

ARISE & BUILD

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COMFORT ZONES AND THE SECOND MILE

BY MARTIN G. SELBREDE



While speaking at the Mid-Atlantic Reformation Society conference in October, Rev. Dr. Paul Michael Raymond

made a passing reference to the need for Christians to get out of their comfort zones. You could build a three-year long sermon series on that point and still not exhaust the issue.

A sobering point that I brought up in my own lecture bears repeating as well: faithful Christians have twice as much work in front of them than others, by dint of being faithful. They will pay for a godly education for their children (whether through homeschool or Christian day school) *and* pay (through taxation) for a state school system they will not even use. They will teach their children each subject from a Biblical worldview, and (where age appropriate) also teach the humanistic perspective on that topic to prepare their children for going toe-to-toe with the enemy in the realm of the mind. A solid creationist must understand both creation and evolution in today's world. A Christian economist must understand Biblical economics as well as Keynesian, monetarist, and Marxist economic theory.

We have to know our enemy's position better than *he* knows his own position.

And even when we know the enemy's views better than they know them, they will still laugh us to scorn, and despise us (Neh. 2:19), and so we have to add yet another burden to the stack. "Our soul is exceedingly filled with the scorning of those that are at ease, and with the contempt of the proud" (Ps. 123:4). The slothful Christian and the ungodly have this much in common: they are both at ease and are scornful of those things in which the godly are exercised. When they justify themselves, their attitude finds its voice in scorn: so far as they're concerned, only fools would work twice as hard, twice as long, at twice the expense.

Our Lord's rebuke to the scorers still echoes through the centuries: "And He said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God" (Luke 16:15). Then Christ provokes the question: at what point might our esteem for personal comfort be an abomination in the sight of God? How large is the gap between "the comfort of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 9:31) and our notions of comfort?

THE DELUSIONS OF THE SLOTHFUL

The slothful delude themselves into thinking that they, "the smart

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ones,” will not be paying double (like their faithful counterparts insist upon doing). When they just do what they think necessary and no more, God takes notice of their slothfulness and hardened hearts. The Scripture outlines in what respect they will be *compelled to pay double anyway*, notwithstanding their complacency-preserving countermeasures against duty and responsibility: “She hath received of the Lord’s hand double for all her sins” (Isa. 40:2).

You’re going to pay double, no matter what. The question is, will you pay double voluntarily, by seeing to your duty, or involuntarily, in judgment following silently upon your heels?

Paying double in judgment is the far higher price, and only self-inflicted blindness prevents us from seeing the folly of it. But God has more than one way to make the slothful, those at ease, to pay double, triple, and more, as the first chapter of Haggai brings home to us. Let’s take a closer look at that passage.

CONSIDER YOUR WAYS

In the opening verses of Haggai’s prophecy, God twice tells His people to consider their ways. The people had made excuses why it was not time to build God’s house or to devote any energy to His Kingdom in this world. They redirected all their energy solely to their own enrichment. The foundation timbers of God’s temple had rotted due to exposure, whereas the people’s houses already had ceilings.¹ The priorities were self-ward rather than God-ward, and God didn’t wink at their conduct. He ended up sending a drought, not merely upon the land and mountains, corn, wine, and oil, but upon cattle and men and “upon all the labour of their hands” (Hag. 1:11).

Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, This people say, The time is not come, the time that the Lord’s

