

FAITH FOR ALL OF LIFE

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

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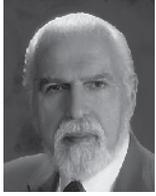
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Theocracy

By R.J. Rushdoony (Reprinted from the soon to be published book *Sovereignty*).



Tierney, in discussing *The Crisis of Church and State, 1050–1300*, observed in passing that “theocracy is a normal pattern of government.”¹ More distinctly, we must say that theocracy is the normal pattern of government, in that men, whatever the form of polity they adopt, see it as right and ultimate; authority is given in a variety of names, e.g., the dictatorship of the proletariat, the consent of the governed, the general will, the divine right of kings, and so on, but in each case the form expresses the rightness of things. The god who rules may be a man, a class, a race, or a majority, but it is still a form of ultimate power. The word *democrat* comes from *demos*, people, and *kratos*, usually rendered as rule but which can also mean to take possession; thus, *democracy* means that the people take possession and rule. Sovereignty and rule are attributes of God, and to claim the right to rule in one’s own name is a claim to sovereignty or divinity. As Fritz Kern pointed out, medieval thinking, until quite late, regarded sovereignty as an attribute of God alone: “[T]he people in the Middle Ages were no more regarded as ‘sovereign’ than was the monarch . . . The monarch, on the one hand, and the community on the other, are joined together in the theocratic order in such a way that both are subordinate to God and to the Law.”²

False theocracies are the rule of men; true theocracy is the rule of God’s law in men and over men. True theocracy requires a very limited church and state. Giving more power to men, either

privately or institutionally, is no substitute for the rule of the triune God in the lives of men.

We are told of Cardinal Richelieu that there was madness in his family. The cardinal himself, in “his spells of mental aberration,” thought himself to be less than a man; he “imagined himself to be a horse.” Richelieu’s elder brother, a half-wit, feeble-minded and delusionary, believed that he was the first person of the Trinity. Richelieu took this brother out of his Carthusian monastery and made him the Cardinal-Archbishop of Lyon.³

Such madness is a dramatic and compelling fact. However, all claims to sovereignty by men and their institutions are even more insane, however routine and humdrum their expressions. Such bland and colorless insanity is in fact far more dangerous than the more dramatic expressions of madness.

Friedrich and Blitzer have seen the origins of the modern state in large part in the idea of “reason of state.” (This was not a new idea in the modern era, but it certainly took on new meaning.) It was popularized by the Jesuit Giovanni Botero (1540–1617) in *Della ragione di stato* (1589) and was quickly popular. It facilitated the shift from ethics to politics, or the blending of the two.⁴ In the modern state, the core of power has been found in “developing effective bureaucracies.”

In the 1970s, while lecturing in Washington, D.C., I referred adversely to bureaucracies to an audience which included such men. They were very unhappy, but, at the same time, gracious and courteous in their objections in a private discussion which followed. Their

thesis was a very interesting one. *First*, they made it clear that, from their perspective, a bureaucracy does *not* initiate policies but simply develops the implications of congressional legislation. *Second*, they said, the men in a bureaucracy prefer anonymity and dislike public attention. While some like to see their names appended, with other names, to a document, the majority do not. For them, an impersonal approach is best, because all actions must be seen as departmental actions or policy decisions. A personal stance defeats the function of a bureaucracy. *Third*, contrary to the opinion of many, whether the bureaucrat is in the Internal Revenue Service or elsewhere, he is usually a quiet and timid man, one who prefers to perform an anonymous task rather than gain public attention.

The sincerity of the men could not be questioned. They saw themselves as each performing a limited task in a limited place. What was, however, equally clear, was their sense of *public duty and mission*. This is a noteworthy fact. During the age of Pope Alexander VI and his son Cesare Borgia (1458–1507), a great advance was made in the efficiency of the Vatican and its various arms. Almost a century later, Pope Sixtus V spoke of “St. Peter, Alexander, and Ourselves,” thereby summing up church history in three names. In the mid-seventeenth century, Urban VIII cited four: “St. Peter, St. Sylvester, Alexander, and Ourselves.”⁵ In terms of the administrative history of the papacy, there was good reason for this high rating given to Alexander VI. However, in terms of faith and morals, Alexander merits an abysmally low rank! Men working under

Alexander VI could, however, have had a strong sense of *public duty and mission*, very much like our modern bureaucrats. In both cases, men could have vindicated their calling as service to an essentially and morally valid institution.

Both in church and state, the issue is a very important one, and at stake is a controversy which came into sharp focus in the Donatist controversy. During the latter half of the third century, and well into the fourth, the struggle raged. During a time of persecution many churchmen apostatized in fear, but later repented. The Donatists opposed the reentry of the “lapsed,” whereas the Catholics favored it. At stake also was the validity of such things as baptism when performed by a priest who lapsed. The Catholics held, as have Protestants since, that the validity of baptism rests, not on man, but on God. Therefore baptisms performed by a lapsed priest did not become invalid.

The issue that was *not* faced then nor since is this: what happens if the priest *continues* as a lapsed man, i.e., continues to be faithless and disobedient? Assuming that his baptisms, i.e., the baptisms he officiates at, are valid, can a people continue to seek baptism from such a man? Catholics of Alexander VI’s day believed him to be an atheist, and the church, like him, corrupt. It was said, “Do you want to ruin your young son? Then make a priest of him.” Alexander had illegitimate children.⁶

What is the duty of a man in such a context: in church or in state? The Donatist controversy concerned the *restoration of repentant* lapsed men. What is the moral requirement of men when unrepentant pastors and priests control the church, and when equally ungodly men control the state?

In the area of the church, men have some choice, in that Protestants still have some evangelical and ortho-

dox churches they can join. Roman Catholics have some Eastern churches whose validity they can recognize. What happens in the area of the state? The modern state is either openly or covertly godless; it has legalized abortion and homosexuality, and, increasingly, euthanasia. Shall the Christian abandon civil office in the bureaucracy because a *public duty and mission* is now a godless one? Or should he work from within to try to change the course of state in some small way?

We find, in Paul’s letters, reference to civil officials who served an evil empire. In Philippians 4:22, “Caesar’s household” may refer to what we would call cabinet-rank officials. Another citation of a Christian official is in Romans 16:23, “Erastus the chamberlain of the city,” which city may have been the corrupt Corinth. Such references are important. Christians then were not pietists who withdrew from the world, or failed to apply their faith to the world and their calling. We know that these men in the generations following the apostolic age at times died for their faith.

Neither a mindless obedience nor a mindless resistance are godly. In current church and state battles, the startling fact at times is the eagerness of some churchmen to batter over absurdities while neglecting central issues.

At stake is an issue which the early church faced, the issue of lordship or sovereignty. The church’s response was, “Jesus Christ is Lord” (Phil. 2:9–11), not Caesar. For Christians, theocracy *must be* the normal pattern of all government, in every sphere of government, because God alone is Lord or sovereign. It is basic to the madness of our time, and of all apostate history, to assert the sovereignty of man, or of the state (Gen. 3:5).

The problem with bureaucracies in church and state is that men ascribe to

them an area of necessity which is god-like. God’s Kingdom will not end, nor His sovereignty diminish, if churches and states collapse, because all things depend on Him, and He depends on nothing. Isaiah declares:

13. *Who hath directed the Spirit of the LORD, or being his counsellor hath taught him? 14. With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and shewed to him the way of understanding? 15. Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing. 16. And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt offering. 17. All nations before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity. 18. To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him? (Isa. 40:13–18)*

To serve God requires a high seriousness, but not self-importance. Theocracy is the normal pattern of life in every sphere, and the rule of God must govern all our actions. All things must be subordinate to God and His covenant law. ■

1. Brian Tierney, *The Crisis of Church and State, 1050–1300* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1964), 131.
2. Fritz Kern, *Kingship and Law in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, England: Basil Blackwell, 1939), 10.
3. Aldous Huxley, “The Lust for Money and Power,” in Theodore K. Rabb, ed., *The Thirty Years’ War* (Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath, [1964] 1972), 141.
4. Carl J. Friedrich and Charles Blitzer, *The Age of Power* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, [1957] 1970), 7.
5. Clemente Fusero, *The Borgias* (New York, NY: Praeger, [1966] 1972), 156.
6. *Ibid.*, 204–205.

Chalcedon's Purpose and Responsibility

Mark R. Rushdoony



People told my father, Rousas John Rushdoony, that Chalcedon was a mistake when he formally began it in 1965. The prob-

lem, they said, was that it was dedicated to an idea, one so broad and sweeping that its mission would be too hard to define or inspire financial support.

Some suggested he jump on the anti-communist bandwagon; at least people could tangibly identify the Marxist threat. Worse yet, when he identified self-consciously Christian education as a priority for the reconstruction of a godly order, he was viciously treated by those whose professed theology was closest to his. The Christian reconstruction of society and culture in terms of a rigorous submission to the transcendent rule of God has always been a harder sell than the subjective "spirituality" of an other-worldly pietism.

The impact of Chalcedon's work has nevertheless been significant, as witness the testimony of its critics, both those within the church and secular academia. Churchmen tend to ignore it. It is the secular critics who keep returning to Chalcedon, and particularly the writings of my father, as significant, even fundamental, to understanding what they group collectively as "the Religious Right." It is the secularists, particularly those who decry the decline in the progress of liberalism (which they now call progressivism), who see R. J. Rushdoony as the godfather of right-leaning Christian activism.

The reason is that they see no depth or extension to most aspects of the

People told my father, Rousas John Rushdoony, that Chalcedon was a mistake when he formally began it in 1965. The problem, they said, was that it was dedicated to an idea, one so broad and sweeping that its mission would be too hard to define or inspire financial support.

Religious Right. Many groups focus on single issues or limit themselves to a specific course of action, such as politics, education, or the family. In trying to understand some larger unifying factor to these assaults on humanistic liberalism, they often find the writings of R. J. Rushdoony. "Ah," they say, "Rushdoony had the big idea, the master plan. He envisioned the Christianization of every aspect of life. He must be the mastermind, the godfather of the Religious Right." They become conspiracy theorists and see Rushdoony as the source of all they fear and loathe, largely because he described a larger picture, a worldview that had far-reaching implications. When Hillary Clinton referred to a "vast right-wing conspiracy," she was not creating a new idea but rather speaking to the fears of her base.

Because most leaders and groups on the Religious Right only speak to limited issues, the tendency has been to see Rushdoony as their source. This is not to say this observation is at all accurate.

When a child skips numbers on a dot-to-dot drawing, we look at the result and say, "This can't be right." Likewise, when we hear that Pat Robertson, Jerry Falwell, and the neoconservative Republicans in Washington, D.C., get their marching orders from Rushdoony, we immediately say, "Wait, this picture doesn't make any sense. You connected the wrong dots."

He was not the architect of the Religious Right (which is a largely political agenda), though he certainly inspired some of its leaders and supporters. Those would not, however, include the Republican leadership and not at all the neoconservatives. Yet the counter-attacking secularists are right about one thing (more perceptively than most in the church): they see in R. J. Rushdoony a broad, consistent worldview that makes the Christian faith applicable to every imaginable part of life and thought.

Chalcedon's work is to further that application. We know my father's work was, ultimately, only a call to renounce humanism in church, state, family, and elsewhere and seek "first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness" (Matt. 6:33). Chalcedon exists to call men to their duties as citizens of the Kingdom of God and His Christ.

Nevertheless, the writings of R. J. Rushdoony are an important means of teaching men their Kingdom duties. His contribution to that educational process dwarfs that of any other man of his or our time.

When most men die, their writings soon follow. Of all the quality writings of the nineteenth century, few are

still available. As we go back in time, far fewer survive. Only those few that continue to sell well remain. The rest tend to be lost to the future. Other factors also exist. The rights to the writings of former Chalcedon scholar Otto Scott are in the control of a family member who shut down his website and has yet to make any of his work available. Unless this changes, his influence will decline precipitously within a few years.

It is my personal responsibility to my father and Chalcedon's institutional responsibility to its founder that the works of R. J. Rushdoony be preserved and disseminated. This is not because we venerate a man but because we recognize his invaluable contribution to the church in its coming struggles. These works are many and varied and cannot be adequately described in a brief space. They include titles that were in print when he died and those that were out of print that are being reissued.

At this time there are more Rushdoony titles available than ever before. This preservation includes also those manuscripts that were completed but never published. This year alone we shall publish *Deuteronomy*, the last of the Pentateuch series, and new titles on confession (*The Cure of Souls* and *Sovereignty*). Several more titles are in the works. A major project beginning to come together is the republication of twenty-five years of columns from *The California Farmer* in a series of seven books. I have collected huge stacks of manuscripts on the church, the state, and the family. Other manuscripts include essays on Indians, charity, revolution, subversion, ethics, art, economics, magic and witchcraft, and more.

My father wrote constantly, whether he could foresee quick publication or not. He wrote because he believed that Christian Reconstruction, that "big idea" behind his work and the founding

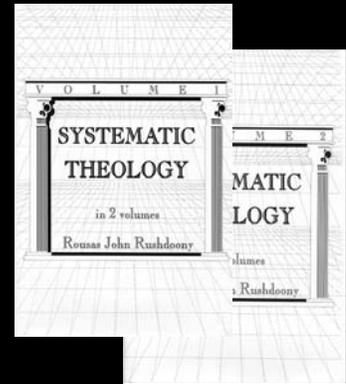
of Chalcedon, was a long-term commitment and needed to address every area of life and thought. He published what he could in his lifetime, but consciously wrote to a church that largely rejected his ideas because he felt that was his calling.

R. J. Rushdoony was not the architect of the Religious Right. His vision went beyond its largely negative ("anti" this or that) and political goals. He was a preacher, a teacher, and a theologian. He preached the Kingdom of God as a present and future certainty in an era of failing humanism. He taught men to think in terms of what they professed to believe. And, as a theologian to a compromised antinomian church, he recalled the people of God to an uncompromising obedience to God's law.

We often wonder if our constant references to R. J. Rushdoony will cause a misconception that we follow a man and not Christ. Reformed thought is still smeared with the false accusation that it follows John Calvin more than Christ. But God repeatedly reminds us of great men of faith in telling us that He is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The very real heritage of faith we see in those patriarchs never detracts us from distinguishing between God and men of God. Chalcedon merely stands on the long-term importance of the very human and fallible but still great man of God my father was.

Our mission, therefore, is to teach men faithfulness to the Kingdom of Jesus Christ while acknowledging our generation's indebtedness to the writings of R. J. Rushdoony. They are, at the same time, a critique of the approaching failures of humanism and statism as well as a witness against false pretenders within the church. Likewise, they are a blueprint for a compromised church for repentance from its repudiation of the sovereign God and His law. ■

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Theocracy Now!

Christopher J. Ortiz



Dr. Gary North once wrote, “The major dividing issue within Christian Reconstruction has been the doctrine of the institutional church.” This is the thesis of his contra-Rushdoony volume *Tithing and the Church*—an obvious twist on Rushdoony’s *Tithing and Dominion*. In his book North dedicates streams of ink to revealing an alleged lifetime of evasion of the institutional church by Rushdoony. Added to this is an unusually weak theological argument for the primacy of the institutional church—this book is not a great example of the fine thinking that appears in many of Dr. North’s other volumes.

It’s on page 91 where Dr. North should have waited before assuring his reader that Rushdoony’s aversion to the institutional church is best demonstrated by the absence of any writings by Rushdoony on ecclesiology:

Rushdoony has never written a book on the doctrine of the church, nor do I expect him to ...¹

He spoke too soon. Dr. North makes this claim in 1994. That very same year Rushdoony published his two-volume *Systematic Theology* in which he dedicates 114 pages to a section entitled “The Doctrine of the Church.”

Church vs. Family

Dr. North is correct that his doctrine of the institutional church and Rushdoony’s emphasis upon the individual and the family are the central dividing lines of Christian

Reconstruction. They are also the primary reason for the misunderstanding surrounding theocracy. An institutional emphasis can more easily be construed as a Biblical justification for advancing the Kingdom through politics, and naturally leads to ecclesiocracy (rule of the church) and statism, while Rushdoony’s doctrine of church and family tends toward theocracy (rule of God) and liberty.

This is made plain when Dr. North cites Matthew 10:34–39 to support his elevation of the institutional church:

Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man’s foes shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.

