dedication.

The test as to whether or not the Sabbath has been kept is not what goes on each Sunday as much as what happens during the week. If there is no holiness during the week, it means that there really was none on the Lord's Day. The true observance of the Christian Sabbath means that all of life is renewed and altered.

On a true Sabbath, there is a confrontation of the people by God's blessing, healing, strengthening, over-powering, and commanding word. The word of God gives us our marching orders. It is not a place where the drop-outs of life are comforted but where men gain strength for the wars of the Lord. The meaning of the Lord's Day is postmillennial in all its implications.

Random Notes, 67

By R. J. Rushdoony

1. Christians need to rethink their attitude towards contact sports such as football, hockey and boxing. Are they godly? A very great number of adults are suffering handicaps from injuries received in high school and college sports. The injured list, for example, for any football team, professional or otherwise, is considerable. Some are crippled for life.

Athletic activities have a place in life; that we can safely assume. But can we approve of a sport that leads each season to the maiming of many persons? Can we favor an activity which has elements of sadism in its appeal to spectators?

We are seeing a degradation of athletes by a mean-spirited attitude which rewards the poor loser and the ungracious competitor for their bad behavior. Tennis, once almost courtly in the conduct of participants, has seen much ugliness well rewarded in recent years rather than expelled from the game. This is a symptom of a declining public character, and also for the replacement of sportsmanship with viciousness. If the sports lovers refused to tolerate the boors, they would soon change their ways.

The coaching staffs are also at fault. Too often they encourage practices which can cripple opponents. If they themselves were not so lax, they would demand stricter supervision by officials.

Athletics are in some ways a reflection of everyday life, and what we see is a growing eclipse of morality, a loss of civility, and a barbarization of everyday life. It is time for Christians to rethink the matter, to bar dangerous sports from Christian schools, and to insist that moral concerns apply to sports.

2. In 1927, President Calvin Coolidge said that the

foundations of government and society would collapse if the people didn't pay more attention to the Scriptures.

3. Over the years, I have known several families who "returned" to Europe to visit the family of their parents, grandparents, and even great-grandparents. In all instances related to me, it was a wonderful experience. The American family still used at times some favored old country recipes handed down to them. Only one thing caused ripples of dismay among their relatives: The differences in child rearing. The Americans, all Calvinistic, seemed both more permissive (bolder, more vocal children) and more given to chastisement, to the dismay of their kinfolk, who saw it as harsh.

I wonder. This could be an important aspect of the American advantage. Our Puritan heritage has, until the latter years of the 20th century, stressed the discipline of the children so that an American edge existed.

About 50 years ago, I thought at times of writing a book on culture and child-rearing. My familiarity with various immigrant groups in the United States, as well as American Chinese and Indians, made me aware of how important the Puritan heritage in America is in providing cultural energy to various groups. Now I shall never get to this project.

4. Those of you interested in painting will find of interest two books by a Chalcedon reader, Margaret E. Stucki: *Crud, and other Essays on Art,* and *War on Light: The Destruction of the Image of God in Man Through Modern Art.* Write to Christian Cultural Center, 1050 East Center St., Pocatello, ID 83201.

5. My youngest granddaughter, daughter of Mark and Darlene Rushdoony, is Marie Anne. When she was very young, Mark brought home a German Shepherd pup, named Akela by Isaac and April after the wolf in Kipling's jungle tales. Marie could not have been happier with the pup. A usually very obedient child, when her father was not around she disobeyed him by carrying the pup around. But, very soon, Akela weighed as much as she did but still wanted to be carried around by Marie, which made it difficult for her to step out of the house. Mark reminded her of his statement. Now she knew why father had commanded her as he had!

6. We hear so much about how the rich evade paying their income taxes that the Internal Revenue Service data comes as a surprise. The top 1% of taxpayers, those with gross adjusted annual incomes of over $196,000, paid 29% of all income taxes; the top 5%, with incomes of $96,000, paid almost half of all income taxes. Those with incomes below $22,000, 50% of all taxpayers, paid less than 5% of all income taxes.

