

Faith for All of Life
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FAITH FOR ALL OF LIFE

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

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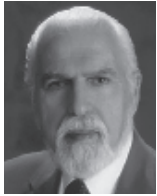
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The Spirit-Filled Men

By R. J. Rushdoony

(Reprinted from *Exodus* [Vallecito, CA: Ross House Books, 2004], 457-461)



Exodus 31:1-11

1. And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

2. See, I have called by name Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah:

3. And I have filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship,

4. To devise cunning works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass,

5. And in cutting of stones, to set them, and in carving of timber, to work in all manner of workmanship.

6. And I, behold I have given with him Aholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan: and in the hearts of all that are wise hearted I have put wisdom, that they may make all that I have commanded thee;

7. The tabernacle of the congregation, and the ark of the testimony, and the mercy seat that is thereupon, and all the furniture of the tabernacle.

8. And the table and his furniture, and the pure candlestick with all his furniture, and the altar of incense.

9. And the altar of burnt offering with all his furniture, and the laver and his foot,

10. And the cloths of service, and the holy garments for Aaron the priest, and the garments of his sons, to minister in the priest's office,

11. And the anointing oil, and sweet incense for the holy place: according to all that I have commanded thee shall they do.

Let us begin by glancing at some of the incidental facts of this text. The name Bezaleel means "in the shadow of God," meaning under God's protection. He was apparently a young man, and a great-grandson of Caleb (1 Chron. 2:18–20). He was a descendant of Judah. Aholiab was a name meaning "the father is my tent"; he was a Danite. His name implies clearly that God the Father is his protection and covering.

H. L. Ellison said of verse 2, "I have called by name' is reminiscent of 33:12 and Isa. 45:4, which shows that the term virtually implies predestination."¹ This is a fact which cannot be overstressed. The enemies of Christianity have too often determined the agenda for discussion, and the subject of predestination has been restricted to election to salvation or reprobation, and to free will versus predestination. We are here told that predestination also has to do with our abilities, here, very specifically, skills in the arts. They are God-ordained and an aspect of our calling, so that God is more involved in our skills than we are. To restrict the doctrine of calling to an ecclesiastical vocation is thus clearly not Biblical.

According to verse 6, a number of

artisans were called, although only two are named. Bezaleel is chosen to be in charge of all the work, and Aholiab is the foreman under him. According to Exodus 35:10, 25–26, a large number of men and women were called to do the work. It is of particular interest that their skills are called "wisdom." According to Scripture, God is the source and author of all wisdom. In Proverbs, the references to wisdom identify it with the Spirit of God (cf. Prov. 8). All skills represent a form of wisdom, and all skills come into their own in the service of God.

Joseph Parker called attention to some important implications of this text. "God builds everything built beautifully." Furthermore, "Not only will God build everything beautifully; his purpose is to have everything built for religious uses," which is not the same thing as ecclesiastical use. Also, and very important,

God will not have the building put up as an expression of mere sentiment; otherwise, he would be assisting the cause of idolatry.²

Finally, this text tells us that "Labour is churched and glorified."³

In verses 7–11, we have a summary of the things committed to these men for construction. Each of these items is very specifically described previously. Thus, the *conception* was from God, and the *execution* was by men. In modern doctrines of art, conception is exclusively seen as the artist's prerogative, as well as the execution thereof. According to John Larnar,

Until the later medieval period virtually all work produced by painters, stonemasons, goldsmiths, and woodworkers was undertaken under contract, in response to the specific demand of a patron. Whether as an individual, a cathedral chapter, or a commune, the patron generally stipulated in detail the character of the work required from the artist. Paintings and sculpture were not made by men hoping, at some future time, to find a purchaser for their wares but were created for one particular occasion and place.⁴

There was thus far more than the individual will of the artist involved. There was the faith of the community, the wisdom of skill of the artisans, and the purposes of those who commissioned the work. In the modern perspective, the will of the individual artist is sometimes all that matters. Not surprisingly, precisely as the artist in the modern era began to see himself as the priest and prophet of a new age, he also began to lose relevance to the world around him. Those who are still governed by the greatest determinant, Christian faith, are still the most relevant artists. There is a difference between entering a medieval church, for example, and a Frank Lloyd Wright building; the church has a universal meaning, a Wright structure a personal, limited, and sometimes quirky significance.

One of our problems with this text is that the Spirit of God is here plainly associated with the artistic skills which are called wisdom. The common belief associates the Holy Spirit with ecstatic utterances; this is not the common aspect of the Spirit's work through men. Oehler's comments on the Holy Spirit are thus especially important:

God reveals Himself in the heart of man by His *Spirit*, which, as the Spirit of revelation, corresponds to the cosmical, in the same way as the word of revelation corresponds to the word of creation. As the *principle of cosmical life*,

as the mighty divine force of all things, the Spirit is the principle of the life of man's soul, and every natural intellectual gift in man is traced back to it: Joseph's wisdom, Gen. xli.38; Bezaleel's skill in art, Ex. xxxi.3, xxxv.31 ... In the Old Testament, the Spirit's work in the divine kingdom is rather that of *endowing the organs of the theocracy with the gifts required for their calling*, and those gifts of office in the Old Testament are similar to the gifts of grace in the New Testament, 1 Cor. xii. ff. In the *Pentateuch* its working appears exclusively in this connection. The Spirit bestows on Moses and the seventy elders skill to guide the people (Num. xi.17ff.), also to Joshua (Num. xxvii.18; Deut. xxxiv.9), and works at a later period in the judges, arousing and strengthening them (Judg. vi.34, xi.29, xiii.25), and comes on the kings, who were called of God, at their anointing (1 Sam. x.6, xvi.13). As the Spirit of revelation, He produces in particular the gift of prophesy, Num. xi.25ff.; and even ... imparts the ability to prophesy to the heathen revealing God against his will (xxii.38). On the contrary, the Spirit does not appear in the Pentateuch as the *principle of sanctification in the pious*, this is first spoken of in the Psalms, Ps. li.13, comp. vers. 12 and 14, cxliiii.10.⁵

The Holy Spirit thus has a more general as well as a more specific place in our lives and world than is generally recognized. The doctrine of vocation or calling must be seen as essentially related to the Holy Spirit. We are therefore not alone; whatever our gifts or vocation, however, great or small, we are the instruments of the Holy Spirit. To limit the Spirit's manifestations in our lives to dramatic or ecstatic experiences is to limit severely our relationship to Him. He is very much present in all our daily tasks, and we have the duty to recognize His presence and power.

Just as the modern artist works out of himself, in a totally personal frame of reference, so too the modern Christian

too often works in a radically subjective context and tries to limit the Spirit's operation to that subjective sphere. Thomas Scott's comment on this text reads in part thus:

The Lord confers his *unmerited favors* on whom he pleases: but the honor, which cometh from him, is always attended with a work to be done: and to be employed by him is indeed the highest honor, and the noblest privilege.⁶

"A work to be done," this tells us the purpose of the Spirit's gifts. The gifts of the Spirit can also be called an "empowerment." In 1 Corinthians 4:6, Paul warns the churchmen of Corinth against "being puffed up for one another." Then, in the next verse, 1 Corinthians 4:7, we have Paul's comment, a devastating one, which both the Authorized Version and James Moffatt's help us to understand:

For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it? (AV)

Who singles you out, my brother? What do you possess that has not been given you? And if it was given you, why do you boast as if it had been gained, not given? (Moffatt)

In the modern view, each man is a little god and creator, whereas our text tells us that the Holy Spirit is the source of our gifts, and neither we nor our gifts are an end in themselves. We are God's creation, for His Kingdom purposes, and there is "a work to be done."

His gifts include a variety of skills, from sculpture to making incense or perfume. All His gifts are in terms of His Kingdom, and "for glory and for beauty" (Ex. 28:2, etc.).

Albert Camus wrote, "Since God claims all that is good in man, it is necessary to deride what is good and choose

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The Danger of Abstract Theology

Mark R. Rushdoony



Abstraction is a thought process where characteristics are separated from actual objects to create a theoretical ideal which is then treated as if it were real. It is a means of simplification where concrete details are left ambiguous so that generalizations can be made in terms of the abstraction, which becomes the norm for the sake of discussion.

We all use abstraction in our thinking and conversation. If I said, “George Washington was a true patriot because ...” I would be defending his patriotism in terms of a definition of patriotism. On the other hand, if I said, “The true patriot is one who ...” I would be about to create an abstract definition of patriotism to which I would be holding others.

Abstract thought is valid in many circumstances. It is dangerous and potentially blasphemous when applied to theology.

Reason and Faith

Medieval Christendom had a very God-centered view of reality. Humanism, in the form of Greek thought, kept reviving to challenge this view. The Enlightenment was a reaction to the Protestant Reformation; it self-consciously returned to Greek paganism and celebrated man’s reason.

Sometimes we buy into this approach, so when a humanist accuses Christians of being irrational our tendency is to respond with, “No, you are irrational.” We then stand with the

cynic on the presupposition that man’s mind is central and that man’s logic is therefore central.

The Christian must understand his faith implies limitations to both reason and logic. *First*, man is limited by his creaturehood and his position relative to his Creator. We could paraphrase Job 9:32–33 as, “God is not a man like I am, that I could challenge him or take him to court. Likewise, there is no one who could act as judge in such a context or exert authority over us as though the two of us were equals.” Man’s reason is part of his created being and can never be elevated above or even close to the level of the Creator.

A *second* limitation on man’s reasoning is the fall. Man is a sinner, so his reasoning is often the logic of rebellion. Satan, of course, used fallacious logic to tempt Eve, so man’s use of reason as a means of standing over God and His Word has that sordid origin.

A *third* limitation on man’s reason is his redemption, his call to be a new creature in Christ and to submit to the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. Man is called to submit the entirety of his being to God, and this includes his fallen mental faculties.

Reasoning is a Religious Activity

Man is rational in terms of his faith, his basic presuppositions. The Enlightenment saw humanistic man in terms of reason, but Scripture views man as a creature of faith. Man always thinks and acts in terms of what he believes.

Adam and Eve rationally considered Satan’s words and chose disobedience because they first believed those lies; they were exercising faith in Satan’s promise. When man follows his rebellion against God, his reason works out the logical implications of what he believes, what he assumes to be true. Reasoning then, is a religious activity though not necessarily an ecclesiastical one (evolution is one of the most prevalent faiths of our era, though it is certainly not ecclesiastical). One of the reasons we see the continuing abandonment of Christian morality and custom, not to mention hostility thereto, is that our culture is becoming more consistently humanistic. Its faith is being acted on more systematically.

Faith and Dominion

Man’s drive to dominion is also in terms of his faith. The Westminster Shorter Catechism defines the image of God in terms of knowledge, righteousness, holiness, and dominion. All these are perverted by sin. Knowledge becomes a confidence in lies, righteousness becomes a false justice, holiness becomes a separation not to God but to evil, and dominion becomes a lust for power and control. Sinners will think and act in terms of what they believe, so that un-Christian morphs into anti-Christian and ever more consistently so. Men are rational, but their reasoning is in terms of their faith. If we do not self-consciously hold a systematic Biblical theology, we will end up with the systematics of another faith. Theology (from *theos* and *logos*) means

“God words,” and if our “God words” are not self-consciously Biblical, they will become more consistently non-Biblical. Faith and its expression will then be followed by action, by an exercise of dominion whereby men work out the implications of their beliefs.

Our thinking must self-consciously rely on God’s revealed words for theology. If God is the Creator, we are in a very small part of His reality; if we assume He is not the Creator, we will recognize Him as a small part of our reality. The danger is when very clever men create abstract ideas about God and equate those abstractions with theology. The academic study of theology, in fact, can encourage this tendency.

We cannot close God off into a category of our making or relegate Him to a place of our definition. We understand as we, by faith, assume God’s Word is true, that it is a consistent whole, and that we are subject to it because we are subject to Him.

God’s Thoughts and Man’s Thoughts

For my thoughts *are* not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. (Isaiah 55:8–9)

We cannot impose our reason on God. Contrast Isaiah’s words with those of E. J. Carnell who famously (and blasphemously) said, “Bring on your revelations! Let them make peace with the law of contradiction and the facts of history, and they will deserve a rational man’s assent.”¹ This is “rational man’s” attitude: let me be the judge of God’s existence, reasonableness, justice, love, etc. Such reason begins with the supremacy of man and God’s

accountability before the court of man’s judgment. Job knew better; modern man does not.

God’s word is transcendent; human reason is not. To impose our reason on God would be to counter Isaiah with, “No, God’s thoughts must be my thoughts; my ways must be God’s ways. God’s thoughts are not higher than my thoughts; God’s thoughts must be understandable to me.” Imposing our reason on God is tantamount to grabbing God, pulling Him down to earth and saying, “You’d better start making sense to me!”

Theology is faith based, and the believer must acknowledge that faith is itself the gift of God. Theology is not a branch of philosophy or logic. Theology is not a critical analysis or an intellectual or academic exercise, but “God words” that we receive by God’s grace from God Himself in Scripture.

Speculative Theology

We ask speculative theological questions all the time. It is natural for limited minds with limited knowledge to ask for more information, but our errors multiply when we try to answer such questions. The question that begins with, “Why would God ...” should be answered with, “Unless God tells us we cannot presume to know the mind of God.”

