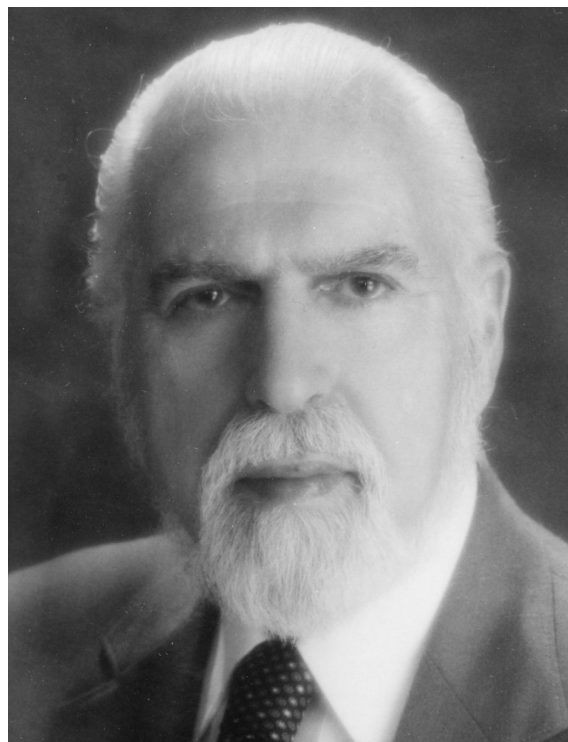


Transcripts of
**The FOUNDATIONS of
SOCIAL ORDER**

A Lecture Series by R.J. Rushdoony



R.J. RUSHDOONY

(1916–2001)

Rev. R.J. Rushdoony (1916–2001), was a leading theologian, church/state expert, and author of numerous works on the application of Biblical law to society. He started the Chalcedon Foundation in 1965. His Institutes of Biblical Law (1973) began the contemporary theonomy movement which posits the validity of Biblical law as God's standard of obedience for all. He therefore saw God's law as the basis of the modern Christian response to the cultural decline, one he attributed to the church's false view of God's law being opposed to His grace. This broad Christian response he described as "Christian Reconstruction." He is credited with igniting the modern Christian school and homeschooling movements in the mid to late 20th century. He also traveled extensively lecturing and serving as an expert witness in numerous court cases regarding religious liberty. Many ministry and educational efforts that continue today, took their philosophical and Biblical roots from his lectures and books.

Learn more about R.J. Rushdoony by visiting: <https://chalcedon.edu/founder>

Foundations of Social Order, I

R.J. Rushdoony

Because our triune God is he by whom all things were made, and: "...without Him was not anything made that was made..." there is not an atom in all creation outside of Him and His creating purpose. Nothing can exist outside of God and His holy will. Every possibility in all creation in heaven above and the vast universe beneath is of His making. No man can think or do anything outside of His design, God declares: "I form light, and create darkness, I make peace, and create evil, I the Lord do all these things." God creates all possibilities, and man can neither think nor imagine anything outside of God's ordination.

Very early theologians called Satan 'the ape of God,' because Satan is imitative, not creative, he seeks to be a substitute for God just as all of fallen mankind seeks to imitate him, striving to be their own God, Genesis 3:5 tells us, knowing, or determining all good and evil, all law and morality for themselves. To attempt to usurp God's throne makes no creature a creator or a lord. The implications of the fact that God is the creator, are that in every sphere of life and thought, man must of necessity think God's thoughts after Him. He may do this in obedience, or disobedience, as either a faithful and regenerate man, or as a rebellious and disobedient covenant-breaker who is trying to supplant God, a futile attempt. Man will either think or act as a covenant man, or as a would-be god, but he cannot think creatively. He is a creature, not a creator.

Accordingly, all man's thinking will be theological, the difference being that for covenant man, God is the Lord whereas, for the covenant breaker, man is the lord. Let us begin with a very practical question: "what is crime?" How we define 'crime' depends upon our theology. If God is the Lord, then His law is the law, and crime is sin, it is a violation of God's law. In fact, John, in his first letter, makes clear that sin is every want of conformity to God's law, and the word he uses for sin is 'anomia,' anti-law.

Crime is a sin, it is a violation of God's law, crime then is injustice because God the lawgiver is totally justice, and just. In Isaiah 45:1, God identifies himself as both a just God and a savior, there is none other beside Me. because there is no other god in all the universe, He alone can define good and evil, He alone can define crime, by His law-Word, God defines sin and therefor crime, He defines grace, truth, mercy, love, all things, there is no other premise for a true or honest definition.

Men have, of course, tried to define crime apart from God, all non-theistic, non-biblical definitions of crime mean either that man or the state becomes the definer, but all such definers lack authority, state-created law is a changing law, a law that has no roots in man's being, but only in his sin. As a result, such state-made laws further the disintegration of a society. I had a discussion recently with someone who, while a very devout Christian and I would have to say a very fine man, was naïve in his thinking. He assumed that what the bible says lays down categories of truth that all men accept, and I had to tell him: "you're assuming that a Turk," because this is what he said, "has the same idea of truth as a Christian," but I said: "no other religion says the truth is basic to the Godhead, our Lord says I am the way the truth and the life."

