

# FAITH FOR ALL OF LIFE

*Faith for All of Life*  
Mar/Apr 2008

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PROCLAIMING THE AUTHORITY OF GOD'S WORD OVER EVERY AREA OF LIFE AND THOUGHT

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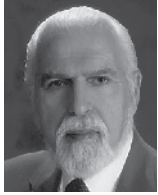
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# Dominion

(Reprinted from *Institutes of Biblical Law* [Phillipsburg, NJ: The Craig Press, 1973], 448–452.)

R. J. Rushdoony



Man was created in the image of God and commanded to subdue the earth and to have dominion over it (Gen. 1:26–27). Not only is it man's *calling* to exercise dominion, but it is also his *nature* to do so. Since God is the absolute and sovereign Lord and Creator, whose dominion is total and whose power is without limits, man, created in His image, shares in this communicable attribute of God. Man was created to exercise dominion under God and as God's appointed vicegerent over the earth. *Dominion* is thus a basic urge of man's nature.

As a result of the Fall, however, man's urge to dominion is now a perverted one, no longer an exercise of power under God and to His glory, but a desire to be God. This was precisely the temptation of Satan, that every man should be his own god, deciding for himself what constitutes right and wrong (Gen. 3:5). The ultimacy of man in both law and power was asserted.

History therefore has seen the long and bitter consequence of man's perverted urge to dominion. Man has made vicious and perverted use of man individually, in gang activities, and as an army or a nation. History is a long tale of horror in which man has sought power and dominion as an end in itself. George Orwell in 1984 saw the meaning of this fallen urge to dominion: "If you want a picture of the future, imagine a boot stamping on a human face—forever." This sinful, fallen urge to dominion is prominent in every sphere of modern life, as well as in all of

history. It certainly governs the political world, where the state daily gains power for power's sake.

As a result of all this, many have become frightened of all power and hostile to the concept of dominion. Liberals, neoorthodox, existentialists, and others have renounced the idea of power as an illusion or a temptation, and the possession of power as an evil. The result has been to accentuate the drift to totalitarian power.

Dominion does not disappear when a man renounces it; it is simply transferred to another person, perhaps to his wife, children, employer, or to the state. Where the individual surrenders his due dominion, where the family abdicates it, and the worker and employer reduce it, there another party, usually the state, concentrates dominion. Where organized society surrenders power, the mob gains it proportionate to the surrender.

This fact poses the problem which for an Orwell, who saw the issue clearly, is impossible to answer. Fallen man's exercise of dominion is demonic; it is power for the sake of power, and its goal is "a boot stamping on a human face—forever." Its alternative is the dominion of anarchy, the bloody and tumultuous reign of the momentarily strong.

Clearly, there is no hope for man except in regeneration. The Shorter Catechism of the Westminster Divines, in dealing with the image of God, declares:

Q. 10. How did God create man?

A. God created man male and female, after his own image, in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, with dominion over the creatures (Gen. 1:26–28; Col. 3:10; Eph. 4:24).

The salvation of man includes his restoration into the image of God and the calling implicit in that image, to subdue the earth and to exercise dominion. Hence, the proclamation of the gospel was also the proclamation of the Kingdom of God, according to all the New Testament.

A radical deformation of the gospel and of the redeemed man's calling crept into the church as a result of neoplatonism. Dominion was renounced, the earth regarded as the devil's realm, the body despised, and a false humility and meekness cultivated. Dominion was regarded as a burden of the flesh rather than a godly responsibility. Especially with Pietism, Jesus was pictured as meek and helpless, pacifistic and mild of manner.

The word *meek* is a Biblical term. It is used in Numbers 12:3 to describe Moses, who is termed "very meek"; Moses hardly jibes with modern ideas of meekness. In fact, Moses is described as meek "above all the men which were upon the face of the earth." John Marsh indicates the meaning of meek: "Moses does not fight for his own status before men, but is concerned to be Yahweh's servant. Therefore Yahweh cares for him and his position among the people."<sup>1</sup> The word *meek* thus refers primarily to a spiritual state in relationship to God. C. J. Elliott notes, "It may be observed, further, that the word *anav*, meek, is frequently interchanged with the cognate word *ani*, and that the meaning may be *bowed down*, or *oppressed*."<sup>2</sup> The meaning is further clarified by the Beatitude: "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth" (Matt. 5:5). Dominion

over the earth is given to the meek, and meekness clearly has reference to God. The meek are the redeemed whom God has burdened, oppressed, and broken to harness, so that they are tamed and workable. God subjected Moses to a more rigorous discipline than any other believer of his day, and Moses accepted that oppression, grew in terms of it, and became disciplined and strong. Hence, Moses was the meekest man of his age. Meekness is thus not mousiness, but disciplined strength in and under God.

Jesus Christ described Himself as “meek and lowly in heart” (Matt. 11:29; rendered “gentle and humble” by both Moffatt and the Berkeley Version). He described Himself as such in relationship to those who sought Him. In His relationship to the Pharisees and Sadducees, Christ’s conduct was firm and resolute. As Christ used the term *meekness*, it meant, *not* the surrender of dominion, but rather the wise, merciful, and gracious use of dominion.

We *cannot* understand the meaning of meekness in Scripture unless we realize that it is not the surrender of dominion but rather the humble and godly use of dominion that it has reference to. The blessed meek are the tamed of God, those harnessed to His law-word and calling, who shall inherit the earth (Matt. 5:5). The blessed meek are those who submit to God’s dominion, have therefore dominion over themselves, and are capable of exercising dominion over the earth. They therefore inherit the earth.

This point is of very great importance. Apart from it, the gospel is perverted. Man has a God-given urge to dominion, to power. The purpose of regeneration is to reestablish man in his creation mandate, to exercise dominion and to subdue the earth. The purpose of the law is to give man the God-appointed way to dominion. The purpose

of the call to obedience is to exercise dominion.

What happens then when a caricature of Jesus is presented, when obedience is constantly demanded without the God-ordained goal of obedience being mentioned, and when man is continually summoned to prepare himself in the Lord, but for no purpose? The ministry of the church then becomes trifling, and the life of the believer, frustrating.

But the urge to dominion does not disappear simply because the church does not speak of it. Instead, it reappears as an ugly and sinful struggle for power in the church; rightful dominion being neglected or denied, sinful dominion begins then to emerge. The life of the church becomes then an ugly struggle over meaningless trifles in which the sole purpose is sinful power and dominion. All too often this sinful urge to dominion is masked with hypocritical meekness.

It is very necessary therefore to recognize that the urge to dominion is God-given and is basic to the nature of man. An aspect of this dominion is property.

It is the custom among ecclesiastical socialists to deny that there is Biblical warrant for private property. Their ground for this is the often-repeated Biblical declaration, “[T]he earth is the LORD’s” (Exod. 9:29, etc.). They choose to neglect the total witness of Scripture to private property. The so-called communism of Acts 2:41–47, also cited by ecclesiastical socialists, was simply a voluntary sharing on the part of some (Acts 5). It was limited to Jerusalem. Because the believers took literally the words of Christ concerning the fall of Jerusalem (Matt. 24:1–28), they liquidated their properties there. The wealthier members placed some or all of these funds at the church’s disposal,

so that a witness could be made to their friends and relatives before Jerusalem fell. Very early, persecution drove all but a nucleus out of Jerusalem (Acts 8:1).

The earth is indeed the Lord’s, as is all dominion, but God has chosen to give dominion over the earth to man, subject to His law-word, and property is a central aspect of that dominion. The absolute and transcendental title to property is the Lord’s; the present and historical title to property is man’s. The ownership of property does not leave this world when it is denied to man; it is simply transferred to the state. If the contention of the liberals that the earth is the Lord’s, not man’s, is to be applied as they require it, then it must be applied equally to the state; the state then must be denied all right to own or control property.

The Scripture, however, places property in the hands of the family, not the state. It gives property to man as an aspect of his dominion, as part of his godly subduing of the earth.

If the doctrine of dominion in and under God is weakened, then all the law is weakened also.

God grants *dominion* to man under His law, but He does not grant His *sovereignty*. God alone is absolute Lord and Sovereign. To deny God’s sovereignty is to transfer sovereignty from God to man, or to man’s state. Thus, Thomas Paine in the *Rights of Man* affirmed as a fundamental principle the sovereignty of the nation-state, declaring, “*The nation is essentially the source of all sovereignty; nor can any INDIVIDUAL, or ANY BODY OF MEN, be entitled to any authority which is not expressly derived from it.*”<sup>28</sup> Paine and the French Revolution clearly affirmed their totalitarianism by this statement. The state as god became the source of authority, morality, and dominion. Quite logically, the Revolu-

*Continued on page 32*

# The Necessity of Dominion

Mark R. Rushdoony



One of the core elements of Chalcedon's message of the need for Christian Reconstruction has always been the belief in

the applicability of the dominion mandate (Gen. 1:28). Within the modern antinomian church our emphasis on the applicability of Biblical law has met the most resistance. This attitude within evangelicalism is largely theological; law is falsely seen as antithetical to grace.

The secularist, however, is not particularly concerned about whether some Christians believe in the applicability of Biblical law. After all, if religion is a purely personal spiritual odyssey, the morality one derives from it has little bearing on others. The secularist, however, is concerned to preserve his own turf. The concept of dominion conveys to him a belief that goes outside the box he has designated as religion's proper realm.

When Christianity makes any claim on secular, humanistic man, great howls of indignation arise. Such thinking must be seen as sinister. In recent years, it has earned its own designation as an "ism"; *dominionism* has become the great evil of the Religious Right and is used to convey what the term *communism* represented to the politics of the cold war.<sup>1</sup>

What dominion theology represents to many is the politicizing of Christian ethics. It is made into a political agenda. The scenario is presented of a fanatical cadre of Christians who determine to usher in God's Kingdom through the political order. As often as not, some reference is made to

presumed similarity with the jihad of Islamic fundamentalists.

Islam, however, has a far different view of the nature of religion, and hence a different motive, methodology, and ethic. Christianity is a religion of faith and necessitates a willing, self-conscious act of conversion. Little belief of any kind is necessary to Islam except a general acknowledgment of the supremacy of the divinity of Allah and preeminence of Muhammad as prophet. Beyond that core theology, Islam is a largely external religion; its focus is on what one does. Conversion in such an external religion of works is thus submission to the authority of Islam and its clerical authorities. No change of heart or ethics is required. This is why Islam has always expanded by the force of conquest and has seen freedom of religion as a threat. The "peace of Islam" is the peace that comes from submission to its rule, however brutal. Statism has not merely characterized the history of Islam; it has been the primary means of its rise as a world religion. It is the nature of Islam that it can advance its religion by force of arms and a "convert or die" policy; it is the nature of Christianity that such force is antithetical to its purpose.

The secularists distrust orthodox Christianity (they rarely have a problem with liberal, modernistic versions whose views are so similar to their own) because they see it as a threat to humanistic man's religious authority, the democratic will. Humanism is the elevation of man to a position of preeminence; anything deemed anti-democratic is thus an attack on the religious orthodoxy of modern man. This is not to say that

the secularist will not oppose the will of the democratic majority, however. When the majority favors some non-humanistic ethic or position, the majority must be forced into line, usually in the name of protecting the "rights" of some minority. Thus either the democratic rights of a majority or the democratic rights of a minority can be appealed to as circumstances dictate.

The scenario that is suggested by accusations that rest in the democratic will is that Christians are likely to resort to compulsion and violent suppression to reform society. Yet oddly, this has been the common pattern of secular humanists, not Christians. In 1972 Gil Elliot, in *Twentieth Century Book of the Dead*, noted how that century was the bloodiest in the history of mankind. That analysis did not include the killings that continued after 1972 nor did it include any of the millions of deaths by abortion. The twentieth century is the record of ascendant secularism, not Christianity.

What great oppression can secularists point to as Christianity's offense? Generally, they point out the resistance to humanism's agenda. If Christians object to abortion, those modern-day Herods (guilty of the murder of millions of innocents) object to the loss of their freedom to kill. If Christians try to retain any meaning of marriage in state law, they are denounced for denying the rights of those few who seek to redefine that institution (one example of how any tiny minority can co-opt the claim of "democratic rights" against the majority as the need arises). Inevitably, one area of Christian ethics is, above all



others, condemned as offensive. Modern man embraces his rebellion and so defines his rights in terms of his will to evil. Sexual morality is thus a hateful concept to modern man.<sup>2</sup> Man now sees sexual license as the measure of his freedom. Western man is now more taxed and regulated than ever in history, but sees himself as free because he can access pornography so readily.

According to Genesis, man was made to work, and the creation or dominion mandate was his directive. Dominion is thus part of man's nature; if he does not use it in an ethical way, he will use it in an aggressive way and manifest his sin nature. Thus, bullying by children, spousal abuse, manipulation by false guilt, and the abuse of employees are all examples of an evil drive to dominion. Those enumerated by Elliot are only the politically sponsored examples of evil dominion that resulted in massive numbers of deaths.

All men have a dominion impulse; it is part of their nature. Benign examples of dominion on the personal level are the nurturing of children into productive members of society, the businessmen who produce capital that increases the wealth and well-being of their family and employees, and the scientists or inventors who seek to improve man's life.

The Christian view of the dominion mandate goes beyond that of a socially responsible and productive life, however. The dominion mandate is, after all, also called the creation mandate, and so represents a view of man's fundamental purpose and responsibility to his Creator.

Man is responsible to God in his every thought and action. Man was created to work. The fact that man rebelled against God means that his efforts are now plagued by sin. God has communicated to man His laws, at times by direct

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revelation to Adam, Noah, Abraham, and others. Moses was led by God to record this law in writing, and later Biblical writers revealed more of God's will for men.

All of God's revelation to man since the Fall has directed man to His promise of salvation from sin and victory over Satan. Ever since Genesis 3, mankind has been divided in terms of response to God's salvation, which is a recall to life on God's terms. God's salvation is a recall to faith in God and a view of life in terms of that faith. Faith represents a confidence in who God is and the truth of His Word and promises. It is not a retreat from the physical, secular realm into a spiritual world. That is a dualistic distinction; the Christian is called to see all of reality as God's. Life then becomes the obedience of faith, a return to full accountability to God.

Men will exercise dominion of one sort or another. The secularism that arose with the Enlightenment and that was fostered by Darwin's naturalism has fed humanism's lust for dominion. This dominion resists Christianity's proclamation of the sovereignty of God and His law at every turn. The humanists do not reject dominion theology; they

only repudiate any Christian form of it in favor of their own. They seek to control every aspect of life to maintain a humanistic order. They demand their dominion over education, law, art, music, economic, and all other spheres. Their faith insists on the legitimacy of their own dominion and demonizes any competing form.

## Whose Right?

The question is not whether man will seek dominion, but whose right it is to dictate that order. That right does not belong to the Christian any more than it does to the secular humanist. It is not a human prerogative. One of the interesting Messianic names of Jesus Christ is "Shiloh." It can be translated as "He whose right it is." All things are Christ's, and all power in heaven and earth is His (Matt. 28:18). The choice for all men since Genesis 3 has been to live in terms of God's covenant promise of salvation. Man since then is defined as either a covenant-keeper or a covenant-breaker. Since the advent of God's Messiah, Jesus Christ, we can only be covenant-keepers if we acknowledge Jesus Christ as the one whose right it is.

