

## **A Note on James Jordan's Recent Letter**

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James Jordan's privately circulated letter (January, 1997) verifies the widening chasm between a number of the earlier Christian Reconstructionists who have now adopted an explicitly ecclesiocentric (and therefore anti-Reconstructionist) vision, and those of us on the other hand spearheading the original vision of Rushdoony and Chalcedon. Jordan complains about "big-name reconstructionists'" "atrocious behavior . . . toward other Christians" (one wished he had specified them) with whom he no longer wishes to be identified. Interestingly, since he has referred to Stephen Perks as "an ignorant and stupid man . . . a fool . . . an unthinking follower" [of Rushdoony] (personal correspondence, August 4, 1992), one finds his public charges about the acrimony of "big-name" Christian reconstructionists somewhat hypocritical.

Nonetheless, Jordan's most recent letter instances that the differences between the new breed of ecclesiocentrists on the one hand and us Christian reconstructionists on the other derive not chiefly from any personal animus, but are indeed substantive. I have demonstrated this in my essay "Recovering the Christian Reconstructionist Vision" originally published in \*Christianity and Society\* and now available from Chalcedon's web site:

<http://www.chalcedon.edu>

In his latest letter, Jordan visibly distances himself from Christian Reconstruction (CR) and theonomy. Fortunately, despite his repudiation of theonomy (or biblionomy), he retains an affirmation of "the continuing applicability of the Sinaitic law." Readers of his works \*The Sociology and the Church\* and his comments in \*Christianity and Civilization\*'s issue "The Reconstruction of the Church," however, are aware that his odd view of the law interpreted through a transformational-Christological grid blunts the force of the OT law's applicability. We biblionomists hold that, apart from the fulfillment of the OT sacrificial system in Christ (Heb. 8) and those ordinances which served to erect a barrier between ethnic Israel and the Gentiles (Col. 2), the law remains eternally applicable. This biblionomic view rests on the conviction of the law's status as divine propositional revelation, the very word of Christ not circumscribed by a highly symbolic new covenant paradigm or "transformed" by Christ's incarnational redemptive ministry. For biblionomists, unlike Jordan, the OT law is authoritative as Christ's word on its own ground, and not by virtue of the imposition of a Christological-transformational construct which eviscerates its authority.

Jordan claims Rushdoony's view of the church "borders on heresy" and recommends as an antidote Gary North's \*Baptized Patriarchalism\*, which attacks Rushdoony's views on the church. For a refutation of many of the misguided assertions and mistaken conclusions of this book, consult my review "Deconstruction Reconstruction," accessible from Chalcedon's web

site and available from the Chalcedon office, P. O. Box 158, Vallecito, CA 95251. Rushdoony and Chalcedon are the heirs of the Kuyperian vision of sphere sovereignty, though, of course, unlike Kuyper, our approach to ethics is explicitly Biblical and anti-statist. We have always maintained that the \*Christian\* family (not the family \*qua\* family, a crucial distinction) is man's first church, school, state, and so forth. It is in \*this\* sense that Chalcedon posits the family as the principal factor in the reconstructive task, following our Puritan forebears (see Edmund Morgan's \*The Puritan Family\*, especially the chapter "Puritan Tribalism" [!]).

With the reformers we acknowledge that the church is wider than its institutional dimension, and with a large segment of the later continental Calvinists we deny that the institutional dimension of the church exhausts the kingdom of God. The institutional dimension of the church is indeed vital, but the ecclesiocentric paradigm of Jordan's works to undermine the CR vision by repristinating a largely medieval consolidation of the kingdom in the institutional dimension of the church, a consolidation from which the reformers were not entirely immune and which Kuyper and Rushdoony progressively (and correctly) abandoned.

I have argued on numerous occasions that the Rushdoonyian vision alone (though in the wake of Kuyper and Dooyeweerd) comes to grips with the staggering effects of Enlightenment and its natural reactions, Romanticism, and most recently "post-modernism," in modern culture. In my opinion, the collapse of the traditional Reformed paradigm in the face of 18th-century Enlightenment was due largely to its fuzzy thinking on the relation between the church and kingdom, paralleling its fuzzy thinking about the relation between nature and grace, a fuzzy thinking which Jordan is now attempting to revive. From a purely theological and theoretical standpoint, only CR, I am convinced, can adequately confront and vanquish the acidic effects of Enlightenment, as well as those of Romanticism and "post-modernism." It is this point that I am convinced Jordan, despite his obvious gifts, fails to grasp.

Note well: OUR MAIN CONCERN IS NOT IN ANY SENSE TO ATTACK THE INSTITUTIONAL DIMENSION OF THE CHURCH, BUT RATHER THE PROPENSITY TO LIMIT THE MAJORITY OF KINGDOM AND RECONSTRUCTIVE ACTIVITY TO THE INSTITUTIONAL DIMENSION OF THE CHURCH. We Christian Reconstructionists are Faith-centered, not church- (or, for that matter, family-) centered. The institutional church is a single dimension of its existence, and a single aspect of the kingdom.

It is for this reason that the CR and the new ecclesiocentric visions are fundamentally irreconcilable, mutually exclusive. We CR's perceive the authority of Christ and power of God's Spirit flowing directly to the obedient familial, ecclesiastical, and state spheres; opposing Rome and ecclesiocentric Protestants (who, in Rushdoony's words, "out-catholic the Catholics"), we do not believe the institutional dimension of the church is the exclusive conduit through which God's covenantal blessings must flow. It is the Faith, not the family, church, or state, that is central.

CR is not an inherently ecclesiological phenomenon, and includes Presbyterians, Baptists, Calvinist charismatics, Anglicans, independents, and others of distinctive church persuasions. We CR's do not believe that what Brian Abshire terms the Greater Reformation must perform

begin in the institutional dimension of the church--crucial though it is--but rather in the hearts and lives of the people of God, working outwardly to Christian families, churches, society and, only finally, the state.

I urge all interested to read my essay "A Theonomic Ecclesiology" published in the September, 1995 issue of the \*Chalcedon Report\* and available on the Chalcedon web site, for an expansion of this point. Vital too, of course, is Rushdoony's section on the church in his \*Systematic Theology\*.

We are saddened by the stereotyping malignity with which Jordan indicts us, though we are relieved he is "not at war with anybody over any of this," as indeed, we are not. Jim will no doubt go his way in his ecclesiocentric vision; and we will, by God's grace, go ours, working by an explicit Biblical pattern to advance the Faith in all spheres of life simultaneously.

His work was once in line with the vision from which he now publicly distances himself (his 1978-79 theonomic essay defending the authority of the Mosaic judicials remains classic); we at Chalcedon persist in that world-conquering vision.

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We all have private ails. The troublemakers are they who need public cures for their private ails.  
-- Eric Hoffer, Reflections on the Human Condition