John tells us in his prologue the truth came in the person of Jesus Christ. Other religions may say: "it's nice to tell the truth," but truth is not a part of the Godhead, it is not basic to the universe, whereas what we are told in the scriptures is that the truth manifests the being of God. In modern society truth is pragmatic, it is what works, it is what Nietzsche says helps you get along, and he said: "the best truth can sometimes be a lie." Nietzsche in his *Beyond Good and Evil*, and in other works, rejected God-ordained biblical standards. For Nietzsche, the 'good' had to be whatever served the superman, and 'truth,' whatever advanced your own interests. The tie of his ideas to national socialism and Hitler is a very real one. No valid concept of good and evil, of law and justice, or truth and error has stood apart from the biblical one. The foundations of social order are thus biblical ones. The definer of justice, thus, is the determiner of society. Man as the determiner is dangerous, because he is a fallen creature, he believes [he is God], but he is not God, and he is prone to use power to serve sin.

The state is no less untrustworthy as a definer, and it is especially prone to use its self-made laws to increase its power. Either God defines good and evil and gives us His law, or else either man or the state does. I am baffled by those who claim to be Christians, who insist that they want not God's law, but the state's. They are rejecting God, because God's law is the expression of His nature, of His righteousness, His justice.

The foundations of social order are theological. This means, first, as we have already seen, that law comes from the sovereign, the lord. This means, second that there must be a sovereign or a lord over society, it can be the state, or a variety of man made lordships, or it can be God the Lord. The lordship of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ does not mean an elite group of men ruling for God, it means rather that God reigns over all of us in our hearts, families, vocations and so on, so that we are a people whose God is the Lord, in a very practical way in our day-by-day functioning.

There is no shortcut to this lordship, by seizing power or winning elections, it comes through the triumph of His government over us. We now currently believe in the 'sovereignty' of civil government, because all over what was once Christendom, sovereignty is now firmed for the state, not Christ. I've sometimes thought of writing a paper on the millennium, the political millennium, the ones the people in Washington are dreaming up for us, which will be hell on earth. It was no accident that the word 'sovereign,' and 'sovereignty' or 'lordship' were left out of the US Constitution, and no accident that the US Supreme Court introduced it into American life and thought. The first edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 1776 defined law as 'the will of the sovereign.' The concept of 'sovereignty' is related to deity. There is no appeal against a sovereign power! This is why in every country the state seeks, and now virtually the world over, claims sovereignty.

Because the US is now held by the courts to be sovereign, no law can bind Washington. It is the binding power, it binds us but cannot be bound. Twice in recent years laws requiring the end of deficit financing have been passed to please the people, but they are invalid, and quickly forgotten because a sovereign power cannot be bound, you cannot legislate against a god, and when Washington began legally to claim sovereignty, it is said: "you the people cannot bind us, no law of Congress can bind us, we are the sovereign, god walking on earth." The sovereign is the source, not the subject of law, but God being God, His law expresses His nature, so He does not act against His nature, or His law but what is the nature of the state? It is sin, it is made up of fallen man, it does not claim to be under Christ. And so it is bound by no law whatsoever.

God's law reveals God. Man and the state both change and can set aside their law, because God is the Lord, the same yesterday and today and forever, His law never changes because He does not change. Then, third, if God is the sovereign and not the state or man, and if law comes from God the Lord and not from anything in the human order, then it follows that the centrality of the state in society

is not justified nor good. To look, as the modern world does, to the state for solutions, or for its millennium, is to expect our problem-maker to become our problem-solver.

Every society in the world in every age of history has been and is organized religiously, although, throughout history, many of those societies, most, have been non Christian. At present, the religious center of many societies is Humanism, which is no less a religion than Christianity. Humanism confesses to be non-theistic, but to all practical intent, it has a god and he is man. He may be elitist man, Marxist man, intellectual man, but man is the god, the ultimate concern of humanistic faith. Centrality in any society belongs to the god of that society, the center of our world is no longer Jesus Christ, it is no longer Christianity, and even though a majority may profess to believe the Bible from cover to cover, and to be born again as is the case in the United States, the core of its faith hope has for some generations been political and humanistic.

This is true not only for the unchurched, but also for the churched. Their priorities are not theological, believer and unbeliever are practical humanists, their answers to problems are political answers. It's a difficult thing to be a pastor nowadays, because the people in the pews may profess to believe the Bible from cover to cover, and the five points of Calvinism, but in effect they say: "speak unto a smooth things, not hard things from the word of God." As one elder told me once: "I come to church to feel good." Another elder once told me: "I don't like your preaching, I've never been able to fall asleep under it, and a man should feel relaxed in church," and he meant every word of it. I submit that's true in a lot of the churches all over the country that are among the very best.

