

FAITH FOR ALL OF LIFE

Faith for All of Life
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PROCLAIMING THE AUTHORITY OF GOD'S WORD OVER EVERY AREA OF LIFE AND THOUGHT

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Theocentric Charismatics

Christopher J. Ortiz

“Without agreeing with tongues, we can say that among God-centered charismatics, there are important movements astir. No doctrine of Scripture is more neglected than that of the Holy Spirit. Our emphasis, however, must be God-centered, not man-centered. All humanism is occultistic. The development of faith and life among theocentric charismatics is one of the most promising aspects of 20th century Christianity. Its potentialities are very great.”¹ ~ R. J. Rushdoony



Just a few years after Rushdoony penned these words, financial and sexual scandal rocked the ranks of Charismatics as a small

host of television evangelists were exposed for rape, fraud, lying, and soliciting prostitutes. Suddenly, the world knew the names of Jim and Tammy Bakker, Jimmy Swaggart, Larry Lea, and Robert Tilton. Almost immediately the revenue from donations dropped dramatically, and it would be several years before parachurch organizations would regain their financial footing.

Despite these dramatic examples of scandal, the modern Charismatic movement continued its unprecedented growth. A movement once scorned as “holy rollers” became both a social and political force with one leader reaching for the White House (Pat Robertson) and others acquiring numerous positions of influence within the lobbying apparatus of the Religious Right.

Ted Haggard

In 2005, *Time* magazine listed Rev. Ted Haggard as one of the twenty-five most influential evangelicals in America. Until recently, Haggard was the senior pastor of a 14,000-member Charismatic mega-church (New Life) in Colorado Springs, Colorado. He made the list in *Time* magazine because in 2003 he was

elected as head of the sixty-five-year-old, 30 million-member National Association of Evangelicals, one of the most politically powerful Christian groups in America.

Ted Haggard, along with James Dobson, led the charge in opposing gay marriage with Haggard teaching that homosexuality was clearly condemned in the Scriptures. There was just one problem. Ted Haggard himself was a homosexual, and a male prostitute exposed Haggard for his hypocrisy revealing a three-year, monthly, paid relationship with Haggard who had been using the alias “Art” to hide his identity.

It took less than a week, after his exposure, for Haggard to cease his public denials and admit to both homosexuality and drug use. Yet the Haggard revelation is barely a blip on the radar in comparison to the earlier scandals of the late eighties. The church and the general public are becoming more tolerant of Christian sin and scandal.

Despite its enormous population, the Charismatic movement continues to struggle with scandal, materialism, and abuse of power. Yet within its numbers are multitudes of faithful men and women who have placed God at the center (theocentric), and this group, in my opinion, holds the Biblical solutions to one of the world’s largest Christian communities.

The Rise of Charismatics

Charismaticism has its roots in fundamental Pentecostalism. It was in 1901 that Agnes Ozman first spoke in tongues at the Bethel Bible College in Topeka, Kansas, but Pentecostalism really gained traction during the Azusa Street Revivals in Los Angeles in 1906. By 1965, there were roughly 50,000,000 Pentecostals throughout the world. That’s a growth rate of 780,000+ per year. Twenty-two years later the Pentecostal movement was surpassing 217,000,000. This represented a yearly growth rate of nearly 10,000,000.

The numbers multiplied exceedingly as the Charismatic movement began in the late 1950s. The simplest definition is that Charismatic equated to mainstream denominations engaging in the Pentecostal experience of Holy Spirit baptism and the accompanying spiritual gifts listed in 1 Corinthians 12–14. Here is a hundred-year chart of the exponential growth of the Pentecostal/Charismatic movement:

1901	– 40 members
1945	– 16,000,000
1955	– 27,000,000
1965	– 50,000,000
1975	– 96,000,000
1985	– 247,000,000
1990	– 372,000,000
1995	– 460,000,000
2000	– 550,000,000 members ²

Maybe I'm just a simpleton, but is this not the most significant Christian revival/movement since the Reformation? The early American awakenings are but a faint moment in comparison. Again, despite the scandals, abuses, and wrong doctrines, the movement grows unabated as it streams into the new millennium.

The Basic Makeup

Charismatic Christians now comprise the largest Protestant body in the world. However, this can be easily challenged because Charismatics are found in virtually every Christian denomination known. As a movement, it is the largest, but as a denomination, it is ill defined.

At present, Catholicism remains the largest Christian body with a total of 1.086 billion as of 2005. Charismatics represent more than half that amount. And with the growth rate of Charismatics, they will likely exceed Catholics in number despite the fact that millions of Catholics fill their ranks. It is a serious mistake to dismiss Charismatics as was done a few decades ago. They are a permanent fixture in church history.

Outside of the isolated branches of Pentecostal denominations (e.g., Assemblies of God, Church of God, United Pentecostal, etc.) and the Charismatics sprinkled throughout the myriad of denominations, the Charismatic community is a decentralized body of predominantly independent churches and parachurch organizations. In addition, there is the abundance of media consisting of some of the largest television networks in the world (e.g., Trinity Broadcasting Network, CBN, Daystar, Sky Angel, Inspiration Network, Word Network) along with countless radio stations, magazines, publishers, musicians, etc. This essentially makes the movement a sizable and powerful subculture.

Reconstructionists and Charismatics

Rushdoony had little interaction with the Pentecostal/Charismatic movement until the late seventies when Christian Reconstruction began its "great invasion" into the ranks of the Charismatic community. It actually wasn't a planned invasion. Like other groups, Charismatics discovered the writings of Christian Reconstruction and quickly sought out thinkers like Rushdoony. By the mid-eighties, thousands of Charismatics, including me, were reading Reconstructionist literature.

Rushdoony cultivated personal relationships with a few noteworthy Charismatics during the 1980s such as Dennis Peacocke, Bob Mumford, Bob Weiner, and Joseph McAuliffe—as you might recall, McAuliffe wrote a regular column in the *Chalcedon Report* for a number of years. The strong political and activist stream of the 1980s mixed with this new community of Charismatics to create a more socially influential movement. Out of this came national leaders such as Pat Robertson. From then on, the Religious Right would retain a strong Charismatic element within its membership.

As I mentioned, I was a part of the initial harvest from the Charismatic community, and I've watched closely the influence of Christian Reconstruction on Charismatics. Although the general dominionist stream within Charismatic churches came from Christian Reconstruction, the majority of Charismatics hardly resemble anything close to Christian Reconstruction. They remain predominantly Arminian in their soteriology, antinomian in their ethics, and evidentialist in their apologetics.

The Charismatic movement still suffers from its doctrinal weaknesses. Would the Charismatics have experi-

enced so much embarrassment from their leaders were they thoroughly ingrained in such doctrines as total depravity and the abiding validity of God's law? Reformed doctrine wars against egotism. Presbyterianism serves as a stopgap to one-man rule. Theonomy stifles the alleged promptings of the Spirit that lead Christians into the most dubious ethical decisions; e.g., "God told me to leave my wife." And presuppositionalism demolishes the idea of neutrality that leaves millions of Christian children in public schools and equal numbers of adults living compartmentalized lives.

In short, it's not so much the Charismatic doctrine of the Holy Spirit that creates its problems. It's their doctrines of God, man, soteriology, and ethics that cause the greater damage. Their emphasis upon the Holy Spirit is beneficial and still needed. Rushdoony understood this.

The Changing Face of Charismatics

Despite the more obvious errors of mainstream Charismaticism, Rushdoony still viewed theocentric Charismatics as "one of the most promising aspects" of modern Christianity; "its potentialities are very great." Has this dynamic potential dissipated? It's difficult to determine because nearly three decades removed from Rushdoony's assessment, the Charismatic movement bears a much different visage.

The modern mega-church, along with the widespread influence of evangelicals like Rick Warren, is blurring the lines between Charismatic and mainstream churches. This is creating a fair amount of cross migration with Charismatics filling large evangelical churches and vice-versa. Much of this is due to the evangelical pastors adapting Charismatic ecclesiastical praxes. It's not uncommon now for the First Baptist

Church of any community to have a contemporary worship service filled with younger faces and raised hands. Adding to the confusion is the name changing. For example, a “First Presbyterian Church” may now be a “Sonlight Community Church.”

The newer generic brand of neo-charismaticism is absorbing the next generation of Charismatics. The old-school Charismatics of the Word of Faith movement may experience the same decline as the Jesus movement of the early seventies. Emphases like “marketplace ministry” are replacing the older concepts of the “prosperity gospel.” This doesn’t mean that faith and prosperity are no longer believed. Rather, more sophisticated approaches to blending the financial with gospel preaching are leading many Charismatics away from a self-indulgent approach to personal economics. This is a good thing.

However, the obvious holes remain in the dam. The doctrines of God, salvation, ethics, church government, and eschatology are still non-reformed. Therefore, the Charismatic community remains a significant—maybe the most significant—mission field for Christian Reconstruction and the Reformed faith.

Reaching Charismatics

Reaching the Charismatics is both simple and difficult. It is simple in that most Charismatics are dogmatically committed to the idea of *Sola Scriptura*, and they are usually open to new ideas (i.e., they are not creedalists). However, Charismatics are difficult to reach because they have endured decades of ridicule and criticism from their Protestant brethren.

Is there a solution? I think so. The best representatives to work with the massive Charismatic community are the theocentric Charismatics that Rushdoony describes. Those Charismatics

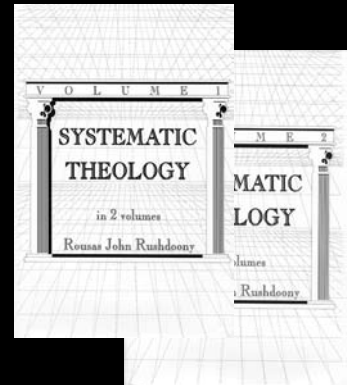
who are grounded in the tenets of the Reformed faith and can explicate with empathy the Biblical doctrines should be the ambassadors to this community. Charismatics are likely to listen to those of their own “tribe” and not the critic who thinks tongues are “of the devil.”

Charismatics will continue to suffer at the hands of their leaders and institutions because of the absence of sound doctrine among so many of its adherents. New leadership is needed to help steer this burgeoning community onto the solid foundations of the Reformed faith and the law of God. The Charismatic movement is set to be the largest Christian community of shared belief in the world. Over the years Chalcedon has influenced a great many Charismatics, and there is no reason why we cannot continue to do so.

Rushdoony put aside the issue of *glossolalia* (“tongue-speaking”) because the point is moot. Tongues are not the sum total of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. We simply cannot go back to the first century to settle the debate on the nature of tongues. But we also cannot question the necessity and validity of the power of the Holy Spirit and His abiding presence in our lives and churches. The Holy Spirit is very real and very active in time and history. The Reformed community must understand that combating the dark forces set against the advancing Kingdom will require more than theology. It will necessitate great faith in both the Spirit and Word to undo the machinations of wickedness, thwart the threats of tyranny, and convert the nations to the glorious gospel. ■

1. R. J. Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law Vol. II* (Vallecito, CA: Ross House Books, 1982), 160.
2. Vinson Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition: Charismatic Movements in the Twentieth Century* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 281.

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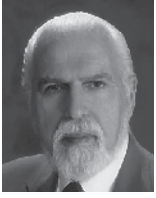


By R. J. Rushdoony. Theology belongs in the pulpit, the school, the workplace, the family and everywhere. Society as a whole is weakened when theology is neglected. Without a systematic application of theology, too often people approach the Bible with a smorgasbord mentality, picking and choosing that which pleases them. This two-volume set addresses this subject in order to assist in the application of the Word of God to every area of life and thought.

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The Religious Foundations of Culture

By R.J. Rushdoony (Reprinted from *The One and the Many* [Fairfax, VA: Thoburn Press, 1978], 371-375).



In 1954, Bernard Baruch found the modern mentality increasingly evidencing fears concerning the future. “Everywhere we look we find further evidences of this dread of breakdown.”¹ No era lacks its fears and problems, but, when the fears of an age outweigh its hopes and confidence, then that culture is in process of disintegration.

Every culture is a religion externalized, a faith incarnated into life and action. The mainspring of every culture is its basic faith, its religious beliefs which undergird its hopes, action, and perspective. When that faith begins to decay, the culture decays.

St. Paul cited the meaning of hope:

We were saved with this hope ahead. Now when an object of hope is seen, there is no further need to hope. Who ever hopes for what he sees already? But if we hope for something that we do not see, we wait for it patiently. (Rom. 8:24–25, Moffatt translation)

But we wait patiently for our hope only as long as we have faith in that hope. When the faith perishes, the hope is gone.

This makes clear the nature of the growing internal crisis within the Soviet Union, among the Communist elite. Both Communist students and leaders are losing hope because they are disillusioned with Marxism. The 1969 defection of one of the most prominent writers of the Soviet Union gave evidence of this. Anatoly Kuznetsov left the Soviet Union, his mother, son, and wife, as well as a position of affluence and prominence, to seek asylum in England.

To indicate the meaning of this step to him, he took a new name, A. Anatol, to signify a new life. In his public statement, he declared:

You will say it's hard to understand. Why should a writer whose books have sold millions of copies, and who is extremely popular and well-off in his own country, suddenly decide not to return to that country, which, moreover, he loves?

The loss of hope: I simply cannot live there any longer. This feeling is something stronger than me. I just can't go on living there. If I were now to find myself again in the Soviet Union, I should go out of my mind ... So long as I was young, I went on hoping for something ... Finally, I have simply given up ... I came to the point where I could no longer write, no longer sleep, no longer breathe.²

The mood of flight is a major one; no sane man wants to remain in a burning building. As a result, many Americans and Europeans also look for a country to run to: Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, all these and more are cited, but all prove to be a part of the same general conflagration.

It is not surprising that the moon flight of 1969 commanded so wide and popular an attention. Many of the remarks made were revealing: “No life there, but no riots either!”

This general disillusionment is caused by the failure of the age to sustain man spiritually. The faith of the modern age is humanism, a religious belief in the sufficiency of man as his own lord, his own source of law, his own savior. Instead of God and His law-word as the measure of all things, humanism has made man the measure of reality.

Humanism has had a measure of success because it preempted Christian civilization; it captured an existing culture and claimed the fruits thereof as

its own. In terms of orthodox Christianity, man is under God's law, and man's only true liberty is under God's law. For humanism, man is not under law but over or beyond law as his own source of law. Liberty in humanistic terms is from law, in particular, in deliverance from God's law. As a result, humanism rapidly erodes a culture as the implications of humanism develop and come to maturity. Humanism calls for perpetual revolution, because, with every man his own law, and with evolution producing new heights each generation, freedom from the past is a necessity. But this perpetual revolution is the deliberate destruction of the capital of a civilization, and its consequence is the ultimate impoverishment of all.

“A faith for men to live by” is the necessity and need of every race and nation. This faith must give meaning to man's life, to his past, present, and future. Man requires a world of total meaning, and humanism, as it comes to flower, gives instead a world of total meaninglessness. Orthodox Christianity, with its faith in the triune God and His sovereign predestinating decree, alone gives that total meaning.

The church can depart from that faith only at the risk of its life.

If a religion is isolated from its world and is confined to its church or temple, it is irrelevant to that world because it is not its motive force. The religion of a culture is that motive force which governs human action in every realm and embodies itself in the life, institutions, hopes, and dreams of a society.

Christianity has ceased to be the motive force of society. Not only has Christianity been opposed by human-

ism, but also, from within its ranks, false eschatologies—premillennialism and amillennialism—have led to a retreat from the world and a denial of victory therein. This is a surrender of culture to the enemy.

However, if the religion of a culture cannot maintain order in the institutions of its societies, then that religion is finished. The established or accepted religious faith of a society must undergird it with the necessary social order to make progress and communication possible. Modern culture, however, is seeing the radical erosion of church, state, school, family, and all things else, so that very obviously the humanistic faith of modernity is ceasing to provide a workable faith for society. Thus, in this day and age, Christianity, the older religion of the West, is irrelevant, and humanism, the present faith, is collapsing rapidly. Humanism in its every form—Marxist, Fabian, democratic, republican, monarchist, or otherwise—is in radical decay and unable to further a culture. Christianity, in its Biblical declaration a world religion calling for world dominion in terms of Jesus Christ, is now unwilling to think in terms of dominion. Schilder has called attention to those Christians who, to use Vriend's summary of Schilder, believe that they have no higher task than to eat the crumbs that fall from the cultural tables of the unregenerate.³ Crumb-pickers are content to let the devil attempt to establish a culture but refuse to believe that God requires it of His people. The stern warning of one prominent clergyman against all attempts at establishing Christian reform leading to a Christian culture is this: "You don't polish brass on a sinking ship!" If, indeed, the world is a sinking ship, then all brass-polishing is futile. But if the world is destined to fulfil all the prophecies of Isaiah, and of all Scripture, and culminate in a glorious peace

(Isa. 2:4) and a joyful reign of Christian law and order, then crumb-pickers are opposing Jesus Christ.

Culture has been defined very simply as "the way of life of a society." When that way of life sees life as meaningless, then society either stagnates and declines, or it collapses. To see life as meaningless is to make death your "way of life." Oriental societies adopted philosophies of world and life negation; they declared that nothingness and meaninglessness are ultimate. The consequence for them was stagnation and ultimate conquest by the West, first by Islamic forces, then by Christian powers. The luxury of stagnation is now gone; history's more rapid pace brings swifter judgment to those who fail. As a result, when the culture, the way of life of a society, is unable to provide either order or meaning to life, its destiny is death.

Facing, thus, the end of an age, particularly one which deserves to die, the Christian must again reassert Christianity as a total way of life. This means that the Christian and the churches are derelict in their duty if they do not rethink every field of life, thought, and action in terms of Scripture. Christian schools are an excellent beginning, but no area of thought can be permitted to remain outside of the dominion of Christ. To the extent to which the churches and Christians pursue a crumb-picking operation rather than an exercise of dominion, to that extent the world will flounder in its own decay and ruin before renewal comes.

