

COLUMNS: WYATT GRAHAM

R. J. Rushdoony: A Patriarch for Modern Theonomy

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I grew up with R. J. Rushdoony and Gary North on my family's bookshelves. My homeschool curriculum had indistinct ties to him. Aspects of my university and seminary education also bore the influence of Rushdoony's thought. I read the works of Cornelius Van Til (who influenced Rushdoony) and Greg Bahnsen to understand apologetics.[1]

Despite these connection points, I had no reason to dig into Rushdoony's works themselves. After all, theonomy had died out in the 1980s and 90s, which was preceded (if not caused) by infighting among its key players. Rushdoony and Gary North (his son-in-law), for example, had a bitter relationship in later years.

Yet through a renewal of this earlier movement under the form of Christian Reconstructionism, I recognized theonomic aspirations. Christian Reconstructionism may not share the same theonomic theology, but it shares the desire to reconstruct a godly society after the coming collapse of our society.

Another reason for my newly borne interest in this movement involves Christian responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. Many believers struggled to find an appropriate way to respond to governmental restrictions.

Traditionally, reformed theology confesses that God reigns through church and state, which has grounded Christians who affirm the reformed confessions and theological writings of the reformers. Yet not all had that grounding nor inclination. Some opted to return to certain ideas that Rushdoony and others had promoted. In particular, some emphasized the law of God as the guide for how the government should act and for how we should respond to restrictions.

For these reasons, looking back to Rushdoony can help us make sense of ourselves and the world we live in today even if he influences only one small sliver of it. I am, after all, not the only one who grew up in a world influenced by Rushdoony's ideas. It can help us to understand Christian reconstructionism in the Pacific Northwest of the USA as well as why some have responded to restrictions in the way they have.

In this article, I do not intend anything like a comprehensive study of Rushdoony. This article merely provides some context for his life, thought, and theology as well as a brief appraisal of his theology.

R. J. Rushdoony's Life

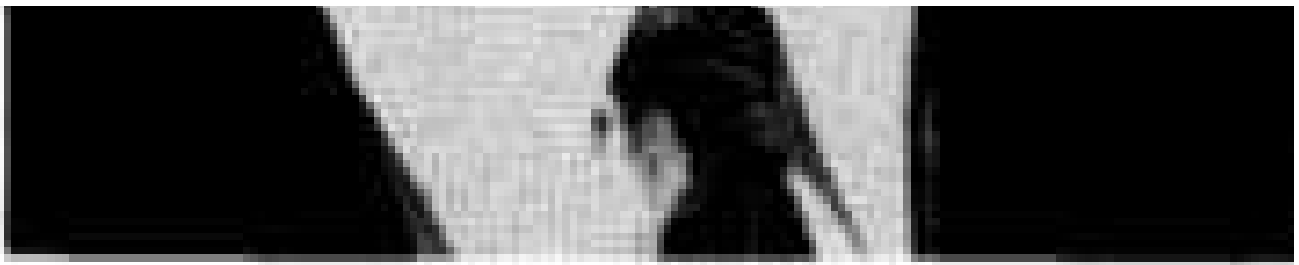
Rousas John Rushdoony was born in New York in 1916. His family had moved to the USA from Armenia because of the threat of Turkish violence during WWI.[2] The family also moved from the Orthodox tradition to become Presbyterians. Rousas studied at Berkeley as well as the Pacific School of Religion.

In 1944, he became an ordained minister in the PCUSA. He began to minister among the Duck Valley Indian Reservation in 1945, where he spent eight years. There, Rushdoony thought carefully about Christian education. He wanted to educate Christians to understand all of life. As McVicar recounts, Rushdoony "believed that the trouble with the reservation's Paiute and Shoshone inhabitants were directly linked to the poor education they received in the reservation schools. He called his flock together to discuss the matter." [3]

McVicar continues, “Rushdoony reckoned that education based on Christian principles would not only help save the souls of the enrolled children but, over time, would also change the culture of the reservation and lead to the spiritual redemption and regeneration of the entire reservation.”[4] In other words, he believed that a Christian education of the reservation could transform it. One might cast a cautious gaze over at a similar system in Canada, in which Christian ministers served at residential schools.

