

ARISE & BUILD

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WHERE WE'VE COME FROM AND WHERE WE'RE GOING

BY MARK R. RUSHDOONY



Chalcedon began during a period of upheaval. In 1965 a group of conservatives who had previously heard my father speak asked him to move to Los Angeles. They promised to organize monthly commitments to his support if he would start classes and Bible studies for them. There were no worldview organizations before Chalcedon. He was, in fact, told that no one would support an organization based on ideas. He was told that the “real money” was in being anti-communist, but he wanted to talk about solutions, not just problems. He did not believe focusing on evil would ever bring about righteousness.

DEFEAT AND DESPAIR

The conservatives were still shell-shocked by the landslide loss of “Mr. Conservative,” Barry Goldwater, the previous November. It did not help that days before our move, Los Angeles had been engulfed in race riots in which thirty-four people died.

The old-line denominations, controlled for years by modernism, raced to advocate for everything perceived as a matter of social justice. Conservative, orthodox churches only wanted to double-down on what they had

been doing for generations. My father was considered a divisive voice when he advocated for abandoning public schools for distinctly Christian ones. Many of those churches had a form of amillennialism that was more defeatist than the pre-tribulation rapture eschatology which then prevailed. My father’s postmillennialism, which drove his outlook on the present responsibility of the church, was an anomaly. The modernist church offered a humanistic political hope and their conservative counterparts a defeatist perspective.

The changes of the 1960s were overwhelming. Many ideas converged to reveal what had actually been developing for years. The nation had lost its Christian faith, and, when given the opportunity, self-consciously renounced it. Student revolts shut down college campuses for weeks at a time. Anti-war protests frequently turned violent. An entire subculture of hippies renounced their parents and their culture. A “new morality” of free love abandoned the remnants of Christian ethics. Political assassinations shocked the nation. At the time, it seemed that all this came about suddenly, though a repudiation of the past had been unfolding for many years. A philosophical idea picked up from a phrase of Nietzsche

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seemed to reflect the new mood. “God is dead,” it said, and for many it seemed that their whole social and cultural context was dying as well. It was hard to put these things into a context, a world and life view, and far harder to know how to react.

There was a dynamic to the humanistic agenda of the 1960s, albeit one of an ultimately deleterious effect. It was a long-developing reaction to the loss of Christian faith and morality which resulted in a belief in the Marxist and Darwinian view of the radical change of revolution as leading to positive results. The revolutionaries of the time (both within and without the system) believed that the destruction of what they perceived as antiquated was preliminary to positive change (“survival of the fittest”).

CONSERVE OR CHRISTIANIZE?

That was the context of Chalcedon’s origin in 1965. Political conservatism resisted many of these changes but had no clear worldview, only a defense of what had been. Two years earlier, my father had seen the conservative movement repudiate a distinctly Christian view of American history and culture. The most important conservative funding source of the previous decade, the Volker Fund, had created the Center for American Studies as a distinctly Christian think tank and hired my father. His first manuscript was *This Independent Republic*. When it was privately passed out to leaders in the conservative movement it was widely criticized as too parochial, too Calvinistic, and anti-Catholic. It was clear that the conservative movement did not wish to identify with, much less defend, a Christian understanding and interpretation of history and culture. My father was fired and the Center for American Studies closed. A distinctly Christian perspective would have to

be developed independently of secular conservatism.

Most conservative voters did not understand the limitations of political conservatism in 1965. That was the audience of my father. He coined the term Christian Reconstruction that year, but the political concerns of his audience were very much evident in the questions asked him after every talk he gave. The frustration at the changes (some of which did include revolutionary rhetoric and violence) was clear.

WHAT PAST ARE WE LIVING IN?

It is the nature of conservatism to look to the past. This is only valid to the extent the past is a solid model for the future. In most cases, the example of the past is only a partial model for the future. Our Lord said “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matt. 6:33). Our future vision must be one of growth and development, not merely preservation. Christian Reconstruction is an analogy of building on the Rock when so much decay and unsound work is evident. The first task of any reconstruction, then, is an evaluation of what can and cannot be reclaimed, of what must be demolished and rebuilt. As with any cherished historic building, there will be voices that resist the need to demolish. Clinging to the past is a natural tendency, but often a counter-productive one.

