

Chalcedon Report

MINISTRY NEWS FROM THE CHALCEDON FOUNDATION®

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A Wider Door of Opportunity: How Chalcedon's Mission Remains Relevant

Chalcedon Editorial

Responsibility is a “tough sell” in the modern age, and we know that all too well at Chalcedon. We are sure you do also, as any attempts to share or argue for Biblical law, dominion, postmillennialism, or Christian education are met with a predictable resistance to the implications of personal responsibility and faithfulness, or the false assumption that we are trying to usher in the Kingdom of God “by our own efforts.”

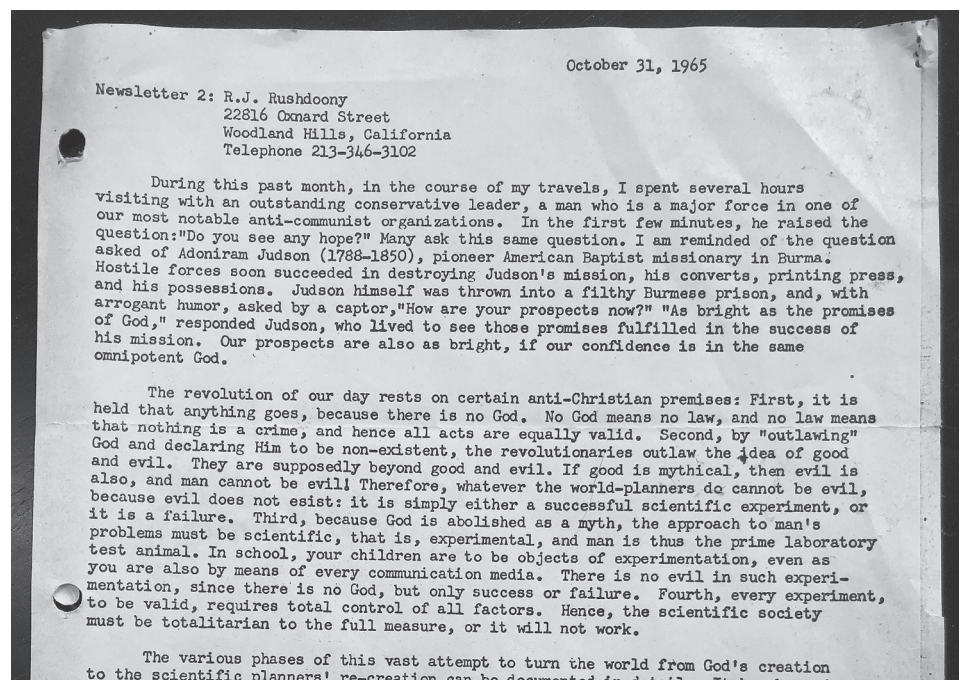
However, not all Christians shirk at the tenets of Christian Reconstruction. After all, here you are reading the *Chalcedon Report*, but you know as well as we do that we are a minority in both society and the church.

It is still a fact that promoting our message remains difficult, but that may be changing as our times are changing. People are gravely concerned about the future of civilization and the world that's being left to their children. They know it is no longer “business as usual” if there is going to be real change in society. They're looking for solutions, and we want to meet them where they are.

Dedicated Minority

In his first newsletter to his small band of supporters in 1965, Rushdoony so precisely described the nature of our world's problem, and the necessary solution, that it may be the citation we reference the most:

The future must be won, and shall be won, by a renewal and development of our historic Christian liberty, by



A mimeographed copy of the second newsletter sent by Rushdoony to his small band of supporters in October of 1965. The subject of the newsletter was “Hope.” It can be read in *Faith & Action*, Volume 3, pages 1203-1204.

an emphasis on the fact: the basic government is the self-government of the Christian man, and by a recognition that an *informed faith* is the mainspring of victory. History has never been dominated by majorities, but only by dedicated minorities who stand unconditionally on their faith.

What you are doing, in your support of me, is to sponsor a countermeasure to the prevailing trend, to promote by your support, interest, and study, a Christian Renaissance, to declare by these measures your belief that the answer to humanism and its statism is Christian faith and liberty. Our choice today is between two claimants to the throne of godhood and universal government: the

state, which claims to be our shepherd, keeper, and savior, and the Holy Trinity, our only God and Savior. You have made your choice by both *faith and action*.¹ (emphasis added)

We cannot improve upon this, which is why it remains the ruling thesis behind Chalcedon's mission. In fact, we lifted “informed faith” and “faith and action” from these passages to be used as the titles for the two multi-volume collections of Rushdoony's *Chalcedon Report* articles and position papers.²

We believe that the answer to tyranny is Christian faith and liberty, but that means more than simply opposing statism or cultural evil. That would be

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equivalent to only plucking weeds out of a lawn instead of crowding out the unwanted plants by growing healthy grass. A true restoration of Christian faith and liberty requires building more than protesting. Strong families, strong churches, and strong institutions are vital to cultural change.