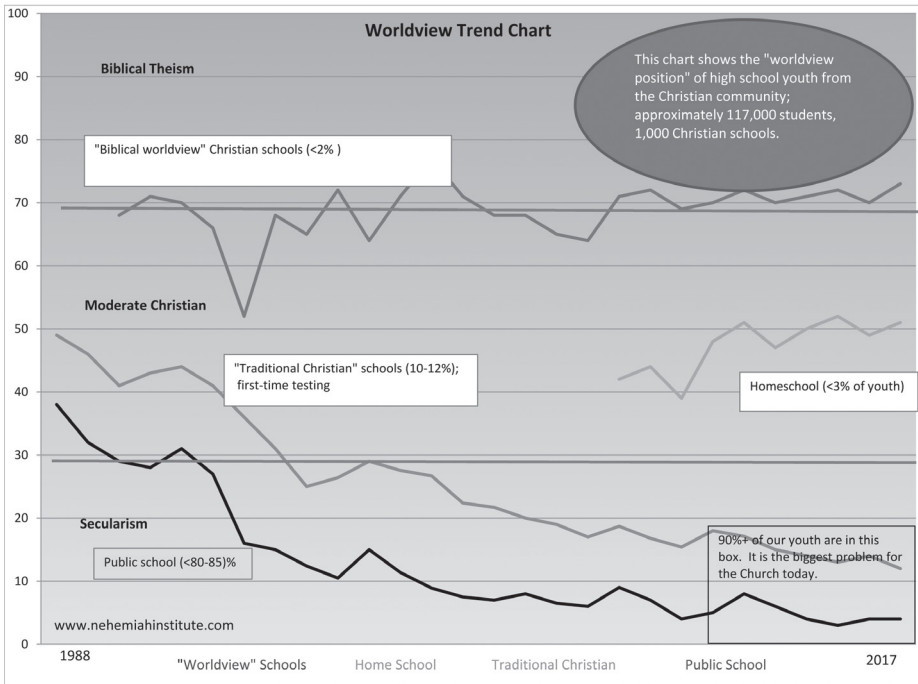
house should be built. Then came the word of the Lord by Haggai the prophet, saying, Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your cieled houses, and this house lie waste? Now therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts; *Consider your ways*. Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes. Thus saith the Lord of hosts; *Consider your ways*. (Hag. 1:2-7 KJV, emphasis added)

It isn’t always smooth sailing when one sets the Lord’s requirements aside, justifying inaction with self-serving rationales. The way of the transgressor is hard (Prov. 13:15) but surely the proverbial Easy Street is misnamed: it has its own negatives. Yes, there’s double the work when you’re simultaneously building God’s house and your own home. But there’s *more* than double the work when you’re only building up your own home, because God can rightfully send a drought upon the labor of your hands due to neglect of His appointed duties.

God is not impressed when we go through the motions. “Who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts?” (Isa. 1:12). This kind of ostentatious busy work, what the late Pastor Paul Doepke called *holy piddling*, achieves nothing except to confirm us as sluggards. There is only one way to lift God’s sanctions upon the labor of our hands. The good news is, the reversal of the drought comes immediately upon taking the first steps:

Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the Lord. (Hag. 1:8)

When God sees His people taking the first steps out of their comfort zone to collect wood (to lay again the foundations of His house), He lifts the



Worldview Trend Survey Results by The Nehemiah Institute

drought. They leave their houses and start the journey uphill to get what is needed for His Kingdom to be built in the earth: raw lumber to be worked into suitable foundation timbers.

Solomon predicted the outcome of Israel enjoying her creature comforts: "By much slothfulness the building decayeth; and through idleness of the hands the house droppeth through" (Eccl. 10:18). By rallying around the rationale that "it's not time for the Lord's house to be built," the people were, by default, arguing that "it is time for the Lord's house to rot."

Today, that rotting of the Lord's house appears in many places, and all of it justified by the blind guides behind the world's pulpits. In America, we can see how His house is left to rot by tracing the rapid decay of a Biblical worldview in the nation's children in the Nehemiah Institute's latest trend survey among four classes of Christian children: those in public schools, those in traditional Christian schools, those in Biblical worldview schools, and homeschoolers. Daniel Smithwick of

the Institute has graciously provided the 2017 results for us to consider (see graphic above).