It used to be common for those ignorant of the times to appeal to the purity of “the early church.” Yet the early church was composed of fresh converts from paganism whose preconceived ideas of religion controlled their ideas of what Christianity ought to be. They were strongly influenced by dualism’s view of spirituality as anti-material and otherworldly. Men mutilated themselves and inflicted punishment

assuming this was a higher way. Monasticism's asceticism was a milder form of this idea. Theologically, these dualists tried to "fix" Christianity by denying the literal incarnation of Jesus Christ, a heresy that persisted until the Council of Chalcedon in A.D. 451. Much of the early church was not worthy of being conserved because it was immature.

Many Christians of sound theology want to rehash the Protestant Reformation rather than extend it. They will dwell on the issues and formulas of 500 years ago without a thought of how those ideas transformed Europe and America or how they can do so now. My father once recounted going into one church in such a denomination. He was considered an outsider by many and so viewed with suspicion, even though he was thoroughly Reformed in his theology. One church leader later recounted the fuming of another in the foyer of the church while my father spoke. The angry church leader was asked why he had a problem with my father. "He believes the same things we do," the man stressed. "Then why doesn't he say them in the same way?" was the response. Traditionalism may or may not be orthodoxy. The idea of "standing on the shoulders" of our forbears should imply that we reach even higher because our outlook is extended by their contribution. It is not meant to imply theirs is the final stage of development and we can rest inactive and rehearse their finished work.

The Fundamentalist movement was a twentieth-century religious effort to resist religious liberalism by retreating into the "fundamentals" of Christian belief and holding the line. It was trying to retreat from what it declared "non-fundamentals" and conserve the core doctrines of Christian faith. Its conservatism thus began with a reduced message and a retreat. It rehashed these points to its faithful

for many years before dissolving into irrelevance.

Southerners lived in their political past for years, repeating the damage done to the Constitution by the Union victory and Reconstruction. There is certainly some level of truth to this, as military defeat always brings about a radical change. The way out of our present Constitutional issues will not be a reversal of events now 150 years past. The way out is not to go back but forward.

The same is true of religious orthodoxy. If we could turn back the clock, we would only go back to a time that led us to the present. There is nothing profound in noting things were once better than today. Even to the extent that it is true, it does not bring us to anything but romanticism and nostalgia. Reformation moves in "Drive" not "Reverse," and it is the same with Christian Reconstruction. We start with what we have, evaluate the extent of the damage, then rebuild on what is sound or start from the ground up if necessary.

WHERE WE ARE GOING

It is easy to be discouraged. Our task is a seemingly insurmountable one. It must have seemed that way to the apostles when Jesus ascended into heaven. They were, for the most part, humble fishermen. They were given a command to go into the world and teach all nations when their own nation had resisted the message. They had to preach of the Messiah promised to the Jews to foreign peoples after He was gone. They had no capital or resources, except for their faith in the certainty of the Kingdom of God and the power of His enabling Spirit.

In their own lifetimes, their results were noteworthy, but not world-changing. The Kingdom, however, continued its growth. Few men in history can

be credited for any of the dramatic growth it has seen. Those who are most noteworthy are those who, at a critical time, took a stand for the faith and encouraged others to do the same. The growth of the Kingdom has always been like the leaven (yeast) in a loaf of bread, too slow to observe. This is still true, as witness the fact that Christians still decry its state though it is larger now than ever before in history and Christianity (not Islam) is the fastest growing religion in the world. Thank God the increase of His Kingdom is not up to our planning and oversight, as we fail to see its very real quantitative growth. The theology may be somewhat deficient, but that was also the case in the early church. Immaturity is a state before maturation. "First the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear" (Mark 4:28).

A defeatist and retreatist mentality poisons our will to serve in the Kingdom of God and blinds us to what is now transforming areas of the world long closed to the gospel. The Kingdom is growing and will continue to grow. We act in terms of this certainty not because our efforts bring it about but because we choose to be faithful to what God has called us to do.

Moreover, our direction must be self-consciously forward, not backward. The road ahead will not look the same as the road behind us because we are not heading in that direction, nor should we desire to. Not conservation of the past, but the Christianization of what is and what will be is our goal.

I do not pretend to understand most modern technology, but I have lived long enough to enjoy its advantages. The Kingdom of God in its fullness lies ahead on the road we follow. That road may be a long one travelled by many generations yet to come, but we have been told that every knee will bow, every tongue will confess, that

the far isles will seek Zion, and that the knowledge of the Lord will fill the earth. That's where the future is, and it will be a godly world of the future, one of technology and marvels, not comparable to the first century, or the sixteenth, or the eighteenth.

Every modern marvel yet to be envisioned will belong to the Kingdom. Every time-saving invention will be its property. Every medical marvel will expand the quality and duration of the lives of its saints. The precise image of the Kingdom down this road is hidden to us but it will be far grander than anything we can romanticize about the past.