Henry Van Til has given an able statement of Schilder's view of Christ as the key to culture:

Since the Christian is one who partakes of the anointing of Christ (Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 12), his concern with culture is inescapable. For, by his anointing Christ was declared the legitimate heir of the first Adam and commissioned as God's officer of the day to do the work which our first father failed to perform, namely, to glorify God in

his handiwork. But Christ was not only empowered, he was also enabled by the Spirit. His anointing was the guarantee of achievement, for he came to reconcile all things to the Father (Col. 1:20). As such Christ does not bring something altogether new, but he restores what was from the beginning, and actually brings to pass what God designed from the first. Adam as a living soul was indeed the father of human society, but Christ is the life-giving spirit, who calls men into his fellowship and fashioned them for the fulfillment of the obligation given at creation to the first Adam. The latter must be seen primarily as image-bearer and consequently office-bearer of God, a servant-son who as prophet, priest and king received the cultural mandate to cultivate the ground, to replenish the earth and have dominion over it. This was for man the service of God, true religion. This was the original cosmic order, in which the idea of vocation, of being commissioned and called was determinative for the nature of culture.

But man rebelled and denied his relationship to the Father, becoming an ally of God's enemy, the Devil. As part of the created world of nature man had both consciousness and conscience, was both letter and reader (interpreter) in God's book. He was called to cultivate the good earth and to bring to expression what was implicit, to fruition what was latent, and thus to be a co-worker with God, the creator. For although God pronounced his creation good, it was not a finished product; there was to be an evolution and a development abetted by the cultural activity of man. And only thus the sabbath of God's eternal rest would be ushered in.⁴

Until there is Christian Reconstruction, there will continue to be radical decline and decay. ■

1. Bernard M. Baruch, *A Philosophy for Our Time* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1954), 4.
2. "I Could No Longer Breathe," *Time*, 8 August 1969, 30.
3. John Vriend, "Christ and Culture." Review of *Christus en Cultuur* by K. Schilder. *Torch and Trumpet* 1, no. 1 (April/May 1951): 11.
4. Henry R. Van Til, *The Calvinistic Concept of Culture* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1959), 138.

The Foundation of the Christian Curriculum

Andrea Schwartz



Let's say you wanted to prepare an ambassador for diplomatic service. What would be involved?

For starters, you would ensure that the candidate was well versed in the ideology and practices of your country and was prepared to discuss, defend, and promote your nation's interests in the country where he was going to serve. Selections would be made on the basis of those who were in wholehearted agreement with your country's goals and purposes, and verified so as to ensure loyalty when living in that foreign culture. You would make sure that anyone sent out was additionally versed in the culture and perspectives of the destination country to be able to conduct the duties and responsibilities of the calling effectively and productively.

Aren't Christian parents charged with the same responsibility as they train their children to be ambassadors for Jesus Christ according to the Great Commission? Before we would consider sending them on such a mission, would we not need to be certain that they were well schooled in the particulars of the Christian faith as it applied to daily situations? Wouldn't we want them to be able to articulate in a coherent way what makes Jesus Christ *the Way, the Truth, and the Life*?

In other words, what would a Christian curriculum look like—one designed to impart a Biblically Christian world and life view?

I've irritated more than a few people by challenging the enrollment of their

children in the public school system. In fact, I'm repeatedly told by Christian pastors and elders that it is important not to be divisive on this issue. To many, it is an issue that is summed up in *agreeing to disagree*.

Their underlying presupposition is that education is a subject that the Lord has no definite opinion about. To them, attendance at church on Sundays and further participation at Sunday school or Awana clubs is all the *requisite* Christian education that children need: religious training is best handled at church, with there being no need to examine all disciplines (history, science, literature, etc.) from the Word of God.

I often challenge such folks and ask them this: as a Christian, why wouldn't you send your children to a Muslim school? A Hindu school? A Mormon school? The answer: because they are Christian and they wouldn't want their children to be influenced against their religious beliefs! My next question is: as a Christian, why are you sending your children to a *missionary* school that teaches, preaches, and mandates the state religion of humanism? As Rushdoony so ably puts it,

A state curriculum to be true to itself must teach statism. A Christian curriculum to be true to itself must be in every respect Christian.¹

Many professing Christians continue to enroll their children in state-run schools, thereby setting up a schizophrenic situation: Jesus Christ is professed King of kings and Lord of Lords on Sundays (and in church), but Monday through Friday, His name is forbidden to be acknowledged or even prayed

to inside the walls of the state-run school where they go to be educated. In fact, often the only acceptable way to mention the name of the Lord in a public school is to take His name in vain!

That said, there is much more to the primary and secondary curriculum than just including the name of Jesus prior to or during the school day. Christ must be the root and branch of every subject—diffused throughout the entire course of study of history, science, literature, language, and mathematics. Children must understand that they cannot adequately comprehend the world in which they live and move apart from the Word of God as contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. Again quoting Rushdoony:

The sound curriculum will be the relevant curriculum, and relevancy requires two factors, a world of absolutes, and a world of change. It is not enough to hold to God's absolutes: they must be continually and freshly related to the changing times.²

Rushdoony used to come and lecture at my home back in the early nineties and would repeat again and again the necessity for us to view all areas of life and thought through the glasses of Scripture. For without this *vision correction*, we are doomed to both the nearsighted and farsighted distortions brought on by sin and disobedience. Through the impetus of his teaching, I came to understand that I was *personally* responsible to understand the implications of my faith in order to adequately teach and prepare my children for adulthood.

Therein lies the rub. Too many Christian parents have abdicated this

role of being the primary educators of their children, passing the baton to a school system to take care of preparing their children for life and the world as adults—apart from submission to the law-word of God. In many cases, these same parents have little to no interest in becoming educated themselves with a Biblical worldview. They profess with their lips that they want children who will live and act as Christians, but with the jello-like standards of the world, almost anything qualifies. What we get is a church full of “baby Christians,” at best (Heb. 5:13) and hypocrites, at worst (Matt. 7:21).

Parents must be able to discern all current events and issues of the day from a Biblical perspective. Then, should they decide that the best method of education is a day school rather than homeschooling their children themselves, their quest should be for a school that is committed to teaching ALL subjects from a Biblical perspective. What’s more, regular “dinnertime” and “in the car” discussions should be maintained in order to evaluate the fruits of the school’s teaching, not to mention the effect the values and standards of fellow students have on their children.

What follows is a non-exhaustive analysis of some of the fundamental differences between Christianity and humanism as they affect education, excerpted from Rushdoony’s *Philosophy of the Christian Curriculum*³ (see chart).

As is apparent from this comparison, the products (graduates) of a secular education and those of a deliberately Christian education will be radically different. What’s more, these same individuals will perceive issues and ethical choices quite differently. Why should we expect the conversion of the non-believer when those who profess the faith more often than not share with him the same economic, political, and

1. The sovereignty of the triune God is the starting point, and this God speaks through His infallible Word.	1. The sovereignty of man and the state is the starting point, and it is the word of scientific, elite man which we must heed.
2. We must accept God as God. He is alone Lord.	2. Man is his own god, choosing or determining for himself what constitutes good and evil (Gen. 3:5).
3. God’s Word and Person is the Truth.	3. Truth is pragmatic and existential: it is what we find works and is helpful to us.
4. Education is into God’s truth in every realm.	4. Education is the self-realization and self-development of the child.
5. Education is discipline under a body of truth. This body of truth grows with research and study, but truth is objective and God-given. We begin by presupposing God and His Word.	5. Education is freedom from restraint and from any idea of truth outside of us. We are the standard, not something outside of man.
6. Godly standards grade us. We must measure up to them. The teacher grades the pupil.	6. The school and the world must measure up to the pupil’s needs. The pupil grades the teacher.
7. Man’s will and the child’s will must be broken to God’s purpose. Man must be remade, reborn by God’s grace.	7. Society must be broken and remade to man’s will, and the child’s will is sacred.
8. Man’s problem is sin. Man must be recreated by God.	8. Man’s problem is society. Society must be recreated by man.
9. The family is God’s basic institution.	9. The family is obsolete. The individual or the state is basic.

social premises?

We must always remember that there is a war that has been raging since the Fall of Man. Again to quote Rushdoony,

Education is thus the power area in the modern world and the arena for the struggle between Christianity and humanism. If humanism can retain control of the schools, the logic of education will then create more and more modernism, because modernism is simply humanism in charge of the church. It will turn evangelicals into neo-evangelicals and neo-fundamentalists. It will produce, in the supposedly Bible-believing churches, a faith having the form of godliness but lacking the power thereof (2 Tim. 3:5).

The recovery of the power of godliness requires a radical break therefore with humanism and humanistic education. It means that a thoroughly Biblical doctrine of education must govern the Christian school. Our hope then is not in externals and methods but in that meaning and truth which is incarnate in Jesus Christ.⁴

There is too much at stake for this

continual disobedience among professing Christians to continue. All the considerations that have been used to justify and baptize the sacrificing of our children on the modern altars of Baal must be confessed and repented of. We should encourage Christian education in both the homeschool and day school. If we truly want to see disciples made of all nations, we must begin in our own homes and churches. ■

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1. R. J. Rushdoony, *Philosophy of the Christian Curriculum* (Vallecito, CA: Ross House Books), 12.
2. *Ibid.*, 14.
3. *Ibid.*, 172–173.
4. *Ibid.*, 161.

The Nuts and Bolts of Law-Keeping

Buddy Hanson

*By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.
For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous. —1 John 5:2–3*



When was the last time you sat down with your Bible for a few minutes with God's Counsel and encountered a sentence or two that gave you a spiritual slap upside the head?

The apostle gives us a double whammy with these two sentences. First, he informs us that the reason we know that we love God is because we keep His commandments. Notice that we are told to keep God's commandments, not simply know them and partake in theological discussions about the finer points of the law. This agrees with Moses' instructions to the Jews to hear God's Word and do it, not merely hear it and discuss it (Deut. 30:12).

As we stop at the first "slap" from John and begin to rationalize how keeping God's commandments is certainly an admirable thing in general, we can expect to find it burdensome or as King James would say, "grievous," if we set out to keep them in every specific situation. Then John delivers his second spiritual slap by telling us God's commandments "are not grievous."

For many twenty-first-century American Christians, obedience and enjoyment are usually not thought to be compatible. But to approach obedience with the attitude, "God commands it, so I'm going to grit my teeth and do it," is not exactly what John has in mind. Indeed, such brothers and sisters appear to be prime prospects for a new bumper sticker that reads, "I'd Rather Be Disobeying."

If you're ready for some "Joy of Living," let's look at John's concluding statement: "[H]is commandments are not grievous." When we were non-Christians, God's law was not grievous to us because we never gave it a second thought. However, now that we have received our supernatural heart transplant, complete with God's law written on it (Jer. 31:33), we not only care about God's laws, but we know that we should live according to them because the veil that once blinded us to that responsibility has been lifted so that the light of the gospel shines in our heart (2 Cor. 4:3–4). Yet we still have some remnants of our old man that tempt us to live according to our rules, instead of God's rules (Gen. 3:1). The Apostle Paul describes our "new creation" thus:

*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.
—2 Cor. 5:17 NKJV*

Note that "all things" become new, not just some of the things that we can most easily fit into our former lifestyle and become a little more moralistic. Christianity is a complete transformation of one's life, and our goal should be nothing less than a complete casting aside of our will and replacing it with God's will. Since we're not perfect, this change is not perfect. Even though every part of our worldview and lifestyle is changed, no part of it is perfectly changed, which is why we will always have conflicts between our old and new natures. But even though the change is not perfect, it is still a lasting change,

and we cannot completely go back to our former non-Christian ways (Prov. 12:3).

Our "new creation" means that our knowledge of God is increased (Hosea 2:20), as well our knowledge of the horribleness of sin (Rom. 7:13), and the knowledge of ourselves (Luke 15:17; Ezek. 36:31). Our will has also undergone a transformation as the Holy Spirit is now working in us "to do of his good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13; 2 Thess. 3:5). A seventeenth-century Puritan, Thomas Boston, observes that Christians are not simply better moral people, but *new* people: "Regeneration is not so much the curing of a sick man, as 'the quickening of a dead man.'"¹

Faced with the expectation that this old man/new man struggle will last throughout our earthly life (Rom. 7:21–25; Col. 3:9–10), how do we overcome the thought that is rattling in the back of our mind that keeps telling us: *Sure, you love God's law. You're supposed to, but be honest; don't you consider it to be a bit "grievous"? After all, the law is perfect and you're not, so can you in all honesty say that God's law is your delight (Ps. 119:16, 24)?*

Perhaps it is best if we first get a clear picture of what it means to delight in something. List the three things in which you most delight, and then see if your excitement about them mirrors your thoughts about God's law. If the excitement about your three delights and the excitement about God's law are identical, then stop wasting your time reading this and get back to taking

ground for Christ's Kingdom. On the other hand, if you still can't get enthused by the thought of filtering your daily decisions through the grid of Biblical law, answer this question and see if it helps: *What three things make you the most upset, frustrated, or disgruntled?*

Where does "bringing dishonor to God" rank on your list? (We do that by refusing to incorporate Biblical principles into our behavior.) If it is not your first priority, or if it is not even among your top three priorities, this is a strong indication that you are yet to give your whole heart to serving Christ in His Kingdom (Jer. 29:13).

To imagine that we can gain the favor of Jesus without giving our most serious efforts to conform our lives to His will is to delude ourselves and embark on a fool's errand (1 Sam. 13:13; Ps. 14:1; Luke 24:25). Such a halfhearted commitment to Jesus demonstrates that our heart is being dominated by our old nature instead of our new nature. We must recognize that just because we may say that we hate sin, and just because we may understand that we should hate it, the true condition of our heart will reveal itself in our actions.

A person's recognition of the need to live a godly lifestyle does not necessarily mean that he has repented from his ungodly ways. Unless and until a person truly repents, his lifestyle will not be positively altered (James 2:18–19).

Who would disagree with King Solomon's statement: "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool: but whoso walketh wisely, he shall be delivered" (Prov. 28:26)? Since we agree that our heart is "only evil continually" (Gen. 6:5, 8:21), could the reason that "bringing dishonor to God" is missing from our list of most upsetting things be that we still do not truly understand ourselves, or our calling? Before a person can be expected to change his behavior, he must first recognize that his current

behavior is unacceptable. Hence, the psalmist asks, "Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law; yea, I shall observe it with my *whole heart*" (Ps. 119:34, emphasis added). Later the psalmist pleads with God, "Order my steps in thy word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me" (Ps. 119:133).

To look forward to each day in the service of Christ's Kingdom with a "Joy for Living," instead of being grieved at the thought of never measuring up to God's perfect standard, we must realize that we are already justified because our sin curse has been removed by Jesus' sinless life and victory over death (Rom. 8:1). His love for us means that our restored condition is even better than Adam and Eve's pre-fallen state and is also better than the state of the disobedient angels before their fall.

The reason for this is that they could and did fall out of fellowship with their Lord, Savior, and King, *and we can't!* Not only have we been redeemed by Christ and renewed by the Holy Spirit, but we remain in our relationship with Him forever by the almighty power of God! Jesus assures us that we will not be "cast out" and that He will lose none of those given to Him by His Father (John 6:35–40). We have been sealed with the Holy Spirit, which guarantees our inheritance (Eph. 1:5, 13–14). This keeps us from falling (Jude 24–25) and enables us to be "more than conquerors through him that loved us" (Rom. 8:35–39).

If these thoughts don't motivate you to want to dance, check your pulse! Certainly we have no reason to consider God's laws a grievance, since our once proud and self-serving soul has been transformed into a humble, others-serving soul that welcomes God's wisdom into our worldview and lifestyle (Col. 1:21).

- No longer should we approach life as though we are merely "good, moralistic citizens who regularly attend worship services, but who have no intention of 'exiting' our beliefs from the friendly confines of our homes and churches."²
- No longer should we attempt to conduct our Christian life with no discernable differences between our worldview and that of non-Christians (Eph. 2:2–3).

A good place to begin our service in Christ's Kingdom each morning is to ask: "What shall I render unto the LORD for all his benefits toward me?" (Ps. 116:12). The answer, of course, is to present "a living sacrifice."

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.
—Rom. 12:1–2 NKJV

At the end of each day we will find that our thoughts, words, and actions have been faithful to the one to whom we belong (Acts 27:23), whether that be God or man. Paul proclaims:

Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness? —Rom. 6:16 NKJV

Since our thoughts and plans center on those things that are most important to us, the question arises: "Am I in the habit of taking time for thoughtful consideration and meditation on the passages I read in Scripture?" If you are not in the habit of meditating or thinking through the various truths in Scripture, there's no need to feel alone; few in our day appear to be thinking reflectively

about anything. There is, however, an easy exercise you can do that will enable you not only to think about Biblical truths, but to incorporate them into your worldview and lifestyle.

Draw a vertical line down the center of a piece of paper and label the left column “Truth” and the right column “Life.” List and number the Biblical truths you profess to believe down the left side and then, in the corresponding number in the right column, note how you are going to incorporate each truth into your lifestyle. Refresh your memory of these each day by including a few of them in your Bible study time.

As you learn other Biblical truths, add those to the left column, making sure also to add their application in the right column. You will find that this is a

very effective antidote to the temptation to store up Biblical truths in your brain with the sole purpose of discussing or debating them. While there is nothing wrong with discussing Biblical truths, God does not reveal them to us in His inerrant Word solely for that, or even primarily for that. He has graciously given us His divine instruction book for life so we can *do* His Word, and if we are doing anything less than that (i.e., discussing them more than we are doing them), we are not bringing glory and honor to Him.

Can you honestly say with the psalmist: “Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day!” (Ps. 119:97 NKJV)? If not, make that your daily prayer. God will be happy to oblige you, and you will find that your worldview

and lifestyle will be energized to a level of enjoyment, excitement, and purpose that you have never known. ■

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1. Thomas Boston, *Human Nature in Its Fourfold State* (The Banner of Truth Trust [1720], 1964), 226. See also Ephesians 2:1–5.
2. Buddy Hanson, *EXIT Strategy: A Handbook to Exponentially Improve Your Service for God* (Hanson Group, 2005). See also Ezekiel 33:31.