We must not presume our human logic can figure God out where He has not spoken. In fact, we often cannot understand what He does say (the concepts of eternity and the triune God cannot be rationally understood). We must not presume that God or His transcendent truth should be comprehensible to us. Trying to probe the mind of God is presuming that He must operate in terms of His creature’s mental abilities and that our sin is not a further impediment to such efforts.

Speculative theology is human ideas about God, developed into abstractions and then imposed on God and His Word. At one time tomes were written on the area of theology known as lapsarianism. The idea has as its root word “lapse,” which refers to man’s sin. This great debate set about to create an order to God’s eternal decrees (creation, the fall, the decree to save some, election of some to life).

Some recognized that, because God is not limited by time and His decrees are one, this could not be debated as a *chronological* order. Still, they persisted in trying to arrange them in a *logical* order, a cause and effect order. The problem was in transferring man’s limitation of time and thought to God. Logic itself imposes a chronological order, but God is not limited by time, He is the great “I am.” Trying to impose an order to God’s thinking imposes time, a creation of God, on God. It also, of course, presumes man can understand the mind of God. One website tried to defend its lapsarian position in terms of the simile of computer chips that God programmed in the past. God is then viewed mechanistically. Once you assume to understand God’s programming code, you then are not afraid to make bold statements based on *your* logic *about* God. Note some of the statements such presumption led to (emphasis added):

“*God cannot do anything* for us until we become an entity; He cannot do anything for a non-entity.”

“No decree itself, therefore, opposes human freedom.”

“*God is fair* and provides for all. God doesn’t arbitrarily assign people to hell.”

“*God is not unfair* to any member of the human race; *such a thought is blasphemous* and unthinkable.”

What is the problem here? Note how this writer's logic is applied to God, and God is then limited by the writer's logic. He presumes to say what God can and cannot do based on his lapsarian logic. In speaking to his readership, the writer even used the second person (speaking to both reader and God) and laid down the law to man and God alike: "You cannot elect until you create. You cannot elect until you permit the fall." I hope God is taking notes. And what is wrong with saying that God is fair? Note that his statements hinge on the abstract concept of that which he believes fairness consists. What is unthinkable and blasphemous by his definition? Apparently it is any affront to humanity by the writer's abstraction of "fairness."

All the various lapsarian arguments were presumptions. Each claimed to read God's mind, to penetrate the eternal decrees of God on the assumption that God's thought and action are comparable to man's.

In Genesis 3 Satan claimed to know the mind and secret thoughts of God and challenged Eve to live in terms of these presumptions. Using Satan's logic, Eve rationally chose sin, as did Adam.

We are commanded to read God's Word, not His mind. We know God only as and to the extent He reveals Himself. We know His truths in the same way. To know God's mind would necessitate having a mind equal to His, yet we do not fully understand ourselves, much less God. Faith calls for a confidence in God; it does not require us to explain about God what God does not explain.

God Is Not An Abstraction

The word "god" is used universally for any supreme being or concept of ultimacy. This is why "god" can be discussed across religious and philosophical lines. Men define their

own "god" and profess belief in him. In modern usage, the term "god," or even "God," often has no reference to the Jehovah of Scriptures.

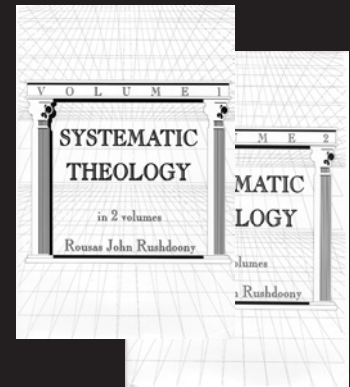
Scripture, however, presents God as a person, not an abstraction. This was John's point of the *logos* in the first chapter of his gospel. He was not the abstract mind of the universe but a person whom John and others knew and loved. The God of Scripture, moreover, is a God who has spoken and has given us His written revelation of Himself. Creating abstract constructs and calling them "God" is a rejection of that revelation, or at least its subordination to the false god of our imagination. God's name is holy and man has no proprietary use of it. The use of God's name is totally governed, so ought not His works, nature, and His decrees to be guarded against speculation by presumptuous man?

Right after God gave the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20) He noted that the people were afraid of Him, and they begged Moses to speak to God so they would not have to face Him directly. God, to those people, was saying, in effect, "You are afraid because you know I am real; you know I am not a concept; I am not an abstraction."

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," Scripture tells us. Fear of real danger can be a healthy attitude. When we see God for all the good things we like about Him—salvation, grace, mercy, love, etc.—and yet ignore His other very real characteristics—judgment, law, wrath, holiness—we have created an abstract God, one of our own creation. We must let God define Himself and His work and accept all that He is. We cannot cherry-pick what we like about God and present this abstraction of a deity

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Cornelius Van Til and Rousas John Rushdoony, Part 3: Moving Spirits

Michael J. McVicar, Ph.D.

This is the final essay in a series documenting the relationship between R. J. Rushdoony (1916–2001), the founder of the Chalcedon Foundation, and Cornelius Van Til (1895–1987), a professor of Christian apologetics at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. In the first essay in this series,¹ I provided a brief intellectual biography of Van Til and outlined how Rushdoony first encountered him. The second essay² recounted how Van Til's ideas influenced Rushdoony's early ministry and played a key role in his development as a thinker and activist. It also pointed to some of the ways Rushdoony influenced Van Til and helped shape the public reception of presuppositional apologetics.

This essay picks up where the second in the series left off to detail the two men's relationship from the 1960s through the 1980s. The first portion of the essay deals with Van Til's attempt to reconcile his career as a professional theologian with Rushdoony's work to popularize the presuppositional apologetic method. The different goals of both men led to no small amount of tension as Rushdoony the activist and Christian social reformer found himself at odds with Van Til the professional philosopher and theologian. But as the remainder of the essay demonstrates, the strains between the two men were dwarfed by their mutual affection for each other's research and their shared commitment to a rigorously Christian vision of epistemological purity. The essay moves beyond the tensions between

the two to outline how Rushdoony's work with the Chalcedon Foundation was deeply influenced by Van Tillian principles. As the essay wraps up, I document how Rushdoony's activism at the Chalcedon Foundation reflected an attempt to embody and further Van Til's presuppositional apologetics.

"Don't Put Me on a Pedestal"

In many ways, Rushdoony's collaboration with Van Til peaked during the late 1950s and the 1960s. Their collaboration started when Van Til reviewed drafts of Rushdoony's *By What Standard?*³ in the 1950s and continued throughout the 1960s as the two traded ideas and manuscripts. During this period, Rushdoony edited many of Van Til's manuscripts and often brought order to disorderly work. By 1959 Van Til so trusted Rushdoony as his editor that he told Rushdoony to "[m]ake *any* changes you deem necessary" to one of his manuscripts.⁴ Later, working on an unnamed project, Van Til allowed Rushdoony to edit several distinct essays into a single volume. Van Til was amazed at the results: "Thank you for sending the four batches of manuscript material. I am again impressed with your ingenuity in that you could find some semblance of unity in all this material. It is truly amazing."⁵ In short, the surviving correspondence between Rushdoony and Van Til suggests that Rushdoony played an important role in shaping Van Til's scholarly output, a fact often overlooked—or unknown—to Van Til's students and biographers.⁶

But this trust between Rushdoony

and Van Til did have its limits. In fact, the only major strain between the two men was that Rushdoony supported Van Til *too* much. This became evident soon after Rushdoony began publicly speaking and writing on Van Til's behalf. In 1955 Rushdoony gave a speech defending Van Til's apologetics. When Van Til heard of the lecture through a friend of a friend, he was grateful to Rushdoony for his impassioned defense of presuppositionalism. Van Til especially liked that a non-academic could offer such a clear and persuasive account of his epistemological ethics. "You as an 'outsider,'" Van Til wrote to Rushdoony, "can do a lot for the cause."⁷ Since Rushdoony was neither an academic nor a recognized theologian with a university appointment, Van Til felt that Rushdoony carried a certain weight among other churchmen who had made ministry—not abstract reflection—their life. But Van Til did worry that Rushdoony's effusive praise might also alienate less sympathetic audiences. Accordingly, even as he deeply appreciated Rushdoony's defense of his ideas, Van Til also cautioned Rushdoony: "please don't put me on a pedestal."⁸

Herein lay one of the few obvious tensions between Rushdoony and Van Til that at times strained their relationship. Rushdoony was a warrior and activist for his faith. In Van Til's thought Rushdoony saw the means for reordering the very structure of American civilization. In contrast, Van Til was an academic. By nature and training, academics tend toward caution, equivo-

cation, and conceptual conservatism. Even as he waged battle with theological modernists and liberals in his books and essays, disciplinary constraints bound Van Til to eschew the sorts of grand pronouncements and laudatory praise with which Rushdoony often lavished him.

In short, Van Til's *professional* concerns often butted up against Rushdoony's *spiritual* commitment to the "truth" he found in Van Til's ideas. To Rushdoony, Van Til was an intellectual mentor and religious guide; he was not just one theologian among many vying to establish the legitimacy of their respective theological visions within the normative discursive standards of academic theology. Van Til understood what was at stake in the professional game and dutifully played his part. Rushdoony felt the rightness of Van Til's ideas in his very soul; academic discourse did not interest him.

The result was a pronounced awkwardness in their relationship as Rushdoony lavished triumphal praise upon Van Til's epistemology, while Van Til studiously sought to rein in what he perceived as Rushdoony's adjectival excess. In fact, Van Til attempted to check what he saw as Rushdoony's unwarranted praise in the earliest drafts of *By What Standard*. In his comments on what eventually became chapter four of the text, Van Til told Rushdoony, "The article on the ['Psychology of Religion'] seems to me to be very good, but again I wonder whether you could leave my name out at many places. At any rate, when you refer to me perhaps you could tone down your generous adjectives."⁹ Similarly, in a later letter, Van Til asked Rushdoony to "omit most of the laudatory adjectives." He continued, "I mean this seriously, you give me more than enough credit by writing the book at all, and it may offend some unneces-

sarily. Some may think of it as primarily for propaganda."¹⁰

For his part Rushdoony dismissed Van Til's concerns. When Rushdoony asked several of his friends to read the manuscript and assess his comments about Van Til, he reported that they "delighted in all of it, including parts you were troubled about ... and wanted no changes. They felt that the present revisions of my statements regarding you should stand, [and] that I am more accurate in my evaluation of your stature than you are."¹¹

Weasel Statements

This issue became particularly troublesome for both men when the faculty of Westminster Theological Seminary began to organize the publication of a festschrift to honor Van Til.¹² Traditionally, a festschrift is a collection of original essays written to celebrate a living academic's contribution to a given field of knowledge. While generally positive assessments of the scholar's career and achievements, the essays in festschriften often feature critical essays weighing the merits of the scholar's work and measuring it against others in the field. The faculty of Westminster organized the festschrift to coincide with Van Til's seventy-fifth birthday and his fortieth year at the seminary in 1970. Under the leadership of Edward Robert Geehan, a general editor at Charles "Hays" Craig's Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, the volume collected original essays by Westminster faculty and international theologians such as the Dutch thinker Herman Dooyeweerd (1894–1977) and the South African theologian Hendrik G. Stoker (1899–1993). Geehan also invited Rushdoony to contribute.

Rushdoony offered an essay on Van Til's contribution to the "one and the many problem" in philosophy.¹³ When Van Til read an early draft of the essay he

was shocked: it was *too* positive! Van Til thanked Rushdoony for the contribution but asked him to tone down the praise because he feared that his critics might think him like one of the great villains of the New Testament: "My opponents will only say that I accept adulation from admirers in some such way as Herod did. I am, therefore, requesting that you change a couple points at least."¹⁴ Upon reviewing Van Til's request, Geehan seconded the notion, noting, "Having become so used to defending his [Van Til's] position against constant attack, he is somewhat uneasy in the presence of praise."¹⁵ Geehan asked Rushdoony to revise portions of the essay so that it might conform more to the scholarly standards of the festschrift.

In a terse response to Geehan's request, Rushdoony registered his disgust with scholastic niceties. "I have no fear of being criticized as 'unscholarly.'"¹⁶ "Today scholarship is identified with the weasel statement, which speaks equivocally on all things, unlike that unscholarly gentleman, John Calvin," Rushdoony fired back to Geehan. "I do know from experience that Dr. Van Til is unduly fearful of praise, and, because of this, I have complied."¹⁷ Only Rushdoony's respect for Van Til compelled his compliance with Geehan's request.

As Geehan assembled the text, Rushdoony grew increasingly unhappy with the festschrift. After reading a draft of one contribution that criticized Van Til's apologetics, Rushdoony wrote to Van Til that he was "dumbfounded" by the "stupid" festschrift article.¹⁸ Privately, Van Til conceded that he agreed with Rushdoony's assessment of the essay. He felt that the piece's author was a "bumptious individual," but he worried to Rushdoony that he couldn't refuse a piece—even a mediocre one—because of the fact that "he is critical of my views."¹⁹

Rushdoony particularly resented the direction taken by the festschrift because he had begun a similar project four years earlier. But rather than a traditional festschrift, Rushdoony had envisioned a “study which would point to the future in terms of the directions laid down by your philosophy, i.e., its implications for historiography, for economics, for theological and textual studies, for philosophy, and so on.”²⁰ In short, where the current festschrift project was backward-looking and concerned with offering critical assessments of Van Til’s impact in the past, Rushdoony had hoped to produce a “seminal study” that used Van Til’s ideas “to indicate the directions Christian thought should take in terms of your philosophy.”²¹ Faculty from Westminster asked Rushdoony to delay his project so they could assemble their festschrift. Rushdoony assented, but came to regret the decision.²²

Beyond the Academy

Although the scholarly reception of Van Til remained a perpetual annoyance for Rushdoony, he continued to push Van Til’s ideas outside of the academy. Here he met with much more success. Initially, he found some of his most receptive audiences among college students, conservative women’s clubs, and businessmen. He began reaching these audiences during his brief stint at the libertarian-oriented William Volker Fund based in Burlingame, California. During the middle of the century, the Volker Fund was one of the few political and socially conservative philanthropic institutions with significant resources.²³ The fund hired Rushdoony as a consultant because of his anti-statist, religiously-grounded beliefs.