These early thoughts on Christian education would blossom over his career. Eventually, he would found the Chalcedon foundation (1965) and become a champion for homeschoolers. Worthen notes that “Throughout his career, Rushdoony was deeply concerned with education as the cornerstone of society—one rightly belonging to parents, but usurped by the State.”[5]





The Rev. R. J. Rushdoony

And Rushdoony particularly played an important role in the homeschooling movement. During a key case in the 1990s in Texas (the *Leeper* case), Rushdoony even gave expert witness. “Shelby Sharpe, one of the Leepers’ attorney later recalled that Rushdoony’s testimony proved decisive in the case: ‘His testimony was way beyond anything I’d hoped for. It was one of the few times in my career that I ever saw a witness destroy the attorney who was trying to examine him.’”[6]. Through this case, homeschooling eventually became legal and possible among the various states within the USA. It is hard to imagine that this only occurred in the 1990s.

As a sort of hero of Christian education, Rushdoony’s basic ideas have directly or indirectly affected many conservative Protestants in North America (and probably beyond). Most probably do not know the name Rushdoony but they might have heard arguments for homeschooling that have some connection to Rushdoony’s teaching on Christian education.

For example, notions that state schools indoctrinate children and so parents should homeschool remain influential today. This suspicion of state education connects to Rushdoony’s anti-statism and libertarianism.

Rushdoony’s anti-statism and libertarianism had theological purpose. William Edgar explains, “Central to just about every one of Rushdoony’s writings is the notion that freedom must be preserved at the local level, so that God’s law can be faithfully obeyed by all people, without interference from higher temporal powers.”[7]. In other words, homeschooling provides one key way to maintain one’s freedom at “the local level” without interference “from higher temporal powers.” In this way, God’s law “can be faithfully obeyed by all people.”

Rushdoony may have been a hero for Christian education, but he struggled to maintain good relationships with Christian denominations, friends, and even his family. He had a tragic and combative relationship with the PCUS/ the OPC (of Machen fame), and Christianity Today. He eventually finished his life as an Anglican. His early career with the Volker Fund resulted in a breakdown of relationships with coworkers. Something similar happened with Christianity Today, and Rushdoony himself had bad blood with its editor, Carl Henry.

Most sadly, Rushdoony had a bad relationship with his wife, Arda, whom he accused of having a mental breakdown. That might have been the case. She was placed in medical care. But one might wonder why she had a mental breakdown. “In court documents, Arda accused Rushdoony of ‘extreme cruelty’ and claimed he ‘wrongly inflicted upon [her] grievous mental suffering.’”[8]. Later, Rushdoony would remarry. This marriage too would tarnish his reputation as he married the wife of a loyal elder at his church (Dorothy Barbara Kirkwood). One wonders how her former husband Thomas Gilbert Kirkwood understood the whole affair.

A former colleague of Rushdoony, Gary North, married one of his daughters. While their relationship started strong, Rushdoony and North became estranged and hostile to each other. This hostility seemed to reach out to those associated with the Tyler school.

McVicar notes, “Even as his personal life fell apart and his family fractured, Rushdoony began making fitful progress toward developing his professional career as a writer, lecturer, and churchman.”[9].

His earlier work at the Volker Fund afforded him libertarian connections, and this sort of commitment to individual liberty seems to have played a role in his ministry and career. It at least helped him to conceive of his anti-state approach to life. As McVicar summarizes his approach: “Rushdoony distinguished himself by fusing a militant Christian Gospel with a visceral antipathy to the modern state. ... He not only advocated that parents abandon public schools but also articulated a social project that called Christians to “take dominion” over all spheres of human society—including the state—and turn them toward explicitly Christian purposes.”[10].

Through his writings and in particular the Chalcedon foundation, Rushdoony basically accomplished his mission. However, his movement was a house divided. And it largely disappeared, although its seeds carried through in movements like John Frame (who was merely sympathetic to the approach) and James B. Jordan.

R. J. Rushdoony's Thought

Rushdoony believed that all of life should submit to God, whether in education, politics, or society at large. We must take dominion, he believed. The state prevents such dominion, as it takes more and more control, becoming something like a god to us. Education too should not be controlled, but open to parents and families to control.