Some of the problem comes from the churches and the seminaries in particular, we have narrowed the sphere of faith to the walls of the church, to exegeses and theological concerns, all of which are good, but I wrote some years ago about 'box theology.' Theology which is only good inside the church and has no application outside the walls. We should recognize that pornography in our time does not profess to be 'writing dirty books,' it professes to be telling us what is the way of heath. They are theological writings, anti-Christian to the core, they profess to be telling us: "this is the way, walk ye in it." Too many professional exegeses theologians are willfully ignorant also of economic problems. They are not interested, they confine themselves only to professional theology, in fact in one country abroad, I hesitate to tell this, but it upsets me every time, there is a periodical that professes to be the best reformed periodical in the country, every issue, maybe they changed in the last year because I no longer take it, rehearses over and over and over and over again the five points of Calvinism. Well, first of all, that's not there is to Calvinism. For one thing, Calvin said, and I wrote an article about the unknown Calvinism a couple months ago, I think in June. I didn't hear one comment about it pro or con. Calvin said: "The marks of a true church are faithful preaching of the Word of God, and deacons who carry on the work of mercy to all the needs of the community." How many churches that profess to be reformed practice that?

God is the Lord, and if He is the Lord, every sphere of life and thought is under the province of theology, the word of God, the word of God speaks to everything. If theology is the queen of the sciences under Christ our king, such ignorance is a surrender of Christ's lordship. It is sad that so much current ignorance is willful, lest there be any misunderstanding, I feel very strongly about the five points of Calvinism, but having read a great deal of Calvin, I know it isn't all, and I know what he did in Geneva, he preached in fact every day because he felt he had to bring the people out of their ignorance of the word of God through continual preaching, but he also worked to take care of every human need. He created hospitals, these were hospitals in the old fashioned sense of the world, to take care of the sick, but the homeless, the aged, homeless children, every kind of charitable work, he made sure it was taken care of. The deacons took an offering toward the end of the service, and to make sure that nobody missed the plate, they went outside and stood by the door to give everybody a second chance to contribute. Nobody could go through Geneva and be homeless, in fact, Calvin invited strangers

whom he'd never seen before into his home. Did you know that about John Calvin? `Of course, the proud people of Geneva did not like that, they named their dogs 'Calvin' and sic'd their dogs on John Calvin, they would shoot guns off under his window to awaken him at night. Ours should be truly a catholic faith, universal in jurisdiction. To reduce Christianity to Churchianity is to abandon it, to limit Christian concern to Church ones is to abandon scripture.

It has been said that too many Christians have a divided loyalty in that other things and other organizations share their allegiance, in reality the situation is worse, in that Christianity gets at best second or worst billing with too many. Our loyalties and priorities are too often wrong. If we are not ready to die for our faith, we are not ready to live for it. Isaiah 26:13 declares:

“O Lord our God, other lords beside thee have had dominion over us, but by thee only will we make mention of thy name.”

That last clause: “...by thee only will we make mention of thy name,” can be better rendered: “...but thine authority alone today we own.” This is the key. If God is God: “thou shalt have no other gods before me.” He must reign in every sphere of life and thought, this is the meaning of the now-forgotten doctrine of ‘the priesthood of all believers.’ Martin Luther, preaching on this one Christmas triumphantly said:

“The angel came and announced to the Virgin Mary that she would give birth to God the son, to the incarnate God-man, and what did Mary do? After that great announcement did she retire into a convent to spend the nine months in prayer and meditation? Oh no! She went on doing the housework like a good daughter in the family in carrying the garbage out to the animals to slop it, and doing all the jobs she'd been doing before.”

This is the meaning of the priesthood of all believers, which means also that Christ as king must prevail in every area of life and thought without any exception. If we do not acknowledge the absolute authority of God the Lord over us, if in every sphere of life and thought we are not under the dominion of the triune God and His law word, then other lords indeed rule over us and we will be judged and found wanting.

We are moving now, as never before in history, into a time of worldwide judgment. God the Lord is bringing judgment upon the nations, and we shall see that judgment for a generation or more perhaps, in one sphere after another, in the life of the church, for judgment begins at the house of God. As those whose faith is weak as water depart from among us, we will see it in the state, which is teetering on the brink of moral and financial bankruptcy, we will see it in every economic area, we will see it and are beginning to see it all over the world now in the weather. We are seeing it in heightened activities; earthquakes, volcanoes and more. God is going to bring this generation to its knees, it is a time of unequalled opportunity for us. Men's hearts will fail them for fear, and if we proclaim the undiluted word of God, the Lord God of hosts will use us to reap the greatest harvest in all of church history. I believe that, and I am living and working in terms of that. May God prosper you as you serve Him to that end, thank you.

