

ChalcedonReport

MINISTRY NEWS FROM THE CHALCEDON FOUNDATION® AUGUST 2022

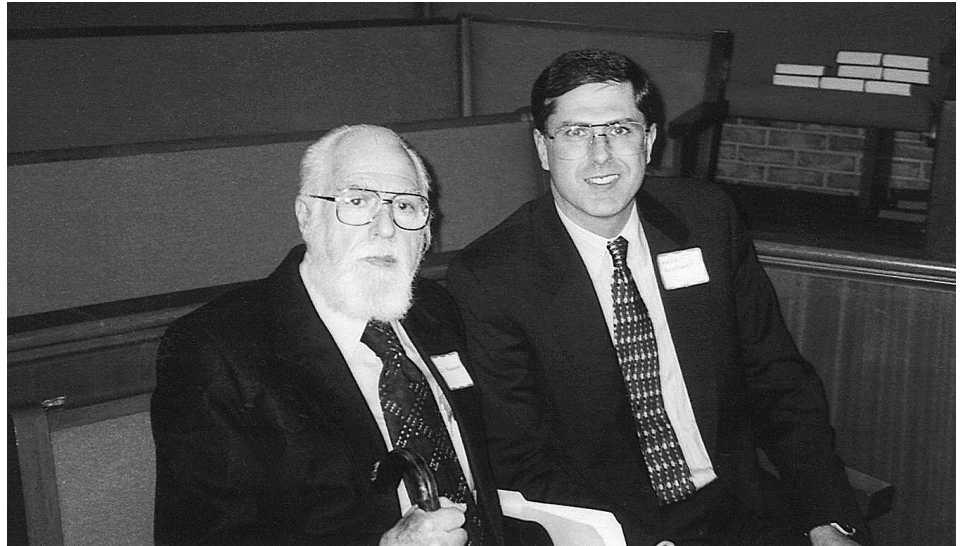
Chalcedon Is Still in the Fight

Mark R. Rushdoony

My father, Rousas John Rushdoony, a reader and a scholar, always understood the enduring power of books. If you asked him what his legacy was, he would have told you it was his writing. In the days before his death in 2001 at the age of 84, he was giving me instructions regarding his unpublished manuscripts. As much as I then felt an overwhelming inadequacy to be at the helm of the Chalcedon Foundation, I was at least grateful that one aspect of that responsibility was obvious. I began with the clear understanding that my father's writing had to be published and then kept available. My father's greatest influence is still future, I believe. I never felt that what he termed "Christian Reconstruction" was a new idea that I had to make palatable. I saw it, rather, as a necessary message of the Christian's responsibility as a citizen of the Kingdom of God, Jesus's most frequent subject of discourse. Call it what you will, what Chalcedon calls "Christian Reconstruction" is no more than an understanding of Christian duty in the confidence that the Kingdom of God and His Christ will prevail. It is acting in terms of what we believe the Bible teaches about the course of that Kingdom.

Who Is Hearing Chalcedon's Message?

The reaction to Christian Reconstruction has been varied. Some see a small organization such as Chalcedon at the forefront of the "movement" and declare it dead, ignoring that more



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people than ever before now adhere to it. This is always a problem when we look at institutions and organizational structure as the model of success; Christian Reconstruction is an idea, though, so its influence must be measured by the extent to which its ideas influence individuals.

Our Lord gave us a parable about the varied *reactions* to His own message. It is often called the Parable of the Sower (Matt. 13:3-9, 18-23), but it is more descriptive to call it the Parable of the Soils because its purpose was to examine the varied response shown when the "gospel of the Kingdom of God" (Mark 1:14) was presented to various people.

In that parable, some seed (the message of the gospel of the Kingdom of Heaven preached by Jesus) was sown in good ground and produced a harvest. Other seed was sown in types of ground that produced no crop, and for various

reasons. Some was eaten by the birds; this obviously means there was no response. Many, in fact, who heard Jesus preach and perform miracles did not believe in Him.

It is important to note the other two reactions to Jesus. They were illustrated as being "stony ground" and as "among thorns." In both instances the seed "sprung up." This has led many to assume there was some sort of confession of faith or even regeneration. Since the new growth quickly "withered away" this cannot be the case. The springing up was merely some positive response to Jesus. Many likely hoped He was the Messiah of Jewish expectation about to usher in a new golden age for Israel, one of strength, independence, and economic prosperity. The miracles and exorcism alone caused "all the people" to ask, "Is not this the son of David?"