Getting Serious about Your Daily Testimony

The next time you are tempted to “loosen up a little” in your application of God’s ethical standard to your life, consider the following twelve questions:

- How will conforming God’s ethics to the world’s (even in a small way) affect your testimony to your non-Christian neighbors that God is “the way, the truth, and the life” **John 14:6** (emphasis added), since you are now saying that another way and another truth is also acceptable?
- Where is an example in history of any people consistently succeeding by conforming to the ways of the world’s non-Christian agenda? **Colossians 3:19–21; Ecclesiastes 1:14**
- How does your compromise with the non-Christian way of doing something bring glory and honor to God? **1 Timothy 1:17; 1 Peter 1:7; Revelation 4:11, 21:24**
- How do you expect to demonstrate that you are trusting in God’s wisdom when you base your daily decisions on man’s wisdom? **Psalms 37:3–4; Proverbs 3:5**
- If you don’t strive to live in strict conformity to God’s will, then what incentive does a non-Christian have to stop living according to his own will and begin to follow God’s will? Why should he change his worldview and lifestyle for an uncompromising Christian one, if you are demonstrating that it’s all right to compromise with non-Christian ethics? **Acts 5:29**
- How will your efforts at following the will of non-Christians demonstrate that you love and respect the ways of God more than you love and respect the ways of man? **2 Chronicles 19:2**
- How does your behavior testify that you hate sin (disobedience to God’s Word) when you willingly and voluntarily choose to live in sin? **Ephesians 2:12**
- How will your actions demonstrate that you are different from those who hate God? **Psalms 9:17, 10:4**
- Given that the major tenet of the Bible is that God rewards those who obey Him and punishes those who disobey Him, **Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 28**, why do you expect to be able to “go upon hot coals” without having your feet burned? **Proverbs 6:28**
- How will being less careful in your walk enable you to be more able to avoid denying God? **Matthew 26:69–75**
- Why do you imagine that you can strengthen your case for living according to God’s will by blatantly disobeying it? **Exodus 32:26; Judges 5:23; Matthew 12:30; Numbers 23:9; John 17:16**
- Since you are going to spend eternity with fellow Christians, shouldn’t your main desire upon the earth be to spend it in fellowship with them, and live and govern yourself according to God’s will, rather than spending your time with non-Christians, and living and governing yourself according to their will? **Hebrews 12:22–24; 2 Corinthians 6:17–18**

Whenever we are presented with a proposal to compromise God’s absolute ethical standard, we must realize that what we are being asked to do is to “[change] the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man.” **Romans 1:23**

From Statism to Christian Reconstruction

Mark R. Rushdoony



Christians disagree on whether the Republican losses in the November elections were a blessing or a setback, because they

initially differed on how to characterize the contest. Those who saw it in terms of the liberal-conservative model saw it as a gain for liberals and a setback for conservatives. Those who saw the elections as a referendum on the enlarging powers of the federal government at the expense of its citizens saw the election results as a healthy repudiation of that loss of liberty. Define the issue differently and the analysis might again change.

The problem with the conservative-liberal model has been long apparent. George Wallace (who in 1968 led the last third-party presidential candidacy to actually garner electoral votes) said then that there was not a dime's worth of difference between the Republicans and Democrats.

The parties themselves have changed greatly over the years. The Republicans were the "radicals" of the Civil War era and the Democrats the conservative party of the Old South. The Democrats took the populist position of loose money and (silver) inflation in the William Jennings Bryan years, and yet the Republicans under Theodore Roosevelt began the popular yet indefensible trust-busting, which labeled any business a danger that became larger than some measure of public opinion deemed appropriate. Democrat Franklin Delano Roosevelt began the massive deficit spending and inflation of the

Semantics aside, the political direction of conservatism has changed over the years, so much so that it can scarcely be called an ideological position ... Conservatives were those who wanted to preserve the long-standing limitations on the role of the national government in the affairs of the citizenry.

New Deal, but he only accelerated what the "conservative" Republican Herbert Hoover had begun.

The word "liberal" has as its root the same word as "liberty" (the "liberal arts," for example, are those subjects that were deemed useful in the exercise and preservation of liberty). "Conservatives" have long had trouble both defining what they sought to conserve and explaining why, when it was long gone, this was not itself a form of radicalism.

Semantics aside, the political direction of conservatism has changed over the years, so much so that it can scarcely be called an ideological position. The evolution of the "conservative" movement was described by Robert LeFevre about fifty years ago.¹ The term "conservative" was first widely used to describe a political philosophy during the FDR era, when his policies were seen as a repudiation of the traditional relation-

ship of the government to its citizens. Conservatives were those who wanted to preserve the long-standing limitations on the role of the national government in the affairs of the citizenry.

While FDR was seen as preparing the U.S. for involvement in the war in Europe, conservatives urged neutrality. FDR's liberal interventionist policies were met by conservative pleas to preserve the traditional non-intervention policy in foreign wars. While FDR sought to expand the influence of the U.S. around the world, his conservative critics attacked this policy as both expensive and dangerous.

FDR began a liberal policy of massive deficit spending and inflation while his conservative critics cautioned against the high taxes and debt this policy represented. FDR's enlargement of government was met by conservatives with a defense of small, limited government. FDR's redistributive taxation policies were decried as socialistic; his conservative critics called for the protection of private property and individual responsibility. FDR's liberal appeals for a New Deal were met with conservative appeals to return to the limited government of the Constitution.

The conservative voices of opposition were almost drowned out amidst those who saw FDR as something of a demi-god, America's savior. The cost of his "salvation" was indeed high, a massive debt, but a victory in World War II made the future seem bright for the U.S.² FDR died near the end of the war. He became a martyr for the next generation of liberals who sought to perpetuate his policies.

LeFevre points out the first post-war shift in conservative politics. Conservatives became anti-communists. This was not merely the philosophical opposition to socialism's redistribution of wealth, which had characterized the criticism of FDR. Conservatives after the war were losing that argument in Washington. Instead, they set their sights on international Marxism. By destroying the head of the beast, they hoped to destroy its influence at home. This necessitated abandoning their opposition to interventionism, which became acceptable if its purpose was to challenge communism. Being an international anti-communist became in the 1950s and '60s the test of a true conservative. This meant supporting spending to resist communism around the world, even if that spending was for a foreign war. Conservatives moved, then, from isolationism to internationalism and from being doves to hawks. They wanted a stronger government in order to oppose communism. They thus based their policies not on ideological principle, but on the first of many issues by which they defined themselves in the years to follow.

As the issues came and went, it was those with an ideological consistency who provided the arguments for the conservative movement, though it was those politicians who operated in terms of pragmatism and the recurring need to win elections that represented them to most people. Pragmatism, by its nature, changes, and the changes in political conservatism were beginning to accelerate.

As pragmatic politicians began supporting what conservatives had once opposed, George Wallace (himself a pragmatic populist) seemed prescient in his analysis of the parties of the late 1960s. Then, into the conservative movement stepped a new force,

The neoconservative confidence in democracy is, of course, itself telling. Democracy became a prominent theme in state textbooks after the Civil War, whereas previously the emphasis had been on the functioning of representative government under the Constitution.

one that would come to dominate the Republican resurgence of the 1980s and thereafter.

The neoconservatives arose as a liberal branch of academia embarrassed by Lyndon Baines Johnson's Great Society tax dollar giveaway boondoggle.³ Their criticisms were valid, bore weight, and were welcomed by the Right. One of the distinctives of neoconservatism is its complete abandonment of the nonintervention policy to the point that it advocates American hegemony. It presents this intervention as a benign attempt to spread democracy. Those who oppose them at home are called anti-democratic liberals (Why "liberals"? Because they oppose the new neoconservative vision of conservatism, the one that used to be called liberalism).

The neoconservative confidence in democracy is, of course, itself telling. Democracy became a prominent theme in state textbooks after the Civil War, whereas previously the emphasis had been on the functioning of representative government under the Constitution. The republic's multiplicity of governments gave way to the national

government in Washington as the representative of "the will of the people."

Democracy has thus represented not more liberty but less. This trend was early seen in the writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who ostensibly claimed sovereignty for the people but then, in reality, removed their right to exercise that power by investing it in the "body politic," the state. The *collective* people in the form of the state always took precedence over the *individual*. "Now, the Sovereign People," Rousseau writes, speaking of the state representing collective man, "having no existence outside that of the individuals who compose it, has, and can have, no interest at variance with theirs. Consequently the sovereign power need give no guarantee to its subjects, since it is impossible that the body should wish to injure all its members, nor, as we shall see later, can it injure any single individual."⁴

This, R. J. Rushdoony notes, was to impart to the state the divine attribute of infallibility.⁵ Because the state represented the collective will of the people, the individuals, though ostensibly sovereign, were demoted to the status of being the "subjects" of "the sovereign power," the government. Democracy can thus be every bit as powerful a force for statist tyranny as any other methodology of absolutism.

The conservative-liberal paradigm is no longer a useful one. Minimally, they represent fixed labels for ideologies that have long since shifted. More dangerously, the conservative-liberal paradigm can mean we are supporting that which we find reprehensible because it claims an old, though-inaccurate label. It is worth noting that the Pharisees were considered the religious conservatives of their day by the people, though our Lord noted their very radical misuse of Scripture.

One of the problems conservatives have had in recent generations is that they have lacked any real ideological touchstone for their “orthodoxy.” Some held fast to the “original intent” of the Constitution, but with new, binding judicial activism, this became a difficult basis for tactical action. Libertarians have been among the most consistent of thinkers because they have a well-formulated (though humanistic) standard of the rights of the individual by which they can judge political thought and acts.

The failure of Christians to formulate a defense of liberty against growing government has been most noticeable. It was, after all, the advance of Christianity that promoted both civilization and liberty in the West, and it was the rise of Calvinism in England that provided it with a limited monarchy and went on to advocate liberty in America with the Constitution. No nation had ever before in history created a government with the express purpose of constraining its growth.

The problem with Christian conservatism in recent generations is that it has followed the ancient Greek and Enlightenment perspective that man is a political animal. This was the very assumption that early Christians rejected. When Paul preached to the Greeks on Mars Hill (Acts 17), he spoke of their religious idols with a full awareness of their greater loyalty to the political order as the essential world of man. They were, as Greeks, interested in gods as first causes for their philosophy or for insight into man’s potentiality (some of the Greek gods, were, remember, men who had transcended mortality to become immortal). The men on Mars Hill had thus expressed interest in the Resurrection of Jesus, but not for the right reasons. Paul presented a God who could not be a tool of philosophers,

The problem with Christian conservatism in recent generations is that it has followed the ancient Greek and Enlightenment perspective that man is a political animal. This was the very assumption that early Christians rejected.

but who made all things and to whom all would answer in judgment. This judgment would be by Jesus Christ, and the supernatural witness to this future exercise of divine right was His Resurrection from the dead.

At this claim the sermon was put to an end, while some openly mocked Paul. If this was the meaning of the Resurrection, they were not interested. A God who was sovereign and who would judge them held no interest. Yet this was the God of Paul and the early Christians, who responded to demands that they proclaim, “Caesar is Lord!” with the baptismal confession, “Jesus is Lord!”

The post-Enlightenment age has been a return to the Greek view of man as a political being and hence subject, as in Rousseau’s thinking, to the sovereign will of collective man as represented by the state. The humanism of the Enlightenment made the theoretically sovereign individual man merely a component of the truly sovereign collective man. This collective and the loss of individual liberty has been a tendency of the democratic impulse ever since.

Modern man is now seen as a political being (hence the individualistic impulse of libertarianism or the older form of conservatism is seen as an unworkable ideal, one out of touch with the “real” world). Christians have yielded to this type of unequivocal political identification, often in the name of well-intentioned patriotism. Whereas Paul said to the Greeks on Mars Hill that “in him [God] we live, and move, and have our being,” Christians now often seem resigned to the end that in the state they live and move and have their being. Instead of the freedom of Christ in terms of God’s law-word, they submit as the slaves of the democratic “body politic.”

The Christian is a citizen of his country, but he must acknowledge that his is a dual citizenship and that his primary loyalty must be to the Kingdom of God. Christ makes clear this is to be our first loyalty: “[S]eek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness” (Matt. 6:33). The righteousness of God and the furtherance of His Kingdom is to be our focus, and this must be our message and our calling in every aspect of our lives.

The state is but one aspect of godly dominion, and its reclamation must be predicated on the need to reduce its sway over other spheres. Without the ideological touchstone of God’s law, conservatism is merely a parody of its own rhetoric. A rootless conservatism looks for issues and rallying points that will turn out the vote to perpetuate the political image that one group or another is doing great things for the people and the nation.

In 1965 my father moved to Southern California to begin Chalcedon and emphasize the need for Christian Reconstruction. Many of his early supporters were those who were disillusioned with the landslide loss of Barry Goldwater in the 1964 presidential elec-

tion. Some urged him to take more of an anti-communist approach in order to attract conservative money. Others have suggested his constant criticism of “the state” was repetitive and tiresome.

His approach was, however, consistent. He renounced both the ascendant statists and their phony political opposition as themselves statists who coveted the reins of power. His alternative was to pronounce a pox on both their houses and proclaim an alternative in limited law spheres and Biblical self-government.

The Christian Right did not learn its lesson in 1964 or in 1980 when in the “Reagan Revolution” it was courted for votes but then dismissed in victory. Reagan’s desire was to conclude the anti-communist crusade of the post-war Republican Party, not to reform government in any way. His bone to those interested in other issues was tax cuts, though he increased their long-term indebtedness and hence tax liability by

continued deficit spending. That is the tactic of a politician, but not a conservative, fiscal or otherwise. The later resurgence of Republicans in the 1994 congressional races and the subsequent victory of George W. Bush represented the ascendancy of neoconservatives, in fact, their virtual monopoly of the party.

Disillusionment is a good thing unless you believe in the utility of illusions. There is no political move toward individual rights, reduced government, or honest money because these things do not advance any political party’s agenda. The liberty of the future will be in a conscious repentance before God and a recommitment to His law-word. The liberty of the future will be in the self-government of Christian man in his family, church, and calling. ■

1. For my synopsis of the devolution of conservatism, I am indebted to Robert LeFevre, “The ‘Conservative Movement,’” a reprint of a leaflet by the author originally titled

“Those Who Protest” available online at www.lewrockwell.com/orig7/lefevre1.html.

2. The New Deal did nothing to turn the economy around. The Depression only deepened. The U.S. entrance into the war and the production of war materials (all financed by debt) is what put Americans back to work. The continuation of massive government spending to stimulate the economy is thus a continuation of our wartime policy of “spending” our way out of depression, with the debt payable by future generations.

3. For the origins of neoconservatism see Gary North, “An Introduction to Neoconservatism” www.lewrockwell.com/north/north180.html.

4. Jean-Jacques Rousseau as quoted in R. J. Rushdoony, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. I (Vallecito, CA: Ross House Books, 1994), 26.

5. Rushdoony, 26.

A Plethora of Labels

Our language reflects the current state of confusion over just what a “conservative” or a “liberal” is. “The labels proliferate like kudzu,” complains National Review editor Jonah Goldberg (“Check the Label,” National Review, Dec. 18, 2006). In the “conservative” camp alone, we find neocons, theocons, paleocons, compassionate conservatives, social conservatives, fiscal conservatives, libertarians, neoliberalists, and “crunchy cons”—just to name the more prominent groups.

It’s not much better on the “liberal” side. Here we stumble over liberals, neoliberals, progressives, socialists, red-letter Christians, progressives, socialists, internationalists, moveon.org, feminists, gay rights, animal rights, and so on.

What do all these labels mean? We can hardly keep track of them, one by one; but collectively they surely mean that the old terms, “liberal” and “conservative,” no longer serve their purpose.

All of these labels represent attempts by fallen, fallible human beings to make sense of the world in purely human terms, without reference to God. The labels proliferate because none of these attempts succeed. “Cease ye from man,” the Bible counsels us, “whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?” (Isa. 2:22).

To be sure, theological labels proliferate, too, just like political labels. These, too, illustrate the shifts, vacillations, changes of heart, second thoughts, uncertainties, and fickleness of the human mind.

The only wisdom we can count on not to change is God’s wisdom, as expressed in the plain language of the Holy Scriptures.

By Faith He Still Speaks

Martin G. Selbrede



N*ew York Times* columnist David Brooks makes an insightful observation in a recent editorial:

[F]rom the 1940s to the mid-1990s, American political life was shaped by a series of landmark books: *Witness*, *The Vital Center*, *Capitalism and Freedom*, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, *Losing Ground*, *The Closing of the American Mind*.

Then in the 1990s, those big books stopped coming. Now instead of books, we have blogs.

The big books stopped coming partly because the distinction between intellectual movements and political parties broke down ...

Today, team loyalty has taken over the wonk's world, so there are invisible boundaries that mark politically useful, and therefore socially acceptable, thought.¹

While I would agree that Brooks identifies one reason for the wane and disappearance of big books, which we'll have occasion to examine further, he doesn't touch on the biggest reason: a landmark book actually needs to express *a big idea*. Men and women aren't inspired by pedestrian utterance or business-as-usual. Their imagination isn't captured by the warmed-over remains of hackneyed discourse. A ceaseless procession of writers lowering the bar, their gaze fixed on the mundane, advocating for various interchangeable human philosophies, can only inspire partisan zeal in those who have no higher ideal or greater goal to pursue.

John F. Kennedy was at least

partially correct when he stated that "ideas have endurance without death." It would be more accurate to say that a truly big idea will have endurance without death, and the bigger the idea, the more it will anchor and shape the future.

What's the Big Idea?