ENDNOTES:

1. The Holy Bible: King James Version (Electronic Edition of the 1900 Authorized Version., Jn 1:3). (2009). Logos Research Systems, Inc.
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Foundations of Social Order, II

R.J. Rushdoony

About fifty years ago, when I was a missionary to the American Indians in an isolated Western reservation, I had staying with me for several months to assist me, an old missionary doctor and surgeon who had spent half a century in southwest China, his mail reached him once every six months, and his supplies also. As we were gathered around the table talking late one night, we asked him: “what did you do when you ran out of medical supplies?” And he said oh that happened regularly, I used things that housewives knew about over the generations. We tried to guess what they were and we all failed, and he said: “they are indeed forgotten victories, these remedies,” and forgotten victories become present defeats.

Over the years I have repeatedly stressed the fact that it is dangerous and potentially totalitarian to speak of the state as the ‘government.’ We do so because we have forgotten the victory for which many Christians died. The word ‘government’ means many things, for us it must mean primarily the self government of the Christian man, this is the first and the most basic sphere of government. If men are not self-governing, then every other sphere of government is warped. The second sphere of government is the family, and its importance in the scriptures is evident, from beginning to end, the family is indeed the great nursery and training ground for all spheres of government, including and especially self-government. Then third, the church is a government like the family God ordained. Fourth, the school is a government as is fifth, our vocation which governs us every day of our lives. Sixth, a variety of private organizations; community relationships and personal and family networks govern all of us. Then, seventh, the state is a government, one form of government among many, in the English-speaking world and in this country for generations, it was referred to as civil government, not government per se.

Now this is an important fact, many of the martyrs of the early church died over that distinction, because they refused to recognize the state as the only government. They held that Christ is king over every sphere of government, including the state, and the state could not usurp the church nor tax it, because it was under Christ as king. It grieves me that there are so many Christians who are ready to say; “let the state tax us.” Christians have died for that, and are we going to surrender it? In most of the world, religion has been controlled by the state as a department thereof. Our very word ‘liturgy’ reflects that fact, look it up in the dictionary for its origin and meaning. Rome allowed no unlicensed; religion, meeting, school, or god, and the Christians were rejecting licensing and control in every sphere except the states power to tax them as individuals, and the states courts, everything else they said was not the legitimate power of Caesar. Islam perpetuates that pagan pattern, it sees the state as the true church, and so on and on in one religion after another. Incidentally, there has been a controversy of late because one major Presbyterian denomination has been giving some of its mission money to support Islamic groups in this country, who want the death of Christianity.

The division of life into independent interacting spheres is an aspect of biblical faith, and it has deep roots in the Old Testament. Never say “government,” when you mean the state house or Washington.

The government is upon His shoulders, our king's, and all the human spheres of government are under Him, for He is king over all kings, and lord over all lords.

This biblical perspective is heightened by the fact of the tithe and the civil tax. According to Numbers 18:25,26, the Levites were to receive the tithe, and tithe a tenth of the tithe to the priests. This meant that the worshiping group received one percent of a person's income, but when people today in the United States tithe about, or give rather, not tithe, two percent of their income... You know that if everyone gave one percent who is in the church, the church would have far more money than it does now. Unless you think that that two percent national average represents the Christians, no it doesn't! A great deal of it represents corporate giving to various non-Christian causes, and foundation giving to non-Christian causes, Christians don't give, except to themselves! They are rich towards themselves and poor towards God.

The care of the sanctuary and its music was given to the Levites, as were; health, education, and charity. Deacons in the literature of the early church were called 'Levites,' because these areas were under their control. The civil tax called an 'atonement,' or covering for protection of man and society was half a shekel, the same for all males aged twenty and over. Well into the Medieval era at least, this tax was collected among Jews for civil purposes, it is referred to in Exodus 30:11-16. What this tells us is that neither church nor state was to be under God's law a powerful institution commanding and controlling society. The Levites, later deacons, has more extensive and diffused duties. But the Levites were not a centralized institution, but local ministers of God's grace and mercy. The Christian man, the believer, was the basic unit of government.

The picture thus of biblical government is a clear one, a high degree of decentralization, with a strong emphasis on the individual and his family to govern in their spheres, and to provide the necessary support to enable the Levites or the deacons and their coworkers to minister in God's name. We first meet deacons in the new testament in Acts 6. The early church was practicing the biblical care of the needy in its midst, the work became too much for the apostles and seven deacons were chosen. The Levitical duties were then given to a new order of Levites, the diaconate. These deacons not only cared for widows but also taught, and in Acts 7 we see Stephen, and later on Philip, as powerful teachers of the faith. In Philippians 1:1, Paul addresses the saints at Philippi in Christ Jesus with the bishops or Presbyters, and deacons. The deacons are clearly important in the Lord's service. In first Timothy 3:10-13, we see how similar the requirements for deacons are to those for bishops or presbyters.

"And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless. Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things. Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus."

Perhaps a good summary of deacons in the early centuries is given by Philip Schaff:

"The office of these deacons, according to the narrative in Acts, was to minister at the table and the daily love feasts and to attend to the wants of the poor and the sick. The primitive churches were charitable societies, taking care of the widows and orphans, dispensing hospitality to strangers, and relieving the needs of the poor. The presbyters were the custodians, the deacons the collectors and distributors of the charitable funds."