In commenting on this verse, North writes, “Jesus made it plain: the false ideal of the sovereign family is a far greater threat to Christianity than the false ideal of the sovereign state. Jesus never spoke this harshly regarding the state.”²

In actuality, Matthew 10:34–39 is not a disparaging of the family—far from it. The very fact that the gospel of Jesus Christ will potentially make enemies out of those within one’s own household, and that one cannot love fa-

ther or mother more than Christ, shows that the authority of the gospel supersedes man’s most basic and authoritative sphere: the family. However, much like other Biblical examples where the disciples are asked to put their hands to the plow and leave all things behind, the meaning is soteriological. Therefore, a redeemed family need not be divided. It’s rather the strength of the Kingdom of God.

Christ did not say He came to set a “parishioner against his pastor” or a “citizen against his governor,” but a “man against his father.” Our Lord is speaking hyperbolically by authoritatively challenging man’s ultimate institution: the family. This is also Dr. North’s point. In making it, he is acknowledging that the family represents the greatest “threat” because it carries the most authority. Christ divides man’s most basic institution; but once redeemed, the family becomes the primary instrument for building the glorious Kingdom. And like he said, the state—and the church for that matter—are not even mentioned.

Christian Reconstruction is a Family Movement

You can often determine the importance of a Biblical subject by considering the penalties and blessings in relation to it. This is especially true in regard to the family:

And he that curseth his father, or his mother, shall surely be put to death. (Exod. 21:17)

Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth. (Eph. 6:2–3)

The Biblical consequences for either cursing or honoring one's parents are extreme: death or extended life. There are no such threats or blessings for dishonoring the institutional church or the state. There are such penalties for speaking evil of the Holy Spirit (Luke 12:10), but outside of the Godhead, it is the family that carries the most severe punishment for treason in Scripture. This is the clearest evidence of the centrality of the family as the basic governing body in history. When you consider the contemporary emphasis upon church and state and their mutual exploitation of the family, it should be obvious that we live in treasonous times.

Christian Reconstruction is in essence a family movement. To make it primarily a matter of reform in church and state is to miss the point of the Biblical mandate.³

The answer to the predominance of power in both church and state is theocracy, i.e., *the rule of God*. When this genuine definition of theocracy is adequately considered, we can easily see how far we are removed from the Biblical form of government. For example, whereas the Scriptures command that the tithe is *to the Lord*, the average Christian views his portion going to the institutional church. The "rule of the church" dominates the Christian view of life and equally represents the assumed threat by those outside the Christian community. Our problem is exactly as Rushdoony postulated: the "landmarks" have been moved (Deut. 19:14, 27:17; Prov. 23:10–11).

If we examine the landmark of God's word, we find that we have altered the landmarks greatly. The two centers of human action are now church and state. In effect, the government is now upon their shoulders ... God places the basic tax and power in the hands of the

family. The sanctuary received a tenth of the tithe, so that the church cannot be a superpower, and the civil government is limited to half a shekel for each male from twenty years of age and above (Exod. 30:11–16).⁴

The jurisdiction of the family has been compromised. Both church and state have progressively extended their landmarks while compounding their exploitation of the family via the inflationary state—requiring two incomes—and the megachurch absorption of the family's time. It is interesting to note that a good many of the primary thinkers in Christian Reconstruction departed from Rushdoony's thesis to seek the Kingdom through politics or exalt the institutional church.

Theocracy and Biblical Law

For a number of years now our often ignored mission statement has read, "Biblical law cannot be imposed; it must be embraced."⁵ I say "ignored" because our critics repeatedly accuse us of seeking to impose Biblical law on an unsuspecting society. However, it's probably insufficient simply to say that Biblical law must be embraced. We are at the heart of the Christian doctrine of the New Covenant when we're discussing the role of Biblical law in society.

For THIS IS THE COVENANT that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people. (Heb. 8:10 emphasis added)

How does one define the New Covenant? For most theologians, it is the redemption of Christ in relation to sin, i.e., a covenant of grace. However, the redeeming of the sinner follows afterward in the text:

For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniqui-

ties will I remember no more. (Heb. 8:12)

The New Covenant represents more than the restoration of the sinner to salvation—this is to place man in the center. In its fullest sense, the New Covenant is rather a restoration to obedience—i.e., saved men made faithful—with the clear emphasis placed upon the moving of the law from stone to the heart of man. It is for this reason that the New Testament writers downplay "ceremony" and the ceremonial aspects of the law. Without the accompaniment of law and theology, the liturgical emphasis on visual ceremony can divert the focus of the believer to something external. At present, some of the most antinomian and compromised churches utilize the most elaborate liturgies. They nullify the commandments of God by their traditions (Matt. 15:3, 6).

The covenant that God said He would make with the house of Israel is described as the putting of His laws into their minds and writing them in their hearts. He then seals this miraculous work of the Spirit (Ezek. 36:27) by declaring "I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people." Herein lies the essential structure of Christianity: God-Law-Individual. This is the essence of theocracy, i.e., the rule of God. It is direct, immediate, and unencumbered by ecclesiocracy and statism.

Family as Teacher

In a Biblical theocracy the family is the primary instructor in self-government. We observe this in the well-known commands given to fathers in Deuteronomy to teach their children God's law:

That thou mightest fear the LORD thy God, to keep all his statutes and his commandments, which I command thee, thou, and thy son, and thy son's son, all the days of thy life; and that thy days may be

prolonged ... And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. (Deut. 6:2, 7)

There is no mention of priests here. The fathers provide this didactic role as they make the law portable by including its discussion during the mundane daily activities of communing in the home, eating, going to bed, waking up, and traveling. The obvious meaning is the comprehensive application of God's commandments. Such a wide and detailed application of the law through a father is best exemplified in the repeated openings to many chapters in the book of Proverbs:

My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother (Prov. 1:8); My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee (2:1); My son, forget not my law (3:1); Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father (4:1); My son, attend to my words; incline thine ear unto my sayings (4:20); My son, attend unto my wisdom (5:1); My son, keep my words, and lay up my commandments with thee (7:1).

It is fathers who must bring up their children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4). In fact, as Proverbs shows, fathers must *embody* the law as covenantal representatives. This is demonstrated by Solomon's constant exhorting of his son to hear the law of his father. Although this is no endorsement of hyper-patriarchy, it does reveal the imperative role that fathers play as the source of Biblical instruction to their children. The key is that fathers must prepare their children for self-government in terms of God's law, not a lifetime of obedience to their parents.

The Knowledge of God

Returning to the inspired discussion of the New Covenant in the book of Hebrews, we see the direct benefit of the inscribing of the law upon the heart and mind is that all would now "know" the Lord:

And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. (Heb. 8:11)

The subject of "knowing God" has suffered much abuse at the hands of Christian movements. For example, the knowledge of God is often misconstrued as an overly spiritual knowing of God through prayer and spiritual exercises. Charismatics tend to lead in this pietistic focus. It's not uncommon to hear them reference Psalm 103:7, "He made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel" (emphasis added).

The Charismatic claims he desires to know the ways of God, yet the Charismatic theology emphasizes spiritual power and demonstrations, i.e., "acts." The ways of God become something spiritual—hidden under the plain reading of the text—which is often why they need an army of modern-day prophets to interpret and reveal this supernatural way of life. Yet, the writer of Hebrews in his citation of Jeremiah is clearly showing that the knowledge of God is tied directly to the law being written upon the heart.

The Mirror of God's Law

Knowing the ways of God as Moses did is contingent upon knowing the laws of God that Moses was given. But Israel could not penetrate the cloud that hovered over Sinai. Therefore, she would forever view her relationship with God in terms of thundering, lightning, manna from the sky, and water out of a rock. She would only know His acts and

despise the law written by His finger. The parallels to modern Christianity are overwhelming.

In order to know the way God does something, one must first know His law: "I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways" (Ps. 119:15). Therefore, our pietism and spiritual exercises should be dedicated to the contemplation of God's law (cf. Josh. 1:8; Ps. 1:2; Ps. 119) as a means to the total application of God's law-word to every sphere of life. Although the law is written upon our hearts and minds, we are given the written text of God's law to help us define and personalize that law:

But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, DECEIVING YOUR OWN SELVES. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man BEHOLDING HIS NATURAL FACE IN A GLASS: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway FORGETTETH WHAT MANNER OF MAN HE WAS. (James 1:22-24, emphasis added)

We deceive ourselves by our failure to obey God's law-word. The written law is to serve as a "mirror" in order that we do not forget what we look like. You are sure to have a messy man who never views a mirror. He can only make proper adjustments to his appearance when he daily reviews his reflection. We have the law written within our being, but we must daily review our appearance in the mirror of God's law-word for the sake of comparison and improvement.

Theocracy Now!

This is the heart of living in a theocracy. It is tremendously personal and begins at childhood. It's also to be perpetuated through succeeding generations by faithful families. This simple yet powerful system also controls those who do not embrace it, for one

can never escape “the eyes of him with whom we have to do” (Heb. 4:13). By their failure to honor and obey God’s written commands, the unbeliever and the unfaithful Christian suffer historically as well as eternally. Their aversion to theocracy is a costly one.

My hope is that this trend can be somewhat reversed by a better definition of theocracy. To the secularist, the threat of theocracy is symbolized by the enthronement of the Ten Commandments in a courthouse, school, or public place. This is why they deem the removal of Judge Roy Moore’s monument as a victory for the theocratic resistance movement. However, theocracy is rather the enthronement of God’s law in the heart of the believer as all human mediators, whether in church or state, are removed and the direct rule of God is placed over the self-governing man. Theoc-

cracy is not coming. Theocracy is now! In my home, relationships, and work, I do not function in terms of democracy, oligarchy, monarchy, socialism, or communism. In all areas of life I must be governed by the direct rule of God (*theos-kratos*) through the writing of His law upon my heart and mind.

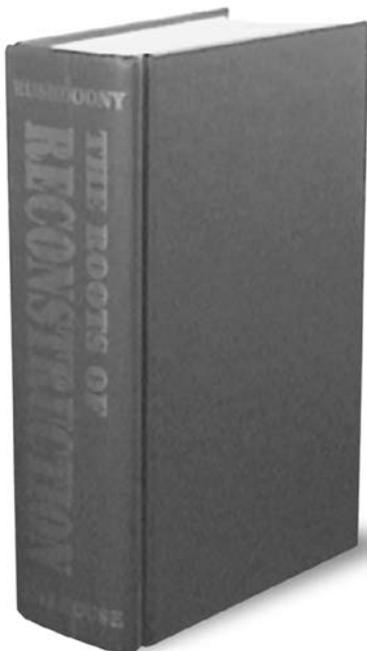
Though I may live in a non-theocratic society, I am still compelled to respond immediately to the rule of God over my life, family, and vocation. Even the liberty I seek is the liberty to serve God more faithfully. If I do become politically involved, it is only to better preserve that liberty.

Rushdoony fought for theocracy. His writings exhaust the discussion of the centrality of the family and the individual as set over against the institutional church and the state. He traveled thousands of miles to countless court-

houses to defend the rights of families to provide their children with an explicitly Christian education. He dedicated his life to the exposition of Biblical law, and he never sought political office. He was a theocrat living in a world dominated by the humanistic state. He was in the world, but was certainly not of it. Let us follow that example and seek evermore the Kingship of Christ. ■

1. Gary North, *Tithing and the Church* (Tyler, TX: Institute for Christian Economics, 1994), 91.
2. *Ibid.*, 93.
3. R. J. Rushdoony, “Christian Reconstruction as a Movement” *The Journal of Christian Reconstruction: Symposium on Reconstruction in Church and State*, Vol. XIV, No. 1, Fall 1996, 9.
4. *Ibid.*, 7.
5. See <http://www.chalcedon.edu/vision.php>.

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The Biblical Duty of Self-Defense

2nd Lt. Judd A. Wilson, USMC



When I was young, I lived in the suburbs of New Orleans. Even though our neighborhood was pretty quiet, I always knew that I had to lock the doors and not talk to strangers because New Orleans was a city with a lot of crime.

One night, my family woke to the sound of screaming. When we ran to see what was happening, we found a young woman banging on the sliding glass door of our living room, begging for help. We called the police and waited for them to come. It must have been an hour before they came—an hour in which my family, fearing for our own safety, did not know what to do. I remember the confusion that such a crisis created in my loving and good—but unprepared—elders. They were concerned that it was a trick and that somebody might hurt us if we opened the door to this girl. All that stood between us and any possible danger was my sixty-year-old grandfather, wielding a kitchen knife.

Not knowing what to do and not having a sure means of protecting ourselves caused us to hesitate to help her. We later found out that the woman had been raped and dumped by her assailant behind our house. Although we eventually opened the door to her, our actions must have exacerbated her shock and fear. It left a profound impression on my memory that this world is a dangerous place and that we must be prepared to treat it as such.

Now I have a wife and a tiny, infant daughter. Those women are the most important people on this planet to me.

Like other Christian men, I have been commanded by God to love my wife as Christ loves His church and to raise my daughter in the fear and admonition of the Lord. But in the face of a palpable silence in the evangelical world regarding this subject, I pose a question. Do I not have the duty to protect them from physical harm?

The Bible says, “Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God” (Matt. 4:7). Citing this verse, the Lord refused Satan’s call to recklessly jump off the temple, and in so doing to deny Biblical common sense in favor of supernatural deliverance. If I send my wife and daughter to the grocery store, the grandparents’ house, or anywhere else, unprepared to deal with this world full of scheming, depraved sinners, have I not broken this commandment?

I’m not saying that we should discount God’s protection and blessing or the customary decency of many citizens; but if I neglected to check the oil, the gas, and the tires before setting out on a road trip, would I not be to blame if we ended up stranded on the side of a road somewhere? I must conclude then that I have a duty to prepare my girls to defend themselves and that I must be able to defend myself as well.

We read about this duty of self-defense in Deuteronomy 22:23–27, which teaches us that when threatened with rape, a woman has the obligation to resist her attacker by screaming for help. The principle implicit here is that this crime is something to be resisted, not acquiesced to. Verses 23–24 mention the case of a woman who is attacked while in a town. It specifies that if she does not scream for help, she is to be

stoned to death along with the rapist. Why? Because she is obliged to resist.

This is not the law of some cruel and unjust God; it is the law of a God who sharply differentiates between good and evil. As Matthew Henry writes on these verses, the assumption here is that in a town or other populated area, when a woman cried out for help, rescuers “might speedily have come in to prevent the injury offered her.” In the case of a sexual assault, that help must be immediate. We can conclude, then, that Israelite city dwellers were not to be couch potatoes, but instead vigilant, manly individuals capable of physically overcoming a criminal or a group of criminals.

Verses 25–27 specify that in the case of a woman raped in the countryside, where there is no one to hear her cry for help, only the rapist must die, for “as when a man riseth against his neighbour, and slayeth him, even so is this matter: For he found her in the field, and the betrothed damsel cried, and there was none to save her.” Again, the woman is obligated to resist, and her fellow Israelites are obligated to rescue her. We also see that the Israelites were expected to know how to help her. Clearly a girl today, just as then, is better off knowing how to defend herself if she is caught alone with “no one to rescue her.”

Where is the teaching on this from the pulpits? Where are the Christian organizations that can provide training for such occasions? I fear that we have blindly accepted the unmanly and unbiblical notion that we ought to look to somebody else to defend us, whether it be our rights, our dignity, or our lives.

Continued on page 31

A Girl's Noblest Goal

Carmon Friedrich



“What do you want to be when you grow up?”

That well-meaning question posed by polite adults wanting to engage children in conversation is generally asked of little boys and little girls without distinction. One answer, given by a shrinking number of little girls, is shocking and controversial in today's culture:

“I want to be a wife and mommy.”

This spring we are graduating our fourth homeschooled student and oldest daughter, Anna. Though we tease her about her blondness (she once told me she was going to rule her children with an “iron thumb,” among many other “Annerisms”), she is an intelligent young woman with a special love for history, theology, and cooking. When she graduates, she will continue pursuing studies in those areas, but not on a college campus. Our daughter will not be attending college.

This is not a unilateral (by parental edict) decision, though she has been taught from her babyhood that marriage and motherhood are noble callings. Anna truly desires to be a “wife and mommy,” and wise young woman that she is, she intends to prepare for those jobs with the single-mindedness that any serious student would give to training for an important profession.

We've met with varying responses to this decision, not always negative. But some reactions that we, and others with like convictions, have received have been condescending at best, negative at worst: “Don't you want to do anything *big* with your life?” “You're too smart to waste your life like that.” “Don't you

think women deserve to be educated?” “You need something to fall back on.” Some parents have even been accused of abusing their daughters. One octogenarian lady chastised her husband for telling a little girl at church that she would make a great wife someday. “Young ladies today aspire to greater things,” she said.

