

Reconstruction Theology in Home Education by Mary McCarthy

"The stranger in ancient Israel did not serve as a judge, although he received all the benefits of living in the land. The political question is this: By what biblical standard is the pagan to be granted the right to bring political sanctions against God's people? We recognize that unbelievers are not to vote in Church elections. Why should they be allowed to vote in civil elections in a covenanted Christian nation? Which judicial standards will they impose? By what other standard than the Bible?"

- Gary North of Institute For Christian Economics

In order to more clearly understand the increasing divisiveness in homeschooling and the various leaders involvement in a political religion, it is necessary to become familiar with some of the facets of Christian theology and theocracy.

"Theocracy, the direct rule of a nation by God through divinely selected spokesmen, has many exemplars in the modern world. Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Iraq are nations with obvious theocratic tendencies. Israel's political parties exhibit growing theocratic patterns. In the United States, the Christian Reconstruction movement proposes the purest form of theocracy.

Reconstructionism believes that the law given for the political and legal ordering of ancient Israel is intended for all people at all times; therefore American is duty bound to install a political system based entirely on biblical law."

Reconstructionist theologian David Barton offered this definition: "The Christian goal for the world is the universal development of Biblical theocratic republics, in which every area of life is redeemed and placed under the Lordship of Jesus Christ and the rule of God's law."

The term 'dominion theology' comes from *Genesis 1:26-28* of the Bible where God's purpose for man is stated: Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth." So God created man in his own image And God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth." (RSV)

Sometimes termed 'dominion' or 'kingdom' theology, "dominionism revolves around the idea that Christians and Christians alone, are Biblically mandated to occupy all secular institutions until Christ returns. An earlier source of dominion theology was an evangelical philosopher named Francis Schaeffer Schaeffer's 1981 book, *A Christian Manifesto* remained one of the Christian Right's most important texts into the 1990's."

Many of the leaders of the so-called hard or Christian Right are followers of the teachings of Rousas John Rushdoony. R.J. Rushdoony (Gary North's father-in-law) is the spiritual leader of Chalcedon Foundation, a California organization dedicated to Christian Reconstruction. According to the Foundation, a Christian Reconstructionist is a Calvinist, holding to the principles that God, not man, is the center of the universe and beyond; a Theonomist, believing that God's law is found in the Bible; a Presuppositionalist, believing that he holds to the Faith because the Bible says so and has no need to prove it; a Postmillennialist believing that Christ will return to earth only after the Holy Spirit has empowered the church to advance Christ's kingdom in time and history and a Dominionist taking seriously the Bible's commandment to the godly to take dominion in the earth. "The Christian Reconstructionist believes the earth and all it's fullness is the Lord's; that every area dominated by sin must be 'reconstructed' in terms of the Bible. This includes, first, the individual; second, the family; third, the church; and fourth, the wider society including the state."

The Dominion theology movement places Judeo-Christian biblical law above any and all constitutional law, including the U.S. Constitution. "Postmillennialists believe that righteous human beings, essentially servants of Christ, must achieve positions of influence in societies in order to prepare the world for the Messiah's return."

In his excellent 1996 book, *With God on Our Side*, William Martin used a sampling of the views of several noted Reconstructionists to give a sense of how a Reconstructed America would be: "The federal government would play no role in regulating business, public education, or welfare [S]ome government would be visible at the level of counties but citizens would be answerable to church authorities on most matters subject to regulation income taxes would not exceed ten percent - the biblical tithe - and social security would disappear [P]ublic schools would be abolished in favor of home-schooling arrangements, and families would operate on a strict patriarchal pattern. The only people permitted to vote would be members of 'biblically correct' churches. Most notably, a theonomic order would make homosexuality, adultery, blasphemy, propagation of false doctrine, and incorrigible behavior by disobedient children subject to the death penalty, preferably administered by stoning a reconstructed America would have little room for Jews, Buddhists, Muslims, Hindus, atheists, or even non-Reconstructionist Christians. 'The Christian', one Reconstructionist author has asserted, 'must realize that pluralism is a myth R.J. Rushdoony, also regards pluralism as a heresy, since, 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."