After the publication of *By What Standard* in the late 1950s, Rushdoony used grants from the Volker Fund to support his work on an ambitious set of writing projects and speaking trips

throughout the United States. It was during his time as a Volker affiliate that Rushdoony either began or finished manuscripts that eventually became *The Messianic Character of American Education*,²⁴ *This Independent Republic*,²⁵ and *The One and the Many*.²⁶ Each of these books grew out of lectures Rushdoony gave to conservative groups across the country, and although they varied widely in content—from educational theory, to Christian historiography, to political theory—each text rested on the solid foundation of Van Tillian presuppositional epistemology. Thus, for example, in the “Preface” to *The Nature of the American System* Rushdoony wrote, “Behind the writing of history is a philosophy of history, and behind that philosophy of history are certain pre-theoretical and essentially religious presuppositions.”²⁷ He then spent the book developing a philosophy of United States history based Christian presuppositions. Similarly, at the outset of *The One and the Many*, Rushdoony uses Van Til’s conception of the Trinity as the foundation for a new political philosophy that rejects centralized statism for decentralized forms of governance.²⁸

Although Rushdoony spent less than a year officially associated with the fund,²⁹ that was all the time he needed to make connections with various important mid-century conservative organizations including the Foundation for Economic Education (FEE) and the Intercollegiate Society of Individualists (ISI). Rushdoony’s connections brought presuppositionalism to a much wider audience than Van Til could have reached as a teacher and writer of narrowly focused philosophical and theological monographs. In fact, when recounting the success of this string of publications—especially his *Messianic Character of American Education*—Rushdoony noted, “The irony of the

situation is that the sales of my book to church circles are negligible, while remarkably good to secular sources, libraries, colleges, universities, and other sources, and the secular reviews [are] uniformly enthusiastic!”³⁰ This fact was not lost on Van Til. He understood that Rushdoony was pushing his ideas well beyond the confines of the academy and seminary. “I am always amazed,” he told Rushdoony, “by the energy with which you are proceeding to present the Reformed Faith to those who are among the educated and the cultured of the land.”³¹ But, remarkably, Rushdoony wasn’t just presenting *the* Reformed faith; he was presenting *Van Til’s* interpretation of the Reformed faith, a fact that had massive repercussions for the lives and reputations of both men.

Presuppositionalism and the Chalcedon Foundation

In 1965 Rushdoony moved to the suburbs of Los Angeles to establish Chalcedon, Inc., a non-profit organization through which he could lecture and raise funds to start a Christian college built on Van Tillian insights. Eventually Chalcedon, Inc. evolved into the Chalcedon Foundation, which Rushdoony used to build on the connections he made while lecturing and researching at the Volker Fund. In a series of lectures and home church meetings during the 1960s and ‘70s he impressed upon his audiences the importance of Van Tillian epistemology and its necessity within any orthodox system of Christian thought and action.

In October 1965, Rushdoony sat down and wrote a brief report to his community of supporters, which he mimeographed and handed out. In that short report—the predecessor of *Faith For All of Life*—Rushdoony wrote, “What you are doing, in your support of me, is to sponsor a counter-measure to the prevailing trend, to promote

by your support, interest, *and* study, a Christian Renaissance, to declare by these measures your belief that the answer to humanism and statism is Christian faith and liberty.”³² Rushdoony’s statement underscored the profound ways he hoped Chalcedon could serve as an institutional manifestation of the basic insights of Van Tillian presuppositionalism: proper education, founded on rigorous Christian presuppositions, could lead to a Christian *Renaissance*—a rebirth, a *reconstruction*—of American culture.

Through the resources of Chalcedon, Rushdoony not only continued his relentless lecturing and writing schedule, but he also began cultivating a generation of thinkers, teachers, and preachers to become presuppositional warriors in the battle against secularism and statism. Perhaps most famously, Rushdoony supported the early careers of a number of young men who would become synonymous with Van Tillian apologetics and Rushdoony’s own project of Christian Reconstruction. For example, Rushdoony used Chalcedon to support the graduate education and early writing careers of Gary North (b. 1942) and Greg Bahnsen (1948–1995).³³ In fact, he used Chalcedon’s resources to provide funding for both young men to study directly under Van Til at Westminster Theological Seminary.

In many ways, however, Chalcedon’s support for individuals such as North and Bahnsen was much less significant than its more amorphous and harder to determine influence on a network of issues in the areas of higher education, homeschooling, and political activism. This work began in the late 1970s when Rushdoony shifted his focus away from encouraging young men to attend seminary and instead spent a considerable amount of time pushing Christians to bring Van Tillian epistemology to bear

on law schools and other institutions of higher education.

Of the many bright and determined young lawyers that Rushdoony encouraged to litigate in the interest of Christian liberty, John W. Whitehead was certainly the most significant. Whitehead published many popular legal texts, including *The Separation Illusion: A Lawyer Examines the First Amendment*,³⁴ and went on to found the Rutherford Institute in 1982 with Rushdoony’s support. As with Chalcedon, the Rutherford Institute similarly embodied Van Til’s ideas: Rushdoony and Whitehead used Rutherford to—among many other things—provide courtroom support to homeschooling parents who wanted to teach their children according to strictly Christian epistemological principles.

This wider influence on colleges, professional schools, and homeschooling manifested itself in complex ways that remain nearly impossible for historians to track or sociologists to map. Rushdoony sometimes received letters from college students at secular institutions asking for information about Van Til. In many cases these inquiries suggest that Rushdoony’s Chalcedon Foundation had become synonymous with Van Til’s philosophy. In one interesting note, two college students wrote to Rushdoony:

A fellow Christian and I have recently become very enthusiastic concerning the theological and social/political works of Cornelius Van Til, Herman Dooyeweerd, Francis Schaeffer, and yourself . . . Both of us belong to Reformed churches, but only recently we have begun to realize the social and political implications of our Christian beliefs. We have become convinced that it is crucial that we understand and teach others the proper Christian social and political structure that is taught in the Word of God . . .³⁵

When Rushdoony relayed such

notes to the aging and now-retired Van Til, he was surprised by Van Til’s pessimistic response. In one note authored in the late 1970s, Van Til doubted that such good news about his ever-increasing influence could really be true. Rushdoony would have none of it:

I was happy to hear from you, but your letter saddened me a bit, because you seem to find my reports about the growth of your influence ‘too generous to be true’ . . . Now we do not get such [positive] letters every day, but we do get enough of them to indicate that things are happening, and that the sons of Cornelius Van Til are beginning to appear all over the world. Therefore: REJOICE!³⁶

As the previous paragraph indicates, the late 1970s saw Van Til recede from the frontlines of the battle to press presuppositionalism in all areas of life. With his retirement in 1972 Van Til continued to teach at Westminster until the late 1970s, but his most significant publications were already behind him. Always modest and self-effacing, Van Til refused to take credit for any of his achievements as a philosopher, theologian, or epistemological revolutionary. In his humble mind all of his successes belonged to others: to the LORD, to his students, to Rushdoony. In a brief handwritten note, Van Til told Rushdoony, “I am more indebted to you than I now realize. You are the moving spirit back of all. The Lord bless you and keep you and yours henceforth and forevermore.”³⁷ Certainly Rushdoony would have disputed the assertion and did so in later letters, but in a melancholy postscript Van Til revealed that his eternal legacy was weighing heavily on his mind: “Soon we shall meet at Jesus’ feet!”³⁸

In a moving but disjointed letter written in 1978 shortly after the death of his beloved wife, Rena, Van Til again

thanked Rushdoony for his work. Van Til began by recounting how he “used to haul cow-manure,” plowing “22 miles” of “clay soil” in order to help his father pay for his first year of college at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He told Rushdoony of how, “For 8 years Rena and I kept company—no money for a wedding. For 52 years she and I were happily married.”³⁹ “I dare scarcely to think of her or look at her picture for fear it will stymie my work. I pray daily and with tears that I may continue *alone* to do something for the kingdom in our Savior.”⁴⁰ He concluded by telling Rushdoony that, although he had been “utterly unknown” to the Westminster theologian when Rushdoony first began defending the *New Modernism* in the 1940s, “I am and shall always remain deeply grateful to you for your ... work and for your encouragement—in the face of ridicule—to me in my labors for our common Lord and Savior.”⁴¹

Conclusion

Cornelius Van Til died on April 17, 1987. Rushdoony did not hear the news immediately. On April 20 and 21, Rushdoony lectured at Dordt College, a small Reformed liberal arts college in Sioux Falls, Iowa. After the session, Dordt’s president Dr. John B. Hulst, pulled Rushdoony aside and told him about Van Til’s passing. Hulst also told Rushdoony “that on one occasion Van Til told him that I [Rushdoony] alone understood him [Van Til] clearly and interpreted him accurately.”⁴²

Through the remainder of his career Rushdoony continued his mission to clearly and accurately interpret Van Til. Never one to shy away from lavishing praise of his mentor, collaborator, and friend, in the May 1995 issue of the *Chalcedon Report*, Rushdoony wrote, “Cornelius Van Til was a giant of the Faith, one of the greatest men in the history of Christianity. Many in the

United States are doing their best to forget him, but his influence keeps expanding.”⁴³

Rushdoony worried that Van Til’s influence in the United States could wane if something wasn’t done. He ended his short note with an impassioned call to get more of Van Til’s major books back into print. Since Rushdoony’s warning about the possible diminishment of Van Til’s legacy, a host of important new publications have appeared: an electronic edition of Van Til’s complete works appeared in 1997;⁴⁴ Greg Bahnsen’s *Van Til’s Apologetic* appeared posthumously in 1998;⁴⁵ Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company has reissued several of Van Til’s major works;⁴⁶ and in 2008 John R. Muether published his excellent biography, *Cornelius Van Til: Reformed Apologist and Churchman*.

From his assertion that Rushdoony was the “moving spirit” behind the public rise of presuppositionalism, to his obviously heart-felt statements of gratitude for Rushdoony’s efforts to popularize his writings, it is clear that Van Til believed that Rushdoony was singularly important to his career as a philosopher and apologist. Similarly, it is hard to imagine that the Chalcedon Foundation or Rushdoony’s consistent effort to reform higher education and homeschooling would exist without the moving spirit of Van Tillian epistemology. Although it would certainly be a misrepresentation to say that the two men’s projects were identical, it would not be an exaggeration to say they helped shape each other’s careers and that each man helped determine the context in which the other would be interpreted. In short, it is impossible to imagine Van Til without Rushdoony’s work, and vice versa. 🏠

In 2010 Michael J. McVicar completed a dissertation exploring the relationship between the ministry of R. J. Rushdoony

and the American conservative movement. He lectures at several universities in Ohio. McVicar is not a Reconstructionist. He can be reached with questions and comments at mcvicar.2@gmail.com

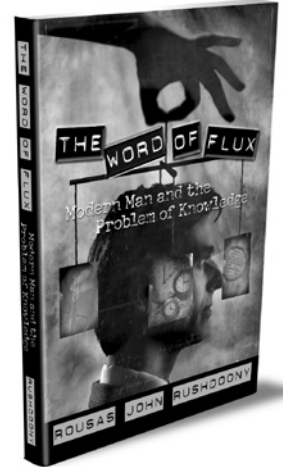
1. Michael J. McVicar, “Cornelius Van Til and Rousas John Rushdoony, Part 1: Every Thought Captive,” *Faith for All of Life* (May/June 2011), 14–19.
2. Michael J. McVicar, “Cornelius Van Til and Rousas John Rushdoony, Part 2: Defenders of the Faith,” *Faith for All of Life* (July/August 2011), 7–13, 16.
3. Rousas John Rushdoony, *By What Standard? An Analysis of the Philosophy of Cornelius Van Til* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1959; repr. Vallecito, Ca: Ross House Books, 1995).
4. Cornelius Van Til to R. J. Rushdoony, 12 August 1959. Emphasis in the original. All references to unpublished letters refer to material held in the Rousas John Rushdoony Library, Chalcedon Foundation, Vallecito, California.
5. Cornelius Van Til to R. J. Rushdoony, 19 February 1962.
6. For example, major studies of Van Til such as John M. Frame, *Cornelius Van Til: An Analysis of His Thought* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1995) and John R. Muether, *Cornelius Van Til: Reformed Apologist and Churchman*, American Reformed biographies (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2008) make no mention of Rushdoony’s role in editing Van Til’s manuscripts or Rushdoony’s effort to clarify Van Til’s often-opaque prose.
7. Cornelius Van Til to R. J. Rushdoony, 25 December, 1955.
8. *Ibid.*
9. Cornelius Van Til to R. J. Rushdoony, 23 October 1957.
10. Cornelius Van Til to R. J. Rushdoony, 27 December 1957.
11. R. J. Rushdoony to Cornelius Van Til, 8 April 1958.
12. *Jerusalem and Athens: Critical Discussions on the Theology and Apologetics of Cornelius Van Til*, ed. E. R. Geehan (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1971).