Our Bestseller?

Christians require an informed faith so they can be moved to faith and action, and what is most lacking is an informed faith. What is an informed faith? It's not simply doctrinal propositions, creeds, or confessions; it's rather demonstrating how our historic faith and Biblical law are to be applied to a culture that's in flux. Or as Rushdoony mentioned about his purpose for writing a systematic theology:

For me theology means the total mandate of God through His word. What I have written only scratches the surface; it is an introduction to the subject, and it is written to move men to faith and action.³

When you consider the history of Chalcedon and the work of R. J. Rushdoony, it produced many who devoted themselves to Christian action of all kinds. They did not merely protest statism. They built Christian schools or began homeschooling. In other words, by reading Rushdoony, men and women did not become more contemplative, but rather more active. They were looking for ways to apply their faith.

Consider the fact that now the cultural decline is far more obvious to the average Christian, and we've already seen within the last few years the greatest exodus out of the public school system. This quiet revolution will only increase as we're seeing "wokeism" drive even more to consider alternatives to both government and commerce.

Rushdoony was the first to emphasize the use of the Christian tithe to help finance alternative institutions to that of the state, and although this is the answer to much of our ills, the resistance to such a proposition has been great. After all, you're touching two sensitive topics: responsibility and tithing. Chalcedon vice-president,

Martin Selbrede, once described a way to measure the progress of Christian Reconstruction in our culture:

[T]hat Christians tithe all the tithes commanded in the Bible, which includes the Levitical tithe, the poor tithe, and the rejoicing tithe. All of it. Every last, decentralizing, state de-bloating cent of it. It is truly pitiful that one of Chalcedon's worst selling books is the 1979 volume *Tithing and Dominion*, by Edward A. Powell and R. J. Rushdoony (T&D for short). We can conclude that meaningful progress has been made when *Tithing and Dominion* has become a Chalcedon bestseller. That day is still only a sparkle in God's eye.⁴

If Rushdoony's *Tithing and Dominion* becomes our bestseller, then we'll know the coin has dropped on the meaning and application of Christian Reconstruction. Until we engage in creating and underwriting alternative means of government, justice, education, health, and more, we will find ourselves forever protesting cultural decline but offering no other options.

Parallel Society

In the early 1980s, the rise of the Religious Right was attached to the thinking of Christian Reconstruction which cemented the idea that Christian dominion equates to political takeover. We saw this happen again in the first decade of the new millennium as the two terms of George W. Bush elicited the threat of "Christian theocracy" with Christian conservatives being credited with securing Bush's second term especially.

It's happening again. While the label now is "Christian Nationalism," the conspiracy theory is the same. Radical Christians want to take over the American system and impose religious rule on an unwilling population.


However, there is one significant difference in that political conservatives are finally considering alternate solutions to the culture around them. Many are using "parallel society" as a description of this trend, but it is certainly closer to the tithing and dominion model offered by Chalcedon. We use our tithing and Christian action to create alternative

means of government, charity, education, healthcare, and more.

Christian Reconstruction is not a political movement because politics cannot deal with the moral character of people nor can it provide the needed spiritual capital for Christian civilization. The great need at this time is to embrace and apply the blueprints given to us by R. J. Rushdoony, and the purpose of Chalcedon is to publish and promote that message and mission.

59 Years Young

Therefore, our mission is to educate others in Christian Reconstruction, which means we still need to be that dedicated minority committed to the long-term mission of godly dominion. The enemies of God will continue their slander and lies, but like Nehemiah, we must be focused on building. We will endure attacks by the church abroad as well, but all of this is par for the course.

Still, the times are changing, and this provides a wider door of opportunity as more Christians are seeing that a more serious application of God's Word is necessary to contend with the growing darkness they see in all areas of life. Chalcedon has something to offer them, by way of a full-orbed Christian worldview, but we need your continued prayers and financial support to meet them where they are. As a dedicated minority, we've made it 59 years, and we can go so much further. Let's do that together. Please take a moment today to prayerfully consider supporting Chalcedon. 

