

ChalcedonReport

MINISTRY NEWS FROM THE CHALCEDON FOUNDATION® FEBRUARY 2021

The Grassroots of Small Group Meetings

Rushdoony's Approach to Strengthening the Family and the Church in the Face of an Ungodly World

A Chalcedon Editorial

"[T]his writer's weekly Bible and theological studies are tape-recorded and circulate across the United States and sometimes beyond its frontiers. Some of these studies are appearing also in print, as witness *The Foundations of Social Order, Studies in the Creeds and Councils of the Early Church* (1968). This work, regarded by some pastors as too difficult or theological, is still circulating heavily among laymen. It is listened to by groups in various states in home meetings. The usual situation is that a man or woman opens his home to friends, provides refreshments, and holds weekly study sessions to a steadily increasing audience."¹

What a difference a year can make. At the outset of 2020, it was life as usual for church, family, school, restaurants, events, and travel. By the end of 2020, most of the civilized world was homeschooling, families were working from home, and churches were streaming their services via Zoom, YouTube, Facebook, et al.

Oddly enough, much of that was the norm for Chalcedon and its supporters, so the adjustments were not too extreme for us.

Much of our staff have always worked remotely even when Rushdoony was active as president. Because he himself did not require oversight to do his work, he expected the same from office staff and adjunct writers. This helped to minimize expenses while maximizing time and productivity. As of 2020, much of America learned this the hard way.

Throughout 2019, Chalcedon was hosting weekly livestreams via Facebook, YouTube, and our own website for our Chalcedon Chapel services followed by

an hour of Q & A with Martin Selbrede. This enabled us to reach more people throughout the world, but for too many, the idea of watching or listening online wasn't so appealing. All that began to change in the early Spring of 2020.

Now, many churches, small groups, and Christian leaders are operating this way because of the lockdowns and public restrictions, and that means people are more interconnected than ever before, and they are more savvy to the technology that makes this possible.

For Chalcedon, leveraging technology was a necessity in order to be cost-effective and productive, and that makes possible something Rushdoony always saw when it came to the life of the church and the family.

Finding Others of Like Mind

For years, a recurring inquiry we receive is from those who can't find a church that espouses Christian Reconstruction. For some, just finding a strong Reformed church is difficult, but what this shows us is that people are looking for fellowship, encouragement,

strategies, and resources regarding advancing Christ's Kingdom in their life and work.

Consider for a moment the citation featured above where Rushdoony in the early days of Chalcedon (1973) saw the value in his lectures and books being widely distributed internationally by laymen who hosted meetings in their homes.

He saw this as reminiscent of the early church who would meet in homes under fierce persecution while living in the midst of ungodliness. As you'll see in the next article (see page 3), by 1994, Rushdoony was still excited about the possibilities of home meetings as a way to strengthen the Christian family and better equip the Christian community for godly action.

Circulation

The keyword used in the citation above is *circulating* in that an otherwise neglected message was making its way throughout Christian homes by utilizing the existing technology of print, mail, and audio recording. Had they been



able to livestream video in the late 60s and early 70s, the growth, reach, and influence of Chalcedon would've been vastly different. Now, we have free technologies that dwarf what was available when Chalcedon began, but are we all taking advantage of them?

As mentioned, Chalcedon has always tried to be innovative with using contemporary technology in order to promote Christian Reconstruction. Consider for a moment the article on page 4 where Rushdoony recorded and mailed his *Easy Chair* audio series in podcast fashion years before we had even heard of such a thing.

What's needed is a growing, active laity who are also utilizing the resources provided by Chalcedon in order to host meetings either in their homes or through the web using conferencing platforms such as Zoom.

Moving Us to Faith and Action

We must also consider the fact that the culture is growing more unfriendly to Christianity and the family, so the need for a more active laity is even greater.

In the introduction to his two-volume *Systematic Theology*, Rushdoony wrote:

Theology belongs in the pulpit, the school, the work-place, the family, and everywhere. Society as a whole is weakened when theology is neglected.²

Good theology belongs everywhere, so we should bring it more into our lives by meeting in the ways that we can whether physical or digital. The reason, as Rushdoony noted, is because theology should create action:

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

The Vitality of Lay Outreach

What was developing with Chalcedon in its early years wasn't unique. Rushdoony saw a similar development with the controversial John Birch Society:

In recent years, numerous organizations have demonstrated the superior vitality of lay outreach. Two illustrations will suffice, *first*, the John Birch Society. This illustration is deliberately chosen. It is not our concern, nor is it relevant, to discuss here the pros and cons of that organization. It is important to our purpose that this society is both criticized, hated, and attacked as the early church was to a far greater degree, and that it is led by volunteer laymen. Groups of men, women, and youth, normally not exceeding twenty persons, meet in

homes regularly to follow a course of study under a leader. These leaders are usually surprisingly busy men: doctors, dentists, businessmen, and others who have a full schedule but still take time to prepare a lesson, invite friends and neighbors, and recruit, with help from other members, new members.⁴

In other words, whether it's the early church, or a contemporary movement, the greatest effect is initiated outside of the major institutions by an active laity, and this can be accomplished alongside faithful churches and schools who are equally committed to the cause of Christian Reconstruction.