My purpose is to frame a defense of the important callings of marriage and motherhood rather than criticize college per se, though I do have many criticisms of it as a given rite of passage for Christian young people. As G. K. Chesterton notes in *Orthodoxy*, “When you choose anything, you reject everything else.”

It's impossible to explain our choice without stepping on some toes, but I do so very gently as I am well aware that there is no Biblical command against women attending college. There are, however, places in the Bible where a woman's role is explicitly detailed, and also many examples of godly women to emulate, and it is clear that the normative role for godly women is centered around home and family.

In 1 Timothy 2:15, after reminding us of God's created order in relation to a woman's conduct in the church, Paul confers a real, though mysterious, benediction on motherhood by saying women “will be saved in childbearing” (NKJV). Later, he gives instructions regarding the care of worthy widows, including the requirement that these godly women have “brought up children” (1 Tim. 5:10). The younger widows are admonished to “marry, bear children, manage the house, give no opportunity to the adversary to speak reproachfully” (1 Tim. 5:14 NKJV). The young women

who did not busy themselves with these occupations were instead using their leisure time to be gossiping busybodies, going from house to house, and leaving opinionated comments on blogs (I added that last part).

Everyone has heard Titus 2:4–5 so many times that familiarity has bred contempt. Yet there we find some of the most direct scriptural instruction regarding the roles of older and younger women. Paul lists what the older women are to teach the younger women, as part of what is proper for “sound doctrine”: “[A]dmonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed” (NKJV).

John MacArthur says:

I will tell you this, if the Church doesn't wake up soon and obey the Word of God—all is lost! We don't need to fall victim to this stuff. You don't need a Master's degree to figure out what it means “to love your husband, love your children, and to work at home!” How hard is that? By the way, there are no qualifiers there, no caveats, no footnotes—it is just what it says: “Go home, submit to your husband, have children, raise them in godliness, take care of your house.” And that's what older women are to teach younger women—they are to teach it not only with their mouth; they are to teach it with their life.¹

One of the central battles facing the church today is over women's roles. Christians have marinated in the prevailing feminist paradigm for so long that they blanch at the no-

tion that being a keeper at home is not only a woman's highest calling, but the normative calling for a Christian woman. There are some who claim to hold a "high view" of Scripture who also rationalize away the previous verses as cultural edicts only relevant to the time they were written. The patron saint Deborah is usually invoked with her example of leadership in Judges given as an imprimatur for choosing a career in addition to, or in lieu of, those equally valid choices of home and family. Yet a woman's leadership was a judgment on an apostate people who persisted in doing what was "right in their own eyes" (see Isa. 3:12).

Feminism is not a phenomenon that exists just in liberal circles any longer. A popular homeschooling speaker and author, Susan Wise Bauer, recently came out of the feminist closet and proudly proclaimed that she is an egalitarian. Mrs. Bauer bemoaned the fact that her alma mater, Westminster Theological Seminary, promotes a "complementarian" view of gender roles, saying that the culture has "moved on" to fully embrace egalitarianism. With a cadre of classical homeschooling mothers hanging on her words, she is in a position to do a lot of damage to certain segments of the church, persuading mothers that their daughters should, as the elderly lady in our example noted, "aspire to *greater* things."

What does all this have to do with college for our daughter? Since the Bible teaches that the normative role for Christian women is centered in the home, then we not only want Anna to be well-prepared for that important position, we also want her to be content in it. Though some see our decision as a condemnation of their conflicting views, rejecting college as necessary for her success in life is more an affirmation of the importance of preparing for life as a keeper at home.

"Sheltering" is a bad word today, but I'm happy to be sheltered from all sorts of things, including pornography on the Internet due to very strict filters my husband has placed on our home computers, and dangerous situations as my husband makes sure that I avoid certain areas when I travel. I'm even constrained by the accountability I have to my family from indulging in activities that may be lawful but not profitable for serving God. Why then should we insist that our daughters leave home for a kind of rumspringa, where the limits as well as protections are totally removed?

The most persistent straw man we have had to battle is the idea that eschewing college means our daughter is condemned to a life of ignorance. Because of what R. J. Rushdoony identified as "the messianic character of American education," even many Christians believe that *real* education is what takes place within the walls of an accredited institution, administered by experts who give their seal of approval to the student's achievements—achievements that in many places consist of showing up for classes and, as Rushdoony notes, becoming socialized in the tenets of statist democracy. He quotes Dirk Jellema, "reporting on the composite attitude of college students":

Q. *What is the purpose of education?*

A. To enable the student to adjust to the group and thus gain emotional security.

Q. *But to what group should the student be trained to adjust?*

A. To the dominant group in this country.

Q. *And what does it want?*

A. A high standard of living.

Q. *Is this good?*

A. Obviously, since the group wants it.²

This thinking ought to give pause to parents of both daughters and sons. But while young men may sometimes need to face the gauntlet of the university's subversive teaching in order to fill certain occupations and to sit with the elders in the gates, most women are to aim for different goals that require different preparations. Some have told me that the independent college life made them better prepared to be good wives and mothers. Jennie Chancey has another perspective. She left college with a degree *and* with \$8,000 in debt, having become a "Christian feminist." She says,

College is not and never has been the real world. Not by a long shot. It is an isolated, insular little cosmos shut off from real life. Stop a moment and look around at the real world you inhabit. Let's compare it to a college campus: Does someone shop for all your groceries? Does someone prepare all your meals for you, having hot food available at almost any hour of the day? Do you have 150–5,000 peers surrounding you throughout the day and night? Can you walk a few steps from your door and find a library, a recreation center, a gym, a fine arts studio, and a swimming pool, all available for free? Does a committee make sure you are entertained by providing concerts, movies, or social *soirees* every weekend? Can you get up at 3 a.m. and drive off to an all-night restaurant, leaving all your responsibilities behind so that you can enjoy a gab-fest with a few friends?³

Both Guy Odom in *Mothers, Leadership, and Success* and George Gilder in *Men and Marriage* argue that feminist thinking, relegating marriage and family to just another—and lesser—choice among many valid choices for women, has created instability in society by undermining home life. Gilder says, “The role of the mother is the paramount support of civilized human society. It is essential to the socialization of both men and women.”⁴ He adds, “The fact is that there is no way that women can escape their supreme responsibilities in civilized society without endangering civilization itself.”⁵

If even secular observers of cultural trends understand the central importance of the mother in the home, why isn't the church, in light of God's clear teaching on women's roles, emphasizing more preparation for the work that is done by homemakers and honoring those who embrace that calling more than with a token nod on Mother's Day?

Such an important job does not come intuitively when the wedding band is slipped on the finger or the baby is placed in the arms. As Titus 2 indicates, young women must be taught the necessary skills, even how to love their husbands and children, something that requires great self-sacrifice. As Mrs. Chancey mentions, college life can be filled with self-indulgence. Is the significant investment of time and money it represents justified when the end is at odds with the means? Four years in school to obtain a bachelor's degree is approximately 20 percent of a young person's life, and the time it takes to pay off the debt for that degree often postpones marriage and childbearing. Family size is even limited due to that financial burden.⁶

Though not the primary consideration in Anna staying home rather than

going to college, there is also the issue of the moral and physical protection of young women away from home. Last year, *Newsweek* profiled how evangelical students entering secular colleges are pressured to engage in partying there with devastating consequences. It is also a well-known fact that violent crime rates are very high on college campuses.⁷

“Sheltering” is a bad word today, but I'm happy to be sheltered from all sorts of things, including pornography on the Internet due to very strict filters my husband has placed on our home computers, and dangerous situations as my husband makes sure that I avoid certain areas when I travel. I'm even constrained by the accountability I have to my family from indulging in activities that may be lawful but not profitable for serving God. Why then should we insist that our daughters leave home for a kind of *rumspringa*, where the limits as well as protections are totally removed? Liberal author Caitlin Flanagan wonders the same thing:

Given the coarsening of the culture, the intense peer pressure and corresponding desire to fit in that have always marked college life, and the way very young women are defined today as at once independent and exploitable, the bitter pill for many parents sending their daughters to college is that there is no possible way to protect them from what they will encounter once they have been dropped off at the freshman dorm.⁸

No young woman should be ashamed to say that her goal is to be a wife and mother. Christians should encourage girls to look forward to those noble callings, not portray marriage and motherhood as second-best or second-rate with raised eyebrows or “what ifs.” A few are called to singleness, but marriage is the norm, and from the original command to be “fruitful and multiply” to the picture of our relationship with

Christ as a marriage, God holds marriage and family in high esteem. This real-life metaphor pictures a reality that culminates in the marriage feast of the Lamb mentioned in Revelation 19:7, which is really a happily ever after beginning, though it's at The End of The Book. If we wish marriage and family to be esteemed in the church, let alone the culture, then we must not denigrate the preparation for it with our daughters, insisting they prepare instead for singleness or a career. ■

Carmon Friedrich has been happily married to Steven for 25 years, and they are the blessed parents of ten children. They live in the California gold country. Carmon has been blogging for six years at <http://buriedtreasurebooks.com/weblog>, and she edits books and writes magazine articles in her spare time.

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2. R. J. Rushdoony, *The Messianic Character of American Education* (Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1963), 319–320.)
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The Perpetual Kindergarten

Martin Selbrede



The churches of America have, by and large, entered a second childhood. Adult education classes are packaged in small bites to accommodate modern attention spans. Class content, often of an introductory nature, is taught to everyone without distinction, whether they've been believers for half an hour or half a century. Under this kind of teaching regime, is it any wonder that growth is redefined in numerical terms or in regard to a vague sense of spirituality, rather than the kind of growth Paul had in mind?

It is even more disconcerting to consider that many churchgoers are getting what they want, namely, Christianity with low mental impact: bunny slope faith for life.

If “knowledge puffs up,” modern evangelicalism is a safely shriveled prune. But it has achieved this false harbor¹ by promoting the ideal of the theological slacker. But the failure to grow in knowledge is treated as a *sin* in Scripture: the sin of slothfulness. One cannot understand the danger inherent in winking at this sin until one grasps the import of Hebrews 5:11–6:3. I won't cover all six of the cardinal principles of the faith enumerated in that passage, just the first two. That alone will suffice to show that *most Christians haven't even properly grasped the basics*. Small wonder, then, that moving on to maturity is rendered inaccessible: the system provides for other results entirely.

Metaphorically speaking, the one-room schoolhouse of the church *should* cover grades kindergarten through

twelve. Too many of our churches only cover grades kindergarten through kindergarten. Everyone is automatically reenrolled in kindergarten Sunday after Sunday, while the illusion of progress and growth is tenuously maintained. “I've been a Christian for thirty years” may mean very little when one has attended a perpetual kindergarten.

Christ asks the church's leaders to “feed my lambs.” But Christ also wants them to “feed my sheep.” If lambs never grow into sheep, something is manifestly wrong with the diet they're being fed. But if churches also fail to feed mature believers (letting them fend for themselves or having the feeding of lambs delegated to them), the problem is compounded. The one-size-fits-all approach to feeding/teaching may ease the pastoral workload, but the implicit rewrite of Christ's pastoral commission concerning this sacred delegated duty has no scriptural support.

Disclaimer: I am *heavily* indebted to John Owen, Rousas John Rushdoony, and other commentators for much of what follows. Their words are so completely interlaced with mine that to footnote everything would have easily doubled the length of this article. Also, the extensive use of italics is intentional throughout this article.

Terms of Endurance

Doctrine is something that takes character to endure. “For the time will come when they will not *endure* sound doctrine” (2 Tim. 4:3). This passage implies that a distinguishing attribute of sound doctrine is that it is something that needs to be endured: that it takes some mental effort to grasp, understand,

and apply it. It's part and parcel of the narrow path that leads to life, in contrast to the wide and easy path that leads to destruction. We must not merely criticize easy-believism: we must better equip the people to embrace hard-believism.²

Some Scripture is admittedly hard to understand, and it takes effort to grasp it properly. “As also in all his [Paul's] epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are *some things hard to be understood*, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction” (2 Pet. 3:16). Jacob wrestled an angel all night long to receive a blessing: do we wrestle with difficult portions of the Word in order to receive a like blessing?

Hebrews 5:11 states (concerning Melchisedec), “[W]e have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing.” The term *hard to be understood* (“uttered,” KJV) is *dyshermeneutos*—one could loosely speak of a dysfunctional hermeneutic, or interpretation. But the reason given *here* for the difficulty in understanding is explicitly given: the blame rests with the *hearers*, who have become *slothful in hearing*.

The Ten-Toed Sloth

The Greek term *noothroi* is used only in Hebrews 5:11 (*dull* of hearing) and Hebrews 6:12 (*slothful*). The term points to a deep moral culpability: slothfulness is a sin. Dictionaries inform us that a slothful person is one who is not easily stirred or moved; heavy, inactive in his constitution and his inclinations.

There is no greater reproach to be laid on a steward than that of slothful-

ness: “Thou wicked and *slothful servant*” (Matt. 25:26). In this light, shouldn’t the prospect of being charged with slothfulness by Christ Himself galvanize us to immediate, consistent action to remedy so serious a fault?

The author of Hebrews³ charges his readers with *culpable neglect*. He condemns the depraved affections that cast us into a neglect of duty. Too many modern churches turn a blind eye to what they see as benign neglect (given the higher weight they place on fellowship, etc., as if one could safely pit one Biblical imperative against another).

It is the duty of ministers to carry us on to perfection (full maturity): *[L]et us go on unto perfection* (Heb. 6:1). This is because the ministry was instituted *[f]or the perfecting of the saints* (Eph. 4:12–13). In too many churches, this process has been all but fully arrested. Worse, it appears to have been arrested by design.

The Bible’s Chief Competition Is Alive and Well—in our Own Hearts

Preparation is required to seek God’s will in His Word. Maturing as a Christian can be impeded by many things, all of which reflect on our sinfulness. A primary example would be the cares of this world—a heart directed to the love of this world, the business of this world, and the cares of this world. *[C]ovetousness, which is idolatry* (Col. 3:5). When we sit in church and think about earthly things, we elevate our idols over God *inside God’s own house*. If we don’t cast these things out, even well before church starts, by way of preparation, we become *noothroi tais akoas* (slothful in *hearing*—*akoas*, from which *acoustic* derives). Hebrews doesn’t hold such people guiltless.

Scripture exhorts us to desire God’s Word. *[D]esire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby* (1 Pet. 2:2). How strong is the modern Christian’s desire for the Word? Does

he even recognize how nourishing it is? Do modern believers esteem it of higher value than thousands of pieces of gold and silver (Ps. 119:72)? Evidently not.

Some hear the Word of God to satisfy their convictions, some hear to satisfy their curiosity, some to please themselves, some out of custom, some for company, and many don’t know why, or have no reason at all. Small wonder such persons are slothful in hearing.

We need to consider our stature in Christ and how short we come of that measure in faith, knowledge, light, and love, which we ought and hope to attain to.

We will thrive on the Word *if we set this purpose in our hearts*.

[L]ay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the ingrafted⁴ word (James 1:21). If you don’t do the first, you can’t do the second. The reception of the Word is rendered impossible when we fail to lay aside those things that war against it.

God shows Ezekiel (Ezek. 8:5–12) that His people were experts in external conformity, yet were internal frauds. God instructs Ezekiel to “dig now in the wall” to see what was going on under the surface of Israel’s religious exercise (v. 8), letting Ezekiel see what was on the inner walls of the religious leaders’ minds and souls (v. 10). *[H]ast thou seen what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the chambers of his imagery?* (v. 12). God looks upon the heart and bade Ezekiel to see Israel through God’s own eyes.

God’s Word is choked out by the cares of this world, which always leads to dull, formal attendance upon God’s witness to His people. See Ezekiel 33:30–33, especially verse 31: *And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with*

their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness.

God’s Word—every syllable of it—is so important that David affirms, *[T]hou hast magnified thy word above all thy name* (Ps. 138:2). The denigration and neglect of the totality of God’s Word is serious, sinful business!

[W]hen ye received the word [logos akoas, literally the word of hearing] of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe (1 Thess. 2:13). This is the appropriate way to treat the preaching of God’s Word—namely, AS God’s Word.

This attitude is exemplified by Cornelius and his household in Acts 10:33, when he declares, *Now therefore are we all here present . . . to hear all things that are commanded thee of God*. Without this attentive attitude, we’ll be slothful, unprofitable hearers of the Word. God’s Word is a word of command and carries the greatest moral imperative.

Doctrine doesn’t speak exclusively to the mind, but to the heart as well, and to fail to grasp this is to fail totally. “But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but *ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine* which was delivered you” (Rom. 6:17).