7. About the time of my 80th birthday in 1996, one of our kinfolk died at age 97. George Esajian and his younger brother had a remarkable life. When my father and mother, with my mother's sister, husband Nishehn Esajian, and infant son Edward came to the U.S. via Archangel, Russia, in late 1915, a number of relatives remained behind for lack of funds; they were sent for and brought to the U.S. in the next eight years or so. George, age 15, and Dick, age 5, remained in Leningrad; an older brother who remained died. Although they were escapees from the Armenian massacres, the U.S. bureaucracy told them, when it came to their turn to migrate here, that they could leave only from the country of their origin, Turkey. The two boys, slowly and with difficulties, made their way from Leningrad, USSR, to Instanbul (Constantinople), Turkey, at times on horseback, often on foot. In Turkey their protection was their Russian-style clothes and the Russian they had learned. In Istanbul they met and were befriended by an Armenian man married to a Turkish woman; he provided them with a room. But they had a problem: their suitcases had been stolen on their arrival, and they had only the clothes on their backs and no address now for their brother and my father in the U.S. Dick went to work as a street peddler, selling shoestrings, pencils, and the like out of a cigar box. One day a Turkish policeman took what he wanted and refused to pay. Angry, Dick spoke in a way that betrayed his Armenian origin, and the officer took him to the nearby station, eager to kill him for the "insult." The officer in charge said, "Toss him into the sea [nearby] and let him drown: don't create an incident." Dick was beaten, kicked down a flight of stairs to the water's edge, and, as he passed out of consciousness, felt himself picked up and thrown into the water. Late in the day he regained consciousness, having drifted to the shore not too far away. He struggled home to cry in his brother's arms. "In the morning," his brother said, "there is an Armenian church nearby; now, more than ever, we need the Lord." When they got there, George asked Dick for the one small coin in his pocket to buy a prayer candle. Dick protested and began to cry, but George insisted. Then they sat through the service. When it ended, bewildered, they continued to sit. The priest came up to ask them what was troubling them, and the story poured out. When they mentioned the loss of the suitcase, with the Rushdoony address, also the address for their brother, the priest asked if this were Y.K. Rushdoony, who used to teach at Van College. "I have his letter on my desk," said the priest, "to answer shortly." And that is how they located my father and their brother and finally came to the U.S.

This is an account of God's providence, to me a very moving story.

Special Announcement

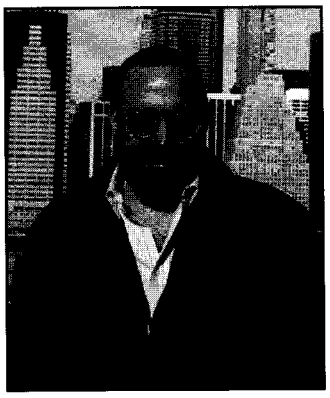
Important Announcement On Answering Mail and E-Mail

We at Chalcedon receive many more letters and e-mail messages than we can answer. In fact, it would probably require hiring a full-time staff member just to answer all our mail. Ours is not a large, sophisticated foundation. We try to respond to the most urgent mail. We hope our faithful supporters and readers understand.

MY BACK PAGES

Continuation On Re-Thinking Church

By Steve M. Schlissel



What is Normative?

A Scriptural example does not a norm make. David's gyrations while accompanying the ark to Jerusalem have been appealed to as a justification for liturgical dance. Wrong. David's dancing endorses nothing more than the legitimacy of demonstrative celebration whenever the ark of the covenant is moved to a permanent location. Such an occasion has not, to my knowledge, occurred in recent history, Indiana Jones notwithstanding. Likewise, appeals to Acts 2 to justify the normativity of "tongues" are amiss, for this was a unique occurrence marking the once-for-all inauguration of Christ as Messiah and Lord (v. 36). Besides, foreign language-speaking was not all that happened. Remember the rushing violent wind and the visible tongues of fire resting on each? One wonders why those appealing to Acts 2 leave "tongue flambé" off their menu of extant expectations.

