

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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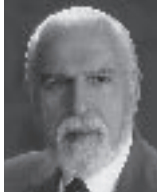
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The Myth of Politics

R. J. Rushdoony



Men usually find it easier to live in terms of myths than truth and reality, because the myth answers the dreams and hopes of man's being, whereas truth and reality command and compel rather than gratify man. In the myth, it is the power and the will of man which realizes itself. Basic to the philosophy of magic, from its more crude forms to its modern expression in Freemasonry, is the famous sentence, "As my will is, so must (or, mote, might) it be." In reality, man is a creature, both sinful and limited, and the conditions of his life are given; there are boundaries to his ability to change reality. Not so in myth. Gerardus van der Leeuw (1890–1950) states it clearly:

Either by mythical-magical methods therefore, or theoretically, man transforms the world into his world, and himself into its sovereign: this is the profound religious basis of all culture. But faith is essentially hostile to every form of domination of the world without exception, since it regards this as rivalry with God, as pseudo-creation whether magical, mythical or rational, and opposes itself also to culture, even to that which is recognized as essentially religious, seeking its own way to the world. It questions, in principle, all human control: even its own pronouncements, so far as these necessarily participate in culture, are immediately disqualified again by faith.¹

We would say, more plainly, that myth and Biblical faith are at radical odds with one another. The mythical-magical approach is to transform indeed the world into man's world, and man

into the sovereign of that world. Biblical faith regards this attempt as in essence original sin, as man's effort to be his own god, knowing, or determining for himself, what constitutes good and evil (Gen. 3:5). Biblical faith begins with the acknowledgment of God as sovereign and continues with a life based on God's ultimacy, priority, and law as the condition of existence and its prosperity.

The mythical-magical approach has sought many avenues of expression. Ancient myths, magical practice, secret and illuminist orders, and other such efforts have marked the history of this perspective. The mythical-magical method has often captured the instruments of Christianity, including the church, and God is then converted into a great and cosmic resource to be commanded by sovereign man. We then have, not only the extremes of Pelagianism and Arianism, the power of positive thinking and possibility thinking, but prayer and works as means of compelling or commanding God. Historically, the mythical-magical method has permeated very diverse peoples, institutions, and religions. This should not surprise us: it is so expressive of original sin that it arises readily in every context.

The great and classical expression of the mythical-magical method is politics. In the political order, two major motives of man merge into one. First, there is the religious motive. Historically, the sacred community has been an important aspect of religion, and, very commonly, the state has been seen as the sacred and redeeming order. Man's hope of salvation is held to lie in and through the activities of the state. During history, far more commonly than

the church, shrine, or temple, the state has been seen as the instrument and vehicle of man's salvation. Very often, the community, the state, the office, or the ruler have been declared divine. The old classical theory held that the voice of the people is the voice of God, *vox populi vox Dei*. Modern forms of this thesis include Rousseau's doctrine of the general will, belief in the democratic consensus, and the doctrine of the dictatorship of the proletariat. The transition from the world of classical antiquity to the Middle Ages was a shift, but always a challenged one, from the state to the church as the redeeming agency and as the continuing incarnation of divinity in action. The modern world has witnessed the abandonment of the church for the state. In either case, of course, we must challenge and deny the concept of a redeeming institution, order, or society on Biblical grounds.

Second, the state has not only served as man's religious institution, but it has also been the vessel for his mythical-magical faith and method. The clearest expression of this mythical-magical aspect is, first of all, the increasing reliance on statist fiat. The word *fiat*, and the idea, are of critical importance. We meet with God's fiat in Genesis 1:3: "And God said, Let there be light: and there was light." The fiats of Genesis 1 are the creation of a universe out of nothing by the sovereign word of God. God's fiats are possible, because God is omnipotent and sovereign, and nothing is impossible for God (Matt. 19:26). All things are totally and absolutely under His control and government, so that God's fiats create out of nothing.

The fiats of the state are imita-

tive of God. They seek to create out of nothing, and they are manifestations of sovereignty, or the claim of sovereignty. Because God's fiat requires an absolute power and control, the state aims at a like absolute power and control, so that, wherever the myth of politics prevails, totalitarianism is a logical necessity. The forms of the total state may vary, but they will in every instance be similar in their inherent philosophy and theology.

Also basic to the divine fiat is an absence of laborious effort. The creation of Genesis 1 is in each case an instantaneous act, not a process.

Each day of creation week manifests fiat power, not laborious work. The mythical-magical method thus sees the solutions to man's problems as power, not work. If sufficient power is concentrated into statist agencies, then all human problems will be solved, or, at least, solvable. Some politicians, and at least one president, have fostered a vision of the end of all poverty, disease, ignorance, and even death, given enough statist power and control. This is mythological thinking in the extreme. It rests on the assumption that power, on the human scene, can be a substitute for, or can create, capital. However, unlike God's power, human power is neither self-generative nor creative. In particular, political power does not produce capital but rather requires its consumption. As a result, as political power and political fiat increase, capital decreases. The more nearly totalitarian a state, the lower its capital and its working capacity. However, as long as men believe in the myth of politics rather than the God of Scripture, they will call for more power to the state, and will increase the state's destructive impact on capital and labor. This belief in power, not work, is basic to the mythical-magical method. It is an aspect of the belief that, "As my will is, so must it be." Third, in the

mythical-magical perspective, man's basic capital is seen as status, not productivity, because status means power. The mythical-magical method has a radically different belief in the necessary ingredients for progress, and its perspective is sharply at odds with the Biblical view. In Biblical faith, character and work are basic to capitalization. In the mythical-magical perspective, moral character and work are divisive and oppressive, and, as a climaxing evil, anti-equalitarian.

To illustrate: A rookie professional basketball player, a substitute spending most of his time on the bench, is paid \$104,000 a year. A professional entertainer pointed out to me recently earns, at a minimum, several times that. Well and good. Both men are meeting a public demand, and those who enjoy their services are paying for them. Basketball players and entertainers are popular and respected people in our culture.

This is not true of others. Small farmers by the thousands work hard, hopeful of earning \$15–30,000 a year, and not always succeeding. They are commonly damned, in our area, as exploiters of farm workers, despite the fact that California farm workers are the best paid in the world. Their relationship to workers has become politicized, and, as a result, they are now villains in this political drama. A capable businessman, if he earns \$25–75,000 yearly, or if an executive earns as much as the basketball player, is again seen as an exploiter by many, and his role in the new mythology is as that of a villain.

The reason for this inconsistency toward farmer and businessman as against athlete and entertainer is that the mythical-magical method and faith are hostile to production and idolize status. The world of politics is the realm of status, power, and fiat, whereas work and productivity belong to another realm. The very persistent success of work and

productivity as against political impediments stimulates hostility against these "exploiters." They represent an alien faith and an alien culture, and they are, in their persons and activities, an indictment of the myth of politics.

Fourth, in our era, the idea of myth has gained highly sophisticated if erroneous attention. The myth is seen as life-giving, as basic to primeval and primitive aspects of man. Freudian and other views of the unconscious stress the role of the myth in the mind and unconscious being of man. Because the myth is traced back into the far recesses of the unconscious, it is held to be basic and real as well as life-giving. Such a view rests on an evolutionary premise that power comes from below, from the primordial and the ostensibly powerful; it is held to be life-giving because life and power supposedly come from below. Logically, such a view leads, as it has done, to a revival of occultism. It also leads to the irrationalism of the myth of politics. The myth, however, instead of being life-giving, is always death-dealing. Myths are the destroyers, not the preservers, of man.

Fifth, philosophically, the ancient magical principle, "As my will is, so it must be," has come into its own in modern philosophy, beginning with Descartes, and especially since Kant and Hegel. The world is now will and idea. Van der Leeuw defined the mythical-magical method as one whereby "man transforms the world into his world, and himself into its sovereign." Modern philosophy has done even more than transform the world into man's world: it has reduced the world to man's will and idea, as in Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. Hegel held that the rational is the real, and this is a basic premise of the myth of politics. The autonomous rational plans of man, whether of Marxists, Fa-

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A Supernatural View of History

Mark R. Rushdoony



History is a frustrating subject for many people. For many, it is only of interest to the extent it bears on one's personal heritage.

It is often seen as boring because it has no perceived meaning or relevance. I remember one student in a college class on ancient history saying angrily, "This is just a history of war." He was largely correct because, when we view history, we often have to focus on the conflicts and who won. The victors, then, invariably write the history books to justify their actions.

Missing the Big Picture

We have even more difficulty assessing the meaning of contemporary history because we perceive a self-interest in the struggle and its outcome. Even when we try to step back and look at events dispassionately, it is easy to get lost in the details, and we often focus on those that seem prominent at the time. When we look back at the political and cultural issues of even a few years ago, we realize that it is not hard to miss the forest for the trees when we look for the important trends of our own day.

This has always been the case. Josephus, the most important historian of first-century Palestine, took little notice of Christ or Christianity. He was Jewish and had no interest in Christianity, and he wrote for a Roman audience so he wrote ably of politics and military campaigns, the things that mattered to first-century Romans. This narrow perspective meant that he failed to appreciate the most important development of his day. The atoning work of the incarnate

Christ and the beginning of His church represented the most significant event of human history. Satan was defeated, redemption was accomplished, and the earth-centered humanistic dream of a culture without God that Scripture calls Babylon, and of which Rome was then a part, was doomed to failure. The Kingdom of the Messiah would come to prominence, though the Roman Empire would collapse. This is exactly what the prophets had said would happen. In terms of the prophecies of Daniel, for instance, Rome had largely accomplished its role, and the focus of history was now on the Kingdom of Jesus Christ. Josephus missed all of that because he focused on the apparent power players of his day.

Hebrews 12:26–28 refers to the work of God in history after Jesus as a shaking of heaven and earth, the purpose of which was, "the removing of those things that are shaken" so "that those things which cannot be shaken may remain."

This passage, obviously a synopsis of historical events after Jesus Christ, follows what has been called the "honor roll of faith" in Hebrews 11, which lists historical figures who acted in terms of their faith in God. It mentions individuals from Abel through the prophets who obeyed God and were blessed and used by Him. They were individuals who stood faithful in faithless times and ordered their priorities in terms of what they confessed.

Then, in chapter 12 verse 1, the lesson is stated for us: we have their example behind us and we have the course that Christ has laid down before us:

therefore, we should "run with patience the race that is set before us." In other words, the faith, the assumption, these saints had that God's promises were sure, together with the historical knowledge of Christ's finished work and His commission to the church, should give us the fortitude of faith that enables us to live in terms of the certainty that our work in terms of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ is not in vain.

Too many Christians today view the world as did Josephus, in terms of the Rome of our day. They are focused on the leaders of our modern Babels who themselves believe they are controlling history. To do this is, however, to miss the ongoing work of God in history and their responsibilities in terms thereof. If we do not have faith in the God of history, we will, like Josephus, focus only on the men of history. It is for us, rather, to speak as did the apostles who knew the power of God and the shaking it surely represented throughout history.

Transcendent or Immanent Meaning?

How are we to view history, not just that long past, but our own history, in fact, all of time? We must begin by seeing that time itself is a creation of God. Scripture gives its beginning at the Creation and its end at the final judgment. Man is constrained because he is a finite creature with a finite lifetime in this finite world in this finite provision of God we call time. Contrast that with the comment by Dostoyevsky, who once noted that if there is no God, then all things are possible. That is the hope of man in rebellion against God, the dream

of Babel, a world where anything is possible for man.

The nonbeliever has a problem with history, namely, where does meaning come from? History is full of billions of occurrences. The course of history has often hinged on one particular, seemingly minor, event. Without a providential view of history, it is easy to say history is chance, a parade of random events. That is in fact the conclusion of postmodernism: there is no meaning, no big picture.

If there is no *transcendent* meaning governing history, the only one, if one is possible, must be *immanent*, present in the cosmos and time-bound. This can lead me onto two different paths. If history is entirely immanent, it can be either ignored as meaningless or seen as the sole source of meaning. Take your pick: no meaning in history or all meaning within time and history.

Every denial involves a corresponding affirmation of some kind. The denial of transcendent meaning is often for the purpose of ascribing an immanent source of meaning. Since the Enlightenment, and particularly after Darwin, modern man thinks in terms of a naturalistic faith to explain the big picture of life, history, and social order. Naturalism explains all things and occurrences in terms of the characteristics inherent in matter. No naturalistic ideology can countenance a supernatural because naturalism is an affirmation of a particular faith. The denial of the supernatural necessitates the affirmation of the natural. To the extent naturalism claims to give any recognition to the supernatural, it usually reduces it to an aspect of the psychology of man, which, in reality, makes it naturalistic.

The Bible does not give a naturalistic view of history. It presents all human existence in a moral perspective, stemming from a transcendent order the source of which is a sovereign God of

all His creation. It presents our history as the outworking of both man's sin nature and that sovereign God's gracious redemption. History is the outworking of man's position relative to either Genesis 3:5 or Genesis 3:15. Genesis 3:5 was Satan's bogus offer to man that he could be "as gods, knowing good and evil"; Genesis 3:15 was God's promise that He would send a seed of the woman to crush Satan. All men are in relation to God either in terms of Adam (sinfulness, the curse, and judgment) or in terms of Jesus Christ (redemption, justification, regeneration, and sanctification), in terms of covenant faithfulness or covenant rebellion.

Man was created a moral being, and despite the Fall remains a moral being, so man has to accept time, matter, and history as moral issues. His understanding of these things will be in terms of his relation to God. Man's problem is his rebellion against God and the meaning that comes from His sovereign creation and providence. That is why the writers of Hebrews had to remind Christians to think of the future in terms of their faith, as did the saints of old.

Artificial Meaning

Given their denial of the God of Scripture, the position of the postmodernist is a reasonable one because without God, time and history are at best only empty pages on which man tries to impose an artificial meaning, usually for the purpose of social and political control. Many years ago history was replaced in government schools by *social studies*: history and cultures were "studied" to reeducate young men and women on how they were expected to think and act in the "social" order the educators sought to create.

Man's life is so short, however, that his artificial meaning rarely outlasts him. Man consistently fails to create a meaning greater than himself because

he is not, in fact, a god knowing, or determining, good and evil. The stories of God's providential movements in history are to remind us of the fact that He always controls history. The past is "His story," and the future is His will.

Without some transcendent purpose to time and history, all that is left for man in Adam is the moment. The past then has no lasting relevance. If anything, it becomes a hindrance, a burden to man because its events constrain him in the present. The future, then, is either meaningless chance or an artificially imposed meaning. All that is left such men is the existential moment, and postmodernism can be seen as no more than a form of existentialism.

Men in Adam do still love to play as though they were gods, so the answer of some to meaningless time and history is the creation of an artificial meaning, a substitute for the providential view of history by God. Karl Marx tried to impose an artificial historical meaning. Darwin tried to impose an artificial science and narrative of man's origins. Freud fabricated an interpretation of man's early family experience. What man is trying to do when he forces an artificial meaning into time and history is replace God's predestination.

Naturalism presents a world that lacks meaning, that needs meaning, but because it presents no transcendent meaning, it presents an open door to contrived meaning, and all naturalistic meaning will be immanent and thoroughly humanistic.

The naturalistic view of history has man as the interpreter of time and history. This presumed prerogative is applied to Scripture, which is assumed to be natural and subject to a rewrite that excludes the supernatural. The only Jesus tolerated is the historical Jesus, one that is entirely human, the product of human history. But this is not the final

humiliation of Christ. Man knows his knowledge is always changing, so he takes it as his prerogative to make Jesus and Christianity constantly evolving. Not only has Christ's relevance and Christianity evolved, it is said, they must be allowed to continue to evolve. The concept of the historical Jesus does not allow any room for fixed orthodoxy.

It is only humanism that has a problem with meaning in history. The Christian faith allows us to live with an imperfect understanding of history because we know complete and perfect understanding is in the God who governs history, not in the process itself. The Christian can know there is meaning in history without seeking it from within history. Transcendent meaning dictates submission in faith; immanent meaning necessitates that man find that meaning.

Modern man has increasingly rejected God as the source of meaning. The Enlightenment reacted against religion and revelation, and advanced science and reason in their place. The Enlightenment faith was in nature and reason. The Enlightenment's rejection of Biblical faith was concurrent with a faith that law was inherent in nature and that man could discern it by reason.