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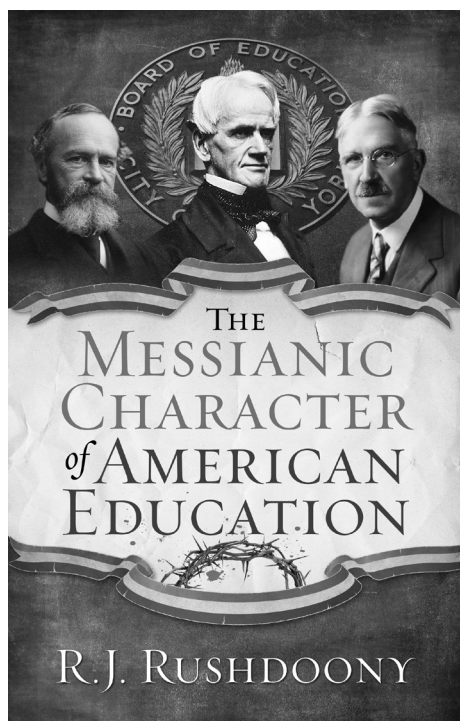
(Matt. 12:23). In the context of the Jewish Messianic hope, this positive opinion might have been no more than an optimistic view that the “good times” were again coming to Israel.

The optimism in the stony ground soon withered and the budding hopes of those who never separated from the “thorns” of the world were choked out. Positive thoughts can quickly dissipate while the regeneration of the Holy Spirit cannot. Men need to believe in more than themselves and their own personal hopes. If they will not believe in the hope presented in Jesus Christ, they will look elsewhere for a sense of hope. Because there is no hope outside of Jesus Christ, however, they often seek to imitate it.

Faking Alternatives to the Kingdom of God

Men in rebellion against God still want some larger purpose, some glorious and unifying umbrella that will give their life and work a larger meaning. Statism is the oldest means by which men seek to accomplish this. In statism men borrow the strength of others by political control. As soon as he was condemned for the murder of his brother, Cain “builded a city” (Gen. 4:17). Five generations later, Lamech bragged that no man could stand in his way (Gen. 4:23-24). Those of Noah’s day were “mighty men,” a description meaning they were warlords. After the Flood the Tower of Babel (Gen. 11:1-9) was an attempt to build a centralized empire, the tower likely intended to represent their grandeur. Empires such as Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, and Rome dominated the region in the historical period covered in Scripture. Much modern political rhetoric is little more than a humanistic revival meeting calling men to one statist agenda or another, with votes the necessary altar call of the faithful.

One of my father’s early works was *The Messianic Character of American Education* (1963) in which he documented that the early progressive educators’ purpose in government education was primarily social planning. Their intent was to create the type of citizen they thought necessary. It was



This book helped to expose progressive social planning in education.

messianic in that they believed they would create a great society by remaking the American mind.

The Clash of Kingdom Loyalists

When we identify with an order, whether family, nationality, nation-state, or religion, we are protective of it and either cold or hostile to any other order which might compete with it or seek to supplant it altogether. Jesus warned us to guard against those who would harm us, whether externally (such as Satan in I Peter 5:8 prowling as a lion “seeking whom he may destroy”) or internally (the wolves in sheep’s clothing in Matt. 7:15). All kingdoms defend themselves, identify aliens, and watch for enemies. Their self-preservation requires such vigilance.

As ambassadors of the gospel of the Kingdom of our Lord, we are quick to point out the dangers represented by its counterfeits. Our opponents do the same. Convinced their order must be protected and enlarged, they see the claims of the Kingdom of God as an illegitimate, alien incursion that must be resisted at all costs. One kingdom is attacked as a threat to another. It should come as no surprise that men, organizations, and even ideas which represent the antithesis of the spirit of

the age will be resisted with ferocity, and most fights are not engaged under enforceable and refereed rules of competition. They most often resemble street fights, where winning is more important than the means, so the attacks are not always truthful or fair.