A similar error is made by those who suggest that Acts 15:1-16:5 somehow requires that there be a classis or presbytery in order for there to be a legitimate church. Those making such appeal are no less arbitrary in their gleaning of Acts-facts than the errorists cited above. Before offering further observations on the passage, however, let us make it clear that we are not arguing against presbyterian polity *per se.* On the contrary, we think there are splendid arguments for certain forms of presbyterianism, but they are to be advanced as based on the practice's general conformity to Scripture principles, and on expediency. Such arguments generate ductile offspring, not the "all else is sin" sort. They are the "good and convenient" consequences of Scripture principles, not the "good and necessary" ones. We stand here against the assertion that broader assemblies are *required* in order to justify a local church's claim to ecclesiastical legitimacy. Does Acts 15 topple this stand? It does not. And neither does recent ecclesiastical history.

A plain and stubborn fact: the largest Reformed and Presbyterian bodies in the world are *liberal.* The wholesale apostasy of denominations with presbyterial polity proves that standing on form alone is a vanity. Some modern assemblages, though in form presbyterian, bear as much resemblance to Acts 15 as the modern "Like-a-Virgin" Madonna does to the true Virgin Madonna. Others — even conservative gatherings which, if you asked them, would say they are following the Acts 15 pattern — are often slick, polished ecclesio-clubs where masters of tertiary standards run roughshod over any who oppose "the agenda," the acceptable outcome of which had been determined prior to the actual gathering. Yes, these are worst-case pictures, but tragically, they are not atypical today. Of course, there have been meetings of wider assemblies, also in this twentieth century, which have provided examples of fierce fidelity under fire. Yet even in best-case pictures, a good deal of what transpires at regularly stated meetings is a needless waste of a good servant's time, a drain on real ministry sacrificed on the altar of an enshrined proceduralism. Many are the denominations that went down "in good order," even according to Robert. It is an amazing yet common deception that groups of men are somehow more immune to sin than individual men. Such a view betrays an ignorance of Scripture, history and covenant entities.

Some modern assemblages, though in form presbyterian, bear as much resemblance to Acts 15 as the modern "Like-a-Virgin" Madonna does to the true Virgin Madonna.

A thought: Wider assemblies ought to be under the same pressure as seminaries: do they faithfully serve the purpose for which they were created? They have no divine entitlement to perpetual existence. If they serve the churches well, fine. If not, the churches are free to pursue other methods which might attain the same, Biblical ends. No special holiness may be claimed for church order. A recent decision by a 300,000 member Reformed denomination authorized the ordination of women. They followed (roughly) their book of Reformed church order, encouraging more than a few delegates to claim the decision as the work of the Spirit (cf. *Acts 15:28*). A spirit, yes, but not *the* Spirit.

The Occasion of Church Councils

But let's return to Acts 15 for some observations. **First,** the meeting in Acts 15 was of two regional churches, not of ministers and elders of a single denomination. **Second,** the meeting was graced by the physical presence and authority of the apostles. **Third,** non-officers meaningfully participated in the meeting (vv. 14, 22). **Fourth,** the matter before the church was actual; it was not make-work. **Fifth,** the matter before the church was acute, as in very *serious,* critical. The Gospel itself was at stake, not a mere provincial interest.

The Word had begun its march around the world from Jerusalem. Now some from Judea were teaching brothers from

Antioch that Gentiles must become Jews in order to become Christians. Was *that* the Gospel? Paul and Barnabas said, "No way!" So several believers from Antioch, Paul and Barnabas among them, were sent to the Jerusalem church, from whence the Gospel had originated, to discover if this was indeed the message that they were proclaiming. In fact, they discovered that some *were* teaching this (15:5). Intense deliberation followed with much dramatic testimony, all bearing on the single question of the nature of the Gospel: Must a Gentile become a Jew in order to become a Christian? The answer was a resounding "No!," as Paul and Barnabas had maintained. A delegation of *proven* men was then sent out with specific purposes: to disavow the false messengers who had misrepresented the teachings of the mother church, and to urge the Gentiles to refrain from practices repulsive to the Jews and of no value in the worship of God.