Beginning with the French Revolution, this shift from Christianity to humanism quickly sparked revolutions in terms of the new view of man and social justice. Karl Marx welcomed revolution and saw it as the power that drove historical process from one stage to the next. He even had a perverse version of the Kingdom of Heaven in his belief that communism would usher in the final stage of social evolution. For his followers, meaning was in Marx's dogma. Communism was a "moral" force. Revolution was the power from below that forced history forward to its predetermined climax, which Marx revealed

to his disciples. These operated with a religious dedication, an evangelistic zeal, an ideological devotion to the unfolding worker's paradise he promised.

To the Enlightenment's social evolution, Charles Darwin added biological evolution. It was Darwin who embedded naturalism in the modern mind. He represented a new faith in how the world operated, a greater antithesis to theism. Marx's belief in revolution was one that held that the essential power and force is from below, not above. Thus Marx welcomed the work of Charles Darwin with delight. Darwin provided a reason to believe that power was from below. Darwin thus changed man's view of the past, the future, and himself. Darwin shifted the West to a thoroughly naturalistic worldview.

The Chaos of Rebellion

Humanism is not a monolith, nor is it a single movement. All forms of humanism share a common philosophical assumption, a belief in man as the measure of all things, based on that promise of Satan in Genesis 3:5. When men rebel against God's reality, however, they do not march in lockstep. They run helter-skelter in chaotic panic; they contradict one another constantly.

Darwin thoroughly separated modern thought from Christian presuppositions, but in doing so, he destroyed the Enlightenment's basis for its brand of humanistic thought. The Enlightenment held to natural law and the supremacy of man's reason. Darwin destroyed the possibility of relying on either, because his view on man's origins described nature as chaotic and man's reason as an evolutionary late-comer; after Darwin neither nature nor reason could be the basis for anything. Darwin's foundation of biological evolution became not the basis for a great new beginning for man, but the cause of an emerging loss of belief in

any possibility of meaning. Darwin had thrown a bomb into the Enlightenment's intellectual presuppositions and paved the way for postmodernism's rejection of any meta-narrative.

Sigmund Freud then further discounted man's reason and even his consciousness, saying man was controlled by his primitive past. Freud explained guilt in terms of man's supposed subconscious memories of his evolutionary beginnings, yet his work and its acceptance also represents the moral character of modern man's rebellion against finding meaning in God. Freud dedicated his life to explaining guilt, yet he never once claimed to be able to remedy it. All he offered was a naturalistic explanation, and modern man preferred that to repentance and faith. Freud gave psychology a thoroughly humanistic perspective, which men still cling to, but he could not bring unity to rebellion. The March 27, 2006, issue of *Newsweek* published a chart illustrating twenty-three spin-off revisions of Freud. Once man is the measure, there can be as many meanings as there are men.

Karl Marx recognized the problem of meaning for modern man, so he avoided trying to find it. Instead, he chose to change things. Marxism is now increasingly seen as an artificial construct that only does harm in the context of the real world. We must pray that one area of humanism after another will soon be regarded as similarly artificial and absurd. The world does not need humanism's artificial meanings. Man needs the truth that there is a sovereign God. The answer to a world without meaning, or with an artificially imposed one, is still found in God. Of course, this is a meaning man fears because it is a moral meaning against which he is in rebellion.

The ugly reality of artificial mean-

ing imposed on time and history is that it inevitably means imposing, like Marxism, not only meaning on, but also control over, man. Just as God's predestination implies God's providence and governing, so man's predestination implies man's governing, man's control.

Modern humanism has been very hard on humanity. Back in the 1960s when humanistic clichés were regarded with reverential deference, cartoonist Charles Schulz once had one of his characters admit, "I love mankind, it's people I can't stand!" According to Gil Elliot's *Twentieth Century Book of the Dead*, in the twentieth century, a higher percentage of the world's population died at the hands of other men than in any other century in recorded history.

Flight from Reality

Naturalism seeks meaning within the confines of time and matter, but it cannot find meaning, only a flight from the reality of a world that is governed by its Creator and His law. This is the message of Scripture, and is why it begins with God as the Creator and ends with Him on the throne of heaven.

When man rejects this meaning, he has to make up his own. Man thus creates modern superstitions and mythologies by which he teaches and reinforces them. These irrationalities are then projected onto reality. The Enlightenment thinkers developed a mythological source of law and social order. Darwin created a biological mythology of origins. Freud created a mythology of psychology and anthropology. Marx created a mythology of historical process. Without God, man is lost in his attempts to create meaning or hope.

The world is full of men and women who see the events around them as did Josephus. They see what man the rebel is doing, not God, and so they miss the most important trends of history.

The world of humanism is in crisis. As many of us saw the Soviet Union collapse, we will see the further disintegration of a civilization built upon a repudiation of God and His Word. The mythologies of modern man will fail him, but this must be seen as part of the great shaking spoken of in Hebrews.

Christians all have a dual citizenship, and our Lord was very clear as to our primary allegiance. It is our part to seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness so that we will be part of "those things which cannot be shaken" and which will remain. ■

R. J. Rushdoony ... *Myth cont. from page 3*

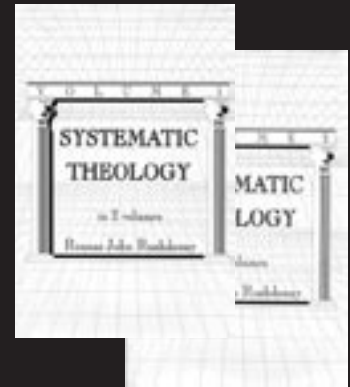
bian socialists, or democratic planners, are real and need only formulation and power to be transferred to the physical world and society. If this rational plan fails to work, according to the rationale of the myth of politics, it is because of evil men, counterrevolutionists, capitalists, foreign influences, alien peoples, speculators, or some like and ostensibly demonic obstruction.

Such mythical thinking means that, because the rational is the real, and because the planner is by definition the rational and the real man, the obstructing people are both irrational and somehow not the real people. The "real" people agree with the plan, because the plan is rational, and the rational is the real. The result, in the name of reason, is legislation against the free market, against free speech, against free men in essence, and finally the totally "rational" slave state and the triumph of myth and unreason in the name of reason.

In our present day, the myth of politics is the most dangerous of all man's myths. Of all mankind's many myths, none has been more destructive. ■

1. Gerardus van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence and Manifestation* (New York: Macmillan, 1938), 560.

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Entrepreneurial Dominionism

Christopher J. Ortiz



Wisdom, as I stated in the last issue, is God's technology.¹

It is the hidden glory that permeates creation and is waiting for man to discover. Wisdom was in the "other trees" that Adam and Eve could freely eat (Gen. 2:16), but they chose a forbidden wisdom, which instead of "making them wise" (Gen. 3:6), brought them a frustrating awareness of their nakedness. This sin consciousness moved them away from the center of the garden to hide among the trees—the trees they should have been exploring.

The center of the garden was the established beachhead for God's great dominion enterprise for man. His intent was that Adam and Eve utilize the trustee family² to work with the raw stuff of creation, glean the principles of *technology* (wisdom), and create godly civilization. Adam would not be told directly what to do; he would have to labor in thought and experimentation to extract the undiscovered laws of architecture, philosophy, mathematics, physics, and agriculture. But as God told Isaiah regarding the farmer who learns by trial and error, "This also cometh forth from the LORD of hosts, which is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working" (Isa. 28:29).

The Kingdom: God's Family Business

The dominion mandate was essentially an entrepreneurial calling. Although man's ultimate employer was God Himself, Adam was very much on his own in terms of the discovery and work process. God immediately

engaged Adam in labor; and when a companion was created for him, even she was categorized as a "help meet" (Gen. 2:18). In short, work and mission were central to man and history. God was an entrepreneur, and He intended that His highest creation would follow suit in the family business. Christ made this doubly clear when He testified that He must be about His Father's business (Luke 2:49).

An entrepreneur is one who starts and operates an enterprise. God more than fits this definition, but the entrepreneurial notion was somewhat lost in contemporary definitions of dominion. Man's great dominion calling is misconstrued when defined exclusively as political, viz. a "world takeover." In reality, that has always been the working premise of elitism: *power over others without work*. This is an ungodly dominionism. As Rushdoony notes: "Elitism is a form of abdication of responsibility in favor of control and power."³

Godly dominion is a work-oriented sense of responsibility toward God that is eschatological in nature. It has a historical goal: it's working solely in terms of the realized Kingdom of God. On the other hand, "The goal of elitism is power, control, and money, to gain social status,"⁴ i.e., to establish dominion in terms of man and his leisure. And "when the elite becomes a leisure class, we have a society of culture in its decline."⁵

But the sin does not lie only at the door of elitism. There is a great depreciation of godly dominion in the working class also. For them, work is reduced to survival, and without developed skills,

they take whatever work is available and labor becomes meaningless drudgery. In addition, many of these less fortunate souls are also devoutly religious, and typically escapist, viz. they await deliverance to heaven instead of cultivating godly rule. This is the end result of work without eschatology:

[I]n the Bible work is eschatological in meaning. It has a goal, the Kingdom of God. Work can be drudgery, a necessary means of survival, or work can be a means of dominion and subduing the earth (Gen. 1:26–28). *Work can be a means of maintaining life and no more, or work can be the means of creating the future*. Work thus can be done simply to maintain the status quo, or it can be the means of determining our tomorrows. Where work is eschatologically governed by the dominion mandate, it is constructive of things present and future ... Work only comes into its own when it is eschatological. To build a house, plant a tree, and till a garden has a future orientation. The world was not empty when we came into it, and it must not be more empty for our coming. We work to establish God's ordained future, His Kingdom. Where work is systematically eschatological, it is also blessed. Work must always have a purpose greater than ourselves.⁶ (emphasis in the original)

Godly dominion avoids the error of elitism and escapism by emphasizing the entrepreneurial nature of extending godly rule, i.e., future-oriented work for the sole benefit of the Kingdom of God. It is as we consider innovative means to advancing the Kingdom with our present resources that we are acting entrepreneurial. This is not about takeover, or dominating others. Dominion is a

comprehensive expression of God's rule in every sphere of life. We are witnessing this now as great energy and investment is pouring into Christian film, media, education, science, business, and invention. Much of the Religious Right is statist to the core, but a great troop of eclectic godly entrepreneurs is now moving into the fray.

The Power to Create

What is needed now is an *entrepreneurial dominionism* that pursues creative means to advancing the reign of Christ in every sphere of life. For too long unregenerate men have dominated in entrepreneurial creativity because their atheism permits them to go much further in the development of world resources. Diligent Christians should be dominating in creativity because part of being made in God's image is carrying on the work of creation:

And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof. (Gen. 2:19)

The power of speech and conceptual thought was given to man, not the animals. Both were formed out of the dust of the ground, but Adam was clearly given the dominant role in that his first assignment was to *name* the other creatures God created. The Bible does not provide the details as to how Adam did this naming, but we do know that *naming* is an intellectual and creative act. Although God rested on the seventh day from all His work (Gen. 2:2), man's work had just begun, and Adam's initial task was strikingly similar to God's first day:

And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon

the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness. And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day. (Gen. 1:2–5) (emphasis added)

When God first addressed the earth, it was without form and void. In other words, it was without definition and distinction. When things are dark and formless, you can't make out what you're seeing. That was the state of the world on the first day of creation. God, as Creator, provided definition by creating a division—or distinction—between the day and the night. He did this by first creating light. Notice that He didn't say, "Let there be darkness." He needed only to add the light.

Notice also that after He divided the light from the darkness, He *called*, or *named*, the light Day; and He *called*, or *named*, the darkness Night. The power to *name* is a work of creation in that you are creating distinction that did not previously exist. In Adam's case, although God had already created the beasts and birds, they too were *formless and void* because they had no distinction. They had not yet been *named*.

Adam was continuing the work of creation as God's dominion man by utilizing wisdom to bring order and distinction to the mass of beasts. This continues today as new technologies, services, and creations are established and the community of man grants them a name and a right to exist. Man is intrinsically entrepreneurial, and a great deal of his religious history was devoted to preparing him for that dominion calling.

Wilderness Thinking vs. Promised Land Living

For the children of Israel, the wilderness sojourn was an era fraught with difficulties, rebellion, and judgment. The 490 years spent in Egyptian bondage fortified a slave's mentality in a vast population that God intended for dominion. They were also susceptible to rebellion because they were accustomed to abiding in a welfare state where more was accomplished by complaint than labor. Jethro—Moses' father-in-law—was the first to recognize this when he observed "that Moses sat to judge the people: and the people stood by Moses from the morning unto the evening" (Exod. 18:13). When you see long lines, you know you're in a welfare state.⁷

God provided for the Israelites by a system of miracles. Manna fell daily from the sky, and water spewed from a rock. He guided them those forty years by means of two giant pillars: one a cloud by day and one of fire by night. All this would change when they crossed the river Jordan and entered Canaan.

And the manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the old corn of the land; neither had the children of Israel manna any more; but they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year. (Josh. 5:12)

The pillars of cloud and fire also disappeared, and there was no more rock from which to draw water. They would now have to collect the water from the abundant supply of Canaan:

For the LORD thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills. (Deut. 8:7)

Much could be said about the dramatic transition into the Promised Land. It was a land that had to be

cultivated. Forests had to be cleared; houses had to be built; and there was a host of diverse enemy nations scattered throughout the territory. And for a people used to a long season of slavery, and a long season of miracles, hard work and warfare hardly sounded like a Promised Land. If they thought they were better off in Egypt when they struggled in the wilderness, they may also have thought the miracle provisions of the wilderness were far better than pulling twelve-hour days to establish a new homestead. To succeed, they could not allow their wilderness thinking to govern their Promised Land living.

Don't Forget the Lord Thy God

Without the pillars to guide them, their national direction would now be determined exclusively by the law of God. Their existence would now take on a seemingly “non-miraculous”—or non-spiritual—nature. Their provision would come from the good land God provided and the labor they exerted. They were to dig brass from the hills (Deut. 8:9) and multiply their herds, flocks, silver, and gold by the work of their hands (v. 13). This—God knew—would bring another potential area of transgression: forgetting Him.

Beware that thou forget not the LORD thy God, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes, which I command thee this day: lest when thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt therein; and when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied; then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the LORD thy God, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. (Deut. 8:11–14)

The danger was their concluding: “*My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth*” (v. 17, emphasis added). So it would seem, since they were the ones now laboring six long days per week. This was hardly bread falling from the sky or water coming from a rock. No sir, the days of God’s power were over. Everything would now come by the strength of man’s hand.

Power to Get Wealth

But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as it is this day. (Deut. 8:18)

When your bread is falling from the sky, it would be difficult to *forget* that it is the Lord who gives you power to get wealth. Imagine if an angel brought you a paycheck each Friday, or a host of angels built your home for you. It would be hard to forget that the Lord was giving you power to get wealth.

However, by the sweat of their brows, the children of Israel would exploit the vast resources of the Promised Land. And after years of hard work, they could easily begin to think that it was their power bringing them their great wealth. The Hebrew word used for power here is *kowach*, and it means a productive force. It’s the same term used in passages describing God’s miracle power:

And because he loved thy fathers, therefore he chose their seed after them, and brought thee out in his sight with his mighty power out of Egypt. (Deut. 4:37, emphasis added)

He hath shewed his people the power of his works, that he may give them the heritage of the heathen. (Ps. 111:6, emphasis added)

The obvious implication is that *the power God granted the Israelites to produce wealth in the Promised Land was just as miraculous as the displays of power in the wilderness!* The danger was in their seeing the world as governed by the work of their hand instead of the powerful hand of God. Simply because their new existence consisted of law-keeping and labor did not mean those days were any less miraculous, or powerful. Every day is filled with the power of God enabling us to accrue dominion—“it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth.”

Still, you can see how the Israelites facing an untamed wilderness after crossing the Jordan is a similar image to that of Adam and Eve facing the untamed creation after being given their dominion mandate. Both were called to dominion, and therefore both were entrepreneurial. The world was to be cultivated for the glory of God, and man was to exhaust the resources through rigorous thought and labor in order to master creation by means of wisdom: God’s technology.

The Reign of Craftsmen

I define technology as *the practice of creating visible things with invisible means*. This is a creative act in the same sense of Hebrews 11:3, which declares that our faith is founded upon the idea that “what is seen was not made out of what was *visible*” (NIV). In other words, we are to model analogically the creative process of God by creating visible things with the invisible means of wisdom, knowledge, and understanding—what the world refers to as *technology*.