## Theonomy Is Anti-Statist

At the heart of the secularists' misconception of the dominion mandate is their assumption that it is statist in nature. Humanism is the belief in the preeminence of man and so tends to either anarchism (the preeminence of the individual) or, more often, some form of statism (the preeminence of collective man). We live in a statist era that equates the state with god walking on earth (after Hegel). It is thus natural for modern statist humanists to presume that Christian dominion theology is also statist. This, however, is not the case.

The dominion of which we speak is not a rule by Christians over a subjected class of unbelievers. *Theonomy* means

“God’s law” as opposed to man’s law. *Theocracy* means the “rule of God” as opposed to the preeminence of man and his law as embodied in humanism. Neither represents the political domination of Christians but rather the authority of the Sovereign Creator God and His law.

It was the people’s will to have a king and its accompanying strong political order that led God to say: “[T]hey have not rejected thee [i.e., Samuel], but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them” (1 Sam. 8:7). Samuel, under instructions from God, predicted the nature of the political order they desired. He described conscription, servitude, the confiscation of lands and wealth (including the redistribution of wealth as political payoffs), until they would cry out under the oppression (vv. 9–19). The monarchy was given, but with it came the oppression prophesied; even the best of the reigns was characterized by heavy taxation and corrupt and self-serving abuses of power. Many reigns had no offsetting characteristics of good rule.

The government of Israel before the monarchy was a very decentralized affair. At its heart was self-government of individuals who recognized their covenant responsibilities. Beyond the self-governing individual was a patriarchal system where the elders or heads of families were the natural authorities. This existed even before the Exodus (Exod. 3:16), but at some point “elder” became an official title. After occupying Canaan, there were elders of cities, tribes, districts, and of Israel as a whole (the latter in some way forming a “congregation” or national assembly in matters of war or other general areas of great importance). The institution outlasted the monarchy and was in evidence after the Babylonian captivity (Ezra 10:14). In New Testament times it was an integral constituent part of the Sanhedrin.

**Christianity sees sin as man’s problem and seeks to limit man’s sin by limiting his power over others. Christianity looks to God and His law-word as authoritative, not man. It is not the Christians’ political power-grab that concerns secularists, but their source of authority, God and His law.**

The problem with accusing dominionists of being wannabe dictators is that big government has never been anything but antithetical to the Christians’ view of the Kingdom of God. The first detailed account of a strong political order was as early as Genesis 11 and was that of the city and tower of Babel. Babel and the later Babylon are thereafter synonymous with a foolhardy rebellion against God. In recent U.S. history Christians have become active in politics for largely defensive purposes, such as defending the victims of abortion and defending long-held ethical standards or definitions in law, such as marriage.

It would be safe to say that most Christians who believe in the dominion mandate distrust any political leader or group that does not believe in reducing the size and power of government. Basic to all Christianity is the belief that man is a sinner and that sin must be controlled. The secularist sees that message and says, “Yes, that means they want to control all people to prevent sin.” To do that would, of course, require a very big government with a great deal of power. That has been the opposite of the Christian direction in government, certainly in modern times.

The Puritan distrust of power in the hands of sinners led to the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, which were limits on the power of civil govern-

ment. It has been humanists who have made the push for more government, more power for the state, enlarged areas of responsibility, and more levels of government authority over man (including various treaties and world bodies such as, but not limited to, the United Nations). At the dawn of the modern era and the rise of absolute monarchs who claimed “divine right,” it was Christianity that conspicuously opposed such claims and precipitated the trend to limited monarchies. It has been the post-Enlightenment secular humanists who have presided over the growth of the modern state both in politics and by way of the philosophical justification of the enlarged state.

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The issue is, to use a title of one of my father’s books, “By what standard” do men live? Man’s standard can produce the horrors of mass murders and the executions Elliot and others have noted. God’s standard limits the power of sinners whether in civil politics or without. Chalcedon will continue to proclaim the standard of God’s law-word for all men of all time and all places as His eternal will and the only course of sanity. ■

1. For this reason I do not use the term *dominionism* and prefer instead to reference the dominion mandate and its call to exercise dominion. Dominionism conveys a political frame of reference alien to Christianity.
2. For a full analysis of this, see R. J. Rushdoony, *Noble Savages* (Vallecito, CA: Ross House Books, 2005).

# The Kingdom-Driven Life: Discovering God's Larger Purpose and Our Place in It

Christopher J. Ortiz



Is there a vision broad enough to be the central mission for every Christian, every family, every ministry, organization, institution, and business, yet focused enough to be meaningful to us individually? I submit that there is such a vision, and understanding it offers the cure for all that ails both our souls and our society.

It probably sounds strange that a vision so universal can yield such empowering purpose to you as an individual. Usually something “general” is too wide to hold such specific influence upon every aspect of life. But the Bible provides us with a vision that is both broad and specific. It’s a vision that can provide every living soul with a purpose that obliterates confusion, stagnation, and procrastination, and it’s a vision that can steer the direction of entire nations, institutions, and relationships. It’s a vision so drenched with purpose that its power can create the greatest era in human history because it’s the only vision that can both order and direct every aspect of society. Yes, the Bible provides us with such a vision, and the only downside is the convoluting of that vision by fashionable evangelical leaders.

## A World Clamoring for Purpose

Would you believe that a conservative Southern Baptist pastor wrote the best selling hardback book in the world? Rick Warren’s *The Purpose Driven Life*

has now sold over 25 million copies. Would you believe that a Charismatic pastor, with no theological awareness, is one of the most popular television preachers in modern history? Millions around the world tune in weekly to hear young Joel Osteen of Houston, Texas, preach to his 40,000-member congregation in a converted sports arena. Osteen is no literary slouch either. His latest book, *Become a Better You*—a follow-up to his bestseller *Your Best Life Now*—had an initial print run of 3 million copies.

It’s obvious that the world is clamoring for a sense of purpose. They want to know why they are here, and what their life should be about. The modern Christian leader skillful in psychobabble can easily tap into this void by presenting a lucid blend of self-help techniques and modified Bible readings. In such a philosophy, the life of Joseph is a lesson for corporate success; Job’s plight reveals keys to overcoming depression; and Solomon is the Donald Trump of the Old Testament. Mankind needs a vision, but Christian leaders are addressing this desperation with a man-centered gospel of deplorable content. The message they bring undermines a central thesis to Biblical revelation.

## The Biblical Thesis

The *Oxford American Dictionary* defines *thesis* as “a statement or theory that is put forward as a premise to be maintained or proved.” If you’ve been to college, or a university, you will

likely recall that before your professors allowed you to begin an essay or dissertation, you were required to craft a thesis statement.

The purpose of the thesis statement is to provide concentrated direction. Inexperienced students begin with a thesis too broad and are later prompted by their teachers to narrow the focus. A student who wants to write a research paper on “love” ends up with a highly focused thesis targeting *the definition of love as found in the romance literature of Victorian England from 1837 to 1845*. Without a tightly defined thesis, the student will get lost in the torrent of source material. Where would one begin research for something so general as “love”? And what would one be trying to prove regarding that general subject? The thesis statement limits the resources to be consulted and sets the goal for what the student is to prove or achieve.

I have my own definition of *thesis*: *that which you are seeking to establish*. In this sense, we all have a thesis, and that thesis gets applied to every area of our lives. So also are nations, corporations, and institutions driven by a thesis. These all have something they are *seeking to establish*. The Bible itself is a crafted thesis—it presents to man that which God seeks to establish. God’s thesis, or purpose, moves throughout the entire Biblical narrative, but its full revelation was not disclosed until the New Testament. Throughout the Old Testament, God’s thesis was essentially

hidden from the body of Israel. Even the prophets themselves were seeing through a glass darkly (1 Cor. 13:12) and could not define with clarity the nature of the unspeakable glory that would follow the sufferings of Christ (1 Pet. 1:10–12). It was not until the prophetic ministry of Jesus Christ that the world's greatest secret began to shine out of dark places as a day star for every human heart (2 Pet. 1:19)—the great secret contained the great thesis.

### The World's Greatest Secret

**I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world. (Matt. 13:35)**

In 2006 a self-help film, *The Secret*, was touted by media elites such as Oprah Winfrey and Larry King as a must-have for every person. It purportedly reveals an ancient method of success called the *law of attraction* that was utilized by such luminaries as Plato, Newton, Emerson, Edison, and Einstein. The premise of *The Secret* is that whatever dominates your mind—whether positive or negative—is what you'll attract into your life. No doubt the success of this film, and accompanying book, is equally due to the need for purpose that is driving the modern *geist*.

There is a secret, but it is not the law of attraction. There is a thesis, but it is not the purpose-driven life. There is a vision, but it far exceeds the grossly limited paradigm of a man-centered gospel of personal development. Our Lord revealed *the secret kept hidden from the foundation of the world*; and though the time had come for men to understand these truths, Jesus still chose to present that glorious vision in a series of parables intended to reach only those ordained by His Father:

**Unto you it is given to know *the mystery of the kingdom of God*: but**

**unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables: That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them. (Mark 4:11–12, emphasis added)**

God kept secret the *mystery of the Kingdom of God* from the foundation of the world (Luke 13:35). The Greek term *musterion* (mystery) is a derivative of *muo* (to shut the mouth) and taken from *mueo*, which means to *initiate into the mysteries*. *Mystery* was commonly defined as a secret revealed to initiate one into an elite religious rite. The mystery religions of ancient history, as well as the more modern secret societies, purport to hold such mysteries as an allure for neophytes into their respective orders. God's reasons for secrecy, however, were contingent upon divine election.

Although the Kingdom of God is to abide in the light so as to be seen of men (Matt. 5:14–16), *understanding* the mystery of the Kingdom of God is still the *secret* to being initiated into the order of God's kings and priests—an order that is ordained to extend His rule into every area of life.

Seeing the Kingdom of God requires first that one be born of the Spirit (John 3:3)—a strange-sounding idea to Nicodemus—“a master of Israel” (v. 10). Jesus was revealing “heavenly things,” but Nicodemus struggled to comprehend His meaning. “How can a man be born when he is old?” Nicodemus asked. Jesus scoffed at Nicodemus' blindness to the heavenly realities. The old order of priests and rulers was passing away, while a new order of king-priests was being created—i.e., “born again”—and they represented the chosen generation to be ushered out of the darkness into the light of God's Kingdom:

**But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. (1 Pet. 2:9).**

Since Nicodemus understood neither the earthly nor heavenly things of Israel's history (John 3:12), this new order of king-priests would require first a framework for understanding history, because the ethno-geographic center of Israel would no longer be the context for future Kingdom history. Christ presented this new framework in His parables, the majority of which focus exclusively as means to defining the Kingdom. Most of them begin with the refrain, “The Kingdom of heaven is like ...”

When Christ stated that with these parables He would “utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world” (Matt. 13:35), it was a preface to His explanation of the parable of the wheat and tares—a foundational parable that provides a new framework for understanding history and the developing Kingdom.

### The Secret of the Parable of the Wheat and Tares

You're probably familiar with the parable about a man who sowed wheat into his field, but while he was sleeping, an enemy came and sowed tares among his wheat. The man restrained the harvesters from plucking up the tares immediately lest they also remove some wheat. He instructed them to wait until the full harvest when the distinction between wheat and tare would be most clear. Of concern to me is what our Lord reveals to His disciples about the meaning of this parable.

**He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man. The field is the world; the good seed are the chil-**



dren of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity ... Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. (Matt. 13:37-43)

Here we learn that two seeds are striving for dominance of the field. If the field is the world, then the children of the Kingdom contend with the children of the wicked one to determine who shall rule it. If you have a grass lawn, you know firsthand that the secret to battling weeds and crabgrass is to crowd them out with healthy grass. However, that is also the way in which the weeds can crowd out your grass. The point is that we are not the only ones plowing in the field. We are not the only ones building a Kingdom. The tares are seeking a world of tares in which all signs of a wheat society are eradicated.

The mystery of the Kingdom is a grand vision in which the children of the Kingdom labor to extend the rule and reign of Christ in every area of life. This is the Bible's simple thesis—a vision sufficient for every institution, relationship, or individual. It is the Kingdom of God and His righteousness:

**But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. (Matt. 6:33)**

I appreciate the defining clause regarding “His righteousness” because it helps restrain too heavenly an interpretation. Righteousness speaks of justice

and the order of God—it is when the will of God is done *on earth* as it is in heaven (v. 10). Like Nicodemus, too many Christians do not see this thesis, and so use the Christian faith for personal ends. R. J. Rushdoony once wrote, “The major concern of most church members is not the Lord’s battles ... but, ‘How best can I enjoy life?’”<sup>1</sup>

Christian leaders have seized on this corruptibility and turned a hunger and thirst for righteousness (Matt. 5:6) into an incessant drive for what we shall eat, what we shall drink, and what we shall put on (Matt. 6:31). This epitomizes the basic difference between the thesis of mainstream Christianity and that of Christian Reconstruction: mainstream Christianity has encouraged believers to pursue carnal necessities and trivial self-worth, while Rushdoony created in us a hunger and thirst for the Kingdom and His righteousness. What is needed most now is a body of faithful people who understand their responsibility as stewards and trustees of God’s righteousness.

### Kingdom Trustees

According to the *Oxford American Dictionary*, “a trustee is an individual person or member of a board given control or powers of administration of property in trust with a legal obligation to administer it solely for the purposes specified.” This aptly describes the primary responsibility of every Christian, relationship, or institution. We are all given the powers to administer the property of another; a property that we only hold in trust, and a property that must be administered according to the purposes specified by the original property owner. The first such trustees were Adam and Eve:

**And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him. (Gen. 2:18)**

God had created man to “Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion” (Gen. 1:28), and this meant man was to go to work seeking first and foremost the expansion of God’s righteous dominion—man’s labors were *glorified with purpose* when understood as the means to fulfilling God’s mandate. To complete this task, Adam was given a helpmeet—not a lover, but a coworker—out of his own flesh. From that point on, this process would be *reversed* as men and women are now fused together in a way that connects them both spiritually and physically.

But the marriage covenant was not to be the end point. This is the lesson we must teach our children. Girls grow up idealizing romance in such a way that the marriage relationship itself becomes the goal or end to their life. Similarly, boys develop the fallacious idea that acquiring a “trophy wife” is one part of their ideal picture of the successful man. Both lead to false expectations, and the true purpose of marriage is never understood or lived out.

Adam and Eve were created as trustees of the dominion mandate. They were given administration over God’s property in trust, and they were expected to administer that property according to the purposes specified by God. As we know, they failed in their trusteeship. They could not manage the single tree from which they were forbidden. They agreed as a “couple” to make a decision as a “couple” to do something for them as a “couple,” viz. they conspired to be like God.

When we make marriage the end or goal, we will likely fail in our trusteeship. A larger vision of the Kingdom and His righteousness is to transcend the purpose of marriage (Matt. 6:33). Our relationships, like vocations and all institutions, are not ends in themselves

but are simply means to the end of establishing God's rule in every area of life. Husbands and wives must commit their marriage and family to the larger vision of advancing God's Kingdom, and this in itself may be of great service in alleviating some of the undue pressures of modern marriage.