Early critics of Christian schools, for instance, criticized them repeatedly as racist. The accusation was that they only existed because parents used them to avoid integrated government schools. Even “conservatives” felt this accusation was such a political “third rail” they perpetuated the accusation. In 1982 my father was one of several Christian leaders at a White House meeting with Reagan Presidential Counsel (later Attorney General) Ed Meese over proposed regulations on private education in the name of “civil rights.” Interestingly enough, Christian schools forty years later are often disproportionately represented by minorities, a trend also reflected in homeschooling.¹

For years my father’s reputation has been slandered by misrepresenting his views. In the 1980s a Sacramento tabloid attacked him for his statement in *The Institutes of Biblical Law I* (1973) that homosexuality was an offense subject to the death penalty in Scripture. In a private conversation he asked me a rhetorical question, “I wrote a book about what the Bible says. What did they expect me to say?”

He was commonly portrayed as a man who sought to wrest political control and impose a theocratic regime beginning, such scaremongering often suggested, with the imposition of capital crimes. They said he would institute an “American Taliban,” though his actual views of civil government tended rather to an extremely limited function of the civil magistrate and decentralized spheres of jurisdiction. The accusation was intended to make him seem a threat to the democratic process. When that system was best advancing statist humanism, any attacks on my father, theonomy, and Christian Reconstruction in its support seemed justifiable.

Again, when the Republican Party

seemed ascendent in the early 2000s, it became a target of the left and attacks on it were often presented with some surmised tie to my father and Christian Reconstruction. Again, the inaccuracy of this is not the point; the left felt all was fair in this street fight. When George W. Bush and the “fight against terrorism” was at its zenith, the left felt its gains were crumbling. The “religious right” was seen as a dire threat. In looking at the leaders of that movement, they saw a loose assortment of one-issue individuals and organizations. My father, on the other hand, had a “big picture,” overarching view that incorporated “all of faith and life.” Moreover, a simple Google search “proved” he wanted to end democracy and impose a Taliban-like theocracy on America. Bingo! That was a powerful talking point, a knife they could take to the street fight. The entire narrative then became less about R. J. Rushdoony and more about the political traction that could be gained by the claims. Thus, one political candidate after another was associated with my father to smear them with the charge of extremism. Many had no contact with (and possibly no knowledge of) my father at all.

A very recent attack was an article on MSNBC (May 12, 2022).² It assumed government schools were a positive social good, so it attacked homeschooling as its antithesis. Again, one kingdom was protecting itself against the incursions being made by another. Author Anthea Butler lost no time referring to private schools as “segregation academies ... designed to keep African American children and undesirable immigrant groups away from white children.” This “should come as no surprise” the author says, apparently assuming all her readers are onboard with that decades-old slander that ignores census data.

Butler’s principal attack, notice, is on alternatives to public education, so she wasted no time in deploring the influence of my father because, she wrote, “He saw homeschooling as a way to cut the government out of educating Christian children and to prepare

How the conservative Christian right is hijacking homeschooling

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Opinion

How the conservative Christian right is hijacking homeschooling

The conservative Christian right has been working hard to dismantle public schooling for years.

— A fixation on homeschooling is yet another salvo in the ongoing evangelical war against public schools. MSNBC / Getty Images

May 12, 2022, 4:02 PM EDT
By Anthea Butler, MSNBC Opinion Columnist

“Public education has become public enemy No. 1,” the actor Kirk Cameron opines in a promotion for “The Homeschool Awakening,” his documentary scheduled to hit theaters in June. The

Once again, R. J. Rushdoony is brought out as the convenient “bogeyman” in order to paint homeschooling as a threat to society.

them to take their place in a theocratic government.” Butler had to frame Rushdoony as a boogeyman to rally faithful statists, so she could not resist warning her audience that his influence was prominent in Donald Trump and former Education Secretary Betsy DeVos.

At this point, the name Rushdoony is, like the words theonomy, Christian Reconstruction, Calvinism, Puritan, and many others, merely a pejorative thrown around warning people to “stay away” or they, too, will be subject to vicious misrepresentation.

What R. J. Rushdoony and Chalcedon Represent

In 1965 my father first used an analogy that soon became the “brand” of his ministry, the distinctive representation of his message. That brand is “Christian Reconstruction.” Its simplest meaning reflects an assumption that Christian civilization needs to be rebuilt, reconstructed. When we speak of such work done on a building, we know we must assess its basic soundness and the value in any changes made to it over the years. The terms redecoration, refurbishing, renovation, remodeling, and historic preservation all convey different levels of work/change that is

anticipated will be necessary.

Christian Reconstruction must also make assessments of the work that is most needed to rebuild a Christian culture that will be a faithful contributor toward the Kingdom of God. Our reconstruction efforts, moreover, must be distinctly “Christian,” that is, based on the certainty of the Lordship of Jesus Christ, the advance of His Kingdom, and His revealed law-word. Our method is a studied obedience, a self-conscious submission to that word.