Let me say the records of the early church show all kinds of rules for caring for the poor so that there would be no 'welfare hounds' on their list.

“To this work a kind of pastoral care of souls vary naturally attached itself, since poverty and sickness afford the best occasions and the most urgent demand for edifying instruction and consolation, hence living the faith and exemplary conduct were necessary qualifications for the office of deacon. Two of the Jerusalem deacons; Stephen and Philip, labored also as preachers and evangelists, but in the exercise of a personal gift rather than an official duty. In post-apostolic times when the bishop was raised above the presbyter and the presbyter became priest, (the word priest by the way is the word presbyter slurred into one, Southern-style!) The deacon was regarded as Levite, and his primary function of care of the poor was lost in the function of assisting the priest in the subordinate part of public worship, and the administration of the sacraments. The diaconate then became the first of the three orders of the ministry, and a stepping stone to the priesthood. At the same time, the deacon by his intimacy with the bishop as his agent and messenger acquired an advantage over the priest.”

There is no adequate history, I am sorry to say of the diaconate. But one fact in its history deserves both attention and revival. Just as the work of a presbytery, his calling is a full-time ministry, so too the deacon service requires a full-time commitment. This is how Europe was captured by the faith, the deacons were out there working among the poor, among the needy, among the sick, they were the missionary arm of the church going out into the community, they were the ones who made an impression on the world outside the church. As the church revives and strengthens the diaconate and makes it a vocation for those called to it, so too will the church grow and society become steadily Christianized. Nothing is more clear from Acts, that and the fact that the seven deacons were not part-time workers, but full-time servants of Jesus Christ. The Christian Levites were the functioning grace and mercy of Christ's kingdom. The deacons revealed clearly that Christ's kingdom is indeed a government. The work of charity carried on by the deacons was in marked contrast to the costly and evil welfarism of Rome, which we have today, here in the United States. At times, this made the deacons a special target of persecution, because their work was not only 'Christ manifested in his royal kingdom and grace and mercy,' but also the love of God through His people.

Long before the church had a building, which it did not for at least two centuries, its deacons were creating institutions; hospitals, homes for the homeless, and more. Chalcedon now has, although not so titled, some working full-time deacons. We today face the coming collapse of the welfare state and its programs, all of which have helped destroy the recipients of statist welfare.

There are economists, good ones, who say that as of January '92, forty percent of the federal income went just to pay the interest on the national debt. Some are predicting within a year and a half or two years, others say it will take longer, but it's coming. The interest will equal the entire national debt. One senator was asked what will you do then? And he looked with disgust at the cameraman and interviewer and said why we will inflate of course! You may be a millionaire in the days ahead, and be very poor. This was the kind of world that the church moved into, this was how it conquered the empire, and replaced it, through the deacons.

I urge you all to go back to your churches and work to make your deacons full-time deacons, well-paid deacons because their work will be hard, to reach out and show that Christ is indeed king. As our modern 'Rome' faces collapse, we need to revive the diaconate and its holy and necessary calling. All this leads in one direction, and to one conclusion, we, Christians, must take government back from the state and restore it to Jesus Christ. The government in every sphere of life and thought must be and shall be upon His shoulders, because He is the blessed and only potentate, the king of kings and lord of lords, nothing can be withheld from His rule. This is postmillennialism, it's taking back government from the state and giving it to the Lord Jesus Christ, not in any centralized form on earth. He has said: "...all power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth," and I therefore find it baffling that churchmen who profess to believe the bible prefer their political party to God's Christ, and to God's law. The

church has confused worship, which is necessary, urgently necessary, but the church has confused worship with Christianity. They have assumed that when we worship properly, then we're Christians, but Calvin defined the true church as the faithful preaching of the Word, and the vast outreach of the deacons and their ministry, and that's why we have had the deacons after the offering at the end of the service stand out there to stick the plate at the end of a pole in front of anybody who pretended to be worshipful, this is literally true, and praying when the plate came by, they got them outside the doors, because Calvin felt this was necessary. The church is a barren place, if it be no more than a worship-center. This church is not a barren place, and I have asked Joe Morecraft, and I hope, he will take this as a rebuke that he must send me an article about the ministries of this church in various spheres. And I trust when you read in the Chalcedon Report, you will follow His example.

The church must be the training center, the barracks building of God's army, where Christ's people are prepared to exercise dominion in those spheres of life which surround them. Just a few days ago, before I left to come here, I received a long letter from a young man in the deep South and it very clearly raises an issue which is important for our time. He wrote in part:

"I have a christian roommate who maintains on eschatology that pre-tribulation dispensationalism is proven to be the only end-time occurrence according to scripture. I told him I was a reconstructionist postmillennialist of the Augustinian school of teaching, that I thought the church of Jesus Christ would prevail in real time, that I do not believe in a pre-tribulation rapture. My roommate said I was a heretic and all postmillennialists are heretics, he also said that a professing Christian need not lead a holy life to be saved, he just makes a profession of faith on the spot and he gets 'zapped' with the Holy Spirit and he is saved just like that."