It is all too common for theological pundits to point to the major work, the magnum opus, of the late Dr. R. J. Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law*, and declare that volume to be his seminal work, the book containing Rushdoony's "big idea." Such an approach to the book embodies a common misconception. The reality is far more stirring: every single paragraph in every book Dr. Rushdoony wrote contains the big idea. We're simply too blind to see it. Familiarity has bred contempt, and confusion has bred unwarranted familiarity.

What is Rushdoony's big idea?

If it were simply *Rushdoony's* idea, an idea originating from a fallible human, it wouldn't mean much. Those attracted to Chalcedon's message would be doing nothing more than following a man and his all-too-human teachings. The idea wouldn't lift our eyes above the horizon of our own contemplation and could hardly provoke us to live for something greater than ourselves. Rushdoony's idea could only be the kind of world-shaking big idea we envision if he were merely the messenger of Someone else's Idea, an Idea that calls us to explode our box theologies, an Idea that can be grasped once God grants us "largeness of heart" (1 Kings 4:29).

Not only would the Idea have to be Someone else's Idea to merit our attention, let alone our suffrage, it would have to be a truly Big Idea. It would have to be so Big that there could be no bigger idea to compete with it. You could see how Big it truly was once a faithful witness, a messenger, had chipped and chiseled away all the accreted dust and muck clogging the clear meaning of the ancient Words that Someone had used to express His Idea.

To be a truly Big Idea, it would have to be bigger than the world itself, and the One expressing it would have to be bigger than the Idea He had expressed. The Biggest Idea would be one capable of conquering a world that initially repudiates the Idea.

In parallel with Paul's tactic in 1 Corinthians 4:6, "these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to" Rushdoony's works. I've indulged in parabolic language to incite you to cast your mental net further and wider, to provoke your imagination to see what is required to take in this Big Idea. Your mind, your understanding, are being called on to "[e]nlarge the place of thy tent ... stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes" (Isa. 54:2). (Note that I'm not peddling the kind of parable currently being marketed in small devotional books printed in large type.)

The other distinctive characteristic of a Big Idea, one that's Big even on the cosmic scale, is that it's not new. The Biggest Idea would have to be older than the hills, older than the stones of time. It would be an Idea we already

know. Because we're familiar with it, its Bigness would no longer appear obvious to our contemplation.

Its Bigness would be hidden in plain sight. It would be an Idea that was eventually reduced to an all-but-mindless slogan, robbing it of its potency. It would be an Idea that everybody thought they were already living out, when in fact they weren't even close to being swept up in the grip of its mighty currents. Bland familiarity can cause the roar of Niagara Falls to make no greater impression on us than a dripping faucet. We then talk as if we've braved the actual cataracts of those mighty waters, when we've really done nothing more than moisten our socks in a stale downstream backwater.

It's an Idea that, once fully grasped, would incite not only zeal, but remorse: remorse for having missed the significance of the Idea entirely even though it was not only right under our noses, it was heard from our very lips. A contemporary worship song laments the self-centeredness of institutional worship in these words: "I'm sorry for the thing that I've made it." If we're to feel remorse for compromising an activity programmed to occupy only forty minutes once a week, what should we feel if confronted by more severe dereliction in regard to a 24-7 obligation laid on our shoulders by our Lord and Savior?

The Idea would be so Big that every other consideration, situation, issue, objection, diversion, distraction, interest, activity, imperative, would be microscopic in impact compared to the Idea. Next to the Bigness of the Idea, they would be "counted as the small dust of the balance" (Isa. 40:15).

What Idea could satisfy all these criteria, being so Big as to storm the heavens with its every implication, yet so familiar as to force us to stifle yawns in response to it?

The Idea is found in the first half of the answer to what we now know as the first question by way of eminence: what is the chief end of man?

The Big Idea is that man's chief end is to glorify God.

What happened to reduce so Big an Idea to so trite a slogan on our corporate lips?

The Idea Was Distorted

Our biggest problem is that man has shaved away at the Big Idea, his mandate to glorify God, reducing its dimensions, gratuitously lowering the bar, and consequently winking at the gross compromises made in fulfilling the Big Idea. We've made it impossible for anyone to get excited about the Big Idea. It is now the Big Mediocrity. Who will turn the world upside down with a Big Mediocrity?

Therefore, let us be plainspoken. Let us tabulate. Let us number the ways we've heaped atrophy upon the Big Idea in how we conduct our lives.

We do not glorify God when we default to the humanistic status quo.

We do not glorify God when we substitute human traditions for the laws of God.

We do not glorify God when we educate our children in government schools.

We do not glorify God when our churches misappropriate the tithe of God.

We do not glorify God when we decline to pay the poor tithe.

We do not glorify God when we limit the domain of His rightful influence to the space between our ears, but work to keep all social life secular and humanistic.

We do not glorify God if we limit that to lifting up hands on Sunday mornings.

We do not glorify God by saying "Glory to God" if we decline to keep

His commandments.

We do not glorify God when we criticize His ordinances as being submoral or beneath His Authorship.

We do not glorify God when we walk by sight and stagger at His promises.

We do not glorify God when we fear man or what man may do to us.²

We do not glorify God when we put our trust in man.

We do not glorify God when we implicitly or explicitly acknowledge any higher authority than Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords, including the U.S. Constitution or any other human document or pronouncement now accorded "sacred" status.

We do not glorify God unless we're glorifying God self-consciously. This last point is important: cows and sheep can glorify God unconsciously. As they stand in the pastures and feed under His shadow, they glorify God because they're doing what they were created to do. Man is not like the beasts of the field. "God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions" (Eccles. 7:29).

Man doesn't enjoy parity with the beasts because *man starts far behind the starting line due to his rebellion*. Man must be proactive in reversing the curse, in being a minister of reconciliation, of making straight the crooked paths, of leveling mountains and raising the valleys. Man in Christ must take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ (2 Cor. 10:4-5). "[T]hey that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places" (Isa. 58:12). With everything laid waste in so humanistic a wasteland, how can anyone claim to be glorifying God who turns his back on the waste places, and then blithely mouths the words, "Be warmed and comforted"?

Finally, we do not glorify God unless we regard glorifying God as a total

concern. If we're glorifying God only a third of the time (quite impressive for this generation), that means that two-thirds of the time we're glorifying something other than God and subordinating His glory to the other thing. Rushdoony taught us that Biblical faith is a total concern, and anything less than that doesn't deserve the name "Biblical faith."

It is wrong to conclude that since we fail to glorify God in so many ways, we should therefore adopt a counsel of despair, or default to that as an acceptable norm for Christians. We should rather adopt a counsel of repentance, and God in turn shall be the lifter of our heads. When John 4:23–24 teaches us that neither in Jerusalem nor on Mount Gerizim shall God anymore be worshipped, but rather in spirit and truth, this fact did *not* dematerialize the faith or detach it from the world. The Jews and Samaritans saw the faith as localized, revealing thinking no less provoking to God than the Syrian claim that "[t]he LORD is God of the hills, but he is not God of the valleys"

(1 Kings 20:28). Rather, the extent of God's crown rights are unleashed to cover every square inch of land, every microsecond of time, and every thought in man's mind.

God affirms that "[t]he silver is mine, and the gold is mine" (Hag. 2:8) and that "all souls are mine" (Ezek. 18:4). We are not our own, and nothing we "own" is ours, but rather all is held in trust by us as stewards.

Herein lies the lasting power of the writings of Rousas John Rushdoony. He restores the Big Idea to its fullness. The Big Idea is implicit, and often explicit, in every paragraph he published. He raises up not his own standard, but God's standard without compromise, without adjustment, without apology, without missing a beat. He faithfully shows us *how* to glorify God as redeemed sinners called out of darkness into the light of God's beloved Son. He has made the lordship of Christ and the Word of God invincibly relevant to every aspect of our waking lives.³

The dreck and shmutz accumulated on the Big Idea has been chiseled away,

leaving a bright, gleaming, blinding imperative in its wake. Rushdoony, unlike so many contemporary theologians, has blown the trumpet clearly. The foundation-rattling sound of God's message as Rushdoony delivers it is not indistinct. This is precisely why Rushdoony's published works are offensive to so many. By and large, we prefer to glorify God according to the sound of a garbled, indistinct trumpet. That way, *we* can make up our own tune as we go along. We would rather glory in our supposed autonomy than delight in His commandments, but Rushdoony's writings make that untenable.

It takes courage to embrace the total claim of God on our lives. Rushdoony invites us to be bold before men but humble before God. By defaulting submissively to the humanistic status quo and our culture's expectations, we show ourselves as being humble before men, but bold in our faithlessness before God. Rushdoony puts before us the two paths: the wide, easy path to anemic atrophy and the narrow, straitened path to courageous 24-7 faithfulness. It is a

Imitating the Big Idea

Every Big Idea has its "evil twin," an imitation spawned by those who violently reject the Big Idea and try to supplant it with an idea of their own.

The Big Idea that R. J. Rushdoony found in Scripture has its evil twin in a thoroughgoing secular humanism that actively tries to bring its own version of faith to bear on all of life—a cuckoo hatchling trying to push Christianity out of the nest.

We see its manifestations everywhere. Under cover of "separation of church and state"—words found nowhere in the Constitution—its proponents seek to erase Christian influence from our national life and take its place themselves. Their tactics run from filing lawsuits to ban Christmas displays, to the imposition of "sex education" programs that indoctrinate children to embrace homosexuality. Thanks to their powerful influence in our courts, our media, and our schools and universities, they have pushed their program very far.

They have their own scriptures (Darwin, Freud, the Humanist Manifesto, Marx, etc.), their own priesthood (trial lawyers, activist judges, so-called "scientists" and "educators"), their own equivalent of the tithe (burdensome taxes imposed by the state), their own rituals (abortion, lawsuits, cohabitation, sodomy), and their own temple, the state. They reject the living God and worship themselves in His place. In all respects the false religion of humanism imitates the outward forms of Christianity.

This is today's Tower of Babel, and we may expect God to bring it crashing down in His own good time.

dilemma from which no honest reader can escape. We should thank our God that this should be so, that we can still be reached and instructed in our full obligations that we, having itching ears, have allowed our teachers to shove into the spiritual paper shredder with our tacit approval.

Nuts and Bolts

Chalcedon rejoices in the labors of other faithful ministries, all of which have diverse missions, each with a different focus, each equipping the saints in different respects. All such efforts are commendable and warrant our prayerful support.

What distinguishes Chalcedon from its sister ministries is the sheer *scope* of what Dr. Rushdoony has set in motion. Others have drawn attention to Christ's claim over every square inch of territory, that God does not abdicate His lordship over *anything*. We can read stirring exhortations from faithful men like Cornelius Van Til to exactly this effect—and we do need to hear that call.

What has been lacking prior to Rushdoony's putting pen to paper has been any clear description of the nuts and bolts of putting that mandate into actual real-world effect. What has been called the "vigorous application of the faith" has been lacking. Up until Rushdoony, men of faith had correctly diagnosed the problem and have called on us, in general terms, to rise up and fix it.

Rushdoony has shown us precisely how to go about it.

In so doing, Rushdoony has put legs on the answers to the questions, *How do I glorify God in this generation? When and where do I glorify Him?* In reality, Rushdoony's gone no further than agreeing with the answer to the Shorter Catechism's second question, *What rule hath God given to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy Him?* Rushdoony

wholeheartedly taught that the Word of God in both Testaments provides that rule—but it is *not* just a rule for Sunday morning, but a rule that arcs across every boundary, every border, every distinction in time, place, authority, sphere, and affiliation, "piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit" (Heb. 4:12). Rushdoony argued that the Word of God was relevant and potent with ultimate authority *over every single part of human life*.

And then Rushdoony showed how.

The world will never forgive him for doing that.

He had unleashed the Word of God on a gainsaying world and sleeping Christians. Those awakened by the Lord's message have found strong meat indeed in the powerful, equipping volumes from Rushdoony's pen.

Scan the published writings of R. J. Rushdoony, the *Journals of Christian Reconstruction*, the topics of the Easy Chair tapes, four decades of *Chalcedon Reports*, and *Faith for All of Life*, and you will lose count of all the spheres, disciplines, subjects, domains, and territories being explicitly subordinated under Christ's feet. They seem to be as the sands of the sea in number (in reality, there are several thousand different fields and topics addressed throughout that body of work). There is no ministry anywhere that has so fully established the proclamation of the psalmist that "thy commandment is exceeding broad" (Ps. 119:96).

Chalcedon would betray that proclamation by sitting on its laurels. Rushdoony didn't set that millstone in motion to let it accumulate moss and lose momentum. Chalcedon is faithful to its founder's vision by being faithful to the Lord's Word as Rushdoony was faithful in *his* proclamation of the truth. Woe to us if we do not faithfully proclaim the message of the King—not

just a general message full of clichés, but specific nuts and bolts that equip His people to glorify Him by magnifying His Word over us and all we are and all we have.

We believe that nothing short of the Big Idea can ever turn the world upside down once again. The great Messianic Psalm, Psalm 110, informs us that "[t]hy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." God sets that fire in a man's heart, a spreading flame, whereby we are consumed with zeal for the Lord's house.

Men and women who hunger and thirst for strong meat, who want to be thoroughly equipped to live the Great Commission, who decry the counsel of pietistic retreat, who weep at the well-named Reduction of Christianity, who recoil at being kept on the spiritual baby bottle in their churches, will seek out the Big Idea. They will prosper in light of the unleashed Word of God, will be liberated from modern Pharisaism, and will render unto God the things that are God's (and properly recognize what few things are legitimately Caesar's).

By Faith He Yet Speaks

A half-decade has passed since the death of Rousas John Rushdoony, and by faith he yet speaks. This was a man who redeemed the time, and every paragraph from his pen reflects that consecration of *every thing*, beginning with every fiber of his own being, to the Lord God.

Apart from the Big Idea being so Big and worthy of our every breath, why else would Christians be motivated to bring all things in subjection to our Lord? The answer is very simple and stands written in Hebrews 2:8: "But now we see not yet all things put under him." As long as we find this incomplete subjection to be true, the works of Rousas John Rushdoony will continue to speak with force to men and women of

faith, and Chalcedon's continued output will insure the contemporary relevance of the Word of God as we continue to expand His claims over the totality of human experience.

The works of Rushdoony will remain relevant and important for years to come. His influence was (and remains) disproportionately huge, despite the exceedingly modest size of his ministry (an influence still loudly lamented at secularist conferences to this very day). Why so influential, even posthumously? Because Rushdoony embraced the Big Idea and thereby became a trailblazer in *consistently* applying the Scriptures as virtually no one else has dared to do. The Big Idea is powerful. It is bold. It scares humanists that there is any Idea out there bigger than their own ideas. They can't compete with it: they can only ignore it or impotently condemn it.⁴

That reflects the impact of the Big Idea, God's Idea, voiced by a humble servant of God who conveyed His Message in longhand from a remote ranch in a rustic Central California town.

Oh, about that Big Idea ... ask yourself this one question in light of the above.

Am I thinking too small? ■

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1. David Brooks, "Milton Friedman glowed with the smile of reason," *Houston Chronicle*, November 21, 2006, B9.

2. This brings us back to columnist Brook's lament about the disappearance of big books: one precipitating cause of that disappearance has been those team loyalties that create "invisible boundaries that mark politically useful, and therefore socially acceptable, thought." What are these team loyalties? They could be loyalties to church, to denomination, to non-denomi-

nation, to a theological school of thought, to a ministry, to a self-serving violation of God's law being protected through a code of silence, etc. We need to read Brook's comment into our religious life and not assume it applies only to secular politics. We have created artificial accountability structures that create these socially acceptable boundaries, transgressing on Scriptural boundaries in the process. Such accountability structures inculcate the fear of man and peer pressure, generally in the context of team loyalty, rather than instilling the fear of God. As Rushdoony put it, we are our brother's *brother*, not his keeper. Not surprisingly, the propagation of the traditions of men makes void the law of God. The conscience can only be bound by God and His Word, but modern Christendom routinely abandons God's Law and binds the people's conscience with human precepts. Humanism always rushes in to fill the gap left when God's law is dumped into the garbage bin. That's when the invisible boundaries, the unstated rules, encroach on Christian freedom under color of ecclesiastical authority. Couching that humanism in SpiritSpeak merely puts lipstick on the pig.

3. In commenting on the second chapter of Daniel, Rushdoony speaks concerning *The Terror of Dreams*, illustrating that God uses our dreams to deprive us of the arrogant view that we are always in rational control of ourselves. Not only is our creatureliness affirmed, but the very gift of rationality is withdrawn every evening as a continual reminder that man's greatest conceit is subject to continuous humbling disproof every night—all according to His overruling design. See R. J. Rushdoony, *Thy Kingdom Come* (Ross House Books, Vallecito, CA: 1970, 1998), p. 13f.

4. The disingenuous form the condemnation usually takes is easy to recognize: all fundamentalism is bad, and it is the reason people fly jetliners into skyscrapers, or why self-appointed vigilantes will shoot and murder a doctor who performs abortions. The answer is self-evident: all these abuses arise, not from a totalistic approach to Scripture (where the whole counsel of God is understood and applied) but from a piecemeal approach to it. We see this in humanistic attacks on the Bible: critics always quote an "offensive" verse or two in isolation and rail about what that allegedly leads to. But Christianity, as Greg Bahnsen well says, must be defended as a system, and theology, as Dr. Rushdoony makes crystal clear, is a seamless garment. The best protection against

the abuses lamented by humanists is Biblical totalism. The man who is guided wholly and authoritatively by the *entire* Word of God is not some mindless automaton, a ticking time bomb that could go off and kill his fellow citizens without a thought, but a man constrained, a man immune from being controlled by those who manipulate fragments of Scripture to their own ends. Far from abandoning ethics and morality, the fully equipped man of God alone has an expansive, well-anchored morality that exhibits, in exhaustive detail, his loving his neighbor as himself. In short, the only solution to the caricature painted of Christian fundamentalism is Biblical totalism. Christian fundamentalism can go astray when it fails to anchor itself to the whole counsel of God, when it plays the piecemeal game the humanists indulge in. The vigilantes can be criticized for being "consistent" with a verse or two, but their actions show their gross inconsistency with the whole counsel. Critics paper over this difference because humanists know nothing other than a piecemeal approach to anything: thinking in a system is alien to their premises. In their hands, our Lord's instruction in the Great Commission would be changed to "teaching them to observe *a select handful of the things* I've commanded you," rather than *all things I've commanded*. Herein lies the modern error: the straw man it erects against the Bible is its own humanistic, fractured approach to the Bible.

