

ChalcedonReport

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Rethinking Theology

“And so, theology became ideas about heaven, ideas about the greater, weightier matters of existence. And it became separated more and more from the mundane things of this world, which were associated with evil.”

~ Mark Rushdoony

Generally speaking, theology is often treated as a specialized field for scholars, pastors, and seminary students, although our readers are the exception to the status quo. However, many Christians assume that theology is something abstract, remote, and technical—important but not immediately relevant to family, work, education, economics, politics, or daily obedience. As Andrea Schwartz observed in a recent Chalcedon podcast with Mark Rushdoony and Martin Selbrede on the topic, it is not uncommon to hear people say, “I just leave theology to the theologians.” But, she added, “everyone is a theologian. Some are good theologians, others are not so good theologians.” Most importantly, “theology is not an abstraction. It must move people to faith and action.”

Theology is the issue before us as it has too often been separated from life. The result has not been a more spiritual Christianity, but a less obedient one. When theology is reduced to ideas about “spiritual things,” while the rest of life is surrendered to humanistic assumptions, Christians are left with a faith that speaks to heaven but has very little to say about the things of this earth. This is precisely what Chalcedon labors to correct.

Dualism

During their discussion, Mark Rushdoony identified the historical root of this separation as dualism. Dualism, he explained, is an ancient non-biblical metaphysic that separates the spiritual

realm from the physical realm. In many forms, it treats the material world as inferior or even evil, so that the goal of religion becomes escape from the mundane world into the spiritual. Mark noted that Christian traditions have often absorbed this through neoplatonism, where “the heavenly realm, the spiritual realm, is the higher realm,” while the things of earth are treated as “of no consequence.” Thus, “theology and life became separated” rather than being united in the world where God placed us and where He calls us to labor.

A Unified Word of God

Martin Selbrede pointed out the practical appeal of this error. Dualism effectively says, “God doesn’t have anything concrete to say about the world down here.” If that is true, then “all bets are off” regarding God’s Word and the physical realm. Scripture is then severed into parts: some “spiritual” passages are retained, while the practical commandments of God are neglected or dismissed. Martin connected this to Marcionism, the ancient heresy that rejected much of Scripture as irrelevant to Christians. The same spirit returns whenever Christians treat the Old Testament—particularly God’s law—as though it no longer speaks to the believer’s life.

This is why Martin insisted that we must recover “a unified Word of God.” As he put it, “God is one. His Word is one Word from Genesis to Revelation, and it speaks to all of life, not some of

life, not merely to the spiritual, but to every part of man because all of man fell.” If all of man fell, then all of man needs redemption. If Christ restores the whole man, then theology must speak to the whole man: his work, money, family, land, time, vocation, and culture. To plug our ears when Scripture speaks to these areas is not spirituality. It is dualism.

The Word Made Flesh

The incarnation itself is the great contradiction of dualism. Martin observed that the incarnation was “a direct affront to dualism,” because the dualistic mind could not fathom that God would condescend to human flesh and enter the material realm. The resurrection compounded the offense. Yet these doctrines are central to the Christian faith. God did not treat creation as disposable. The Son of God took on flesh, died, rose bodily, and secured the redemption of all things under His authority. Christian theology must therefore “grapple with the entire world” and declare that all of it is “subject to the Word of God.”

This means theology cannot be confined to the categories that later academic traditions permitted. Martin noted that many systematic theologies narrowed theology to subjects such as God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, salvation, and the church, while neglecting the areas of life to which Scripture also speaks. They “did not actually extend as far as Scripture’s extent went.” The result was a tradition in which theology

became responsible “basically for spiritual things,” leaving work, economics, politics, education, law, and culture to be governed by another word—the word of man.

The Vacuum of Neutrality

But the absence of God’s Word never creates neutrality. It creates a vacuum, and that vacuum is immediately filled. Martin warned that when the scope of the Kingdom is restricted, “you’re also restricting the rule of the King.” Consequently, “the Gospel becomes shrunk.” The problem is not merely that God’s Word is absent from certain areas, but that “man’s fallen word” is applied in its place. Humanism does not leave life ungoverned. It governs life by putting man “on the pedestal as the measure of all things.”

This is why bad theology produces bad action. Mark stated the matter plainly: “If we define our faith wrong, our action is going to follow.” Heresy is not merely an academic mistake. It shapes obedience, culture, institutions, and the future. Bad theology justifies bad development, and bad development extends the error further into life. This is why the church councils mattered. This is why Chalcedon mattered. Battles over theology are battles over meaning and the obedience of God’s people.

The modern myth of neutrality is one of the most damaging forms of bad theology. Martin argued that when systematic theologies leave out vast areas of life, the implication is that these areas are neutral. But as we know, neutrality is a myth. He cited Proverbs 21:4: “even the plowing of the wicked is sin.” If even plowing is not neutral, then agriculture, economics, science, law, education, and politics cannot be neutral either. Scripture speaks because God created all things, governs all things, and best knows how all things should be stewarded.