In the New Testament, the root word *techne* is used in various forms for the idea of *craft* or *craftsman*. The word means *artificer*, or *artisan*, and is also translated as *art*. Consider the following passages in light of that meaning:

Forasmuch then as we are the

offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art [*techne*] and man's device. (Acts 17:29)

And because he [Paul] was of the same craft [*techne*], he abode with them, and wrought: for by their occupation [*techne*] they were tent-makers. (Acts 18:3)

For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, which made silver shrines for Diana, brought no small gain unto the craftsmen [*technites*]; whom he called together with the workmen of like occupation [*techne*], and said, Sirs, ye know that by this craft [*techne*] we have our wealth. (Acts 19:24–25)

Notice that Demetrius concludes that by his *techne*, or craft, he has his wealth. The predictability of the world is seen as natural, and no acknowledgment of God's power is recognized. Demetrius believes his craft is simply a natural fact of his own being, and not a result of God's creative power. To be a true *technite* means to be versed in a creative skill that exhausts the resources of creation in order to further the reign of God. Christians must be pursuant of God's hidden wisdom instead of remaining chained to the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. We're identified as moralists when we should also be seen as inventors, artists, craftsman, etc., not merely baptizers of existing crafts already well developed by unbelievers.

God, the Entrepreneur

For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder [*technite*] and maker is God. (Heb. 11:10)

The ultimate craftsman—the One whom we follow—is God. He is the model for the entrepreneurial calling.

And in order to follow Him properly, we must determine two essential items: (1) How did God create His enterprise? (2) What was His work ethic? The former I covered in my previous article “Wisdom the Principal Thing,” where I demonstrated that God used wisdom, knowledge, and understanding to create the universe.⁸ The latter—His work ethic—forms the essential structure of our life calendars:

And on the seventh day God ended his work. (Gen. 2:2a)

Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work. (Exod. 20:9)

God, using His wisdom, knowledge, and understanding, created His enterprise in the span of a six-day workweek. This is our model. Granted, we do not have the preexisting wisdom, knowledge, or understanding, nor do we have the power to accomplish so much in one week—the comparison is simply analogical. God is the archetypical entrepreneur from which we will pattern our efforts.

Therefore, education is primary because this is how we gain our wisdom, knowledge, and understanding. This is how we glean the *technology* to create our own enterprises. And let me make absolutely clear that being entrepreneurial does not mean quitting your day job and starting a business. You can be entrepreneurial in whatever capacity you find yourself. It is any expression of independent creativity that produces something that did not previously exist. You can easily do this as a spouse in your home or as a subordinate at your job. By practicing entrepreneurial dominionism, you are creating value for yourself, and your value is always determined by your contribution, or the problems you solve. That's why you pay your doctor or lawyer more than a waiter. The doctor and lawyer are solv-

ing sizable problems for you.

You have six days per week to both do your present work and invest in educating yourself in another skill, enhancing your existing skill set, or creating something new. Dr. Gary North has written on this repeatedly⁹ by recommending that people invest an extra twenty hours per week on something other than their present job—something that could be turned into a business.

You can also be creative in that time by writing novels, making films, creating videos, investigating a scientific problem, or simply tinkering in the garage. The only requirement is that you do it with an eschatological purpose in mind, i.e., the Kingdom of God. As I stated in the previous article, we cannot confuse the means with the end. The end is the realized Kingdom of God in history; the means are such things as our personal enterprises.

Begin Today

Adam's calling was to investigate what God had hidden in the “other trees,” but this required leaving the forbidden tree alone. In his disobedience, Adam forsook the entrepreneurial calling, and much of church history has followed suit. All the while, the unbeliever, because of his atheism, embraces the world as it's given to him and exhausts its possibilities. Like Demetrius, fallen man sees his craft (*techne*) as the source of his wealth. He believes he has power in himself to create, and the power is from him, not God. The Christian tends only to see the power of God displayed in miracles and neglects the daily infusion of power given by God to take dominion by faithful labor. We have suffered from a “wilderness mentality” instead of operating in “Promised Land thinking.”

Our daily lives are just as miraculous as Israel's wilderness sojourn.

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Reigning Catechisms and Dogmas

Amy Hauck



In 1908 William Booth, founder and general of the Salvation Army, said, “I consider that the chief dangers which confront the coming century will be religion without the Holy Ghost, Christianity without Christ, forgiveness without repentance, salvation without regeneration, politics without God, and Heaven without Hell.”

In 2006 New Age guru Sylvia Browne said, “We believe that our Lord was crucified, but did not die on the cross. Instead, he went on to live his life in France with his mother and Mary Magdalene, his wife.”¹

Last month, television icon Oprah Winfrey said, “God in the essence of all consciousness isn’t something to believe, God is; and God is a feeling experience, not a believing experience . . . If God for you is still about a belief, then it’s not truly God.”²

And this morning in a small room in the back of a Christian home, a little girl stood proudly before her mother and stated, “I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried. He descended into hell; the third day He rose from the dead; He ascended into heaven; and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.”

While the little girl learning the creeds of the church will bring a rich

inheritance with her as she moves out into this world to transform it and claim Christ’s victory over it, who will stand with her? The world will offer her a plethora of paths to “enlightenment” while scoffing at the true path her parents have set her upon. Will she walk this path with a few, or could a whole generation walk with her down the well-worn path our forefathers paved?

R. J. Rushdoony says that “Christian creedalism is [thus] basic to Western activism, constitutionalism, and hope concerning history.”³ He also observes that “the modern era has seen the growing irrelevance of Christian faith and doctrine to the world in general.”⁴ The ignorance many evangelicals today have of church history is a sad testament to the truth of Rushdoony’s statements.

Yet over the history of Christendom the church has spoken to the world through its creeds and confessions. As Rushdoony says, “The creed is the door to the house of faith.”⁵

Many have abandoned this door. Fathers and mothers neglect to teach the creeds or catechize their children. Many children grow up never learning of church history and never knowing their rich inheritance.

Eschewing the great resources handed down from generation to generation, evangelicals today have been led astray by fads, crazes, and insipid bestsellers by “Christotainers” peddling self-help humanism sprinkled with twisted Scripture. “Remember, God has put in you everything you need to live a victorious life,” grins one such “pop” preacher.⁶ These gurus of Gnosticism sell a feng shui-style faith that tells

Christian parents that if they say the right prayer, read the right books, and recite positive slogans, they are doing something meaningful. And they leave it to the next generation to arrange the spiritual furniture in their own lives as they see fit. These parents leave no path in the shifting sands feng shui faith rests upon. Their children are left to find their own self-help books and slogans.

Yet there exists a blessed path many saints have traveled throughout history. It echoes with the voices of thousands of mothers and fathers telling their children the old, old story, reciting the ancient creeds, and asking their covenant children, “What is your only comfort in life and in death?” This is our children’s inheritance. When we recite these ancient creeds and confessions, we are uniting ourselves with such a cloud of witnesses that dared to speak light into darkness, truth before lies, and life to the dying. Why would we not celebrate these treasures? Why would we rob our children of them? These are the words of a robust and vital faith! These are the ideas and truths that have changed the world. In the hearts and mouths of our covenant children, they can change the world again!

Parents must encourage their covenant children to “[f]ight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses” (1 Tim. 6:12 NIV). Imagine a whole generation of God’s people who speak the same spiritual language; who grew up on the stories of the heroes of the faith, facing down heresy and giving their lives for

the church and the Word of God; a whole generation who cherishes the confessions and creeds of the church, and most importantly, applies them to society.

Pray God will raise up a generation who with one voice will confess, “We, then following the holy Fathers, all with one consent, teach men to confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in manhood; truly God and truly man, of a reasonable soul and body.”⁷ And pray that God will give mothers and fathers a passion for and the diligence to train up their children in the way they should go.

Rushdoony says, “The foundation of true social order can only be in the triune God and His enscriptured truth and word.”⁸ So how can we hope, how can we pray, how can we believe in God’s Kingdom coming, His will being done on earth as it is in heaven, if we do not pass on these foundations for social order to our children? Humanism and the myriad other -isms *du jour* of this world are waiting to devour our children.

It won’t be a feng shui faith that defeats the enemies of Christ. It will be a faith that stands on the Word of God, the faith that is elucidated in the creeds and confessions and is illustrated in the lives of the saints. The faith that reminds our children that true faith is a knowledge and conviction that everything God reveals in His Word is true and everything not in conformity to His Word is false. As Rushdoony warns, it is our lack of fidelity to the training of our children in the creeds, confessions, and history of the church that has had a detrimental effect on all of society. Our children face an enemy they are ill-equipped to engage.

Long ago, the iron chariots of Siser’s army faced down the children of Israel. Defeat seemed a foregone conclu-

sion. But Deborah assured God’s people that He had given them the victory. And victory did come. Siser’s iron chariots became obsolete as soon as the rains came. Stuck in the mud, they ceased to intimidate. Isn’t God amazing? When we might have reached for a nuke, God sends the rain.

Today the chariots of humanism are poised to overrun our children with their own creeds and beliefs. “The creed of the state therefore requires holy warfare against the Christian creed and faith.”⁹ Yet we should see our enemies as already stuck in the mud. “[H]ath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?” (1 Cor. 1:20). God has already sent the rain onto the battlefield. “Through God we shall do valiantly: for He it is that shall tread down our enemies” (Ps. 60:12). So now we must engage the enemy. It will be the vibrant, strong faith of our fathers that will prevail and strengthen the hearts of the next generation.

Let us be aware of the high price society pays when we fail to honor the lives, words, and deeds of the saints who have given so much to the faith. “Shall thy wonders be known in the dark? and thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?” (Ps. 88:12). If the creed is the door to the house of faith, let us swing open the door and explore every room in that house.

Rushdoony’s words should embolden faithful fathers and mothers as they train up the next generation: “The salvation of man is to declare the Biblical creeds, to confess the triune God and to find in Him salvation, liberty, and life. When man declares, ‘I believe . . .’ he becomes the confessor of God’s glory and God’s truth, and the recipient of God’s grace and prosperity.”¹⁰

Our children are the next generation of confessors of God’s glory, and thus let them glory along with St. Ambrose, “I

will not glory because I am righteous, but I will glory because I am redeemed. I will not glory because I am free from sin, but because my sins are forgiven.”¹¹

We must equip our children with the creeds, councils, confessions, and history of the church. As the Reformers knew so well, we cannot fight something with nothing. The church, indeed all of society, suffers when Christians do not apply their faith to all of life. But how can we expect our children to do so if they don’t know what they believe and why they believe it? They may know a song or two or even a prayer by Jabez, but they don’t know how to apply their faith to change the world. The confessions and creeds of the church were used by our forefathers to defend the faith, stabilize society, and change the world.

Today the iron chariots of our enemies have sent the church fleeing the battlefield. We must fill our children with the Word of God and look to the rich inheritance our forefathers have left us to build their faith. What can dusty old church history offer a Christian soldier facing down iron chariots of unbelief and humanism? Its reigning catechisms and dogmas. ■

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1. Sylvia Browne, *If You Could See What I See: The Tenants of Novus Spiritus* (Hay House Books, 2006).
2. Oprah Winfrey in Internet interview with Eckhart Tolle, March 2008.
3. R. J. Rushdoony, *The Foundations of Social Order* (Vallecito, CA: Ross House Books, 1998), 8.
4. *Ibid.*, 1.
5. *Ibid.*, 3.
6. Joel Osteen, introduction to *Become a Better You* (Free Press, 2007).

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Working with Pygmies: R. J. Rushdoony, *Christianity Today*, and the Making of an American Theologian

Michael J. McVicar

R. J. Rushdoony was always an outsider. In the earliest days of his ministry he served as missionary to an isolated Indian community in Owyhee, Nevada; in his later ministry he severed ties with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in order to write and research freely; as a theologian he didn't hesitate to draw sharp distinctions between himself and his critics, even if these distinctions cut him off from the institutions and recognition that a less principled man might covet. In short, Rushdoony often found himself on the cusp of the theological mainstream, ready to burst onto the national stage as a major Reformed thinker, only to draw back based on his own principles or to have others collude against him to deny a wider audience for his ideas.

Nowhere is this more clearly illustrated than in Rushdoony's long-running and often heated confrontations with the neo-evangelical publication, *Christianity Today*. Through his engagement with "the flagship publication of mainstream evangelicalism,"¹ Rushdoony walked a precarious line between national notoriety and grassroots obscurity.

After initially cultivating a relationship fraught with economic and theological potential, *Christianity Today* covertly worked to suppress Rushdoony's ideas. When obfuscation failed, the publication turned to outright attack, only to have Rushdoony emerge as a more significant figure. By closely analyzing Rushdoony's conflicts with *Christianity Today* and its editors, we

can better understand how deftly he cultivated his ideas and succeeded in presenting them to a broad audience in spite of the dedication of his enemies and his own habit of forsaking popularity for theological purity.

Combining the Best in Liberalism with the Best in Fundamentalism

Perhaps no single national Christian publication was more prominent in the mid-twentieth-century struggle to create a coalition of theologically conservative, socially aware Protestants than *Christianity Today*. Billy Graham and a group of financial supporters founded the magazine in 1956 to "plant the evangelical flag in the middle of the road, taking a conservative theological position but a definite liberal approach to social problems. It would combine the best in liberalism and the best in fundamentalism without compromising theologically."² Since its founding, the magazine has consistently popularized a theologically conservative, socially relevant brand of fundamentalism that has since come to be known as neo-evangelicalism.

The publication's editors sought out theological conservatives and invited articles on any number of issues. They were particularly interested in critics of theological modernism. Not surprisingly, in 1957 associate editor Dr. J. Marcellus Kik sent Rushdoony, then known primarily as a promising young critic of modernism and secular education, a letter announcing the launch of the new venture. Kik invited Rushdoony to write an article for an early issue of the maga-

zine and closed with this solicitation: "I would like to have you suggest articles which you might like to contribute to our new magazine ... It is my hope that you will accede to our requests."³

Rushdoony accepted Kik's invitation because, like many theologically conservative clergy of his day, Rushdoony perceived *Christianity Today* as a response to the creeping liberalism embodied in other national Christian publications such as *The Christian Century*. Thus, although the magazine was not "as Calvinist as I would like it,"⁴ Rushdoony supported the publication with short articles, book reviews, and freelance editorial work. In return, *Christianity Today* ran favorable reviews of Rushdoony's early books, including *Freud, Intellectual Schizophrenia*, and *By What Standard?*

As a capable popularizer of the difficult ideas of Cornelius Van Til, *Christianity Today's* editors specifically sought out Rushdoony to help edit and clarify the Westminster theologian's submissions. In one note soliciting Rushdoony's aid, Kik explained, "Both Carl Henry and myself have struggled with [Van Til's manuscript] in order to clarify it. Since you have clarified the writing of Van Til previously, I thought the best thing we could do is to send it to you to work over. Please remember 95% of our readers have no knowledge what *geschichte* is. Anything you can do to clarify will be helpful."⁵ Rushdoony fulfilled this request along with many others, but over time his impatience with the editors began to grow.

During the first decade of Rushdoony's relationship with *Christianity Today*, he alternately assumed the antagonistic roles of good-cop/bad-cop with the magazine's editors. In one memorable harbinger of animosities to come, Rushdoony criticized the editors' decision to publish a favorable review of the writings of the Southern novelist William Faulkner. After citing a vivid inventory of the vulgar evils in Faulkner's work, Rushdoony concluded, "I maintain that the defense of or liking for Faulkner is a sign of moral and spiritual degeneracy . . . and that *Christianity Today* has no moral right to protest filth on the newsstands and then give such prominence to Faulkner. I realize that the editors have probably not themselves read Faulkner or they would not have accepted the article."⁶

If Rushdoony meant this final sentence as a rebuke of the intellectual vapidness of *Christianity Today's* editors, they hardly noticed. Instead, Kik admitted that he and others at the magazine had never read Faulkner. "If the editors had read William Faulkner's works," Kik began, "and they are as you described them, you may be assured this article never would have appeared in our magazine."⁷ This embrace of ignorance by the magazine's editors ultimately led Rushdoony to question its intellectual value. Similarly, the editors grew to resent his outspoken criticism of the magazine, and, more notably, to worry about his growing influence on key theological questions.