Critics deride Rushdoony's "jot and tittle" approach to Scripture as leading to such a piecemeal approach to God's Word, but even that criticism misquotes Rushdoony: the mandate is to obey *every* jot and tittle, not pit them against each other. "[T]he spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets" (1 Cor. 14:32), forbidding the isolation of any portion of the Scriptures from the testimony of the rest. Modern Christendom sets legalism in motion when it picks and chooses between jots and tittles but disdains to teach *all* of them, because what remains after filtering is no longer subject to scriptural checks and balances (those having been expunged). When the Sadducees attempted to refute the doctrine of the Resurrection, they cited jots and tittles concerning Levirate marriage, yet Jesus said to them, "Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the scriptures ...?" (Mark 12:24). Unless one embraces the *total message* of the *entire Bible*, he "knows not the scriptures" and will blunder into a ditch as readily as the Sadducees had done.

The Pulling Down of Strongholds: The Power of Presuppositional Apologetics

Michael R. Butler



We live in an age of unbelief. Our culture has abandoned its faith in God's Word and has turned aside to idols. Humanism has replaced

Christianity as the established religion. Our churches as well have ingested the toxin of humanism and no longer hold out a viable alternative to the unbelief of our age. This is why Christianity seems, at least to some, to be irrelevant.

There are many ways Christians are called to combat unbelief. Education and political activism are perhaps the most apparent. But the most effective way to combat unbelief is through apologetics. We must confute the gainsayer and establish the truth of Christianity if we expect to dominate, once again, the institutions and thought of our culture.

We cannot effectively defend Christianity against unbelief unless we know something about the faith we endeavor to defend. Too often, well-intentioned Christians pursue apologetics without considering the issue of methodology. Rather than reflecting upon how Christianity should be defended, they jump right into the fray and employ any argument that appears to offer some hope of success. This hope is futile. Because Christianity is a complete system of thought, the apologetic method that we use must be organic to it. The defense of the faith must be consistent with the Christian system of thought.

To develop a proper method of apologetics, we need to consider some basic philosophical and theological issues. After this is done, we will be in

a position to develop an argument that will demonstrate the truth of the Christian religion.

Philosophical and Theological Considerations

Many people do not have an interest in philosophy. This is mainly due to a misconception of the subject. It is often thought to be unnecessarily abstract with little or no practical value.

Philosophy is a systematic attempt to answer the questions that all of us occasionally ask: "How are claims to knowledge justified?" "What kind of a world do we reside in?" "Are there values, and if so, what are they?" These are not only practical questions, but are the most important questions we can ask. The way we answer them provides the basic perspective from which we lead our lives.

Let us start by considering the first question, "How are claims to knowledge justified?" This is perhaps the most fundamental question in the area of philosophy called epistemology. Implied in the question is a distinction between knowledge and belief or opinion. Not everything that is believed is known.

Jones may, for example, believe that Cleveland is the capital of Ohio, but he could not know this since Columbus is, in fact, the capital. Knowledge thus requires truth. One cannot know something that is not true. But even if Jones believed that Columbus was the capital of Ohio, he still does not necessarily know this to be the case. Jones may have formed the belief that all state capitals, like that of his native

state, North Carolina, are named after famous explorers. Since Columbus is the only city in Ohio that is named after a great explorer, he concludes that it must be the capital. If this were the only reason he believed Columbus to be the capital of Ohio, we would not say that he had knowledge, but that his erroneous theory just happened to lead him to truth in this instance. What Jones is missing is what philosophers call justification. He has a true belief, but lacks proper justification.

The question of what qualifies as justification has vexed philosophers for many centuries. Some even maintain that something in addition to justification is necessary for knowledge, but there is no need to add complications here. It is sufficient to understand that when challenged on our claim to know something, one can challenge us on the veracity of our belief or on its justification (or perhaps both).

What, then, constitutes justification for a belief? This depends on the belief. Suppose Jones asks Smith (who recently returned from a trip to Germany) what the population of Saxony is. Smith replies that it is 4.3 million. Surprised at the precision of the answer, Jones asks how he knows this. Smith tells him that he read it in a paper while in Germany. This would likely be sufficient for Jones since, like most people, he believes newspapers are typically reliable when it comes to facts and statistics. But if he wanted, Jones could press the issue and ask Smith how he knows the paper got the figure right. Smith answers that the paper cited the latest census.

Next Jones wants to know why Smith thinks the census is reliable. Smith replies that census takers went through every neighborhood in Saxony and counted every resident within a certain degree of accuracy. Undeterred, Jones wants to know why Smith believes they counted accurately. Smith tells him that they are trained to count the number of people residing in each house and, when not possible, to ask the neighbors how many people reside in a certain house. But Jones can press still further. Why, he asks, does Smith believe that counting this way is reliable? Smith answers that counting basically relies on sense perception. The census taker asks how many people live in a residence; the housewife counts the members of the household; and the census taker jots down the figure. When Jones asks Smith how he knows that sense experience is reliable, Smith may simply say that he just knows it is. If so, Smith has reached his final authority.

The point of this is to show that most of our beliefs are grounded in more basic beliefs. We justify our beliefs in terms of other beliefs. But this process cannot go on indefinitely. Sooner or later one will come to what he considers the bottom line. When this point has been reached, one is said to have reached his ultimate authority.

This authority is such that it not only provides justification for beliefs, but also determines what will be counted as true. This entails that ultimate authorities are self-attesting; they do not go outside themselves for justification. The Word of God is, of course, the only true ultimate authority, but fallen man has turned to false surrogates. But whatever is chosen as the final authority, there is no questioning its supremacy. This is why the Christian cannot appeal to some other authority to justify the authority of the Bible. If he did so, then

whatever he appealed to would be his actual final authority. The same holds for the unbeliever.

Ultimate authorities reside within a nexus of other beliefs. They are bound up with other fundamental beliefs, which together provide a basic framework for understanding the world. This is called a worldview. Since everyone has an ultimate authority, it follows that everyone has a worldview.

For apologetics, it is crucial to realize the significance that ultimate authorities and worldviews play in a person's belief structure. It is fruitless to reason with unbelievers without taking account of their worldview. Since they adhere to a different authority, there is little point in trying to argue for the truth of Christianity without first shattering their intellectual stronghold. Because they interpret everything, including our apologetic arguments, through their worldview, nothing we say will convince them of the truth of Christianity since their fundamental commitments are antithetical to it.

At this point, it seems natural to note that there are different worldviews and move on to the issue of how this will inform our apologetic methodology. But it is important first to consider how these different worldviews arose. The reason for this will become clear in a moment.

When man was created, he viewed the world through the perspective of God's revelation. There were no competing worldviews because man lived in submission to God's authority. But when the serpent came and asked, "Yea, hath God said?" he introduced the possibility of there being another authority. Rather than answering as the second Adam ("it is written . . ."), man chose to reject God's authority and become his own final authority. With his new authority he introduced an alternative

worldview to compete with the one he rejected.

Man's choice to reject God's authority and replace it with his own was not a mistake, but a conscious and deliberate decision. What we often fail to realize about the account is that Adam knew he was choosing a lie. As the children of Adam, we, too, apart from grace, choose to believe this same lie.

Arguments alone will never convince the unbeliever of the truth of Christianity. As a rebellious son of Adam, he knows the truth, but despises it. He hates God and will not bend his knee to his Lord and Maker. If we fail to realize these basic truths of our religion, our defense of the faith will lack both authority and power.

The only effective argument is one that takes account of these Biblical truths together with the gospel of Jesus Christ and presents them to the unbeliever in an uncompromising manner. The unbeliever does not need to be convinced of the truth of Christianity. He needs the Spirit of God, working through the proclamation of the gospel, to vivify his dead heart. And it is only presuppositional apologetics that does this.

Before turning to the presuppositional argument, it will be a helpful exercise first to consider two traditional arguments for God's existence to illustrate the problem of defending the faith without taking account of either the issue of worldviews or the doctrine of sin.

Traditional Arguments

The Cosmological Argument

Perhaps the most famous of the arguments for God's existence is the cosmological argument. While it comes in many forms, its general thrust is that a world that is constituted by contingent facts (such as, there are caused things) must have a sufficient explanation for such facts. In its most common for-

mulation, the argument contends that since there are caused things and since no caused thing is the cause of itself, any caused thing must be caused by something else. Since there cannot be an infinity of causes (otherwise the causal chain would have never commenced), there must be a first or uncaused cause. And this first cause is God. This is essentially Aquinas' "second way."

There are several problems with this argument. First, the claim that there cannot be an infinite series of causes is controversial; many philosophers have disputed this. They ask why a series of causes must terminate at some point. No doubt our intuition is that there can be no infinite causal sequence, but intuition often leads us astray. What, after all, forces us to maintain that an infinite series of causes is impossible? There seems to be no a priori reason to deem such a series impossible. Even Aquinas himself thought that an infinite series of temporal causes could not be ruled out on philosophical grounds alone.

Modern proponents of the cosmological argument maintain that there cannot be an actual infinite set of anything, including caused events. To hold to the contrary seems to lead to absurdity. Bertrand Russell offers the example of a man who writes an autobiography. The man is a slow writer, and it takes him a year to write about any given day of his life. This, of course, means that he gets further away from completing his project every day that goes by. But given an infinite amount of time, he will be able to complete his project.

This is because of a paradoxical feature of infinite sets. Since there is an infinity of years as well as days, the two may be mapped out in a one-on-one correspondence. And if they can be so mapped out, they are equal. Hence, there is a year for every day, which gives the writer enough time to complete the

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book. So despite the fact that given a finite duration of time, the writer falls one year behind for every day that goes by, in an infinite duration he would be able to finish. But this seems absurd. For this reason and others, some have maintained that there cannot be an actual infinite sequence of events. And if there are no actual infinities, then there must be a first cause.

Whether this defense succeeds in the end is beyond the scope of this article. (One typical reply is that this judges infinite sets on the standards of finite ones, which is, of course, question begging.) Assuming it does, the second objection to this version of the cosmological argument reveals a deeper flaw. Since the series of causes in the world are finite, it is not necessary to posit a first cause that is infinite. At best, all one needs is a cause that is a little less finite than the whole series or perhaps a little less finite than the first event in the sequence. In other words, if the series is finite, there is no reason to conclude that the first cause of the series is itself infinite.

Third, even granting this argu-

ment proves there must be an uncaused cause, it does not preclude the possibility that there are two or more uncaused causes. Since there seems to be quite a few divergent series of causes (physical interaction, thoughts, moral decisions, reproduction, and so on), it is not unreasonable to conclude that different causal sequences have different uncaused causes. More than one pagan religion has posited two ultimate causes of the world order: the good and the bad. Given this way of reasoning, there seems to be no adequate ground to reject this possibility.

To press this objection further, why can there not be as many first causes as there are effects? In other words, why is it not possible that every event has its own unique uncaused cause? There seems to be no good answer to this. This tells us that the only reason this argument concludes with only one uncaused cause is that the rabbit is already in the hat. Christian philosophers believe there is only one God, and so they force their belief into their conclusion.

Fourth, even if these objections were overcome, the argument does not necessitate that we identify the first cause as the God of Christianity. Muslim philosophers at one time used this argument to prove the existence of Allah. Even the non-religious philosopher Aristotle appealed to this kind of reasoning to prove his unmoved mover. Thus the god that is proved by this argument is compatible with pagan gods. If it is so compatible, this alone indicates that it is not compatible with the living and true God.

The Teleological Argument

The teleological argument, as the name indicates, is concerned with the design or purpose of the world. William Paley offers the classical statement of the argument in his famous analogy of the watch. He asks us to suppose we came across a watch on a deserted beach.

Unlike finding a pebble or a seashell, which are natural objects that we would expect to see there, we would infer that there must have been a maker of the watch. For the watch, unlike the pebble, has parts such as gears and dials that exhibit planning or design. The parts of the watch function together to keep time. Such things do not come about by random chance.

In the same way, Paley argues, when we observe the world, we see that there is design as well. Take the eye with its various parts (iris, cornea, lens, pupil, retina), all functioning together to produce vision. Or the oak tree with its root system, trunk, branches, leaves, and acorns. Like the watch, the parts of the oak all operate in perfect harmony with each other, producing a unified and purposeful organism. Even more than the watch, the eye and the oak tree reveal upon investigation a staggering complexity down to the microscopic level. Since we would infer the existence of a watchmaker if we found a watch, how much more should we infer the existence of a grand designer whose work far surpasses the skill and ingenuity of the greatest of watchmakers? Since nothing in the universe has such power, imagination, and skill to make these and the vast number of equally complicated and ordered objects, the designer must transcend the universe. The designer, therefore, must be God.

Like the cosmological argument, there is something to be said for this. Creation does indeed display wonderful design. Kant himself (a critic of the traditional arguments) views this as the strongest of all the proofs for God's existence.

But as the argument stands, several objections can be raised against it. First, the premise that there is design in the world is hotly disputed. Of course there appears to be design, but this does not

mean that there really is design. Take the following analogy. It is possible for a toddler to scribble on a piece of paper what appears to be the sentence "The barn is red." Assuming the child is not precocious, we would not say he intended to write such a sentence. It would be accidental. In the same way, the appearance of order and design may be accidental.

Most modern scientists are willing to say that there is design in the world, at least in the biological realm. The eye, for example, exhibits so much complex order that it could not have come about by random processes. Darwinians have an explanation for this, though. Vision has a great deal of survival value for predators and prey alike. Nature selects for this advantage and culls out those creatures without vision. What appears to have been designed by an intelligent agent turns out to be designed by a "blind watchmaker."

I am not advocating an evolutionary approach to biology, of course. But this Darwinian account of design is enough to debunk the teleological argument as it stands. Of course, Darwinism can be refuted on philosophical grounds, but this requires a presuppositional argument. The teleological argument loses much of its force in the light of modern evolutionary theory.

Second, even if we assume that there is design, this argument gives little reason to conclude that there must be only one designer. This is the same basic objection raised against the previous argument. Perhaps there are two designers or more. To extend Paley's original analogy, suppose that while walking along the beach I discovered two watches lying in the sand. I would no doubt conclude they each had a designer, but I would not necessarily conclude they had the same designer.

Third, the teleological argument

can be used to prove any number of gods. Many religions view their god or gods as the designer of the cosmos. Plato, for example, taught that a god or demiurge fashioned the world by impressing forms upon preexistent matter. There is no reason given in the argument that we should conclude that the Christian God as opposed to Plato's god is the designer of the world.

Summary

Apart from the specific criticism of these arguments, the fundamental flaw in both is that they grant that the unbeliever can understand the world on his own terms. The concealed assumption is that man's intellect is sufficient to stand in judgment over God. If man would simply follow his own reasoning to its logical conclusion, he would realize that God exists. But this autonomous way of reasoning only engenders further rebellion in man. Man's problem is not that he has failed to consider the implications of the principles that underlie his approach to life. He has done this all too well. Rather, man's problem is that he refuses to cast aside his man-centered principles and turn to God as his ultimate authority.

In essence these arguments assume that one's worldview plays little or no role in determining whether God exists or not. But as we have seen above, worldviews are the crux of the matter. If his worldview is not challenged at a fundamental level, the unbeliever has no reason to believe in the God of the Bible. This does not preclude the possibility that he will believe that some god may exist. But as long as his basic humanistic principles are left intact, this will be a god made in his own image—whether it is a god of traditional man-made religion or something of his own devising.

Presuppositional apologetics avoids the debilitating compromises of the traditional

arguments. It does not offer man more of what he already believes, but challenges his view of the world at every single point, contending that without God man is not only lost spiritually, but in every way—including intellectually.

The Presuppositional Argument

Unlike the traditional arguments for God's existence, the presuppositional argument starts where our faith demands: with God's revelation. It presupposes the truth of God's Word and presents the Christian worldview as a necessary precondition for all knowledge. It refuses to grant that the unbeliever has any knowledge apart from God. And it refuses to answer the skeptic by appealing to principles and philosophies that are congenial to him. Rather, it attacks these principles and demonstrates their failure to provide a foundation for knowledge.

Presuppositionalism maintains that questioning God's existence is on par with the satanic question posed to Eve. Eve succumbed to the seducer because she failed to stand upon God's Word as her final authority. Presuppositionalism endeavors to answer the satanic question in the same way our Lord answered him—by appealing to the authority of Scripture.

The presuppositional argument takes any aspect of human experience and reasons that only the Christian worldview can account for or make sense of such experience. This involves a two-step method.

The first step is to answer the fool according to his folly. The fool (one who has denied God in his heart) believes he can understand the world on his own terms and by means of his own philosophy. We let him try. We ask him to take any experience and account for it on his own terms. We then proceed to offer an internal critique of his account, showing that his worldview is either

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contradictory or arbitrary and thus unable to account for the experience in question. This process is illustrated at some length below, but a brief example may be helpful at this point.

Empiricism serves as a good example. The empiricist claims that all knowledge is ultimately grounded in sense experience. Aside from the glaring problem that omniscience is necessary to establish this claim (how could one know that all knowledge comes through the senses without knowing all there is to know?), the fundamental error with empiricism is that it is self-contradictory. It claims *x* is the case, and then at another point denies *x*. It claims that all knowledge comes through experience.

But the knowledge that empiricism is true itself does not come from sense experience. Empiricism is a philosophical theory. Theories cannot be felt, tasted, touched, heard, or seen. Thus empiricism is contradictory. If the empiricist tried to rescue his theory by claiming that all knowledge comes through sense experience, except the knowledge that all knowledge comes through sense experience, he would

be making an arbitrary and gratuitous claim.