Those bottom two trend lines testify to the catastrophic rate at which children of the covenant are losing any pretense to a Biblical worldview. This is what rotting foundations look and smell like. This is the deadly price to be paid for staying in our comfort zones and not going the second mile. If you thought God was wroth when His physical house was eroding away, imagine what He thinks when the temple made without hands, compacted from living stones, is left to slide into the cesspool on our watch.

What's the best way for parents of children occupying those bottom-hugging trend lines (95 percent of all students)² to ease their conscience? By heaping scorn upon the 5 percent of parents whose children occupy the more promising trend lines on the Nehemiah Institute's graphic. This is a time-honored tactic, as shown in Job 12:5, to which we now turn.

A LAMP DESPISED

“He that is ready to slip with his feet is as a lamp despised in the thought of him that is at ease” (Job 12:5 KJV). The Masoretic Text takes *lappid* in the sense of lamp or torch, while other translations split the word to make it mean misfortune or calamity. We affirm the former translation, as does the KJV and, among others, Robert Young in his Literal Translation: “A torch—despised in the thoughts of the secure—is prepared for those sliding with the feet.” Both of these translations do justice to different parts of this key verse. Let’s connect the dots.

Those that are at ease despise the lamp or torch. If you’re using a lamp or torch to light your way, you’re obviously not at ease: you’re in motion, likely over difficult terrain, picking your way and trying not to slip and fall. Those that walk by the light of God’s Word and in terms of His commands expend effort that those at ease see no point in. Why bother paying twice for private Christian education? Why have children learn both sides of an issue? Why create your own curriculum? Why not follow the multitude, the 95 percent in the Nehemiah Institute chart who are at ease? The 5 percent who use the torch of God’s Word to shape their family’s education are fools, are they not?

If you don’t think homeschoolers are despised, think again. The entire concept of homeschooling was excoriated by Dr. Paul C. McGlasson, whose scorn is unbridled toward it:

You may or may not consume contaminated beef; you may or may not get your prescribed medicine, a placebo, or a dangerous narcotic; and since your butcher and pharmacist are home-schooled in their field, the chances are high that mistakes will be made ... Your surgeon will be home-schooled in the latest techniques of surgical procedure, or at best educated at church; ... *Fathers and mothers* will now train the

next generation of particle physicists, microbiologists, literary critics, neurologists, brain surgeons, linguists, international diplomats, oceanographers, specialists in sustainable architecture, and wildlife managers.³

Who will gravitate to Dr. McGlasson’s characterizations? Those who are content to let their children ride that downward-diving trend line on the chart, that’s who. To repeat Psalm 123:4 as seen from the homeschooler’s standpoint, “Our soul is exceedingly filled with the scorning of those that are at ease.”

But perhaps the King James translators had it right, that the faithful Christian isn’t *provided* with a lamp or torch, but is *himself a lamp* that lights the way *by his walk*. By paying double and working twice as hard, he is a walking witness to the “highway of holiness” (Isa. 35:8), seeing to it that his children are *not* riding to hell on those chart lines. The faithful parent becomes *a lamp despised* because his family bears silent witness to God’s expectations as they walk by faith.

It is tragic that he who goes the second mile, gives the shirt off his back, also turns the other cheek to those who scoff at his determination to fulfill Deuteronomy 6. But his detractors will realize *true* poverty, for “he becometh poor who dealeth with a slack hand” (Prov. 10:4).


FOLLOW THE TORCHES

The power of a shining example is made clear in the Book of Hebrews. Despised torches, despised lamps, *are to be followed*. Despised or not, they light the way forward as Christ “sends forth justice to victory” (Matt. 12:20). Do not cave in to the temptations of those at ease in Zion, who hold that it isn’t time to build and that the heritage of God can be safely left to the ravages of moth and rust.

No, the author of Hebrews extols

diligence on our part, “that ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises” (Heb. 6:12). This is profound: those who *inherit the promises* are not slothful, and their example is to be followed, that we might also inherit those self-same promises.