Theology Must Become Action

This has direct implications for Christian Reconstruction. Mark emphasized that Christian Reconstruction is not merely a movement or a label. It is an analogy

for what Christians should be doing: rebuilding on a firm foundation. “When our culture has institutions, ideas, that are not Biblical, we must go after those,” he said. Some things must be destroyed at the root; others may be repaired. But Christians are always to be “rebuilding something fit for the Kingdom of heaven.” We are not past-bound. We are future-oriented, because we are called to bring “all of life and thought into conformity to Christ the King.”

This is why theology must become action. A theology that never touches life is not biblical theology. It may use biblical vocabulary, but it has no transmission belt to the world. Martin used Gary North’s analogy: theology is the engine, the real world is the wheels, and what is needed is “a transmission belt” connecting the engine to motion. “What a good theologian does,” Martin said, “is he creates that transmission belt so that people’s ideas in their minds then translate to motion and action in the world of men.”

Practical Application

Politics provides a useful example. Many Christians believe that the right candidates will solve our problems. Mark rejected this as a statist temptation. “We tend to look for men to solve our problems,” he said. Christian Reconstruction begins instead with responsibility in one’s own sphere: family, work, church, calling, and local community. True government begins with self-government under God. Martin added that “you cannot fix a moral problem politically.” A moral problem requires a moral response, and Scripture gives us criteria for rulers: they must be just and rule in the fear of God. Yet because politics has been treated as a neutral area, Christians often ignore the very standards God has given.

The same applies to education, economics, law, medicine, psychology, and every other sphere. If Christians retreat into an abstract theology, humanism will govern these areas by default. Martin warned that liberal theologies often become “nothing but humanism with the word theology

tacked on.” They may speak of God, but not the God who commands, orders reality, and requires obedience. Such theology cannot produce courage, because it does not provide marching orders.

Andrea noted that Rushdoony wrote his systematic theology for laymen, not merely seminarians. That is crucial. Theology is not a luxury for those with academic credentials. It is necessary for obedience. How can a woman teach younger women to love their husbands and children without theology? How can a father educate his children without theology? How can one practice honest business without theology? How can a citizen evaluate law without theology? If theology is the study of God and His Word, and if His Word speaks to all of life, then every Christian must become a better theologian.

The practical beginning, Mark said, is the study of God’s law. It is easy to say “Christ is Lord” in a vague spiritual sense. But if Christ is King, then His law is binding. “You can’t ignore the law of the king,” Mark warned, and still claim to be a loyal citizen of His Kingdom. To ignore theonomy is to ignore the kingship of Christ.

Martin’s counsel was equally practical: begin where God has placed you. If your children are in public schools, rethink education. If you are in debt, consider what God’s law says about economics. If you are a farmer, study the theology of the land. If you teach science, bring that discipline under the authority of Scripture. Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might.

This is rethinking theology. Not abandoning doctrine for activism, and not reducing Christianity to practical tips, but recovering the biblical unity of truth and obedience. Theology must lead to faith, and faith must lead to action. God’s Word is not silent. Christ is King over all. Therefore, every area of life must be brought under His rule, and this is the mission of Chalcedon. 🚩

You can listen to the entire podcast discussion on our website at <https://tinyurl.com/ChalcedonPodcastEp64>

Coming Soon... New Three-Volume Series by R. J. Rushdoony on Revolutionary Theory



We look forward to releasing this attractive new three-volume paperback series.

It's truly remarkable that, a quarter century after the passing of R. J. Rushdoony ("Rush"), we are still able to release previously unpublished manuscripts from his extensive body of work. We're especially excited about this new trilogy because its themes are strikingly relevant to our own time—as so much of Rush's writing continues to be.

We've titled this three-volume set the *Revolution Trilogy*, featuring: *Revolutionary Man: Chaos as Virtue*, *Subversive Man: Destruction as Virtue*, and *Underground Man: Vulgarly as Virtue*.

These manuscripts were among the many papers Rush left behind at his passing. For years, however, other publishing priorities took precedence. We are now grateful to finally prepare these important works for print.

Rush began writing the first volume—originally titled *The Religion of Revolution*—in 1964 and completed it in 1968. In it, he presents his central thesis regarding revolutionary

thought: that after Darwin, modern man increasingly came to believe that mindless chaos, rather than God, is the source of progress and order. Therefore, contemporary revolutionaries, adapting evolutionary theory to politics and culture, believe that chaos is necessary to sweep away the old order and accelerate mankind's evolutionary progress toward the future they envision.

Rush wrote the second volume, *Subversive Man*—originally titled *The Nature and Strategy of Subversion*—between 1963 and 1966. As the original title suggests, this work examines how revolutionaries infiltrate institutions in order to reshape society according to their vision. Rush argues that revolutionary faith in chaos was not irrational, but strategic and calculated, aimed ultimately at influence and control.