J. Howard Pew

J. Howard Pew, the chairman of the Sun Oil Company, a prominent Presbyterian layman, and major financial backer of *Christianity Today*, had long been an outspoken critic of theological modernism and the Social Gospel. As a noted and wealthy layman, Pew believed it was his duty to, as the historian E. V. Toy notes, "counteract the misconcep-

tions that many ministers had about businessmen."⁸ During his tenure as the chairman of the National Lay Committee of the National Council of the Churches of Christ, Pew attempted to combat what he saw as a pronounced socialistic drift in American clergy.

According to one biographer, Pew fortified his Lay Committee as a bulwark against clerical liberalism, both political and theological.⁹ From 1950 until 1955, Pew used his chairmanship to defend "the principle that the Christian churches should not become involved in economic and political controversy" and to resist any intermingling of the church and the state.¹⁰ Indeed, as his defiant final report to the National Council insisted, "Our premise was that, instead of appealing to government, the church should devote its energies to the work of promoting the attributes of Christianity—truth, honesty, fairness, generosity, justice and charity—in the hearts and minds of men. We attempted to emphasize that Christ stressed not the expanded state but the dignity and responsibility of the individual."¹¹ Although the National Council managed to part ways with Pew's pesky Lay Committee in 1955, Pew continued his quest to resist theological and social liberalism in the church. To this end, he often used his financial influence over *Christianity Today* to recruit writers and suggest stories to its editors.

For the first decade of the magazine's history, Pew maintained a close personal relationship with associate editor Dr. J. Marcellus Kik, a conservative Presbyterian. Pew offered financial backing to Kik's scholarly pursuits while Kik served as Pew's loyal theological ally and friend.¹² When Kik died in the fall of 1965, Pew went looking for another scholar and minister of similar stature and ability. He quickly settled on R. J. Rushdoony. "Knowing how interested you have been in the history

and development of our Church down through the ages," Pew wrote to Rushdoony shortly after Kik's death, "I was wondering if you would like to continue Dr. Kik's work."¹³ Rushdoony eagerly responded, "I am honored that you are considering me to continue Dr. Kik's work, and am greatly interested."¹⁴

While Pew vetted Rushdoony as Kik's potential successor, he moved to give Rushdoony a prominent national platform in the pages of *Christianity Today*. On Monday, February 12, 1966, Rushdoony flew from Los Angeles to Phoenix for a private audience with Pew. Though the exact substance of the conversation is unclear, the two discussed Rushdoony's desire to start a Christian college and Rushdoony's replacement of Kik. During the meeting, Pew also solicited a series of four articles on the topic of "The Mediator: Christ or the Church?" The articles would, in Pew's words, address "the need of the church to keep out of economic, social and political affairs."¹⁵ Pew hoped to run the articles in *Christianity Today*, believing they could counteract the liberal drift he perceived in the journal's editorial direction.

Failed Mediations

Pew clearly intended the "Mediator" series to highlight the young theologian's skepticism of clerical activism, and the essays did not disappoint. In an unpublished draft of the first essay in the series, Rushdoony didn't pull his punches: "The modern attempt to reduce Jesus to the level of political reformer, and the church to the same level, is a denial of Christ's true Kingship."¹⁶ When Rushdoony submitted the first article for consideration, Pew declared, "I am entirely in agreement with it,"¹⁷ and pressured the editors of *Christianity Today* to publish it immediately. In a letter to Dr. L. Nelson Bell, Billy Graham's father-in-law and executive editor of *Christianity*

Today, Pew wrote, “Mr. Rushdoony is a scholar and I believe as well equipped to write on this subject as anybody I know . . . Time is running out and we should get these articles in *Christianity Today* very quickly.”¹⁸

Given both Pew’s and Rushdoony’s combative relationship with the *Christianity Today* staff, what happened next hardly came as a surprise. Dr. Carl F. H. Henry, *Christianity Today*’s editor, accepted the first article in the series, but rejected the second. Henry and his editors homed in on a key passage in which Rushdoony interpreted Satan’s Temptation of Jesus in the wilderness as a rejection of socialism. “In the Temptation,” Rushdoony argued, “Jesus has maintained the integrity of his vocation. The First Temptation was to turn the stones of the wilderness into bread. The world was full of hungry men, starving babies, economic problems and Satan demanded in effect that Jesus prove Himself a savior, a compassionate redeemer, by dealing with the politico-economic crises of man . . .”¹⁹

Rushdoony interpreted Jesus’ rejoinder—“Man shall not live by bread alone”—as a categorical rejection of socialism. “Salvation is not in the manipulation of man’s environment: it is the regeneration of man’s heart, and hence . . . the apostles were clearly forewarned against proclaiming a social (or socialist) gospel in place of the atoning, redemptive work of the crucified and risen Jesus Christ.”²⁰

Henry asserted that Rushdoony’s interpretation of the Temptation was “highly fanciful.” Henry also shared with Rushdoony one of his anonymous readers’ comments. These added further insult to injury by declaring the essay “bizarre,” “laughable,” and accusing Rushdoony of “twisting” and “perverting” Scripture.²¹ Rushdoony curtly responded to Henry, demanding the

return of both essays: “Kindly return my first essay to me. It is one of a series of four, and I have no desire to break up the series. Moreover, it is for me more a liability than an asset to be published in *Christianity Today*.”²² Henry acquiesced to Rushdoony’s demand, but insisted, with lightly veiled contempt, that he and his editors found the first letter adequate after making “some factual corrections.”²³

Ultimately, Henry’s motivation for rejecting the essay may have had more to do with Rushdoony’s budding relationship with Pew than with concerns over Rushdoony’s theological impertinence. Over a year before this conflict, Henry wrote a brief response to one of Rushdoony’s many critical letters, noting, “I’m sorry that about the only time we hear from you in relation to *Christianity Today* is by way of criticism.” Henry concluded the letter by calling for a more positive relationship between the magazine and Rushdoony: “Now I would like to invite you to become an appreciative participant in the dialogue also.”²⁴ Henry’s willingness to share the snide and personal attacks on Rushdoony’s second “Mediator” essay suggests that Henry’s previous invitation to an “appreciative” dialogue was less than honest. In fact, one is left to wonder if Henry shared the comments of his fellow editor in order to embarrass Rushdoony in front of Pew²⁵ and to force Rushdoony into an antagonistic stance. It is likely that Henry and his editors knew about Pew’s proposal to Rushdoony. Given Pew’s initial strong support for Rushdoony as Kik’s successor, it is likely that Henry and the editors at *Christianity Today* resented the possibility of a vocal critic becoming a patron of one of the magazine’s major financial supporters.

Regardless of the exact reasons for the essay’s rejection, Rushdoony abruptly ended any hopes of developing a

potentially lucrative patronage arrangement with Pew when he made his principled stand. In a letter to Pew, Rushdoony briefly summarized his reluctance to work further with *Christianity Today*, concluding, “I cannot work with pygmies; you are in a position where you can command them, and I am not . . . I am sorry that this terminates our association, because I do have a very great respect for you and your faith.”²⁶ There is no evidence that Rushdoony wanted Pew to intervene on his behalf, or that Rushdoony tried to save the relationship by editing the essay. In the end, Rushdoony showed little concern that this exchange ended his chance of securing a nationally prominent position as Pew’s favored Presbyterian theologian.

Enforcing Obscurity

If fractious theological in-fighting and a nasty clash of personalities between Rushdoony and the magazine’s editors dominated the 1950s and early 1960s, then the late 1960s and 1970s developed into an era of relative peace. *Christianity Today*’s editors mainly operated as gatekeepers determined to prevent the publication and transmission of Rushdoony’s ideas. Their primary goal seems to have been further to marginalize a figure who was already an outsider. For his part, Rushdoony seemed content to ignore the publication, and instead developed his vision of Christian Reconstruction.

Private editors’ notes suggest that Henry and his associates occasionally considered publishing articles by Rushdoony, but in each case decided against it. Rushdoony himself never personally submitted an article for the editors’ review. Instead, his supporters occasionally sent in unsolicited manuscripts to the magazine only to receive the inevitable rejection. In one instance, Henry prefaced a submission by asking the editor to “[f]orget this is by Rushdoony. Does

it have any merit?" The response hardly qualified as constructive criticism of the essay. "This," the reviewer began, "has the form of scholarship but none of its content ... Rush's theology is not much better."²⁷ Henry's initial warning to his reviewer to "forget" who wrote the essay suggests that the magazine's staff was generally prejudiced against Rushdoony's work. Later, in a similar 1973 exchange, editors discussed an article of Rushdoony's submitted by Llewellyn Rockwell, ultimately concluding, "I don't see that this article takes us anywhere."²⁸

In a rare exception to the obscurantist spirit of the era, *Christianity Today* let its guard down long enough in 1974 for Harold O. J. Brown to declare, "Without a doubt, the most impressive theological work of 1973 is Rousas J. Rushdoony's *Institutes of Biblical Law*, a compendious treatment of a whole gamut of questions in governmental, social, and personal ethics from the perspective of the principle of law and the purpose of restoration of divine order in a fallen world."²⁹ This rare acknowledgment of Rushdoony's mammoth theological work totaled only two sentences and mentioned nothing of his growing influence in conservative Reformed circles.

More commonly in the 1970s, the publication's editors tried to erase Rushdoony's influence by ignoring his and his students' work. The most telling example of this effort to consciously ignore and covertly obliterate Rushdoony's influence came in the October 24, 1975, issue's cover story, "The Reformers." Authored by Terrill I. Elniff, the article discussed Puritan philosophies of government and jurisprudence and detailed their relevance to modern society. The article leaned heavily on Rushdoony's ideas, but Elniff was shocked when the article appeared in print: all references to Rushdoony, his ideas, and direct quotations from

his works had mysteriously disappeared. The author wrote Rushdoony, apologizing for the sudden omissions:

I was embarrassed and not a little shocked when I received my copy of the printed version ... and found that most of my direct quotations from your works plus specific footnotes attributing the sources of indirect quotations and sources of ideas had been deleted ... If I had realized how the text would be edited, I'd have written more of the documentation into the text itself rather than putting it in the footnotes, but that's hindsight now.³⁰

Given that the article ran, by the author's own admission, largely as written, the removal of specific references to Rushdoony pointed to the publication's concerted effort to simply "unacknowledge" Rushdoony. *Christianity Today's* editors felt it sufficient to expunge Rushdoony without engaging in any direct exchange with him or his followers. This stealth strategy of erasure, however, soon transformed into one of direct engagement.

American Heretic

Broad interest in Rushdoony's work developed slowly over the course of the 1980s. In previous decades, Rushdoony remained content to publish in specialized journals read mostly by like-minded clergy and in libertarian and conservative publications read by movement insiders who longed for coherent, religiously astute analyses of American culture. Further, he narrowly focused his public ministry on small Christian colleges, activist meetings, and Christian schools. This patient, small-scale grassroots work eventually led to higher profile appearances on programs such as Pat Robertson's *700 Club* and D. James Kennedy's television broadcasts. By the 1980s, Rushdoony's ideas seemed to be everywhere, even though few in the neo-evangelicalism movement had heard of or actually read

his writings. How had Rushdoony managed this slippery end-run around *Christianity Today*, the "flagship" publication of American evangelicalism? The editors needed a narrative, a carefully constructed tale to redefine its old foe, and once again relegate him to the margins of American Protestantism.

In "Democracy as Heresy" Rodney Clapp settled on the narrative that has since become *the* controlling discourse on Rushdoony and his concept of Christian Reconstruction.³¹ Clapp's exposé portrays a dystopian, twisted nightmare society built on Rushdoony's ideas. By focusing on the crimes and punishments enumerated in Rushdoony's *Institutes of Biblical Law* and the tensions between Rushdoony and his son-in-law Gary North, Clapp's article presents a theological movement in which violence trumps benevolence and theology is degraded to a generational grudge match. More conveniently, Rushdoony's focus on theonomy over autonomy and God's will over humanity's allowed Clapp to make a rather simplistic but nonetheless compelling argument that Rushdoony's ideas are anti-democratic. As the editor's note at the beginning of the story asks, "Do Reconstructionists really want to trade the freedoms of American democracy for the strictures of Old Testament theocracy?" Clapp's article answers the question with an enthusiastic "Yes!" therefore insinuating that at some fundamental level Rushdoony is not only anti-democratic, but also anti-American. In a single article Clapp distills the spirit of a decades-long theological fight into a fundamental accusation: Rushdoony is a heretic. But Clapp does *not* charge that Rushdoony is a *religious* heretic. Instead, in Clapp's hands, Rushdoony emerges as a *political* heretic, one who is out of touch with contemporary evangelicalism and, worse still, contemporary American political sensibilities.

To call the article effective is an understatement. Clapp's cover story laid the groundwork for nearly all of the popular press coverage of Rushdoony and Christian Reconstruction that followed. In effect, Clapp secularized a debate that had previously been irreducibly religious in nature. Secular concepts of force, violence, domination, and political legitimation replaced traditional Christian concepts to become the metrics for measuring Rushdoony's theology.

In fact, it is reasonable to assert that "Democracy as Heresy" helped expose Christian Reconstruction to the secular media and ultimately helped bring Rushdoony's ideas to a national audience. For secular reporters like Chip Berlet, Rob Boston, Frederick Clarkson, and Sara Diamond, the article is one of the urtexts of Christian Reconstruction journalism.³² It presents Rushdoony's thought as a microcosm of a timeless struggle between democracy and religion, theocracy and freedom. In short, it reduces Rushdoony's ideas to their secular political implications, while studiously neglecting their theological and epistemological foundation.

Conclusion

Given *Christianity Today* editors' wont to diminish Rushdoony's theology, it is all the more ironic that *Christianity Today* eventually ran the cover story that helped make Rushdoony a national religious figure. At the time of his death in 2001, *Christianity Today* acknowledged Rushdoony as the "founder of the Christian homeschooling movement and an intellectual catalyst of the Christian Right."³³ While one might be forgiven for thinking that either accomplishment would merit a respectful if critical assessment of Rushdoony's influence on contemporary American Protestants, *Christianity Today* editors apparently did not. Yet regardless

of *Christianity Today's* assessment of Rushdoony, its attempts to suppress his ideas and to portray him as an anti-American theocrat ultimately helped secure Rushdoony's status as a significant twentieth-century theologian and Christian activist. ■

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1. William Martin, *With God on Our Side: The Rise of the Religious Right in America* (New York: Broadway Books, 1996), 42.
2. Quoted in Jon R. Stone, *On the Boundaries of American Evangelicalism: The Postwar Evangelical Coalition* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 105.
3. J. Marcellus Kik to Rousas J. Rushdoony, 7 February 1956, R. J. Rushdoony Library, Chalcedon Foundation, Vallecito, CA.
4. R. J. Rushdoony to J. Marcellus Kik, 25 February 1959, R. J. Rushdoony Library, Chalcedon Foundation, Vallecito, CA.
5. J. Marcellus Kik to R. J. Rushdoony, 30 January 1959, R. J. Rushdoony Library, Chalcedon Foundation, Vallecito, CA.
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7. J. Marcellus Kik to R. J. Rushdoony, 12 March 1959, R. J. Rushdoony Library, Chalcedon Foundation, Vallecito, CA.
8. Eckard V. Toy, Jr., "The National Lay Committee and the National Council of Churches: A Case Study of Protestants in Conflict," *American Quarterly* 21, No. 2, Part 1, Summer 1969, 196.
9. Mary Sennholz, *Faith and Freedom: The Journal of a Great American, J. Howard Pew* (Grove City, PA: Grove City College, 1975).
10. *Ibid.*, 45–46.