As Rushdoony explains, “Where God’s law is honored, no man can regard himself as meeting God’s requirements of holiness who gives his children to a godless system of education, or who feels that a secular state is acceptable to a Christian. God’s law requires obedience by all men and institutes at all times.”[11].

The Law of Moses particularly played an important role here, since it was to be followed and guide these spheres of life. In his well-known but controversial application of Mosaic Law to society, Rushdoony believed that witches, incorrigible children, and gay persons should be put to death.

In her study of theonomy, Molly Worthen defines the continuing validity of the whole law as one of its five key tenets. She explains, “This last principle means that most of the more than six hundred rules and regulations of ancient Israelite society laid down in the Pentateuch, which most Christians consider abrogated by Christ, apply to modern society today.”[12].

He marshalled the philosophy of Cornelius Van Til for his cause as well, even translating some of the writings of Van Til for *Christianity Today*. He also dedicated an entire book to Van Til’s thought in 1959.[13]. Van Til argued for an antithesis, a separation of creator and creature. There was no sort of neutral ground among Christians and non-Christians.

Rushdoony took this in rather pointed directions when it came to something like natural law. He argued, “The doctrine of natural law asserts the presence in nature of inherent laws which govern reality, so that law is transferred from God to nature.”[14]. In other words, Rushdoony argued that natural law implies an internal process, so that God is not needed to discern right from wrong.[15].

Reformed and classical Christian thinkers have said just the opposite. God’s law in nature manifests his order in the world. That is why people can recognize God’s law in nature, since it reflects his order in the world. Still, Rushdoony moved away from natural law, which left him with biblical law, the Law of Moses. This law would then inform a good society, especially since Rushdoony and others believed that American society would soon collapse.

The name *Chalcedon* (Rushdoony’s organization) already hints at this notion of dominion. He argued that the Council of Chalcedon (451) denied legitimacy to the state apart from Christ, since Chalcedon declared that Christ’s one person existed in two natures, the divine and human. All was under Christ, and so all must follow the law of God.

Worthen notes, “Rushdoony’s interpretation of the Chalcedonian formula may seem eccentric.”[16]. Indeed, it is. Chalcedon affirmed Christological doctrine, and the political implications did not play as central a role (if it all) a Rushdoony believed.

Even so, on the basis of his view of Chalcedon and Christ’s Lordship, Rushdoony could say, “Socialism, statist education, mental health programs, social security, and a variety of other statist programs provide the framework man’s growing attempt to claim the power of predestination for himself.”[17]. Man wants to be independent of God. And man, for Rushdoony, uses the state, mental health programs, and more besides for that end—to take control make human institutions divine.

One must resist then and take dominion of the world. Rushdoony says, “The world, moreover, cannot be surrendered to Satan. It is God’s world and must be brought under God’s law, politically, economically, and in every other way possible.”[18].

Elsewhere, he writes, “The man who is being progressively sanctified will inescapably sanctify his home, school, politics, economics, science, and all things else....”[19]. This dominion mandate, rooted in Genesis 1, controls much of Rushdoony’s thought as he tries to bring all spheres of life under the control of Christ and the law of God.

R. J. Rushdoony’s Theology Briefly Appraised

Rushdoony wrote prolifically, read widely, and bears the mark of genius. In other words, I cannot appraise his theological views properly in a short article like this. I can, however, mention a couple of lines of thought that I find interesting and reflect on them.

Hermeneutics of Law

First, Rushdoony believed that an Old Testament law remains valid unless the New Testament says otherwise. His position might remind readers of John Feinberg’s argument that promises in the Old Testament remain valid unless the New Testament says otherwise.[20]. While both Rushdoony and Feinberg formally disagree on theology (Feinberg was a dispensationalist), they share a similar approach to defining when and how the Old Testament has ongoing force for Christians.

In any case, this hermeneutical rule leads to interesting conclusions. For example, when Rushdoony speaks about dietary laws in the Mosaic Law, he does not believe the New Testament abrogates them but merely modifies their function in the life of a believer.

Generally, Peter’s vision in Acts 10 is understood to invalidate the Mosaic dietary laws. Rushdoony disagrees. He explains: “To what extent are the Mosaic dietary laws still valid for us? Acts 10 is commonly cited as abolishing the old dietary restrictions. There is no reason for this opinion” (*Institutes*, 301).[21].