Before, During, and After

It isn’t enough just to prepare ourselves for hearing the Word beforehand and then to hear it with a right attitude while it is being taught. What we do *after* hearing it is equally important: we can still fall into the sin of slothfulness *after* hearing the Word of God. Our duty goes further than dutifully warming a pew.

We must examine everything that is new or doubtful. *Prove all things; hold fast that which is good* (1 Thess. 5:21).

[T]ry the spirits (1 John 4:1). These are skills that need to be acquired and

honed (Heb. 5:14), skills that mark maturity in a believer.

Note that the critical gadfly is *not* commended here. The kind of super-critical person who continually takes exception to, and disputes, the proclamation of the Word—thinking he could have delivered it better and more suited to his sentiments and preconceptions—is the *worst* sort of unprofitable hearer. These people are light years away from subjecting their consciences to the authority of God.

Moreover, don't call a minister's doctrine into question lightly. You need manifest evidence of some failing or mistake. Don't major in the minors. "Doubtful disputations" make us unprofitable, slothful hearers.

We need to *actually learn* what we are being taught. If the Word isn't ingrafted, we will find ourselves [*e*]ver learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth (2 Tim. 3:7).⁵

Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip (Heb. 2:1). The standard for New Testament Christians is *higher* than that for Old Testament Israel. Without earnest, diligent heed, we stand in danger of letting the Word of God slip. If a vessel has holes, the only way to fill it is to pour more into it than is lost through the holes. So it is with our souls and God's Word. There is no "standing still"—there can be only growth or decay. We either press toward the mark by running the good race, or we backslide.

Total (not partial, pick-and-choose) obedience is critical. *Therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people, according as ye have not kept my ways, but have been partial in the law* (Mal. 2:9).

Sadly, ministers can profit from people's sinfulness, and some are tempted not to correct the people's waywardness

in order to feather their own nests. *They eat up the sin of my people, and they set their heart on their iniquity* (Hos. 4:8).

God here indicates that the ministers are enriched by the people's sin and are disinclined to correct it. They rather look forward to cashing in on it. It is a tragic circumstance when people are compelled to ask themselves if this might be true in their own churches.

You Might Be a Slothful Hearer of God's Word If ...

Sinful and willful carelessness about their own condition marks the slothful hearers of God's Word. Where lack of due growth and progress in the faith are, there you will find sinful slothfulness.

Hebrews 5:12 begins with the words, "For when ...". The following point is the condemning evidence for the charge lodged against the slothful—the presence of this evidence makes it easy to identify a slothful man or woman. What follows is a crystal clear description of the smoking gun and how to recognize it easily.

The milk drinker who should already be a teacher is BOTH *unskilled in the Word of righteousness* AND *slothful in hearing*. The two go together.

Our calling is to *grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ* (2 Pet. 3:18). Because this is true, the *time* that has elapsed *since* our conversion is a *talent* to be *accounted for*. For too many in modern Christendom, it is a buried talent.

When the writer to the Hebrews says his readers *ought to be teachers*, he does not mean that they *might have been able to be teachers*. He actually expected them to assume this duty!

Far too many people are content merely to hear the sermon and go home to resume their worldly pursuits quite unchanged. In contrast to this, appropriate attendance upon God's Word

yields some amazing fruit. *I have more understanding than all my teachers* (Ps. 119:99). The goal of all instruction is that *all the LORD'S people were prophets, and that the LORD would put His Spirit upon them* (Num. 11:29).

Hebrews 5:12 points out that *ye have need that one teach you again*. This is the *highest evidence* of their dullness and unprofitable hearing of the Word. It is a great fall, from the top to the bottom. God is saying, in effect, "You have to repeat a grade. Too many Fs, you'll have to be held back a grade." In fact, the "first principles" He sends them back to is the Greek term *stoicheia*, which suggests the alphabet (the basics, the elementary building blocks of something). As R. J. Rushdoony has well said, one learns the alphabet in order to be able to read and write, and not to earn a doctorate in alphabet.

God has a "No Believer Left Behind" educational policy, but we wrongly think He supports "social promotion" and will give us school credit for merely warming the pews. This mindset only compounds the moral failure of slothfulness that leads to atrophy in Biblical knowledge and wisdom.

Stuck in the Starting Gate

You need *more* than first principles. For example, if you stop building a house after only laying the foundation, it will be a sorry shelter from the storm.

The first principles are FIRST and not LAST principles. They're designed to be built upon further. They are to be learned as a precondition for further growth and improvement in holiness and righteousness. (See 1 Corinthians 3:1–2 and Ephesians 4:13.) The former discusses a different aspect of the milk/meat issue, while the latter exhorts us to come up to the full measure of the stature of Christ.

Babes in Christ need first principles, *not* eschatology! Eschatology is the last

thing one should study, once all other aspects of our understanding of Scripture are well in place and on a solid footing. Teaching eschatology to new Christians is like putting beer in a baby's bottle. Eschatology (the study of last things, or end-time prophecy) is *strong meat*, not *milk*! A babe cannot consume strong meat, only milk! The "eschatology for babes" trend can produce distorted and misshapen theologies among its "students." We must take care not to put the cart before the horse—each doctrine in its own season (Mark 4:28)!

Brethren, be not children in understanding (1 Cor. 14:20). We are forbidden to remain babes. See also Ephesians 4:14–15. Children are apt to be struck with novelty and strange appearances. Children find toys attractive; they want dessert while skipping dinner. *[I]n understanding be men* (1 Cor. 14:20). Be like children *only* in having an innocent and inoffensive disposition, and in acknowledging total dependence upon God. It cannot be repeated often enough: *in understanding be men*.

We are to grow, to *abound more and more* (1 Thess. 4:1). *The righteous also shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger* (Job 17:9). We are to go from *strength to strength*, not weakness to weakness. We are to reach *unto those things which are before* (Phil. 3:13). Men and women are *designed* to stretch and reach, to aspire, to rise above our present circumstances, and to turn five talents into ten.

We are to be workmen approved, not ashamed, in our handling of God's Word (2 Tim. 2:15). What greater cause of shame in a workman than abiding ignorance of his own toolkit and the materials he must work with?

Christ is our example in all this. Rest assured: He knew His Scripture. Our efforts to emulate Him will always fall short (Phil. 3:11–14, *[N]ot as though*

I had already attained, either were already perfect [v. 12]), but we must nonetheless strive to *press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus* (v. 14).

Selective obedience can lead to grievous sin. Jesus confronted men who justified abandoning care of their parents with the cavalier attitude, "It is Corban," i.e., I'm busy giving God a gift, which means I can set aside the law (Mark 7:11). Matthew 5:19 is clear: *Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven*. Someone who disparages the least of God's commandments may still be a Christian, but his standing in God's Kingdom is surely affected by his reckless attitude toward God's law.

Selective obedience finally means *no obedience at all*—because whether we obey God or not, in either case it is *our will* that is done because we insist on being in the driver's seat. We pass judgment on God's requirements and pick and choose what suits us, i.e., "We'll obey the laws that seem right in our own eyes." Jesus draws attention to this lawless mindset when He asks, *[W]hy call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?* (Luke 6:46).

Faith is not opposed to the law. Faith is a key part of the law, as Jesus points out in Matthew 23:23, where He identifies the weightier matters of the law as *judgment, mercy, and faith*.

The kind of faith Christ requires is depicted in Luke 18:1–8, in the story of the importunate widow. As R. J. Rushdoony pointed out, the widow did not despair. She kept persevering until her petition was answered. The widow's faith was triumphant, for she was finally avenged. This parable is a stinging

indictment of all weak faith that does not work for, and expect, victory.⁶ Too many churchmen turn this parable into a defeatist story.

Repentance from Dead Works

Let's examine two of the six cardinal principles that are designated as the doctrinal foundation that Christians are to build on to see how well even the basics are understood. We will examine repentance from dead works, and faith toward God. Note that much of what follows can be found in R. J. Rushdoony's landmark *Systematic Theology* and his commentary on Hebrews.

Repentance is future-oriented. Remorse is past-oriented. *Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord* (Acts 3:19).

There is a distinction in the Greek terms as well. In the case of Judas Iscariot, the term was *metamelomai*. But true repentance is termed *metanoial metaneo*. Today, too many preachers try to induce remorse for the past rather than actual repentance. To equate repentance with misery and suffering is dead wrong. It is not without justification that John A. Broadus held that the English words *repent* and *repentance* are "the worst translations in the entire New Testament."

The true meaning of repentance is a *complete change in mental outlook and of life design*.

Repentance, as Lactantius taught, is a *return to right understanding*. He cited the case of the prodigal son—he *came to himself* (Luke 15:17)—in support of this definition.

We too often require remorse, not repentance. Examine John the Baptist's approach in Luke 3:4, Luke 3:7–14, and Matthew 3:7–12. Not once did he counsel remorse for past deeds: rather, he demands new works to replace the

old dead ones.

Study the story of the rich man and Lazarus, particularly Luke 16:24 and Luke 16:27–28. The rich man (legend gives him the name Dives) is not in the least repentant, though many preachers have painted him as such. In point of fact, Dives indicts both Lazarus and Abraham. As Rushdoony points out, Dives in effect makes the following arguments: (1) “I did nothing for Lazarus while he lived. If he does nothing for me now, how is he any better than I, or any more deserving of heaven than I?” The extremely modest request (a single drop of water) is calculated to make Abraham’s refusal seem wickedly malicious. (2) “I went to hell because God did not conclusively prove to me that my course of action would lead here. God should have warned me: I am suffering needlessly, and, being truly noble at heart, I want to spare my five brothers the same suffering.” Dives wants to indict God by showing that he is more concerned with soul-saving than God is. God should spare no means to convince people into heaven, even to the point of sending them someone from the dead. [T]hey will repent, he argues. Dives actually uses the technically correct term for repentance, *metanoeo*, at Luke 16:30. Although Dives uses the right word, he is past-bound because he wants to justify himself and his past, thereby indicting God. False repentance seeks to change the past, while true repentance works to change the future.

When the church stresses remorse rather than repentance, this entails a past-bound, not future-bound, view. Ungodly repentance is like the weeping and wailing over the past, which is one of the distinctive marks of hell. But ask yourself: prior to exposure to Rushdoony’s exposition above, did you think the rich man exhibited repentance? How strong is our basic foundation if

we weren’t able to answer this question correctly?⁷

Dead Works and Sin

We must distinguish between individual sins (*hamartia*) and the principle of sin (*anomia*, literally *lawlessness*). The two are contrasted in 1 John 3:4. In the modern church, new converts are instructed to repent from particular sins, but are never forced to confront their essential core lawlessness. The convert becomes disgusted with particular sins but never comes to grips with his desire to be his own god—which is the principle of sin (Gen. 3:5).

Consider Luke 1:51: “[H]e hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.” The word *dianoia* (translated *imagination* here) means a *thinking over*; it means reasoning that is independent of God, or more concisely, *reasoning without God*.

The principle of sin, of *reasoning outside of God’s parameters*, is condemned by Paul, even when it is indulged in by Christians themselves. Notice the form it takes as Paul reproves it. “Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do” (1 Tim. 1:4). “But refuse profane and old wives’ fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness” (1 Tim. 4:7). “He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about *questions and strifes of words*” (1 Tim. 6:4). Why is Genesis 3:5 the most quoted verse in Rushdoony’s works? It receives that attention because it truly is the verse that is most universally neglected despite being so universally applicable. Evangelicalism’s piecemeal approach to repentance only worsens that neglect.

Faith toward God

Faith toward God is *linked* with repentance from dead works in Hebrews 6:1. These are the first two so-called

cardinal doctrines in a list of six that represent the foundation that the writer forbids us from “laying again.” This foundation is to be laid once and for all, and then built upon. Hebrews 6:1 uses an interesting term in its opening clause, “Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection.” *Let us go on* is better rendered *Let us be carried on*, as a ship is driven by the wind. The picture is like a ship that has been loitering near the shore for far too long; it’s time to hoist the sails and journey on the open sea—it was designed for this! The image is a vivid one. To leave the first principles means to move from kindergarten to the next grade, not forgetting what was learned in kindergarten!

Hebrews 11:13 makes it clear that faith is *not* blind. In fact, as Rushdoony observed, faith is actually a more intense form of vision. “These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having *seen them afar off*, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them.” Faith has the truer vision, and the more penetrating one, because it sees beyond the moment and beyond the visible.

Faith is a confident trust and reliance on God. Abraham “staggered not” at God’s promises, no matter how improbable their fulfillment (Rom. 4:20). He understood that God properly operates in the sphere of the humanly impossible. “He considered not his own body” (Rom. 4:19), that is, he refused to walk by sight. His example is rarely followed, even by Christians. We often insist on walking by sight, excusing this as “prudence” and “common sense realism.”

Faith and repentance are both gifts from God—we do not bring them to the table at all. As William Temple noted, “The only thing of my very own which I can contribute to my redemption is the sin from which I need to be redeemed.”

Reexamine Hebrews 6:1–2. If we fail to move past the starting gate, how can we claim to be contestants in the Christian race? Hebrews 12:1 exhorts us to *run with patience the race that is set before us*. First Corinthians 9:24 exhorts us to outdo one another, for all to seek the prize: *So run, that ye may obtain*. (“Ye” is a plural pronoun: in this race, more than one can win. Hence Paul invites us all to a noble emulation of himself.)

The actual term *dead works* occurs only in Hebrews 6:1 and 9:14 (although the general idea can be found in other places). Hebrews 9:14 helps explain the *purpose* of repentance (or purging) from dead works. It is not an end in itself, but in order *to serve the living God*.

Calvin says, “We are not cleansed by Christ so that we can immerse ourselves continually in fresh dirt, but in order that our purity may serve the glory of God.” Accordingly, *dead works* are incompatible with the *living God*, which is why they are directly contrasted in Hebrews 9:14.

“And This Will We Do, If God Permit”

The conclusion of this passage (Heb. 6:3) rests all future growth of the readers on God Himself. Since God is the author of all such growth, prayer to Him to grant this growth is quite appropriate. In fact, the author *does* go on and spend several chapters discussing the matter of Melchizedek, not letting the slothfulness of far too many of his readers stop him. He expects them to repent of their slothfulness and become attentive hearers. He expects the perpetual kindergarten to stop because he sees the church of God as a teacher’s college, one that prepares everyone to be able to understand and teach doctrines as complex as the priesthood of Melchizedek. (Sadly, we hear more about this doctrine from Mormons than from Christians, which is doubly culpable, since the Mormon doctrine is quite faulty.)

Why, then, does slothfulness persist? Slothfulness can only persist when it is indulged. If it is indulged enough, it becomes the norm (a statistical norm, not an absolute ethical norm). What happened to the culture-transforming power of the Bible seen during the Reformation? The double-edged sword has been blunted by our own corporate slothfulness. For what end did William Tyndale die? To give the Word of God to people who’ve become a spiritually indolent welfare class?

“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge” (Hos. 4:6). The next time someone smugly wags the finger at you and says, “Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up,” ask him this: “What about love for God’s Word and a love of knowledge of God’s Word? Do they puff up, or build up?” Pitting knowledge against love is an abuse of 1 Corinthians 8:1, which would pit it against 2 Corinthians 8:7: “Therefore, as ye abound in every thing, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also.” In fact, without knowledge, love can’t properly abound at all, as we read in Philippians 1:9: “And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment.”

Lack of knowledge destroys. Ignorance is not bliss. Treating slothfulness lightly by lowering the bar far below where Scripture sets it is a culpable act, whether done by the laity or by pastors.

The perpetual kindergarten offers plenty of candy and naps. To cling to it and indulge our corporate laziness is to partake of the spirit of those who wandered in the wilderness for forty years. To label the result “a healthy church” is one of the most dangerous fictions of our time. Both the human enemies of God, as well as Satan, gain their easiest victories when we forfeit our

responsibilities. So long as the church is content to suck its thumb and play on the merry-go-round, or waste energy in doubtful disputations in internecine conflicts, there can be no meaningful victory. The first victory must be the one over our own slothfulness. This will be the hardest battle because it is a battle within ourselves, a battle against our comfort zones, a battle against the tempting seduction of the perpetual kindergarten. Thankfully, there are some notable grassroots antidotes at hand. The works of R. J. Rushdoony, in particular, are an excellent ticket out of that perpetual kindergarten onto the road toward Christian maturity.

We’ve essentially turned the church into something alarmingly close to Pinocchio’s Pleasure Island. God raised the church up to be “the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15). Those two conflicting visions cannot help but be at war, and there can be no doubt whose vision will prevail.