11. *Ibid.*, 47.
12. Shortly before his death, Kik demonstrated his dedication to Pew's cause when he moved to Philadelphia in an effort to help Pew resist changes to the Westminster Confession. (Undated letter from Charles Hays Craig to R. J. Rushdoony, R. J. Rushdoony Library, Chalcedon Foundation, Vallecito, CA.)
13. J. Howard Pew to R. J. Rushdoony, 26 November 1965, J. H. Pew Papers, Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, DE. Evidence suggests that Howard E. Kershner of the Christian Freedom Foundation recommended Rushdoony to Pew. In a letter dated 26 January, Kershner wrote, "[Rushdoony] is the man whom I recommended to you as a possible substitute for Mr. Kik. He is very scholarly and sound." (Howard E. Kershner to J. Howard Pew, 26 January 1966, J. H. Pew Papers, Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, DE.)
14. R. J. Rushdoony to J. Howard Pew, 2 December 1965, R. J. Rushdoony Library, Chalcedon Foundation, Vallecito, CA.
15. J. Howard Pew to Howard E. Kershner, 24 January 1966, J. H. Pew Papers, Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, DE.
16. R. J. Rushdoony, "The Mediator: Christ or the Church? The Witness of Jesus Christ," J. H. Pew Papers, Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, DE.
17. J. Howard Pew to R. J. Rushdoony, 3 March 1966, R. J. Rushdoony Library, Chalcedon Foundation, Vallecito, CA.
18. J. Howard Pew to Dr. L. Nelson Bell, 3 March 1966, J. H. Pew Papers, Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, DE.
19. R. J. Rushdoony, "The Mediator: Christ or the Church? The Witness of the Apostles," J. H. Pew Papers, Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, DE.
20. *Ibid.*
21. Carl F. H. Henry to R. J. Rushdoony, 5 April 1966, R. J. Rushdoony Library, Chalcedon Foundation, Vallecito, CA.
22. R. J. Rushdoony to Carl F. H. Henry, 19 April 1966, R. J. Rushdoony Library, Chalcedon Foundation, Vallecito, CA.
23. Carl F. H. Henry to R. J. Rushdoony,

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Of Squirrels, Socrates, and Scripture

Greg Uttinger

Vizzini: Let me put it this way. Have you ever heard of Plato, Aristotle, Socrates?

Westley: Yes.

Vizzini: Morons.

Westley: Really?

—William Goldman, *The Princess Bride* (1987)



Sometimes They Do Say, “A Squirrel”

It was Christmastime. Around our table sat some of our school’s brightest graduates.

“What do you remember best from high school?” I asked them. Something from Biblical Theology, I supposed, or maybe Systematics. They were all good Bible students. But the first answer I got was Rachel’s: “You remember the squirrel that runs up and down the World Ash Tree? That!”

The World Ash Tree: Yggdrasill, the cosmic axis of the Nine Worlds in Norse mythology. I don’t remember the name of the squirrel. Yes, I teach mythology—Egyptian, Greek, Norse, and Germanic.¹ It falls in World Literature, a junior/senior class. In addition to my lectures, we read Edith Hamilton’s *Mythology*, the *Enuma Elish*, the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, the *Iliad*, and the *Aeneid*. We read a little from the Elder and Younger *Eddas*, early sources for Norse mythology.

I’m not sure why the Norse squirrel stuck in Rachel’s memory: probably because the idea was a bit quirky. I do know that Rachel has an excellent knowledge of Scripture and of systematic theology. We spent a few weeks here and there with mythology: we spent four years with the words and doctrines of Holy Scripture. Quirky squirrels to the contrary, Rachel and her classmates

are not classicists, but they are Christians. And they know their Bibles well.

Christian Education at the Crossroads

Education is inescapably religious. Like all things human, it will be directed in the service of the triune God or in the service of some idol. But “service” implies not only a transcendent authority—a Lord who must be obeyed—but also a revelation from that authority that includes specific requirements. (“Service” also implies sanctions.²) If we are going to serve God in our teaching and learning, we have to know what He has revealed and what He requires. We have to know what God has said. Then we have to submit to it. This means we must bring our educational beliefs and practices captive to the Word of God, to Holy Scripture.

Today, however, there are voices within the Christian community—or at least, just outside its walls—that are finding God’s revelation, God’s will, in high human tradition, in Aristotelian logic, or in the pagan classics. If we want to humanize and civilize our young, they say, we must begin with the Greeks.³

Now, Paul knew Greek philosophy and culture. He had read the Stoic poets. He could quote them from memory.⁴ Yet he pointed Timothy, not to the local academies, but to the inspired Word of God that was able to make him “perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all

good works” (2 Tim. 3:14–17). As far as Paul was concerned, the classical world was morally corrupt, epistemologically bankrupt, and religiously demonic (Rom. 1:20–32; 1 Cor. 10:19–21). The classical world needed the gospel.

The issue at stake here is not *whether* we should read Homer and Plato. The issue is *how* we should read them. How will we analyze or make use of what we find there? Will we begin from Scripture, with its doctrines of divine transcendence and sovereignty, of total depravity and sovereign grace, and let Scripture critique and condemn Greek humanism? Or will we begin with Greek humanism and try to baptize it with some bland moralisms in the name of Christ? Will Scripture be our foundation or our afterthought? If we are going to serve Jesus, the answer shouldn’t be difficult.

Autonomous Reason

From the beginning, however, Satan has challenged the Word of God. His “Hath God said?” in Eden was quickly followed by, “Ye shall not surely die.” God, he told Eve, knows something you don’t know: He is lying to you. So Satan proposed a test of God’s Word concerning the forbidden Tree. In effect, Satan asked Eve to step out onto the theoretically neutral ground of her own autonomous heart and mind and there put God’s Word to the test. But such a test was hardly neutral: it was blatant unbelief. For the Tree was God’s creature

through and through. So was Eve. So was Adam. They were His image, and He had spoken to them plainly. Their being resonated to His Word. To pretend otherwise was an act of incredible rebellion and folly. But if they were going to decide good and evil for themselves, it was a necessary folly. Adam and Eve could maintain their own autonomy only by presupposing that God the Creator did not and could not exist. Man has continued in that folly ever since.

From Polytheism to Natural Law

Satan's "Ye shall not *surely* die" implied other forces in the universe as ancient and, in their own spheres, as powerful as God. Satan spoke for cosmic evolution and for polytheism, the existence of many gods, of whom Jehovah was but one. But many gods means many law-orders and many truths. For polytheism, every tribe, nation, and city-state was its own cosmos, defined in terms of its own god and its own religion. When nations went to war, their gods went to war. The defeated god would be incorporated into the pantheon of the victor ... as a subordinate. Every military defeat was a religious defeat, and the victorious god was a new truth for a new day.

The Greek philosophers tried to rationalize and naturalize their theories of knowledge and learning. They abandoned the myths and exalted Reason, the divine quality shared by man and "God," whatever he might be. But for all their talk of transcendent absolutes, the Greeks could not escape the notion of an immanent absolute—the state. The *polis*, the city-state, was the incarnation of the divine.⁵ "Man is by nature a political animal," Aristotle wrote, "and he who by nature and not by mere accident is without a State (*polis*) is either above humanity or below it." This is not secularism as we know it; it is religious humanism, and it is the context for ev-

erything that Plato and Aristotle wrote. It completely conditioned the Greek conception of education: education was for, by, and through the *polis*; that is, one's own *polis*. For Plato and Aristotle, that meant Athens.

But when Alexander's conquests transformed the world into a Hellenistic empire, the *polis* failed as educator and absolute, and Hellenistic philosophy wrestled with meaning and law in a cosmopolitan world. The Cynics and Epicureans assumed a divine disinterest in the affairs of man; they retreated into a rabid individualism. "Yet the old idea, that man owed an allegiance to the order of relationships supporting his existence, was too deeply rooted, and it fell to the Stoics to work out a new formula for membership."⁶ The Stoics tried to root law in Nature, in the divine intelligence or *logos* inherent in the cosmos itself. Here it would be accessible to all right-thinking human beings. "For there is one universe made up of all things, and one God who pervades all things, and one substance, and one law, one common reason in all intelligent animals, and one truth ..."⁷ So wrote the philosopher-king, Marcus Aurelius, persecutor of Christians.

Now comes some theological sleight of hand. Since God reveals Himself in creation—since every man is the image of God with the "work of the law" written in his heart—can't we conclude that Stoic philosophy stumbled upon a Biblical truth? Aren't general revelation and natural law the same thing? And isn't this, at last, common ground? For eighteen centuries, Western civilization and Western education have rested on this assumption.⁸ Of course, no one talks about total depravity.

Common Ground Education

In *The Classical Teacher* Cheryl Lowe writes,

In the Western tradition, education has always been synonymous with classical education. It began with the Greeks and Romans, was preserved and expanded by Christians during the Middle Ages and Renaissance, and continued unabated until well into the twentieth century.⁹

"Preserved and expanded": the assumption is a basic continuity between Greek and Roman paganism and "the mind of Christ" (1 Cor. 2:16). That is, there is a natural law to which both pagan and Christian can appeal, and thus a neutral plan of education fit for both—at least as long as everyone is reasonable.

Discussing the Great Books curriculum, E. Christian Kopff writes in terms of a similar assumption: Western culture is the product of an ongoing conversation and debate carried out in the great works of Western literature. This conversation began with Greece, and the *Iliad* is the first book in the canon. This conversation, Kopff tells us, "extends from Homer through Plato and Aristotle to Augustine and Aquinas."¹⁰

However, handing down the torch of human understanding is a risky business. Cicero made Greek thought live in great literature in Latin. The genius of Augustine and Aquinas assimilated Christian perspectives into the living reality of Plato and Aristotle. That tradition, also by means of humane assimilation (and genius), survived through the Middle Ages and Renaissance. But one generation may drop the project or run off towards a *cul-de-sac*.¹¹

It seems that the Greek and Roman authors were having a conversation about important matters, and Augustine and Aquinas managed to find room in that conversation for Christians who had something useful to say. Renaissance humanists were the next to come to the table. But, for Kopff, the Enlightenment writers dropped the project: they rejected tradition and nearly brought the Great Conversation to an end.

Once again there is an assumption of philosophical neutrality and of human autonomy. Christianity enters the classical conversation as (maybe) an equal participant, but certainly not as the representative of the holy Creator sent by Him to call all men to repentance. The church must yield up her prophetic voice, and frame whatever she has to say in terms of the common ground of neutral reason and natural law.

Kopff completely misunderstands the Enlightenment as well. While Enlightenment writers tried to edit Christianity out of the Great Conversation, they had no problem at all with Greek rationalism or with the esoteric and occult strains that pervade classical thought.¹² The Enlightenment was classical thought rushing headlong toward maturity.

But humanism is self-destructive. When men do not “like to retain God in their knowledge,” God gives them over to a reprobate mind, a mind void of judgment (Rom. 1:28ff). The ethical consequences are profound and horrible. Jesus says, “[A]ll they that hate me love death” (Prov. 8:36b). There is no common ground, no concord between Christ and Belial. There is only life and death, heaven and hell. We have to serve somebody: it had better be the Lord.

Scripture as History and Story

Now if we as educators want to get serious about beginning our work from Scripture, we will likely have some practical problems. Let me illustrate the first. See if you recognize this:

So Inigo killed the six-fingered man. Wesley had been mostly dead all day. Buttercup jumped into eel-infested waters. There was a mighty duel: both were masters. But they survived the Fire Swamp, for “This is true love.”

Yes, this is *The Princess Bride*. No, it doesn’t make much sense. It’s full of gaps and out of order. Now try this:

So David killed the giant with a sling. And Jesus rose from the dead. Noah built an ark and the animals came on, two by two. Elijah ascended into heaven, but Judas betrayed Christ. And Daniel survived the lion’s den, for “God so loved the world . . .”

This also doesn’t make much sense. Yet many of us have learned the Bible this way—in bits and pieces with no evident connection and in no particular order. The plot is missing and so are the thematic connections. We are left with a handful—often no more—of odd supernatural tales after the fashion of *The Arabian Nights* or a few moralistic stories like those in Aesop’s *Fables*.

But consider: the Bible is a book. This may seem obvious, but it is actually profound. The Bible has a beginning and an end: it has a plot and a purpose. For the most part, it is history—and not dry, dull facts, but fascinating and lively story—story that begins in Creation and the Fall, moves through God’s covenant with the patriarchs and with Israel, and culminates in the death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God. In short, the Bible is about Jesus: “[T]he testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy” (Rev. 19:10d). If we don’t understand all the pieces in terms of Him, we really won’t understand much of anything. And if we don’t even know the pieces, and in order at that, we won’t know Him very well either.

Young people have no trouble learning the ins and outs of the *Star Wars* saga or the complex history and geography of Middle-earth.¹³ There is no cognitive reason that they can’t master the Bible’s story just as well. Any teenage student of Scripture should be able to tell the story of redemption from Creation to the Cross—and in some detail. The books of the Bible, the six days of Creation, the Ten Commandments, the seven covenants of promise, the Levitical offerings

and festivals, the floor plan of the tabernacle and temple, the succession of the kings, the prophecies of Daniel: these are all things that a good student can learn easily, even quickly—especially when they form the framework for the greatest story ever told. But if our students are going to learn them, we who are educators must learn them first.

Scripture as Theology

Now let me illustrate a second problem. The next time you go to a Christian educators’ conference, take a look at the book tables. Count the number of books on systematic theology and doctrine you see there. In my experience, it’s somewhere near zero. There may be some books on world-view and probably some on educational philosophy or psychology. There may be some devotionals for teachers or some counseling helps. There will probably be some Christian biographies. Books on doctrine you won’t find.

Here’s another assignment. Take out your school’s or church’s statement of faith. Read it through carefully. Now explain how each of its propositions relates to your curriculum as a whole and to particular subjects or lessons more particularly. What, for example, does the doctrine of the Trinity have to do with language and communication? with painting? with feudalism or federalism? Or how should our belief in God’s providence affect our understanding of economics and law? of gravity or the scientific method? What does the doctrine of the Incarnation have to do with the birth of Western civilization?

We should be able to answer these questions. But, first, we must understand the faith. Jude speaks of the faith “once [for all] delivered unto the saints.” Paul writes, “One Lord, one faith, one baptism.” There is a doctrinal unity to Christianity. Scripture contains a system of truth, a consistent, objective

self-revelation from the living God.

To understand, apply, and defend that system is the work of systematic theology. Systematics emphasizes the unity of the faith, its internal coherence. It shows how all of God's truth stands together, and it summarizes that truth in an orderly and useful manner.¹⁴ It works from Scripture: it works in terms of the creeds and confessions of the church, and those creeds and confessions are the product of the faithful church doing systematic theology under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We can begin our studies using the Apostles' and Nicene Creed as study guides. We can move on to the Formula of Chalcedon or the Athanasian Creed.¹⁵ Then there are the Westminster Standards or the Three Forms of Unity. We can read Calvin, Turretin, or Berkhof and find still greater treasures. At every step, we will learn there is much more to learn and that it is all profitable for an education in godliness.

Scripture as Law and Life

This brings us to a third practical problem: we must not reduce the study of Scripture to an academic exercise. It is Christ we encounter in Scripture. We must come ready to hear and obey. He speaks to us infallibly and with authority. He teaches us and commands us. He grants us grace and power. His words are truth and law, Spirit and life. We must believe every word, and live by all of them. Practically, this means that any lecture or discussion may easily turn to issues of faith and godliness. We will find ourselves talking of God's law as we rise up and lie down and walk by the way. Of course, this is exactly what our Lord commands (Deut. 6:4–9).

"Thy Words Were Found, and I Did Eat Them ..."

Scripture is the inspired Word of God. That makes it valuable beyond reckoning—more precious than gold,

more vital than our necessary bread. Furthermore, Scripture is about our Savior and our salvation. It ought to be the joy and rejoicing of our hearts. We really should work at knowing it better, understanding it more deeply, and applying it more broadly. There is a place for the Greeks and the Romans, and even for quirky Norse squirrels. But that place is not at the heart of our learning or teaching; it is not at the foundation of what we call Christian education. Jesus has told us how to build: we must hear His sayings and do them. Nothing less will do. ■

1. Some of my lectures on Norse mythology are currently on YouTube. They seem to be the most popular of my posted lectures. Sad, that.
2. Gary North, *Political Polytheism: The Myth of Pluralism* (Tyler, TX: Institute for Christian Economics, 1989).
3. See, for instance, Cheryl Lowe, "Why Read Homer's Iliad?", *The Classical Teacher*, Spring 2008, 19.
4. He quotes from Aratus and Cleanthes in Acts 17:28; he also quotes the Cretan poet Epimenides there and in Titus 1:12.
5. Any educator who feels the lure of ancient Greece needs to sit down and read chapter 4 of Rousas J. Rushdoony's *The One and the Many*.
6. Sheldon S. Wolin, *Politics and Vision: Continuity and Innovation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 67.
7. Marcus Aurelius, *The Meditations*, VII, 9.
8. North, *Political Polytheism*, xxi.
9. Lowe, "Why Read Homer's Iliad?", 18.
10. E. Christian Kopff, *The Devil Knows Latin: Why America Needs the Classical Tradition* (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2001), 92.
11. Ibid.
12. On the place of the occult and esoteric in revolutionary Enlightenment thought, see James H. Billington, *Fire in the Minds of Men: Origins of the Revolutionary Faith* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1980), especially chap. 4.
13. I can still tell you the title and plot of

any episode of the original Star Trek within its first four seconds—a hangover from my youth.