Rushdoony thinks the vision only meant to prepare Peter to embrace the gentiles. “There is no evidence in the charge that the vision had anything to do with diet; it did have everything to do with the Great Commission and the admission of Gentiles into the kingdom” (*Institutes*, 301).

But Colossians 2:16–17 tells Rushdoony that he cannot directly accept the dietary laws in the exact same way they applied to Israel. Rushdoony understands Colossians 2:16–17 to mean that it is no longer a capital offense for failure to keep the sabbath (*Institutes*, 301). The same thing is true for food laws. They “provide us with a principle of operation,” says Rushdoony. The food then is not important for our salvation, but it is important for our health (*Institutes*, 301).

In other words, Kosher eating is “a sound rule for health” (*Institutes*, 302). He believes that Colossians 2:16 cannot mean the dietary laws are gone, or so is the sabbath law. So both remain to some extent (*Institutes*, 302).

It fascinates me that one explanation (which was incidentally popular among some dispensational circles) for the laws in the Mosaic Law is that they provided a healthy diet to the Israelites. Rushdoony concurs, and so would many others. But it shows a similar hermeneutical approach between Rushdoony and many other modern evangelicals. Dietary laws in the Bible may set Israel off from the nations, but they are also for the health of the people.

While I cannot develop the point at length here, I find such arguments to be too thin theologically. The logic of eating in Leviticus has a *thick theological purpose, not merely a civil or organizational rationale*. Civil and societal order, however, end up being Rushdoony's emphasis—how to order society around God's law. But that's not the ultimate purpose of the Mosaic law, and not the primary purpose of the food laws.

An important theological reason for eating some foods and not others has to do with the basic theological meaning of the law—to point us to life and to separate us from death. Food that associates with death and corruption are forbidden; food associated with life is encouraged. The whole structure of the camp and tabernacle—structured around being closer or farther from God depending on where one stands—involves life and death, purity and corruption.

If one touches a dead body, they go outside the camp, and are exiled from God who is Life—as Adam and Eve were exiled from the tree of Life. All of this not only teaches us about God but also provides the theological structure to understand the sacrifice of Christ who is Life ([John 14:6](#)). To see this argument spelled out in more detail, see *Who Shall Ascend the Mountain of the Lord* by L. Michael Morales.

The ultimate purpose of the law basically is to give us the structures of thought to understand the work of Christ, priest, the mediator of the new covenant, and law-giver. As Hebrews says, “the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities” ([Heb 10:1](#)).

The law of Moses is *Christological* through and through. Its meaning ultimately and primarily is about Christ, who is why Christ defines himself in all of Scripture, even in “the law of Moses” on the road to Emmaus ([Luke 24:44](#)).

At the end of the day, we can either have bacon or we can have theonomy. We cannot have both! I am joking of course, but even here, the joke bears a sense of truth to it (see Rushdoony's view on food law above).

More seriously, I maintain that Christ is the *telos* of the Law, the reason why the law of Moses came into being. I imagine the food laws are also a relatively healthy way to eat, but that is not the point. I also affirm they set Israel as a holy people. But there is always a *reason why*—it is just not mere whim. The logic, I maintain, centres on life and death, divine presence and divine absence, purity and contamination. All of this gives us the structure of thought to understand the person and work of Christ.

When Christ said to Peter that he made all things clean, he meant the food laws ([Acts 10:15](#)). Peter inferred that if the food laws no longer define one's purity or proximity to life, then it follows that gentiles are now included in the new covenant, where they can feast on Life itself, Christ. As Peter says, “God has shown me that I should not call any person common or unclean” ([Acts 10:28](#)).

Justification, Law & Sanctification

Rushdoony argues that God saves us by grace but sanctifies us by the law. “Salvation is by the grace of God through faith, and sanctification is by law.”[22].

It is important to realize that by law Rushdoony does not *only* mean the Law of Moses but also the various laws throughout the Bible. Basically, he uses the word law interchangeably for the law of Moses or the whole Bible. He has said, Rushdoony often prioritizes the Law of Moses: “The law, as given through Moses, established the laws of godly society, of true development for man under God, and the prophets repeatedly recalled Israel to this purpose” (*Institutes*, 3).