The message of Chalcedon has not changed since 1965. Over fifty years later there is still change taking place and much of it is both destructive and dangerous. By the time Jesus told the disciples to teach all nations, the Roman Republic had also declined into an absolutist empire. It continued to dissolve over several centuries until it collapsed. Had the church focused on how bad things were, they would have never laid the groundwork for the next step, the emergence of Christendom in Europe. It was far from perfect, but continued the progress down the road which led into a future under God. Still, we look, not back to the old Christendom but to the future and the maturing of the Kingdom.


As Rome's empire developed, it was full of abuses and degeneracies. Likewise we can now see evils we did not imagine a few years ago. My father often said that we were at the end of the age of humanism, and that its death throes would be both unpleasant and dangerous. It is wise to be concerned about the damage being done, but we must also reflect that God is now shaking the things of this world so that those things which cannot be shaken might remain (Hebrews 12:26-27). The conclusion (v. 28-29) of that was what

would revive the Kingdom:

Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God *is* a consuming fire.

Our duty during the shaking is clear: “serve God.” That is the message of Christian Reconstruction and Chalcedon.

“The future,” as Adoniram Judson once said from a prison cell, “Is as

bright as the promises of God.” We are on the winning side of time and eternity. The Kingdom progresses and we are called to serve it, so we move forward toward the bright promises of God’s tomorrows. 

Mark Rushdoony is the President of the Chalcedon Foundation, Ross House Books, and Storehouse Press and preaches weekly at the Chalcedon Chapel which is streamed live each Sunday via Chalcedon’s Facebook page at <http://www.facebook.com/chalcedonfoundation>.



SUPPORT A LONG-TERM MINISTRY, FIGHTING A LONG-TERM BATTLE IN SERVICE OF A LONG-TERM VISION.

Since 1965, the Chalcedon Foundation has served as the founding and leading ministry for the message of Christian Reconstruction, which is simply the mission of advancing the Kingdom of God in every area of life. Now, fifty-three years later, the need for this message and ministry is greater than ever as we continue to face the enemy of humanism both in the world and in the church.

Our objective is to help equip Christians to “take back” government from the state by means of Biblical self-government and to apply

their faith to every sphere of life and thought. We’ve already gained significant ground through helping to restore Christian education, but it’s time to move into other spheres by God’s grace, law, and power.

We desperately need your help to continue this mission, so please take a few moments today to prayerfully consider supporting Chalcedon with your tax-deductible giving. We’ve enclosed a self-addressed, postage-paid envelope to make it easy, and you can also donate online at: Chalcedon.edu/Give

WRONG DIAGNOSES, FALSE CURES

BY MARTIN G. SELBREDE



Malcolm Gladwell's books are bestsellers, which is something of an annoyance to his many appalled critics who

feel obligated to explain his enduring popularity. The opposition trots out the usual canards: oversimplification, reliance on anecdotes, storytelling skills that leave the facts far behind, etc. Not one synthesis put forward by Gladwell has been successfully overthrown, even when subsidiary details have lost their original luster when contrary evidence came to light.

Why is Gladwell so popular? The less-traveled road leads to the truth of the matter.

In an interview published on May 29, 2018, Gladwell explains why he emphasizes the things he does.

I like ideas that absolve people of blame. That's the most consistent theme in all of my work. I don't like blaming people's nature or behavior for things. I like blaming systems and structures and environments for things.¹

When interviewer Dan Amira asks the follow-up question, *Why do you not want to blame individuals?*, Gladwell replies, "I've thought about this a lot,

and I have no idea. I don't know where it comes from."

There, in a nutshell, is the explanation for Gladwell's popularity: he puts the blame where humanistic, autonomous man always puts it. He has a built-in audience because if systems and structures and environments are to blame, *then man is a victim and not responsible for his woes*. Gladwell is promoting the idea of *metaphysical evil*, an idea launched in the Garden of Eden when personal responsibility was jettisoned by Adam and Eve.



Malcolm Gladwell

Enter R. J.

Rushdoony, who overthrows that view by asserting that *evil is a moral fact*: human responsibility is *always implicated*. In respect to diagnosing mankind's problems, Rushdoony is the anti-Gladwell. The two men couldn't be any farther apart.

Gladwell's

approach leads to false solutions. The false doctrine of metaphysical evil requires installing a massive state apparatus to "solve" a problem that can only be corrected by regeneration of the heart. Until blame and responsibility are dealt with head-on, mankind's problems only worsen.