Other noted Reconstructionists include Greg Bahnsen, David Barton of WallBuilders, Inc., David Chilton, Gary DeMar of American Vision and Worldview Magazine; Ted DeMoss of Christian Business Men's Committee; Kenneth Gentry, Jay Grimstead of Coalition on Revival; James Kennedy of Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church; *Tim LaHaye* (Left Behind) of American Coalition for Traditional Values; Mrs. Connie Marshner of Free Congress Foundation; Rev. Joseph Morecraft; Gary North of Institute for Christian Economics; Mark Siljander of Global

Strategies, Inc.; Randall Terry of Operation Rescue and Rev. Donald Wildmon of American Family Association. Dr. Kennedy, Rev. LaHaye, Mrs. Marshner, Mr. North, R.J. Rushdoony, and Rev. Wildmon are all members of the Council For National Policy.

"Whether it is acknowledged or not, Reconstructionism has profoundly influenced the Christian Right. Perhaps its most important role within the Christian Right can be traced to the formation in 1982 of the Coalition on Revival (COR) Founded and headed by Dr. Jay Grimstead, COR has sought in this way to create a transdenominational theology The COR leadership has significantly overlapped with the Christian Right, and has included: John Whitehead, Don Wildmon Tim LaHaye and D. James Kennedy, Randall Terry Steven Hotze, Rev. Glen Cole Michael Farris Robert Dugan Bill Dannemeyer Mark Siljander R.J. Rushdoony, Gary North, Joseph Moorecraft, David Chilton, Gary DeMar and Rus Walton."

It is difficult for secular homeschoolers to understand the apparent double standard when Christian homeschoolers are discriminatory against them at the local support group level, while at the same time, courting their efforts when it comes to state or national political causes. Understanding Reconstructionist Theology and Theocracy is important because it reflects understanding on the division in the homeschooling community between secular and religious members, and the theocratic motivations of politically manipulating the community.

Gary North declared, "All long-term social change comes from the successful efforts of one or another struggling organizations to capture the minds of a hard core of future leaders." Reconstructionists believe that Christian schools and the homeschooling movement are the key to capturing those minds. Joseph Moorecraft said in 1987, that the Reconstruction movement was made up of a small number but expected a massive acceleration in 25 to 30 years 'when those kids that are now in Christian schools have graduated and taken their places in American society, and moved into places of influence and power.'

When it comes to politics, the principles are simple: "The long-term goal of Christians in politics should be to gain exclusive control over the franchise. Those who refuse to submit publicly to the eternal sanctions of God by submitting to His Church's public marks of the covenant-- baptism and holy communion--must be denied citizenship, just as they were in ancient Israel."

"Gary North claims that 'the ideas of the Reconstructionists have penetrated into Protestant circles that for the most part are unaware of the original source of the theological ideas that are beginning to transform them.' North describes the 'three major legs of the Reconstructionist movement' as 'the Presbyterian oriented educators, the Baptist school headmasters and pastors, and the charismatic telecommunications system.' What this means is that hundreds of thousands of Pentecostals and charismatic Christians, as well as many fundamentalist Baptists, have moved out of the apolitical camp. Many have thrown themselves into political work - not merely as voters, but as ideologically driven activists, bringing a reconstructed 'Biblical world view' to bear on their area of activism."

In his well researched 1995 book, *Home Schooling: The Right Choice*, Christopher Klicka frequently quotes Reconstructionist writers, notably Rushdoony and Barton. In addition to including Rushdoony's "The Difference Between Christian Education and Humanistic Education", the book's forward was written by D. James Kennedy and many of the ideals expressed seem Reconstructionist, however, he does not state specifically that he is a Reconstructionist.

The relationship between Michael Farris of HSLDA and Tim and Beverly LaHaye goes back to the early 1980's when Michael Farris was head of the legal department of Concerned Women for America. Tim LaHaye was attempting to start a television ministry which failed. In 1983 he started the American Coalition for Traditional Values which was similar to the now defunct Moral Majority, its goal being to mobilize Christians to register and vote. Some accounts indicate Michael Farris was deeply involved with ACTV while others do not mention his involvement. ACTV closed down shortly after the 1986 elections. However, Tim LaHaye withdrew from his television ministry when it was publicized that his church was funding an anti-Catholic group. In 1985 he further withdrew after it became known that CWA had accepted 'generous help' from the Rev. Sun Myung Moon's Unification Church which teaches the divinity of the Rev. Moon in direct conflict with Christian teachings. In 1987 Rev. LaHaye was forced to resign as co-chair from Jack Kemp's presidential campaign because newspapers printed divisive passages from his writings, which were anti-Catholic and anti-Semitic.