We are all trustees whether young or old, or male or female. The Apostle Paul speaks of marriage as a mystery that actually reveals the relationship of Christ and His church (Eph. 5:32); but he goes on in the next chapter to redefine all areas and people in terms of that same larger purpose:

**Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right ... And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh ... in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ. (Eph. 6:1–5, emphasis added)**

Whether a small child, father, or employee, all that we do is to be done *as unto the Lord* with singleness of heart. And doing things unto the Lord means for the Lord's purpose, which is His Kingdom. This idea of singleness of heart bespeaks of purpose, but that purpose is still the advancing Kingdom.

All people in all areas work as unto the Lord. Their labor is redefined in terms of its meaning—the Lord's vision becomes the end point instead of the relationship, position, or job in itself. We shouldn't pursue a "Christian marriage"; we should see our marriage as a means to advancing the vision of the Kingdom that transcends our marriage. We're not to be merely "Christians in the marketplace"; we're to see our vocations as a way in which the Kingdom is advanced. To live in this manner requires a singleness of heart (Eph. 6:5), and that level

of commitment opens the door to an even greater understanding of God's purpose:

**The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. (Matt. 6:22)**

When our focus, or purpose, is God's Kingdom, we are enlightened to better understand that purpose, i.e., *we are filled with light*. This greater understanding aids us in multiplying the effectiveness of our gifts, talents, and resources. God's wisdom will "speak with you" (Prov. 6:22 NKJV) as you hunger and thirst for His Kingdom and righteousness because your commitment is the power behind creativity and invention. With a passion for God's purposes, you'll look for ways to exhaust all that God has entrusted you with.

### **The Parable of the Ten Pounds**

Our Lord taught this well-known parable for two reasons: (1) He was closing in on Jerusalem, and therefore His death, and (2) His disciples "thought that the kingdom of God should *immediately* appear" (Luke 19:11, emphasis added). In verse 14, an important aspect of the story is revealed:

**But his citizens hated him [the nobleman], and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us.**

Our Lord's point is that *the Kingdom shall not immediately appear*, but rather, *He shall disappear*, and the responsibility for implementing His reign would fall to the trustees He empowered with both authority and money (or resources). This is a great lesson for dispensationalists who insist only a physically present Christ can reign on the earth. This parable shows only that His return is to reconcile the accounting with His trustees; He need not be physically present in order for "occupation"

to ensue (v. 13). The reign of God will be manifested through His trustees in His physical absence.

This explains our plight as well. The unbeliever hates Christ and refuses to accept His reign over them. The trustees are required to take the resources given to them and "occupy till He comes" (v. 13). Occupying, in this parable, means increasing the pounds, or resources, as ruling trustees over the property. When the nobleman returns, the trustees are judged on "how much every man had gained by trading" (v. 15).

Matthew 25:14 states that the nobleman "called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods." What we have is not our own. Our gifts, talents, and resources are His goods, and they are delivered to us as trustees to administer. The larger purpose, therefore, governing our administration of His goods is the mission of expanding His reign. Metaphorically described as *gaining by trading* in Luke 19:15, we understand the extension of His rule is by means of our making more out of our resources for the purpose of His Kingdom. This can only happen when you take the position of a trustee in all areas of life; and a trustee will elevate the purpose of the Kingdom above all he does.

The great sin of this parable lies with the third servant who hid his pound. His reasoning was simple, but greatly flawed: "Lord, behold, here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin: For I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow" (Luke 19:20–21). For many, the response of this servant is quite sensible: try not to lose what was given to you and call it even! But the flaw in logic came right out of the servant's mouth:

**And he saith unto him, Out of**

thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow: Wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury? (vv. 22–23)

If we know our Lord is an austere (severe, strict) man, then *not* multiplying is *not* an option. Yet, an even greater principle is being taught here: the Lord will take up where He did not lay down, and reap where He did not sow. Here again we see His physical absence has no bearing on the expansion of His reign. Although He is the creator and sustainer of all things, He expects to take up what we lay down, and reap what we sow. He Himself shall not personally invade every area of life, but shall send us into each arena to lay down and sow for His great reaping.

### **Burying Our Resources**

The wicked servant buried his pound due to his faulty religious reasoning: he confused the means with the end. He saw the true value in the pound itself, and therefore did not consider that for which the money was given. It's like confusing seed and harvest. The pound was simply a measurable resource of seed that the nobleman expected to become a harvest by the administrative abilities of his trustee. Because the servant did not elevate the purpose and mission of the seed-resource above himself, he saw it as the goal instead, and therefore protected the pound with all his might.

We sin in this manner routinely. To use the illustration of marriage again, we can have a “good” marriage, yet still be considered lazy servants because we've made a good marriage the end instead of the means to the end. This is to bury

our God-given resource. Our marriages are seeds toward a greater harvest; and God expects of us multiplication. The easiest way to “multiply” is the most obvious: having children. If possible, a Christian couple should look to have children and to teach them also to elevate the Kingdom of God above their respective families. In this way, all future generations will be Kingdom-driven at the root.

This misconception may lie at the root of abuse in Christian male authority in the home. The danger inherent in some expressions of Christian patriarchy is misunderstanding the trustee family,<sup>2</sup> and this results in what amounts to a baptized domestic family. When you bear the title “patriarchy,” the less informed will therefore make establishing the position of the father as the end. This can easily lead to abuse, as some have testified. Our need of Biblical fathers is to point the direction of the family, its members, and their respective callings, to glorifying God by the building of the Kingdom of God—this is the true nature of glorifying the Lord.

We glorify God by extending His reign, and we extend His reign by multiplying our resources and abilities. The family is a trustee empowered with administrative authority to advance the reign of Christ in every area of life. The father's role is to instruct the family members in this regard, not simply to instruct the family in his role or position as father. The family must understand first that it is a collective, covenantal trusteeship responsible to Christ and His Kingdom.

### **The Kingdom for Which We Were Created**

**Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put**

**on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? (Matt. 6:25)**

This is the life of faith: to live in abandonment to God's purposes with the absolute trust that He knows what we need and will surely care for us more than many sparrows (Matt. 10:31). However, this verse is often misread to justify a monastic life of simplicity and near-poverty. In fact, even the reasonable unbeliever often reasons this way when he says, “Well, at least I have my health!” In other words, life is more important than whether we have meat, and our physical well-being more important than whether we are adorned with expensive clothing—we should be appreciative of the important things, right?

There is nothing contradictory in taking the passage in that fashion, but it misses the greater meaning our Lord intended. If “life is more than meat” and “the body than raiment,” then is there not something in addition that is more important than even life and the body? There most certainly is, and Christ leads His hearers to that conclusion:

**Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. (Matt. 6:31–33)**

Life is more than food, and the body more than clothing, yet we worry and toil for such things in the same manner as the unbeliever. Christ is not simply requiring us to be thankful that we're alive or healthy; He's showing us that as life and body are greater than



meat and clothing, so the Kingdom of God and His righteousness are greater than life and body. As He says elsewhere, “[F]ear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matt. 10:28).

The unbeliever lives in the fear of man. He lives in the fear of scarcity and provision. He’s also consumed with laying in store for this life only. But as the parable of the rich man demonstrates (Luke 12:16–21), being *rich toward God* requires that we find no rest in the abundance of our wealth, for “this night thy soul shall be required of thee” (Luke 12:20). And to be rich toward God (v. 21) means that rich men “do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come” (1 Tim. 6:18–19).

God is not asking the rich man to give away *all* his wealth to have treasure in heaven. Nor is He demanding us merely to be grateful for having life and body. The issue is the “firstness” of the Kingdom of God, and our central passion must be to use our resources for the establishment of God’s order of righteousness. An unbelieving man can be thankful for his health and general well-being, but this hardly makes him effective in God’s Kingdom.

We are not to be concerned with food and raiment because our concern must be dominated by the advancing Kingdom. That’s why God is so faithful to feed the ravens that “neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn” (Luke 12:24), because if the raven began to sow and reap for its own provision, the “kingdom” of the created order would break down. God wants nothing upon the raven’s mind but the purpose and kingdom for which he was created.

**The mystery of the Kingdom is a grand vision in which the children of the Kingdom labor to extend the rule and reign of Christ in every area of life.**

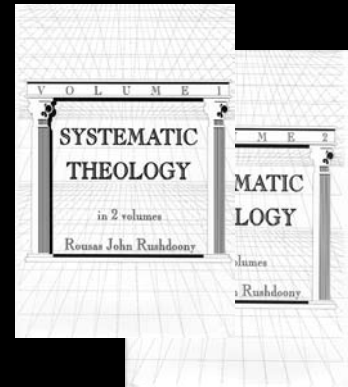
**This is the Bible’s simple thesis—a vision sufficient for every institution, relationship, or individual. It is the Kingdom of God and His righteousness:**

In like manner, nothing should occupy the central purpose of our lives but the affairs of the Kingdom for which we were created.

We should live the Kingdom-driven life, which means discovering God’s purpose and then finding our place in it. It means understanding that everything we have, all that we do, and every relationship in which we are involved, serves the greater purpose of advancing the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. A poor man understands what it means to hunger and thirst. Christ seeks to redirect that base human passion into an obsession for His righteousness, i.e., the establishment of God’s justice and order throughout the world until the tares are so few that the angels can pluck them out with ease. ■

1. R. J. Rushdoony, *Chariots of Prophetic Fire: Studies in Elijah and Elisha* (Vallecito, CA: Ross House Books, 2003), 2.
2. See Andrea Schwartz, “The Biblical Trustee Family” *Faith for All of Life*, November/December 2007, 30.

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# The Blessing of Dominion Theology

Martin G. Selbrede



It's something of a testament to the power of dishonest reporting that so many Christians believe that anyone writing on *The Blessing of Dominion Theology* must somehow be arguing for *The Blessing of Abject Miserable Tyrannical Legalism*. If you see a blessing in dominion theology, it is held, it can only be because you've turned a blind eye to the Scriptures, which supposedly bar anyone from forming such a dangerous view.

Dominion theology is equated with the yoke of bondage, to be repudiated and thrown off without further thought. That its critics might actually be echoing the raging nations so intent on bursting Christ's bands asunder and casting His cords from them (Ps. 2:3) is summarily discounted. But there is a world of difference between *saying* you have a strong Biblical case and *actually making good* on that claim. To that end, let us consider the Biblical testimony regarding the relationship of *blessing* to the matter of dominion theology.

Some housecleaning is necessary before we can launch into a fair appraisal of the Biblical case. It is needful to sweep away distortions, slanders, libels, and evil reports. Rarely is dominion theology allowed the courtesy of setting forth its own distinctives.<sup>1</sup> Words are stuffed into the mouths of dominion theologians by opponents intent on knocking down straw men. This near-universal tendency to malign dominion theology introduces a peculiar pathology: distancing oneself from dominion

theology entails distancing oneself from the Bible. Whether done out of deliberation or ignorant inconsistency, the result is equally crippling.

Critics seem to think that dominion theology implies taking the existing massive government we currently have and forcibly installing Priests, Preachers, and Pastors (the Three P's) at the top to run the show. Given the track record of the Three P's, this is an admittedly unattractive option. It's also an imaginary scenario with no foundation in fact, used to scare people away from dominion theology by invoking images of an American Taliban.

The truth be told, dominion theology goes the other direction entirely in its consistent call for decentralization of power.<sup>2</sup> Modern man confuses the concept of *dominion* with *domination*, for in humanism the two are synonymous. In actuality, the ideas are radically different, but Christians often fail to discern the difference. As R. J. Rushdoony points out,

The Christian can never exercise sovereign power. As David tells us, "God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this; that power belongeth unto God" (Ps. 62:11). At most, the Christian can exercise delegated power. His truest power comes from faithfulness to every word of God (Matt. 4:4). God's law-word gives man the way to dominion, and dominion is not domination. Domination is the exercise of lawless power over others. Dominion is the exercise of godly power in our God-given sphere. The rejection of God's sovereignty leads to domination; the affirmation of God's sovereignty and His law is the foundation of dominion.<sup>3</sup>

Chalcedon is entering its forty-third year of setting the record straight on this fundamental issue, yet there remains no more heavily misrepresented position than that of the dominion theologians. From all that can be gathered, "truth is fallen in the street" (Isa. 59:14), but wisdom shall be justified of her children (Matt. 11:19).

## How Do We Resolve the Question?

Some scholars have posed the challenging question, Is dominion theology a blessing or a curse? Behind this question is an even more important question: *how* do we determine if something is a blessing or a curse? By what standard is it to be determined to be one or the other? Do we appeal to historic precedents and analogies, or do we ground our answer unapologetically in the Scripture? The way we answer this question tells us a lot more about ourselves than it tells us about dominion theology.

It is understandable for humanists to reject dominion theology; humanism and dominion theology are clearly antithetical. But it is disturbing for Christians to dismiss dominion theology, for the substitutes offered up in its place (antinomianism, neoplatonism, taking nothing captive to Christ, and/or slothfulness raised to a theological ideal) are woefully destitute of any compelling scriptural support.

For surely it is to Scripture that we must resort if we wish to seek the mind of God on the question of *our duty before Him*. Making up answers as we go along is tantamount to simply doing what is right in our own eyes.

This is bad enough, but we often compound this by asking God to bless this dereliction, leading to an oil-and-water mixture R. J. Rushdoony labeled *baptized humanism*. The baptism part is for show: the fundamental thing being retained was the core *humanism* that invariably lies behind all anti-dominionism.

We shall examine six different aspects of dominion theology as it relates to the question of blessing and blessedness: Blessing and Law, Blessing and Work, Blessing and Eschatology, The Buried Talent, The Beatitudes, and Blessing and Subjection under Christ's Feet. We propose to establish, by appeal to Scripture, the *close, intimate relationship* of blessing with the key elements of dominion theology, taken severally and as a system. If, in the course of examining the scriptural data, this relationship is seen to be clearly revealed, we can come to only one conclusion: with all due respect, the opponents of dominion theology "have some 'splainin' to do."

## Blessing and God's Law

It defies imagination that we should need to prove that God's law is tightly correlated with God's blessing. Misunderstanding concerning the "curse of the law" has evidently led many Christians into an erroneous mindset, one at war with the Bible itself, a mindset that sunders the Scriptures into bite-size bits of uneven relevance. This Scripture-slicing tactic raises a problem, since preachers very much want to appropriate many wonderfully relevant verses *without* really appropriating them—"possessing as if not possessing them" (1 Cor. 7:30). What to do when a verse needs to be tweaked to fit your theology, especially if it fits the tenets of dominion theology if left to stand as God had originally written it? Short answer: tweak it anyway.

There is no more brutalized victim of such illicit tweaking in all the Bible

than Psalm One. As litmus tests go, the principle of Isaiah 8:20 ("[I]f they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them") is a powerful tool, but an awareness of how Psalm One is being handled by an expositor of Scripture is no less important. You, the redeemed of God, need to maintain a continual vigil against the *Psalm One Bait and Switch*.

## The Psalm One Bait and Switch

Psalm One, at the head of the Psalter, pronounces a blessing. This Psalm is all about blessing, in fact, and it premises the blessing that it promises on certain specific things. This Psalm is fairly clear about what those things are. The language isn't muddled or vague.

The reason the verse gets tweaked is *not* to introduce clarity to a vague verse, but to *rob the Psalm of clarity* and introduce *vagueness* where there was none before. This is the principle of the Psalm One Bait and Switch.