14. Greg Uttinger, *An Introduction to Systematics* (Anderson, CA: 1994), 1.
15. R. J. Rushdoony's *Foundations of Social Order* is an invaluable tool for this sort of study.

Ortiz ... Entrepreneurial cont. from page 11

The power and gifts come from God, though we are putting in the twelve-hour workdays. We can therefore avoid the snare that tripped Israel if we simply recognize that God is prepared to empower any effort we make to develop visible things by invisible means. Don't put your dreams on hold for another day. Creation is filled with untapped wisdom, and He's given you power to *get wealth* today! ■

1. Christopher J. Ortiz, "Wisdom the Principal Thing," *Faith for All of Life*, May-June 2008.
2. Andrea Schwartz, "The Biblical Trustee Family," *Faith for All of Life*, Nov.-Dec. 2007.
3. R. J. Rushdoony, *Systematic Theology in Two Volumes* (Vallecito, CA: Ross House Books, 1994), 1046.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid., 1045.
6. Ibid., 1020f.
7. Christopher J. Ortiz, "The Leadership Principle," *Faith for All of Life*, Mar.-Apr. 2006.
8. Ortiz, "Wisdom the Principal Thing."
9. See www.garynorth.com.

Hauck ... Reigning cont. from page 13

7. The Chalcedonian Creed, A.D. 451.
8. Rushdoony, *The Foundations of Social Order*, 2.
9. Ibid., 183.
10. Ibid., 179.
11. Ambrose, *De Jacob et Vita Beata* 1.6.21.

The World in God's Fist: The Meaning of History

Martin G. Selbrede

I have seen the travail, which God hath given to the sons of men to be exercised in it. He hath made every thing beautiful in its time: also he hath set eternity in their heart except that man is unable to reach unto the work which God accomplisheth from the beginning to the end.” (Eccles. 3:10–11)



In the words of Ecclesiastes, history is “the work that God accomplisheth from the beginning to the end.”

But the study of history, and more particularly of eternal things, is a source of travail because “man is unable to reach unto the work which God accomplisheth.” We are driven to try to grasp the scope of it, to get our arms around it ... but cannot do so.

History is driven forward by God because our doings and actions are derivative and secondary, *not* causal or primary. We're pathologically forgetful of God while we're absorbed in temporal affairs. We find the idea that our doings are derivative rather than primary quite unsettling.

That the Scriptures teach us that our actions, and all of history, are ultimately derivative and dependent upon Him is incontrovertible. In Isaiah 37:26, God upbraids Sennacherib through Isaiah with precisely such a declaration: “Hast thou not heard long ago, how I have done it; and of ancient times, that I have formed it? Now have I brought it to pass, that thou shouldest be to lay waste defenced cities into ruinous heaps.” God is merely bringing to pass what He *has already done and formed in ancient times*, i.e., before the world began.

Against this idea, man pits his claim of autonomy, of independent action. But God scoffs at such posturing as a meaningless boast, no more so than

in His rebuke of the king of Assyria. “Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith? Or shall the saw magnify itself against him that shaketh it? As if the rod should shake itself against them that lift it up, or as if the staff should lift up itself, as if it were no wood” (Isa. 10:15). The wooden staff (the symbol God uses for the Assyrian king) has the attitude it isn't made of wood at all, that its actions are not controlled by a transcendent Being that wields it, believing instead the fiction that it exerts its own free, self-determined control over itself and others. The staff, the axe, mentioned by Isaiah, are instruments shaped for a workman's hand: they were fashioned to be controlled and used of God.

History is thus the process whereby human autonomy is continually being shattered and laid in ruins by the triune God.

A Christian History of the United States?

The Christian history of the United States of America: why do the humanists oppose such an idea and vigorously seek to discredit it? Because they fear that people may want America to return to its roots. “*If it once was Christian, it could become Christian again!*”

But, most nations did *not* start out Christian. Whether the U.S. was or was not a Christian nation in the past is utterly irrelevant to our mission. Our strategy, our commission (Matt.

28:18–20), remains the same.

So, what *does* a Christian origin for the United States represent? Would this circumstance be bad news for humanists who oppose it, who fear the teaching of such an origin for this nation?

No. If we started out Christian, that fact would constitute an indictment, *not* of the humanists (who at least act consistently with their worldview and principles) but of *Christians*, representing proof of Christian decline and decay.

We shouldn't be proud we began as a Christian nation. We should be saying this with fear and shame, that we squandered an amazing beachhead for Christ.

If anything, the fact that we were Christian at one time in the past should be a *comfort* to humanists—because we set the decisive precedent that we couldn't or wouldn't keep our nation Christian. The situation is the opposite of what both sides think it to be.

King Josiah and Other Examples

Consider the reconstruction under King Josiah. What good did a glorious history do the Hebrew nation? Were *they* consistent with their reconstruction under Josiah? Did Josiah's example rub off on the people at large? The people loved Josiah, and *still* the revival under his benevolent and godly rule flopped after he was killed.

Consider Laodicea, praised early on by Paul but rebuked by Christ in Revelation 3 a single generation later. The lesson here is equally clear: decline

is inevitable if the conditions for growth are not met. What are the conditions for growth or decline? It is here that history can help us, for history is the handbook of man's failures at being his own God.

Division in the Camp

Mark A. Noll, Nathan O. Hatch, and George M. Marsden published a book in 1983 entitled *The Search for Christian America*. As reviewer Dr. W. David Gamble explains, these three authors believe that the United States of America is not, was not, and never will be a Christian nation. They hold that the very notion of a Christian society is erroneous and an impossibility, and this idea usually has harmful effects upon the individuals who entertain such notions. The authors thus state their intention to debunk the mythological idea of a Christian origin of the United States and to declare that there will never be a Christian culture. In other words, *history* is tied to the *alleged shape of the future!*

As Gamble reveals, the three authors "acknowledge that their conclusions concerning the non-Christian nature of early America are conditioned by their theological understanding of the impossibility of a truly Christian culture (pp. 28, 43ff). Thus, the authors give us an interesting insight into their task as historians: they already believe, even before examining the historical record, that there is no possibility that early America, or any other culture in the world, could be accurately described as Christian. Therefore, as they begin their historical research, their conclusion is already established, and facts are made to conform to their views concerning the impossibility of Christian culture.

"It is the authors' understanding of the nature of the Gospel which radically influences their historiography ... They tell us that the Gospel cannot change the foundational principles of culture, but they give us no exegetical reason for

this impotence of the Gospel."

The approach of these authors is identical to that of humanistic scholars, as C. Gregg Singer documents in his analysis of R. G. Collingwood's philosophy of history when the latter asked, "What is this criterion of historic truth?" Collingwood found that criterion in *the web of imagination*, by which he meant the historian's own *a priori* imagination. This *a priori* imagination furnishes the historian with a picture of the past, which in turn justifies the sources that the historian uses in constructing the past. The history thus gives credence to the sources only because they are justified in this manner. This approach justifies Collingwood's statement that "the Biblical records cannot be considered from the point of view of whether they are true or not." (Truth is an irrelevant question to historian Collingwood.)¹

Christians Noll, Hatch, and Marsden adopt a similar approach to Collingwood's. Singer analyzes Collingwood further, pointing out that "every new generation must rewrite history in its own way ... At best, every historian and each new generation is free to assign to history that meaning or purpose which fits the needs of the moment."

Kings Aplenty

As Rushdoony put it, when God is not the king, every man makes himself the king. The historians have assumed precisely such a kingship, but their kingdom is nothing but rotted timbers under their rule, as Singer and others have ably documented.

So we return to the question, Why all the fear about a Christian history of the United States? *It is feared because that history came complete with a total world-view and legal system (God's law-word) that circumscribed all of life prescriptively.* That feared history acknowledged an Authority over man in all things, but modern man wants to be his own

authority, to be free to create his own paradise on his own terms.

The Enlightenment agenda can never succeed on its merits. The vilification of Christianity as the religion of knuckle-draggers is therefore part of the artificial propping up of Enlightenment thinking.

U.S. History: Christian or Not?

Journalist Jeff Sharlet² is concerned about the rising tide of Christian fundamentalism in general and its incursion into the field of historiography in particular. He suggests that American history is being hijacked by wrongheaded revisionists. But Sharlet acknowledges that the fundamental question is, Who is *really* guilty of revisionism? He acknowledges that there is *some* basis for the "revisionist" claims.

Compared to secular democracy, the Christian vision, says Sharlet, "seems to some great portion of the population more compelling, more just, and more beautiful." Sharlet has to lamely excuse his own secularist vision for looking comparatively dull (due to "the perfunctory processes of secular democracy"), but his actual problem is quite different. He doesn't have a dull model, he has a nonfunctional one, as shown by Richard A. Shweder, Professor of Human Development, University of Chicago.³

Shweder asks, Why so many barbed attacks against religion lately? "The most obvious answer is that the armies of disbelief have been provoked." But Shweder probes below that superficiality:

[T]he popularity of the current counterattack on religion cloaks a renewed and intense anxiety within secular society that it is not the story of religion but rather the story of the Enlightenment that may be more illusory than real.

The Enlightenment story has its own version of Genesis, and the themes are well known: The world woke up from the slumber of the "dark ages," finally

got in touch with the truth and became good about 300 years ago ...

As people opened their eyes, religion ... gave way to science. Parochial and tribal allegiances gave way to ecumenism, cosmopolitanism and individualism. Top-down command systems gave way to the separation of church from state, of politics from science. The story provides a blueprint for how to remake and better the world in the image and interests of secular elites.

Unfortunately, as a theory of history, that story has had a predictive utility of approximately zero.

Shweder's subsequent explanation makes clear that we're witnessing the death paroxysms of the Enlightenment story of history.

Not only is the humanistic theory of history coming up short, *modern educators are miserably incompetent to propagate it*. Former U.S. Secretary of Education William J. Bennett sat down for an interview with Gloria Gaither.⁴ The problem Dr. Bennett outlines, regarding American education, is letter simple:

Our worst subject is history. People have heard *ad nauseum* the reports and the scores of our reading and math. Our kids actually do better in reading and math than they do in history, American history particularly. Many kids from other countries know American history better than we do. That's a stunning fact.

And second—if we do not teach it to them, they will not pick it up, unless they watch the History Channel, which a lot of kids don't do. It's the obligation of one generation to pass on to the next things of value. There's hardly anything of greater value than passing on the legacy of this country. We're not doing it. Our schools are teaching social studies, which is not history. When historical subjects are taught, they are often taught either: A) in a very tendentious, politically correct way, or B) in a very boring way, or C) both of the above.

The very vehicle (public education) intended to propagate the secularist outlook is an international disgrace. But what children *do* imbibe history and grasp it? Those in conservative Christian schools and homeschools.

Frederick Clarkson, lecturing at a New York secularist seminar in October 2005, held that Christian Reconstructionists “know where they stand in history” and the role they'll be playing in it. Clarkson contrasted this with the rest of society, which “is pretty much disconnected from” history.

“Obstacles to Our Understanding of the Past”

Rushdoony notes that the *Humanistic Education Sourcebook*, an anthology “used in training teachers,” contains an essay “entitled ‘Humanism: Capstone of an Educated Person.’ This title is revealing. For our statist educators, a truly educated person is a humanist.”⁵ This academic reality is confirmed by the secular scholar Karl D. Uitti, thus:

What is the purpose of humanistic scholarship? What, in fact, does the humanist scholar do? The job of the humanist scholar is to organize our huge inheritance of culture ... *to clear away the obstacles to our understanding of the past*, to make our whole cultural heritage ... accessible to us.⁶

The problem, as Bennett and Clarkson have noted, is that this entire program *has failed*. The Enlightenment heritage that secularism sought to perpetuate has *not* been made accessible. And from all accounts, the program is not even worth saving because the secular view of history must now compete with the Christian view of history.

The flaw in history education is a simple one. As Robert Erwin puts it: “In the long run humans do not bear up well without meaning.”⁷ Sharlet recognizes that a Biblical worldview

delivers history from meaninglessness. It also delivers us out of the cold hands of an expurgated version of history, a tale denatured by educational necessity given the exigencies of public policy. Sharlet writes concerning the Christian nation depicted by Christian revisionists that:

Secularism hides this story, killed the Christian nation, and tried to dispose of the body. Fundamentalism wants to resurrect it, and doing so requires revision: fundamentalists, looking backward, see a different history, remade in the image of the seductive but strict logic of a prime mover that sets things in motion.⁸

The movement now sees that to reclaim America for God, it must first reclaim that tradition for Him, and so it is producing a flood of educational texts with which to wash away the stain of secular history.⁹

All “revision” is spurious to the stalwart old guard. To be called a “revisionist” is a slur one tier below “extremist” in today's environment. But if the Christians are correct about God and history, then God Himself is a revisionist, and His story cannot ultimately be buried, let alone countered. *If the Christian history proponents didn't have a seemingly infinite storehouse of evidence for their view*, but only shallow, easily exhausted resources that paled next to the evidence for the Enlightenment version of history, *the Christian history movement would have long ago died*.

Notably, Rushdoony never saw history as normative:

I have more than a few times been disappointed in men whose knowledge at first glance made them notable. Their problem was a past-bound vision. Their focus was on the early church, or the medieval church, or the Reformation church, and so on and on. If their interest was political they often looked backward to a particular era in history.

Now such interests can be good, but too often such people idealize the past and want a return to something no longer tenable. The modernist, on the other hand, wants a continual revision of the content of the Faith in terms of the spirit of the age. Those of us who hold that it is God's enscripturated word that is alone authoritative must recognize that it must transform and govern our todays and tomorrows.¹⁰

Jeff Sharlet has failed to recognize that Rushdoony is future-oriented and is *not* seduced by idealistic notions of an alleged "romance of American fundamentalism."

Sharlet laments that his secular history message (1) isn't competitive, (2) is so far from attractive it's positively stultifying compared to Christian historiography, (3) is a complete bust in terms of predictive utility, (4) inspires nobody to live for something greater than himself, and (5) has led to attempts to remediate one through four that are manifestly futile since Christian Reconstructionists are latched onto the future.

Our Place in History

Rushdoony comments on Deuteronomy 4: "What Moses assumes from start to finish is a chain of generations accountable to God and subject to His judgments. Our modern individualistic perspective makes this a strange concept today. Each new generation now sees itself in supposed freedom and independence from the past. The result is both shallow and dangerous thinking. The freedom presupposed by this anarchistic view of history is very faulty. The chain of generations is not a binding chain but a foundation to build upon and in terms of which to grow."¹¹

To speak concerning God's judgment constitutes one a prophet. Rushdoony points out that the true prophet is not a welcome person. He calls attention to the apostasy of men from God's

covenant and law. This fact creates a market for false prophets who speak encouraging words where judgment is required. As he points out, "For covenant-breakers, *judgment* is the governing and overruling fact of history. Man's goal, however, is history without judgment, history as an experiment, not a test. But history without judgment does not exist. Because God made heaven and earth and all things therein, history is a continuing test and judgment."¹²

Rushdoony, commenting on Exodus, points out that "[f]or God to act in history means that the decisive determiner of events is not man but God." Events are given a naturalistic interpretation so that man can retain his priority and keep God in His place. He further quotes Joseph Parker to the effect that "The Song of Moses is simply history set to music." Rushdoony adds, "If left to the scholars, history could never be set to music because it is dehydrated, dehumanized, and stripped of God."

Meaning and History

Meaning and history are tied together. If there is no meaning, there can be no history—men can then *create* meaning by fiat. If history is meaningless, time cannot be precious. But because time *is* precious, is to be redeemed, history by implication *has meaning*.