Well you are no doubt familiar with that there is a city in Texas a major city where a man for years has been preaching that when you say yes to Jesus when you come forward you put Him under contract and tie His hands, you can go out and be a murderer, you can commit every crime he says in the book and some that are not in the book and He's got to take you to heaven. That's blasphemy! but that's the kind of idea that prevails so extensively, and this is why the church is content with 'worshiping' and not serving, it must worship and serve. It must get its marching orders in church, and then apply them.

It is sad that many who were neither Arminian nor dispensationalist premillennialists have come to believe that a bare confession of faith is binding on God, but not on them. Such people may appeal to the Bible, but they are not governed by the word of God. I began by calling attention to the fact that we today falsely equate government with the state or civil government. At times over the centuries the church, or some of the churches, have sought to equate government with the state, and even with the church. But if Isaiah 9:6, Matthew 28:18, and many other texts are right, we must equate government with our Lord Jesus Christ; He is priest, prophet, and king. As our great high priest He has made atonement for us, intercedes for us and prays for us, as the great Prophet He speaks God's clear and infallible word to us as king, He is our ruler and our law-giver, and when Paul called Christ our king, he was not talking about the kings that exist in our day who are figureheads, he was talking about one who was almighty, all-powerful, and total in His government. If we look elsewhere for prophet, priest, or king, we are faithless because then other lords have dominion over us. When other lords have dominion over us, the Lord gives us over into captivity to our enemies. He will not defend nor bless those who will not have Him as their king. This is why we are in the state we are in, this is why I urge you, work towards a full time diaconate in your church, begin with one full-time deacon. The question of course is an ancient one, "why speak ye not a word of bringing the king back?" Let us bring back the king! Thank you.

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Foundations of Social Order, III

R.J. Rushdoony

I spoke in a baptist church, I believe it was in Alabama, and the woman who was in charge of the dinner, I was an after dinner speaker, with a twinkle in her eyes told me she said: “you know, I know a little bit about you, so I prepared the dinner accordingly.” We are used to having Southern Baptist preachers who are just getting warmed up at an hours time, and they go on and on, and she said: “we get them seated very early, we give them a dinner of ham and corn on the cob, and they’ve got so much ham and corn stuck between their teeth they don’t last long with their speech, and she said we’re not doing that to you today.” Well, I once talked to a Sioux Indian, and in those days when, I was a missionary to the Shoshone and Paiute Indians, the Siouxs had a presbytery made up entirely of Sioux churches. Of course later, I understand the northern church decided that was discrimination and they broke it up against the will, I think, of the Siouxs. But, whether they succeeded or not, I don’t recall, because there was some discussion over it. But the Sioux had no liking for the annual visit of the moderator of the northern church because he would come, one of the old elders told me: “and speak a lot of nothings, and take a long time saying it.” So he said: “we fixed them! After dinner, and when the moderator was about to get up and speak, we would have the elder who was the host for the evening ask him very courteously how he liked the dinner. And of course being a polite man the moderator would say; ‘Very much.’ and the elder would say good, good, we served you, (and this is true,) one of our prized delicacies, puppy meat.” And he said: “you know, it made the after-dinner talk by the moderator very, very short.”

Well, I shall try to stay awake. in spite of the after-dinner hour, and I trust you will too. To review a bit of what we dealt with, the giving in the United States all causes; Christian United Way and other causes is now down to about two percent of the income of American families, and it is continuing to drop. The increasing proneness of Americans to debt living is cutting steadily into their ability to give to anything other than banks and loan companies. After they get through making their house payments and their car payments, the amount of funds they have is very limited. So, by despising God’s law which prohibits long-term debt, they’re paying a price for it, and the church, for failing to teach what God has to say here, is also paying a price. I pointed out also that in biblical law the tithe was paid to the Levites who gave a tithe of the tithe to the priest for the sanctuary. In addition, the Levites provided the music and the general care of the sanctuary, so that perhaps two to three percent of the tithe went to the sanctuary. In other words, more than now goes to all causes in the United States. The Levites were the deacons and teachers of that era, so that much of the government of society was in their care. If today the churches had a regard for God’s law, they would be the better for it.

More than one scholar has called to the fact that Christians are in the retreat; financially and in terms of their impact on the world. Hospitals are a Christian creation. Education for all is a Christian creation, in order as one of the first laws of this country, in a Massachusetts Bay colony, and picked up elsewhere: “that all might know the word of God, and thereby foil that old deluder Satan.” We provided the charity, the education, everything! More than one scholar has called attention to this retreat of Christianity. Some scholars have described the protestant church today as: “a convent full of married monks

and nuns,” people withdrawn from the world, unwilling to act in it, or upon it with a faith for victory. In 1928, one Christian scholar; John T. Glover wrote:

“Read James 1:27 and 2:8. Does he say that religion pure and undefiled consists of being baptized with water and observing the Lord’s supper? He does not mention the sacraments at all. Uninspired teachers say: ‘observe the sacraments, and so fulfill the law of Christ.’ Paul says in Galatians 6:2: ‘Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.’ Trusting in the sacraments for salvation, and substituting the observance of sacraments in the place of righteous living is a great error, a great perversion of the teaching of the New Testament.”