Be not slothful. Come out of your comfort zones. Go the second mile. God’s promises are to be found on the other side of that second mile, not in your recliner or in the public schools. Become a torch that some of your brethren *will follow*. And if you’re a lamp despised, know that you’re doing the right thing. Burn brightly.

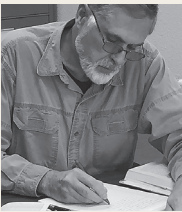
And if you’re not yet a lamp, not yet a torch, it is time to become one. Why? Because your comfort zone bears more than a passing resemblance to the wide, easy path that leads to destruction, and your children are right behind you as you walk it. 

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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. Some translators hold the term to mean “paneled,” meaning expensive decorative woodwork beyond the basic structure. The contrast with God’s house is clear either way.
2. The “traditional Christian schools” in the chart exhibit a decay paralleling (in fact, following) the public schools into pure secularism. Even though these parents are “paying double” dollar-wise, they’re paying no attention to the content of the education they’re purchasing, as the chart makes abundantly clear. They remain content with the results because they don’t believe it is time for the Lord’s house to be built. So it goes unbuilt and their money (from a Kingdom-centered perspective) is simply misspent. But “good enough” is simply not good enough, and never was.
3. See my review of Dr. McGlasson’s book-length attack on Christian Reconstruction here: <https://chalcedon.edu/magazine/false-flags>

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OF COURSE YOU HAVE A KINGDOM JOB

BY MARK R. RUSHDOONY



“I wish I could do more for the Kingdom,” I hear people say. “I don’t feel what I do as a profession advances the Kingdom.”

All work involves some level of frustration as the result of the curse, however. But mundane work is not necessarily unimportant work. Adam’s work in the garden was largely agricultural we should note, yet it was his designated, and hence holy, calling.

The rule of Jesus as King of kings is easily professed, but the Kingdom of God is an analogy easily misunderstood because it is only partially comparable to any human kingdom, as it is “not of this world” (John 18:36). All analogies are partial. This is why the disciples had a difficult time understanding it; they assumed the analogy meant Jesus would remain as the earthly King of the Kingdom He preached. His role as the heir to David’s throne would have reinforced that view.

When we envision a kingdom or nation we do so in statist political and military terms. We therefore see our loyalty as “fighting” for the Kingdom as Christian soldiers. Yet Jesus followed His words to Pilate that the origin of his Kingdom was “not of this world” with the statement, “... if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight ...”

No kingdom exists without a citizenry. The heavenly host do not need a kingdom analogy to understand their role; the comparison is for our understanding. As the people of the King we

have a need to know what citizenship entails. The Sermon on the Mount was largely directed toward understanding life in the Kingdom, our responsibilities.

The work of any domain is largely done by its citizens. Royal courts and princes cannot constitute a kingdom. The Greek work translated as “economics” refers to the management of a household and the study of economics is one of the totality of such decisions. Thus, Ludwig von Mises titled his classic work on the free market *Human Action*. His perspective was that an economy was based on the sum total of the work and decisions of people.

Likewise, the emphasis of the Kingdom of God, though based on the authority of its head, Jesus Christ, is the obedience of its people. The reprimands of the prophets were for lack of obedience to *first*, their covenant obligations and *second*, to God’s righteous law. This was the standard of the old kingdom model, Israel, and is still today that for the new model, the Kingdom of God. It demands our covenant faithfulness exhibited by the obedience of faith. Theonomy (which means God’s law) is how we obey, our instruction book.

Our primary responsibilities to the Kingdom of God remain as faithfulness to our covenant responsibilities and our obedience to His law. All citizens of the Kingdom can obey its law, as individuals, families, employers, workers, and every other role and relationship which collectively comprise our “human action,” the sum total of our work and decisions. Adam obeyed his calling in the mundane work of tending the gar-

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den. It was when he sought the “more important” job of being “as gods” that he failed.