Notice that this internal critique makes no appeal to the Christian worldview. Empiricism, as well as all other non-Christian philosophies, fails on its own terms. It is unable to provide a coherent system of thought.

Refuting a non-Christian worldview does not establish the Christian worldview. It may be that both his worldview and ours are false. To prove the Christian worldview, we must demonstrate that it and it alone can account for human experience.

This leads to the second step. In this step we do not answer the fool according to his folly. Rather, we invite the unbeliever to come inside our worldview in order to show him that Christianity makes sense of our experience. It provides the necessary preconditions for knowledge.

Let us illustrate this method in more detail by taking atheism as our example. In evaluating atheism, we will look at the atheist's ability to make sense of science and ethics. In the end, we will see that it does not account for either, whereas the Christian worldview does.

Science

Science is the systematic attempt to understand the natural world. Through the scientific method it seeks to discover general laws that explain the diverse phenomena of our experience. The scientific method is that the scientist observes the world, notes patterns, and formulates generalizations about some aspect of it. These generalizations or hypotheses are then tested by experiments and are either confirmed or disconfirmed. Those that are confirmed become theories or laws. These laws then provide a heuristic for forming new hypotheses, and the process begins all over again.

Though overly simplified, both

Christians and atheists agree with this conception of science. The atheist, though, often thinks that science and religion are incompatible. Science is rational, but religion is a matter of faith. And faith amounts to irrationality and superstition. Religion, moreover, is dogmatic, and dogmatism has no place in science. The atheist thinks we must choose one or the other. If we choose religion, we cannot have science, and if we choose science, we cannot have religion.

As it turns out, science and religion (meaning, of course, the Christian religion) are not incompatible as the atheist claims. In fact, religion provides the necessary preconditions for science. Apart from Christianity, science lacks a foundation. And since the atheist rejects Christianity, he must reject science as well.

To prove this, we will look at the scientific method and ask how we are justified in believing that it leads us to truths about the world. Though we could choose any number of the components of the scientific method, the principle of induction is probably the easiest one to focus on. Induction is often said to be the pattern of reasoning that moves from particulars to generalities. (This is not quite how a logician would define it, but it is sufficient for our purposes.) Today the sun rose in the east; yesterday the sun rose in the east; and every day in recorded history prior to yesterday, the sun rose in the east. We conclude that the sun always rises in the east.

Many philosophers, though, have questioned the propriety of inductive reasoning. Hume was the first, but others, including Karl Popper in the twentieth century, have rejected it as a reliable form of argumentation. Why is it reasonable, they ask, to accept the conclusion of inductive arguments? This is called the problem of induction. If the atheist fails to offer a viable solution, he

has no basis for his adherence to science.

The atheist typically justifies induction on the grounds that the universe operates in uniform and law-like ways. If nature is uniform—where the future will operate the same as the past—then the atheist does appear to have justification for induction. But this only pushes the problem to another level. How does the atheist know that nature is uniform? Why in a world that is not created by a sovereign Creator does he think that the world behaves in an orderly manner? In so far as the atheist attempts to answer this question (most just take the uniformity of the world as given), his answer is viciously circular.

The atheist typically says that our experience of the world gives us warrant to believe that nature is uniform. He argues that since all of our previous experience of the world has been that the world operates in regular and uniform ways, it is reasonable to conclude that the world has always operated in the same way and will continue to do so.

There are at least two problems with this argument. First, the premise may be called into question. Is it really the case that all of our experience has been that the world operates in a uniform manner? Perhaps most of our experience is like this, but all have experienced what appear to be incongruities. Bertrand Russell notes that the chicken that has been fed every morning expects that this morning is not different. But this morning the farmer comes to wring its neck and serve it up for supper.

Even if the atheist can provide an adequate defense to this objection, a more difficult objection for him to answer is the second problem. His argument that all past futures have been like the past, and therefore the future will probably be like the past as well, is itself an inductive argument. But this begs the question. We began by asking the atheist

to provide an account for induction. He argues that since the world is uniform, he has an account. But when asked how he knows that nature is uniform, the atheist makes recourse to an inductive argument. This is no solution at all. The atheist, thus, can provide no account for induction; and without induction, he cannot account for science.

Where the atheist offers a viciously circular defense of induction, the Christian does not. The Christian worldview teaches that God is providentially in control of all events. God has revealed to us that we can count on regularities in the natural world. "He appointed the moon for seasons: the sun knoweth his going down" (Ps. 104:19). He providentially causes the harvest to come in due season. Nature is uniform because God makes it so. Since nature is uniform, the Christian can account for induction. And with induction, he can account for science as well. So while the atheist touts science as being on his side, the reality is that only the Christian worldview provides the precondition for science.

Ethics

Perhaps the easiest way to understand the presuppositional method is in terms of ethics. Ethics is the field of philosophy that is concerned with imperatives. Unlike science, which seeks to know what is the case, ethics seeks to know what ought to be the case. Ought we to give to charity? Should we always tell the truth? Is the taking of human life ever justified? These are ethical questions.

Most atheists believe in morality. They think there are some things that are right and some that are wrong. Our concern is not whether they believe that there are ethical values, but whether they have any justification for their belief. It turns out that like his belief in science, he has no foundation for this belief.

The atheist has developed a number of systems of ethics to justify his belief in goodness. For the sake of brevity, only two will be considered.

The two positions concern the nature of the ethical term “goodness.” What is goodness? What does it mean to say something is good? While a number of philosophers have argued that ethical language has no cognitive meaning, most believe that it does. And if it does have meaning, it must have it in one of two ways. Either ethical words such as “good” are simple and unanalyzable (much like the words “red” or “hot”) or their meanings are analyzable to other words (like “bachelor,” which means an unmarried male over, say, eighteen years of age). The former position is known as non-naturalism (ethical terms are not reducible to empirical experience) and the latter, naturalism.

If goodness is unanalyzable, then the atheist faces several difficulties. The first is epistemological in nature. Even if good has meaning, how are we to apply the term? How do we know what the good is? What, if any, criteria do we have to distinguish the good from the bad?

This typically leads the non-naturalist to intuitionism. Intuitionism is the view that humans possess a faculty of intuition that gives them direct access to what is good. It operates much like the faculties of sense perception. When we see a fire truck, we see that it is red in color. We do not infer its redness from anything else, but see the color immediately. Intuition works the same way, only it perceives goodness (or the lack of goodness). When we see a Boy Scout help an old lady cross a busy street, we immediately perceive the goodness of the act. Or when we witness a bully stealing lunch money from smaller children, we immediately perceive that the action is wrong.

Intuitionism suffers from problems on many grounds. First, some claim that they have no intuitive sense of right or wrong, but come to ethical judgments on the basis of reflection. The intuitionist’s answer to this is unsatisfactory. Such people, says the intuitionist, either are not correctly understanding what is going on inside them or they lack the faculty altogether, much like the blind man lacks the faculty of vision. This type of reasoning, though, is thoroughly question-begging.

Second, the fact that people have different ethical intuitions provides some evidence against intuitionism. If we all have such a faculty, it would seem that our intuitions would almost always be the same. If even two people have different intuitions about an action, how is it to be determined which intuition is the correct one?

Third, another difficulty is that there are some cases where we do not know how to evaluate a specific action. Someone performs a certain moral action, and we have no intuition whether it is good or not. Some intuitionists say that in such cases we need to reflect upon the deed in order to judge its goodness. This seems to place our judgment outside of our intuition and on to another faculty.

Fourth, on the atheistic worldview, how is it possible for there to be non-reducible ethical facts? Of course the materialist atheist could not countenance such facts. But even the atheist who is not a materialist must provide some account of the existence of goodness. But no account has been given. For the atheist, the world just is. In an ultimately impersonal world, there is no space for goodness since personhood is the precondition for value.

Despite these failures, non-naturalism has some commendable features. It rightly refuses to reduce ethical terms to

empirically verifiable ones. To analyze good down to nonethical terms violates Bishop Butler’s unobjectionable principle that everything is what it is and not another thing. It also rightly suggests that men know what is good not by means of abstract reasoning, but by something within us. But this something is not a faculty called intuition, but rather the law of God that He has impressed in all men.

Another answer the atheist may give is naturalism. Naturalism defines goodness in terms of something else. The most prevalent form of naturalism is hedonism. Hedonism reduces goodness to pleasure. To say something is good is to say that it tends to lead toward pleasure. Hedonism may be further broken down to egoism and utilitarianism. The egoistic hedonist asserts that something is good if it brings him pleasure. The utilitarian hedonist says that something is good if it tends to bring about the most pleasure to the most people.

There are epistemological problems with both versions of hedonism. How, for example, does one know that a given action will tend to bring about pleasure? Even if a reasonable answer is given, there is still the question of what pleasure consists in. Some hedonists such as Bentham maintain a relatively crass view of pleasure. The highest quantity of pleasure and least amount of pain constitutes the ultimate good. With few qualifications, it matters not what kind of pleasure is enjoyed.

Other hedonists such as the Epicureans commend the so-called higher pleasures such as good conversation, good food in moderation, leisure, and art as the most desirable. For them, the quality not quantity of the pleasure is most important. But which version of hedonism is correct? There appears to be no nonarbitrary way of adjudication between these two positions. This being

the case, ethics is reduced to a matter of taste.

Naturalism in both its utilitarian and hedonistic forms allows for what we would otherwise consider gross examples of evil in the name of goodness. The egoistic hedonist who finds pleasure in sadistic acts is behaving in an ethically upright manner. The stricture that it is illegitimate unnecessarily to inflict pain on others is incompatible to the theory. If goodness is pleasure, then whatever pleases me is, by definition, good. The utilitarian hedonist faces a similar criticism. If inflicting pain on the innocent results in maximizing pleasure for the many, then such an action is morally acceptable.

The insuperable problem with naturalism in whatever form it takes is that it reasons from what is the case to what ought to be the case. This has been labeled the naturalistic fallacy. As G. E. Moore observes, one can always ask the naturalist who claims a certain action tends toward happiness, "Yes, but is it good?" But on the non-naturalist view, good means pleasure. And so the question would really be, "Is pleasure pleasurable?" But this a trivial question, and Moore's question is not trivial. It certainly makes sense to ask the man who is leading a life of debauchery whether he is leading a good life. And because it makes sense, non-naturalism cannot be true.

Summary

Though this is by no means a complete survey, it illustrates the problem that the atheist faces in the realm of ethics. The atheist wants ethics, but denies the only possible grounds for it. He believes he can have morality without God, but all he has is arbitrariness and confusion.

Whereas the unbeliever has no foundation for ethical judgments, the Christian worldview can account for

goodness. God Himself is the foundation of ethics. Because there is an infinite and personal God, there is absolute truth and goodness. Because man is created in His image and has been given access to God's standards through revelation, the Christian has justification for his ethical beliefs.

This does not mean that the unbeliever never behaves in an ethical manner. He often does what is right. He feeds and clothes his children, gives to charity, and so on. Though the unbeliever may do what is right in some cases and in some sense of the word, he does not do so in all cases nor does he do so in the robust sense of the word. He never acts ethically in a way that brings glory to God since he has denied God in his heart. He lacks faith in God and so cannot please Him (Heb. 11:6). And he does not follow the only standard of good, which is, of course, God's law. This is why the Bible tells us that even the plowing of the wicked is detestable in the Lord's sight.

Presuppositionalism forces this point on the unbeliever. It not only demonstrates the futility of ethics without God, it demands that the unbeliever repent from his sin and rebellion. Only by turning away from his autonomy will the unbeliever be saved. In the process of defending the faith, it shows the unbeliever that he is destitute of both a theory of goodness and goodness itself. Only through faith in Christ can he find intellectual and spiritual salvation.

Conclusion

The presuppositional argument is not just one more argument to place in our apologetic arsenal. It is fundamentally different from the traditional arguments for God's existence. Unlike them, it starts with God's Word. It considers God to be true and all who deny Him to be liars. It establishes not only the mere existence of God, but the

truth of the entire Christian worldview as revealed in Scripture. It forces the unbeliever to acknowledge the impossibility of knowledge apart from God. And it drives him to repentance from his sin and to submit to the only hope he has for salvation, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Contemporary Christianity is weak because it has abandoned its faith in the authoritative Word of God. The church cannot answer the gainsayers of the day because she has compromised her commitment to Scripture's authority. If the church would rest upon God's Word and not lean on her own understanding, she would once again vanquish all her foes.

"[T]he weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds" (2 Cor. 10:4). So said the Apostle Paul. If we wish to pull down strongholds, we must take every thought captive to Christ. When we rely upon His authority, we are able to close the mouth of anyone who rails against our holy religion. ■

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What Makes This Church Different?

A Look at the Reformed Presbyterian Church in the U.S.

Lee Duigon



Does your church entertain, but not instruct?

Is it faithful to the Word of God, or does it teach from the pulpit

trendy cultural innovations and the traditions of men?

Does it spend too much time, effort, and money expanding and adorning the building, and tacking on new programs that have little to do with godliness and everything to do with growing and pleasing the membership?

Does it ever leave you wondering what, exactly, your church and its leaders stand for? Does it leave you wondering what *you* believe?

For many Christians in America, the answer to all these questions is “yes.”

But there’s at least one denomination that’s trying to “do church” differently—to do things God’s way, as taught in the Bible and explicated in the founding documents of Presbyterianism.

“When the church fails, the culture declines,” said Rev. Joseph Morecraft III, one of the founders of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in the United States (RPCUS) and pastor at the Chalcedon Presbyterian Church in Cumming, Georgia. “Now is the time to start working on building a second Christendom.”

The founding of a new Christendom may seem a tall order for a denomination that lists only a dozen churches on its home webpage (www.rpcus.com); but all Christians know the parable of

the tiny mustard seed that grows into the biggest tree in the field.

“We are confident in the power of the Holy Spirit,” Rev. Morecraft said.

A “Distinctive” Denomination

The RPCUS came into being in 1983 when Rev. Morecraft’s Chalcedon Presbyterian Church congregation voted to separate from the Presbyterian Church in America.

“We believe that as Reformed churches we are to preserve Biblical Christianity, as understood by the Westminster Standards,” said Rev. John Otis, pastor at Westminster Presbyterian Mission, Corpus Christi, Texas. “We’re obviously not the only ones who do this. But it was for this purpose that we came together in the first place.”

The “Standards” are the Westminster Confession of Faith, with Larger and Shorter Catechisms, the Form of Presbyterian Church Government, and the Directory for Public Worship of God. English and Scottish Puritans, against the background of the English Civil War, drew up the Confession in 1646. This and the other documents have been “amended” several times since then, Rev. Morecraft said.

“The effect of those changes, over time, is to dilute the strict Calvinism of the Confession,” he said.

How did the RPCUS try to return to original Calvinism? Rev. Otis, who was the denomination’s moderator in 2005, explained.

“We have four ‘distinctives’ that

make us different from other Presbyterian denominations,” he said. “Furthermore, we expect all our officers—pastors, elders, deacons—to give allegiance to every chapter of the Westminster Confession.”

Persons wanting to join the RPCUS, he added, only have to make “a credible profession of faith” to be accepted for church membership. Only officers have to subscribe to every detail of the Confession.

“I think our people like knowing exactly where their leaders stand and what they believe in,” he said.

The decision to form a new denomination, and the crystallization of the four distinctives, “happened pretty much simultaneously,” he said. “One inspired the other, and vice versa.”

Rev. Otis has written an article, “RPCUS Distinctives and the Westminster Standards,” about the four “distinctives” that make the RPCUS ... well, distinctive.¹ They are:

1. *A commitment to presuppositional apologetics.* Simply, this means that the Christian must presuppose the existence of God and the total authenticity of Scripture. “The Christian’s ultimate starting point is self-attesting Scripture,” Rev. Otis writes. This means that God’s Word, not man’s subjective feelings or imperfect reasoning, is the foundation of all truth, and all Christian reasoning must flow from it.

2. *A commitment to God’s law.* The RPCUS is a theonomic denomination: that is, it assumes and teaches that God’s

laws, as given in the Bible, still apply today in every aspect of human life: “[T]he underlying principle of the case law is what is obligatory upon us today.”

3. *A postmillennial eschatology.*

Postmillennialists believe that the Bible preaches the ultimate victory of the gospel of Jesus Christ in this world, in this age. God will make Christ’s enemies His footstool, as proclaimed by Psalm 110, and all nations will be converted to Christianity.

4. *Only males to exercise power in the church.* Only male heads of households vote in RPCUS congregational meetings, hold church offices, or confirm church officers. This is according to the Bible’s teachings on the respective roles in the church for men and women, Rev. Otis said.

“These distinctives are what sets us apart,” Rev. Morecraft said. “Certainly, the ultimate authority for anything we do is the Word of God. We believe that historic Westminster Calvinism, unedited and original, accurately explicates the Scriptures.”

Presupposing the Truth of Scripture

Sometimes there is a disconnect between theology and the people in the pews. Ordinary church members may wonder what a technical term like “presuppositional apologetics” has to do with them.

RPCUS pastors, Rev. Morecraft said, take pains to instruct their congregations.

“We run to longer Sunday services than most churches—up to two hours with the music—because there’s such a need for instruction and empowerment of the Word of God,” he said. “The purpose of our sermons is to explain, clarify, and expound on what the Bible teaches. And then we apply it to the context of how people live.”

Without putting the congregation

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through a seminary course, RPCUS pastors, in their sermons, apply a presuppositional apologetic to promote a Biblical worldview. “[I]t is pointless to argue endlessly with unbelievers about ‘the facts,’” Rev. Otis writes. “Rather, we must challenge the foolishness of the unbeliever’s philosophy of fact, his worldview.” Much of the sermonizing in the RPCUS deconstructs the secular view of life, exposing its fallacies, stripping away layer upon layer of assumptions made without God. Meanwhile, pastors teach their congregations to view all things through the lens of Scripture and reason out all things with the Bible as their starting point.