*Blessed is the man who ... meditates on God's law day and night.* By way of the bait and switch, the last clause becomes transmuted, in sermon after sermon, into "meditates on God's Word." That's *Step One* of the bait and switch. *Step Two* happens when the term "God's Word" is shifted entirely OFF the law that the psalmist mentions onto passages of the New Testament where the law isn't the topic of discussion at all. The bait and switch *completely reverses the intent of David the psalmist with absolute impunity*. This is conservative Biblical scholarship?

How can the blessing arise when the stated cause of the blessing (meditation on God's law) has been arbitrarily struck down by our pastors and seminary professors? You, the flock of God, are then forced to choose between the authority of the scribes and the authority of God Himself on the matter. This bait and switch cuts Christians off from the

blessings God would otherwise bestow, for the reader is being led astray as to David's meaning.

It is equally clear that once the bait and switch has been taught, and Christians mentally substitute "New Testament" for "God's law" when they read this Psalm, they will be unable to see the blessing that dominion theology brings. They have already blinded themselves with artificial blinkers to God's own promises. They see very different words than these: "[The blessed man's] delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night." Critics of dominion theology generally do *not* delight in the law of the Lord, nor do they meditate upon it day and night. In their view, no blessing can come from doing so.

They'd be more honest to cross out the words of this Psalm than to adjust the wording to suit their revisionist approach to God's revelation. Their intention is obvious, and they've hit the target quite well: Christians read Psalm One and then flip forward to the New Testament. One in a thousand might actually flip back to the source of blessing the psalmist bore such solemn witness to.

## Blessing and Cursing Are Indexed to Law, Justice, and Righteousness

The list of Scriptures that link blessing with obedience to God's law, and cursing with rebellion against His statutes and precepts, is a long one. They dovetail perfectly with Psalm One.

**Praise the LORD. *Blessed* is the man who fears the LORD, who finds great delight in his commands. (Ps. 112:1 NIV, emphasis added)**

***Blessed* are they who maintain justice, who constantly do what is right. (Ps. 106:3 NIV, emphasis added)**

*Blessed* is the man you discipline, O LORD, the man you teach from your law (Psalm 94:12 NIV, emphasis added)

See, I am setting before you today a *blessing* and a curse; the *blessing* if you obey the commands of the LORD your God that I am giving you today (Deut. 11:26–27 NIV, emphasis added)

Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint; but *blessed* is he who keeps the law. (Prov. 29:18 NIV, emphasis added. See also Deut. 27:26, 28:1, 30:19; Josh. 8:34; Ps. 119:1–2, 21; Luke 11:28; James 1:25)

Dominion theology's emphasis on the law of God as a source of blessing is hardly an idea foisted onto the Bible. The Bible itself witnesses to this association, and does so consistently. Although the Bible condemns the idea that justification can be secured by keeping the law (an idea that finds no support in either Old Testament or New), it magnifies God's law as the pattern of sanctification for the redeemed to walk by.

Failure to distinguish *abuse* of the law from the *right use* of the law can create the erroneous impression that the New Testament is opposed to God's law as a standard for Christian conduct. To forestall this conclusion, Paul informs us that "the law is good, if a man use it lawfully" (1 Tim. 1:8). That there can be an *unlawful use of the law* does not rule out a *good, lawful use of it*. Dominion theology is predicated on the lawful use of the law, the law that Paul calls upon Christians everywhere to establish (Rom. 3:31). Only a lawful use of God's law can deliver a blessing, and it is this use of it that dominion theology defends and promotes, to the end that God's blessings would extend to all those who are called by His Name.

### Blessing and Work

There is no more distinctive component to dominion theology than its emphasis on work, the primary domain where dominion is to be exercised. Work includes vocation, but much more as well. Competing theologies call upon man to enter into a holding pattern, often teaching that little can be achieved in such spheres since Christians are not called to exercise godly dominion therein. Dominion theology sees work, godly labor in all spheres and discipline, as God's ordained means of extending His dominion "from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth" (Zech. 9:10).

The association of God's *blessing* upon *dominion*, upon work, is established early on at man's creation, in Gen. 1:28, where blessing and dominion are tied together. Too many theologians today are anxious to cut God's people off from this connection, on the assumption that work is now an irrevocably cursed activity and that (by implication) dominion theology can never bring a blessing since a fountain can't bring forth both salt water and fresh water (James 3:12).

Such an anti-dominion stance would have been easier to establish had there not been continued testimony to God's blessing being laid upon work done to His honor and glory (the basis of dominion theology's approach to all labor):

**The LORD your God has *blessed* you in all the *work of your hands*. (Deut. 2:7a NIV, emphasis added)**

**There, in the presence of the LORD your God, you and your families shall eat and shall rejoice in *everything you have put your hand to*, because the LORD your God has *blessed* you. (Deut. 12:7 NIV, emphasis added)**

Your basket and your kneading trough will be *blessed*. (Deut. 28:5 NIV, emphasis added)

You have *blessed* the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land. (Job 1:10b NIV, emphasis added)

[H]ow *blessed* you will be, sowing your seed by every stream, and letting your cattle and donkeys range free. (Isa. 32:20 NIV, emphasis added)

The blessings upon *diligence* are rife throughout the book of Proverbs. Dominion theology is nothing less than a *theology of diligence*, of total commitment to the King to bring all things in subjection to Him, taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ in every realm, particularly *in every work of our hands*. Note the contrast between productivity and indolence reflected in Hebrews 6:

**Land that drinks in the rain often falling on it and that *produces a crop* useful to those for whom it is farmed receives the *blessing* of God. But land that produces thorns and thistles is *worthless* and is in danger of being *cursed*. In the end it will be burned. (Heb. 6:7–8 NIV, emphasis added)**

A misconception concerning God's blessing of work needs to be pointed out. Mark 4:28 establishes the pattern of blessing with respect to the Kingdom of God and our work: "For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear." R. J. Rushdoony identifies the misconception with precision: it is the expectation of "quick or immediate results in the growth of God's Kingdom. If we plant grain, we must cultivate it, often water it, tend to the field, and, only after much labor,



reap a harvest.”<sup>4</sup> This is the pattern that dominion theology recognizes as God’s plan for godly dominion.

As Rushdoony adds, “[O]ur Lord describes quick growth as false (Matt. 13:5–6, 20–21).”<sup>5</sup> The revolutionary call for instant growth, particularly in God’s church, leads to disaster for the preachers who pursue it: “Such men often do better at growing weeds than grain.”<sup>6</sup> Dominion theology expressly condemns “the myth of victory by revolution,” the gospel of instant growth.<sup>7</sup> As Rushdoony summarizes it,

Our Lord is very clear: the pattern of the Kingdom of God is like that of the earth which bringeth forth fruit of itself. There is an order and a progression from the seed, to the first green shoot to emerge, to the cultivated growth, and finally the harvest. Both time and work are essential.<sup>8</sup>

Slothfulness is the antithesis of dominion theology’s emphasis (see “The Ten-Toed Sloth” in my article *The Perpetual Kindergarten* for an exposition of Heb. 5:11 in this regard).<sup>9</sup> A long-term vision pinned to vocation, to diligent labor in the fields ripe unto harvest (wherever we may find them), lies at the heart of dominion theology. When God finds His people so occupied, His blessings will be poured out “on the work of our hands,” so long as we’re working to self-consciously glorify Him in *all* (and dominion theology takes this to literally mean *all*) that we do.

### Blessing and Eschatology

Distinctive to dominion theology is its view of the future, a time when the promised blessings of the Bible come upon all men then living, when “all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Gen. 12:3; Acts 3:25 NKJV), wherein “all the nations of the earth shall be blessed” in Abraham (Gen. 18:18), “the heir of the world” (Rom. 4:13). The Great Commission, driven forward

by the gradual pouring out of God’s Spirit upon all flesh, is God’s ordained means for securing this blessing, namely, through the foolishness of preaching and the power of an almighty Spirit.

Dominion theology prays the third petition of the Lord’s Prayer in faith, and works for the day when God’s will is done on earth as it is in heaven. This emphasis has, inexplicably, been criticized as a route to curses, not blessings, by the critics of dominion theology. We are apparently expected to pray one way, and work in another direction altogether! Perhaps our prayers and labors were intended to align more harmoniously than our critics are willing to grant.

It is common for our premillennial and amillennial brethren to argue that dominion theologians are blind to God’s judgments in history, blind to the crippling pervasiveness of man’s sin nature.<sup>10</sup> But it’s impossible to read *any* appreciable sequence in Chalcedon’s voluminous output without being confronted with Christendom’s most realistic and scripturally relevant assessment of man’s sin nature and God’s judgments in history. If anything, it’s the other prophetic views that discount current judgments as being a mere warm-up for something bigger. Dominion theology can see God’s judgments for what they are: God being the governor among the nations, *now* (Ps. 22:28).

Dominion theology ties the affairs of men and nations to God’s covenant of blessing and cursing. When competing eschatologies have seen plagues, wars, earthquakes, and famines, they’ve pointed to Matthew 24 ... and, for twenty centuries, *have been dead wrong* in doing so. Dominion theologians see the same events and point to Deuteronomy 28. The covenantal blessings and curses tied to God’s law are thus *relevant* to dominion theology as it interprets history and how it moves toward the era

when no man need teach his neighbor saying, Know the Lord, for all shall know Him, from the least unto the greatest (Heb. 8:11). Dominion theology teaches the *widest possible extension of God’s blessing* of any orthodox Christian theology. To question dominion theology’s relationship to blessing is disingenuous at best, dishonest at worst. Dominion theology is *the theology of blessing, par excellence*.

### The Buried Talent

If the message of dominion theology is unpopular, it’s because it affirms that far too many Christians have buried the talent. Dominion, by definition, entails taking what God has given us and working with it, being productive with it, and therefore multiplying God’s stake in it. Dominion theology is thus the antithesis of easy-believism and slothful conduct.

Perhaps more upsetting to dominion theology’s critics is the other implication of the position, namely, that such slothfulness is *ultimately traitorous*, for Christ’s Kingship is implicitly denied over anything we refuse to treat as His property. Two things, it is said, never sleep: God and rust. If we fail to labor on God’s behalf in His world on His orders, then rust will gain the upper hand. At the moral level, such slothfulness delivers victory notices to Satan stamped “won by forfeit.” The Christians refused to engage. Perhaps our troops spend too much time at pleasant retreats.

This is the offense of dominion theology: its message implicitly suggests that until we move in terms of dominion theology, we’re probably burying the talent and failing to redeem the time properly. Such a message, if true (and we believe it is), will be a tough sell if the champions of dominion theology are perceived to be caustic, judgmental, and harsh



in their discourse. The challenge is to issue a clear wake-up call (1 Cor. 14:8) while not breaking a bruised reed or quenching a smoking flax (Isa. 42:3; Matt. 12:20). When men and women who take Scripture seriously are mature enough to strike this difficult balance, the blessings (Luke 12:43) that dominion theology preaches will overtake God's church.

### The Beatitudes

It is sufficient to note that the opening twenty verses in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:1–20) break down into clear sections: a list of blessings, the salt of the earth, an impossible-to-hide city, an unquenchable lamp, and Christ's canonization of God's law as eternally valid. Our Lord had no difficulty putting a positive endorsement of God's law in *close conjunction* to an extended pronouncement of blessings. The notion that any appeal to God's law obliterates blessings is preposterous on the face of it.

While no scholar would dare dispute that *blessings* are iterated in the first twelve verses, no end of efforts have been made to evade the positive force of Matthew 5:17–18. The most compelling exegetical analyses of these critical verses were done by H. A. W. Meyer<sup>11</sup> and Benjamin B. Warfield,<sup>12</sup> whose respective seminal works are unlikely to be surpassed any time soon. Their century-old scholarship exposes modern antinomian evasions for what they are. Dominion theology has neither the desire nor the need to play fast and loose with the Greek text of this pivotal passage.

We are thus comfortable in standing by the assertion that the blessings of the Sermon on the Mount are pulled into tight conjunction with the law of God, and that the two are not only compatible, but in some sense dependent upon one another. Dominion

theology therefore becomes the seat of blessing because it magnifies God's law. Matthew 5:19 teaches that those who do and teach the least of the law's jots and tittles shall be called great in the Kingdom of heaven, while those who loosen them shall be called the least in the Kingdom of heaven.

Which group sounds more likely to be blessed? Those who loosen the jots and tittles, or those who keep and teach them? Dominion theology is all but defined by the latter option. The position of the Beatitudes in our Lord's sermon reminds us that blessing is never far from the keeping and teaching of the least of His commandments.

### Blessing and Subjection

There *is* a proper place for humanistic thinking, and dominion theology makes room for it in its proper sphere. That proper sphere is what the Bible calls hell.<sup>13</sup> Humanistic thinking reflects the serpent's call to Adam to be his own god (Gen. 3:5). Dominion theology finds no legitimate place in God's church for humanistic thinking and holds that humanism's days are numbered in the world, for whatsoever thing the Lord hath not planted shall be rooted up (Matt. 15:13). Hebrews 2:8 teaches that *all things* are put in subjection under Christ's feet, *despite* the fact that we don't yet *see* all things in subjection. Dominion theology works consistently for the advancing subjection of all things under the Lord Jesus, in accordance with the 2 Corinthians 10:4–5 command to take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, following the growth pattern of Mark 4:28.

The Bible does not offer any blessing upon those who operate outside of God's parameters, who think and act humanistically, beyond the orbit of God's revealed law-word. Blessings can *never* be secured humanistically.

Whoever invokes a *blessing* in the land will do so by the God of truth; he who takes an oath in the land will swear by the God of truth. (Isa. 65:16 NIV, emphasis added)

When such a person hears the words of this oath, he invokes a *blessing* on himself and therefore thinks, "I will be safe, even though I persist in going my own way." This will bring disaster on the watered land as well as the dry. (Deut. 29:19 NIV, emphasis added)

"If you do not listen, and if you do not set your heart to honor my name," says the LORD Almighty, "I will send a curse upon you, and I will curse your *blessings*. Yes, I have already cursed them, because you have not set your heart to honor me." (Mal. 2:2 NIV, emphasis added)

Thus saith the LORD, Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, that maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord ... Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the LORD is. (Jer. 17:5, 7)

Some critics of dominion theology believe the position goes too far, that by applying the Word of God to *everything* dominion theologians have lost balance and turned God's Word into an unnecessary burden. Apart from being out of harmony with St. John's view of God's commandments *not* being burdensome (1 John 5:3), these critics fail to appreciate that God's law *liberates* whatever it touches, unchaining all things from sin and releasing them to freely serve and glorify their Author and Maker. In this, the critics are the ones unwittingly suppressing the blessing of God, a blessing that enriches without any sorrow being added to it (Prov. 10:22).

### Who Shall Have the Preeminence?

Christ is to have the preeminence in all things (Col. 1:18). One would think this would be an uncontroversial position, but lo, it remaineth a bone of contention, even among orthodox Christians. But the relationship of this question to the matter of blessings eventually fans out into even more pointed questions.

Are we more blessed when Christ is denied the preeminence, when we deliberately pry His fingers off of all human enterprises? Ought things then to be left to themselves? Is that God's plan, that nothing really needs to bow the knee to Christ here and now, and that working now to expand His Kingship over all things brings a curse to the world?