Even if no such church can be found, one can still participate in online groups as a way to supplement their ecclesiastical life, but are there "doctors, dentists, businessmen, and others" who will take the time and invest in the resources to host such meetings?

Be Faithful With What We Have

Throughout his ministry, Rushdoony never wavered from the value he saw in an active laity and the need to provide them with the theological resources for faith and action.

And as of 2021, our mission at Chalcedon is no different. If anything, the time has never been better to see a rise in lay ministry, and Chalcedon has never been more prepared to supply the theological resources for such a ministry.

It matters little that Rushdoony is no longer with us. He supplied us with more than enough to equip the church for a century and beyond. No doubt, we will continue our work in Christian education with contemporary scholarship, but we must be faithful to make use of what we already possess in as many ways as possible. 🙌

1. R. J. Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law, Volume 1* (Vallecito, CA: Ross House Books, 2020), p. 761

2. R. J. Rushdoony, *Systematic Theology in Two Volumes* (Vallecito, VA: Ross House Books, 1994), xv.

3. *ibid.*

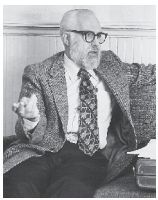
4. Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law*, p. 761.



Rushdoony speaking at the Western Conference on Media & the Arts, Sacramento, CA, 1983

The Re-Awakening of Christian Concern

Taken from *Our House Church Newsletter*, Spring 1994, Issue 1.



Over the years, a number of people have asked me for guidance in starting a home Bible study group, a home church, or a class. There are now many such groups all over the country; someone once told me that perhaps a million people gather in this manner, both Catholics and Protestants. In my travels, I have learned that at least two such groups are now churches, one with a Christian school.

The reasons for these groups are many: no sound church exists in their area; or, they feel a need to supplement what their church does with a more intensive study. This is a remarkable movement because it demonstrates that the laity is deeply concerned with the faith. They recognize the need for a re-awakening of Christian concern and relevance on the grass-roots level. In some instances, where the groups are still tied to their church, their efforts are welcomed as a revitalization of the church; in other cases, the classes are resented. In any case, they are growing, and they are an evidence of a major development: the work of Christ's Kingdom is seen as the responsibility of every Christian, not something to be relegated to the clergy or the church agencies.

There is another facet to this movement, the development of charitable activities. This began with counseling services to unwed mothers. From an anti-abortion impulse, it has grown into a practical service to unwed mothers, both before and after the baby comes, and then other activities have been started.

We want to be of help to all such groups. We welcome reports from you about your activities and/or services. We think it is wonderful that so many of you are applying your faith to one sphere after another, and we hope that your accounts will stimulate others.

Remember, the early church, for about two centuries or more of its early history, had no sanctuaries. Yet during that time, meeting secretly in homes, and often persecuted, the early church cared for the sick and the elderly, cared for orphans and widows, rescued abandoned babies that had not been successfully aborted, created courts of arbitration to settle cases in terms of Biblical Law (1 Cor. 6), ransomed captives, and much, much more. The church was rapidly becoming the only good government in the Roman Empire.

We believe that there are evidences of like movement today. We want to give you an outlet for telling others of your activities, and for learning what others are doing. Be sure to write to *Friends of*