13. Rousas John Rushdoony, "The One and Many Problem—The Contribution of Van Til," in *Jerusalem and Athens*, 339–348.
14. Cornelius Van Til to R. J. Rushdoony, 10 February 1969.
15. Edward Robert Geehan to R. J. Rushdoony, 18 February 1969.
16. R. J. Rushdoony to Edward Robert Geehan, 21 March 1969.
17. Ibid.
18. R. J. Rushdoony to Cornelius Van Til, 26 March 1970.
19. Cornelius Van Til to R. J. Rushdoony, 31 March 1970.
20. R. J. Rushdoony to Cornelius Van Til, 17 January 1970.
21. Ibid.
22. Eventually Rushdoony realized his goal of producing a text that assessed how Van Til's ideas could be applied to disciplines as diverse as history, economics, education, political science, sociology, and mathematics. See *Foundations of Christian Scholarship: Essays in the Van Til Perspective*, Gary North, ed. (Vallecito, Ca: Ross House Books, 1976).
23. Gary North, "It All Began With Fred Schwarz," LewRockwell.com, December 16, 2002, <http://www.lewrockwell.com/north/north145.html>.
24. Rousas John Rushdoony, *The Messianic Character of American Education: Studies In the History of the Philosophy of Education* (Nutley, NJ: Craig Press, 1963).
25. Rousas John Rushdoony, *This Independent Republic: Studies in the Nature and Meaning of American History* (Nutley, N.J.: Craig Press, 1964).
26. Rousas John Rushdoony, *The One and the Many: Studies in the Philosophy of Order and Ultimacy* (Nutley, NJ: Craig Press, 1971).
27. Rushdoony, *This Independent Republic*, v.
28. Rushdoony, *The One and the Many*, 8–10.
29. Rushdoony's time as a consultant was brief and tumultuous. He was fired, at least in part, because his conservative Presbyterianism chafed many of the more secularly

- inclined individuals associated with the fund. Even though many of the fund's rank-and-file staffers disliked Rushdoony's religious ideas, the fund's manager, Harold W. Luhnnow, remained loyal to Rushdoony even after the fund's staff demanded Rushdoony's termination. In turn, Rushdoony remained loyal to Luhnnow and even dedicated *The One and the Many* to him. For a thorough history of Rushdoony's work at the Volker Fund, see Michael J. McVicar, "Aggressive Philanthropy: Progressivism, Conservatism, and the William Volker Charities Fund," *Missouri Historical Review* 105 (July 2011), 191–212.
30. R. J. Rushdoony to Mr. Brough, 26 January 1962.
 31. Cornelius Van Til to R. J. Rushdoony, 1 February 1962.
 32. Rousas John Rushdoony, "Chalcedon Report, No. 1," reprinted in *The Roots of Reconstruction* (Vallecito, CA: Ross House Books, 1991), 545. Emphasis in the original.
 33. Many readers are no doubt familiar with North's and Bahnsen's careers and their tempestuous relationship with Rushdoony and the larger Christian Reconstruction movement. This essay is not the place to recount those oft-told tales. Suffice it to say, during the 1960s and 1970s both men were dedicated to Van Til's ideas and steadfast supporters of Rushdoony's Chalcedon Foundation.
 34. John W. Whitehead, *The Separation Illusion: A Lawyer Examines the First Amendment* (Milford, MI: Mott Media, 1977).
 35. D. John Guild and Richard W. Bledsoe to R. J. Rushdoony, 5 March 1973.
 36. R. J. Rushdoony to Cornelius Van Til, 31 March 1978.
 37. Cornelius Van Til to R. J. Rushdoony, n.d. (letter postmarked 28 July 1976).
 38. Ibid.
 39. Cornelius Van Til to R. J. Rushdoony, 4 April 1978.
 40. Ibid.
 41. Ibid.
 42. R. J. Rushdoony journal entry for 23

Continued on page 24

If you or someone you know has ever struggled with understanding the philosophy of Cornelius Van Til, this book is for you.



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Why Check-Book Theology is Necessary for the Expansion of Christianity—Part 1

Ian Hodge, Ph.D.

You don't have to do this—survival is not compulsory.

W. Edwards Deming



This was going to be one interesting meeting. People began dribbling in around 6 p.m. on Friday. Not all at once; some came a distance, and others finished their workday later. By the time the assembly was complete there were thirteen church elders and deacons, two pastors—and yours truly. The purpose of the meeting? To find out what was “wrong,” if anything, with the senior pastor.

Early in the event I asked the question about profit. Now I should have known better than to use the “f” word in a meeting of church elders. They were happy to talk about “prophets” but not “profits.” But I had committed the mistake—deliberately, I might add.

“We’re a church,” I was told. “We don’t make a profit.”

With that response I went to the whiteboard and wrote two numbers: revenue and expenses. And I made sure the expenses were less than the revenue. Accounting systems usually refer to that as net profit. But this is a no-profit church.

“This \$10,000 you see here at the bottom that has not been spent,” I asked, “is that a profit? It is certainly money left over at the end of the year. What do you call that?”

“We don’t make a profit,” it was repeated. After some thought: “But we can call it a surplus.”

I know when I’m ahead, and I figured “surplus” would achieve our ends. From that time forth the question was not “Should we make a profit?” but “Should we have a surplus?”

There was silence as a response to this question. Logic said “yes,” there should be a profit—sorry, surplus—but something prevented these church leaders from *planning* to have a surplus. Why?

Dysfunctional Churches

I have developed a methodology that explores organizational behavior, or more importantly, uncovers organization *dysfunctionality*. The legal status of “for profit” or “not-for-profit” is irrelevant to this method. The “non-profit” matter has no bearing on organizational *management*, but is instead a legal—and therefore moral—issue concerning the distribution of unused assets, such as money.

It was my purpose in the discussion to identify the underlying problems in the management practices of this local church. I was a relatively new member, having relocated to the area, and the pastor was in a spot of trouble. He confided in me some of those issues, and I convinced him to let me conduct this workshop. He thought one evening would be enough; I said I needed Friday night and all day Saturday. I was right (on this occasion, anyway).

Understand the scene: the elders are

not happy with the senior pastor. He doesn’t know what to do with the pressure they put on him, is not sure how to address the issues which, by the way, were never conveyed adequately to him. As a result, he is one very frustrated senior pastor. And they are an equally frustrated governance board.

My objective: find out if Total Quality Management guru W. Edwards Deming is right when he says 85 percent of problems are *process* problems, while only 15 percent of the problems are people problems. I wanted to help everyone in the room discover and understand what was causing their underlying frustrations.

The church leaders were unhappy with the pastor. Why? Was he incompetent? Lazy? Slow? Easily sidetracked onto unimportant tasks? Overwhelmed with too much activity?

On the other hand, were the expectations of the elders, representing the congregation, misplaced? Expecting too much? Unclear? Or simply never expressed?

You begin to see the range of potential problems which boiled down to either process or people. It was my objective, over the course of the workshop, to have everyone in the room agree on the nature of the problem *and* its solution.

But getting there is only half the challenge. (Implementing change is the other half.)

I continued the discussion covering key functionality of organizations. And I just love it, in a not-for-profit organization, when I get to the functions that in business are referred to as “functions of ownership.” These are the key activities that *only* business owners can do.

As anticipated, I received the usual response from church elders. We don’t have owners. We’re a non-profit organization. There are no owners.

“I’m sorry,” I replied. “You may not have owners in the legal sense, but the functions of ownership are only two, and you have them in *any* organization. They are *inescapable*.”

Inescapable? I have their attention.

“The first inescapable function of ownership is the privilege of providing the investment capital for the organization.”

Silence. They wait. I wait for them to digest this, because the second function drives right off this first one.

“Does this organization have financial needs?” They nod.

“And who provides that money?” I already know the answer but I need just one of these men to tell me: the congregation.

“You’re correct,” I said. “It is the members of the congregation who jointly fulfill the function of ownership on *this* point and in *this* organization.”

Whoa, there. Back up a little, they ask. “What, then, is our role in this organization?”

“I’m glad you asked. It seems to me the eldership of this church is to be a board of directors, acting for and on behalf of the ‘owners’ of the organization, the congregation.”

It helps if you understand how radical these ideas are for these elders. This is a *Presbyterian* church, and I’m suggesting that the local church eldership, the Session, is somewhat like a board of directors, and the “owners” of the

church are the congregation. That does not sound like Presbyterianism. Not to these men, anyway.

In their eyes, God owns this church, not the members. And they do not see any connection between themselves and the congregation that is strong enough to solve the problems of organization governance. There are, of course, differences between church and business, but there are also similarities. On this occasion, I identify the similarities, not the differences.

My interest, therefore, is not theology in the narrow sense, even though I know theological presuppositions drive people’s responses to everything, including organizational management. My interest is to uncover what is necessary for *this* organization to achieve its objectives.

Here you see in the word *objectives* the second inescapable function of ownership. In business it is called the Return On Investment (ROI). ROI can be expressed in different forms, some of them intangible while others are tangible. Organizations need to set both kinds, but it is common in not-for-profit organizations to be very weak in setting tangible goals. Yes, we want to help the poor (intangible) but no one determines the tangible expression of that. *How many* of the poor do you wish to help in a given time period? Will one person every other year be an acceptable achievement of the objective?

It is the for-profit *and* not-for-profit organizations that set *tangible* goals that become successful. Here’s why.

Stewardship

Pick up your Bible and read from the beginning. After quite a long time, you will come to the gospels, but by the time you get there you’ll have all the Old Testament Scripture to help you understand what you read in the New Testament.

In Matthew 25 you find “the king-

dom of heaven is like . . .” parables. The parables must be important if the Kingdom of heaven is in some way “like” this. Yeshua, the Messiah, is teaching *principles* about the Kingdom of heaven. He tells of a man with assets leaving his stewards different gifts; one five talents, one two talents, and the third only one talent. Five talents are estimated by one scholar as equal to a hundred years of wages, so even one talent was a significant amount. These recipients of the talents—stewards—are supposed to do something with that which was entrusted to them.

When the man returns he calls them to account, a day of judgment, a day of assessing their *performance*. The stewards who increased their talents were praised and rewarded; the steward who buried his talent and returned only that which had been given to him without increase is described as an unfaithful steward. God apparently intends for us to *increase* the talents He gives us, but He does not dictate the amount of increase. We have some leeway here.

From this parable, you can identify that stewardship, in its Biblical sense, has four very important ingredients. The first of these is *responsibility*. Stewardship *means* being allocated some kind of responsibility. The second ingredient is *accountability*. Somehow there is to be accountability for the steward that is related to the responsibilities given to him. Third, there must be *measurement* of some kind as a way of determining the accountability. Finally, there must be *empowerment*. The steward must be given everything he needs—tools, knowledge, skills (training), and time—to achieve the objective.

Handing back to God only that which He gives us is less than adequate, according to this parable. Therefore, people need a plan, a goal and objective—ROI.

It is the function of ownership in an organization to determine the ROI. Even in a large public-ownership company, owners do not escape this function, but it is *practically* handled by the owners' representatives, the board of directors.

Our church elders were beginning to see some light. They breathe a sigh of relief when they realize it was not my intention to be Congregational and suggest church government from the congregation. The Session members were the ones who needed to set the goals and objectives—tangible and intangible—for the church, *as representatives of the congregation*.

"What are your objectives?" I ask.

Holding church services, prayer meetings, Bible studies, counseling for those in need. But these are not objectives, I suggest: they are *activities* with no determined outcome.

An objective, to be more than an activity, needs to be an *accountable* objective. It must be tangible, measurable. It is the tangible "number" to which people will be accountable.

In other words, it is a *touchstone* of the organization. And if there is no touchstone there is nothing to guide people to a successful outcome.

There is always one very important touchstone for any organization. It is the destination that allows the organization to determine if it is on course. In for-profits, it is called profit. But you can call it a surplus.

Profits, or surplus, according to management guru Peter Drucker, are "the future costs of staying in business." Think about that. Future costs. Not those in existence now; the ones that are yet to be incurred. Repairs to the building or replacement of furniture and equipment, for example.

And not-for-profits have costs to be covered just like their cousins, the for-profit organizations.

When an organization functions at peak performance, that ROI number is broken out into different areas of the business. If the ROI determined by the business owner is \$1 million, and the business can operate at 10 percent net profit (after all expenses), then there needs to be \$10 million in sales. Now you can have a conversation with your sales hires: "Are you capable of selling \$10 million of my product? What did you do at your last job? You only sold \$2 million? What makes you think you can meet our need and sell \$10 million?"

You get the idea.

Back to our elders. "What do you expect from the pastor if there is no pre-determined ROI for him to achieve? What tangible objective did he fail to meet?"

"We expected church growth from him, and we didn't get what we wanted."

It is now becoming clear that the church elders wanted growth—an *activity*. But it was not activity they were measuring. They wanted *results*. How many new people in the church would satisfy their expectation of the pastor? One? Two? Twenty-two? And over what period of time? They had never answered questions like these because they were *never* asked.

When church elders say things like this, they are like the business owner who tells their consultant, "You're here to get me more money."

"And if I get you one dollar extra, will that satisfy your expectation? After all, it is more money."