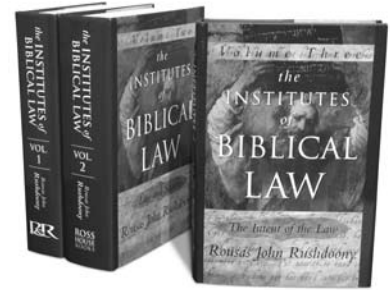
Critics of dominion theology hold that the route to blessing lies elsewhere, *not* in working consistently with the premise that He shall have the preeminence in all things. To which I can only ask one final question:

How can Christ bless something over which He has no preeminence? ■

1. It is remarkable that some of the more dispassionate, evenhanded assessments have been written by scholars on the secular side of the aisle. See Michael McVicar, "Rushdoony Among the Academics: The Secular Relevance of the Thought of R. J. Rushdoony" *Faith for All of Life*, May/June 2007, 20f. McVicar takes pains to be accurate, shaming many careless Christian critics of dominion theology in the process.

2. McVicar, "Rushdoony Among the Academics." See also Rushdoony's massive study referenced in note 3 below. On a lighter note, some pastors find it difficult to operate consistently with respect to certain forms of ecclesiastical decentralization. They sometimes find themselves in the shoes of the dwarf, Randall, in the fantasy movie *Time Bandits*, who enforces decentralization among his cohorts in a peculiar way: "Remember, we agreed, no leaders! Right? Right. So shut up and do as I say!"

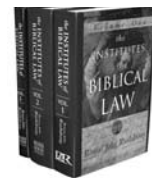
3. R. J. Rushdoony, *Sovereignty* (Vallecito, CA: Ross House Books, 2007), 165.
4. R. J. Rushdoony, *The Roots of Reconstruction* (Vallecito, CA: Ross House Books, 1991), 374f.
5. *Ibid.*, 375.
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.*, 378.
8. *Ibid.*
9. Martin G. Selbrede, "The Perpetual Kindergarten" *Faith for All of Life*, May/June 2007, 14.
10. Paint man's pathetic, perpetual sinfulness in as dark a shade as you can muster, and all you're doing is further magnifying the stupendous victory of Christ, for "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound" (Rom. 5:20; see the entire passage Rom. 5:9–21).
11. H. A. W. Meyer, *Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Gospel of Matthew* (Winona Lake, IN: Alpha Publications, 1980; originally published by T&T Clark, 1883), 119–123.
12. Benjamin B. Warfield, "Jesus' Mission According to His Own Testimony" *Biblical Doctrines* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 2003 reprint; originally published by Oxford University Press, 1932), 293–299.
13. Chalcedon Communications Director Rev. Chris Ortiz, surveying the mass of emergency fund-raising appeals coming in from all quarters of Christendom (including ministries sympathetic to dominion theology), had a wry observation to make about this in light of Matthew 16:18: "Shouldn't it be the gates of hell that have to keep issuing emergency fund-raising appeals?" Surely such a view has inherent within it the premise that blessings upon the godly will discomfit the wicked.



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# A Secular World Order: Humanists Pursue Their Own “Reconstruction” Project

Lee Duigon

“Since a sovereign must have absolute power, the state, where it claims sovereignty, whether a democracy or anything else, moves toward totalitarian powers. Sovereignty with such powers becomes *the saving power*, and the state becomes man’s god and savior. It then governs and controls man’s total life.”<sup>1</sup> —R. J. Rushdoony



Christians, especially Christian Reconstructionists, are often accused of “trying to impose their values on the rest of society.”

But those who are loudest in their railing accusations are also the guiltiest. Since the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century, humanists—Christianity’s most vociferous critics—have self-consciously labored to impose *their* values on society. Their aim is nothing less than the total reconstruction of all human society into a secular world order.

Yes, we would like to see society reconstructed along Christian lines and be made conformable to God’s laws; we admit it. But humanists admit to no religious agenda of their own. Instead, they distract the public by accusing Christians of the very thing that they themselves have been doing every day for centuries.

This is a vast subject, and Chalcedon has reported on it extensively. You will find in this article many references to these earlier reports. Please refer to them for details; they are archived on our website ([www.chalcedon.edu](http://www.chalcedon.edu)) under “Articles.”

## The Humanist Program

How do we know humanists are purposely trying to reengineer society? They tell us so.

Thousands of scientists, including many Nobel Prize winners, academics, educators, public officials, jurists, media figures, artists, and even church leaders have signed their names to The Humanist Manifesto II, a 1973 document, slightly amended in 2003, which articulates the humanist vision for mankind.<sup>2</sup> It is not the only such document in circulation, but it is the most comprehensive of its type. Thanks to the stature of its signers, it has the prestige to stand as the quintessential expression of contemporary secularism.

Claims the manifesto, “[F]aith in the prayer-hearing God, assumed to live and care for persons, to hear and understand their prayers, and able to do something about them, is an unproved and outmoded faith.” Christianity “offers false hopes” and is “a disservice to the human species.” “There is no credible evidence that life survives the death of the body,” say the humanists.

Condemning world religions for offering “Utopian promises,” the manifesto goes on to state the humanists’ own program:

“Using technology wisely, we can control our environment, conquer poverty, markedly reduce disease, extend our lifespan, significantly modify our behavior, alter the course of human evolution and cultural development, unlock vast new powers, and provide humankind with unparalleled opportunity for achieving an abundant and meaningful life.”

They mean to put this scheme into action, and are doing it—by means of legislation, regulation, international treaties, court rulings, public education, and round-the-clock use of the media as a pry bar to get into people’s hearts and minds.

Secular humanism permeates every human institution. It might not be going too far to say its influence is felt in every human mind—even in the minds of Christians. We live in a civilization saturated with secularism.

For the sake of brevity, we will focus on how two of these institutions—the church and public education—have been affected by humanism and what part they play in the attempt to create a secular world order.

## A Church without a Voice

“European freedom was created, because the monolithic power of the state was challenged by the church, and a law over all kings and lords was upheld . . . The modern democracies are leading to slavery, because they have no guarantee against the monocratic tendencies of popular government.”<sup>3</sup>

—R. J. Rushdoony

If the church is not able to call the state to account before God, what happens to freedom?

Much of the church today has lost its voice, and the loss is self-inflicted. Too many churchmen have abandoned scriptural authority—the only real au-

thority that the church has ever had—in favor of emotional, “spiritual” experience, popular and personal opinion, and worldly politics.

What has the church done to itself to lose its voice?

**\*Pietism**, an attitude of disengagement from the world, took root in the nineteenth century and has removed many Christians from the battle for dominion. Once upon a time, pietism moved Christians to isolate themselves in the wilderness as monks or hermits. Today pietists are content to wash their hands of the business of this world.

Although Christ commands the church to go and proclaim the gospel to all nations, pietists equate that with “polishing the brass on a sinking ship.”

**\*Syncretism** is the practice of adding pagan elements to Christianity or Christian elements to paganism. The Bible frequently admonishes us not to add to or subtract from God’s Word, but in the church in America today, syncretism is widespread.

In March of 2006 Chalcedon published a five-part series on “Paganism in Our Churches” (see the archived articles at Chalcedon.edu). Driven primarily by “feminist theology,” many of our churches, representing most denominations, have adopted “goddess” worship, Buddhist chants, Hindu dance, and even pure idolatry complete with idols. In September 2007 we reported on an Episcopal priest in Seattle who says she is also a Muslim<sup>4</sup>—an action for which she has incurred no penalty from her superiors.

Syncretism devolves into a muddle of superstition and personal idiosyncrasy that is unable to speak authoritatively to any issue.

**\*Outright rebellion** against God’s law-word takes its most flagrant form in the “gay-affirming” movement now seen in many churches. Even the Reformed

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Church in America (RCA)—small, but the oldest Protestant denomination in America—wrestles with renegade clergy who insist that God’s Word is wrong and that homosexual behavior is something to be “affirmed” and “celebrated.”<sup>5</sup> In the winter of 2004–2005, the RCA had to dismiss the president of its New Brunswick Theological Seminary—for performing the “marriage” of his daughter to another woman.<sup>6</sup>

What are Christians—to say nothing of non-Christians and potential converts—to think when their church leaders contradict the plain teachings of the Bible? What moral authority can be exercised by churchmen whose teachings reflect not the everlasting Word of God, but fleeting trends in popular opinion?

**\*Salvation through works of the flesh** has always been a heresy, but that doesn’t stop certain churchmen from embracing it.

We reported in our “Paganism” series that goddess worship and gay-affirming are nearly always accompanied by political activism, almost always of a socialist tinge. Even where syncretism or sodomy hasn’t touched it, the “social gospel” has a problematic theology.<sup>7</sup>

What’s wrong with churches focusing on aid to the poor, world peace,

homes for the homeless, etc.? Nothing, of course: churches have always done these things.

But today the church’s charity often morphs into political advocacy. Whether or not these “social gospel” churches themselves actually aid the poor, they tend to demand that everyone be coerced to do so by government action. When John Lofton confronted a United Methodist Church official on “the immorality of the federal budget,” he was told that “charity” and “concern for the poor” are best expressed through government taxation!<sup>8</sup>

By imitating and endorsing the humanists’ big government agenda, the church legitimizes the state as the agent of salvation, makes itself redundant, and loses sight of its God-given mission of preaching, teaching, and prophecy. Who cares if I offer honey-cakes to the goddess, as long as I have a small carbon footprint?

## Schools vs. the Family

“Today, the attack on the family is being stepped up. Humanistic statism sees control of the child and the family as basic to its drive toward totalitarianism . . . The family must give way to the Family of Man.”<sup>9</sup> —R. J. Rushdoony

“When you put on your Jesus glasses, you can’t see the truth.”<sup>10</sup>  
—James Corbett, public school teacher, California

With much of the church having neutered itself, the family remains the secular state’s chief competition for the loyalties of the individual. Humanists are using the public schools to destroy that competition.

This is in itself an enormous topic. For a deeper understanding, we recommend two books: *The Messianic Character of American Education* by R. J. Rushdoony, a history of the secularist, anti-family ideology of public educa-



tion, and Bruce Shortt's *The Harsh Truth About Public Schools*, a painstakingly documented examination of how that ideology is being put into practice in the public schools today.<sup>11</sup>

Public educators (when they're not actively denouncing or mocking Christianity) assault the family by drilling into children's heads a mantra of sexual anarchy. The schools incessantly promote homosexuality—to name just one “alternative lifestyle” favored by the educators.

God ordained the family as the basic unit of human society, responsible for raising and educating each successive generation. To define the family, and protect it from dissolution, God's laws set boundaries on sexual behavior. Without such boundaries, the family cannot exist: hence the Biblical laws against adultery, incest, sodomy, and other sexual experiments.

Secular schools are out to erase those boundaries. There are literally thousands of examples to prove this claim. To name just a few:

\*A new California state law, SB 777, due to take effect this year, will allow “gay-affirming” educators to begin preaching homosexuality to children as young as two years old.<sup>12</sup> In fact, the new law will *require* California public school teachers to promote a positive view of homosexuality.<sup>13</sup>

\*The Maryland State Board of Education has ruled that Maryland's public schools have a duty to promote the acceptance of homosexuality, whether parents like it or not.<sup>14</sup> Parents' rights, under this ruling, must always give way to whatever the schools deem necessary.

\*In Boston last summer, public school students attended a publicly funded “Youth Pride Day” celebrating the virtues of transgenderism.<sup>15</sup> This new penchant for artificially changing one's biological “gender” is cutting-edge

**“A secular world order would have to swallow up all the competition. Above all, it could not tolerate the continued existence of Biblically orthodox Christianity. The humanist state sees itself as the sole authority on all matters of morality and law. It cannot allow the church to preach that God is the authority, not the state, and that the state is and must be under God's authority.”**

in public education today.

\*And who can forget “The Little Black Book,” handed out in 2005 to middle and high school students in Massachusetts—a manual explaining how to perform assorted deviant sex acts, complete with a directory of “gay bars” where teens can meet adult male sex partners.<sup>16</sup> It was made available to teens at a “safe sex conference” at Brookline High School.

These are just a few of a very many examples; in fact, they are just a few of the examples reported by Chalcedon. It's simply not possible for any one news outlet to report them all. Nor have we space here to discuss the public schools' advocacy for abortion, divorce, “living together,” and general sexual promiscuity.

In addition to strenuously pushing ungodly behaviors, public schools also advocate for “social justice.” When used by educators, the term means indoctrinating children into a soft Marxism of collectivism, groupthink, internationalism, and an all-embracing statism.<sup>17</sup> Schools of education—where college students learn how to be teachers and begin their certification process—have actually insisted on students pledging,

in writing, their commitment to “social justice” as a prerequisite to certification.

## What Will It Look Like?

“A basic doctrine of theology is the unity of the Godhead. No god can be truly a god if he is divided within himself. Every humanist attempt to replace God with a one-world humanistic order leads to efforts to bring all mankind under a common civil government. This is a theological necessity: the ultimate power cannot be a divided power. Every effort is made to compel human unity in the name of the new faith.”<sup>18</sup>

—R. J. Rushdoony

A secular world order would have to swallow up all the competition. Above all, it could not tolerate the continued existence of Biblically orthodox Christianity. The humanist state sees itself as the sole authority on all matters of morality and law. It cannot allow the church to preach that God is the authority, not the state, and that the state is and must be under God's authority.

If somehow a fully secular world order could be imposed, what would it look like?

Certainly it would include these features:

\*Marriage and the family, as we know them, would be lost in a welter of “alternative marriages” and “alternative families.” Real families might survive, here and there, but most children would grow up without fathers, in ever-shifting “family arrangements.” In practice, they would be wards of the state, spoon-fed state-prescribed ideas and ideologies, and carefully dumbed down into a mentality of entitlement and hedonism.

\*What little religion is allowed to remain will be syncretistic, vapid, and meaningless. The true church, like the church in North Korea, will have to go underground.

\*The only freedom left will be the freedom to sin. Opposition to the state

will be deemed “unreasonable” or “undemocratic.” With the state in control of all communications media, no dissenting message will be heard.

\*Living standards in the Western countries will drop as the world state “allocates resources equitably” and “saves the planet” by taking away individuals’ mobility, air conditioning, property ownership, private medical care, food choices, etc.

\*The overarching objective of all this is to install a world government, managed by self-appointed elites, that will control everyone’s health, education, welfare, and access to information.

How do we know it will look like this?

The humanists’ writings say so. And communist countries already look like this, and the socialist countries of Western Europe and elsewhere resemble it more every day. We see it in the world all around us. One would have to be blind not to see it.

### Will the humanists prevail?

We see in history, from the Tower of Babel onward, that Godless enterprises can never be maintained. The humanist vision, if achieved, would be the end of history. But we are taught in Psalm 127, “Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it.”

The threat is not that secular humanists will accomplish their design and end history. The threat is that in their efforts to do so, and in the ruin of all those efforts, they will cause an immeasurable amount of unnecessary suffering. How many will die from AIDS or other STDs, or heat prostration, or the inability to obtain a much-needed medical procedure, or imprisonment, or in a war or revolution, or of suicide prompted by despair, because they or their leaders bought into the secular vision and tried to make it a reality?