How, as sinners, can we further the Kingdom of God? *First*, we are faithful to our covenant calling. We self-consciously operate in terms of the confidence that Jesus is Lord and King. This means He has authority, so *second*, we “observe all things whatsoever.” One of those things we observe, remember, is the requirement to give tithes and offerings. We are to fund the Kingdom economy beyond our obligation to provide for our families.

The church is modeled on the synagogue, not the temple. By tradition, ten adult men were required to establish a synagogue. That would support a rabbi. Additional members would then allow for charity, education, and more. The tithe in the Old Testament went to the broad educational and charitable work of the Levites, who in turn gave a tenth to the priests (Numbers 18:20–32). Nine-tenths of the tithe (or 9 percent of all increase) went to the work of the Levites.

The work of the shepherd, farmer,

craftsman, or merchant was thus Kingdom work because it was done in faithfulness to God’s law (and hence to His ordering of man’s life) and also because it funded the godly work of others. The tithe means that all ethical work serves the Lord. The majority of the people in Israel were not Levites, but through tithes and offerings all were productive in funding their work. Without that faithfulness, the Levitical work was impossible. The same holds true today. We must personally be faithful to our covenant responsibilities as individuals, families, employers, and employees, but we must also give of our increase to the work of God beyond those obligations. Our tithes and offerings extend our faithfulness by funding the economy of the Kingdom of God. We can only claim faithfulness to that Kingdom if we fulfill our citizenship duty to pay its tax. Are you a Kingdom tax dodger? 🙏

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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 @chalcedonfoundation.

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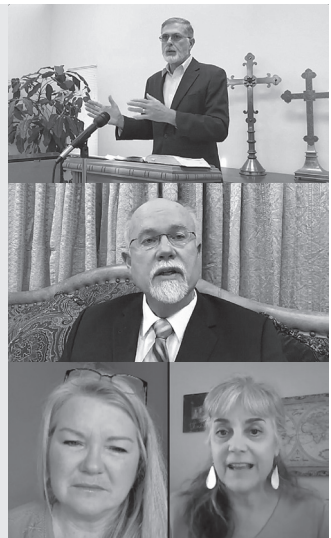
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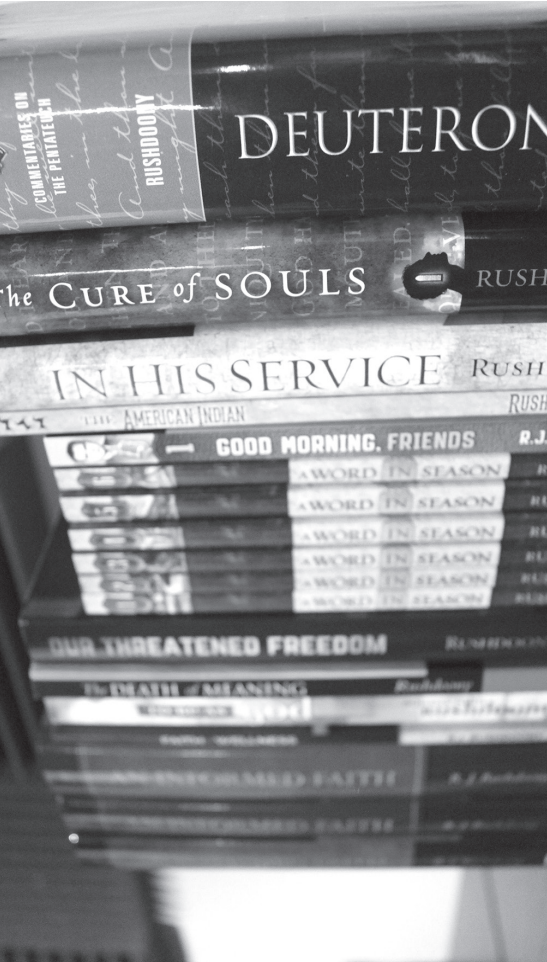
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