The objective—church growth—is an intangible hope that needs to be expressed in tangible terms: We would like to have twenty-four new people attending church by the end of the year.

"But you can't do that," I am repeatedly told. "This is a church. We don't

operate like that."

"I know you don't operate like that," I reply, "and that's why I'm here. I'm here to tell you that the frustrations you have are caused by your *failure* to supply tangible responsibilities, hold people accountable to them, measure their effectiveness, and provide the tools for their success. In other words, *you're not managing*."

Now I have their attention.

Large, successful organizations have appropriate organizational functions that are well developed and constitute a key part of the activities in the organization. Small businesses are small because they fail this test. And when the small organization learns these lessons and implements them, it can then grow into a large organization.

So too with large churches and small churches. It is often a mistaken notion that you cannot have "business planning" in a church without compromising doctrine. And the people who tell you this are usually the ones with small churches. In other words, they use it as an excuse and a rationale for their smallness.

Here's the underlying theological problem. Most of us don't like accountability. It goes against our desire to be God. No one holds a god accountable except another god. Consequently, people will complain about the performance of others while at the same time providing poor excuses for their own failures.

Back to the elders and the church. I explain that without a tangible ROI they will achieve very few of their expectations. You can't beat up on the pastor just because he failed your expectation, especially when you *didn't tell him* what you really expected.

"But he knows we wanted evangelism and church growth."

"And this senior pastor," I reply,

“has a junior pastor to manage, a seminary student working part time in youth work he has to manage, a secretary to manage, all the church department heads need some of his time, and you expect him to preach twice on Sunday, marry the young and bury the dead, and have time to visit you in your homes on occasion. When does he have time for evangelism? What will you remove from his current activities in order for church growth to take place?”

Now they're thinking. “We appointed the junior pastor to take the counseling load off his shoulders. But it appears he's still busy.”

“If church growth is so important to this elder board, why didn't you appoint a second pastor skilled in outreach and evangelism rather than counseling? After all, in theory (if not in practice), ten new families tithing in the church is getting close to covering the evangelist's salary, and then you could appoint your counselor. Then you could have had church growth *and* counseling, and perhaps less frustration between you and the senior pastor.”

A longer silence took place. Sometimes people need time to think ... before they are willing to make an admission.

“We never thought of doing it that way,” someone eventually offered.

“Then why are you beating up on your senior pastor?”

Now a really long silence.

Conclusion

An organization without tangible goals and objectives is like a ship on an ocean without a destination. Is the ship going to Australia or Alaska? When do we expect to arrive, July or December? The goals and objectives in an organization determine its destination within a given period of time.

Until the crew knows the destination and the expected arrival time, they

will not know when to pull the oars, which direction they should be facing, and how often they should do oar pulling. But since they need to be active, they will make up their own objectives and pull the oars anyway. And if the ship goes in circles, don't be surprised. This is often referred to as competing agendas; it is, without a doubt, competing destinations.

Without the *agreed* destination there is no possibility of checking to see if the ship is still on course. If the ship is heading towards Alaska when it should be going to Australia, then it's time to take some corrective action.

If the church is planning to get twenty-four new families in the church this year, and it's six months down the track and they have only one family, it may indicate they're on the wrong course. It means the activities they are doing may not be producing the results and something needs to change. Perhaps it is not the wrong activity, but rather a recognition that people are not trained to be effective in that activity.

The truth is, you can no more step around good organizational management than you can step around good farming management. Is eating important to you? Crops don't grow without planning, planting, cultivation, and harvesting. You need to plant at the right time, pull the weeds at the right time, apply water at the right time, and harvest at the right time. If you want a crop and food on the table, *manage*.

Is church growth important to you? Good organizations succeed with good planning, planting, cultivation, and harvesting. If you want church growth and the expansion of Christianity, *manage*.

No, I am not saying you can have people converted just by managing, any more than I am saying you can guarantee the crop just by good farm management. Both require the blessing of God

to be productive and fruitful—successful, using that word guardedly. There's a place for these activities because God expects them. That's what the parable above is concerned with.

Some people accept a two-kingdom management model: one theory of management for the business world, another for the religious world. It's time for a one-kingdom model of management. And then get everyone to work.

Process or people? What was the problem uncovered in the workshop?

And what would you do, and how would you do it, to solve their problem?

In part 2, I'll explore the implementation of the solution within a covenant model framework. 🏡

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Tyranny, Independence, or Liberty Under God

Paul Michael Raymond

And it came to pass, when Samuel was old, that he made his sons judges over Israel. Now the name of his firstborn was Joel; and the name of his second, Abiah: they were judges in Beersheba. And his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment. (1 Samuel 8:1–3)



In this passage of Scripture we see the future of Israel hanging in the balance. Samuel's sons were worldly and profane, and their leadership punctuated by wickedness (1 Sam. 2ff.). They had the outward show of religion and perhaps even the outward testimony of their father, but their own testimony was void of legitimacy. They were covetous men, perverse and lacking judgment.

Nevertheless, Samuel made his reprobate sons judges. Perhaps he hoped they would receive the office with sobriety and sense. But they failed to change even when thrust into a situation which requires godly sobriety and holy obedience to the law of God.

Herein is the first transgression. It was typical of what was to follow.

Samuel's sons, like Eli's, were reprobate men. Nothing could change that.

We might view Eli's sons as representing the apostasy of the priests, and Samuel's sons the apostasy of the civil rulers.

Both of these apostate groups were setting the stage for a great judgment upon Israel. It is a fact of Scripture that the judgment of God must come upon every nation that refuses to follow His lawful precepts, especially when it concerns leadership, statesmanship, and government. If God judged His own people, Israel, how much more will He

judge other nations that rebel against His holy law?

Perhaps Samuel's offense is not to be laid upon Samuel alone. Perhaps he was too tenderhearted as a father and thus his eyes were blinded and his heart hopeful that his seed would be great in the earth God-ward. Although he was wrong, Samuel needn't bear the guilt alone. The people were equally to blame, and perhaps more so.

On the one hand, the elders acknowledged that Samuel's sons were apostate, and could not rule as judges. On the other hand they asked for an equally sinful solution. They asked for a king patterned after the kings of the pagan nations around them:

Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel unto Ramah, And said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations. (1 Sam. 4:4–5)

This request defied all logic as well as knowledge. It was a complete rejection of God and His laws, and God would not suffer His chosen, covenantally bound people to reject Him without retribution.

Notice the elders wanted to be *judged* like the other nations were judged. Since the other nations were structured tyrannically, with totalitarian despots acting like gods according to personal whims and lusts, Israel was

asking to become slaves of wicked men. They were asking to return to the vomit of Egyptian slavery.

It was common knowledge that the nations outside of God's covenant were despotic. Nevertheless, the people desired to be like them. This request was not made out of ignorance, but out of defiance:

And the LORD said unto Samuel, Harken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them. (1 Sam. 8:7)

What was transpiring was a complete repudiation of the covenant oath that Israel had made with God in the wilderness. It was a blatant violation of a promise sworn before God, and to God.

Israel wanted God's covenant of redemption, but refused to have His covenant of political precept and expression. They would rather take after the nations and ideologies of the heathen. They wanted God's salvation but not His Lordship. They wanted Him as Savior but not as King. This was impossible. Divine salvation is predicated upon God's sovereign rule. There is no redemption without lordship. There is no redemption without submission to Christ's crown and His covenant.

Israel thought that salvation was a ticket to escape lawful obedience to God's precepts. Today this idea prevails

in many churches, both Arminian and Reformed. Statements such as “We are under grace and not under law” are typical of those wanting God’s redemption but not His lordship.

Salvation is not an escape from obedience, but rather it emphasizes obedience, as well as sacrificial devotion and service. This idea of salvation without obedience was born out of pagan rebellion. The pagan idea of salvation was one of safety and prosperity, not obedience to an ethical standard of holiness. Pagan redemption had little to do with an obedient lifestyle, since salvation was based upon ritual and ceremony and was relegated to the individual alone—a “me and my savior” relationship without any infringement upon personal needs, desires and actions.

Israel desired liberation from God and not a liberation to God. They wanted heaven, but they wanted it without fulfilling their covenant oath of obedience. Israel wanted the impossible.

R. J. Rushdoony puts it this way, “There can only be divine salvation where there is a sovereign and omnipotent God.”¹

Israel had rejected God as Lord. God was now going to reject them.

Why did God require Israel to uphold His political covenant structure?

Daniel Elazar, in *Covenant and Polity in Biblical Israel*, observes:

Covenant can be studied in three dimensions: 1. As a form of political conceptualization and mode of political expression; 2. as a source of political ideology; and 3. as a factor shaping culture, institutions and behavior.²

In rejecting God as King, Israel was rejecting God’s political covenant structure which included:

1. Divine law, justice and equity
2. God’s political ideology of righteousness, which has at root ethical purity

3. God’s commanded political structure, which was to shape the culture, its institutions, and regulate the behavior of the people.

All this was rejected and overthrown by Israel’s desire to be ruled by a king and a system of government that was diametrically opposed to the divine civil and legal order of Jehovah.

Israel rejected God’s declaration of His holiness, His covenant oath to them, and their oath to Him. God’s covenant agreement was an informed agreement, pact or contract with Israel, based upon their voluntary consent. It was an agreement established by God (a higher authority), with certain stipulations of divine law attached to it. These stipulations were sanctions of two kinds: curses for disobedience and blessings for obedience. It was generational in scope. If obeyed, the blessings would continue throughout their generations; but if disobeyed, the nation would be destroyed.

Divine covenants are important because they shape the worldview and perspectives of the parties involved, and because they sustain those divine ends whereby they cannot be altered without divine sanctions.

Elazar confirms this:

As a source of political ideology, covenant shapes the world views ... of whole societies, defining their civil character and political relationships, and serving as a touchstone for testing the legitimacy and often even the efficiency of their political institutions and those who must make them work.³

Covenanting is a security measure, especially when it comes to political ideology, structure, and expression. As a result of the sinful rejection of God and His laws, Israel’s culture would now be structured according to the apostate system of government under a king who was like the pagan kings in their totalitarian rule.

Covenants are expressions of relationships. By violating their covenant with God, Israel severed the relationship between themselves and God, their Saviour, Lord, and Protector. Once they rejected God, they were on their own, and under the frowning providence and active judgment of the Almighty.

Elazar again notes that God’s original covenant with Israel actually established the Hebrew people, and founded them as a body politic, while at the same time creating a religious framework that gave that polity its reason, norms, and constitution. It also gave them particular guidelines, i.e., laws, for the development of a political order based upon justice and equity, all of which were based upon a covenantal relationship.

God’s covenant established Israel’s moral commitment to one another and to God. It was a binding law. All this Israel rejected. Even after they had been warned time and time again, they continued in their rejection of the counsel of God.

The result was tyrannical rule under a totalitarian statist government, brought about by the direct intervention of God according to His declared judgment for rebellion. Israel was seeking a political platform that would free them from the covenantal obligations of God’s law. They wanted to decide for themselves right and wrong according to arbitrary human standards and thus sought independence from God’s law and from God’s blessings.

What they said in effect was, “We the people of Israel will decide how we will be governed.” And they did this by seeking a legislator-king outside of the parameters God gave. They traded God for Saul, a terrible mistake.

Israel’s rebellious cunning quickly backfired and they became slaves once again. Samuel told the people what

the results of their choice of a human king would be in 1 Samuel 8: 11–18. Even with this warning the people were seared in their conscience, and desired to live under the yoke of an oppressive statist system. As long as they could be like every other nation, and compete in the global arena, and do it the way they saw fit, they would be satisfied. Or so it seemed.

The Parallels Are Astounding.

Like Israel, Americans desire a president, or a political party, structured after those of the nations of the world. When non-Christian rulers are placed into power they enter into office with their own ethical standards, epistemological starting point, economic ideologies and worldviews, structured according to humanistic ideas, and refuse to follow God's ethical standards for a community, state, or nation.

As author Buddy Hanson states, "Any other view of civil government other than [God's] view, will result in the citizens [including lawmakers who are elected from the citizenry] becoming a law unto themselves."

During the Reformation the idea of national covenanting was rejuvenated. It was the Reformation that inspired the Puritans, Covenanters, and early American colonists to consider returning to the God of their fathers, so as to construct a body politic obedient to the law of God and His infallible Word. As a result, Biblical covenanting re-emerged as a central theme in political theology, political philosophy, and political practice.

Men like Theodore Beza and the German-born Calvinist Johannes Althusius were among the finest of juridical scholars. Althusius systematized Calvinistic teachings and stated:

[A] republic is formed by a covenant between the rulers and the people before God, that the foundation of this

covenant is the Law of God ... that the Decalogue is the best expression of this higher law, that the church and state are separate in form, but joined in function, that families, churches, and states alike, must protect the rights and liberties of the people, and that violations of these rights and liberties, or of the divine and natural rights that inform and empower them, are instances of tyranny that must trigger organized constitutional resistance.⁴

The Reformation called men to both an outer and an inner reformation wherein they would be conformed outwardly and inwardly to the Word of God. This reformation concerned every area and institution of life, especially in the realm of government, since tyranny would be violently hostile to the preaching of the gospel and the health of the Christian cause.

Beza insisted that tyrants were rulers who violated the terms of the political covenant.