Driven by an ideology of replacing

God with man, and a lust for supreme power on a global scale, secular elites are trying to reconstruct human society into a secular world order. These elites include teachers and academics, liberal churchmen, politicians and bureaucrats, news pundits and movie stars, scientists, and single-issue types like gay activists, feminists, and environmental extremists. Because they all serve the same master, Satan, and obey the same marching orders (“Ye shall be as gods,” Gen. 3:5), their efforts naturally tend to converge and reinforce each other.

Western, humanistic, secular civilization, which attempts to carry on its business as if God did not exist, is like a tribe of lunatics lining up to jump off a cliff because they don’t believe in gravity. It has been weighed in the balance and found wanting.

When it sinks into historical oblivion, the human race, under the providence of God, will move on to something better. God will carry out His redemptive plan for all creation. And the true church, which survived the fall of Rome and two thousand years of all the worst a fallen world could throw at it, will endure to the end. ■

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# Coaching the Next Generation of Dominionists: It's as Easy as 1-3-2!

Buddy Hanson



Many of us have “coached” a group at one time or another. It may have been a youth athletic team, a chorus, a discussion group, or a team of fellow employees on a particular project. As different as these “coaching situations” are, each coach has one common denominator that is missing among most Christian brothers and sisters, and especially among church pastors and officers: a clear *expectation* of the goal.

As a coach, we may or may not have achieved our goal in the above examples, but at least we *knew* whether or not we had achieved it. Indeed, we seem to have clear expectations about every area of our life *except* what is our purpose as a Christian. When we are single, we expect to find a great spouse. We expect to train up our children to be successful and honorable adults. We expect to be successful in our vocation. We expect our favorite sports team to be successful. We expect our church to be faithful in accurately teaching us God's Word.

But we don't seem to have any expectations about what our obedience to God's Word will accomplish!

Week in and week out we attend worship service *expecting* to “Listen and Learn” about God. On the way home, we may make a passing comment about some point the pastor made that was “really good,” yet after a brief discussion, we will put his message behind us and

carry on with life without making any significant effort to incorporate into our lifestyle the truths he presented. During the ensuing week we will make a zillion decisions, seldom, if ever, stopping to reflect on whether our decisions conform to the Biblical truths we claim to hold so dearly. Before you know it, it's Sunday once again and time to learn more about God. While there is certainly nothing wrong with increasing our knowledge of God, as Rev. R. J. Rushdoony points out:

Somewhere along the line our pastors have stopped instructing us in how to *apply* our faith.<sup>1</sup>

The preaching of the Puritans “Christianized” Western civilization because their teaching paradigm included “Listening, Learning, *and* Doing.” During the last century or two our pastors have pretty much neglected the “Doing” part. The consequence is that American Christians are well informed about God, but poorly instructed in what to do with our knowledge of God. It's troubling enough when we learn that the estimated percentage of American Christians who have a Christian worldview is five percent. However, when we put that into historical context and find that this is one percentage point less than the estimated amount of German pastors who stood against Chancellor Hitler in the 1930s, it is downright scary!

? What can we do to repair the ruins of our culture (Ezra 9:9; Isa. 61:4; Amos 9:11) when few of our fellow Christians have any expectation that

we can make a positive difference?

First is to understand that the “Listening and Learning” preaching paradigm we have grown up with is not Biblical. Until we do, we will have no reason to question it, much less to change it. Since many pastors do not emphasize how the Biblical truths in their sermons should impact our worldview and lifestyle, most of us conclude that our basic responsibility is to continue to store up knowledge about God *and confine it inside our homes and churches*, thereby allowing non-Christians to run amuck with their cultural agenda. This was most certainly not the case with those who listened to the Puritans. Their pastors were not only zealous for the expansion of Christ's Kingdom, but for their members to experience the truths of Scripture in their everyday situations and circumstances.

By carefully explaining the text of their sermon and then presenting examples of how it could be applied to the lives of their members, the Puritan pastors enabled their listeners to discern whether the types of daily decisions they were making were in sync with God's revealed will.

As the Prophet Isaiah states, if our daily decisions do not conform “[t]o the law and to the testimony,” this can only mean that “there is no light in them” (Isa. 8:20). Today's post-Puritan preaching paradigm of providing sound Biblical exegesis *without* also including practical ideas on how to incorporate



Biblical truths into their members' worldview and lifestyle has proven to be a pietistic paralysis to well-intentioned members, as far as living out their faith.

? Why should pastors lead us to conclude that the application of Biblical truths can only be carried out by para-church organizations and/or political action groups?

A friend who runs a well-respected conservative organization made the remark, "We have a long way to go!" as we discussed various solutions for our culture war. She has a Christian worldview, which is why she could make what appears to be a very basic and common-sense statement. However, if she were like most of our fellow Christians, this statement wouldn't have come to her mind because she wouldn't know where it is that God wants us to be, and without knowing that, it would be impossible for her to conclude that we have a long way to go to get there.

To live without a Christian worldview means that a person is, for all intents and purposes, taking an existential view of life. He takes each day as it comes and tries to make the best of it, but doesn't have any long-range plans or goals about how he should live because in order to have those, he would have to have an overall purpose in mind. Without that overriding purpose, his Christian lifestyle is reduced to attempting to live a morally upstanding life, being courteous to everyone, and doing what he can to help those in need. While each of these character traits is admirable, they provide an incomplete answer for why God calls us into Christ's Kingdom.

- We know that God works "all things ... together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28), but we aren't certain what His purpose is.

- Still, we take comfort in the fact that God is smarter than we are and knows what He is doing, even though it can be frustrating to live in a culture in which fellow Christians are timidly allowing non-Christians to "call the shots."

The "It's as Simple as 1-3-2" list illustrates our predicament as well as our path to winning the culture war.

### **It's as Simple as 1-3-2!**

#### **Step #1 – We know *where* we are.**

We know we're losing the culture war.

#### **Step #3 – We don't know *where* we're going.**

We don't know what our culture can become.

#### **Step #2 – We don't know *how* to get there.**

We're confused about which strategies and tactics to use to get to where God wants us to be.

Every Christian is well acquainted with Step #1. We know without a doubt that we are losing the culture war, and unless the Christian is young, he also knows that our cultural situation has only gotten worse during his lifetime. Since most pastors don't explain Step #3, most of us neither know what God has in store for the earth, nor the important and most significant purpose for which He has called us into His Kingdom. Obviously, if we don't know where we're going, we're not going to be able to determine how to get there (Step #2). If a person has an unclear picture of Step #3, his view of Step #2 will also be fuzzy, if visible at all! This means that many of us are trapped in Step #1 with no idea of what to do to next, or even if there is a next step. As a result of this void that pastors have created by refusing to teach the whole counsel of God (knowledge and application), two camps of Christians have arisen, with

neither being able to solve our cultural issues because what they are doing, even though well-intended, does not conform to God's prescribed solutions in His revealed Word.

One group has decided to go through life as mere spectators while they wait for Jesus to return to rescue them supernaturally from this cultural mess. The other group recognizes that there is no Biblical warrant to wait for Jesus to rescue us from our commanded duties (Matt. 25:14–30; Luke 19:11–27), so they join a conservative political organization or a para-church group, or both. But, again, conservative solutions are not necessarily Christian, and since ONLY God's Word works, their well-intentioned, man-created plans never achieve the hoped-for results.

For pastors (as well as parents and disciplers) to be able to offer a viable explanation of why it is necessary for all Christians to incorporate Biblical truths into their everyday decision-making, they must paint a clear mental picture of what God promises that our culture can become (Step #3). Once fellow Christians understand this, they will be ready to develop various strategies and tactics to incorporate into their worldview and lifestyle (Step #2). As pastors (and parents and mentors) explain how various spiritual gifts of individuals can be used to combat the elements of the non-Christian cultural agenda, their members will be able to connect their spiritual dots and recognize how they can use the gifts and abilities that God has given them.

Puritan pastors recognized that they were God's "messengers and mediators" to show their listeners their "uprightness" (Job 33:23). They knew that their calling involved teaching their congregation and praying for them. To do this, they got to know their members,



often through catechizing them in their homes. I can imagine many pastors saying, “Buddy, that might have worked in the eighteenth century, but there is no way I could do that in our fast-paced twenty-first century!” My response to that is, how do you know what your members need to be taught and/or for what they need prayer? Are you admitting that for the sake of convenience you are merely going to preach generic sermons and pray generic prayers? If so, you are ignoring the two most basic questions on the minds of everyone who listens to your sermons:

- What does this message mean for me?
- How should these Biblical truths impact my worldview and lifestyle?

Christians of all ages will be excited to find that they have been called into Christ’s Kingdom with a most important purpose, which is to restore our culture to its pre-Fall condition (Gen. 3:15). Our triune God of the Bible certainly doesn’t need to work His will for the earth through our obedience. If He wanted, He could wiggle His nose (if He had one) and instantly have the world Christianized. In this scenario, we could merely sit on the sidelines of life and watch this unfold. However, praise God, this is not the scenario that God created. His design includes us in the thick of things, “working out [our] own salvation with fear and trembling” (Phil. 2:12), while we “crush Satan under [our] feet!” (Rom. 16:20 NKJV).

In the meantime each of us must recognize the necessity of always weaving God’s Big Picture of where we’re going (Step #3) into our Bible lessons so our listeners will understand their purpose in life and how to go about accomplishing it (Step #2). Whether we are a pastor, parent, or a discipler, we must guard against placing all of our efforts and emphasis on filling

our listener’s tanks with spiritual fuel, without giving any instructions on *where* we’re supposed to go and/or *how* we’re supposed to get there. As a result of operating according to this “Teaching and Learning” paradigm, the church has become little more than a theological filling station on a mental island surrounded by roads with no destination signs. The result is that when we pull out of the church parking lot, it doesn’t matter which direction we go because we’re going nowhere in particular, which means, as the Cheshire cat tells Alice, “[A]ny road will take us there.”<sup>2</sup>

? Does your congregation (and family) have a clear idea of which direction it should go?

? Does it know why it should go in that direction?

? Do your members know how to use their spiritual gifts along the way?

? Do your church and family members understand that their main goal is to conform their daily decisions to God’s Word and then trust in and rely upon God’s sovereign control of His creation to bring about His eternally perfect plan according to His eternally perfect timetable?

**[S]eek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness ... (Mt. 6:33, emphasis added)**

When Jesus commands us to “seek ye first the kingdom of God,” He is talking about the *personal* salvation aspect of our life. And when He adds that we should seek “his righteousness,” He is referring to the *public* demonstration aspect. Whenever we prepare a lesson, whether it is for a formal sermon, an informal small group, or a family lesson around our kitchen table, we must

make sure that it includes both of these aspects, or else we are not presenting a complete picture of our commanded duties (the whole counsel of God).

Since only God’s Word is true, we must rely on His perfect Word to define our terms, otherwise we will end up with an incomplete or erroneous description. To correctly live the “righteous” lifestyle of which Jesus speaks, we must obey God’s commands. The Apostle Paul adds another key term for our lifestyle when he urges us to “[p]ursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord” (Heb. 12:14 NKJV, emphasis added). Since we “won’t see the Lord” without being holy, we need to make certain that we know the correct definition of this all-important word, and once again, the only way to be certain of that is to define it according to God’s terms. This, of course, Paul does at length in his letters to the churches at Galatia, Ephesus, and Colosse. Indeed, in his letter to the church at Rome, Paul states: “[T]he kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but *righteousness* and *peace* and *joy* in the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 14:17 NKJV, emphasis added).

It is very clear that being “holy” and “righteous” are nonnegotiable elements of being a member of Christ’s Kingdom, therefore Bible teachers have no excuse for neglecting to provide clear examples of how to incorporate the Biblical truths in their lessons into the lifestyles of their listeners.

This explains why Paul cautions us to “work out [our] own salvation with fear and trembling” (Phil. 2:12). His point is not that we should work to “get” our salvation, since he explains to the church of Ephesus that we “have been saved through faith” and that “it is the gift of God” (Eph. 2:8 NKJV),

but that we should “work” to become holy by conforming our daily decision-making to the Biblical truths in which we profess to believe. Once again we see that the Christian life is not a one-time “me and Jesus” event, but a life-long testimony of the grace of God by which we daily demonstrate answers to our non-Christian neighbors for questions they may not even know to ask about how to live. But even in this ongoing process of living out our faith, we are told that God “works in [us] both to will and to do for His good pleasure” (Phil. 2:13 NKJV). What this means is that with the new spiritual heart that the Holy Spirit gives to us with God’s law written on it (Jer. 31:33; Ezek. 36:26–27; Heb. 8:9–10) is a built-in motivator to “put off” our former ungodly behaviors and to “put on” new godly behaviors (Eph. 4:22–24; Col. 3:8–11)!

Whether you are a pastor, parent, or discipler, or all three, you should challenge yourself to see whether your lessons are following the current “Listening and Learning” model or the Puritan (and Biblical) “Listening, Learning, *and* Doing” model. Notice how Jesus, in His Sermon on the Mount, frequently uses word pictures to bring home His points about how to “do” His Word (Matt. 5–7).

- After listing the Beatitudes, He illustrates what it means to live according to them by using the metaphor of their being “salt and light” (Matt. 5:13–16).
- In explaining that keeping the law involves more than literally refraining from a certain behavior, He tells them that murder and adultery begin “in the heart” (Matt. 5:21–30).
- He next points out the wide-ranging consequences of marriage and personal oaths (Matt. 5:31–37) and what it is to relate to our non-Christian neighbors in a manner that brings honor to God (Matt.

5:38–6:4).

- Upon concluding His outline for how we are to pray, Jesus goes into another series of brief explanations of basing our behavior upon what God commands instead of what man demands (Matt. 6:16–34).
- In describing how to judge others correctly, Jesus tells us to “[r]emove the plank from [our] own eye” before attempting to “remove the speck from [our] brother’s eye” (Matt. 7:1–6 NKJV).
- He also likens persistence in praying to how we answer the requests from our children (Matt. 7:7–12).
- Jesus concludes His sermon by painting a contrasting word picture of a person who builds his house upon a rock (His Word) and a person who builds his house upon sand (man’s word) (Matt. 7:24–27).

Jesus’ goal was not to make His listeners feel good via humorous anecdotes, but rather to make them feel good because they had an accurate understanding of how they should live and govern themselves.

How is it with you?

? As you teach the various Biblical truths, are you careful to point out that the Christian lifestyle is far more glorious than adding a few moralistic character traits to our former non-Christian lifestyle?

? Do you make clear that, as Christians, we are expected to completely transform our lifestyle so that our non-Christian neighbors will have no doubt that we march to a very different ethical drummer?

? As you prepare for your next sermon, or small group study, are you making certain that you help your listeners answer the all-important question about how they can

present a Biblical antithesis to the cultural agenda of non-Christians?

? If your message doesn’t answer this question, why doesn’t it?

## How to Demonstrate the Faith

Whether your teaching role is a pastor, parent, or discipler, you can carry out your calling by following the four points that enabled the Puritans to “win the West” for God. Including these four points in our teaching, parenting, and discipling will not only help us to prevent Western civilization from its continuing slide toward the non-Christian ethics of the East, but in God’s timing, to “win the East!”

