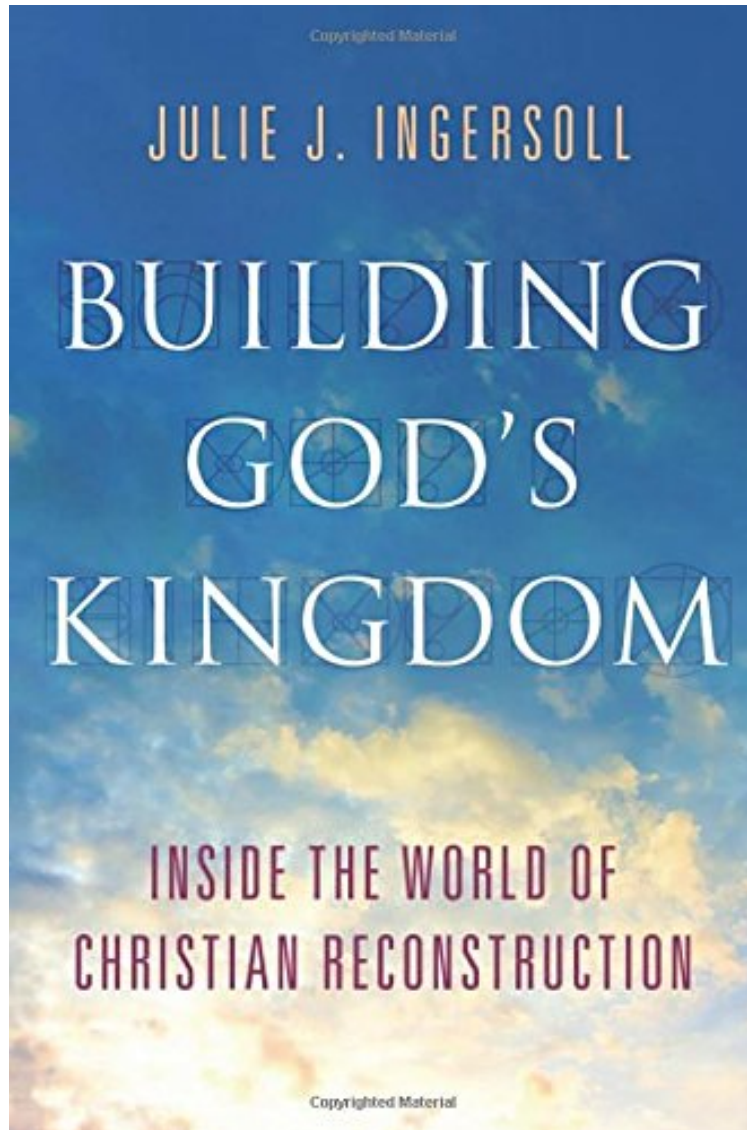


[Download free pdf] Building God's Kingdom: Inside the World of Christian Reconstruction

Building God's Kingdom: Inside the World of Christian Reconstruction

Julie J. Ingersoll

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Julie J. Ingersoll : Building God's Kingdom: Inside the World of Christian Reconstruction before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Building God's Kingdom: Inside the World of Christian Reconstruction:

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Fortunately, it likely never will come to passBy Spalding W. CoyoteJulie Ingersoll has a unique perspective in that she was for years involved in fundamentalist Christianity and

even participated in peaceful actions against abortion clinics. What the book posits is that a very small group of Reconstructionists have had a much greater influence in the larger fundamentalist world than their numbers might suggest. The group's influence extends to pseudo historian David Barton, who has been on a committee on curriculum for Texas' public schools and whose writings are taken as gospel by millions (despite his last book being removed from the shelves by the publisher because even fundamentalist Christian historians said it was a load of bollocks). Reconstructionist thinking, according to Ingersoll, also heavily influences homeschool curriculum and the concept that the family (with father in charge) is solely responsible for educating children and that public schools are socialist and should be eliminated. Ingersoll traces this thinking back to R.J. Rushdoony and shows how his writings influenced others over the years. All in all it's a fascinating look into a world that hardly anyone in the U.S. realizes even exists. The broad Christian world -- including mainline and progressive flavors -- have largely not even heard of Rushdoony, and even some of the fundamentalists who teach his doctrines are unaware of the Reconstructionist origin of their teachings in some cases, according to the author. Their thinking even extends to far-right politicians who are not part of the Reconstructionist thought. But the end goal for the movement is for the U.S. to one day have a majority who share their beliefs -- a multigenerational effort that could take hundreds of years -- at which point their "godly" civil government will work toward their goals and Old Testament crimes will be punished by civil authorities with the punishments given in the Bible. Personally, I can't wait for their barbaric theocracy to begin. Fortunately, it likely never will come to pass. Maybe this book will help the broader public recognize the Reconstructionists' influence and their goals.