If humanists consistently believed in meaninglessness being ultimate, they wouldn't care about history or historic determinism—such ideas would be myths to dismiss. *But*, because humanists want to be their own gods, because they want to *create* meaning and not submit to a preexisting meaning that they stridently deny in their ethical rebellion, they deliberately undercut history. *Humanistic historians always become mythmakers and spin doctors.*

As Rushdoony notes, "[M]an, in seeking to wrest control of history from the hand of God, has made himself

instead the prisoner of history, and moreover, a prisoner without hope."¹³ The non-Christian doctrine of history "places man *under nature* and seeks to place him *over God*; the Biblical doctrine places man *under God* and *over nature* in Him. Thus, the consequence of *every* philosophy of history which denies the God of scripture ... is to open the way for the terror of man under nature and under the divine and messianic state."¹⁴

Purpose of Secular History Books

One of the main purposes of secular history books is to document a progressive trend from darkness to light, to enlightenment. This is the enlightenment heresy. History books make a point of talking about the evils of the past and the darkness under which men lived (scientific, artistic, cultural, racial), and they depict the process by which everything is becoming new. This anti-Christian bias in a history book makes it objective. A Christian bias in a history book makes it worthless in the eyes of a humanist, and even dangerous.

This philosophical requirement—that schools not establish a religion—requires the rewriting of history. The children get a false understanding of the truth. But they *do* get an understanding that is *useful* from the point of view of humanists, who are interested in manipulating truth for their own purposes.

A notorious example of such manipulation can be found in the writings of Dr. Susan McClary. A dedicated revisionist, she received a reported six-figure grant from the MacArthur Foundation in 1995 and wrote as follows:

It is no accident that the dynasty of great bourgeois composers begins with Bach, for he gives the impression that our way of representing the world musically is God-given. Thereafter, tonality can retain its aura of absolute perfection ("the way music goes") in its native secular habitat. This sleight of

hand earned Bach the name “the fifth evangelist.” I would propose the age-old strategy of rewriting the tradition in such a way as to appropriate Bach to our own political ends.

It is clear that humanists aren’t even hiding their intentions anymore, they’ve become so brazen. Herbert Schlossberg has identified such “idols of history” equally well:

Thus far almost everything we have said has stressed the plasticity of history. Instead of the constellation of names, dates, treaties, and other hard facts we learned in school, it now seems that history is apprehended subjectively and used in accordance with the purposes of the moment . . . Thus, history has always served equally as well those who ransack it for weapons and those who explore it for wisdom. The past is made to fight the battles of the people who are using it.¹⁵

Memory and Remembrance

In Deuteronomy 16:3 Israel is told, “[R]emember the day when thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt all the days of thy life.” Rushdoony comments that people with no sound memory of the past have no good hope for the future: “Having no sound memory of past victories, they have no foundation for present and future triumphs . . . [Biblically] the purpose of memory is to guide and govern action.”¹⁶ It is no surprise that Rushdoony discerns in Scripture the view that history is, in part, a memory war, quoting Jeremiah 11:19 to the effect that Jeremiah sees his enemies as men seeking to obliterate the very memory of him because their cause in history is anti-God.

Forgetfulness of history leads to the Deuteronomy 8 problem: beware lest you forget what God has done. We redefine our philosophy of reality when we forget what God has done. Loss of history is a loss of our understanding of reality. Reality is inevitably distorted to the extent that history has been lost. In Exodus 1,

there arose a king that knew not Joseph. Forgetfulness has consequences.

The biggest example of divine consequences in history is the seventy years of Babylonian captivity exacted against Israel for nearly 500 years of missed land Sabbaths. The Lord didn’t execute justice speedily (Eccles. 8:11), and men misinterpreted His providing opportunity to repent as His winking at sin for century after century.

God is never mocked.

History Rendered Irrelevant

Herbert Schlossberg provides further evidence of the trend toward irrelevance that marks modern idolatrous historiography:

In 1977, David Donald of the Harvard history department . . . says that the lessons of the past are not only irrelevant for his students, but dangerous. “Perhaps my most useful function would be to disenchant them from the spell of history, to help them see the irrelevance of the past.” Donald’s position gives the appearance of devaluing history, but in fact it is only a disguised version of the Hegelian divinization of history. It dismisses history as a subject of study to exalt it as a principle of inevitability.¹⁷

It comes as no surprise, then, that when C. Gregg Singer attended an annual convention of the American Historical Society, “the scholars were agreed that history is devoid of meaning and purpose. When Singer asked why they then taught it, there was no reply.”¹⁸

Pray that *we* might have a reply for why *we* teach history, a history that is *saturated* with ultimate meaning and purpose. Let’s teach it with resolve, let’s remember the rock from which we were hewn, and let’s build the future that is advancing to meet us in Christ Jesus. ■

1. C. Gregg Singer, “The Problem of Historical Interpretation,” in Gary North, *Foundations of Christian Scholarship* (Vallecito, CA: Ross House Books, 1979), 57.

2. Jeff Sharlet, “Through a Glass, Darkly: How the Christian right is reimagining U.S. history,” *Harper’s Magazine*, December 2006, 33–43.

3. Richard A. Shweder, “Guess who’s unwelcome at dinner? Nonbeliever elites may as well get comfortable with God in conversation.” Shweder, a Guggenheim Fellow and winner of the AAAS Socio-Psychological Prize, was president of the Society for Psychological Anthropology. Shweder’s piece first appeared in the *New York Times* on November 27, 2006, under the title “Atheists Agonistes.”

4. “Raising a Ruckus,” Gloria Gaither’s interview with Dr. William J. Bennett. *Homecoming*, Vol. 4, Issue 5 (September/October 2006), 25–28.

5. R. J. Rushdoony, “Education: Today’s Crisis and Dilemma,” *Journal of Christian Reconstruction* 11.2 (1987), 69.

6. Karl D. Uitti, *Linguistics and Literary Theory* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1969), vii.

7. Robert Erwin, *The Great Language Panic and Other Essays in Cultural History* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1990), 75.

8. *Ibid.*

9. *Ibid.*, 36.

10. Andrew Sandlin, ed., *A Comprehensive Faith* (San Jose, CA: Friends of Chalcedon, 1996), 15, quoting Rushdoony’s article, “Unconstructive Religion,” first appearing in *Chalcedon Report*, No. 362, September 1995, 2.

11. Rushdoony, upcoming commentary on Deuteronomy.

12. Quotations from Rushdoony’s upcoming commentary on Deuteronomy.

13. R. J. Rushdoony, *The Biblical Philosophy of History*, 10.

14. *Ibid.*, 14.

15. Herbert Schlossberg, *Idols for Destruction* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Publishers, 1990), 19–20.

16. Rushdoony, upcoming commentary on Deuteronomy.

17. Schlossberg, 22–23.

18. *Ibid.*, 24. Also see North, *Foundations of Christian Scholarship*, 53.

The Biblical Philosophy of History and Worldview Evangelism

Roger Schultz



Years ago Francis Schaeffer, while teaching at Covenant Theological Seminary, was invited to lecture at Yale University. This

was a great opportunity, and Schaeffer asked his colleagues to recommend Biblical topics and lecture ideas. One professor friend quickly urged him to give a gospel message on John 3:16. But Schaeffer decided against it, arguing that his humanistic and post-Christian audience would have an insufficient framework to understand the Christian message. Instead, he thought his message should be on Genesis 1 and should cover God's sovereignty, the Biblical account of origins, and man's creation in the image of God. Calling this "worldview evangelism," Schaeffer insisted that this was the best way of opening contact with an ignorant, disillusioned, and skeptical audience. (Afterwards, Schaeffer added, the InterVarsity students could follow up by evangelizing their interested classmates.) Schaeffer's choice of text and theme for the Yale lecture is intriguing—and it follows precisely the apologetic approach of the Apostle Paul.

Pauline Apologetics

Acts 17 records Paul's famous discourse at Mars Hill, a classic of Christian apologetics. In Athens, Paul evangelized divergent audiences: religious (in the synagogue, v. 17a), economic (in the marketplace, v. 17b), academic (philosophers, v. 18), and political (at the Areopagus, v. 19). Paul's appearance before the assembled Athenian leaders and intellectuals is reminiscent of Socrates'

defense at the Areopagus four centuries earlier, and Luke deliberately seems to make this parallel.

Paul's audience clearly had a philosophical bent, and Luke underscores the presence of Stoic and Epicurean philosophers. The Stoics were pantheistic and believed in a cosmic determinism, the need to cultivate virtue, and human freedom and self-sufficiency. Epicureans were polytheistic and materialistic, did not believe in the immortality of the soul, and are best remembered for their emphasis on the pursuit of pleasure. Elements of Stoic and Epicurean philosophy linger in intellectual circles today.

Paul's audience had a surprisingly modern attitude. Athenians were religiously pluralistic, for instance, and Paul was distressed by the number of idols that he saw in the city (v. 16). The intellectuals at Mars Hill, Luke further emphasizes, spent all their time listening to novel theories, always hoping to hear "some new thing" (v. 21). Elsewhere Paul describes those of a similar mindset who are "always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (2 Tim. 3:7 NKJV). That mindset fits twenty-first-century Americans as nicely as first-century Athenians.

The Areopagite worldview was humanistic, skeptical, relativistic, and pluralistic. All things were tolerated. The philosophers were titillated by the novel and innovative, and they reveled in their agnostic sophistry. (The fact that they erected a temple to the "unknown" God indicates a certain detached, postmodern snobbery.) Paul's message was a frontal challenge to their worldview. A few of

the Areopagites would believe (v. 34), but most sneered at his words.

Likewise, the worldview of our day is humanistic and modern (or postmodern). Rushdoony notes that modernism "is the belief in the relativism of all truth, coupled with an evolutionary concept of man and history." Elsewhere he states that "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."

So what does Paul say to his pluralistic, postmodern Greek listeners? He does not say, "God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life!" His approach is quite different than the simplistic seeker-friendly slogans of watery postmodern evangelicalism. Instead, Paul presents a gospel-oriented apologetic message anchored in a Biblical philosophy of history. He offers a comprehensive worldview, stressing the sovereignty of God, His total control of life, and His providential governance of history. The message concludes with reference to Christ and His Resurrection, the movement of history to a final judgment, and an urgent call to repentance. But before issuing the call to repentance and salvation, the Apostle offers an overarching view of history. This would have been a stunning message for Areopagite intellectuals.

Paul versus the Postmodernists

After an initial point of contact, Paul stresses the absolute sovereignty of God (vv. 24–25). God was Lord of heaven and earth, having made all things. He was completely transcendent, needing nothing from men. (He certainly did not

depend on temples built by the hands or on man's idolatrous worship.)

Paul's attention to God's sovereignty establishes an essential starting point for historical consideration. Every view of history must begin with some foundation or starting point or organizing principle. This fundamental principle of sovereignty may be explicit or implicit, acknowledged or ignored—but it always exists. As a university student majoring in history and philosophy, I was intrigued by Rushdoony's *The Biblical Philosophy of History*. For the first time I saw a philosophically astute, Biblically faithful, and comprehensive view of God's sovereignty and history. And that is exactly how Paul starts with the Athenian philosophers.

Like Schaeffer at Yale, Paul also stressed creation (v. 24). The idea of creation *ex nihilo* was as objectionable to Hellenistic humanists two thousand years ago as it is to humanists today. But the essential principle of divine creation has been constantly affirmed by God's people (Neh. 9:6). Early Christians instantly made it part of their corporate worship and testimony. In Acts 4:24, for instance, when Christians gave a spontaneous prayer of thanks—it was a corporate prayer that stressed God's creative work, His absolute sovereignty, and His providential governance of history.

The Christian faith is not a discommodulated abstract and speculative faith. It is real and historical, emphasizing God's work in time. The incarnation, Resurrection, and ascension affirm what Christ did in space and time. Christians further believe that time is linear, moving by God's power from creation to a culminating point.

Paul's address at Mars Hill also stresses a Biblical doctrine of man (v. 26). Since all men are formed from "one blood," there is emphasis on a common humanity. This may have surprised Paul's

ethnocentric Greek audience, which was inclined to look down on outsiders as uncivilized barbarians. Paul's message is straightforward: man was created by God, is totally dependent on God for life, is subject to judgment, and is called to repentance.

Paul's introduction of Biblical anthropology at Mars Hill raises basic questions of history. How does the historian view man and human society? For humanists, man is essentially good, perhaps neutral, or, at worst, somewhat ignorant and in need of a little education. What kind of creature is man? Is he an economic creature (motivated primarily by money), a political creature (influenced largely by a quest for power), a sexual being (for whom sexuality is the dominant concern), or a religious creature? The Biblical perspective is clear. Man is made in the image of God, is a covenant breaker, is deserving of the wrath of God, and needs a savior.

Paul further emphasizes God's providence (vv. 26, 28). God gives life and breath to all creation. The nations of earth are under the sovereign control of God, who has determined their times and the boundaries of their habitations. Ben Franklin evidenced this confidence in God's providence at the Constitutional Congress, urging prayer and reminding delegates that "if a sparrow cannot fall without His notice, a nation cannot rise without His assistance." The Westminster Confession of Faith (chapter 5) has a masterful discussion of God's providence, which is worthy of careful study. Some consider this a heavy theological doctrine and warn Christians about straying to the topic of providence, as it is frequently controversial. It is notable, however, that Paul introduced the topic of providence early in his Mars Hill discourse, even though speaking to a hostile and theologically green audience.

All theological systems and philoso-

phies of history will have some doctrine of sovereignty, providence, and predestination. Years ago a nominal Christian student, having listened to my lecture on Reformation theology, expressed her disapproval of Calvin's view of predestination. I knew that the student was interested in zodiac signs. "Why do you believe that the stars and signs influence your life," I asked, "but refuse to believe that the sovereign God of the universe providentially controls the lives of His creatures?" Men will inevitably believe in some kind of providence. If they don't believe in the providence and purpose of God, they will believe in a surrogate providence—the power of the zodiac, biological determinism, the omnipotent state, individual will to power, some impersonal "force," etc.

God's eternal decrees and providential governance of history is what gives history meaning. In *The One and the Many*, Rushdoony clearly states the Christian position: "[B]ecause the world is totally under God and is absolutely determined by Him, it is therefore a world with purpose and meaning. History is rescued from meaninglessness. It is no longer brute factuality, meaningless and uninterpreted facts. It has purpose, meaning and direction, because God created it in terms of His ultimate decree and purpose."¹

Paul's message, finally, is Christocentric, eschatological, and evangelistic (vv. 30–31). The Apostle's preaching in Athens had emphasized Jesus and the Resurrection (17:18), and at his closing at Mars Hill he returns to the same theme. History moves toward a final judgment, and this fact should motivate men to repent. In short, doctrine and history are not abstract considerations. They should drive men to repentance and salvation in Christ.

Paul versus the Humanists

In Romans 1:18–32, Paul further

describes the humanist mindset. He may have been thinking of the self-confident philosophers who sat around Mars Hill eager to learn some new thing. Paul's discussion provides an overview of man's depravity, human cultures, and societal declension. It is, in short, an overview of humanism.

Paul argues that man and humanistic culture are in rebellion against God. Though men know certain things about God, they "suppress the truth in unrighteousness" (v. 18 NKJV). They turn from the truth of God and "exchange [it] for the lie" (v. 25 NKJV). For Paul, there is a significant epistemological shift—as sinful man repudiates the truth of God that is everywhere present. There is also a significant moral shift, as man repudiates the truth in "unrighteousness." It is for this reason that the sovereign God must first grant repentance to sinful man, which will lead in turn to a knowledge of the truth (2 Tim. 2:25).

Humanistic culture and thought, furthermore, inevitably descend into idolatry. Sinful man falls into the grossest idolatry, exchanging the glory of God for the image of beasts and worshipping the creatures rather than the Creator. Even as these pretentious rebels are transformed into utter fools, they proclaim themselves to be wise.

Paul further argues that humanistic cultures descend into moral degradation. God gives these sinners over to their lusts and depravities so that they may be dishonored. Moral perversions are, themselves, a sign of God's judgments. The larger, more systemic problem is rebellion against God, and perverse behavior is simply a symptom of a deeper spiritual crisis. Human corruption becomes increasingly manifest because God no longer restrains man's fallen passions.

Paul further argues that humanist cultures become revolutionary and seditious. Sinful man does not want to retain the knowledge of God. So God gives

these rebels over to a debased mind. They become grotesquely immoral, rebellious, hateful, and seditious. These reprobates know God's judgments, know that they deserve death, and simply do not care. Humanistic systems will proclaim freedom and human autonomy but will inevitably end in degradation or in either anarchy or statism. Christ College, Lynchburg, Virginia, used to sell a sweatshirt with a great Christian message. It showed a Bible and a cross and had a memorable inscription: "God's law or chaos!"