Sixth, the decision guarded the liberty of the Gospel. It was delivered to be obeyed, yes: "Let no one trouble Gentile believers with such *narrishkeit.* The mother church, following Scripture and the Spirit, teaches no such thing as the *necessity* of Gentiles being circumcised for salvation." But notice that circumcision itself was not forbidden (see 16:3!); it just couldn't be commanded. Circumcision was a decision left, for all practical purposes, to expediency.

While we have no shortage of modern Reformed folks ready and willing to dismiss one another over the most trivial of differences, we suffer from a virtual vacuum of men who understand that there are enemies at the door quite as formidable as the ones fought in Acts 15

Seventh, the assembly of Acts 15 was purely *ad hoc, i.e.,* "for a special case only." There was no continuing assembly, no standing committees, no heresy headquarters established: Conflict/ resolution by conference/dissolution of conference. It met for a crisis and resolved it authoritatively, based upon Scripture, apostolic witness and the Holy Spirit's guidance. When the crisis was over, the assembly was history. (The decision, of course, lived on.)

Now, we object to the assertion that routine meetings of presbyteries, classes or synods and general assemblies compare favorably with the meeting of Acts 15 (especially at points #5 & #7, above). Yet we would maintain that Acts 15 did establish important precedents in the church to be imitated in her history. From time to time, when a crisis threatens the very continuance of the Gospel, *e.g.,* it is vitally important for the church to gather under the light of the Word of God to determine whether something that is actually being taught is in agreement with the Scriptures. Ironically, this is the very type of discussion which is given short shrift at many modern wider assemblies.

Historical Example

The spirit of Acts 15 was, in most respects, present at the great Synod of Dordt in 1618-19 — when the Reformed churches articulated the Canons which became known in history as the Five Points of Calvinism — and again at the Westminster Assembly in the 1640s. It has also been present on other occasions in church history. But our eyes, though they look ever so longingly, fail to see it today. For while we have no shortage of modern Reformed folks ready and willing to dismiss one another over the most trivial of differences, we suffer from a virtual vacuum of men who understand that there are enemies at the door quite as formidable as the ones fought in Acts 15. Evolutionism and egalitarianism are eating away at the fabric of the church today as moths left to a woolen feast, while the custodians of the wardrobe attend meetings and obsess over the wrong insect: they strain ecclesiastical gnats. *Adoption of the great confessions of the church provides our continuity with Acts 15,* and a whole lot more. We are organically one with all our fellow-confessors. If denominations can serve to advance the cause of God and Truth, we will not stand in their way. But a look over 20th century American church history would lead one to conclude that denominations have a good track record for abusing, not serving, local churches, and have tended to create, grow and protect bureaucracies which live off resources that would be better employed at the local level. Are we suggesting ecclesiastical anarchy as the antidote to tyranny? Are we offering atomism as against centralism? No. But we are suggesting that there may be a better way, one that is Scriptural, flexible, and expedient. We'll tell you more soon, D.V.

The Column is called "My Back Pages" not only because of its placement, but in remebrance of one of Bob Dylan's earliest songs of the same name.

Steve Schlissel has been pastor of Messiah's Congregation in Brooklyn, NY since 1979. He serves as the Overseer of Urban Nations (a mission to the world in a single city), and is the Director of Meantime Ministries (an outreach to women who were sexually abused as children). Steve lives with his wife of 22 years, Jeanne, and their five children.