The New York Times profiled Michael Farris' campaign for Lt. Governor of Virginia as part of a series of articles about Christians in politics. It is noted that Michael Farris' name appeared as a co-author of a policy paper by Jay Grimstead's "Coalition on Revival, which has called for the United States to reclaim itself as a 'Christian nation.'" (Farris says that he only worked on an early draft of the document and that the organization included his name without his permission.)"

Michael Farris, in his 1992 book, *Where Do I Draw The Line?*, addressed Reconstructionism. He quotes Francis Schaeffer's *Christian Manifesto* to explain our nation's slide into its current cultural condition but he also takes an opportunity to note that, "there are those who advocate the idea that America should enact the Old Testament law right down to the rules for conducting trials. I am not one of those people but I do believe the moral principles of God apply to every age."

However, when discussing classical education in *The Future of Home Schooling*, he recommends as "one of the best programs I have seen that offers a clearly Christian classical education is David Quine's *World Views of the Western World*. *World Views* is a three-year program that is built largely around the works of Francis Schaeffer. Students still read Homer, Socrates and Machiavelli. But these are balanced not only by Schaeffer's works, but also by St. Augustine, Luther and Calvin."

As homeschoolers we should be very careful not to assign guilt by association. It is probable that some of the individuals involved in homeschooling and/or HSLDA are Reconstructionists, while others who associate with them are not. Prominent Reconstructionists are often given a forum to advance their cause at HSLDA conferences but it is unknown whether HSLDA itself is a Reconstructionist organization. HSLDA has ties to the Reconstructionist movement through former employees such as Doug Phillips, the son of prominent Reconstructionist Howard Phillips, founder of the U.S. Taxpayers Party and HSLDA founder James Carden who was instrumental in introducing the concept of home schooling to Bill Gothard, himself a prominent Reconstructionist. Carden was among the 100 families who piloted the Advanced Training Institute of America (ATIA) program in 1984/85. Board member Jeff Ethell may have been influenced by Reconstruction ideas while a student at Westminster Seminary in Philadelphia, where noted Reconstructionist Cornelius Van Til taught for nearly 50 years. In his 1959 book, R.J. Rushdoony lavishly praised Van Til's philosophy and the influence it had on him.

Christopher Klicka attended Regent University where 'longtime Dean of the Law School, Herb Titus used Rushoony's book in his introductory law course "Christopher Klicka, who has been deeply influenced by R. J. Rushdoony, writes: 'Sending our children to the public school violates nearly every Biblical principle It is tantamount to sending our children to be trained by the enemy' Klicka also advocates religious selfsegregation and advises Christians not to affiliate with non-Christian homeschoolers in any way. 'The differences I am talking about have resulted in wars and martyrdom in the not too distant past.' According to Klicka, who is an attorney with the Home School Legal Defense Association, 'as an organization, and as individuals, we are committed to promote the cause of Christ and his Kingdom."

Former HSLDA employee Inge Cannon was previously employed by Bill Gothard's Institute of Basic Life Principles where she was involved with the development of ATIA's homeschool curriculum. Several of HSLDA's interns come from or plan to attend Oak Brook College of Law and Government Policy which is part of Bill Gothard's ATIA. Also, Tim LaHaye, considered to be a prominent Reconstructionist, is associated with Michael Farris' Madison Project as well as having ties to him through Concerned Women for America.

Many of the ideals, particularly exclusivism and selfsegregation as promoted by prominent Christian homeschooling leaders like Christopher Klicka and Gregg Harris, are Reconstructionist in nature. As homeschoolers we must be careful when examining the religious motivations of our fellow homeschoolers not to attach labels which may not be appropriate. However, it would be more honest of HSLDA and others to define their belief status when placing themselves in positions of moral authority over homeschoolers, who are perhaps of other, contrary, beliefs.