Valid solutions start with Christian self-government. Men, in fleeing from blame and responsibility, throw them-

selves into the hands of false saviors willing to countenance their victimhood and apply coercion to undercut liberty. Manipulating “systems and structures and environments” requires *total control*, but because those things are not the actual source of mankind’s problems, our moral evil not only remains but is actually amplified.

Gladwell struggled to explain why he doesn’t like to blame individuals: he doesn’t know where that impulse comes from. It comes from our sin nature, and it is only resolved by the transformation wrought by Christ. Malcolm Gladwell, a professed Christian, does not appear

“In respect to diagnosing mankind’s problems, Rushdoony is the anti-Gladwell. The two men couldn’t be any farther apart.”

to apply his faith to this question.² Some level of dualism is acting in him and countless other Christians to create The Great Disconnect, whereby God is effectively muzzled in the world at large that He created.

No problem can be solved if misidentified. Faulty solutions will multiply, and their guaranteed failures, one after another, will spawn only more vexation and loss of liberty. Humanistic solutions fail “because there is no light in them” (Isa. 8:20), i.e., they don’t speak according to His law.

“God hath made man upright, but they have sought out many inventions” (Eccl. 7:29). Don’t miss the implicit

contrast: God made man upright (a moral fact) but men seek out many inventions, devices, contrivances, and schemes (metaphysical facts). Men only set aside their devices when they’re made upright again in Christ, when they’re self-governed under God’s law. Contra Gladwell, there is only one way people are absolved of blame: when the Father makes us “holy and without blame before Him in love” (Eph. 1:4).

Christian self-government is the key to solving mankind’s problems because it’s the only solution that recognizes the actual problem (moral evil), its solution (regeneration), and the strategy for recovery (applying God’s law). This begins with equipping Christian men and women with the tools to rebuild moral foundations, and the resolve to use them, “to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself” (2 Cor. 5:19).

Once Christians repudiate victimhood, they can become more than conquerors. We won’t look for solutions in the wrong places, “healing the wound of the people lightly” (Jer. 6:14, ESV). We will live to see that “the entering in of Thy Word bringeth light” (Ps. 119:130). 🙌

Martin Selbrede is the Vice-President of the Chalcedon Foundation and is the senior researcher for Chalcedon’s ongoing work of Christian scholarship, along with being the senior editor for Chalcedon’s publications. He is considered a foremost expert in the thinking of R.J. Rushdoony. A sought-after speaker, Martin travels extensively and lectures on behalf of Christian Reconstruction and the Chalcedon Foundation. He is also an accomplished musician and composer.

1. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/29/magazine/malcolm-gladwell-likes-things-better-in-canada.html>

2. Ironically, Gladwell’s view of the American prison system come close to Rushdoony’s views, but for different reasons.



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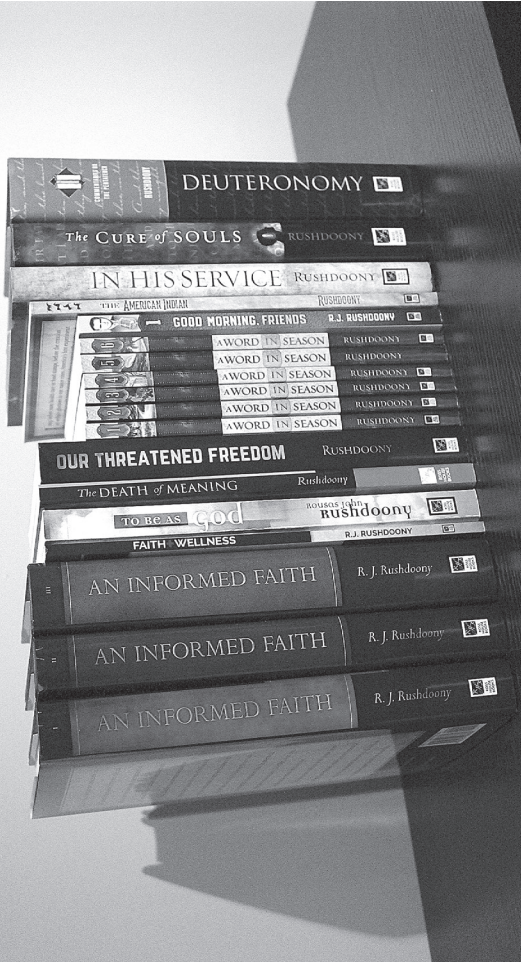
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