Attention Chalcedon Friends in the Southeast:

Southeastern Conference on Christian Reconstruction

The Family as the Cornerstone of Dominion in the Third Millennium

May 3
9:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.
at
Grace Community Schools
5525 Hunter Blvd.
Naples, FL 34116

Speakers and Topics:

Andrew Sandlin: "Family, Covenant, and Property"

Joe Gandolfo: "Preservation of Family Property"

Monte Wilson: "The Family and the Kingdom"

Colonel Doner: "Discipling the Nations Through Family Businesses"

Ellsworth McIntyre: "The Creation of Family Wealth: How to Use the Unbeliever's Tithe to Finance the Dominion of Christ"

No entrance fee; offering taken for Chalcedon

(box lunch offered at cost)

For additional information, contact Grace Community Schools,
941-353-9662 or 941-566-7248

One of the things we are proud of is the many varied activities of our associates. Some of them are publishing important newsletters, and we take this opportunity to tell you of them.

1. ***The Lofton Letter*** by John Lofton, P.O. Box 1142, Laurel, Maryland 20725, e-mail address: JLof@AOL.com, $100 a year, monthly (20 pages).

2. Ian Hodge of Australia's Foundation for the Advancement of Christian Studies is an affiliate, and he publishes ***F.A.C.S. Report, Probe,*** and ***Christian Economics*** monthly, on a donation basis: write to him at P.O. Box 547, Ferny Hills, QLD 4055, Australia, Tel/fax 07-851-1265.

3. For those of you who read French, Jean-Marc Berthoud publishes several periodicals. For sample copies, send a donation and write to Jean-Marc Berthoud, Trabendan 16, Lausanne, CH 1006, Switzerland.

4. For the Chalcedon tapes, write to Christian Tape Productions, P.O. Box 1804, Murphys, California 95247. The twice monthly Easy Chairs are $4.50 each, and the weekly Bible studies (two lessons on each tape), are also $4.50. For a sample of either, send $5; California residents add 7¼% sales tax.

5. For those of you who read German, Dr. Thomas Schirrmacher (a professor of missions and ethics) and his wife Dr. Christine Schirrmacher (a scholar in Islamic studies) publish **Querschnitte** (obtainable from Culture and Science Publ., Friedrichstr. 38, D-53111 Bonn, Germany).

6. **Friends of Chalcedon** provides networking and other resources to Chalcedon and its supporters. It assists Chalcedon in producing books and video materials, hosts conferences to bring Chalcedon supporters in contact with each other, and refers Chalcedon supporters in ways to help Chalcedon. Friends of Chalcedon is at 4960 Almaden Expressway, #172, San Jose, CA 95118 [408] 997-9866 (phone and fax).

THE MINISTRY OF CHALCEDON

CHALCEDON (kal•see•don) is a Christian educational organization devoted exclusively to research, publishing, and to cogent communication of a distinctly Christian scholarship to the world at large. It makes available a variety of services and programs, all geared to the needs of interested ministers, scholars and laymen who understand the propositions that Jesus Christ speaks to the mind as well as the heart, and that His claims extend beyond the narrow confines of the various institutional churches. We exist in order to support the efforts of all orthodox denominations and churches.

Chalcedon derives its name from the great ecclesiastical Council of Chalcedon (A.D. 451), which produced the crucial Christological definition: "Therefore, following the holy Fathers, we all with one accord teach men to acknowledge one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, at once complete in Godhead and complete in manhood, truly God and truly man . . . ." This formula directly challenges every false claim of divinity by any human institution: state, church, cult, school, or human assembly. Christ alone is both God and man, the unique link between heaven and earth. All human power is therefore derivative; Christ alone can announce that "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (*Matthew 28:18*). Historically, the Chalcedonian creed is therefore the foundation of Western liberty, for it sets limits on all authoritarian human institutions by acknowledging the validity of the claims of the One who is the source of true human freedom (*Galatians 5:1*).

*The **Chalcedon Report** is published monthly and is sent to all who request it.*

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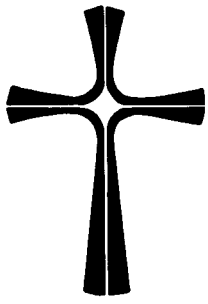

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