Finally, humanistic cultures will face the wrath and judgment of God. Paul's burden in the first chapters of Romans was the same as in Acts 17. He wanted to show that every man is left without excuse, ready to face the wrath of God in judgment (Rom. 1:18). Depraved rebels, however, don't care—not only doing these reprehensible things, but also "giv[ing] hearty approval to those who practice them" (1:32 NAS).

So, how would the humanists of Romans 1 do history? How faithfully would they write history books or teach children in their schools? They will do a poor job—since Scripture attests that they have already exchanged the truth of God for a lie, worshipped the creature, and given "hearty approval" to those defying God. Contemporary humanistic rebels will understand, write, and teach history from their core presuppositions, which are the presuppositions of rebellion and apostasy.

Christian Presuppositionalism

Cornelius Van Til advanced a system of Biblical and presuppositional apologetics, and his consistently Biblical insights can be applied to other disciplines, including history. Rushdoony's *The Nature of the American System* opens with an explanation of a presuppositional methodology for history. "Behind the writing of history is a philosophy of

history, and behind that philosophy of history are certain pre-theoretical and essentially religious presuppositions. There is no such thing as brute factuality, but rather only interpreted factuality. The historian's report is always the report of a perspective, a context, a framework."²

No man can approach history with absolute detachment and complete objectivity. "Neutrality," Rushdoony observes in *The Nature of the American System*, "is one of the persistent errors of the modern era."³ Modern man makes himself and his knowledge the sole source of autonomous authority, he continues, and man is the final "court of appeal."

Man always has some perspective, and religious presuppositions are inevitable. What is unique about Christian historians and academics is that their fundamental commitments are (or should be) clear. They have a central commitment to Christ and Scripture. They know how history began and where it is headed. They know the Lord who guides history. As Rushdoony puts it in *The Biblical Philosophy of History*, "[T]he Christian accepts a world which is totally meaningful and in which every event moves in terms of God's predestined purpose, and, when man accepts God as his Lord and Christ as his Savior, every event works together for good to him because he is now in harmony with that meaningful destiny."⁴

Contemporary Humanistic Historiography

In modern approaches to history, as in society, there is a repudiation of absolute truth—and certainly the truth of Scripture. There are two versions of this relativism. There is moral relativism, where fixed and enduring ethical standards are denied. There is epistemic relativism, where man denies fixed standards of truth.

As Rushdoony notes, "[A] basic premise of law and society today is rela-

tivism.” For the Christian, however, “an absolute law set forth by the Absolute God separates good from evil and protects good.” Biblical orthodoxy directly challenges the new creed of humanistic relativism.

In 1989 I defended my Ph.D. dissertation in history. The dissertation focused on Harry Rimmer, a prominent early-twentieth-century Presbyterian apologist who was a pioneering creationist. During the middle of the dissertation defense, one of my liberal professors jumped up from the table with a clenched fist and declared, “There are no absolutes!” This was, of course, a silly and inherently self-contradictory statement. Unfortunately, many historians operate under this assumption: there are no absolutes.

Man cannot live in the absence of absolute standards. Having rejected the truth of God, man will create or embrace some surrogate authority. Freed from God’s authority, man will submit himself to any and every kind of foolishness.

A friend of mine once served as the headmaster of a Christian school. The school had a crisis one day when officials realized that someone had “dirtied” on the floor of the boys’ room. The circumstantial evidence pointed to a persistent little troublemaker, but he had steadfastly denied his involvement. (He even put his little hand on a Bible and swore that he was innocent.)

My friend called the little reprobate in for an interview. “Do you know why I called you in?” he asked. The youngster knew that it was for something that had happened in the bathroom. “Before we begin,” my friend continued, “have you ever heard of DNA evidence?” Somewhat nervously, the boy admitted that he had. “You know, don’t you,” my friend continued, “that DNA evidence can be *very* accurate.” Now panicky, the boy agreed. “So,” my friend concluded, “Isn’t there something you’d like to say?”

At this point, the little boy confessed to what he’d done.

I was astonished by the story. The little fellow was in a Christian school—and had put his hand on the Bible and lied through his teeth. But he was forced to confess when confronted by the presumed infallibility of scientific evidence. That is the new authority of our age.

Because all standards and truths are relative, modern culture will stress toleration. Everything is to be accepted or tolerated. The new creed of our age is “Diversity is good.” This meaningless and content-void slogan is trumpeted everywhere, including billboards and bumper stickers.

Some diversity is glorious. We know that Christ died to redeem a people from every nation and tongue, and throughout eternity a diverse group of saints will bless the Savior. I suspect that modernists celebrate diversity for different reasons, as a way of gaining acceptance for heterodox thinking and immoral behavior.

No one, of course, will tolerate absolute diversity. Toleration has its limits. Few people would be so committed to religious diversity that they’d allow the renewal of Aztec human sacrifices. The key question is this: What are the boundaries of freedom within a system?

For many modernists, pluralism is a positive norm provided that one does not violate the humanistic and statist creed. In modern America, most faiths are tolerated as long as there is recognition that the state is sovereign. Two centuries ago, Rousseau hinted at the direction of modern pluralism in a discussion of civil religion. He was happy to encourage religion, so long as it recognized the sovereignty of the state, taught good morals, and advocated toleration for all other religions. But he couldn’t tolerate a religion that taught absolute principles. “Wherever theological intolerance is admitted, it must inevitably have some civil effect; and as soon as it

has such an effect, the Sovereign is no longer sovereign even in the temporal sphere: thenceforth priests are the real masters, and kings only their ministers . . . [T]olerance should be given to all religions that tolerate others, so long as their dogmas contain nothing contrary to the duties of citizenship. But whoever dares to say ‘Outside the Church is no salvation,’ ought to be driven from the State . . .”⁵ Those advocating a transcendent view of God and the importance of salvation, then, are a challenge to the state, are guilty of heresy, and cannot be tolerated. In a pluralistic society, Rushdoony notes, man cannot “be under one law except by virtue of imperialism.” The new pluralism inevitably leads to statism.

Ultimately, modern humanists have a religious agenda. Because man is a spiritual creature, made in the image of God, he must have some focus of worship. Having set aside the true God, he will look for surrogate deities. As Rushdoony puts it, “The alternative to ‘In God we trust’ is ‘In man we trust,’ or in reason, science, the experimental system, an elite, or some like entity. In any and every case it is a *religious* affirmation. The presuppositions of all man’s thinking are inescapably religious, and they are never neutral.”

All modernistic and postmodern humanistic systems of thought will eventually disintegrate into meaninglessness. “When man makes himself and his reason god over creation,” Rushdoony explains, “he thereupon destroys all meaning in creation and leaves himself a chained and gibbering baboon, sitting in terror on a wired electric chair in the midst of a vast universe of nothingness.”

The Christian Opportunity

Christians should be ready to confront the challenge of humanism and postmodernism. Scripture has given us a clear charge in confronting the idolatries

of our age. The Great Commission gives a comprehensive task—evangelizing the nations in terms of all that Christ has commanded. As Paul puts it, “[We are] casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing *every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ*” (2 Cor. 10:5 NKJV).

Christians shouldn’t worry about the crises of the modern age—be they economic, political, religious, ecological, and educational. As Rushdoony observed some forty years ago, “Modern age has lost even the most elementary abilities . . . namely the ability to discipline its children and maintain its authority. Without this, a culture is soon dead.” He says, “The modern age gives every evidence of approaching death. This is a cause, not for dismay, but for hope. The death of modernity makes possible a new culture, and such an event is always, however turbulent, an exciting and challenging venture. The dying culture loses its will to live. A new culture, grounded in a new faith, restores that will to live even under very adverse circumstances.”⁶

Romans I offers a grim overview of human culture and thought. The first chapter doesn’t appear to leave much hope for the future. Yet the conclusion of Romans offers much encouragement. Paul tells the Romans that “[t]he God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet” (16:20 NKJV). The great Epistle concludes with the confidence that the gospel will go to all nations—leading to the obedience of faith (16:26).

From the Areopagus where Paul spoke, one has a sweeping view of Athens, including the historic Acropolis with its magnificent structures and temples. One could have seen the Temple of Athena Nike (“Athena Victorious”)—indicating the power and ultimate triumph of the patron goddess of Athens.

It seems strange that Paul would, in that pagan setting, announce the conclusion of history at the judgment of Christ. But he did—and it was a key part of his apologetic.

Of all the speeches given over the centuries at Mars Hill, someone recently commented, only Paul’s remains. The Apostle’s words, recorded in Acts 17, point to God’s ultimate purposes in and over history through Jesus Christ. Those words are engraved on a bronze plaque and are bolted to the bedrock at the Areopagus. ■

1. Rousas John Rushdoony, *The One and the Many* (n.p.: Craig press, 1971), 359.
2. Rousas John Rushdoony, *The Nature of the American System* (Vallecito, CA: Ross House Books, 2001), 1.
3. *Ibid.*, 77
4. R. J. Rushdoony, *The Biblical Philosophy of History* (Vallecito, CA: Ross House books, rp 2000), 7.
5. Jean Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, Book IV.
6. R. J. Rushdoony, *The One and the Many* (n.p.: Craig Press, 1971), 370.

McVicar ... Pygmies cont. from page 18

26 April 1966, Archives of the Billy Graham Center, Wheaton College Archives and Special Collections, Wheaton, IL, collection 8, box 20, folder 42.

24. Carl F. H. Henry to R. J. Rushdoony, 11 January 1965, R. J. Rushdoony Library, Chalcedon Foundation, Vallecito, CA.

25. Henry carbon copied the letter and editor’s comments to Pew, R. J. Rushdoony Library, Chalcedon Foundation, Vallecito, CA.

26. R. J. Rushdoony to J. Howard Pew, 19 April 1966, R. J. Rushdoony Library, Chalcedon Foundation, Vallecito, CA.

27. Undated exchange between Carl Henry and a reviewer identified as “Jim,” Archives of the Billy Graham Center, Wheaton College Archives and Special Collections, Wheaton, IL, collection 8, box 20, folder 42. The article under consideration,

“Christian Social Ethics: Love, Justice, and Coercion,” is dated 2 February 1965, but the letter’s place in the Billy Graham Center’s Archive suggests the editors reviewed the article *after* the 1966 debacle.

28. “Evaluation of Manuscript,” 8 March 1973, Archives of the Billy Graham Center, Wheaton College Archives and Special Collections, Wheaton, IL, collection 8, box 20, folder 42.

29. Harold O. J. Brown, “Theology, Apologetics, and Ethics,” *Christianity Today*, 1 March 1974, 70.

30. Terrill I. Elniff to R. J. Rushdoony, 23 October 1975, R. J. Rushdoony Library, Chalcedon Foundation, Vallecito, CA.

31. Rodney Clapp, “Democracy as Heresy,” *Christianity Today*, 20 February 1987, 17–23. Gary North authored a caustic response to Clapp that addresses many of the article’s criticisms. See North, “Appendix B: Honest Reporting as Heresy,” *Westminster’s Confession: The Abandonment of Van Til’s Legacy* (Tyler, TX: Institute for Christian Economics, 1991), 317–341. North charges that *Christianity Today* initially agreed to run an article on Reconstructionism by John Hannah of Dallas Theological Seminary, but eventually rejected it telling him “that they had hoped for an essay that went into the details about the Reconstructionists’ infighting” (328). Given *Christianity Today*’s past relationship with Rushdoony, this is entirely plausible.

32. Rob Boston, “Thy Kingdom Come: Christian Reconstructionists and God’s Law in America,” *Church & State*, 8 September 1988, clearly used Clapp’s article as a source. The two articles share several quotations and bear a remarkable similarity in argumentation and organization. Boston’s essay has been widely cited by Berlet, Clarkson, and Diamond. Clarkson amplified and expanded the gist of Clapp’s article into a major theme of his oft-cited book, *Eternal Hostility: The Struggle Between Theocracy and Democracy* (Monroe, MA.: Common Courage Press, 1997).

33. “Briefs: North America,” *Christianity Today*, 2 April 2001, 25.

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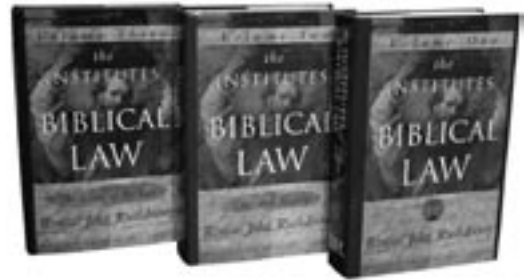
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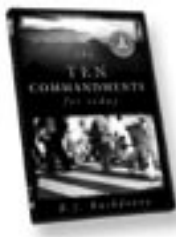
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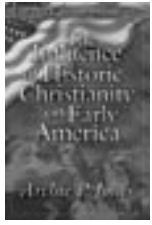
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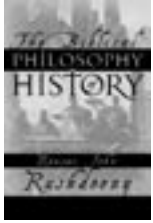
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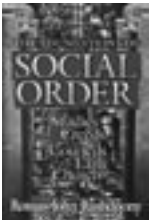
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By Rousas John Rushdoony. Early Christians were called "heretics" and "atheists" when they denied the gods of Rome, in particular the divinity of the emperor and the statism he embodied in his personality cult. These Christians knew that Jesus Christ, 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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Philosophy



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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 reprieved.

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.

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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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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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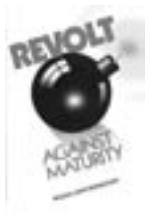


Politics of Guilt and Pity

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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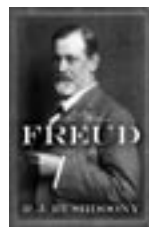


Revolt Against Maturity

By R.J. Rushdoony. The Biblical doctrine of psychology is 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 and cannot be understood from the Freudian 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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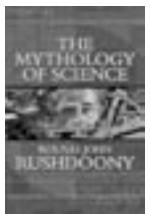
The Cure of Souls: Recovering the Biblical Doctrine of Confession

By R. J. Rushdoony. In *The Cure of Souls: Recovering the Biblical Doctrine of Confession*, R. J. Rushdoony cuts through the misuse of Romanism and modern psychology to restore the doctrine of confession to a Biblical foundation—one that is covenantal and Calvinistic. Without a true restoration of Biblical confession, the Christian's walk is impeded by the remains of sin. This volume is an effort in reversing this trend.

Without a true restoration of Biblical confession, the Christian's walk is impeded by the remains of sin. This volume is an effort in reversing this trend.

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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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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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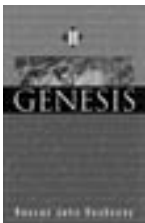
Pamphlet, 8 pages, \$1.00

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



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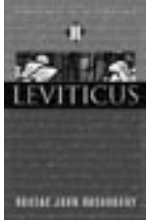
Exodus, Volume II of Commentaries on the Pentateuch

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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The Gospel of John

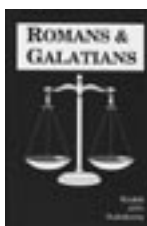
By R.J. Rushdoony. In this commentary the author maps out the glorious gospel of John, starting from the obvious parallel to Genesis 1 ("In the beginning was the Word") and through to the glorious conclusion of Christ's death and resurrection. Nothing more clearly reveals the gospel than Christ's atoning 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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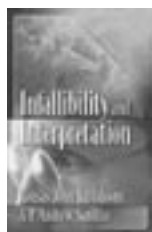
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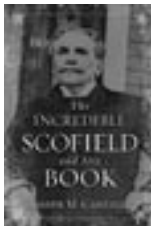
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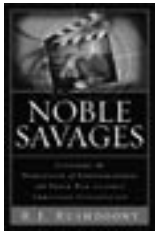
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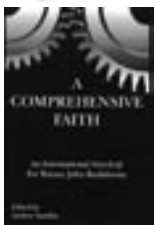
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A Comprehensive Faith

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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Thine is the Kingdom: A Study of the Postmillennial Hope

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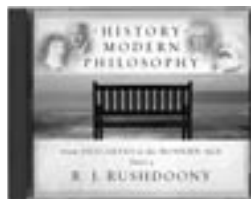
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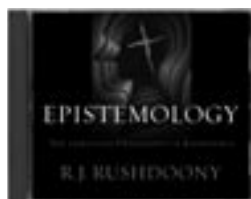
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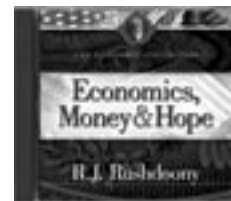
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