

CHRISTIAN RECONSTRUCTIONISM

“fulfilling the law”

Key question

What is the reconstructionism movement?

Key text

Colossians 1:18

“He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; so that He Himself might come to have first place in everything.”

Key Definition

Reconstructionism

Reconstructionism is a movement within strongly Reformed theological groups that seeks to reconstruct the rule of Biblical Law in every area of society, understanding that the church is to bring in the Kingdom as it seeks to capture the culture for Christ.

Introduction

1. The ‘Christian nation’ or Reconstructionism community, argues that the purpose of Christian political involvement should be to legislate biblical law.
2. There are historical precedents for Reconstructionist ideas stretching back to the millennialistic strains of Puritan thinking.
3. Reconstructionism is an authoritarian ideology that threatens the most basic civil liberties of a free and democratic society.
4. Founded in 1964, Chalcedon is the origin and principal center of the Christian Reconstruction movement, and their materials have had a vast influence in the movement.
 - a. Named after the Council of Chalcedon of 451 A.D., in which the Lordship of Christ was proclaimed, the organization’s purpose is to establish Old Testament Biblical law as the standard for society.
 - b. Chalcedon promotes Christian Reconstructionism -- which mandates Christ's dominion over all the world.

According to the Ministry of Chalcedon statement, “Chalcedon’s emphasis on the cultural or dominion mandate and the necessity of a return to Biblical law has been a crucial factor in the challenge to humanism by Christians in this country and elsewhere.”

- c. Chalcedon's president, Rousas John (R.J.) **Rushdoony**, is best known as "the father of Christian Reconstructionism."
 - 1. As well as being the author of more than 100 books, he is a former Orthodox Presbyterian minister, John Birch Society operative, and missionary to Native Americans.
 - 2. Rushdoony, 78, is a longtime conservative leader. He is a member of the Council for National Policy and the Conservative Caucus, and served on the steering committee of Coalition on Revival.
 - 3. Rushdoony's writings and the work of Chalcedon have had a major impact on the Christian Right.
- d. For years, millions of Christians have embraced what Reconstructionists derisively call "escapism theology."
 - 1. That is, Jesus will return soon, in fact, at any moment, and then everything will be all right.
 - 2. Christian Reconstruction simplified, says, "No, the Church must first set up Christ's Kingdom on earth, then Christ will return."
 - 3. While many evangelical Christians still believe the imminent return theory, significant numbers have switched. Most of these Christians would not label themselves Reconstructionist, but they embrace the doctrine. The significance of the shift in doctrine is that most of evangelical Christianity has been apolitical, believing that salvation and the imminent return were the only answer in a world largely governed by Satan.
 - 4. Reconstructionism argues instead that the kingdom of God on earth is built not only by evangelism, but by the implementation of Biblical law. The only way to get Biblical law is through politics. No need to wait.
- e. Christian Reconstruction teaches that every aspect of society must come under Biblical law.
 - 1. This includes the death penalty for "practicing homosexuals," abortionists, heretics, blasphemers, and even disobedient sons.
 - 2. Rushdoony considers democracy to be "heresy" and he advocates total Christian theocracy. "Supernatural Christianity and democracy are inevitably enemies," he writes. "Democracy is the great love of the failures and cowards of life."
 - 3. Similarly, Rushdoony opposes pluralism because "in the name of toleration, the believer is asked to associate on a common level of total acceptance with the atheist, the pervert, the criminal, and the adherents of other religions."
- f. Chalcedon was a leader in establishing the notion of special Christian legal organizations. The Rutherford Institute was founded with the help of Chalcedon to promote, through the courts, the Religious Right's agenda.
- g. Chalcedon holds seminars, promotes speakers, publishes numerous books and position papers, and distributes a series of 16 programs on videotape. Publications include the Chalcedon Report, a monthly 32-page magazine, and the semiannual Journal of Christian Reconstruction. Some of Chalcedon's books are published by Ross House Books, a separate non-profit, tax-exempt affiliated organization.
- h. In 1991, Chalcedon received \$634,264 in contributions, gifts, and grants. The group also received \$57,486 in tuition at their Christian day school; \$5,533 from journal sales; \$3,571 in speaking and writing fees; and \$10,092 from sales of tapes and videos.

- i. Besides Rushdoony, the board of directors includes vice president Mark Rushdoony, Dorothy (Mrs. R.J.) Rushdoony, actor John Sanders III, conservative philanthropist Howard Ahmanson, political consultant Wayne Johnson, and Daniel Harris.
- j. Tens of thousands of dollars in fees and honoraria are paid each year to a dozen associates, including Otto J. Scott, Samuel Blumenfeld, John Lofton, Joseph McAuliffe, and Gary Moes.
- k. Chalcedon enjoys the privilege of wealthy board members and other contributors. Rushdoony's work is well established, and his books and tapes will continue to sell. Chalcedon has had and will continue to have a great effect on the politics of the Religious Right.