6 of 7 people found the following review helpful. *The Power and the Glory, Forever* By Kevin L. Nienstiel

Christian Reconstruction doesn't believe the Rapture is nigh. They don't expect to escape Earth next Thursday; they plan to live among us for generations, centuries, or longer. More important, they have concrete plans to rebuild America's core values according to Christian Gospel and Levitical law. Even most non-seminarian Christians haven't heard of them, but their influence touches Christian homeschooling, anti-abortion activism, Quiverfull, conservative politics, and beyond. In her introduction, Julie Ingersoll, professor of religious studies at the University of North Florida, describes her early upbringing in Reconstruction-affiliated conservative Christianity. She describes marrying into one of the movements' leading families. She once fought for the cause, but eventually grew disgusted when the movement's inherent violence became inarguable. Now she mixes scholarship, journalism, and history to expose a movement that specifically desires to change how you think. Ingersoll traces Christian Reconstruction's roots to R.J. Rushdoony, Presbyterian pastor and son of Armenian immigrants. After Rushdoony's passing in 2001, the leadership mantle passed to his son-in-law, Gary North. Between them, Rushdoony and North have assiduously created a matrix of thought and philosophy literally encompassing every aspect of life. Their thoughts are voluble, their knowledge vast if slanted, and their influence touches many Christians who ordinarily find their teachings weird. Reconstructionist thought is firmly grounded in very old-school Five-Point Calvinism. Don't worry if terms like Five-Point Calvinism sound opaque. Ingersoll writes for generalist audiences, and defines specialist terminology in vernacular English. She also defines very important words like presuppositionalism and theonomy, words she reuses generously. For our purposes, they mean: all knowledge comes from somewhere, and all authority derives from God. This matters for Reconstructionists' all-encompassing philosophy. For starters, Reconstructionists' critics often lambaste them with terms like theocratic and patriarchal. While critics mean these terms insultingly, according to Ingersoll, Reconstructionists actually embrace these terms. Since they believe all authority derives from God, and expresses itself in family, church, and state, we already have theocracy, they say; secularists just don't recognize God's authority. And yes, they're patriarchal: a stern father drives all Reconstructionist social order. Importantly, Reconstructionists deny political motivations. But unpacking their supposed apolitical leanings, we realize parties are just talking past one another. Here, as elsewhere, Reconstructionists use the same words outsiders use, but mean something altogether different. Because politics, for Reconstructionists, refers exclusively to state authority, which they consider limited, they believe they themselves aren't political, although their entire philosophical structure is dedicated to the relationship between individuals and power. When Christian Reconstructionists intend to rebuild American society along Christian lines, they don't mean what I would. They don't highlight issues of justice, feeding the hungry, and comforting the afflicted. They want to establish society, meaning specifically America, according to strict Levitical law. Most Christians today feel squeamish about Leviticus, and apply it selectively at best. But Reconstructionists want to apply Leviticus culture-wide, through power structures beginning with household patriarchs. To accomplish these goals, Reconstructionists have established networks of Christian homeschoolers, political firebrands, and preachers who deliberately court problems with the state. It wouldn't be accurate to say that every homeschooler, Tea Party sign-waver, and activist preacher is a Christian Reconstructionist. But the Reconstructionists have integrated themselves, often invisibly, into these circles. It's impossible to pursue these goals without some Reconstructionism rubbing off on you. Besides just scholastically describing Reconstruction from historical sources, Ingersoll dives into their world. She meets founders of Reconstructionist private schools, attends Reconstructionist conferences and gatherings (many of which tellingly have the word Vision in their titles), and dives into their circles. She records their motivations directly from their mouths, expressing how they want the world to perceive them. This sometimes includes telling society one thing, while doing another. The world Ingersoll ultimately describes herein isn't only religious, or political, or social. These