Pleasure Island or Pillar and Ground—whose vision will you adopt as your own? ■

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1. In this connection, this article should be seen as doing no more than merely extending the program R. J. Rushdoony laid out for *all* theological studies on the first page of his 1973 book, *The Flight from Humanity* (currently being typeset for reprinting by Chalcedon): “A theological study is thus also an act of intellectual exorcism, an attempt to cast out the evil spirits of some kind of heretical, debilitating thought which is enfeebling and crippling the life of man and our understanding of the word of God.”
2. Some things in Scripture are complicated *on purpose*, for the exercise of our faith,

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Rushdoony Among the Academics: The Secular Relevance of the Thought of R. J. Rushdoony

Michael McVicar

For regular readers of *Faith for All of Life*, the writings and public ministry of R. J. Rushdoony are neither eccentric nor controversial. Rushdoony is rightly respected for his prodigious authorial output, his extensive learning, and his ability to communicate sophisticated theological issues to a wide audience.

Since the 1970s, his ideas have slowly trickled out of his writings and into the minds of thousands, perhaps millions, of Americans and others worldwide. Yet this perception of Rushdoony is hardly appreciated outside the circles of his colleagues, former students, and others directly influenced by his ideas. In fact, regular readers of *Faith for All of Life* are also acquainted with another view of Rushdoony. This view, popularized by a recent burst of fashionable journalistic articles and books, depicts Rushdoony as a dangerous theocratic fascist.

I first encountered this latter depiction of Rushdoony in a religious studies course I took at Ohio State University. Initially, I accepted it with the uncritical faith common to zealots and demagogues of all stripes. After careful research, however, I came to reject this unfair depiction of Rushdoony. I have made it my personal mission to familiarize secularists with the Rushdoony that most Chalcedon supporters already respect.

Chris Ortiz has asked me to recount this effort and explain why a young secular academic would reject the wisdom

of his peers in order to take Rushdoony and Christian Reconstruction seriously. Below, I outline the argument I sometimes use to persuade secularists of Rushdoony's political and philosophical significance. As you'll surmise from the text, I am neither a Reconstructionist nor sympathetic to the worldview expounded by Rushdoony. As a historian of American religion, I am the product of a secular academy that is far removed from the world Rushdoony envisioned, yet this distance need not translate into overt hostility. I have come to realize that Rushdoony has much to teach us about American Christianity, but before I came to this conclusion, I had to reeducate myself.

Rushdoony in the Secular Academy

As a graduate student in a religious studies program located in one of the largest secular universities in the United States, I can immediately testify to Rushdoony's wide reception beyond conservative Christian circles. During my tenure as a Ph.D. student, I encountered Rushdoony in several classes covering twentieth-century American religion. Like most undergraduate and graduate students in secular universities all over the U.S., I met Rushdoony in popular texts such as Karen Armstrong's *The Battle for God*, Mark Juergensmeyer's *Terror in the Mind of God*, and Michael Lienesch's *Redeeming America*. The first two authors implicitly tie Rushdoony to terrorists and revolutionaries, while the last text renders him utterly indistinguishable from such popular evangelical

authors as Hal Lindsey or Tim LaHaye. In each case, the presentations are short and partially inaccurate.

Worse still among academic treatments are works like Mark Crispin Miller's *Cruel and Unusual*. Miller, a professor of media studies at NYU, has set the gold standard for shallow academic work, flippantly arguing that Rushdoony is the secret mastermind behind the current Bush/Cheney administration. His specious narrative is a mendacious reworking of the important—and more accurate—journalistic work pioneered by long-time Rushdoony critics Frederick Clarkson and Chip Berlet. These academic and popular journalistic accounts have become most Americans' introduction to Rushdoony. They all deliver anxious warnings about fundamentalist "theocracy" and neglect the broader significance of Rushdoony's ideas.

The Secularist Anxiety

One might interpret the secular academy's reaction to Rushdoony as sinful rebelliousness, but I'd rather suggest that it is rooted in the systematic misreading of his ideas and his ministry.

At the heart of the secularist critique of Rushdoony, I detect a contradictory narrative that declares him to be the most relevant irrelevant Christian thinker of the twentieth century. He and his supporters—the Christian Reconstructionists and dominionists—are said to be *both* insignificant outsiders *and* the theocratic masterminds behind the rise of George W. Bush and the Christian Right. These critics blame the Recon-

structionists for everything from George W. Bush's interventionist war in Iraq to his faith-based initiatives even as they simultaneously ridicule Rushdoony for his primitive irrelevance. That neither portrayal has any basis in fact has yet to deter the purveyors of the vast theocratic conspiracy theory.

After initially buying into this conspiracy theorizing, I came to realize that it tells me more about Rushdoony's detractors than it does about his ministry. My peers and I had turned Rushdoony into an allegorical figure that embodies all of our uneasiness with the Bush regime and the so-called Christian Right. Thus we obsessively warn that Rushdoony's followers will steal elections, oppress their foes, and indiscriminately murder children and homosexuals. Such presentations neglect to point out why so many Christians find Rushdoony's work persuasive. They also neglect to point out how and why Rushdoony's ideas are relevant to us haughty secularists.

Rushdoony and Postmodernity

Looking beyond the nonexistent theocratic conspiracy, I believe that Rushdoony's urgent relevance to the secular academy can be found elsewhere in his radically postmodern philosophical mission. *Postmodern!*? No doubt both Rushdoony's critics and supporters from all sides of the political, philosophical, and theological spectrum are muttering with disgust at this characterization of his thought, but don't close the magazine yet.

While modernism is popularly associated with the philosophical and aesthetic developments of the early twentieth century, most historians and philosophers recognize that "modernity" is inseparable from sweeping industrial, political, and intellectual changes inaugurated in eighteenth-century Europe and North America. If one accepts this

broader perspective of modernism, then postmodernism becomes a heuristic distinction denoting an historical era. By labeling Rushdoony a *postmodern* thinker, I am appealing to the literal meaning of the term, indicating that his thought developed *after* and partially in response to many of the modernist philosophies developed between the eighteenth and twentieth centuries.

To contextualize Rushdoony as a postmodern thinker is to recognize that his thought did not develop in a vacuum. For instance, any Chalcedonian might rightly protest if a scholar tried to understand Rushdoony without referring to the Reformed tradition from which his ideas emerged. But Rushdoony's Kuyperian heritage grew out of a much larger cultural context that we all—Christians and atheists alike—live with today: the state.

Seen within the totality of his life—from the Armenian genocide that forced his parents to flee Turkey to the horrific twin disasters of the Second World War and the Cold War—I view Rushdoony's *oeuvre* as a godly critique of the ascendancy of the modern state. This, I argue, situates Rushdoony as a postmodern thinker because, unlike most forms of modernism that seek to systematically legitimate the state, postmodern philosophy is dominated by the state's systematic critique.

The State

I recognize that this characterization of Rushdoony is as unlikely to satisfy his supporters as it is his critics, but I nonetheless contend its general accuracy. Unlike the modernist philosophies developed by Hobbes, the utilitarians, or Lenin and Stalin, which sought to legitimate the state via an epistemological break with Europe's premodern, Christian heritage, postmodern thinkers are highly critical of any presumed foundation for the state.

Like many of his post-World War II contemporaries working in theology and philosophy, Rushdoony explored questions of ontology, epistemology, and language to develop a critical analysis of state power. In contrast to his contemporaries, Rushdoony sought to build a bridge between our contemporary socio-political world and the Protestant Christian premodernity that so many self-styled modernists rejected. From this perspective, he is a thinker of considerable import because he tried to redraw the boundaries between God, the individual, and the state.

Autonomy or Theonomy

The vast majority of philosophers begin their critique of the state by assuming the autonomy of man. For instance, Marx and Nietzsche, the godfathers of leftist postmodern political philosophy, initiated their demolition of the state with an ontological rejection of God in order to establish the autonomy of man. From this rejection, Marx proposed a new kind of state while Nietzsche's project terminates with an oligarchy of the powerful. Similarly, a host of conservative thinkers deployed a similar materialistic rejection of God based on natural rights to undergird very different criticisms of the state that ultimately culminate in aristocracy or anarcholibertarianism.

Rushdoony entered into this discussion and offered an ethical and political alternative to humanistic autonomy. Following the insights of Van Til, Rushdoony argued that theonomy is the only alternative to autonomy. This ontological perspective has been neglected by nearly all contemporary criticisms of state power.

A Christian Libertarian

To faithful readers of Rushdoony's works, my presentation of his ministry

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Is Profit Compatible with Christian Ministry?

Timothy D. Terrell



Profit has been a suspicious word for Christians for many centuries. Perhaps it seemed that in order to gain a profit from a transaction, the other person had to lose. Maybe it seemed too worldly to want to gain the world's goods by seeking profit. But churchmen have fostered guilt among entrepreneurs, and entrepreneurs have often bought into the theologians' flawed arguments against profit.

The hostility toward profit has not disappeared, even after market economies demonstrated their ability to generate vast improvements in material well-being. Oil companies today are condemned for making high profits while we pay \$3.00 a gallon for gasoline.

Must a Christian ministry be "non-profit"? Most people, with their biases against profit, would believe that the ministry had failed morally if it had anything to do with the notion that there was something good about revenues being greater than expenditures.

Measuring Profit

Measuring profit is actually quite difficult. This is because profit can come in several forms (Proverbs 10:2 says, "Treasures of wickedness profit nothing"; 1 Timothy 4:8 says that "bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things"; 2 Timothy 3:16 says that Scripture is "profitable"; John 6:63 says that the flesh "profiteth nothing"). We have to think more broadly than the perspective of the accountant and look at revenues and costs that come in a form other than dollars.

This means that entities that produce zero profit on paper may actually produce profits or losses. Sometimes the costs are more easily measurable than the benefits. Education is one of those cases. Homeschools are an example: if the education provided by the parents is equivalent to that provided by a Christian school, but the mother is foregoing a \$30,000 a year job to do the home education, plus paying \$2,000 a year for books and materials, the education costs \$32,000 a year. The parents may decide this is worthwhile, even if tuition at a good private school is far less than \$32,000. I would be slow to criticize their decision, as the parents may have very good reasons for making this choice. However, we should not pretend that homeschooling is *necessarily* a savings over a Christian school.

Mutually Beneficial Exchange

Both buyer and seller profit from an exchange. This was not commonly recognized by the church. For example, St. Jerome (c. 340–420) believed that trade was zero-sum. That is, if the seller gains a dollar of profit in the exchange, it must be because the buyer lost a dollar. "All riches come from iniquity," he said, "and unless one has lost, another cannot gain. Hence that common opinion seems to me to be very true, 'the rich man is unjust, or the heir of an unjust one.'" Evidently St. Jerome was double-minded because he was inclined to excuse the wealthy if they were wise as well. "[W]ealth is not an obstacle to the rich man who uses it well," he writes.¹

Martin Luther, also contradictory in his economic statements, defines theft so broadly that it could include all trade.

Stealing, he writes, "means the unlawful approbation of another's goods, or, to give it briefly, to derive any sort of advantage from thy neighbor's disadvantage. Now this is a very common sort of vice."²

But we all "derive advantage" from another's disadvantage. A pharmaceutical company profits from relieving the illness that would result without their drugs. A construction business profits from relieving the hardship that would exist without shelter. A Christian school profits from relieving the ignorance of its students. No one likes to admit that they "make a profit from someone else's suffering," and it is true that when there is hardship or suffering, there is an opportunity to exercise charity. However, to disallow profit from alleviating suffering would be to eliminate the most significant motivating force that prompts relief of those needs. Most hunger is relieved not by people donating charitably to a community pantry, diaconal fund, or international organization, but by profit-seeking entrepreneurs in the normal course of business.

As objectionable as the profit motive is to many people, it is the profit motive that we most rely on to meet most human needs. As we will see, it is highly unlikely that two parties will conduct an exchange without expecting profit in some form, even if one party calls itself "nonprofit."

Luther struggled with the idea of the just price, like many Christians before and after his time. He tended to say that a just price is not the market price but rather the cost of production plus profit for labor and the risk of the seller.

Luther's statement on the just price and usury was his essay "Trade and Usury," written in 1524.³ As Gary North writes,

Its perspective is medieval. Like the scholastic conservative commentators before him, especially those of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, he opposed free pricing. Merchants may not follow the rule of buying low and selling high. "On such a basis trade can be nothing more than robbing and stealing the property of others ... The rule ought to be, not 'I may sell my wares as dear as I can or will,' but, 'I may sell my wares as I ought, or is right and fair.'" The problem for Luther's analysis, as it had been with the earlier scholastics and canonists, concerned the ethical limits of fairness. How dear may the merchant sell?⁴

Luther writes, "Now it is fair and right that a merchant take as much profit on his wares as will reimburse him for their cost and compensate him for his trouble, his labor, and his risk."⁵

The fact that *both* parties to the exchange can expect to profit might help us deal with some of the objections to profit. We might see that Martin Luther was not being evenhanded with respect to buyer and seller.

As buyers of goods and services, we usually see the seller—the person receiving the money—as the only one who might receive profit. But the buyer receives profit too, sometimes far more than the seller. It is not easily measurable, but it is profit nonetheless.

Suppose I am driving from Greenville, South Carolina, where I live, to Charlotte, North Carolina, to fly out of the airport there instead of the one three miles from my house. By doing so, let us say that I can save \$200.00 on an airplane ticket by driving the extra two hours or so (round trip). Let us suppose that my time is worth \$40.00 an hour (so that the trip would cost me \$80.00 of my time), and the wear and tear on

my car would cost me another \$40.00. So after these costs of \$120.00, I expect to save \$80.00 by making the trip. I have not yet added the cost of fuel. Suppose it will take me eight gallons of gasoline to make the round trip. What is the most I could pay for fuel while still breaking even? Of course, we can see that at anything less than \$10.00 a gallon, it makes sense for me to buy the fuel and make the trip. What I actually have to pay is only \$2.50 a gallon, so it can be seen that I receive \$7.50 of benefit (per gallon) from buying the fuel over and above what I actually paid. This excess of benefit over costs is my "profit" from buying the gasoline. If the seller of the fuel paid \$2.00 per gallon for it, and sold it for \$2.50 per gallon, his profit is \$0.50 per gallon. For the entire eight gallon purchase of fuel, I profited by \$60.00, and the gasoline seller profited by \$4.00.

Even if the gasoline seller raised the price of gasoline to \$9.90 per gallon, I would still benefit from buying it. I would certainly prefer that it be \$2.50, or even \$1.00, but I am still better off buying it at \$9.90 than not buying it at all.

Overconcern about the size of the profit going to your trading partner is likely to make matters worse. In other words, it is better practically and morally not to be envious. McDonald's probably makes only a few pennies on each Big Mac combo they sell. A hungry customer might be willing to pay \$2.00 or \$3.00 more than what McDonald's actually charges for the combo. But rather than fret about the "lost" \$2.00 or \$3.00 of value going to the customer, McDonald's merely sells billions of combos and makes a fortune off the pennies from each one.

Oil companies, pharmaceutical companies, and many other firms have been criticized for gaining large prof-

its. For Christians, who base ethics on the Bible, it would be difficult to find grounds for ruling out large profits by businesses but not large profits by customers. And I have yet to see a coherent case for determining that profit over a particular level would be unethical. It would seem that in the absence of a Biblical statement on the issue, we would be adding to the Word of God to argue that any level of profit is unethical.

Profit and Christian Ministries

Maybe the common animosity toward profit can help explain why churches, Christian schools, and other ministries have such perpetual financial difficulties.

About three years ago, the Christian school my daughter attended closed down. The principal and one of the members of the board of directors, who were married, had been running the school without much oversight from the other board members. Without the knowledge of the rest of the board, they had been failing to pay the employers' share of taxes for their employees. Faced with trouble from the IRS, they decided to raise tuition for the next school year by about 25 percent, thinking this would bring in more money. Many parents (more than a fourth) decided they could not afford the new tuition and turned to other Christian schools, homeschooling, or government schools.

With the financial prospects worsening, the fact that the IRS had not been paid became public knowledge, and the parents hastily met to decide if the school could be saved. A few parents took up the reins and formed a new school, determined to be more financially accountable. The former principal and her husband left a wake of unpaid faculty, most of whom signed on with the new school. Parents who had paid hundreds of dollars of re-enrollment fees to the failing school, in trust that

“things would work out,” never saw their money again. I am sorry to say that I was one of those parents.