**D** – Help your listeners **discern** which commandment applies to a cultural situation.

**E** – Present several ways of incorporating God’s **ethics** into their worldview and lifestyle.

**M** – Contrast non-Christian behavior with God’s **mandatory** model of behavior.

**O** – Reinforce the truth that Christianity is a complete transformation of one’s worldview and lifestyle, not merely the addition of a few moralistic behaviors to our former worldview and lifestyle. Emphasize that the only way to achieve this is to put **off** our former ungodly habits and to put **on** new godly habits based upon the laws that the Holy Spirit has written on our heart.

## This Sounds Great, but How Do I Get Started?

Life, like sports, is all about momentum. We don’t have to be convinced that non-Christians had “Big Mo” on their side in the early years of the twenty-first century. What’s needed is to convince our fellow Christians that we can take “Big Mo” away from the bad guys and that doing so is not all that difficult. All that is needed is to select one

of Paul's divinely inspired Obedience Starters and *do it!* Then select another and *do it!* Then select another and *do it!* By then, you will not have to force yourself to select an Obedience Starter because you will have "Big Mo" on your side and will be anxiously looking for an opportunity to put another one in play in your daily situations and circumstances. Paul's Obedience Starters will enable you to get you and your listeners' minds focused on serving God and to realize the "aahs" of an experiential Christianity, instead of the "blahs" of a mental Christianity.

**Obedience Starters**

***Demonstrate one of these to the next person in your path!***

- \* Kindness
- \* Longsuffering
- \* Goodness
- \* Faithfulness

- \* Love
- \* Gentleness
- \* Joy
- \* Self-control
- \* Peace

**Gal. 5:22-23**

- \* Tender mercies
- \* Meekness
- \* Humility
- \* Forgiving one another
- \* Above all, put on love (which is obeying God's law)

**Col. 3:12-14**

"Love ... does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, thinks no evil." **1 Cor. 13:4-5 NKJV**

- \* Honor your father and your mother ...
- \* You shall not murder.
- \* You shall not commit adultery.
- \* You shall not steal.
- \* You shall not bear false witness

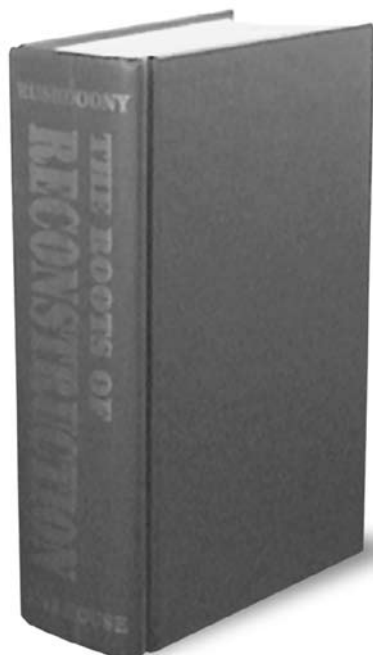
against your neighbor.  
\* You shall not covet.

**Exod. 20:12-17 NKJV ■**

Buddy Hanson is a popular speaker on Christian worldview topics and has written several books on how to incorporate Biblical truths into one's worldview and lifestyle. He is a former college baseball coach and spent a career in corporate marketing and sales training. This feature is from his current manuscript, which is in search of a publisher, entitled: *Re-examining Your Teaching Paradigm: Expanding your approach from Informant to Instructor by advancing from the current "Listening and Learning" mindset of your congregation to the "Listening, Learning and Doing" mindset.* Buddy can be reached at bhanson@graceandlaw.com, and his books are on www.graceandlaw.com.

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# Christian Thinking Applied: A Look at the Life of Groen van Prinsterer

By Ben House



History is like a treasure hunt. Solomon notes, “It is the glory of God to conceal a matter, but the glory of kings is to search out a matter” (Prov. 25:2 NKJV). Beginning with his book *How the Irish Saved Civilization*, historian Thomas Cahill notes changes due to what he calls the “hinges of history.” He writes, “We normally think of history as one catastrophe after another, war followed by war, outrage by outrage—almost as if history were nothing more than all the narratives of human pain, assembled in sequence. And surely this is, often enough, an adequate description. But history is also the narratives of grace . . .”

On these occasions, the direction of history is changed by a particular person, a nation, or a culture. There are always social, political, and economic forces at work in history, but these are only sidebars to the transforming work done by those Cahill describes as “the great gift-givers, arriving in the moment of crisis, provided for transition, for transformation, and even for transfiguration.”<sup>1</sup>

Christian apologist Cornelius Van Til says, “As Christians we have a very definite philosophy of history. For us history is the realization of the purposes and plans of the all-sufficient God revealed through Christ in Scripture. And if this is the case, we are naturally persuaded that in history lies the best proof of our philosophy of human life.”<sup>2</sup>

If, as we affirm, God calls us not only to be transformed, but to be the transforming changers of culture, we might expect the study of history to uncover treasures of models to follow. If, as we believe, God uses the wicked acts of men to advance His Kingdom in spite of the wicked intentions behind those acts, we ought to be looking past the acts of evil men for hinges of history leading to narratives of grace. If, as we confess, God uses the humble, the obscure, and the small to succeed against the proud, the great, and the dominant, we surely can find our philosophy of life in historical examples. History teaches theology by example.

## Beyond the Maze of the French Revolution

Without a doubt, the French Revolution was one of the most wicked and horrible episodes in history. When coupled with the succeeding revolutions and turmoil of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the ever-increasing death counts might obscure the French Revolution. Gas chambers are certainly more horrible than the guillotine. Yet the ultimate evil of the French Revolution is not to be found in this purge or that execution, but rather in the philosophy or worldview that it unleashed on society.<sup>3</sup>

The Revolution has its defenders. Some historians winced at the evils of the French Revolution, but found the Age of Enlightenment a historical curative. Transitioning from a world of

darkness to the Enlightenment justified the busy guillotines, for Paris was worth a bloodbath.

The aftermath of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Era promoted a changed perspective on history and culture. Martyn Lloyd-Jones describes this new thinking as follows: “It was an attack on all established institutions, including the church and the State. It meant the rejection of all authority and the setting up of ‘the sovereign people,’ and their reason and understanding, as arbiters in these matters.”<sup>4</sup> From the storming of the Bastille to the march of Napoleon’s Grand Army, a man-centered humanism replaced religious doctrine, popular sovereignty became the lodestone of truth, the perfectibility of man provided the eschatological hope for the future, and the centralized state took the place of the church.

From 1789 France dominated the political and military complexion of Europe as she fought against military coalitions consisting of Russia, Prussia, Austria, and Britain. Even after her final defeat in 1815, France was still a formidable power. Less noticed, less powerful, less influential in the power politics of the day was the kingdom to the north-east of France—the Netherlands.

Perhaps more clearly than anywhere else, Christians in the Netherlands came to understand the implications of the French Revolution and the Enlightenment. In this small, swampy, low country, God raised up a host of Christians like the famed sons of Issachar, who



understood the times and knew what God's people ought to do (1 Chron. 12:32). William White, Jr., notes, "This tiny, densely populated nation has contributed more to the difficult fields of philosophy and theology than most people are aware of. It may not be an overstatement to assert that what ancient Greece donated to philosophy and ancient Rome to jurisprudence, the Netherlands has given to theology."<sup>5</sup>

Both in terms of the home team of Dutch Christian thinkers and those who immigrated to other lands, particularly the United States and Canada, the low country birthed Christian denominations, universities, intellectual movements, philosophies, revivals, and mounds of books and literature. This small landmass, about a third the size of Virginia, has had a worldwide impact on Christian thought and life. Although in our times, the Netherlands is noted for its infidelity, immorality, and apostasy, God mightily used that nation in the past, and He will do so again.

The historical blueprints for this Christian dominion can be discovered by looking at the key men and movements in the Netherlands. The thoroughness of Dutch Christian thought as found in Abraham Kuyper's Stone Lectures of 1898, and published in book form as *Lectures on Calvinism*, applied Calvinistic theology to religion, government, science, art, and society. What we now call "a Christian worldview," Kuyper called a Christian "life-system." It might appear that Kuyper was like a "blazing comet who lit up the sky for a time and then disappeared beyond the horizon; he came from nowhere and then vanished without a trace."<sup>6</sup> But he had his own predecessors in the Netherlands, and in particular he was mentored by a fellow Christian thinker and political leader, Guillaume Groen van Prinsterer (1801–1876).<sup>7</sup>

## An Amazing Conversion

God's use of Groen van Prinsterer fits that recurring pattern of God doing the unexpected to advance His Kingdom. He used an aristocrat to help the poor, a childless couple to promote Christian education for children, a historian to chart the future for the Netherlands, and a servant to the royal family to start a political party for the common people.

This phase of reformation in the Netherlands began with an evangelical revival, which resembled similar revival movements in other countries in the early 1800s. It has been described as "a blend of native Calvinism and the Methodist-inspired revival."<sup>8</sup> No work of reformation or Christian dominion can take root without a foundation built on the saving work of Christ. Paul's first letter to the Corinthians is a call for unity of doctrine, the pursuit of holiness, and the proper use of gifts so that the Corinthian Christians could impact Greek society with Christian culture. The foundation for that cultural conquest was Paul's Christ-centered preaching (1 Cor. 3:10).

Concerning this revival, Van Dyke says, "Wherever the latter movement spread it questioned mere outward observance of religion and insisted on personal experience and inner conviction of the new life in Christ."<sup>9</sup> What was true of the revival in general can be specifically seen in the life of Groen, who recognized the shallowness of the profession of faith he made at an early age.

Groen was born to privilege and blessed with exceptional intelligence. His father was a doctor, and his mother was the heiress of a banking family. Like so many accounts of education in the past, the depth and range of his schooling is phenomenal compared to modern standards.<sup>10</sup> Beginning

with homeschooling and private night classes, he was trained in his native Dutch language and culture, as well as in French, English, and German. By age twelve, he added Latin, Greek, and natural science to his studies. At age sixteen he went to the University of Leyden to study law and letters. After six years, he completed two dissertations, one in law (on the Justinian Code) and one in literature (on Plato) and was awarded two doctorates.

Building upon his family name and wealth, he stood poised to advance his career in either the practice of law or in the scholarly pursuits. He began to practice, but soon accepted a position as the official historian of the Netherlands, enabling him to study history, which was his first intellectual love.

There was another love that entered his life—Elisabeth van der Hoop. She was a fervent evangelical Christian who soon became his wife. Her deep faith made her the perfect helpmeet for a man of great potential whose own faith needed deepening for God's future work in his life.

The building blocks in Groen's life as a reformer were beginning to come together: an education, work as a historian, and a godly wife. But there was another factor that had already altered his way of thinking.

In his book *Heroes*, Paul Johnson gives some defining qualities of heroes. The first quality, he says, is "[A]bsolute independence of mind, which springs from the ability to think everything through for yourself, and to treat whatever is the current consensus on any issue with skepticism."<sup>11</sup> But for Groen to become such an independent thinker himself, he needed someone who fit Johnson's description to show the way.

There are many brilliant scholars whose names, works, and reputations earn them respectability within the

academic community, but there are also others who think outside the box and go against conventional wisdom. Good students might know the risks of footnoting these types. But wise students read and follow these kinds of thinkers diligently. One can readily fill in the names of such independent thinkers: Eugene Rosenstock-Huussy, Ludwig von Mises, R. J. Rushdoony, Herman Dooyeweerd, Otto Scott, and others.

In Groen's college days, one such thinker was a poet and independent lecturer named Willem Bilderdijk (1756–1831). Having no official position and little respect from the university community, he conducted his own lectures off-campus. As is usual with such thinkers, Bilderdijk was accused of “corrupting the best of our youth.”<sup>12</sup> His lectures are remembered as “high-flying harangues . . . delivered harum-scarum in a dazzling display of astonishing erudition.” These controversial lectures on history, philosophy, law, and politics went contrary to the spirit of the age or “political correctness” of the time. The Enlightenment worldview was thought beyond intellectual reproach, but it was this worldview that Bilderdijk opposed.

This erratic, quirky, politically incorrect Calvinist poet redirected Groen just enough to cause him to begin to doubt the accepted conventions of his day. As Groen described it, Bilderdijk “first made me doubt the things I had hitherto accepted without questioning.”<sup>13</sup>

It would be this willingness to rethink issues and go against the comfort zone of the academy and the complacency of society that would eventually chart Groen's course in life. Before that would happen, yet another key figure would enter his life.

Mr. and Mrs. Groen van Prinsterer began sitting under the preaching min-

istry of Merle d'Aubigne, who was an evangelical Calvinist and was appointed chaplain to the Dutch royal family. D'Aubigne is primarily remembered today as a historian, but it was his Bible teaching that most strongly influenced Groen.

For a period of six years, Groen went through a prolonged conversion experience. Part of this process was a two-pronged reading program. Along with the task of researching and chronicling Dutch history, he began re-reading history. Rather than following the now conventional Enlightenment and using the French Revolution as an interpretive lens through which history was to be understood, Groen read the historians who were against the French Revolution.

His second focus was on Bible reading, spurred on by his pastor. From the Scriptures, Groen realized that he lacked a real commitment to Christ and he lacked peace and comfort. As Van Dyke notes about the Dutch revival, “The movement was characterized by a rediscovery of the Bible as the guide for all of life, to be appropriated through personal study and communal sharing.”<sup>14</sup>

Spiritual awakening followed by a rethinking of history are common occurrences. On an individual level, conversion is followed by rethinking our own past. Like the Apostle Paul, what once was counted as gain is now counted as loss (Phil. 3:7–8). Likewise, spiritual conversion calls for a reassessment of the historical past. Reformation always results from a rediscovery of the Bible, followed by a reinterpretation of history. Augustine's *Confessions* chronicles his spiritual change, and his *City of God* then reevaluates Roman history. Calvin and Luther and their followers constantly combed history for support for their Biblical discoveries.

Groen's new perspective on both

history and the Bible enabled him to begin to recognize the day-to-day occurrences and the Enlightenment worldview. It was a case of seeing root causes rather than societal symptoms, or as Richard Weaver's title notes, it was seeing that “ideas have consequences.” Groen also began to see that the revolution France experienced grew out of unbelief. Van Dyke notes, “He learned to see that the intellectual revolution of the eighteenth century was directly related to the decline of Christianity after its short-lived revival in the sixteenth century, that in fact it represented its wholesale substitute aiming at founding a new society, one without God.”<sup>15</sup>

At this time Groen was writing newspaper articles on both political and religious topics. But, like all too many Christians, he was still seeing and thinking in fragments. The spiritual realm of his thought and his political and historical outlook were not connected. A colleague told him that his writings on both topics were good, but that they lacked a unifying principle connecting his religion to his historical and political philosophy.

Willem de Clercq, yet another key influence in Groen's life, recognized the spiritual and intellectual dilemma that Groen confronted. In a letter, de Clercq told Groen that he needed to abandon everything in order to know Christ. Groen wrote back asking, “Must it all be discarded? Can it not be quite properly united with the truth of the Gospel?”