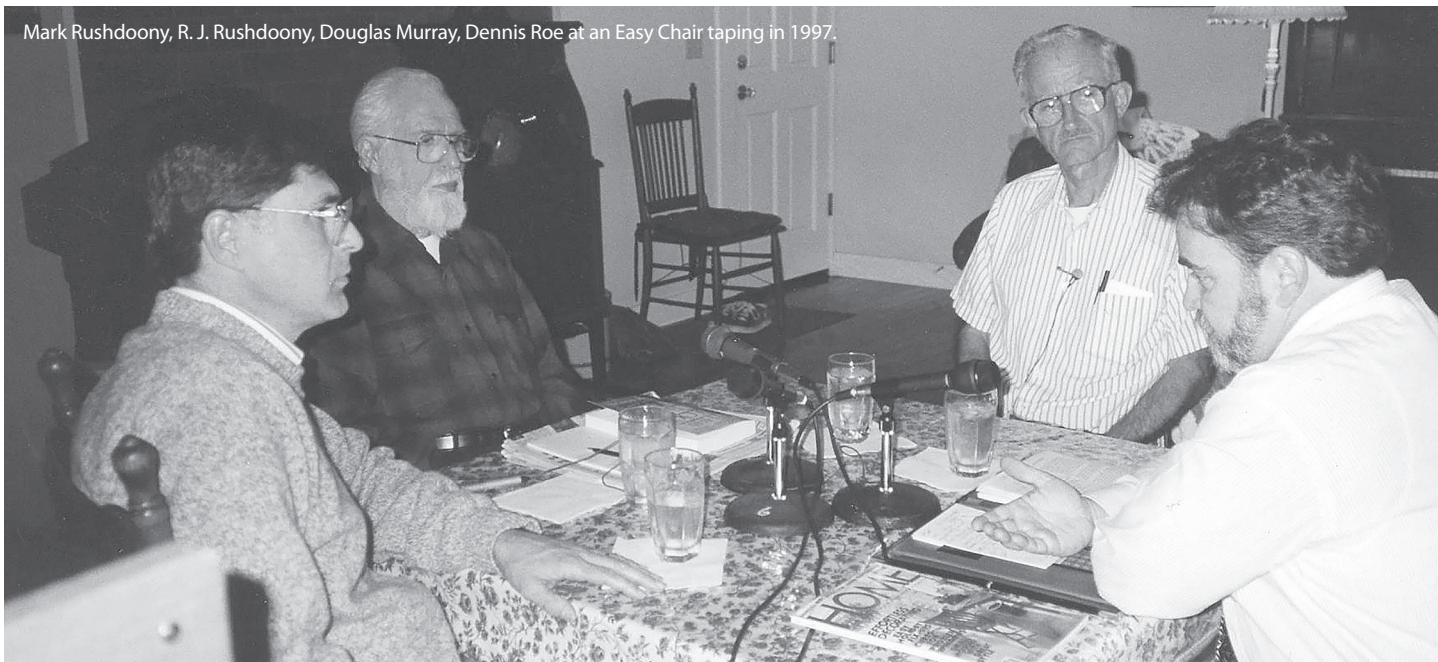
Chalcedon at the address given on the heading of this newsletter.

In the Old Testament, we see that for most of that era, worship on the Lord's Day was in the home. All males went to the central sanctuary for the three great feasts, but, the rest of the time the worship was in the home.

The father was God's priest over his family, with a duty to instruct his household in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Some churches still retain this structure in varying degrees, and the church membership is reckoned, not by the number of persons, but by the number of families, the basic unit. Remember too that the beginning of the New Testament era was the Holy Family—Joseph, Mary, and Jesus. When the family grows strong, so too does the church.

You may be a member of an excellent church, and we hope you are. All the same, consider seriously some kind of effort to strengthen your family's Christian life. There is a major revolution under way against the godly family: the sexual revolution, abortion, homosexuality, pornography, sex education classes, euthanasia, and more. We cannot be passive in the face of these things, and nothing is more important in this battle than the renewal of the strength of the Christian family. This is why we take this effort very seriously. 🇺🇸

Mark Rushdoony, R. J. Rushdoony, Douglas Murray, Dennis Roe at an Easy Chair taping in 1997.



Did Rushdoony Invent the Podcast?

No doubt he saw the importance of the audio format for deep discussions as a way to promote ideas.

Wikipedia defines a *podcast* as “an episodic series of spoken word digital audio files that a user can download to a personal device for easy listening,” and the reason someone would produce a podcast is to “to express a personal passion, increase professional visibility, enter into a social network of influencers or influential ideas, cultivate a community of like-minded viewership, or put forward pedagogical or ideological ideas.”

Rushdoony began his *Easy Chair* audio series as a way to provide more content to Chalcedon supporters in a discussion format instead of the didactic or scholarly content of articles, essays, and books.

Conversations are engaging, and how often do people say, “I’d love to be a fly on the wall when those two talk?” Recorded audio discussions such as the *Easy Chair* enabled Chalcedon supporters to be that fly on the wall when great minds conversed on relevant topics to the Christian life.

This was the same motive behind our launch of the *Chalcedon Podcast*—now on Episode 10. Our desire was to better connect with our supporters and subscribers as well as provide an easy way

to reach new listeners—and viewers—of Chalcedon’s message. Because the podcast is available in both audio and video format on multiple platforms, it’s never been easier to access and share its content.

As noted in the opening article, if Rushdoony had access to our technology during the early years of Chalcedon, it no doubt would have accelerated and increased the reach of Christian Reconstruction. Now that we have the technology, and more resources, are we doing less or more with what we have? Our society is changing rapidly, so we

must meet the resistance with godly action. Podcasts are a great way to carry your ideas with you.

In addition to the *Chalcedon Podcast*, our own Andrea Schwartz has published over 120 episodes of the *Out of the Question Podcast*, and both are available on our website. These audio programs along with the thousands of sermons, lectures, essays, articles, and books make the Chalcedon website the go-to resource for Christian Reconstruction.

Please continue to pray and financially support Chalcedon as we strive to advance Christ’s Kingdom. 🙏