John Witte notes:

For Beza, tyrants were rulers who violated the terms of the political covenant—particularly its foundational requirements, that all must honor the rights of God to be worshipped, and the rights of God's people to discharge their duties of the faith, in conformity with God's Law.⁵

It was Beza, more so than Calvin, who advanced the doctrine of interposition whereby the lesser magistrates could resist and overthrow, if necessary, the tyrant. According to Beza, if the ruler exceeded his authority in violation of the political covenant, the people, through their representatives, had both the right and the duty to resist him as a tyrant. It was this doctrine of interposition (or the doctrine of the lesser magistrate) that was invoked by the American Puritan colonists during the late 1700s, sparking the American War for Independence.

During the years of the Reformation, John Calvin admonished the people of Geneva with a stern warning, "And ye, o peoples to whom God gave the liberty to choose your own magistrates, see to it that ye do not forfeit this favor by electing to the positions of highest honor, rascals and enemies of God."⁶

This warning could have easily been given to the twenty-first-century evangelical Christian community. But where there has been warning, it has mostly fallen on deaf ears. Today, we see very little real outcry from any quarter as to the apostasy of our civil magistracy, and almost no outrage.

Why Is the Community of the Church So Complacent?

The visible church has lost the vision of what it means to be at liberty under God. Not only has the church lost the vision, she has become like Israel desiring a king (or a political party) to rule over her like the other nations. Rather than rebuking and abstaining from the workers of iniquity, many Christians run to them for safety and the hope of prosperity. But America's true hope is neither in any king nor in any political party. Moreover it is not in politics per se.

Many in Christendom have testified that they want to reform the nation and bring it back to the morality of Scripture. An abundance of words are spoken, but little real action is implemented. However if and when action is finally implemented, it is with the hope that Christ will emerge and rapture the church from the evils of the world supernaturally. This two-kingdom heresy has stifled the church to the point of her being culturally irrelevant in many areas of society.

There are far too many professing Christians still eating at Jezebel's statist table, wiping their mouths and saying

that they have done no evil. Too many saints have bought into the lie that the government is here to help and to provide for cradle-to-grave assurances. American Christians have yoked themselves with the beast of statism.

Like Israel they desire Saul.

The community of Christendom has forged an unholy alliance with God's enemies, thinking that appeasing the oppressor will insure survival, not realizing that appeasement of the beast only stirs its wrath. American Christians seem to think that if they act according to the liking of the "beast," believing its lies, getting involved with its programs, and refraining from antagonizing it, the "beast" will spare them. It will not. In the end it will destroy them in the same way it destroys the ungodly. It is the nature of man, when given any kind of political power, to enslave, impoverish, humiliate and eventually kill the very people he has sworn to protect. In doing so, he kills himself along with the people of his charge.

Buddy Hanson has a keen eye for the problem:

It is said that it's hard to read the label from the inside of the jar, but that is exactly where we are in the early years of the 21st century. The cultural jar into which we have allowed ourselves to be placed, and confined, is a result of a century and a half of preferring the world's ways to God's. This has so influenced the way we look at life, that when we decide to "do something" about our culture, we act according to non-Christian tactics—and don't even realize that we are doing so.⁷

In other words, trying to change the culture by acting according to the dictates of the culture, and re-establishing the position of godless rulers, avails nothing, and exacerbates the problem, bringing the wrath of God down upon us more ferociously.

He continues, "What is not under-

stood is that by acting naturally, we are guaranteeing that the non-Christian agenda will continue to influence the culture."⁸

The answer to our political, economic, militaristic, and cultural problems is not whether the Republicans or the Democrats gain control over the government. Our problems will only be remedied when God's people stop making excuses for their acquiescence to wickedness and tyranny, and devote themselves to an expressly Christian world and life view that seeks to advance the crown rights of Christ and not the kingdom of man.

As long as our approach is godless, we will continue to lose ground. As long as we continue to think like the world we will be snared and enslaved by the world. As long as we continue to forge alliances with the wicked of the world, we will lose God's support and His holy justice will fall upon our family or nation and us as individuals.

Christians must once again decide between Christ or Caesar; between God and Baal; between the Table of the Lord or the table of idols; between being bond servants under God's law, or being slaves of sin, the lusts of the flesh, serving corrupters and the promoters of wickedness.

We stand at a crossroads. Will we Christians continue to be led like sheep to the slaughter, or will we be men of faith and resolve, relying upon God alone for our every blessing?

The future of Christendom and our coming generations depend upon our answer. While we may not avoid the destruction of our present culture, we still may avoid the comprehensive totality of God's wrath upon ourselves. May God have mercy upon our godless nation. 🇺🇸

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Dispelling the Myth that God is a Buttercup

Andrea Schwartz



Back in 1984, a friend introduced my husband and me to the writings of R. J. Rushdoony. It wasn't until 1985 that we actually met Rush and started making monthly trips to Vallecito, CA. In getting to know Rush and his wife, Dorothy, we also became friends with the rest of their family, members of the Chalcedon staff, and Chalcedon's resident scholar, Otto Scott.

Otto was in a special category all his own. His grasp of history, his knowledge of world events, and his self-educated style made him a bit intimidating at first. I had to *work* while reading his articles and books and listening to him converse. Otto wasn't about spoon-feeding his readers. He assumed that if you were reading something he wrote, you were interested. He didn't *try* to make you interested.

Otto used an expression that has become his signature quote, and it is a distillation of a profound Scriptural truth: *God is no buttercup*. Jack Phelps, pastor of Covenant Bible Church, shared in a tribute to Otto after his death in 2006:

"[Otto] spent the dark years of World War II serving with the Merchant Marine, making several perilous crossings of the Atlantic during that conflict. He was on convoy in a North Sea storm, under threat of German attack, when, he said, the fierce forces of nature first caused him to realize that "God is no buttercup!"¹

To be honest, this statement used to irritate me when I heard it, mostly because I didn't really understand why

others thought it so special. But as time, maturity, and sanctification have progressed in my life, those words ring truer and truer, and I appreciate their implication.

Randy Booth comments on Otto's buttercup quote,

Another way to make this point is to recognize that the Bible is not a collection of "precious moments." God's Word speaks to the real world and it makes no apology for doing so. It is filled with stories about a fallen world and its redemption. There are no subjects that are off limits. Some people are embarrassed over certain things in the Bible, but God is not embarrassed. He covers the range of human sin and redemption. He freely speaks of life and death, sex and violence, treachery and warfare, and He does so in graphic terms (e.g., Ezek. 23:17–21; Mal. 2:3). He is not being gratuitous, and neither should we be.

The church should speak more, not less about these "forbidden" subjects. The silence of the church has given us the culture that is around us. If we don't set forth what God says about these things, both in their sinfulness and in their righteousness, then the world will speak to them for us. They will define justice and sexuality and marriage and every other issue.²

Yet, in most of today's churches, pastors and congregants busily try to soften the words of a politically incorrect God. The last thing most Christians want from Christian teaching or preaching is an "unkind" view of God, or to be presented with a God who requires obedience to His law-word. God is often portrayed as Someone whose sole

purpose is to serve man and make him happy. Of course, these standards are man-centered.

Romans 10:14–17 states:

How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

The prevailing theology of the day has transformed the gospel of peace and glad tidings into a message that leads those who hear it to believe they need to make very few changes in their lives. This seeker-friendly church paradigm, which has been our modern evangelistic model, self-consciously chose to do away with more difficult passages of the Bible. It is as though the church finds God's total revelation of Himself an embarrassment and an impediment to the church.

Bojidar Marinov, an international missionary, recently reminded us that changed people change cultures.³ Those who have been changed by the Holy Spirit, though imperfect, cannot help but be salt and light to those around them. But if church goers have only been fed "baby-food" (Heb. 5:12–14)

from the time of their new birth, should we be surprised that their “stomachs” reject meat?

Please, No Bad News

What is the effect of one generation failing to pass on the “meat of the Word” to the next? Those fed a milk-toast faith do not have the strength to face the trials of life. They have not been taught to seek wisdom and solace from the entire Word of God. They cannot be cultural leaders who apply Biblical solutions to their lives or to a decadent culture. When we see that the alleged divorce rate for professing Christians is identical to that in the general population, and that many church-going women are obtaining abortions, it is obvious that the culture is having more impact on the church than the church is having on the culture.

The church today prefers the “buttercup” God over the God of the Bible. I have heard more times than I care to recall that we must not preach a “harsh” God—a God who is angry at sin. There are actually believers who think that sharing the truth that God hates sin will “turn people off” and cause them to flee from Jesus, not flee to Him. Not only does this give man more power than he presumptuously assumes, but it means God needs a public relations firm to deal with the unpleasant parts of His resumé!

The cross is extremely offensive, and intentionally so. God’s righteous wrath on the sons of disobedience caused a sinless man to die a horrendous death. And, to add insult to injury, if a person fails to believe and receive the substitutionary atonement provided by the God/Man and thereby submit to His law-word, there is eternal death in store for him. Can we get any more offensive?

But a majority of parents, pastors, and “pleasers” want to take the offense out of the cross and replace it with a bet-

ter *life now* message. Contrast this with Ephesians 5:6–7:

Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not become partners with them.

Too many mothers and fathers *have* become partners with the sons of disobedience by telling their children Bible stories rewritten to accommodate a buttercup-God. So, the story of Noah’s ark morphs into a story about an old man and his happy wife and friendly animals hanging out of a merrily bobbling-along houseboat. You would never guess it was originally the historical account of a worldwide, catastrophic flood brought upon all creation because of man’s unrepented sin resulting in death for all mankind, except the eight souls in the ark. The problem with presenting the Biblical accounts with watered-down versions like this is that we end up believing these fantasies ourselves.⁴

Genesis 6:6–7 says,

And the LORD was sorry that He had made man in the land, and He was grieved in His heart. And the LORD said, “I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky; for I am sorry that I have made them.”

That’s what you call an internal commentary from the book of Genesis that identifies God’s “motive” for judgment. One might imagine a “kinder/gentler” approach with something like:

And the LORD was slightly disturbed that he hadn’t made man as well as he should and was trying to forgive himself for his bad design.

And the LORD said, “I will give man a time out, as I reevaluate my commandments and see if I’ve been too harsh with them.”

Passage after passage in Scripture identifies God’s utter hatred for violations of His law. Psalm 5:4–6 and Proverbs 6:16–19 are but two.

Culture Changing Prerequisites

The family is the primary God-ordained institution, and any cultural transformation must begin there. As I’ve pointed out in previous essays, it is advantageous for a woman to experience the travail of labor⁵ so that she transitions from carrying her child to mothering her child, thereby becoming *invested* through her own blood, sweat, and tears. The focus necessary to deal with the intensity of labor is excellent preparation for the perseverance needed for a mother to guide her child through the ordeals of infancy and childhood.

Without question, raising children involves dealing with lots of problems since sinfulness is bound up in the heart of a child. The mother is uniquely positioned to teach her children that *life has its share of problems* and how to deal with them in a godly, righteous fashion. If she fears God and keeps His commandments, her witness will be stronger than her words.

R. J. Rushdoony states,

Childhood, youth, middle age, and old age all have their problems, as does every era of history. Problems are a part of life in a fallen world, and they are a necessary part of it, necessary to our testing and to our growth. Be sure of this: when you solve one problem, you create a new situation which has problems of its own. Problems are in part a product of sin and in part a condition of growth ...

We need to accept problems and testing as a condition of life. Even in Eden, apart from the problems of farming, Adam and Eve were every day put to the test. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil could be bypassed or not. God presented them always with the problem of faith and obedience.

Solve one problem, and you will have another. This is life, and to be sick of problems is to be sick of life. Because this is God's world, every problem has its answer, and with every answer we graduate to another problem, until we finally pass on into God's eternal Kingdom and our reward.

Problems are thus not only aspects of a fallen world, as well as aspects of a growing world, but they are also opportunities sent from God, to test us, to enable us to grow, and to further us in the fulfillment of our calling.⁶

Rather than respond to the Biblical calling of motherhood, many women are too willing to have their children taught and nurtured by paid substitutes. The "experts" have successfully convinced these women that their children are better off interacting with other kids under a "trained professional," learning arts and crafts in school-type settings from the time they are barely walking. These children don't learn how to be part of a family, but rather how to be part of a collective in group settings where the caretakers often have little more investment than the paycheck they receive for keeping the children physically safe.

Are these babysitters/teachers prepared to love the child enough to deal with his selfish spirit? Are they prepared to fully deal with deceit when it makes its appearance? Or, do they just "make peace" and convince the child that she can have or do whatever she wants, whenever she wants, just so long as there is an appearance of cooperation (John 10:12–13)?

If we train our children in this fashion, they will grow up to look to the "village" to make up for their shortcomings, bail them out of bad investments, and excuse their bad behavior, often shifting the blame onto their parents. (I would agree that the parents are the guilty party as charged, but not because

they were "mean" to their children. Rather, it is because they indulged their children instead of disciplining them.)

Rather than develop into culture-changers, Christian children raised in this fashion become part of the culture that needs to be changed.

A portion of dialogue near the conclusion of the 1962 film *The Miracle Worker*⁷ involves Helen Keller's father thanking her tutor, Annie Sullivan, after she succeeded in improving Helen's behavior and obedience. I share it here to make an important point:

Captain Keller: Miss Annie, your first month's salary. With many more to come, I trust. It doesn't pay our debt for what you've done.

Annie Sullivan: I've taught her one thing: No... Don't do this, don't do that.

Captain Keller: It's more than we could do...