De Clercq was not advocating a retreat from the world, an intellectual monasticism. Rather, he was calling for a complete worldview, a faith that applied to all areas of life and thought. He told Groen,

Understand me well, I do not wish that you become *stupid*, but that all your gifts become sanctified . . . If we have learned and studied history apart from

Christ, we must now learn to see that Christ is the centre of history ... [I]f we have studied philosophy and come to admire it, we must now learn that ... this same philosophy can teach us the vanity of all human knowledge and the insufficiency of its power to re-create man ... What was truth outside of us must become truth inside us. What was a vision of the mind must become a feeling that fills our hearts.”<sup>16</sup>

Further reflections upon these matters, along with prayer, more Bible reading, and conversations with friends, and even a time of severe illness were used by God to prepare Groen for his key labors. Van Dyke says, “It was all, he had learned to see, a providential preparation for the next phase of his life in which he would discover his life calling.”<sup>17</sup>

### Christian Thinking Applied

Following Paul’s example of using military metaphors, the mission of the Christian faith is not to raid the enemy camp to rescue a few hostages. It is total war—upon society, culture, institutions, and individuals. Central to this war is preaching and teaching. A necessary component is ministry to the needy. Vital to this war is an intellectual assault upon all of the false philosophies and ideologies (or idols) of an unbelieving culture.

Groen sat under sound preaching and teaching and even had home Bible studies. With other believers, he worked to promote Christian education in the Netherlands. His wife and others organized sewing classes for girls, Christian nursery schools, and Christian day schools for the lower classes.<sup>18</sup> Groen’s main emphasis was, however, on writing, teaching, and lecturing on history.

His initial focus was upon increasingly ignored Christian influences in Dutch history. His concern was not simply that of a nationalist or a patriot,

but grew out of a concern that children were not reading and learning of their Christian and Reformational heritage. With an understandable bit of Dutch pride, he asserted, “The Netherlands, more than any other country, was chosen and set apart by the mercies of God to be a seat of Protestantism.”<sup>19</sup>

For this history to become a means of reformation in Groen’s time, the stories and teaching needed to be embedded in the minds of the youth. For this reason, Groen turned to writing history textbooks for Christian students. He wrote books on Dutch history and world history, and also compiled a collection of patriotic songs and poems and Christian hymns and psalms.<sup>20</sup> But for the content and use of these books to have the desired impact, Christian schools were needed.

The story of government education in the Netherlands in the 1800s parallels that of the United States during that same time period. Whatever Christian influences in the government schools remained were being drowned out by the trend toward total secularization of education. A government decree, for example, forbade the public schools from teaching anything that might offend any religious persuasion. Van Dyke states, “Readers were expurgated and history lessons neutralized. The singing of psalms and hymns in school became the subject of bitter altercations and in more and more locations even Bible reading was banned if the Catholic priest objected to it.” Two years later, that point of contention was “solved” when the Bible was completely banned from the schools.<sup>21</sup>

In pursuing a desire for private schools, Reformed Christians and Catholics joined together to oppose modernistic Christians, liberal humanists, and rationalists on the education issue.<sup>22</sup> Hebden Taylor points out that

Groen’s philosophy of Christian education was not seeking for “some religious coloring.” He states,

Groen wanted the children of the New Covenant not merely to be taught some knowledge of the Bible at school and to learn to pray, but rather that they should study all their subjects in the light of God’s revelation of himself, given in nature and in the Scriptures. His desire was not merely to add the fourth “R” (religion) to the other three “R’s” but to have all subjects of the school curriculum taught and studied from a truly biblical and Christian point of view. In short, he wanted Christian children to be taught to worship God with their minds as well as with their wills or “hearts” and to learn to think about God’s creation as Christians, not as secular scientific humanists and unbelievers.<sup>23</sup>

From the battle for education grew the need for political action, and this led to the establishment of the Anti-Revolutionary Party, which ultimately became a major force in Dutch politics. The school battle came, in time, to be known as the “sixty years school struggle.” Even though Groen was involved in the formation of a political party and served in the Dutch parliament, he never saw great success for his causes in his own lifetime. Yet he labored all his days for these very causes.

It was not until 1989 that a complete edition of Groen van Prinsterer’s greatest work, *Lectures on Unbelief and Revolution*, was made available in English translation.<sup>24</sup> This work in itself is a key treatise on history and political philosophy from a Calvinistic Christian perspective. With so many battles facing us as Christians, we would do well to pursue the narrative of grace, this hinge of history, this example of our philosophy applied to life as found in the writings and life of Groen van Prinsterer. ■

*Continued on next page*

Ben House is the editor of HouseBlog (<http://benhouseblog.blogspot.com/>)

1. Cahill includes this preface now in all of the volumes of his ongoing *Hinges of History* series. It began with *How the Irish Saved Civilization* (New York: Nan A. Talese, 1995).
2. Cornelius Van Til, *A Survey of Christian Epistemology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, no date), Introduction, xiii.
3. Two of the best studies of the spirit of the French Revolution can be found in James Billington's *Fire in the Minds of Men: Origins of the Revolutionary Faith* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2003) and Otto Scott's *Robespierre: The Voice of Virtue* (New York: Mason and Lipscomb Publishers, 1974).
4. D. M. Lloyd-Jones, "The French Revolution and After," a Westminster paper published in *The Christian and the State in Revolutionary Times*, 1975; published again in *The Puritans: Their Origins and Successors* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1987), 329.
5. William A. White, *Van Til: Defender of the Faith* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1979), 16.
6. Harry Van Dyke, "Abraham Kuyper: Heir of an Anti-Revolutionary Tradition." <<http://72.14.209.104:80/search?q=cache:W0gIkECGcaEJ:www.redeemer.on.ca/~tplant/rr/hvd-02.pdf>> Van Dyke amply shows in this essay why this impression is a wrong one.
7. The name Guillaume (or Willem) was only used for official purposes. He is generally referred to as Groen, which translates as Green and is pronounced "Grune" (rhyming with prune). "Van Prinsterer" was a title that meant "of the King."
8. Van Dyke, *Groen van Prinsterer's Lectures on Unbelief and Revolution* (Jordan Station, Ontario, Canada: Wedge Publishing Company, 1989), 21.
9. Van Dyke, 21.
10. It may take a few more generations for us to completely reclaim the educational heights of the pre-twentieth-century Christian world.

11. Paul Johnson, *Heroes: From Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar to Churchill and Charles de Gaulle* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007), 280.
12. Van Dyke, 41.
13. Van Dyke, 41. I had a similar experience in college when I read Rushdoony's and Gregg Singer's books on American history from Calvinist perspectives.
14. Van Dyke, 21.
15. Van Dyke, 45.
16. Van Dyke, 47.
17. Van Dyke, 49–50.
18. Van Dyke, 41, 27.
19. Groen van Prinsterer, Lecture VII: Reformation. Quoted in Van Dyke, *Lectures*, 176.
20. Van Dyke, 67.
21. Van Dyke, 65.
22. E. L. Hebden Taylor, *The Christian Philosophy of Law, Politics, and the State* (Nutley, NJ: The Craig Press, 1966), 39.
23. Hebden Taylor, 38–39.
24. This is Harry Van Dyke's translation, published by Wedge Publishing Foundation, which is the basis for much of my essay. It also includes his 269-page background study of the man and the book.

*Rushdoony ... Dominion cont. from page 3*

tion became a boot, grinding down the face of man, but, by the grace of God, not forever.

God's purpose is not the dominion of sin but the dominion of redeemed man over the earth under God. According to St. Paul, the very creation around us groans and travails, waiting for the godly dominion of the children of God (Rom. 8:19–23). Because of the Fall, creation is now under the dominion of sinful man and is being laid waste by his perverted use of power. Even as the plant turns to the light, so creation turns with longing to the restored dominion of godly man. Even as dust and stones move in terms of gravity, so they move also in terms of God's purposed dominion of man over them. The people of God must therefore be schooled into the nature and requirements of godly dominion. Anything short of this is a contempt of the supreme authority of God, who declares in His Word that He will make a covenant with the very beasts of the field to ensure man's prosperity in the day of his obedience:

And in that day will I make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field and with the fowls of heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground: and I will break the bow and the sword and the battle out of the earth, and will make them to lie down safely. (Hosea 2:18) ■

1. John Marsh, "Numbers," *Interpreter's Bible*, 2, 201.
2. C. J. Ellicott, "Numbers," *Ellicott's Bible Commentary*, 1, 516.
3. "Declaration of the Rights of Man and of Citizens," approved by the National Assembly of France, in *The Complete Political Works of Thomas Paine* (New York: The Freethought Press Association, 1954), 2, 95.

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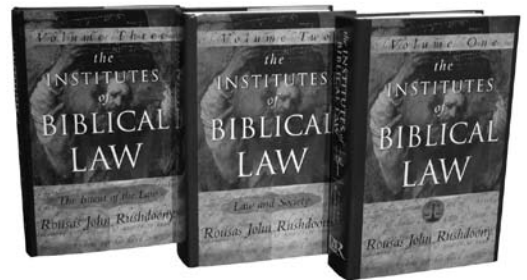
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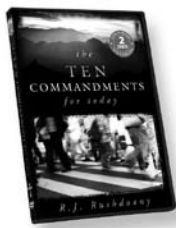
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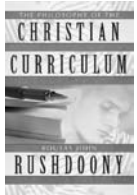
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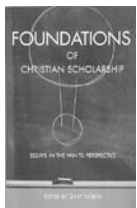
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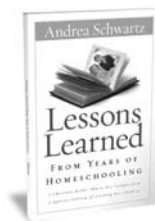


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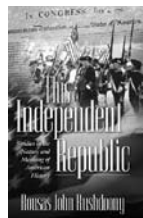


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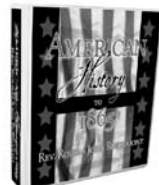
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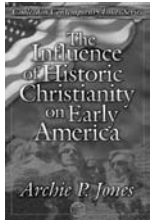
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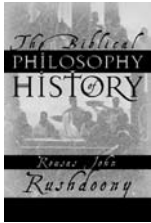
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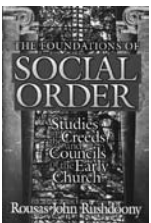
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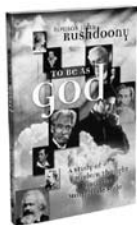
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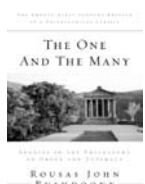
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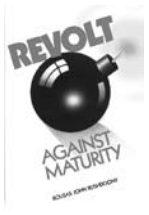


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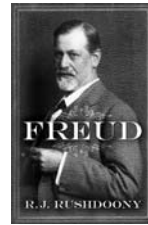


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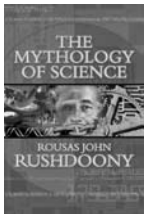
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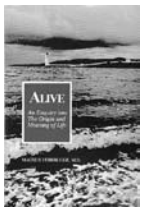
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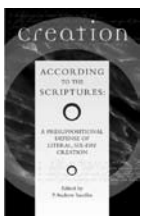
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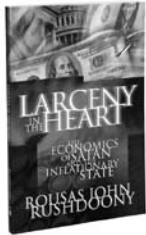
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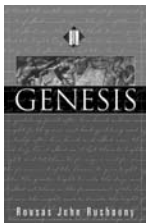
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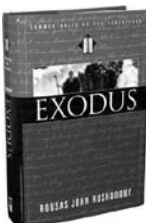
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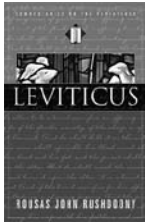
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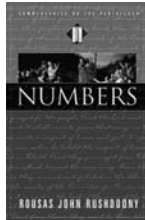


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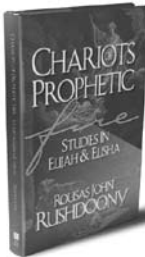


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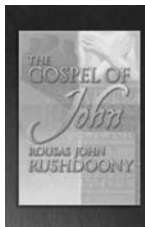
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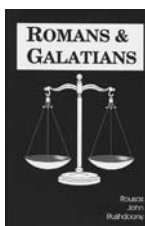
By R.J. Rushdoony. In this commentary the author maps out the glorious gospel of John, starting from the obvious parallel to Genesis 1 ("In the beginning was the Word") and through to the glorious conclusion of Christ's death and resurrection. Nothing more clearly reveals the gospel than Christ's atoning 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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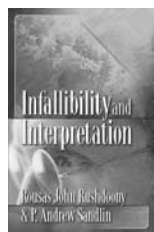
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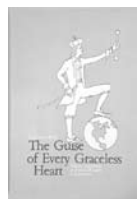
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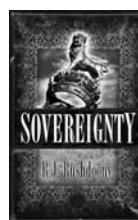
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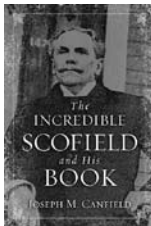
Edited by Andrew Sandlin. The Bible and the Christian Faith have been under attack in one way or another throughout much of the history of the church, but only in recent times have these attacks been perceived *within* the church as a healthy alternative to orthodoxy. This book is a trumpet blast heralding a full-orbed, Biblical, orthodox Christianity. The hope of the modern world is not a passive compromise with passing heterodox fads, but aggressive devotion to the time-honored Faith "once delivered to the saints."

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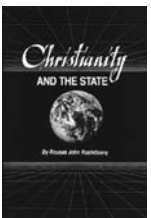
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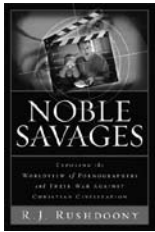




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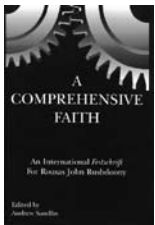
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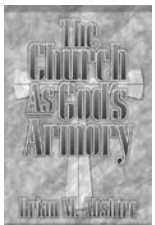
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Edited by Andrew Sandlin. This is the surprise *Festschrift* presented to R.J. Rushdoony at his 80th birthday celebration in April, 1996. These essays are in gratitude to Rush's influence and elucidate the importance of his theological and philosophical 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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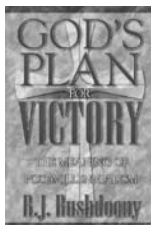


#### Thine is the Kingdom: A Study of the Postmillennial Hope

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

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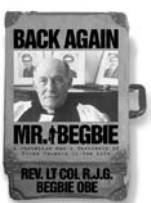
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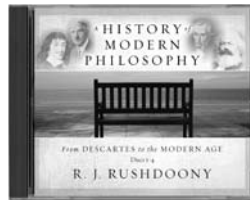
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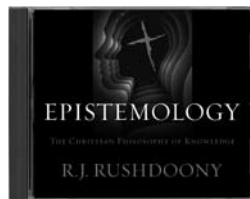
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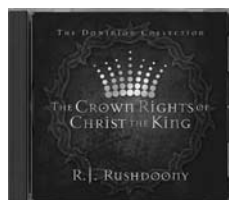
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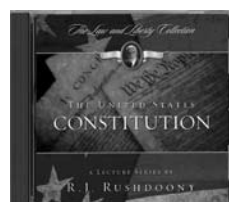
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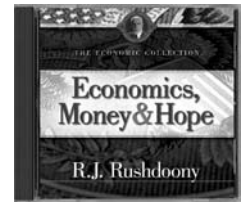
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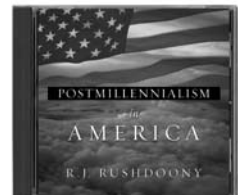
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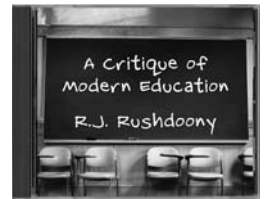
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