There is an adage that you can judge a man by his enemies. I believe that is generally true when we look at the opposition to godliness spoken of in Scripture. We are in a street fight, and we need to face that fact. Our opponents know they are in a fight. Do we? 🤔

1. See Cato Institute (cato.org) commentary: Karry McDonald, “MSNBC Claims Homeschooling is Driven by ‘Insidious Racism,’ but the Facts Show Otherwise.” The percentage of black homeschoolers alone rose to 16.1%, according to numbers from the 2020 Census.
2. msnbc.com See Anthea Butler, “How the conservative Christian right is hijacking homeschooling.”

He That Overcometh

R. J. Rushdoony (*Good Morning, Friends*, Vol. 2, pp. 116-119)

Good morning, friends. There are times when many of us wish we could play God for a little while and make a few changes in the nature of things around us. We would certainly eliminate some of those very trying problems which dog our steps, and we would reach out a helping hand to friends whose grief or need leaves us distressed and normally helpless. We'd make quite a few changes towards making our lives richer and happier, and this world a safer and healthier place to live in. Our way of making these improvements would be to eliminate problems.

That, inevitably, is the solution we gravitate to and think of constantly. As far as we're concerned, life's freedom, meaning, and richness would begin as soon as those problems could be eliminated.

An obvious question then raises itself. If life can be so greatly improved by the elimination of these problems, then why doesn't God eliminate them? After all, He does have the capacity and power to do so. By His sovereign will and word, God can do anything. Then why does He permit us, year after year, to flounder about in the sickening and searing jungle of human life today? Why doesn't He eliminate these problems and conditions to begin with?

We like to dream of such a solution, and we show our weakness in this. We fail to recognize or admit that the problems we want to avoid are often more necessary to us than the peace we crave. We refuse to recognize that problems and troubles are as much God's instruments as anything else. Just as a child would like to receive all his nourishment in the form of candy, cake, and ice

cream, so we want God to give us all the blessings of life without any of its problems. An intelligent parent makes certain that his child gets a healthy diet, and the God of love makes sure that we get a healthy diet of problems to develop on.

It is a great and foolish mistake for us to demand peace and victory before the battle is begun. We cannot avoid the battle without at the same time avoiding the peace and victory that follows it. Problems and troubles are a hard necessity without which life would become impossible, peace unattainable, and man without character. Our Lord promised us peace and victory, but, first of all, He declared that His work would be a divisive one. It would result in painful division, trouble between members of a family and between friends, and would separate men. "I am come," Jesus said, "not to bring peace on the earth, but the sword" (see Matt. 10:34). In short, He asserted that the way to peace and victory lay through trouble and defeat. He warned all His disciples against a peace too hastily claimed. He promised them only an inner peace, not a trouble-free or peaceable location in life. And this inner peace, He declared, would sustain them in all things. Not by eliminating problems but by overcoming them do we gain peace and victory. Therefore, God does not eliminate all our problems but very often adds to them in order that He might truly bless us.

Jesus declared (John 12:24) that a grain of wheat must fall into the ground and die in order to bring forth fruit. In the same way, you and I have to die to ourselves in order to live in Him. All the problems of life are an assault on our ego, on the old Adam

in us, trying steadily to drive us out of ourselves, our constant source of trouble, into the hand of God, our only source of peace and strength.

Jesus said, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne" (Rev. 3:21). Our Lord gained His peace and victory by overcoming, and we ourselves need to realize that peace is the portion only of those who overcome in Christ. We are told that "he that overcometh shall inherit all things" (Rev. 21:7). This is a call to struggle, with the assurance of His power in the battle and His peace at the end.

More than that, this declaration contains an important promise concerning our inheritance. The Swiss poet C. F. Ramuz has declared, "Man never has what he wants, because what he wants is everything. It was/is only in God that he could/can have *everything*." The promise definitely carries the clear-cut statement that everything is due to the man who overcomes in the Lord. The time shall come, in eternity, when the redeemed man shall inherit all things. Meanwhile, we walk in this confidence, that our problems are God-given and will be used to our ultimate peace. As Cowper's hymn declares:

Ye fearful saints,
fresh courage take;
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy,
and shall break
In blessings on your head.

(William Cowper, "God Moves in a Mysterious Way," 1773) 📖