Annie Sullivan: I wanted to teach her what language is. I know that without it, to do nothing but obey is no gift. Obedience without understanding is blindness, too... I don't know what else to do. I simply go on and keep doing what I've done and have faith that inside she's waiting, like water underground. You can help, Captain Keller.

Captain Keller: How?

Annie Sullivan: The world is not an easy place for anyone. I don't want her just to obey. But to let her have her way in everything is a lie... to her. You've got to stand between that lie and her.

And that is what God has called mothers to do—to stand between the lies of the flesh, the world, and devil—and relentlessly teach their children while their hearts are still tender. Mothers who teach their children what sin is help them identify it in their lives. By refusing to shield them from the consequences of disobedience, they are

planting the seeds for culture-changing growth. The results of the opposite worldview in practice are all around us.

Conclusion

Otto Scott's insight bears repeating: *God is no buttercup*. Doug Wilson comments:

Otto Scott put it well when he said that the God of the Bible is no buttercup. And when Jesus came He revealed all the attributes of the Father, and not just those things which we can easily interpret as comforting to ourselves. But the Lord's words were simultaneously blunt and pointed, and as Chesterton put it, "He did not hesitate to throw furniture down the front steps of the Temple." However, we like to hear all about love, and mercy, and comfort, and kindness. This is not bad in itself; these are all biblical revelations of God's nature and character. But we present them out of context; we neglect the wrath, and holiness, and justice of God. We do not neglect these attributes because they are contradictions to the first set; we neglect them because we do not know how the Bible reconciles them. Notice how the apostle seats them at the table together, as though they were good friends. "Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness" (Rom. 11:22). We must constantly remember that a half-truth presented as the whole truth is an untruth. God is kind, and God is severe. Jesus reveals the nature of the Father to us; Jesus is kind, and Jesus is severe.⁸

Proverbs 6:20–23 states that parents are the responsible parties when it comes to inculcating a worldview that identifies God's commandments as the lamp and light which will lead, protect, inform, and reprove children as they move through life.

The God of the Bible is holy and calls us to be holy as He is holy (Lev. 20:26 and 1 Peter 1:16). The problem

with too many who claim Christ as their Lord and Savior is aptly explicated in the lyrics of the song “Be Like Him”:

You know a lot of people have their own ideas of what God is like and how we should live.

But our authority is God’s word alone, if we want to know what to believe.

You see, you thought God was just like you, willing to wink at sin, but He tells us plainly in His word that we must *be like Him*.⁹

Andrea Schwartz has been an active proponent of Christian education for over 28 years. She successfully homeschooled her three children through high school. Andrea lives in San Jose, CA, with her husband of 35 years and continues to lecture, teach, mentor, and serve as a volunteer doula. Visit her website www.WordsFromAndrea.com.

1. <http://www.covenantbiblechurch.com/Home/tabid/36/Default.aspx>
2. <http://feastofbooths.blogspot.com/2011/01/god-is-no-buttercup.html> by Randy Booth
3. In a recent Law & Liberty podcast of the Chalcedon Foundation: <http://chalcedon.edu/blog/2011/7/22/law-and-liberty-podcast-bojidar-marinov-translating-rushdoony-and-missions/>
4. In my read-aloud story book *Teach Me While My Heart is Tender*, each story conveys the ugly reality of sin, the beauty of godly repentance, and the necessity of forgiveness. Sugar-coating or minimizing sin only serves to vaccinate children from ever seeing their need for Christ’s atonement.
5. See <http://chalcedon.edu/faith-for-all-of-life/gods-law-the-only-hope-for-animals-2/rethinking-childbearing-part-1/> and <http://chalcedon.edu/faith-for-all-of-life/the-warfare-state-3/rethinking-childbearing-part-2/>
6. R. J. Rushdoony, *A Word in Season*, Vol. 1 (Vallecito, CA: Ross House Books, 2010), 138.
7. I recommend any mother who is struggling with affecting a change of attitude and behavior with her children to watch this film. The scene in the kitchen as teacher

and student battle for which one will be in control inspires me each and every time I watch it.

8. http://www.dougwils.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=4055:What-Would-Jesus-Damn&catid=98:old-table-talk-articles
9. <http://judylyrics.klsoaps.com/WW.html> from the CD *Walkin’ Wise* by Judy Rogers.

Rushdoony ... Spirit-Filled cont. from page 3

what is evil.”⁷ As a concomitant to this, the modern artist has led the way in despising the beautiful and exalting the ugly. Having denied the Lord of Glory, his choice is a logical one. Restoration in the arts requires a return to a truly Biblical Christian faith.

At the beginning of the modern era, there was a gradual separation under way of the arts and artists from Christianity. Then “The Romantic movement began that severance of the innovative artist from the masses which has gone on ever since.”⁸ But this is not all. “Like society as a whole, artists have indulged in an orgy of destruction.”⁹ God’s world must be denied together with God, and a new world created. Picasso very clearly expressed his mindset when he wrote on a printing, *yo el rey*, I am the King.¹⁰ Such a philosophy of art is in savage revolt against God’s order, and the artwork it produces reflects this temper. One aspect of this revolt is a militant hostility to all that Scripture declares and requires.

1. H. L. Ellison, *Exodus* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1982), 166.
2. Joseph Parker, *The People’s Bible*, Vol. 2, *Exodus* (New York, NY: Funk & Wagnalls, n.d.), 252–253.
3. *Ibid.*, 257.
4. John Lerner, “Art, Commercial Trade Of,” in Joseph R. Strayer, editor-in-chief, *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, Vol. 1 (New York, NY: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1982), 561.

5. Gustave F. Oehler, *Theology of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, reprint. n.d.), 141.
6. Thomas Scott, *The Holy Bible, with Explanatory Notes, etc.*, Vol. 1 (Boston, MA: Samuel T. Armstrong, 1830 printing), 306.
7. Albert Camus, *The Rebel* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, n.d.), 47.
8. Michael Gil, *Image of the Body* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1989), 325.
9. *Ibid.*, 327.
10. *Ibid.*, 337.

M. Rushdoony ... Abstract cont. from page 6

as the God of Scripture. Neither can we try to supplement what God has said as though we were His copy editor supplying what He neglected and then pass it off as God-words.

We need to pay close attention to the difference between Scriptural “God words” and the “man words” that so often pass for theology.

1. E. J. Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1949), 73. Quoted by Cornelius Van Til in “The Defense of Christianity” at http://www.the-highway.com/defense_VanTil.html

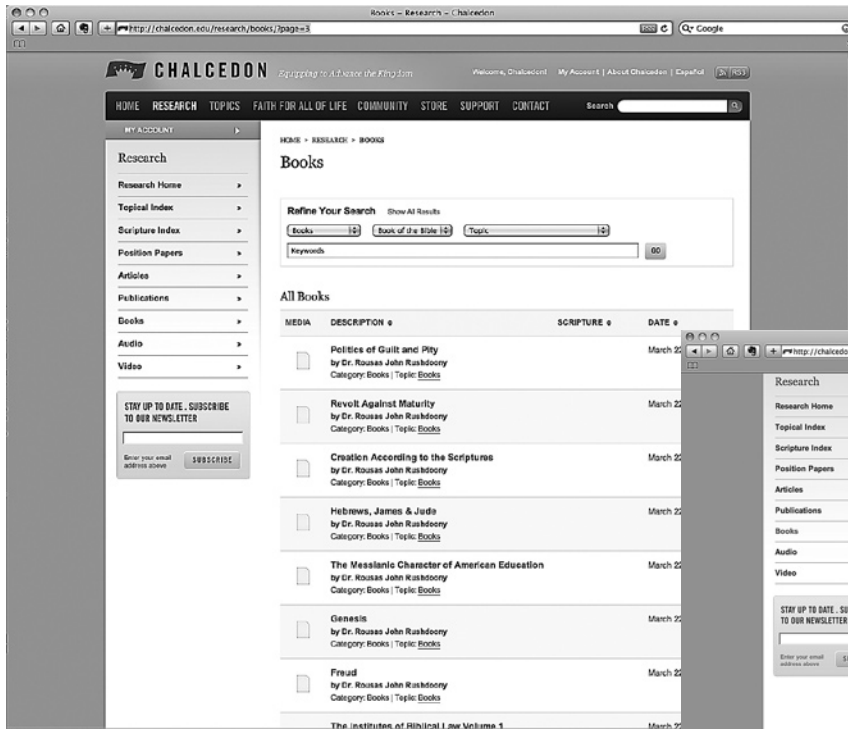
McVicar ... Van Til cont. from page 12

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43. R. J. Rushdoony, “Dr. Cornelius Van Til,” *Chalcedon Report* (May 1995): 2.
44. Cornelius Van Til, *The Works of Cornelius Van Til, 1895–1987*, Bristley, Eric D., ed. (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Library System, 1997).
45. Greg L. Bahnsen, *Van Til’s Apologetic: Readings and Analysis* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1998).
46. These include Cornelius Van Til, *Christian Apologetics*, ed. William Edgar, 2nd ed. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2003); Cornelius Van Til, *An Introduction to Systematic Theology: Prolegomena and the Doctrines of Revelation, Scripture, and God*, ed. William Edgar, 2nd ed. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2007); *Cornelius Van Til, The Defense of the Faith*, ed. K. Scott Oliphint, 4th ed. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2008).

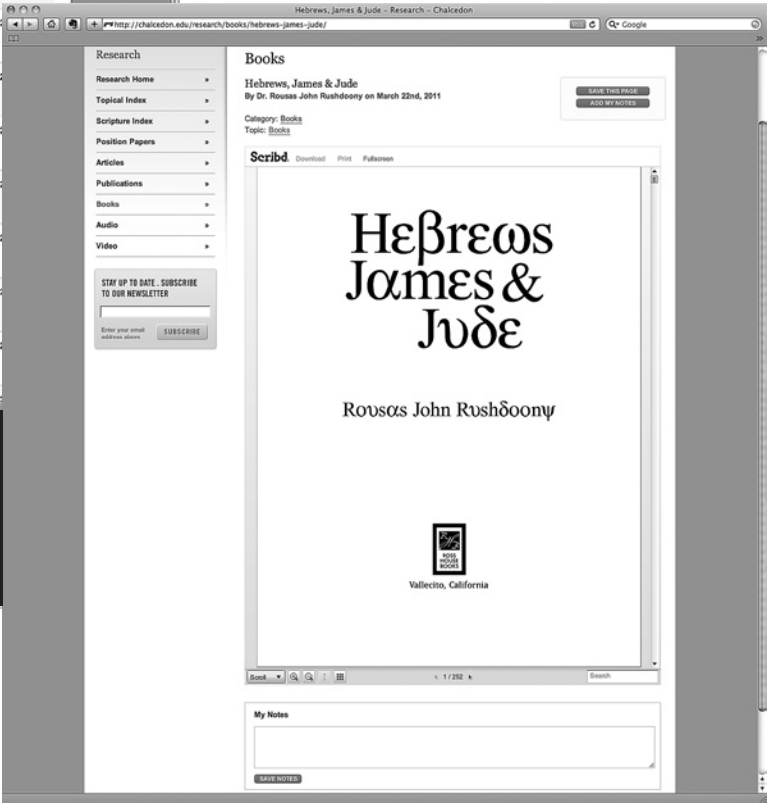
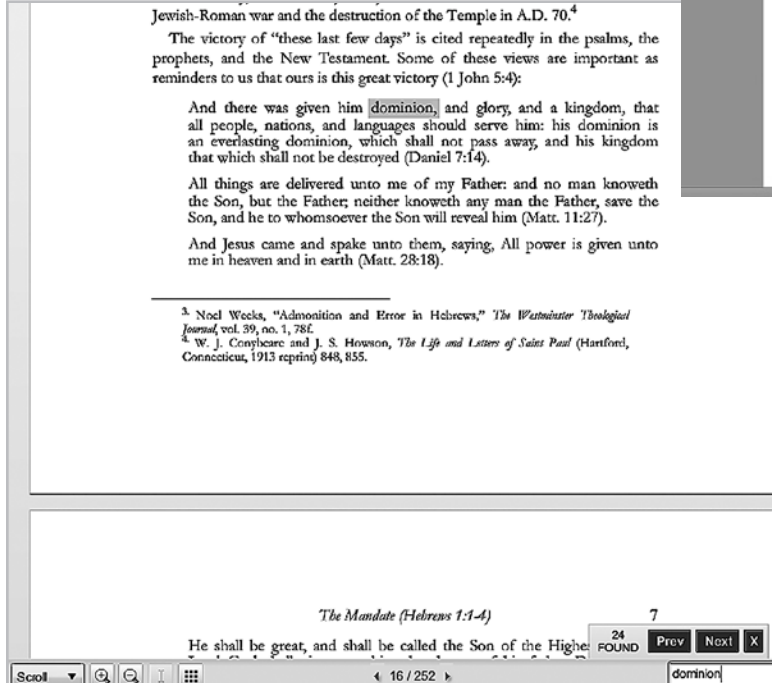
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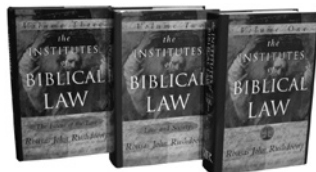
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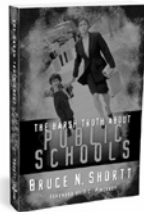
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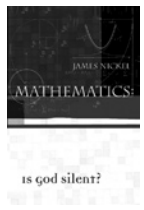
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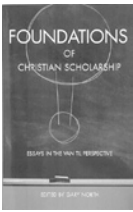
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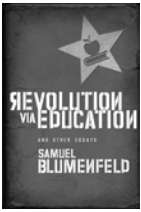
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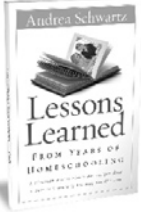
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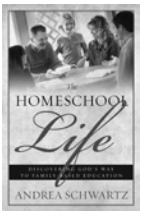
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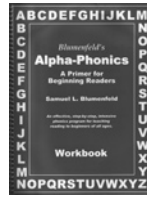
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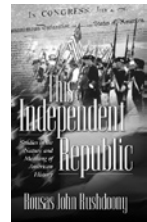