Rev. Christopher Strevel, pastor at Covenant Presbyterian Church, Buford, Georgia, belongs to the first generation of pastors brought up and trained in the RPCUS. The church’s commitment to Biblical teaching, he said, makes the RPCUS special.

“I see this difference in the diligence with which our elders teach the various ages of Sunday school using the Shorter and the Larger Catechism[s],” he said, “in the resulting commitment to the

Bible throughout the congregation, and the absolute lack of any feeling that it is necessary to modify or update the Bible to make it relevant. It is relevant because it’s God’s Word. We do not need to be hip or creative; we need to be faithful to what God has said.”

Children in the RPCUS, he said, attend the regular worship service “from their earliest age” instead of being shunted off to children’s services, as is the custom in some other denominations.

Does this commitment to teaching have the desired effect?

“As far as I know,” Rev. Morecraft said, “we do not have one member in our denomination who does not believe the world was created by God in six days about 6,000 years ago.”

“Although we’ve had our share of heartrending departures from the faith,” Rev. Strevel said, “the overwhelming majority of our young people are walking with the Lord. Most of the second generation has remained at Covenant Church, now raising their own families in the fear and admonition of the Lord.”

Theonomy in Daily Life

The RPCUS is a small denomination; but thanks to modern technology, the ministry reaches more listeners than one might think.

“Our influence is out of all proportion to our numbers,” Rev. Otis said.

“We don’t measure our success by numbers,” said Rev. Morecraft. “We plant churches wherever we can [one of these successful plantings has taken root in Ecuador], and meanwhile, our sermons on sermonaudio.com get us thousands of responses every month from all over the world.”

“We believe the numbers do matter at the end when the gospel takes over the earth,” Rev. Otis said. “Naturally, we’d like to see our numbers grow. But we won’t compromise to get there.”

For the time being, the denomina-

tion's word gets out via the Internet, its own monthly magazine and newsletters, articles by RPCUS pastors published in other venues, and on the radio, too.

Pastor Jeff Black, at Providence Reformed Presbyterian Church in Wytheville, Virginia, hosts a thirty-minute radio show, which can be heard by anyone, anywhere, at any time, over the Internet.² The show, "The Edinburgh Inn," features "casual conversations about mere Christianity" with Rev. Black and his guests.

"With this program we are discussing basic Christian doctrine, following the section divisions of the Westminster Confession of Faith," Rev. Black said. (There are thirty-three chapters in the Confession.) The show's archive offers twenty-four previous broadcasts, divided into two volumes of twelve each.

Some Christians bristle at the word "theonomy." Non-Christians have tried to use it and terms like "dominionist" to conjure up visions of a faith-based tyranny on American soil.

But theonomy is one of the topics regularly discussed on "The Edinburgh Inn" under headings like "Is the Bible Sufficient for the 21st Century?" (Vol. 1, No. 11), and it's unlikely these discussions will alarm anyone.

"We do use the Bible as the rule for our belief and practice," Rev. Black said. "This is practically demonstrated by the in-depth and systematic teaching from the pulpit and the lectern."

In their conversation, Black and his guests explain how God's laws are to be applied to every phase of daily life today, even to such seemingly non-Biblical areas as driving a car or operating a nuclear power plant. "Not in those express words," one of the guests adds, "but in the application of Biblical principles. For instance, the Bible teaches you to love your neighbor and to be careful of his person and his property. So you'll

"Although we've had our share of heartrending departures from the faith," Rev. Strevel said, "the overwhelming majority of our young people are walking with the Lord. Most of the second generation has remained at Covenant Church, now raising their own families in the fear and admonition of the Lord."

have to drive safely and obey the rules of the road, etcetera."

"We are quite aware of the controversy in the Reformed world over this point [theonomy]," Rev. Otis writes, "and we are grieved that this is even an issue." The controversy is over "the continuing validity of the judicial or case laws of the Old Testament for our modern culture." The RPCUS' conclusion, quoting theologian Gregory Bahnsen, is that "we are now required to keep the underlying principle (or 'general equity') of these laws."

"There is nothing new about our position on theonomy," Rev. Morecraft said. "The source of all public and private morality is God's law—and if not the law of God in the Bible, then what?"

"Everybody, in his heart of hearts, knows sin is to be punished. We know that everybody suppresses the truth in unrighteousness; but Romans 1 teaches us that we already have the truth within us.

"Here is our teaching, as simply as I can put it. Only God can perfectly distinguish good from evil, and He does so in the Bible. Only God can define

what is a criminal act, and He does so in the Bible. And only God can justly define how crime is to be punished, and He does so in the Bible. When man tries to do these things, guided by his own subjective standards, he is erratic and arbitrary."

God's laws, he said, are not to be imposed on American society.

"For one thing, the government does not have the authority to punish every sin. Only God has that authority," he said. "We reject any wholesale, forced, coercive attempt to institute these laws. Rather, we want to see people joyfully, from the heart, try to bring themselves, their families, their churches, their businesses, and their governments under the law of God."

The Victory of the Gospel

"Postmillennialism"—another one of those theological terms—is key to the RPCUS' teaching.

The postmillennial position, as discussed by Rev. Otis in his article, is a belief in "the victory of the gospel in space and time during the present millennial age. The Great Commission of Christ in Matthew 28:18–20 will be accomplished in history prior to Christ's Second Coming. The knowledge of the glory of the Lord will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea ... King Jesus will take possession of His inheritance as was promised Him by the Father."

A postmillennial outlook makes a difference in a believer's life and thought, Rev. Morecraft explained, and in his morale, too.

"People follow the news and lose heart. It seems the world is getting worse, not better," he said. "But we are taught to walk not by sight, but by faith. I don't base my faith on news reports, but on the Word of God. And we are to believe that Word in spite of everything we see.

"We are to be like Abraham. When

God told this ninety-year-old man that he and his wife were going to have a baby, Abraham believed Him. But if he'd only gone by what he could see, he never would have believed."

American Christians, he said, should not take their country's problems as evidence that God will be unable to keep His promises.

"For America in the short run," he said, "we can expect God's judgment. But these setbacks are to prepare us for continuing victories in the future.

"Throughout history, we see many examples of what I call microcosmic postmillennialism—the conversion of whole nations to Christianity, the birth of new nations, and so on. But even if we saw no microcosmic postmillennialism in history, we are still to believe the Word of God."

"A prayer for the kingdom of sin and Satan to be destroyed is a prayer for the victory of the gospel in the millennial age," Rev. Otis writes. "Since prayer is a means ordained by God to bring about His sovereign decrees, would God have us pray for something that He does not intend to accomplish? Of course not!"

Farewell to Feminism

In our feminist-influenced age, it may seem strange or even wrong for a church to restrict voting to men and allow only men to serve as church officers. But that's not the only unusual thing about the RPCUS.

"Our worship services," Rev. Black said, "are determined by God's Word. We make a serious effort to do only what God commands or demonstrates by example in His worship. If He hasn't authorized it, we don't do it. If He has forbidden it, we don't do it."

So not only will you find no female preachers or elders in an RPCUS church, but no rock bands, comedy routines, magic acts, goddess worship, altar

dancing, Buddhist chanting, or multi-media extravaganzas either. The music used in RPCUS services, Rev. Morecraft said, is simple, based on the Psalms and other Scriptures, and traditional hymns. The church buildings themselves are simple and unpretentious: see the picture of the church on the Chalcedon Presbyterian Church website, www.chalcedon.org.

"It was the women in our church who demanded that our selection of elders adhere to the Biblical standard," Rev. Morecraft said. "Without believing in the inferiority of women—which certainly I don't—we are required to follow the Bible's teaching. It is not oppression of women to follow the Bible and insist that elders be elected by male heads of households only. Those who are of the opinion that it is ought to consult the women in our church."

Women in the RPCUS, Rev. Otis writes, "did not view this prohibition [on their voting] as an act of tyranny or as an attempt to control or subjugate women in the church. Some said that they viewed this prohibition as a blessing in that they felt relieved of the burden of responsibility that more properly belongs to their husbands ... If your church is grounded in the Word of God, your women will desire faithful male headship in all areas of life ... Regardless of what you think the response of women in your church will be, you must act Biblically. Be courageous, and the Lord will honor you."

Or, to put it in the form of a question, would a woman rather belong to a godly church where she cannot vote, or a less-than-godly church where she can?

Conclusion

But America is a big country, and RPCUS churches are still few and far between.

"What to say to people who live in a part of the country where there isn't any

RPCUS church?" Rev. Black said. "Seek the strongest Bible-preaching church in your area, then supplement your teaching with good books and good sermons from www.sermonaudio.com. Of course, I would highly recommend Dr. Joe Morecraft's sermons on the Westminster Confession of Faith.

"If there are several families somewhere that together desire to see an RPCUS church in their area, they should contact the stated clerk—which is me, Pastor Jeff Black—at www.theiblealone.com."

Morecraft's sermons are most easily accessed via the Internet by visiting the Chalcedon Presbyterian Church website, www.chalcedon.org, where a quick link to sermonaudio.com is provided.

"We do not believe that we are the only legitimate Presbyterian denomination," Rev. Otis writes, "but we do believe that God has raised us up to be guardians of a special treasure—the Westminster Standards ... We do say to all our Reformed brothers, 'Come, join us, and stand with us as together we champion the cause of King Jesus.'"

"In this hour of pluralistic compromise, fear, and secularist hatred of Biblical faith," Rev. Strevel said, "I believe the RPCUS shines a bright light to its families, teaching them that compromise and synthesis are not necessary to preserve the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Be faithful to God's Word, and He will take care of the rest." ■

Lee Duigon is a Christian free-lance writer and contributing editor for *Faith for All of Life*. He has been a newspaper editor and reporter and a published novelist.

1. See http://www.rpcus.com/?id=RPCUS_Distinctives.
2. Visit the church's website, www.theiblealone.com, and click on "The Edinburgh Inn."

Chalcedon Foundation Catalog Insert

Biblical Law

The Institute of Biblical Law (In three volumes, by R.J. Rushdoony) Volume I

Biblical Law is a plan for dominion under God, whereas its rejection is to claim dominion on man's terms. The general principles (commandments) of the law are discussed as well as their specific applications (case law) in Scripture. Many consider this to be the author's most important work.

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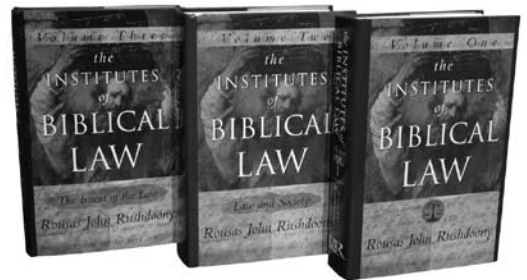
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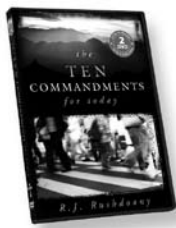
Volume III, The Intent of the Law

"God's law is much more than a legal code; it is a covenantal law. It establishes a personal relationship between God and man." The first section summarizes the case laws. The author tenderly illustrates how the law is for our good, and makes clear the difference between the sacrificial laws and those that apply today. The second section vividly shows the practical implications of the law. The examples catch the reader's attention; the author clearly has had much experience discussing God's law. The third section shows that would-be challengers to God's law produce only poison and death. Only God's law can claim to express God's "covenant grace in helping us."

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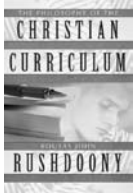
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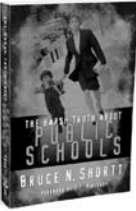
Education



The Philosophy of the Christian Curriculum

By R.J. Rushdoony. The Christian School represents a break with humanistic education, but, too often, in leaving the state school, the Christian educator has carried the state's humanism with him. A curriculum is not neutral: it is either a course in humanism or training in a God-centered faith and life. The liberal arts curriculum means literally that course which trains students in the arts of freedom. This raises the key question: is freedom in and of man or Christ? The Christian art of freedom, that is, the Christian liberal arts curriculum, is emphatically not the same as the humanistic one. It is urgently necessary for Christian educators to rethink the meaning and nature of the curriculum.

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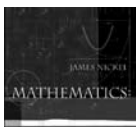
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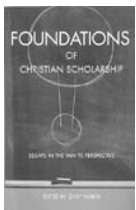
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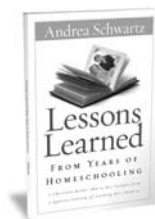


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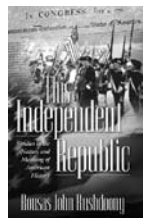


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The Nature of the American System

By R.J. Rushdoony. Originally published in 1965, these essays were a continuation of the author's previous work, *This Independent Republic*, and examine the interpretations and concepts which have attempted to remake and rewrite America's past and present. "The writing of history then, because man is neither autonomous, objective nor ultimately creative, is always in terms of a framework, a philosophical and ultimately religious framework in the mind of the historian... To the orthodox Christian, the shabby incarnations of the reigning historiographies are both absurd and offensive. They are idols, and he is forbidden to bow down to them and must indeed wage war against them."

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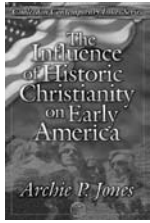
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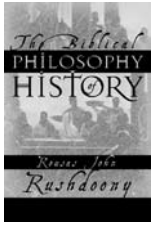
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| Tape 5 | 5. The Early Church | Tape 10 | 13. France: Louis XIV through Napoleon |
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By R.J. Rushdoony. For the orthodox Christian who grounds his philosophy of history on the doctrine of creation, the mainspring of history is God. Time rests on the foundation of eternity, on the eternal decree of God. Time and history therefore have meaning because they were created in terms of God's perfect and totally comprehensive plan. The humanist faces a meaningless world in which he must strive to create and establish meaning. The Christian accepts a world which is totally meaningful and in which every event moves in terms of God's purpose; he submits to God's meaning and finds his life therein. This is an excellent introduction to Rushdoony. Once the reader sees Rushdoony's emphasis on God's sovereignty over all of time and creation, he will understand his application of this presupposition in various spheres of life and thought.

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James I: The Fool as King

By Otto Scott. In this study, Otto Scott writes about one of the "holy" fools of humanism who worked against the faith from within. This is a major historical work and marvelous reading.

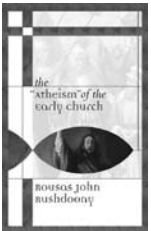
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A cassette tape series by R.J. Rushdoony, previously released as *English History* examines the impact of John Wycliffe, Richard III, Oliver Cromwell, and John Milton on English history.

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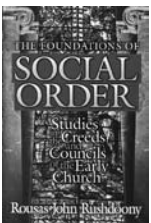
Church History



The "Atheism" of the Early Church

By Rousas John Rushdoony. Early Christians were called "heretics" and "atheists" when they denied the gods of Rome, in particular the divinity of the emperor and the statism he embodied in his personality cult. These Christians knew that Jesus Christ, not the state, was their Lord and that this faith required a different kind of relationship to the state than the state demanded. Because Jesus Christ was their acknowledged Sovereign, they consciously denied such esteem to all other claimants. Today the church must take a similar stand before the modern state.

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The Foundations of Social Order: Studies in the Creeds and Councils of the Early Church

By R.J. Rushdoony. Every social order rests on a creed, on a concept of life and law, and represents a religion in action. The basic faith of a society means growth in terms of that faith. Now the creeds and councils of the early church, in hammering out definitions of doctrines, were also laying down the foundations of Christendom with them. The life of a society is its creed; a dying creed faces desertion or subversion readily. Because of its indifference to its creedal basis in Biblical Christianity, western civilization is today facing death and is in a life and death struggle with humanism.

Paperback, 197 pages, index, \$16.00

Philosophy



The Death of Meaning

By Rousas John Rushdoony. For centuries on end, humanistic philosophers have produced endless books and treatises which attempt to explain reality without God or the mediatory work of His Son, Jesus Christ. Modern philosophy has sought to explain man and his thought process without acknowledging God, His Revelation, or man's sin. God holds all such efforts in derision and subjects their authors and adherents to futility. Philosophers who rebel against God are compelled to *abandon meaning itself*, for they possess neither the tools nor the place to anchor it. The works of darkness championed by philosophers past and present need to be exposed and repoved.

In this volume, Dr. Rushdoony clearly enunciates each major philosopher's position and its implications, identifies the intellectual and moral consequences of each school of thought, and traces the dead-end to which each naturally leads. There is only one foundation. Without Christ, meaning and morality are anchored to shifting sand, and a counsel of despair prevails. This penetrating yet brief volume provides clear guidance, even for laymen unfamiliar with philosophy.

Paperback, 180 pages, index, \$18.00



The Word of Flux: Modern Man and the Problem of Knowledge

By R.J. Rushdoony. Modern man has a problem with knowledge. He cannot accept God's Word about the world or anything else, so anything which points to God must be called into question. Man, once he makes himself ultimate, is unable to know anything but himself. Because of this impasse, modern thinking has become progressively pragmatic. This book will lead the reader to understand that this problem of knowledge underlies the isolation and self-torment of modern man. Can you know anything if you reject God and His revelation? This book takes the reader into the heart of modern man's intellectual dilemma.

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To Be As God: A Study of Modern Thought Since the Marquis De Sade

By R.J. Rushdoony. This monumental work is a series of essays on the influential thinkers and ideas in modern times. The author begins with De Sade, who self-consciously broke with any Christian basis for morality and law. Enlightenment thinking began with nature as the only reality, and Christianity was reduced to one option among many. It was then, in turn, attacked as anti-democratic and anti-freedom for its dogmatic assertion of the supernatural. Literary figures such as Shelly, Byron, Whitman, and more are also examined, for the Enlightenment presented both the intellectual and the artist as replacement for the theologian and his church. Ideas, such as "the spirit of the age," truth, reason, Romanticism, persona, and Gnosticism are related to the desire to negate God and Christian ethics. Reading this book will help you understand the need to avoid the syncretistic blending of humanistic philosophy with the Christian faith.