1. R. J. Rushdoony, *Faith & Action: The Collected Articles of R. J. Rushdoony from the Chalcedon Report, 1965-2004, Volume 3* (Vallecito, CA: Chalcedon/Ross House Books, 2018), pp. 1201-1202.
2. R. J. Rushdoony, *Faith & Action: The Collected Articles of R. J. Rushdoony from the Chalcedon Report, 1965-2004*. R. J. Rushdoony, *An Informed Faith: The Position Papers of R. J. Rushdoony*. Both are available at <https://chalcedonstore.com>.
3. R. J. Rushdoony, *Systematic Theology in Two Volumes* (Vallecito, CA: Ross House Books, 1994), p. xv.
4. Martin G. Selbrede, "Tithing & Building," *Faith for All of Life*, May-June, 2006.

The Meaning of Theocracy

Chalcedon Position Paper No. 15, August 1980 (Abridged)

By R. J. Rushdoony

Few things are more commonly misunderstood than the nature and meaning of theocracy. It is commonly assumed to be a dictatorial rule by self-appointed men who claim to rule for God. In reality, theocracy in Biblical law is the closest thing to a radical libertarianism that can be had.

In Biblical law, the only civil tax was the head or poll tax, the same for all males twenty years of age and older (Exod. 30:16). This tax provided an atonement or covering for people, i.e., the covering of civil protection by the state as a ministry of justice (Rom. 13:1–4). This very limited tax was continued by the Jews after the fall of Jerusalem, and, from a.d. 768–900, helped make the Jewish principedom of Narbonne (in France) and other areas a very important and powerful realm. This tax was limited to half a shekel of silver per man.

All other functions of government were financed by the tithe. Health, education, welfare, worship, etc., were all provided for by tithes and offerings. Of this tithe, one-tenth (i.e., 1 percent of one's income) went to the priests, for worship. Perhaps an equal amount went for music, and for the care of the sanctuary. The tithe was God's tax, to provide for basic government in God's way. The second and the third tithes provided for welfare, and for the family's rest and rejoicing before the Lord.

What we today fail to see, and must recapture, is the fact that the basic government is the self-government of covenant man; then the family is the central governing institution of Scripture. The school is a governmental agency, and so too is the church. Our vocation also governs us, and our society. Civil government must be one form of government among many, and a minor one. Paganism (and Baal worship in all its forms) made the state and its rulers into a god or gods walking on earth, and gave them total overrule in

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all spheres. The prophets denounced all such idolatry, and the apostles held, “We ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29).

From the days of the Caesars to the heads of democratic states and Marxist empires, the ungodly have seen what Christians too often fail to see, namely, that Biblical faith requires and creates a rival government to the humanistic state. Defective faith seeks to reduce Biblical faith to a man-centered minimum, salvation. Now salvation, our regeneration, is the absolutely essential starting point of the Christian life, but, if it is made the sum total thereof, it is in effect denied. Salvation is then made into a man-centered and egotistical thing, when it is in fact God-centered and requires the death, not the enthronement, of our sinful and self-centered ego. We are saved for God's purposes, saved to serve, not in time only, but eternally (Rev. 22:3). To be saved is to be members of a new creation and God's Kingdom, and to be working members of that realm.

In a theocracy, therefore, God and His law rule. The state ceases to be the overlord and ruler of man. God's tax, the tithe, is used by godly men to create

schools, hospitals, welfare agencies, counselors, and more. It provides, as it did in Scripture, for music and more. All the basic social financing, other than the head tax of Exodus 30:16, was provided for by tithes and offerings or gifts. An offering or gift was that which was given above and over a tithe.

Since none of the tithe agencies have any coercive power to collect funds, none can exist beyond their useful service to God and man. For the modern state, uselessness and corruption are no problem; they do not limit its power to collect more taxes. Indeed, the state increases its taxing power because it is more corrupt and more useless, because its growing bureaucracy demands it.

California State Senator H. L. “Bill” Richardson has repeatedly called attention to the fact that, once elected, public officials respond only under pressure to their voters but more to their peer group and their superiors. Lacking faith, they are governed by power.

People may complain about the unresponsiveness of their elected officials, and their subservience to their peers and superiors, but nothing will alter this fact other than a change in the faith of the electorate and the elected. Men will respond to and obey the dominant power in their lives, faith, and perspective. If that dominant power or god in their lives is the state, they will react to it. If it is man, or their own ego, they will be governed by it. If, however, it is the triune God of Scripture who rules them, then men will respond to and obey His law-word. Men will obey their gods.