Rev. Ellsworth McIntyre, a witness to similar financial failures, has argued that Christian schooling is perfectly compatible with a for-profit status.⁶ In some cases, Rev. McIntyre turned a church-run school around financially, only to find the church leaders resentful that he expected to be paid as agreed upon. The world of business, profit, entrepreneurship, and honoring contracts was, sadly, quite foreign to some pastors.

Why should Christian schools be nonprofit, or, for that matter, be tied to nonprofit churches? McIntyre contended that Christian educators should feel free to be independent and entrepreneurial in their approach. Given the chronic problems churches seem to have with financial management, independence is probably quite sensible in many cases. Theological faithfulness can be preserved by a board of trustees, without requiring financial management by pastors. There is nothing sanctified about the nonprofit status, and as we will see, there are quite a few problems with it.

Nonprofit Status

“Nonprofit” is a legal definition but does not really do away with profit. It merely restricts the destination of those profits (i.e., they must be plowed back into the company rather than distributed to owners).

One textbook I use in my economics classes, written by a Christian economist named Paul Heyne, has some rather non-complimentary things to say about nonprofit entities. The handicap that nonprofit institutions face, Heyne says, is the lack of a “residual claimant”—a person who takes whatever is left over after all contracts have been honored. That leftover may be positive (a profit) or negative (a loss), but the key point is that there is a person, or group

of persons, who stands to personally gain or lose depending on the decisions he makes. Heyne writes,

This is why we expect long lines at the post office but not at the grocery store. It's not that no one at the post office cares. Postal employees are probably just as caring or noncaring on average as the checkout people in grocery stores. The difference arises from the fact that policies are set for the grocery store by a residual claimant, someone with an incentive to estimate the costs ... of long lines and the costs ... of a reserve supply of [checkout people] ... There is no residual claimant in the post office branch or in the postal service as a whole.⁷

Nonprofit entities employ business practices that are sometimes consistent with what for-profit entities use, though turning for-profit might increase the efficiency of those practices. One such practice is what economists call “price discrimination,” which occurs when customers are charged different prices for the same product. This can increase profits. Airlines charge different prices for the same coach seats. Schools practice this all the time when they grant discounts for low-income families. The practice is equivalent to charging higher prices to people with higher incomes. There's nothing immoral about price discrimination—in fact it has the advantage of making schooling available to more people.

Is anyone in nonprofit schooling sufficiently motivated to make good decisions about price discrimination practices, or anything else? People naturally pay more attention to what they own and expect income from than what they donate to. This may translate into better accountability for for-profit entities.

Although nonprofit status may encourage donations, some private schools, both Christian and non-Christian are consigning themselves to a

marginal financial state and poor information on the appropriateness of their decisions by rejecting profit-seeking out of hand. Are Christian schools clinging to nonprofit status in the hopes of raising \$10,000 a year in donations, while squandering \$15,000 a year because there is no residual claimant? It is difficult for a school board to contemplate trading a known stream of donations for an uncertain gain in operating efficiency, but this may be what is needed to escape the problems of poor management incentives.

Schools, in my view, may be run under the auspices of a church, or independently of a church, organized as a for-profit or nonprofit entity. I am not arguing that nonprofit entities are illegitimate, although I do believe there are certain disadvantages.

Churches and Profits

We have seen that profit is inevitable in transactions—that anytime a party to a transaction receives benefits that exceed its costs, that party has profited. But a point of clarification is in order when it comes to churches. Arguing that a church may legitimately earn profit (create benefits in excess of costs) does not mean that the church has a license to engage in any profit-making activity.

Obviously, for churches and anyone else, immoral activity, profitable or not, is out of bounds. However, churches have a certain scope of action, outside of which they begin to lose their relative advantage. The ministries of preaching, teaching, healing, and “mercy” are all historically Levitical occupations that might well serve as guidelines for the activities of the modern church. Should a church become involved in real estate investment, restaurants, auto service, home construction, or web hosting? These are somewhat distant from the role of the ministerial Levitical role,

although we might see deacons doing auto service or building a house for needy members or sometimes for those outside the church. We may also see a church sell its property and realize a large gain on the appreciated real estate. But there should be boundaries on what the church may do.

According to *Christianity Today* magazine, a suburban Kansas City church called Church of the Resurrection created a for-profit company legally separate from the church, registered with the SEC, and sold what amounts to shares of stock, in order to raise funds to buy forty-seven acres of valuable nearby property. About a third of the property would be initially used by the United Methodist church, leasing the remaining property to businesses.⁸

To the extent that this project was undertaken to provide property for the church's expansion, there is no problem. To the extent this was undertaken to substitute for tithing, this could represent a troubling departure of the church from its core mission. Ron Sider, president of Evangelicals for Social Action, has other concerns—that the church is engaged in profit-seeking. “We desperately need new models of for-profit businesses that reject the idea of achieving the highest profit margin possible,” Sider says.⁹ To be logically consistent in his anti-profit position, Sider would have to oppose the hard-to-measure—but still real—profit that goes to the buyer.

Profit and Knowledge

Sider also neglects the very important practical purpose of profits—to alleviate the problem of man's ignorance. In a world with a wide variety of human needs, limited resources with which to meet them, and limited knowledge about which needs are most severe, we should actually be thankful for the existence of profit. Profits serve as an

important signal, with higher profits saying, in effect, “More resources are needed over here,” and lower profits or losses saying, “Filling this need is less urgent right now.” Because humans are not omniscient, these signals are vital to good stewardship. Profit is a here-and-now reward for doing something that is beneficial to other people. Socialists, however, view profit as unnecessary, even equivalent to fraud or theft.

Central planners of all types, including socialist-leaning Christians like Sider, want to use some other criteria to decide among competing human needs. But other sources of information are highly unreliable.

If you had a million dollars at your disposal, with the requirement that you devote it to relieving the most urgent human need, how would you decide? Of course the initial response for many Christians will be to direct the funds toward the ministry of the gospel. That might be a good choice. Yet even the most zealous evangelist would have to concede that other uses of those resources are also desirable. Christ himself spent money on food, clothing, and other things. We do not want to fall into the gnostic error here by treating the material world as nonessential or defiled beyond hope. Food, clothing, shelter, medical care, education, and other things are well worth our consideration.

So then, how should this million dollar sum be allocated among these needs? You could ask people to present requests for funding of these various needs and choose the one that seems most important to you. But the repetitiveness, volume, or tone of requests for funding is a poor substitute for the test applied by the market. The market test is, for which of these needs are people willing to sacrifice the most “other goods” to satisfy the need? That essential clue is provided by profit.

Even charitable efforts are directed by profit, to some extent. Charitable assistance being what it is, it is not sold and has no dollar profit associated with it directly. However, the price system and profits inform the donor about which goods and services are in the shortest supply, and thus which goods and services would do the most good if donated. Sider's objections to profit-seeking probably originate from a desire to do good, but his suggestions, if followed, would lead to social chaos.

Socialism Today

Socialism objects to the divinely imposed limits on humanity. Man has inadequate knowledge of how to prioritize various needs, but socialism says that if properly educated and equipped with enough technology, a group of central planners can make an economy run without relying on a price system. The Austrian economists, most notably the late Ludwig von Mises, have been pointing out the problems with this idea for over a century. As Christians, we might add that the centralization of power in the hands of a group of government planners is a violation of the Biblical limits on government.

After the obvious failure of the Soviet system, the failure of the Soviet satellite states, and the movement of China toward market systems, communism is out of fashion, and in the United States at least, one would not admit to being a socialist. The socialists have not disappeared, however. They survive, and to some extent prosper, in several vocations.

Socialism today is common among academics, particularly in the humanities. Academics, often entrenched in tenure, are under less pressure to make their ideas conform to the realities of the world. It is especially ironic that we find socialists in the language arts, for after Babel at least, the development of lan-

guage has occurred without centralized control, except for computer languages. Perhaps another contributing factor has been the heavy government funding of education. One tends to support the entity that pays one's bills.

Socialists have also found a home in environmental movements. In these groups one can complain about the abuses of "unfettered capitalism" and spend a career lobbying governments to regulate. I certainly will not deny that there are pollution problems, but socialism tends to make these problems much worse. One needs only look at the severe pollution generated under Communism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.

Journalists also seem to have a propensity toward socialism. I struggle with the reasons for this and can suggest that many of them come from university humanities programs, so they are soaked through with socialist ideas as they enter their work in the media. In addition, journalists may be especially prone to the conceit that they can comprehend how society works—and that they are therefore qualified to plan the lives of others.

Politicians, of course, are often socialists, though they do not usually adopt that moniker in the United States. Socialism provides a justification for expanded state power, and it is difficult for a governing official to resist the idea that he should have more power. Political life is perhaps attractive to those who see government as a solution to the world's problems.

Finally, socialism is also common among pastors and other church leaders, particularly in mainstream denominations and Roman Catholicism. Thankfully, there are some exceptions, but I have noted that even among the relatively conservative Presbyterian Church in America, of which I am a

member, socialism is tolerated or even encouraged. I can attribute this to an inadequate or completely nonexistent formal training in economic ideas in seminaries, as well as the usual entrenched socialism among seminary academics. Another contributor to pastoral socialism may be the nature of their work—which is dependent upon donations instead of a conscious profit-seeking for their living.

We note that there is much more socialism among theological liberals. This may be because theological liberalism is anthropocentric—it makes religion into something human-centered. If God is a creation of man, as many theological liberals state or imply, man becomes the origin of law, and no Biblical boundaries on government apply. In *Politics of Guilt and Pity*, R. J. Rushdoony writes,

[Theological liberalism] accepts either the autonomous reason of man or the autonomous state as its basic political center and principle, and it calls a state "Christian" insofar as it ministers to human needs and "human rights," not in terms of any theocentric standard. In terms of theological liberalism, to be "Christian" is to be humanitarian, and, in terms of this, the Merriam-Webster Second International Dictionary has defined "humanitarianism" as "The doctrine that man's obligations are limited to, and dependent alone on, men and human relations" ... This is the framework in terms of which theological liberalism has championed statist action as "Christian" morality.¹⁰

This theological statism among pastors, seminary professors, and other church leaders is truly tragic. In a sense, humanitarian liberalism is a kind of slavery—the unceasing labor to establish one's righteousness by works instead of trusting in the righteousness of Christ. As the great Presbyterian theologian J. Gresham Machen writes,

The grace of God is rejected by modern liberalism. And the result is slavery—the slavery of the law, the wretched bondage by which man undertakes the impossible task of establishing his own righteousness as a ground of acceptance with God. It may seem strange at first sight that "liberalism," of which the very name means freedom, should in reality be wretched slavery. But the phenomenon is not really so strange. Emancipation from the blessed will of God always involves bondage to some worse taskmaster.¹¹

Thus theologically liberal churches remain socialist in their social statements. The battle against socialism is theological at its core. This area of a church's witness has important consequences for the freedom of all society. That is why it is so important that pastors and other leaders in the church understand what the Bible has to say about economic issues and that economists understand what the Bible has to say about their field of study. Maybe a small part of the advancement of Biblical economics will be the understanding of the legitimacy of profit, which I have briefly defended in this paper. ■

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1. Murray N. Rothbard, *Economic Thought before Adam Smith*, (Edward Elgar, 1997), 33.
2. Martin Luther, "Greater Catechism" (1529), *Luther's Primary Works* (1896), 72, in Gary North, "The Economics of Luther and Calvin" *Journal of Christian Reconstruction*, 79.
3. *Luther's Works*, (1962), 45, 248.
4. Gary North, "The Economics of Luther and Calvin" *Journal of Christian Reconstruction*, 79.

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Review of *Religious Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know—and Doesn't*

by Stephen Prothero (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2007)

Review by Lee Duigon



Does the acquisition of factual knowledge about religion lead to an understanding of religion?

Author Stephen Prothero, who chairs the religion department at Boston University, believes it does. “My goal,” he writes, “is to help citizens participate fully in social, political, and economic life in a nation and a world in which religion counts” (p. 15).

The problem, as he sees it, is Americans’ vast ignorance of religion—ignorance not only of other people’s religions, but of the Christian religion which most of them profess.

But is the problem really knowledge, or the lack of knowledge? As R. J. Rushdoony observes, “The more sinful man is, the more dangerous he is ... The old proverb is true: You can’t make a good omelette with bad eggs.”¹

Bible Bloopers

Prothero has no trouble proving his point that “religious amnesia” is rampant in America. As a teacher, he has the opportunity to quiz his students frequently. The answers he gets are ... well, judge for yourself.

- Most of his college students can’t name the four gospels (p. 28).
- Most of them can remember only four of the Ten Commandments (p. 28).
- Many believed that Jesus, not Moses, led the Israelites through the Red Sea (p. 29).

- In a national “scientific survey,” only one-third of the respondents knew that Jesus, not Billy Graham, preached the Sermon on the Mount (p. 30).
- In the same survey, 10 percent identified Joan of Arc as Noah’s wife (p. 30).

Such bloopers are legion. Not only that, as one of my acquaintances put it, “Why should what you know have anything to do with what you believe?” We are naturally led to wonder: what has gone wrong?

Good Intentions, Bad Results

“Every religious festival [in ancient Israel] had an element of instruction in it, and it was essential in all things that the children be reared in the essentials and fundamentals of the faith. God so requires it.” —R. J. Rushdoony²

Once upon a time, Prothero writes, American children, too, were reared in the essentials and fundamentals of the faith—the Christian faith. Children got their schooling at home and learned to read by reading the Bible and readers and primers that were chock-full of Bible stories, Bible verses, and Bible-derived lessons in life and morals. Literacy itself, and Bible literacy, amounted to virtually the same thing.

But as the nineteenth century dawned, all this began to change.

Who was responsible? Not unbelievers, Prothero says, but Christians themselves: “[T]he villains were not

activist judges or ACLU types ... but well-meaning folks intent on doing just the opposite ... [It was] the nation’s most fervent people of faith who steered Americans down the road to religious illiteracy” (p. 11).

Why should this be? Rushdoony says it was because the church got above itself, like the scribes and Pharisees of the New Testament. “Too often the church identifies faith with itself, and faithfulness with loyalty to the institutional forms and practices,” he writes.³ Prothero sees it also as a process of conflict resolution and constant compromise.

Citing a remark made by sociologist Will Herberg back in 1955, Prothero reports, “[T]he religion which actually prevails among Americans today has lost much of its authentic Christian (or Jewish) content” (p. 7). In the Second Great Awakening, 1801–1831, evangelism replaced Puritanism: “[M]ore than any other single event, the Second Great Awakening aided and abetted our national amnesia” (p. 90), giving priority to feelings over facts, to personal experience over doctrine, to fervor over theology, to works over faith.

As Americans of various denominations came together to campaign against slavery, fight intemperance, and help the poor, they were motivated to bury their doctrinal differences. The rise of public education was especially critical.

In Philadelphia, in 1844, for instance, Catholics and Protestants rioted over whose Bible should be used in the

city's public schools (p. 97). In the end, four people were killed, and the Catholics, unable to win the dispute, switched to demanding Bible-free schools.

Protestants, meanwhile, deemed it "better to secularize public schools than to let [Horace] Mann's Unitarianism prevail" (p. 97).

The "acids of nondenominationalism were starting to erode religious content" not only in the schools, Prothero writes, but in every aspect of American life (p. 85), from politics to the churches themselves. Higher education followed the public schools into nonsectarianism (p. 101), and "evangelicals made a virtue of their ignorance" (p. 106).

Church sermons, once instructional and doctrinal, drifted into "story-telling" (p. 109). Famous evangelists like D. L. Moody said things like, "My theology! I didn't know I had any" (p. 104). Churches emphasized "having a relationship with an astonishingly malleable Jesus" (p. 111), aiding an overall "shift from theology to morality" (p. 111).

In pursuit of political ends, America's Christianity became increasingly generic. Anti-communism united Protestants and Catholics, and when Jews came aboard in the 1950s, Americans began talking about a "Judeo-Christian tradition" (p. 113). In the 1980s the Moral Majority brought Protestants, Catholics, and Jews together to campaign for "values." More recently, "values evangelists" have reached out to Muslims under the umbrella of an "Abrahamic tradition" (p. 115). The big tent of American Christianity just keeps getting bigger and bigger!

The result is appalling. Describing the conduct of a recent Chicago Leadership Prayer Breakfast—"interfaith," of course, complete with rabbis and imams—Joseph Stowell reports:

For the first time in my life, I was

being asked to publicly deny Jesus. By joining in the standing ovation I would affirm the speaker's premise that it was best for me to give up the "tradition" that divided us. It was clear. The only way I could stand would be to turn my back on Jesus.⁴

The problem is not only religious illiteracy, Professor Prothero. More than knowledge has been sacrificed on the altar of tolerance. The sacrifice, for many, has been their belief in Christ.