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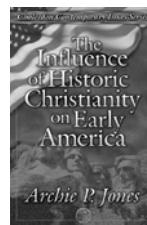
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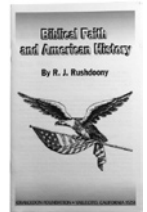


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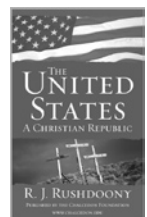
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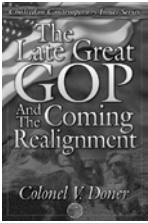
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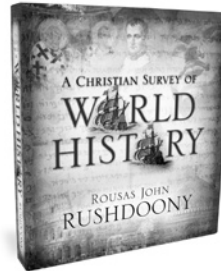
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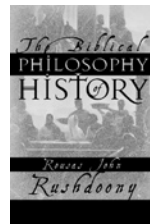
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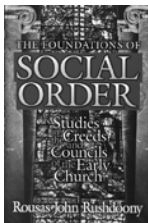
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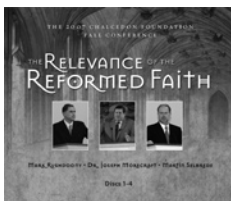


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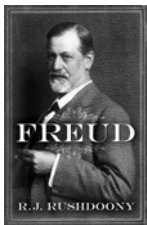


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By R. J. Rushdoony. The Biblical doctrine of psychology is a branch of theology dealing with man as a fallen creature marked by a revolt against maturity. Man was created a mature being with a responsibility to dominion and cannot be understood from the Freudian child, nor the Darwinian standpoint of a long biological history. Man's history is a short one filled with responsibility to God. Man's

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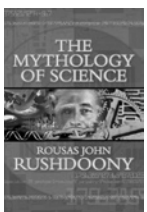
The Cure of Souls: Recovering the Biblical Doctrine of Confession

By R. J. Rushdoony. In *The Cure of Souls: Recovering the Biblical Doctrine of Confession*, R. J. Rushdoony cuts through the misuse of Romanism and modern psychology to restore the doctrine of confession to a Biblical foundation—one that is covenantal and Calvinistic. Without a true restoration of Biblical confession, the

Christian's walk is impeded by the remains of sin. This volume is an effort in reversing this trend.

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The Mythology of Science

By R. J. Rushdoony. 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.

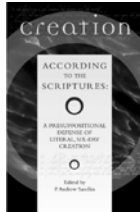
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Alive: An Enquiry into the Origin and Meaning of Life

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

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

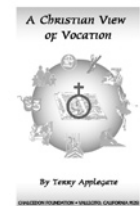
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Larceny in the Heart: The Economics of Satan and the Inflationary State

By R.J. Rushdoony. In this study, first published under the title *Roots of Inflation*, the reader sees why envy often causes the most successful and advanced members of society to be deemed criminals. The reader is shown how envious man finds any superiority in others intolerable and how this leads to a desire for a leveling. The author uncovers the larceny in the heart of man and its results.

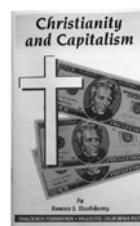
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A Christian View of Vocation: The Glory of the Mundane

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

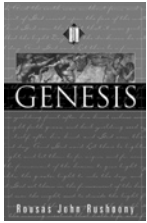
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Christianity and Capitalism

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.

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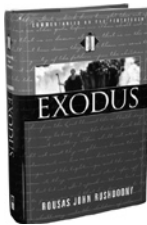


Genesis, Volume I of Commentaries on the Pentateuch

By R. J. Rushdoony. 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. 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.

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Exodus, Volume II of Commentaries on the Pentateuch

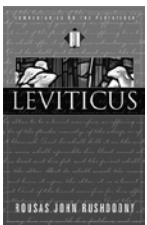
By R. J. Rushdoony. Essentially, all of mankind is on some sort of an exodus. However, the path of fallen man is vastly different from that of the righteous. Apart from Jesus Christ and His atoning work, the exodus of a fallen humanity means only a further descent from sin into death. But in Christ, 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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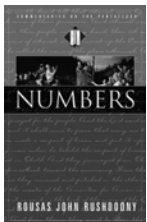
By R. J. Rushdoony. Much like the book of Proverbs, any emphasis upon the practical applications of God’s law is readily shunned in pursuit of more “spiritual” studies. Books like Leviticus are considered dull, overbearing, and irrelevant. But man was created in God’s image and is duty-bound to develop the implications of that image by obedience to God’s law. The book of Leviticus contains

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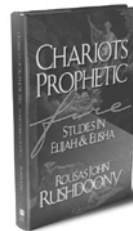
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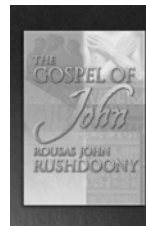
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and was resurrected. His life cannot be understood apart from this, nor can we know His history in any other light.

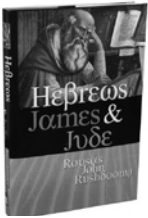
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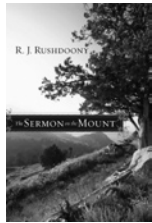
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Hebrews, James and Jude

By R. J. Rushdoony. The Book of Hebrews 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. 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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Sermon on the Mount

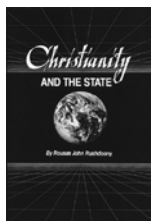
By R. J. Rushdoony. So much has been written about the Sermon on the Mount, but so little of the commentaries venture outside of the matters of the heart. The Beatitudes are reduced to the assumed meaning of their more popular portions, and much of that meaning limits our concerns to downplaying wealth, praying in secret, suppressing our worries, or simply reciting the Lord's Prayer. The Beatitudes are the Kingdom commission to the new Israel of God, and R. J. Rushdoony elucidates this powerful thesis in a readable and engaging commentary on the world's greatest sermon.

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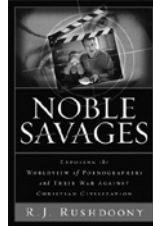
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Salvation and Godly Rule

By R. J. Rushdoony. Salvation in Scripture includes in its meaning "health" and "victory." By limiting the meaning of salvation, men have limited the power of God and the meaning of the Gospel. In this study R. J. Rushdoony demonstrates the expanse of the doctrine of salvation as it relates to the rule of the God and His people.

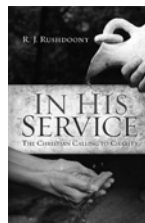
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Noble Savages: Exposing the Worldview of Pornographers and Their War Against Christian Civilization

By R. J. Rushdoony. In this powerful book *Noble Savages* (formerly *The Politics of Pornography*) Rushdoony demonstrates that in order for modern man to justify his perversion he must reject the Biblical doctrine of the fall of man. If there is no fall, the Marquis de Sade argued, then all that man does is normative. What is the problem? It's the philosophy behind pornography — the rejection of the fall of man that makes normative all that man does. Learn it all in this timeless classic.

Paperback, 161 pages, \$18.00



In His Service: The Christian Calling to Charity

By R. J. Rushdoony. The Christian faith once meant that a believer responded to a dark world by actively working to bring God's grace and mercy to others, both by word and by deed. However, a modern, self-centered church has isolated the faith to a pietism that relinquishes charitable responsibility to the state. The end result has been the empowering of a humanistic world order. In this book, Rushdoony elucidates the Christian's calling to charity and its implications for Godly dominion.

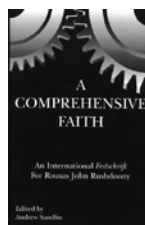
Hardback, 232 pages, \$23.00



Roots of Reconstruction

By R. J. Rushdoony. This large volume provides all of Rushdoony's *Chalcedon Report* articles from the beginning in 1965 to mid-1989. These articles were, with his books, responsible for the Christian Reconstruction and theonomy movements. More topics than could possibly be listed. Imagine having 24 years of Rushdoony's personal research for just \$20.

Hardback, 1124 pages, \$20.00



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, Ellsworth McIntyre, Howard Phillips, Ian Hodge, and many more. Also included is a foreword by John Frame and a brief biographical sketch of R. J. Rushdoony's life by Mark Rushdoony.

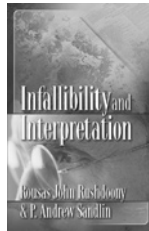
Hardback, 244 pages, \$23.00



A Conquering Faith: Doctrinal Foundations for Christian Reformation

By William Einwechter. This monograph takes on the doctrinal defection of today's church by providing Christians with an introductory treatment of six vital areas of Christian doctrine: God's sovereignty, Christ's Lordship, God's law, the authority of Scripture, the dominion mandate, and the victory of Christ in history.

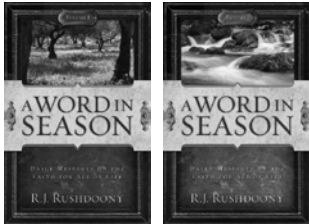
Paperback, 44 pages, \$8.00



Infallibility and Interpretation

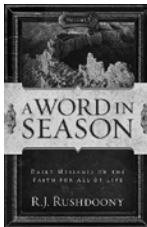
By R. J. Rushdoony & P. Andrew Sandlin. The authors argue for infallibility from a distinctly presuppositional perspective. That is, their arguments are unapologetically circular because they believe all ultimate claims are based on one's beginning assumptions. The question of Biblical infallibility rests ultimately in one's belief about the character of God.

Paperback, 100 pages, \$6.00



A Word in Season: Daily Messages on the Faith for All of Life (Multi-volume book series)

By R. J. Rushdoony. These daily messages on the faith for all of life are unlike any compilation of Christian "devotional" ever published. In these pages, you won't find the overly



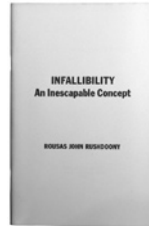
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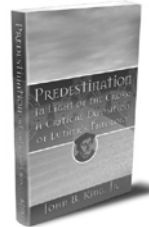
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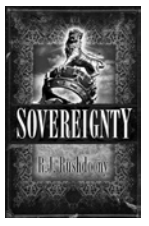
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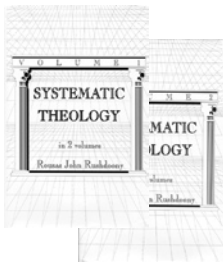


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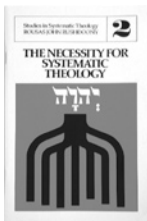
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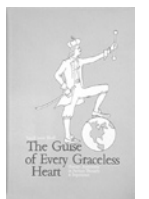
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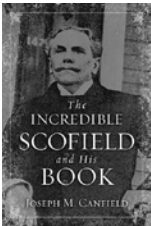
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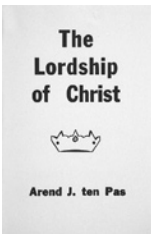
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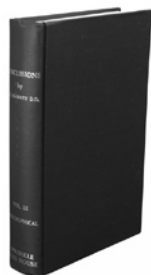


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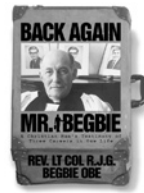
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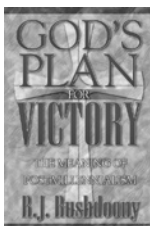
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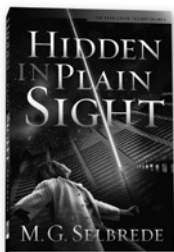
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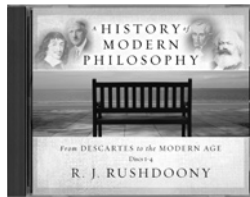
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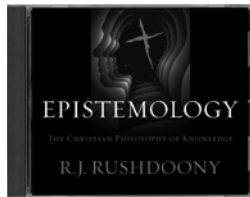
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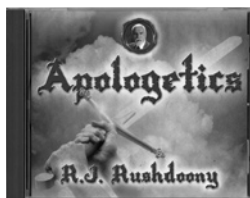


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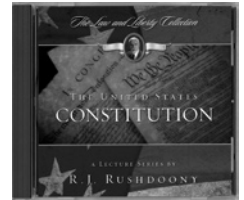
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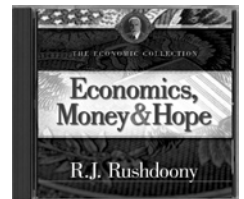
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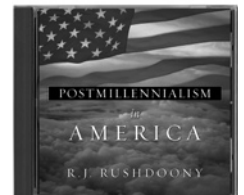
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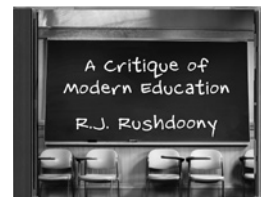
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