One of the more important books of this century was Albert Jay Nock's *Our Enemy, The State* (Caldwell, ID: Caxton Printers, Ltd., 1935). Without agreeing with Nock in all things, it is necessary to agree with him that the modern state is man's new church and saving institution. The state, however, is an antisocial institution, determined to

suppress and destroy all the historic and religiously grounded powers of society. With F. D. Roosevelt and the New Deal, the goal of the statist became openly “the complete extinction of social power through absorption by the State” (p. 21). This will continue in its suicidal course, until there is not enough social power left to finance the state’s plans (as became the case in Rome). The state’s intervention into every realm is financed by the productivity of the nonstatist and economic sector: “Intervention retards production; then the resulting stringency and inconvenience enable further intervention, which in turn still further retards production; and this process goes on until, as in Rome, in the third century, production ceases entirely, and the source of payment dries up” (pp. 151–155). It is true that crime needs suppression, but, instead of suppressing crime, the state safeguards its own monopoly of crime.

We can add that the solution to crime and injustice is not more power to the state, but God’s law and a regenerate man. The best safeguard against crime is godly men and a godly society. Furthermore, God’s law, in dealing with crime, requires restitution, and, with habitual criminals, the death penalty.

One more important point from Nock: he called attention to the fact that “social power” once took care of all emergencies, reliefs, and disasters. When the Johnstown flood occurred, all relief and aid was the result of a great outpouring of “private” giving. “Its abundance, measured by money alone, was so great that when everything was finally put in order, something like a million dollars remained” (p. 6).

This was once the only way such crises were met. Can it happen again? The fact is that it is happening again. Today, between 20–30 percent of all school children, kindergarten through twelfth grade, are in nonstatist schools, and the percentage is likely to pass 50 percent by 1990 if Christians defend their schools from statist interventionism. More and more Christians are recognizing their duties

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for the care of their parents; churches are again assuming, in many cases, the care of elderly members. Homes for elderly people, and also for delinquent children, are being established. Christians are moving into the areas of radio and television, not only to preach salvation but to apply Scripture to political, economic, and other issues.

Moreover, everywhere Christians are asking themselves the question, what must I do, now that I am saved? Answers take a variety of forms: textbook publishing for Christian schools, periodicals, and more. The need to revive and extend Christian hospitals is being recognized, and much, much more.

Isaiah 9:6–7 tells us that, when Christ was born, the government was to be on His shoulders, and that, “Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end.” By means of their tithing and actions, believers are in increasing numbers submitting to Christ’s government and reordering life and society in terms of it.

Ancient Rome regarded religion itself as a public domain and hence licensed and controlled it. (The very word *liturgy*, Greek in origin, means public service. Religion is indeed a public concern, more so than the state, but not thereby a matter for statist control.) Rome, like all ancient pagan states, equated the public domain with the state’s domain, and it saw all things as aspects of the state’s domain.

For any one institution to see itself as the public domain is totalitarianism. All things public and private are in the religious domain and under God. No institution, neither church nor state, can equate itself with God and claim control of the public (or private) domain. Every sphere of life is interdependent with other spheres and alike under God. No more than mathematics has the “right” to control biology do church or state

have the “right” to control one another, or anything beyond their severely limited sphere of government.

There are thus a variety of spheres of government under God. These spheres are limited, interdependent, and under God’s sovereign government and law-word. They cannot legitimately exceed their sphere. The legitimate financial powers of all are limited. The state has a small head tax. The tithe finances all other spheres.

The tithe, it must be emphasized, is to the Lord, not to the church, a difference some churchmen choose to miss or overlook. This robs the individual believer of all right to complain about things; by the godly use of his tithe, he can create new agencies, churches, schools, and institutions to further God’s Kingdom in every area of life and thought. Holiness comes not by our abilities to whine and bewail the things that are, but by our faithful use of the tithe and the power God gives us to remake all things according to His Word.

Tithing and godly action, these are the keys to dominion. We are called to dominion (Gen. 1:26–28; 9:1–17; Josh. 1:1–9; Matt. 28:18–20; etc.). The creation mandate is our covenant mandate; restoration into the covenant through Christ’s atonement restores us into the mandate to exercise dominion and gives us the power to effect it.

Aspects of that mandate can be exercised through institutions, and sometimes must be, but the mandate can never be surrendered to them. The mandate precedes all institutions, and it is to man personally as man (Gen. 1:28). This is the heart of theocracy as the Bible sets it forth. Dictionaries to the contrary, theocracy is not a government by the state but a government over every institution by God and His law, and through the activities of the free man in Christ to bring every area of life and thought under Christ’s kingship. 🏰

You can read the complete position paper in *An Informed Faith*, Volume 2, pp. 517–522.