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By What Standard?

By R.J. Rushdoony. An introduction into the problems of Christian philosophy. It focuses on the philosophical system of Dr. Cornelius Van Til, which in turn is founded upon the presuppositions of an infallible revelation in the Bible and the necessity of Christian theology for all philosophy. This is Rushdoony's foundational work on philosophy.

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The One and the Many

By R.J. Rushdoony. Subtitled *Studies in the Philosophy of Order and Ultimacy*, this work discusses the problem of understanding unity vs. particularity, oneness vs. individuality. "Whether recognized or not, every argument and every theological, philosophical, political, or any other exposition is based on a presupposition about man, God, and society—about reality. This presupposition rules and determines the conclusion; the effect is the result of a cause. And one such basic presupposition is with reference to the one and the many." The author finds the answer in the Biblical doctrine of the Trinity.

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The Flight from Humanity

By R.J. Rushdoony. Subtitled *A Study of the Effect of Neoplatonism on Christianity*.

Neoplatonism is a Greek philosophical assumption about the world. It views that which is form or spirit (such as mind) as good and that which is physical (flesh) as evil. But Scripture says all of man fell into sin, not just his flesh. The first sin was the desire to be as god, determining good and evil apart from God (Gen. 3:5). Neoplatonism presents man's dilemma as a metaphysical one, whereas Scripture presents it as a moral problem. Basing Christianity on this false Neoplatonic idea will always shift the faith from the Biblical perspective. The ascetic quest sought to take refuge from sins of the flesh but failed to address the reality of sins of the heart and mind. In the name of humility, the ascetics manifested arrogance and pride. This pagan idea of spirituality entered the church and is the basis of some chronic problems in Western civilization.

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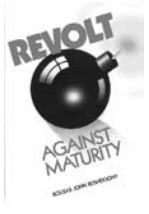
Psychology



Politics of Guilt and Pity

By R.J. Rushdoony. From the foreword by Steve Schlissel: "Rushdoony sounds the clarion call of liberty for all who remain oppressed by Christian leaders who wrongfully lord it over the souls of God's righteous ones... I pray that the entire book will not only instruct you in the method and content of a Biblical worldview, but actually bring you further into the glorious freedom of the children of God. Those who walk in wisdom's ways become immune to the politics of guilt and pity."

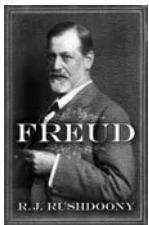
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Revolt Against Maturity

By R.J. Rushdoony. This is a study of the Biblical doctrine of psychology. The Biblical view sees psychology as a branch of theology dealing with man as a fallen creature marked by a revolt against maturity. Man was created a mature being with a responsibility to dominion. Therefore, He cannot be understood from the Freudian standpoint of the child, nor the Darwinian standpoint of a long biological history. Man's history is a short one filled with responsibility to God. Man's psychological problems are therefore a resistance to responsibility, i.e. a revolt against maturity.

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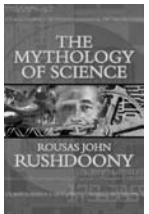


Freud

By R.J. Rushdoony. For years this compact examination of Freud has been out of print. And although both Freud and Rushdoony have passed on, their ideas are still very much in collision. Freud declared war upon guilt and sought to eradicate the primary source to Western guilt — Christianity. Rushdoony shows conclusively the error of Freud's thought and the disastrous consequences of his influence in society.

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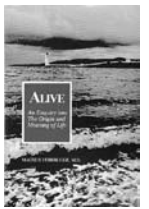
Science



The Mythology of Science

By R.J. Rushdoony. This book points out the fraud of the empirical claims of much modern science since Charles Darwin. This book is about the religious nature of evolutionary thought, how these religious presuppositions underlie our modern intellectual paradigm, and how they are deferred to as sacrosanct by institutions and disciplines far removed from the empirical sciences. The "mythology" of modern science is its religious devotion to the myth of evolution. Evolution "so expresses or coincides with the contemporary spirit that its often radical contradictions and absurdities are never apparent, in that they express the basic presuppositions, however untenable, of everyday life and thought." In evolution, man is the highest expression of intelligence and reason, and such thinking will not yield itself to submission to a God it views as a human cultural creation, useful, if at all, only in a cultural context. The basis of science and all other thought will ultimately be found in a higher ethical and philosophical context; whether or not this is seen as religious does not change the nature of that context. "Part of the mythology of modern evolutionary science is its failure to admit that it is a faith-based paradigm."

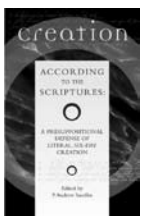
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Alive: An Enquiry into the Origin and Meaning of Life

By Dr. Magnus Verbrugge, M.D. This study is of major importance as a critique of scientific theory, evolution, and contemporary nihilism in scientific thought. Dr. Verbrugge, son-in-law of the late Dr. H. Dooyeweerd and head of the Dooyeweerd Foundation, applies the insights of Dooyeweerd's thinking to the realm of science. Animism and humanism in scientific theory are brilliantly discussed.

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Creation According to the Scriptures

Edited by P. Andrew Sandlin. Subtitled: *A Presuppositional Defense of Literal Six-Day Creation*, this symposium by thirteen authors is a direct frontal assault on all waffling views of Biblical creation. It explodes the "Framework Hypothesis," so dear to the hearts of many respectability-hungry Calvinists, and it throws down the gauntlet to all who believe they can maintain a consistent view of Biblical infallibility while abandoning literal, six-day creation. It is a must reading for all who are observing closely the gradual defection of many allegedly conservative churches and denominations, or who simply want a greater grasp of an orthodox, God-honoring view of the Bible.

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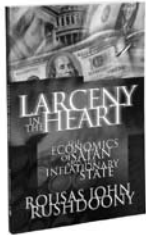
Economics



Making Sense of Your Dollars: A Biblical Approach to Wealth

By Ian Hodge. The author puts the creation and use of wealth in their Biblical context. Debt has put the economies of nations and individuals in dangerous straits. This book discusses why a business is the best investment, as well as the issues of debt avoidance and insurance. Wealth is a tool for dominion men to use as faithful stewards.

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Larceny in the Heart: The Economics of Satan and the Inflationary State

By R.J. Rushdoony. In this study, first published under the title *Roots of Inflation*, the reader sees why envy often causes the most successful and advanced members of society to be deemed criminals. The reader is shown how envious man finds any superiority in others intolerable and how this leads to a desire for a leveling. The author uncovers the larceny in the heart of man and its results. See how class warfare and a social order based on conflict lead to disaster. This book is essential reading for an understanding of the moral crisis of modern economics and the only certain long-term cure.

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By R.J. Rushdoony. In a simple, straightforward style, the Christian case for capitalism is presented. Capital, in the form of individual and family property, is protected in Scripture and is necessary for liberty.

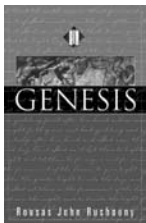
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A Christian View of Vocation: The Glory of the Mundane

By Terry Applegate. To many Christians, business is a "dirty" occupation fit only for greedy, manipulative unbelievers. The author, a successful Christian businessman, explodes this myth in this hard-hitting title.

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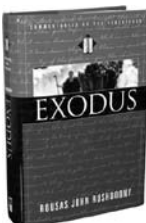
Biblical Studies



Genesis, Volume I of Commentaries on the Pentateuch

By Rousas John Rushdoony. *Genesis* begins the Bible, and is foundational to it. In recent years, it has become commonplace for both humanists and churchmen to sneer at anyone who takes Genesis 1-11 as historical. Yet to believe in the myth of evolution is to accept trillions of miracles to account for our cosmos. Spontaneous generation, the development of something out of nothing, and the blind belief in the miraculous powers of chance, require tremendous faith. Darwinism is irrationality and insanity compounded. Theology without literal six-day creationism becomes alien to the God of Scripture because it turns from the God Who acts and Whose Word is the creative word and the word of power, to a belief in process as god. The god of the non-creationists is the creation of man and a figment of their imagination. They must play games with the Bible to vindicate their position. Evolution is both naive and irrational. Its adherents violate the scientific canons they profess by their fanatical and intolerant belief. The entire book of Genesis is basic to Biblical theology. The church needs to re-study it to recognize its centrality.

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Exodus, Volume II of Commentaries on the Pentateuch

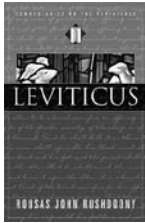
Essentially, all of mankind is on some sort of an exodus. However, the path of fallen man is vastly different from that of the righteous. Apart from Jesus Christ and His atoning work, the exodus of a fallen humanity means only a further descent from sin into death. But in Christ, the exodus is now a glorious ascent into the justice and dominion of the everlasting Kingdom of God. Therefore, if we are to better understand the gracious provisions made for us in the "promised land" of the New Covenant, a thorough examination into the historic path of Israel as described in the book of Exodus is essential. It is to this end that this volume was written.

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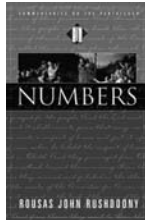


Leviticus, Volume III of Commentaries on the Pentateuch

Much like the book of Proverbs, any emphasis upon the practical applications of God's law is readily shunned in pursuit of more "spiritual" studies. Books like Leviticus are considered dull, overbearing, and irrelevant. But man was created in God's image and is duty-bound to develop the implications of that image by obedience to God's law. The book of Leviticus contains over ninety references to the word holy. The purpose, therefore, of this third book of the Pentateuch is to demonstrate the legal foundation of holiness in the totality of our lives. This present study is dedicated to equipping His church for that redemptive mission.

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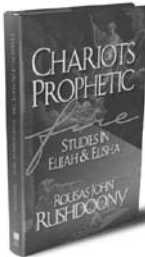


Numbers, Volume IV of Commentaries on the Pentateuch

The Lord desires a people who will embrace their responsibilities. The history of Israel in the wilderness is a sad narrative of a people with hearts hardened by complaint and rebellion to God's ordained authorities. They were slaves, not an army. They would recognize the tyranny of Pharaoh but disregard the servant-leadership of Moses. God would judge the generation He led out of captivity, while training a new generation to conquer Canaan. The book of Numbers reveals God's dealings with both generations. The rebellious in Israel are judged incessantly while a census is taken to number the armies of Israel according to their tribes. This was an assessment of strength and a means to encourage the younger generation to view themselves as God's army and not Pharaoh's slaves.

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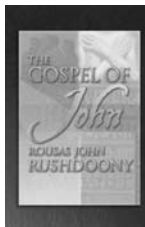
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The Gospel of John

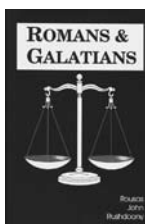
By R.J. Rushdoony. In this commentary the author maps out the glorious gospel of John, starting from the obvious parallel to Genesis 1 ("In the beginning was the Word") and through to the glorious conclusion of Christ's death and resurrection. Nothing more clearly reveals the gospel than Christ's atoning death and His resurrection. They tell us that Jesus Christ has destroyed the power of sin and death. John therefore deliberately limits the number of miracles he reports in order to point to and concentrate on our Lord's death and resurrection. The Jesus of history is He who made atonement for us, died, and was resurrected. His life cannot be understood apart from this, nor can we know His history in any other light. This is why John's "testimony is true," and, while books filling the earth could not contain all that could be said, the testimony given by John is "faithful."

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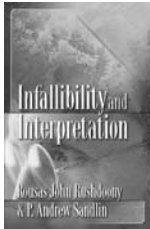
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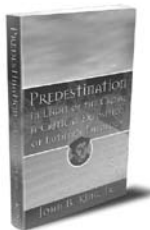
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By Rousas John Rushdoony & P. Andrew Sandlin. The authors argue for infallibility from a distinctly presuppositional perspective. That is, their arguments are unapologetically circular because they believe all ultimate claims are based on one's beginning assumptions. The question of Biblical infallibility rests ultimately in one's belief about the character of God. They believe man is a creature of faith, not, following the Enlightenment's humanism, of reason. They affirm Biblical infallibility because the God Whom the Bible reveals could speak in no other way than infallibly, and because the Bible in which God is revealed asserts that God alone speaks infallibly. Men deny infallibility to God not for intellectual reasons, but for ethical reasons—they are sinners in rebellion against God and His authority in favor of their own. The authors wrote convinced that only by a recovery of faith in an infallible Bible and obedience to its every command can Christians hope to turn back evil both in today's church and culture.

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By John B. King, Jr. This book is a thorough presentation of the Biblical doctrine of absolute predestination from both the dogmatic and systematic perspectives. The author defends predestination from the perspective of Martin Luther, showing he was as vigorously predestinarian as John Calvin. At the same time, the author provides a compellingly systematic theological understanding of predestination. This book will give the reader a fuller understanding of the sovereignty of God.

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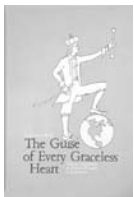
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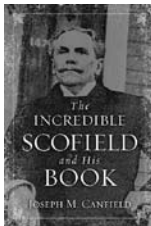
Edited by Andrew Sandlin. The Bible and the Christian Faith have been under attack in one way or another throughout much of the history of the church, but only in recent times have these attacks been perceived *within* the church as a healthy alternative to orthodoxy. This book is a trumpet blast heralding a full-orbed, Biblical, orthodox Christianity. The hope of the modern world is not a passive compromise with passing heterodox fads, but aggressive devotion to the time-honored Faith "once delivered to the saints."

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By R.J. Rushdoony. "The doctrine of the infallibility of Scripture can be denied, but the concept of infallibility as such cannot be logically denied. Infallibility is an inescapable concept. If men refuse to ascribe infallibility to Scripture, it is because the concept has been transferred to something else. The word infallibility is not normally used in these transfers; the concept is disguised and veiled, but in a variety of ways, infallibility is ascribed to concepts, things, men and institutions."

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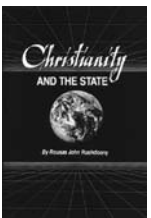
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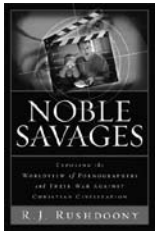
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By William O. Einwechter. This monograph takes on the doctrinal defection of today's church by providing Christians with an introductory treatment of six vital areas of Christian doctrine: God's sovereignty, Christ's Lordship, God's law, the authority of Scripture, the dominion mandate, and the victory of Christ and His church in history. This easy-to-read booklet is a welcome antidote to the humanistic theology of the 21st century church.

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Toward a Christian Marriage

Edited by Elizabeth Fellserson. The law of God makes clear how important and how central marriage is. God the Son came into the world neither through church nor state but through a family. This tells us that marriage, although nonexistent in heaven, is, all the same, central to this world. We are to live here under God as physical creatures whose lives are given their great training-ground in terms of the Kingdom of God by marriage. Our Lord stresses the fact that marriage is our normal calling. This book consists of essays on the importance of a proper Christian perspective on marriage.

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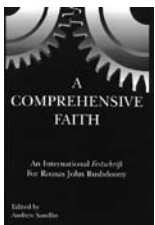
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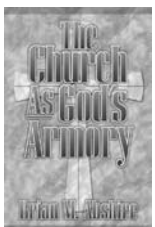
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A Comprehensive Faith

Edited by Andrew Sandlin. This is the surprise *Festschrift* presented to R.J. Rushdoony at his 80th birthday celebration in April, 1996. These essays are in gratitude to Rush's influence and elucidate the importance of his theological and philosophical contributions in numerous fields. Contributors include Theodore Letis, Brian Abshire, Steve Schlissel, Joe Morecraft III, Jean-Marc Berthoud, Byron Snapp, Samuel Blumenfeld, Christine and Thomas Schirrmacher, Herbert W. Titus, Owen Fourie, Ellsworth McIntyre, Howard Phillips, Joseph McAuliffe, Andrea Schwartz, David Estrada-Herrero, Stephen Perks, Ian Hodge, and Colonel V. Doner. Also included is a forward by John Frame and a brief biographical sketch of R. J. Rushdoony's life by Mark Rushdoony. This book was produced as a "top-secret" project by Friends of Chalcedon and donated to Ross House Books. It is sure to be a collector's item one day.

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The Church as God's Army

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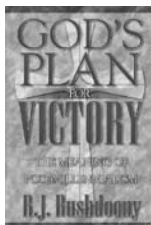


Thine is the Kingdom: A Study of the Postmillennial Hope

Edited by Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr. Israel's misunderstanding of eschatology eventually destroyed her by leading her to reject the Messiah and the coming of the Kingdom of Heaven. Likewise, false eschatological speculation is destroying the church today, by leading her to neglect her Christian calling and to set forth false expectations. In this volume, edited by Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., the reader is presented with a blend of Biblical exegesis of key Scripture passages, theological reflection on important doctrinal issues, and practical application for faithful Christian living. *Thine is the Kingdom* lays the scriptural foundation for a Biblically-based, hope-filled postmillennial eschatology, while showing what it means to be postmillennial in the real world. The book is both an introduction to and defense of the eschatology of victory. Chapters include contemporary writers Keith A. Mathison, William O. Einwechter, Jeffrey Ventrella, and Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., as well as chapters by giants of the faith Benjamin B. Warfield and J.A.

Alexander.

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God's Plan for Victory

By R.J. Rushdoony. An entire generation of victory-minded Christians, spurred by the victorious postmillennial vision of Chalcedon, has emerged to press what the Puritan Fathers called "the Crown Rights of Christ the King" in all areas of modern life. Central to that optimistic generation is Rousas John Rushdoony's jewel of a study, *God's Plan for Victory* (originally published in 1977). The founder of the Christian Reconstruction movement set forth in potent, cogent terms the older Puritan vision of the irrepressible advancement of Christ's kingdom by His faithful saints employing the entire law-Word of God as the program for earthly victory.

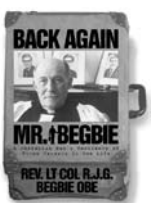
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