The original purpose of mankind was to take dominion of the world under God's law ([Gen 1:28](#)), and I suppose that Rushdoony would say that Mosaic Law represents that law. But due to the Fall of humanity, Christ must bring us back to a state of covenant keeping (*Institutes* 3–4). Grace justifies, but Christ then brings us back to the dominion mandate, to covenant keeping, to law keeping. Rushdoony explains, “The purpose of grace is not to set aside the law but to fulfil the law and to enable man to keep the law” (*Institutes*, 4).

Once humans begin to follow God's law, culture will flourish, Rushdoony argues. He writes:

“The increasing breakdown of law and order must first of all be attributed to the churches and their persistent antinomianism. If the churches are lax with respect to the law, will not the people follow suit? And civil law cannot be separated from Biblical law, for the Biblical doctrine of law includes all law, civil, ecclesiastical, societal, familial, and all other forms of law. The social order which despises God's law places itself on death row: it is marked judgment” (*Institutes*, 4).

So the law transforms Christians and society. While that law certainly means the Law of Moses, it also includes the whole Bible (*Institutes*, 6). That it includes the Law of Moses is illustrated by the fact that Rushdoony believes that the state should, for example, execute gay people or possibly execute someone who intentionally has sex with a woman on her period (*Institutes*, 422–25, 427).

It is hard to square God's gracious salvation of us with ongoing penalties of the law, such as the ones just mentioned. Rushdoony, for instance, explains that we are dead to the law because the law no longer has a sentence of death for us (*Institutes*, 304). Christ took the penalty for us, the curse of the law.

But then: if the Law of Moses can legislate death for my sin, how am I free from the law? As Paul notes, “you also have died to the law through the body of Christ” ([Rom 7:4](#)).

Rushdoony rightly says that Paul means we are dead to the law's consequences because Christ took our penalty. But then Rushdoony wants this very *same* law to legislate the death penalty for our crimes against the Mosaic legislation.

For example, Rushdoony believes that Jesus approved of the death penalty for the woman caught in adultery ([John 7:53–8:11](#)). The reason why Jesus does not condemn the woman is that no legal witnesses were available. Rushdoony explains, “Jesus had *confirmed* the death penalty; He had simply demanded honest witnesses to step forward and execute her, to ‘first cast a stone at her’ (vs. 7)” (*Institutes*, 705). There was “no *legal* case against the woman” (*Institutes*, 705).

Had there been witnesses, Jesus would have approved the woman's legal execution according to Rushdoony's argument. As he says, “We are simply told that no ground for legal condemnation existed at the moment” (*Institutes*, 705). Even if she was converted at this time, her husband—should she have one—could still return and prosecute a case against her. The story then, for Rushdoony, proves that Jesus was “the champion of the law” (706).

While I cannot go as far as Rushdoony, I agree that the law plays a role in sanctification, but which law? For Rushdoony, the ceremonial law might sanctify in that, for example, food laws remain valid for Christians for the purpose of health (see above).

But Rushdoony thinks that laws made to Israel for her civil order continue more directly. “It is a serious error to say that the *civil law* was also abolished, but the *moral law* retained. At most points, they cannot be distinguished” (*Institutes*, 304). So one must execute an incorrigible child, to state one implication of this view.

Yet, as noted, Rushdoony also argues that Christ frees us by grace from the punishment of law. He even cites Christ's death, taking the penalty or curse of the law, on our behalf as evidence of the ongoing validity of the law (*Institutes* 302–303, 308). Again, how can that be if the death penalty under the Mosaic legislation still applies? Are we in the new covenant and justified or not (cf. [Acts 13:39](#))? This represents a weakness in Rushdoony's work because he does not distinguish law appropriately.

I find John Calvin and many others in the Reformed tradition more compelling in their denial of the ongoing force of both ceremonial and civil law. John Calvin, for instance, wrote: “Therefore, as ceremonies might be abrogated without at all interfering with piety, so, also, when these judicial arrangements are removed, the duties and precepts of the law can still remain perpetual” (*Inst.* 4.20.15). Piety and the civil law's purpose (charity or love) continue to remain even when ceremonial and civil aspects of law are abrogated.

Usually then, the reformed argued that the moral law as presented in the Ten Commandments has ongoing relevance because they correspond to natural law, an expression of God's eternal law, his own Being. (To learn about more about this reformed understanding of law, see the four articles linked in the footnote below.)[23].