Glover was not a modernist, he was a teacher of Greek in a Bible school. The work of bearing one another’s burden was so seriously regarded by the apostles that at first they undertook it all by themselves. Very soon they found that a division of labor was necessary. Justice could be done neither to the ministry of the Word, or to the care of the widows and other needy persons. As a result, the diaconate was created as Acts 6 tells us, and we know the abilities of these men from the ministries of Stephen and Philip. The early church began and it continued to exist for about two centuries or more without buildings, but as I observed earlier today with hospitals for the sick or travelers and for the elderly, with homes for orphans and the homeless, and with ministries to every need including courts of law in terms of I Corinthians 6.

They also redeemed captives! As Rome grew weaker its navies were no longer able to cope with piracy, and many people were taken captives and held for ransom with no-one to ransom them except the Christians. One pastor, shepherd of souls, could say long before his death that he had helped rescue fifteen thousand captives. Do you understand what that means? Wherever there was a need, the early church worked to minister to that need.

More than a century ago, Gerhard Uhlhorn called attention to the great difference between the welfareism of the Roman empire and the charity of Christians. The Romans distributed money and food in terms of political premises. Seneca observed the thief as well as the perjurer and the adulterer receive the public corn; everyone, irrespective of morals, is a citizen. But, what was received only increased the demand. One emperor in 255 AD, decided to go a mile further than any previous emperor and he said every person on welfare would have their children and their children’s children to the end of time automatically go on welfare without application, and they cheered him that year, but the next year but he had nothing more to promise. In Uhlhorn’s words: “Christianity first introduced true benevolence and as it has a noble labor so it has also honored innocent poverty.”

Seneca, the Roman philosopher had said the aim of philosophy is to despise life, but Christians worshiped the one who is truth and life. Accordingly Christians became the dominant force in society. They rebuilt Europe when Rome fell, abolished torture and other evils, including slavery, which the Renaissance revived. Renaissance humanism, and Enlightenment humanism reintroduced slavery into the world.

Late Medieval pietism led to a loss of catholicity, and of relevance as religious concerns became narrow rather than universal. As the center of the Christian concern became; peace of mind, peace of heart, the right relationship with God, questions that should be settled with conversion, were made lifelong concerns. Alfred Von Martin has written that with the Renaissance religion ceased to be the moving and dominant force in society, it was replaced by politics. The Reformation, for a time, changed that, but with the decline of the reformation, and the return of pietism to the church, the church withdrew from the world. Last of all in colonial and early America. Up until the time of president Andrew Jackson, the church took care of health education and charity. Biblical preaching was replaced by pietistic preaching which aimed at producing a spirituality which had no earthly good. The-

ology became shop-talk among professional theologians, arcane discussion reserved for the doctors of theology, and beyond the reach of peoples in the pew. An example of this was lapsarianism, which had as its premise an erroneous assumption, namely a time-sequence in the mind of God, but God is the creator of time not its subject.

I am happy that a trend that is now apparent all over the country, theology returning to the pulpit, not a narrow theology, but a broad-based theology. Those of you may have picked up a book on the book table on 'word of faith theology,' man as God will find in it masterly theology, better than is taught in many a college and seminary, and it's in a pulpit in Mississippi. Marvelous! Theology is returning to the church.

But what happened with this other development of the departure of theology to the seminary was that the church was divided in two sectors. On the one hand were the scholars speaking to one another learnedly and abstractly, and irrelevantly. On the other hand were the scholars writing their learned tomes, and talking endlessly to each other. Both were separated from reality, the pious to pious gush, and the scholar to scholarly gush. This left the pastors unsupported in their effort to relate the faith to life. There is a story which could be better told by doctor Lee, Francis Nigel Lee, about a scholar in the Netherlands who decided he was going to be (he was a theological professor) the great authority on angels. And so he began to collect evidence of angelology from all religions and cultures. Having tenure, he would not lecture on any subject but angels. Students got bored with the subject, and finally he had no students so that was all the better, he was collecting a salary to do nothing but learn new languages, and learn about Hindu, Buddhist angels and the angels in Islam, learning Arabic for that, and so on and on. Until there was nothing of interest to him except angels, he didn't want visitors to come by, he wasn't interested in his children, he was going to be the world's great expert on angelology. Finally, his wife left him and moved in with her daughter, and said when you come to your senses, and can live again with humans I'll return. Well, he finally finished the seventh manuscript volume of the most complete work on angels ever produced, and went to bed joyfully, planning to take the seven massive volumes to the printer the next day. That night the Lord spoke, and the house burnt down, God gave his opinion of such scholarship.