words don't convey the sweeping motivations that drive Reconstructionists. They literally believe they're charged by God, from the Bible itself, to reorganize society according to God's vision. They insist they're only following the Bible literally, and everyone else is apostate, a common far-right Christian belief: they insist they're only following God, everyone else is the problem. Secular audiences will read this book and feel chilled. They'll see the pervasive ways a little-known sect has permeated discussions that aren't specifically religious. They'll recognize the violence implicit in a Levitical system. But Christian audiences should feel horrified at this book too. Because what Ingersoll describes isn't limited to fringe elements. This shockingly violent, authoritarian message has permeated mainline Christianity, often unseen. And it's changed our discourse, possibly forever.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. a very useful book and well worth reading alongside McVicar's Christian Reconstruction

By J F G Shearmur This is an interesting study of Reconstructionism and its influence. There seemed to me perhaps a danger that too much influence was being attributed to Rushdoony and other reconstructionists, without other sources - most obviously Schaeffer - being explored in more detail. But this is, nonetheless, a very useful book and well worth reading alongside McVicar's Christian Reconstruction

For the last several decades, at the far fringes of American evangelical Christianity has stood an intellectual movement known as Christian Reconstruction. The proponents of this movement embrace a radical position: that all of life should be brought under the authority of biblical law as it is contained in both the Old and New Testaments. They challenge the legitimacy of democracy, argue that slavery is biblically justifiable, and support the death penalty for all manner of "crimes" described in the Bible including homosexuality, adultery, and Sabbath-breaking. But, as Julie Ingersoll shows in this fascinating new book, this "Biblical Worldview" shapes their views not only on political issues, but on everything from private property and economic policy to history and literature. Holding that the Bible provides a coherent, internally consistent, and all-encompassing worldview, they seek to remake the entirety of society--church, state, family, economy--along biblical lines. Tracing the movement from its mid-twentieth-century origins in the writings of theologian and philosopher R.J. Rushdoony to its present-day sites of influence, including the Christian Home School movement, advocacy for the teaching of creationism, and the development and rise of the Tea Party, Ingersoll illustrates how Reconstructionists have broadly and subtly shaped conservative American Protestantism over the course of the late-twentieth and early-twenty-first centuries. Drawing on interviews with Reconstructionists themselves as well as extensive research in Reconstructionist publications, *Building God's Kingdom* offers the most complete and balanced portrait to date of this enigmatic segment of the Christian Right.

" [Ingersoll] make[s] a compelling and sobering case for the significant impact of this extremist movement Recommended."--CHOICE "A thoughtful and important resource for scholars and students wishing to know more about an important movement in modern American religion and politics."--Church History "This is the first book-length study of the shadowy but influential right-wing Christian Reconstruction movement. Julie Ingersoll reveals it all--its history, ideas, and current political impact--with sensitivity and laser precision. This is a major contribution to the study of religion in public life, the book to read in understanding the dark potency of America's religious right." --Mark Juergensmeyer, author of *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence* "During the last four decades, Christian Reconstruction, a theological movement seeking to remake the United States on the basis of biblical law, has shaped American evangelicalism. With scholarly acumen and subtle argument, *Building God's Kingdom* traces this influence in contemporary struggles over education, the family, and politics. In these pages, Ingersoll guides readers through Reconstruction and finds a logical, successful, and authoritative worldview that has been embraced by legions of pastors, well-known politicians, and popular pundits. This is not a conspiracy book. Instead, with quiet intensity, it reveals the power of religious influence to change the direction of a culture." --Diana Butler Bass, author of *Christianity After Religion: The End of Church and the Birth of a New Spiritual Awakening* "Historians have long debated the role of Reconstructionism in the formation of fundamentalist politics. Julie Ingersoll's intrepid research and astute analysis demonstrates that the thought of Rousas John Rushdoony and others did indeed shape the nascent discontent that emerged in the late 1970s as the Religious Right." --Randall Balmer, author of *Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory* "Ingersoll has turned a bright spotlight on a little-known group. *Building God's Kingdom* exposes the Reconstructionists' many areas of influence and is crucial both for a better understanding of American politics and a more thorough understanding of right-wing religious groups."--Nova Religio

About the Author Julie J. Ingersoll is Associate Professor of Religious Studies at University of North Florida. She is the author of *Evangelical Christian Women: War Stories in the Gender Battles* (2003).