Another interesting facet of Rushdoony's view on justification and sanctification involves his view of law and gospel. He writes, “To separate the law from the gospel is to separate oneself from the law and the gospel, and from Christ” (*Institutes* 307-8). It seems by this statement that Rushdoony wants to unite law and gospel since he says that separating from law and gospel amounts to separate oneself from Christ.

A sympathetic reading of his view would be to see this type of statement as fitting into his larger argument that God justifies by grace and sanctifies by law.

The work of Christ, for Rushdoony, is not only about justifying but also about restoring mankind to a state of law-keeping. He explains, “With Adam's fall, man fell, and God's law-order was broken. With Christ's victory, man in Christ triumphed, and God's law-order was restored, with its mandate to exercise dominion under God and to subdue the earth. Can any man of God proclaim less?” (*Institutes*, 308).

The key passage that Rushdoony cites is [Romans 8:4](#). He strongly implies that “the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us” means fulfilling the Law of Moses.

But one might wonder if the rest of the verse gives another and more compelling interpretation since Paul qualifies the statement by saying, “who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.”

Paul writes a little later in Romans, “love is the fulfilling of the law” ([Rom 13:10](#)). And that Love comes by way of the Holy Spirit, “God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit” ([Rom 5:5](#)).

So walking by the Spirit means walking by love, which fulfills the law. Jesus taught the same thing in [Matthew 22:37-40](#).

Since God and Christ give the Spirit of Love ([Rom 8:9–11](#)), then “Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes” ([Rom 10:4](#)). He is the end, as in telos, the fulfillment of the law. He gives the Spirit of Love who allows us to accomplish the purpose of the law, which is to love God and neighbour.

As Paul says, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control; against such things there is no law” ([Gal 5:22–23](#)). This is because “the law is not laid down for the just” ([Tim 1:9](#)).

This kind of logic makes sense of Paul in [Galatians 5:6](#) where Paul says, “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything”—which is obviously a law of God—“but only faith working through love” ([Gal 5:6](#)).

In sum, the Spirit inscribes Love unto our hearts by faith in Jesus, so that we from the heart accomplish the law's intent—the duplex love of God and neighbour.

J. Rushdoony among the Evangelicals

Reading Rushdoony helped to uncover a significant influence in my life, one which I had not considered in detail before. Interestingly, I posted some quotes and thoughts on Rushdoony on social media, and I found that I was not alone.

Rushdoony, in one way or another, influenced many evangelicals in the 80s and 90s. While his movement died out, influence continued through the homeschool movement as well as institutions aligned with the Moral Majority (e.g., Liberty University).

It is an historical oddity that Rushdoony for some time worked with Hal Lindsey in California! The theological line and connections one might expect from Rushdoony's writings should have prevented such relationships. We generally expect theology to create unity among organizations. Often, however, it is not theology but personality or political emphasis that forges group identity.

Baptists, whose roots involve the separation of church and state and discontinuity between the Old and New Covenants (e.g., by maintaining believer's baptism, not infant baptism) have at times adopted theonomic arguments. That should be nearly impossible theologically, but perhaps other reasons explain why a Baptist might adopt theonomic reasoning.

In another article, I want to focus on one such reason: the rebirth of Christian Reconstructionism without the structural theonomy of Rushdoony. Through the fine historical work of [Crawford Gribben](#) and others, I hope to provide *some* context for this newer movement.

Concluding Reflections: Christ, the Mosaic Law, and Natural Law

In summary, I find myself surprised at how well-read and expansive the writings of Rushdoony are. His *Institutes* in particular remain a work that someone should deal with at least once in their life, if they have cause to discuss theonomy. That said, his hermeneutical, exegetical, and theological arguments failed to persuade me.

A Christological reading of the law rightly understands the point of all creation—Christ. A tighter reading of the book of Romans (for example) shows that love imparted by the Spirit is how we fulfill the law. And the theology of the reformers, who stood on the shoulder of Spirit-filled men for 1,500 (and now 2,000) years provides us with two millennia of careful thinking about God's truth.

We stand on the shoulders of giants.

Rushdoony, in at least one case, jumped off these shoulders. For example, Rushdoony held that Calvin had heretical notions of natural law.