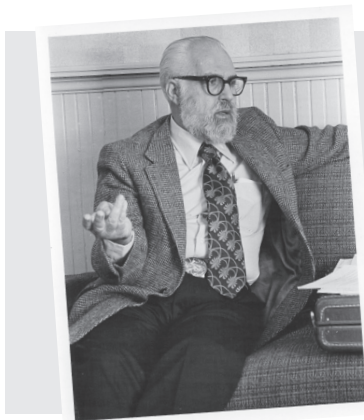
Rush wrote the third volume, *Underground Man*—borrowing the title from Fyodor Dostoevsky—from 1974 to 1988. By then, many of the radicals of the 1960s had moved into positions

of cultural power, and their ideas had become deeply entrenched within society. The "underground man" Rush describes is especially recognizable to modern readers because he now appears everywhere around us.

In many ways, these volumes are even more suited to our moment than to the era in which they were written. Though the forms have changed, the same revolutionary spirit remains visible today in movements centered on DEI ideology, gender confusion, and the rewriting of history. Revolution has always been about power, and the themes of revolution, subversion, and the underground man are once again clearly before us.

We hope you can see the hand of providence which has helped Chalcedon navigate over six decades of our turbulent modern history bringing the message that's most needed along with the tools of reconstruction. Rush only becomes more relevant, so we're excited to see these volumes come to print. Stay tuned for more information! 📖

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"The heart of Scripture is that man is morally responsible for all his acts, and no law order can long survive if this fact is denied." ~ R. J. Rushdoony

Duty by R. J. Rushdoony

A Word In Season: Daily Messages on the Faith for All of Life, Volume 1, pp. 136-137

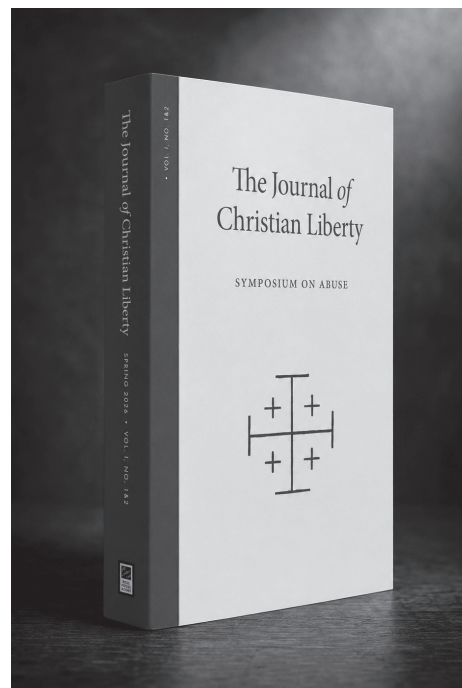
One of the problems of history is the persistence of false ideas. Thomas Jefferson and the Jeffersonians strayed badly in seeing evil as a product of the environment, as "just another bodily disease." As Daniel J. Boorstin, in *The Lost World of Thomas Jefferson*, observes: "To reproach a man because his moral sense was corruptible was like blaming him for susceptibility to yellow fever—like reproaching a wagon for its broken wheel" (p. 148f).

The heart of Scripture is that man is morally responsible for all his acts, and no law order can long survive if this fact is denied. Our problem today is that our culture does see evil as a product of the environment, whereas Scripture tells us it originates in man. Our Lord says, "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false

witness, blasphemies" (Matt. 15:19). Hence, "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life" (Prov. 4:23).

For our society to regain its strength means to become again a responsible people in the Lord; it means that we stop making excuses for ourselves and for others. Such excuses carry no weight with God, and they should carry none with us.

The Jeffersonians had many worthy causes, but they did much harm in shelving the concept of duty for rights. Boorstin says, "Jeffersonian political science... was not concerned with duties" (p. 197). Today, most politicians, schools, and too many churches share this failing. When did you last hear a sermon on our duty to God, to our neighbor, to our family, or to our land? Isn't it time we stressed duty and responsibility, beginning with ourselves? 📖



NEW! *The Journal of Christian Liberty* from Chalcedon

The church is supposed to protect the weak—not protect abusers. Yet across modern Christianity, victims of clergy abuse are too often silenced, manipulated, and further harmed by the very institutions claiming to represent Christ.

The inaugural double edition of *The Journal of Christian Liberty* confronts this crisis head-on with biblical clarity and uncompromising honesty. Featuring multiple contributors, this landmark volume examines clergy abuse, institutional corruption, spiritual manipulation, and the tactics predators use against unsuspecting men, women, and children.

Included is the premier publication of Course Correction—a devastating case study exposing how Christian leaders protected a well-known evangelical missionary after admitted sexual harassment while abandoning the victim.

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