Destroying Christian Order

If in America today "faith is almost entirely devoid of content" (p. 1), Prothero says, "you need religious literacy in order to be an effective citizen" (p. 9). Historical events, like the American Revolution and the Civil War, cannot be understood "in a religion vacuum" (p. 4). Nor can current events be understood: "[I]t should be obvious that Christian literacy is more important than other religious literacies when it comes to understanding U.S. politics" (p. 13).

For most people in the world, Prothero argues, religion matters. "[P]arochial secularists were wrong about the waning of religion and the 'death of God'... [They] based their predictions on nothing more substantial than the vague air of skepticism they detected at the dean's sherry hour" (p. 40).

Politics spurred a revival of religion as a force in public life, as seen in the elections of presidents Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan. "Religion has always mattered in American society," Prothero says (p. 45).

But ... "the God-fearing faith of Calvinism yielded to the Jesus-loving faith of evangelicalism" (p. 46), while the role of religion in history was progressively deleted from school and college textbooks, contributing to a "massive ignorance" (p. 52).

It's more than that, Professor. "State

control of education has been a central means of destroying Christian order ... By means of education, certain aspects of life and experience are given the priority of truth and others are relegated to unimportance or are classed as wrong," Rushdoony says.⁵ Prothero errs in overlooking the consciously anti-Christian agenda of the public school enterprise, amply documented in such books as Rushdoony's *The Messianic Character of American Education*.⁶

Still, Prothero is not completely unaware of the baneful influence of public education and benign neglect at home. "The fact of the matter," he says, "is that you cannot avoid teaching religion to your kids; if you offer them nothing, you are telling them that religion counts for nothing" (p. 126).

Prothero's Prescription

"The Fall into religious ignorance is reversible," Prothero insists (p. 121); and he offers a prescription for reversing it. Briefly:

- Churches must go back to preaching and teaching from the Scriptures (p. 126).
- The media must provide better coverage of religion (p. 126).
- Individuals must study harder, reading the Bible and familiarizing themselves with other religions (p. 127).
- Schools must teach "about religion," offering religion studies as allowed by the courts (p. 127).

Let's examine the ingredients of this prescription.

It is true that many churches have abandoned scriptural teaching from the pulpit. A few still provide it; and new technology makes it available to all through such resources as sermonaudio.com. But it's hard to imagine the other churches changing their ways. As long as entertainment at the expense of instruc-

tion equates to warm bodies in the pews and cold cash in the collection plates, business will go on as usual.

It is true that Christians ought to spend more time reading and studying the Bible. But only a massive change of heart would provide the motivation for it. Every adult school teacher who has handed out a reading assignment, no matter how small, has heard the refrain, “I didn’t have the time.” What is going to convince them to make the time for reading the Bible, Prothero does not discuss.

As for the media, as heavily populated as it is by unbelievers, scoffers, and debunkers, Prothero’s hopes for help from this quarter seem misplaced. We are talking about people whose idea of “covering Jesus” is to run to the Jesus Seminar for assurances that the Resurrection never occurred.

By and large, the culture of the education establishment is implacably anti-Christian and highly unlikely to change. Prothero would insist on a “fair and balanced” education “about” religion, neither preaching it nor debunking it: “[S]teer clear of both advocating religion and impugning it while at the same time communicating that individual religious convictions are to be treated, as a matter of both law and civility, with respect” (p. 132).

Very idealistic, to be sure, but Prothero expects too much from teachers who are already up to their eyebrows in queer studies, women’s studies, global warming, Darwinism, and left-wing political activism.

Education “about religion,” carried out by secular public schools and colleges, seems unlikely to accomplish much. Our skepticism is expressed by Rushdoony: “Phonics will again teach children to read, but is a barbarian who reads any less a barbarian? Knowledge is clearly good, but has knowledge made

our professors any better than the rest of the population? Do professors have a lower percentage of moral and mental problems than do farmers?”⁷ How can anyone hope to “understand” religious faith without having it?

Meanwhile, Prothero has left out the most important element of any child’s religious training—the family! In fact, he makes a startling admission: his own children are, generally speaking, religiously illiterate (pp. 125–126). For a man who makes his living as a professor of religion studies, whose family goes to church and whose children go to Sunday school, this is an embarrassment. Was he so busy teaching other people’s children that he had no time to teach his own?

Why We Need to Know

As glaring as this omission is, Prothero has missed something even more important—the real reason *why* we ought to be knowledgeable about the Christian religion (never mind the others).

The reason is simple: God commands it.

In the words of Christ Himself, “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations . . . Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you” (Matt. 28:19–20).

And, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15).

And, “[B]e ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you” (1 Pet. 3:15).

We can hardly teach what we do not know, or preach a gospel out of ignorance, or give a reason for a faith we do not understand.

Prothero wants to reverse religious illiteracy because to him it’s good civics. To us, it’s a matter of obedience to God. If making our hearers better Christians,

or converting them to Christianity in the first place, makes them better citizens, well and good. But the commandment is to be obeyed regardless. We belong to God’s Kingdom before we are citizens of any country.

We are not sold on his remedy, but he has done a good job (and an entertaining one) of calling attention to the ailment.

We are not convinced that hours of instruction “about” religion, divorced from belief, will produce an understanding of any religion. We don’t believe it’s possible to be religiously neutral or that it’s intellectually honest to claim to be so.

We and Prothero agree, for different reasons, with the prophet Hosea: “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge,” and not forgetting the rest of the verse, “because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee” (Hosea 4:6). ■

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

1. R. J. Rushdoony, *Roots of Reconstruction*, “False Religions” (Vallecito, CA: Ross House Books, 1991), 307.
2. Rushdoony, *Systematic Theology* (Vallecito, CA: Ross House Books, 1994), 683.
3. *Ibid.*, 674.
4. Joseph Stowell, *The Trouble with Jesus* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2003), 22.
5. Rushdoony, *Institutes of Biblical Law*, Vol. 1 (The Craig Press, 1973), 296.
6. Vallecito, CA: Ross House Books, 1995.
7. Rushdoony, *Roots of Reconstruction*, 309.

What's Up, Dawk? The Dawkins Dilemma

Anthony Rogers



Richard Dawkins has recently argued that God is a delusion,¹ but a vicious problem attends his case: if God is a delusion, then so is Dawkins and everything else.

As the creator of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible, God is both the ontological source of all that is, as well as the epistemological starting point necessary to account for the world as something that is both non-delusory and intelligible. To the extent that Dawkins presupposes his own and the world's existence and intelligibility, he has also presupposed the existence of God, contrary to his own thesis. This means that Dawkins is not only deluded about the nonexistence of God, but he is *self*-deluded.

Competing Claims of Self-Deception

The live possibility that a person can be self-deceived or self-deluded about the existence or nonexistence of God is recognized by Dawkins early in his book. In the preface he says, “There are many people who know, in their heart of hearts, that they are atheists but dare not admit it to their families or even, in some cases, to themselves” (p. 3). This is simply the *ad hoc*, atheistic equivalent of what the apostle Paul said millennia ago, but without the punch: “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them” (Rom. 1:18–19 NKJV).

Paul goes on to say, and here is the punch missing in Dawkins' counterclaim, that certain God-ordained, judicially imposed consequences follow from exchanging the known truth about God for a more palatable, self-flattering lie: God gives such people over to a reprobate mind and to all manner of sinful and self-degrading behavior, or at least to the approval of such practices, such as an unnatural desire for the same sex. The punch lands, as we can see, for Dawkins likens those who are theists by profession but atheists deep down in their hearts to homosexuals who need to come out of the closet (p. 4), a practice he roundly approves of (pp. 289–291). Thus atheism and homosexuality go hand in hand, according to Dawkins. How is that for disproving what the Bible says about God?

The Evidence of Self-Deception

Dawkins never gets around to showing any evidence that people who believe in God are self-deluded, secretly believing in atheism, as it were, all the while telling themselves that God exists. However, in the process of arguing that theists, especially Christian theists (his preferred targets), are simply deluded and that God very probably doesn't exist, he does give abundant evidence of his own self-deception—that is, that he in fact knows what he claims is “almost certainly” not true. From start to finish, Dawkins' argumentation shows not only that he surreptitiously *believes* in God, but that he secretly *relies* and even **must** rely upon Him. Dawkins' own existence, and any and all ability to make it intelligible, wholly and completely depends upon God.

The evidence for self-deception that can be offered is of various sorts. In the first place there are certain unwitting expressions and unguarded comments that belie Dawkins' atheism, such as when he chides C. G. Jung for believing “that particular books on his shelf exploded with a loud bang” (p. 51).² Christians of course would agree with Dawkins, and for obvious reasons, such as their presupposition that God created the world, but what presupposition is at the bottom of Dawkins' criticism of Jung? It must be more of the same, for surely it can't be Big Bang cosmology.

A second and more devastating line of proof that Dawkins is deceiving Dawkins is that he has a firmly entrenched belief in and claims knowledge about the world—for example that the doctrine of creation is false and evolution theory is true—but then he gives us a philosophy that, if he really and faithfully held to it, would undermine any possibility of accounting for his belief in the external world or the knowledge he lays claim to. You simply can't claim any right to believe in an extra-mental reality or insist that others share your peculiar outlook on human experience and at the same time say things like the following (unless of course you are self-deceived):

Our eyes don't present to our brains a faithful photograph of what is out there, or an accurate movie of what is going on through time. Our brains construct a continuously updated model: updated by coded pulses chattering along the optic nerve, but constructed nevertheless. (pp. 88–89)

What we see of the real world is not the unvarnished real world but a model of the real world, regulated and adjusted by sense data—a model that is constructed so that it is useful for dealing with the real world. The nature of that model depends on the kind of animal we are. (p. 371)

The problems with this are many, not the least of which is that for Dawkins there is nothing else to go on but perception. If perception is as unreliable as he says, then the only thing anyone has, including Dawkins, is self-imposed models of the way things are, and even this depends upon the accident of what kind of animal we were born as, along with a long chain of other accidents leading up to that kind of animal. This can't be the same platform that Dawkins is standing on when he looks out upon the world and concludes from the evidence that God "almost certainly does not exist," for artificial mental constructs foisted on otherwise brute sense data do not yield solid conclusions but ephemeral—need I say it?—delusions. Things aren't the way they appear to Dawkins, and it's his own brain's fault. If Dawkins is right in saying that all we have are inaccurate, unreliable images of reality constructed by our own minds, then why should we pay any attention to *his* unreliable image of reality? Worse, how can we be sure of anything at all? By his own admission, Dawkins is the victim of intrapersonal deception.

The final and most devastating example of self-deception is that on Dawkins' espoused atheistic assumptions, not only would it be the case that God is a delusion, which Dawkins insists on, but it would also be the case that Dawkins himself is a delusion, which he implicitly denies all throughout his book and in his every waking moment. Throughout his book,

Dawkins speaks of his own past and present, as well as certain expectations he has for the future, all of which assume some continuing personal identity, but then he tells us that persons are more like waves than permanent things, for none of the atoms that make up our bodies are the same today as when we were born, nor will we have the same atoms in the future that we have today (p. 371).

It shouldn't be missed: this problem cuts through everything, for if Dawkins goes, then the world goes, too, at least as far as it concerns him. If Dawkins is just an ever-changing collection of atoms—i.e., if it is a delusion to believe that there is any such person as Richard Dawkins who persists through all of these changes—then all "his" thoughts and arguments about God, man, and the world are delusory as well.

Will the Real Delusion Please Disappear?

Dawkins has argued that God is a delusion, and as it turns out, the only way he would be able to do so is if his argument is false: his God-denying assumptions lead inexorably to a denial of all knowledge, even knowledge of his own personal identity. So it is either the case that both Dawkins and the world are delusions, or God exists. This is the dilemma; which will Dawkins choose?

In light of these observations, my exhortation to Dawkins is twofold: first, either repent of your self-inflicted delusion and confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father, or else live up to your own foolishness and disappear. Second, go talk to Daniel Dennett and Sam Harris about these things, as I suspect there is more than a little bit of self-deception going on over there as well.

The delusion of atheism is widespread, and you know what they say: "When one person suffers from a delu-

sion, it is called insanity. When many people suffer from a delusion, it is called Religion" (p. 5). Atheism is a religion, and not a very good one at that: it deludes those who buy into it. ■

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1. Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2006).
2. As the story goes, Jung was once arguing with Freud about psychic phenomena when an inexplicable event happened: the books on his shelf exploded with a loud bang. Neither Jung nor Freud had any rational explanation for this event (chance, irrationalism, etc.). It is far from clear how Dawkins' dismissal of this comports with his underlying philosophy of chance and acceptance of the doctrine of the Big Bang.

Wilson ... Self-Defense cont. from page 10

We Reformed men, and Reformed Christians generally, ought to take a closer look at what the Bible teaches about individual self-defense, as well as our obligation to defend our civil liberties. We should not be afraid to delve into this, one of the most important of subjects. Our fallen world is a hard and cruel place, save for the grace of God. The Bible demands that we be able to deal with it. ■

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Selbrede ... Kindergarten cont. from page 19

humility, due subjection of our mind to the authority of the Holy Ghost speaking in the Scriptures, diligence, and dependence on Him for instruction. Nonetheless, the Scriptures are *not* a source of darkness, but the very opposite. *The entrance of thy words giveth light* (Ps. 119:130).

3. John Owen's monumental seven-volume commentary makes the strongest case for Paul being the author of Hebrews. R. J. Rushdoony believes Paul and the apostolic fellowship jointly authored the Epistle. However, if the analogy of Scripture were followed, the strongest evidence points to Jude's composition of the book. Although the fact is obscured in some translations, Hebrews 13:22 makes reference to a shorter letter of exhortation that was sent out by the author. The Epistle of Jude appears to be that letter of exhortation. Jude 1:3 reports that Jude was in the middle of writing a larger Epistle concerning their common salvation—a project large enough to require *all diligence*, as he says—that needed to be interrupted to write a much-needed word of exhortation. The two Epistles refer to each other by this link. Moreover, Jude utilizes some of the Old Testament imagery of Hebrews in the sequence they appear in Hebrews. These being fresh in Jude's mind during the composition of Hebrews, and also being relevant to the situation that necessitated the composition of Jude, they are naturally cited. It is interesting that the conventional view is that the short "word of exhortation" written by the author of Hebrews is lost, while the larger Epistle Jude mentions is also regarded as lost. After writing and lecturing on this solution to the question, I later discovered only a single scholar (writing in the nineteenth century) who mentions the possibility of Jude's authorship.

4. The term *ingrafted* is essentially equivalent to *implanted*.

5. True, Paul is speaking of women, but Puritan commentator John Owen has fully demonstrated the justice in generalizing the principle. If the shoe fits, wear it.

6 The purpose of the parable of the importunate widow is explained at the outset at Luke

18:1—it is an exhortation to pray without fainting. In verse 8 the word *faith* has the Greek article in front of it, best rendered here thus: "Will the Son of Man find *this faith*—the faith that prays without ceasing, the faith exemplified by this widow—on the earth when He comes?" As Warfield pointed out, the question is a probing ethical exhortation, not a prophetic prediction.

7. Rushdoony's exposition was a surprise to me as well, so I'm fully aware of the beam in my own eye when I pose this question of our readership.

McVicar ... Rushdoony cont. from page 21

as an extended meditation on the state should hardly seem radical, yet it is quite foreign to many secular academics and journalists who have cultivated a misleading image of Rushdoony as a primitive, Old Testament patriarch. While it is certainly true that Rushdoony appeals to a law-order radically different from the one that most secularists and liberal Christians recognize, this should not disqualify his work as a political and ethical thinker.

I've been busy telling academics and anyone else who will listen that Rushdoony's *postmodern* critique of the state challenges almost everything that we think we know about God, the state, and man. That some of my peers find this perspective provocative testifies to the power of Rushdoony's ideas.

When I then argue that Rushdoony is best understood by his own self-identification as a *Christian libertarian*, many of his critics are surprised that he ever adopted such a title. Nonetheless, as any good Chalcedonian knows and few secular critics appreciate, Rushdoony played an important role in the Volker Fund, the ur-source of American libertarianism. To this day, many secular libertarians revile him for daring to challenge their irreligious presuppositions. These historical facts don't jibe with narratives that incorrectly portray Rushdoony as an "American fascist."