Well, theology is coming back to the pulpit, rejoice in it! Consider again for a moment the meaning of 'government' as more than the state, and as primarily self government. For us, this must mean the self-government of the Christian man. In *Revolt Against Maturity* which I published in 1977, I called attention to Salem, Massachusetts from 1795 to 1845. Societies were created by lay people, each of whom would begin a work, and then accumulate a following, to meet every kind of need that immigrants possibly could have. They met every boat, they helped the immigrants find housing, to find jobs, they them job training if they needed it. They told them about the foods they could encounter in the United States, which were unknown in Europe. They taught English to the parents, they put the children in Christian school, and hosts of things like that. Do you know that most of the Irish in the United states to this day are Presbyterians? Because there were Presbyterian societies like this that met the boats! Every part of the United States in those days had hundreds of similar groups, loosely organized, action-oriented. I'm telling you this because it is a mistake to believe that the United States was a free country from George Washington on through Franklin Pierce, and some of the other presidents of that pre eighteen sixty era, because of its politicians. No! That was not the key. The key was all these Christian men and women who took it upon themselves to meet every conceivable need they saw in their communities. Once Christians under the influence of revivalism began to abandon these spheres, the state expanded its powers, and statism began to develop in the United States.

In fact, in some parts of the country, the last of these organizations and activities did not end until WWII. How many of you remember Captain Dollar's steamship lines? They were a Pacific firm, the biggest organization on the West Coast in the area of shipping. The man Captain Dollar was a com-

manding figure, a big white-haired white bearded man, take note Joseph Morecraft, and a Presbyterian elder. He created homes for all the homeless boys he could find. Each home would have a Christian couple as the father and mother. Each home had sixty boys. There was never a graduate of the Captain Dollar's homes that ever went astray. When they finished their schooling they were bussed across the bay to San Francisco and taken to old Captain Dollar's offices, and when the boys crowded in, the old man would pray for each of those boys, hand them each a silver dollar, and say: "God bless you!" Those boys were proud to tell you: "I'm one of Captain Dollar's boys!" That was one man seeing a need in the San Francisco bay area, and meeting a specific need. There are thousands of stories like that, tens of thousands that tell you why we were so free a country for so long in our history. During WWII they shut down the Captain Dollar's homes saying that sixty boys could not be properly taken care of by one couple. There have never been state homes that have been successful. Captain Dollar's homes were a source of pride to every boy who ever went there. In those days, if I met someone, and he learned I was a Presbyterian minister, he would say: "I'm one of Captain Dollar's boys." He knew I would appreciate what that meant.

Dr. Cornelius Van Til said very bluntly that man's choice is between autonomy and theonomy, self-rule, or self law or God's rule, God's law. Any honest reading of God's law makes clear its great emphasis on godly charity, how else can we become members one of another? True social order is only possible on biblical grounds, in terms of God's law. During the Medieval era, and also the Reformation, 'charity' was called 'almsgiving.' The word 'alms' comes from the Greek 'Ilios,' compassion. Now, in the Greek, the word has no singular form. One scholar has said of it that it is as if to teach us that a solitary act of charity scarcely deserves the name. Alms, a way of life, outgoing, continual compassion. We read in Psalm 41:1-3, and there are many many verses like this in the Bible, but we pass over them:.

"Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble. The Lord will preserve him, and keep him alive; and he shall be blessed upon the earth: and thou wilt not deliver him unto the will of his enemies. The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing: thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness."

A magnificent promise, from God who cannot lie! Why do we neglect texts like that? It is God's word, He equates the quality of life with charity, alms, our compassion. What must God think of members in churches who have never helped the needs of others? He declares: "I am the God of widows and orphans." He asks us to remember them when we give thanks around the thanksgiving table, by inviting them in. How can we expect God to be merciful to us when we ignore the opportunities He sets before us to govern the world in terms of His law? The church was very early required to separate itself from the world, not to fight it, but to train itself to rule over it. How can we rule over God's world if we do not begin by having God and His law to rule over us? It is time to take back the government from the state, and to place it under the triune God and His law. It is time to bring the king back, and to take His promises and His Word very seriously. Thank you, and God bless you as you serve Him.

ENDNOTES:

1. Notably Count Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn
2. Dr. Gerhard Uhlhorn. *The CONFLICT OF CHRISTIANITY WITH HEATHENISM*. Translated by Egbert C. Smith and C.J.H. Ropes. Revised Edition. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1901, 110.
3. *The Holy Bible: King James Version (Electronic Edition of the 1900 Authorized Version., Ps 41:1-3)*. (2009). Logos Research Systems, Inc.
4. "A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows, Is God in his holy habitation." *The Holy Bible: King James Version (Electronic Edition of the 1900 Authorized Version., Ps 68:5)*. (2009). Logos Research Systems, Inc.

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