Calvin wrote, "For some deny that a state is well constituted, which neglects the polity of Moses, and is governed by the common law of the nations. The dangerous and seditious nature of this opinion I leave to the examination of others; it will be sufficient for me to have evinced it to be false and foolish" (*Inst.* 4.20, cited in Rushdoony 9).

To this claim, Rushdoony writes, "Such ideas, common in Calvinist and Lutheran circles, and in virtually all churches are still heretical nonsense" (*Institutes*, 9).

I disagree.

God has revealed his law in nature; he created it. The reformed affirmed this view of common or natural law because it is biblical and true. I affirm with Calvin that “the law of God which we call the moral law is nothing else than a testimony of natural law and of that conscience which God has engraved upon the minds of men” (*Inst.* 4.20.16).

No reformed Christian should be comfortable with a denial of natural law, and especially Rushdoony’s accusation affirming this law is heretical—a view that virtually all reformed theologians maintained with explicit clarity.

And so I end by returning to God’s law. By affirming biblical law but by denying God’s law in nature, Rushdoony led to my mind, misunderstood the law of God. For all his brilliance, Rushdoony did not affirm the law of God according to Scripture and truth.

[1]. Rushdoony would largely adopt Van Til’s reformed apologetics, even publishing a book dedicated to his thought in 1959 called *By What Standard? An Analysis of Philosophy of Cornelius Van Til*.

[2]. Molly Worthen, “The Chalcedon Problem” *Church History* 77.2: 401.

[3]. McVicar, *Christian Reconstruction*, 1.

[4]. McVicar, *Christian Reconstruction*, 1.

[5]. Worthen, “The Chalcedon Problem,” 409.

[6]. McVicar, *Christian Reconstruction*, 2.

[7]. William Edgar, “The Passing of R. J. Rushdoony,” *First Things* (Aug 2001): <https://www.firstthings.com/article/2001/08/the-passing-of-r-j-rushdoony>

[8]. McVicar, *Christian Reconstruction*, 44.

[9]. McVicar, *Christian Reconstruction*, 44.

[10]. McVicar, *Christian Reconstruction*, 4.

[11]. Rousas John Rushdoony, foreward to *Theonomy in Christian Ethics*, Greg L. Bahnsen (Nutley, NJ: The Craig Foundation, 1979), x–xi.

[12]. Molly Worthen, “The Chalcedon Problem” *Church History* 77.2: 401.

[13]. The book was titled, *By What Standard? An Analysis of Philosophy of Cornelius Van Til*.

[14]. R. J. Rushdoony, *The Biblical Philosophy of History*, 6.

[15]. Rushdoony, *The Biblical Philosophy of History*, 6–7.

[16]. Worthen, “The Chalcedon Problem,” 407.

[17]. Rushdoony, *The Biblical Philosophy of History*, 7.

[18]. Rushdoony, *The Biblical Philosophy of History*, 16.

[19]. Foreward to *Theonomy in Christian Ethics*, x. The quote continues by emphasizing that we must bring these instructions under God's word and Christ's dominion. That happens by bringing it under law since Rushdoony believes that personal and public sanctification occurs by obedience to the law. "Salvation is by the grace of God through faith and sanctification is by law" (x).

[20]. See Feinberg's chapter in *Continuity and Discontinuity* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1988).

[21]. Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law* (Nutley, NJ: The Craig Press, 1973). Citations of this book will appear in text to simplify the presentation.

[22]. Foreward to *Theonomy in Christian Ethics*, x. In his *Institutes*, he makes virtually the same argument (3–4).

[23]. For a positive use of the moral law in the Christian's life, see "John Calvin: The Third Use of the Law" (<https://ca.thegospelcoalition.org/columns/detrinite/john-calvin-the-third-use-of-the-law/>). See also my "Does Mosaic Law Still Apply to Christians" (<https://ca.thegospelcoalition.org/columns/detrinite/does-the-mosaic-law-apply-to-christians/>). Also, see "Is the Civil Law of Moses Still in Effect?" (<https://wyattgraham.com/is-the-civil-law-of-moses-still-in-effect/>). Last, read my article, "Between Legalism and Antinomianism" (<https://wyattgraham.com/between-legalism-and-antinomianism/>).

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