That Rushdoony denounced revolution and eschewed violence is an essential facet of his work ignored by most of his critics. Similarly, the popular authors who spend so much time warning about Rushdoony neglect to point out that Rushdoony was a vociferous critic of the very forms of statist intervention that they want to blame on him.

I am convinced that it is time for secularists of all kinds to move beyond the popular parodies of Rushdoony and Christian Reconstructionism. It's time to stop projecting our uneasiness with the Bush regime onto *all* conservative Christians. In fact, by engaging Rushdoony, we might all learn something about resisting tyranny, secular or otherwise. ■

Michael McVicar is a PhD candidate in the Department of Comparative Studies at The Ohio State University. He is currently developing a dissertation that will focus on the life and ministry of R. J. Rushdoony and his relationship to religion and politics in contemporary American society. In particular, he is interested in Rushdoony's complex association with libertarianism and conservatism. He can be reached at mcvicar.2@osu.edu.

Terrell ... Profit cont. from page 26

5. *Luther's Works*, 249.

6. Ellsworth McIntyre, *How to Become a Millionaire in Christian Education* (Naples, FL: Nicene Press, 1997).

7. Paul Heyne, *The Economic Way of Thinking*, 11th ed., 172.

8. Corrie Cutrer, "The Business of Resurrection" *Christianity Today*, December 4, 2000. <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2000/014/12.78.html>.

9. *Ibid.*

10. Rousas J. Rushdoony, *Politics of Guilt and Pity* (Vallecito, CA: Ross House Books, 1995 [1970]), 316.

11. J. Gresham Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism* (New York: McMillan, 1923), 144.

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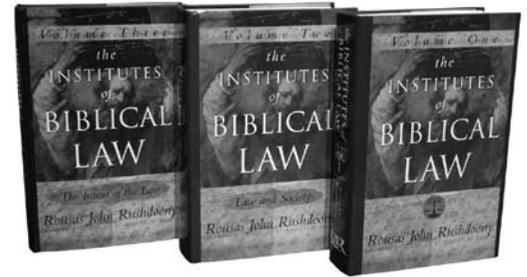
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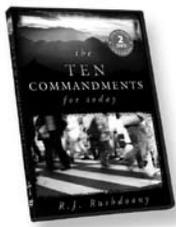
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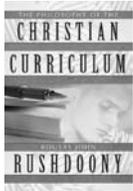
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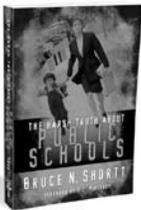
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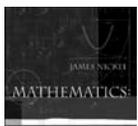
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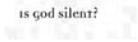
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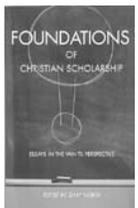
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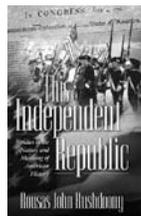


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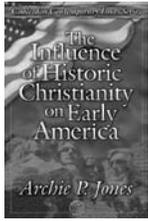
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| | 16. The Federalist Administrations | | 34. The Interpretation of History, I |
| Tape 9 | 17. The Voluntary Church, I | Tape 18 | 35. The Interpretation of History, II |
| | 18. The Voluntary Church, II | | |

18 tapes in album, RR144ST-18, Set of "American History to 1865", \$90.00

Retreat From Liberty

A tape set by R.J. Rushdoony. 3 lessons on "The American Indian," "A Return to Slavery," and "The United Nations – A Religious Dream."

3 cassette tapes, RR251ST-3, \$9.00



The Influence of Historic Christianity on Early America

By Archie P. Jones. Early America was founded upon the deep, extensive influence of Christianity inherited from the medieval period and the Protestant Reformation. That priceless heritage was not limited to the narrow confines of the personal life of the individual, nor to the ecclesiastical structure. Christianity positively and predominately (though not perfectly) shaped culture, education, science, literature, legal thought, legal education, political thought, law, politics, charity, and missions.

Booklet, 88 pages, \$6.00



The Future of the Conservative Movement

Edited by Andrew Sandlin. *The Future of the Conservative Movement* explores the history, accomplishments and decline of the conservative movement, and lays the foundation for a viable substitute to today's compromising, floundering conservatism.

Because the conservative movement, despite its many sound features (including anti-statism and anti-Communism), was not anchored in an unchangeable standard, it eventually was hijacked from within and transformed into a scaled-down version of the very liberalism it was originally calculated to combat.

Booklet, 67 pages, \$6.00

The United States: A Christian Republic

By R.J. Rushdoony. The author demolishes the modern myth that the United States was founded by deists or humanists bent on creating a secular republic.

Pamphlet, 7 pages, \$1.00

Biblical Faith and American History

By R.J. Rushdoony. America was a break with the neoplatonic view of religion that dominated the medieval church. The Puritans and other groups saw Scripture as guidance for every area of life because they viewed its author as the infallible Sovereign over every area. America's fall into Arminianism and revivalism, however, was a return to the neoplatonic error that transferred the world from Christ's shoulders to man's. The author saw a revival ahead in Biblical faith.

Pamphlet, 12 pages, \$1.00

World History



A Christian Survey of World History

12 cassettes with notes, questions, and answer key in an attractive album

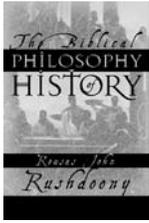
By R.J. Rushdoony. *From tape 3:* "Can you see why a knowledge of history is important—so that we can see the issues as our Lord presented them against the whole backboard of history and to see the battle as it is again lining up? Because again we have the tragic view of ancient Greece; again we have the Persian view—tolerate both good and evil; again we have the Assyrian-Babylonian-Egyptian view of chaos as the source of regeneration. And we must therefore again find our personal and societal regeneration in Jesus Christ and His Word—all things must be made new in terms of His Word."

Twelve taped lessons give an overview of history from ancient times to the 20th century as only Rev. Rushdoony could.

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| Tape 1 | 1. Time and History: Why History is Important | Tape 7 | 9. New Humanism or Medieval Period |
| Tape 2 | 2. Israel, Egypt, and the Ancient Near East | Tape 8 | 10. The Reformation |
| Tape 3 | 3. Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece and Jesus Christ | Tape 9 | 11. Wars of Religion – So Called |
| Tape 4 | 4. The Roman Republic and Empire | | 12. The Thirty Years War |
| Tape 5 | 5. The Early Church | Tape 10 | 13. France: Louis XIV through Napoleon |
| | 6. Byzantium | Tape 11 | 14. England: The Puritans through Queen Victoria |
| Tape 6 | 7. Islam | Tape 12 | 15. 20 th Century: The Intellectual – Scientific Elite |
| | 8. The Frontier Age | | |

12 tapes in album, RR160ST-12, Set of "A Christian Survey of World History", \$75.00



The Biblical Philosophy of History

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

Paperback, 138 pages, \$22.00



James I: The Fool as King

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

Hardback, 472 pages, \$20.00

Christian Reconstruction in England

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

5 cassette tapes, RR135ST-5, \$15.00

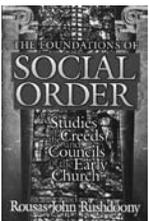
Church History



The "Atheism" of the Early Church

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

Paperback, 64 pages, \$12.00



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

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

Paperback, 197 pages, index, \$16.00

Philosophy



The Death of Meaning

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

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

Paperback, 180 pages, index, \$18.00



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

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

Paperback, 127 pages, indices, \$19.00



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

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

Paperback, 230 pages, indices, \$21.00



By What Standard?

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

Hardback, 212 pages, index, \$14.00



The One and the Many

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

Paperback, 375 pages, index, \$15.00



The Flight from Humanity

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

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

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Humanism, the Deadly Deception

A tape series by R.J. Rushdoony. Six lessons present humanism as a religious faith of sinful men. Humanistic views of morality and law are contrasted with the Christian view of faith and providence.

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movement. This is a good companion set to the author's book, *The Word of Flux*.

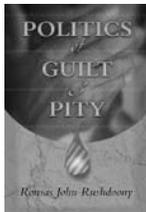
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A History of Modern Philosophy

A tape series by R.J. Rushdoony. Nine lessons trace modern thought. Hear a Christian critique of Descartes, Berkeley, Kant, Hegel, Marx, Sade, and Genet. Learn how modern philosophy has been used to deny a Christian world-view and propose a new order, a new morality, and a new man.

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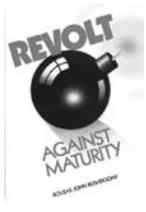
Psychology



Politics of Guilt and Pity

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

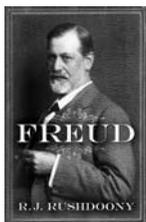
Hardback, 371 pages, index, \$20.00



Revolt Against Maturity

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

Hardback, 334 pages, index, \$18.00

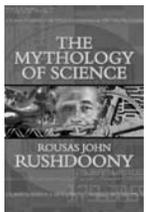


Freud

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

Paperback, 74 pages, \$13.00

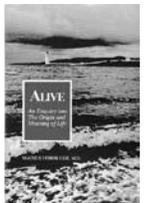
Science



The Mythology of Science

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

Paperback, 134 pages, \$17.00



Alive: An Enquiry into the Origin and Meaning of Life

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

Paperback, 159 pages, \$14.00



Creation According to the Scriptures

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

Paperback, 159 pages, \$18.00

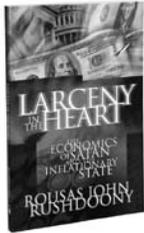
Economics



Making Sense of Your Dollars: A Biblical Approach to Wealth

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

Paperback, 192 pages, index, \$12.00



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

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

Paperback, 144 pages, indices, \$18.00

Christianity and Capitalism

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

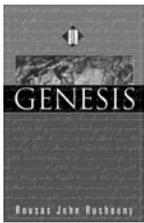
Pamphlet, 8 pages, \$1.00

A Christian View of Vocation: The Glory of the Mundane

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

Pamphlet, 12 pages, \$1.00

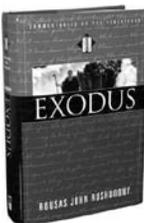
Biblical Studies



Genesis, Volume I of Commentaries on the Pentateuch

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

Hardback, 297 pages, indices, \$45.00



Exodus, Volume II of Commentaries on the Pentateuch

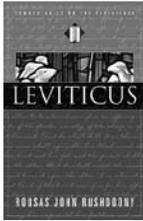
Essentially, all of mankind is on some sort of an exodus. However, the path of fallen man is vastly different from that of the righteous. Apart from Jesus Christ and His atoning work, the exodus of a fallen humanity means only a further descent from sin into death. But in Christ, the exodus is now a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

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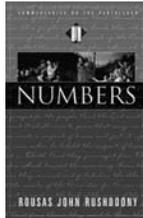


Leviticus, Volume III of Commentaries on the Pentateuch

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

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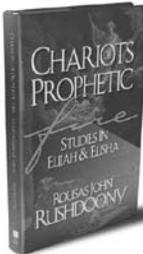


Numbers, Volume IV of Commentaries on the Pentateuch

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

Hardback, index, 428 pages \$45.00

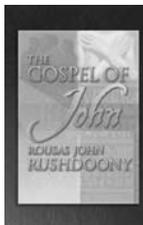
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Chariots of Prophetic Fire: Studies in Elijah and Elisha

By R. J. Rushdoony. See how close Israel's religious failure resembles our own! Read this to see how the modern Christian is again guilty of Baal worship, of how inflation-fed prosperity caused a loosening of morals, syncretism and a decline in educational performance. As in the days of Elijah and Elisha, it is once again said to be a virtue to tolerate evil and condemn those who do not. This book will challenge you to resist compromise and the temptation of expediency. It will help you take a stand by faith for God's truth in a culture of falsehoods.

Hardback, 163 pages, indices, \$30.00



The Gospel of John

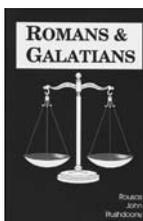
By R.J. Rushdoony. In this commentary the author maps out the glorious gospel of John, starting from the obvious parallel to Genesis 1 ("In the beginning was the Word") and through to the glorious conclusion of Christ's death and resurrection. Nothing more clearly reveals the gospel than Christ's atoning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

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Companion tape series to The Gospel of John

A cassette series by R.J. Rushdoony. Seventy sermons cover John's entire gospel and parallel the chapters in the author's commentary, *The Gospel of John*, making this a valuable group Bible study series.

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By R.J. Rushdoony. From the author's introduction: "I do not disagree with the liberating power of the Reformation interpretation, but I believe that it provides simply the beginning of our understanding of Romans, not its conclusion..."

The great problem in the church's interpretation of Scripture has been its ecclesiastical orientation, as though God speaks only to the church, and commands only the church. The Lord God speaks in and through His Word to the whole man, to every man, and to every area of life and thought. ... To assume that the Triune Creator of all things is in His word and person only relevant to the church is to deny His Lordship or sovereignty. If we turn loose the whole Word of God onto the church and the world, we shall see with joy its power and glory. This is the purpose of my brief comments on Romans."

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Hebrews, James and Jude

By R.J. Rushdoony. There is a resounding call in Hebrews, which we cannot forget without going astray: "Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach" (13:13). This is a summons to serve Christ the Redeemer-King fully and faithfully, without compromise. When James, in his epistle, says that faith without works is dead, he tells us that faith is not a mere matter of words, but it is of necessity a matter of life. "Pure religion and undefiled" requires Christian charity and action. Anything short of this is a self-delusion. James's letter is a corrective the church needs badly. Jude similarly recalls us to Jesus Christ's apostolic commission, "Remember ye the words which have been spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ" (v. 17). Jude's letter reminds us of the necessity for a new creation beginning with us, and of the inescapable triumph of the Kingdom of God.

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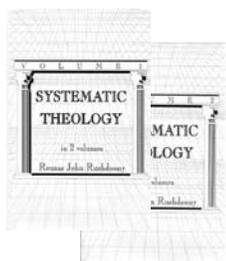
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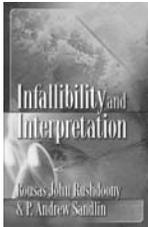
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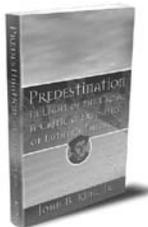
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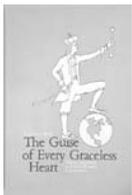
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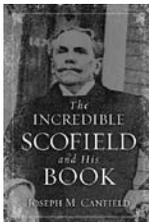
Edited by Andrew Sandlin. The Bible and the Christian Faith have been under attack in one way or another throughout much of the history of the church, but only in recent times have these attacks been perceived *within* the church as a healthy alternative to orthodoxy. This book is a trumpet blast heralding 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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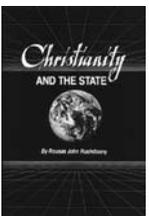
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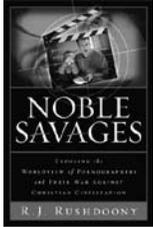
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Edited by Elizabeth Fellserson. The law of God makes clear how important and how central marriage is. God the Son came into the world neither through church nor state but through a family. This tells us that marriage, although nonexistent in heaven, is, all the same, central to this world. We are to live here under God as physical creatures whose lives are given their great training-ground in terms of the Kingdom of God by marriage. Our Lord stresses the fact that marriage is our normal calling. This book consists of essays on the importance of a proper Christian perspective on marriage.

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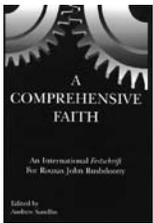
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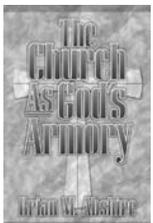
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A Comprehensive Faith

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

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Thine is the Kingdom: A Study of the Postmillennial Hope

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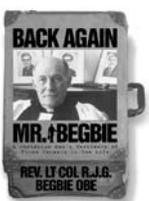
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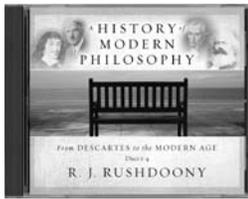
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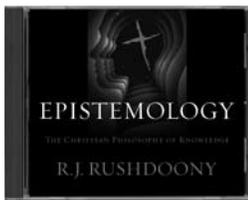
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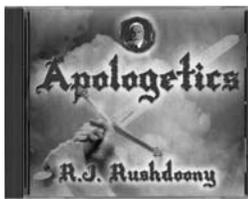


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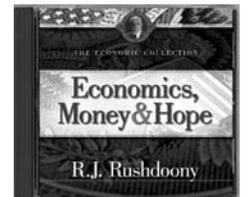


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