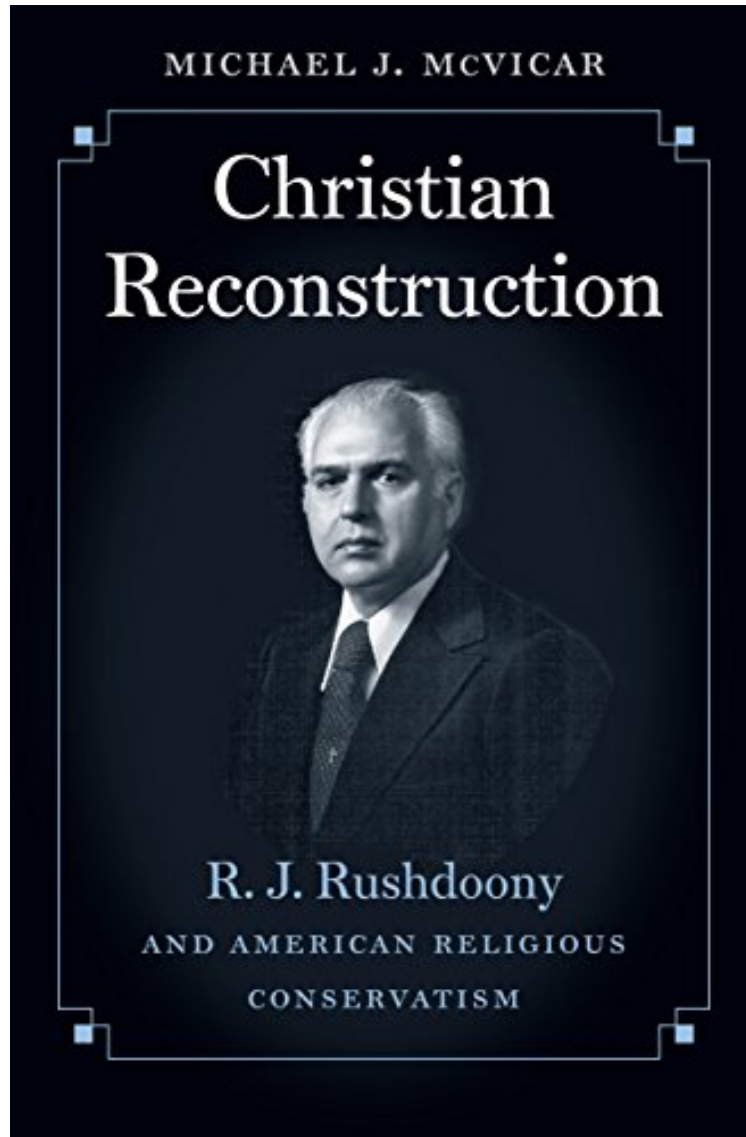


Christian Reconstruction: R. J. Rushdoony and American Religious Conservatism

Michael J. McVicar

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#File Name: 1469622742326 pagesChristian Reconstruction R J Rushdoony and American Religious Conservatism | File size: 27.Mb

Michael J. McVicar : Christian Reconstruction: R. J. Rushdoony and American Religious Conservatism before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Christian Reconstruction: R. J. Rushdoony and American Religious Conservatism:

2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Essential ReadingBy LauregonI found McVicar's book on Rousas Rushdoony to be a terrific resource regarding Rushdoony and his exceptional and extensive albeit subterranean influence on conservative politics in America today. Anyone willing to learn about Christian Reconstructionism and its toxic effects on American politics will be well served by McVicar's valuable book. As someone who had relatives who supported Rushdoony early on during his rise to influence in Southern California, I looked forward for months to the book's publication, and found all I hoped it to be. As companion volumes on the topic of the theocratic movement in 21st century America, I also recommend Julie J. Ingersoll's 2015 book, *Building God's Kingdom - Inside the World of Christian Reconstructionism*, and James C Sanford's 2015 book, *BluePrint for Theocracy*.0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. First major academic study of RushdoonyBy Dan KnaussThis is a very readable, solid academic study of Rushdoony, Reconstructionism, and their role in shaping movement conservatism as well as Protestant Fundamentalism/Evangelicalism.14 of 14 people found the following review helpful. McVicar's book is an excellent exploration and analysis of RBy Canuck MonkLast year before I started grad school I thought Christian Reconstructionism would be an interesting topic to tackle. I wasn't aware of much research done on Christian Reconstructionism but I quickly discovered there were at least two substantial books on the movement - "Christian Reconstruction: R.J. Rushdoony and American Religious Conservatism" by Michael J. McVicar and "Building God's Kingdom: Inside the World of Christian Reconstruction" by Julie J. Ingersoll.McVicar's book is an excellent exploration and analysis of R.J. Rushdoony, Christian Reconstructionism's primary pioneer, and the movement itself. The first few chapters follows Rushdoony and his early years as a missionary on a Native American reserve. During this period, Rushdoony also came across the works of Cornelius Van Til, the Calvinist theologian and philosopher. These experiences proved formative; Rushdoony witnessed the lawlessness that afflicted the reserve (perhaps providing the impetus for Rushdoony's fervent focus on biblical law as a means of restoring holiness and order), Rushdoony lamented the state's inability and negligence in caring for the Native Americans and Rushdoony's embrace of Van Tillian presuppositionalism would provide the intellectual framework for his work and thought. After leaving the reservation Rushdoony found himself in southern California where he began exercising influence thanks to the initial support of conservative Christian housewives who wanted him to lead their Bible studies. He would establish the Chalcedon Foundation which would disseminate his ideas through letters, tracts and books (most notably the massive "Institutes of Biblical Law") and tirelessly tour to promote Christian Reconstructionism. Although Rushdoony brushed with eminent scholars and thinkers, he was never able to achieve mainstream success.Rushdoony mentored and developed the next generation of Christian Reconstructionists, several of whom would die prematurely (Greg Bahnsen and David H. Chilton). Christian Reconstructionism promoted the use of biblical law, an aggressive Calvinist worldview grounded in presuppositionalism, homeschooling and libertarian economics. The most notable would be his future son-in-law, Gary North. Eventually North, Bahnsen and other Reconstructionists would turn on Rushdoony and found a rival Reconstructionist organization in Tyler, Texas. McVicar writes poignantly about Rushdoony's later life, when he felt abandoned by his proteges and close friends and unrecognized for his work (McVicar persuasively demonstrates how much the Religious Right's key figures, such as Francis Schaeffer, Pat Robertson, and D. James Kennedy; although an ardent Calvinist, Rushdoony's impact would even be felt in Pentecostal and secular conservative circles)).The research in this book is topnotch. McVicar is able to draw upon Rushdoony's correspondence in letters. Considering it's extreme views on government, economics and religion, McVicar's book provides a fairly balanced portrayal of Rushdoony and Christian Reconstructionism and is essential reading for anyone interested in 20th-century American Christian history.

This is the first critical history of Christian Reconstruction and its founder and champion, theologian and activist Rousas John Rushdoony (19162001). Drawing on exclusive access to Rushdoony's personal papers and extensive correspondence, Michael J. McVicar demonstrates the considerable role Reconstructionism played in the development of the radical Christian Right and an American theocratic agenda. As a religious movement, Reconstructionism aims at nothing less than "reconstructing" individuals through a form of Christian governance that, if implemented in the lives of U.S. citizens, would fundamentally alter the shape of American society.McVicar examines Rushdoony's career and traces Reconstructionism as it grew from a grassroots, populist movement in the 1960s to its height of popularity in the 1970s and 1980s. He reveals the movement's galvanizing role in the development of political conspiracy theories and survivalism, libertarianism and antistatism, and educational reform and homeschooling. The book demonstrates how these issues have retained and in many cases gained potency for conservative Christians to the present day, despite the decline of the movement itself beginning in the 1990s. McVicar contends that Christian Reconstruction has contributed significantly to how certain forms of religiosity have become central, and now familiar, aspects of an often controversial conservative revolution in America.

Christian Reconstruction is...an invaluable contribution to understanding the intersection of politics and religion in America, as well as appreciating the role of Reconstructionism in shaping the modern conservative movement.-- Religious Studies Scholars of religion will find his discussion sufficiently sophisticated, but historians, political

scientists, and other seeking insight into this influential theologian and his influence will benefit from McVicar's clarity of exposition.--Journal of Religion Highly recommended for anyone seeking a detailed background on this little-known, little-understood offshoot of American religious conservatism.--Church and State A remarkably even-handed analysis. . . . Unequaled in its depth and in the scope of its analysis.--Journal of Church and State An extensively researched and critical yet balanced history of the Christian Reconstruction movement and its founder, R.J. Rushdoony. . . . Specialists in religion, politics, sociology, history, and cultural analysis, as well as the general public, can find rich reflection herein no matter their personal, political, or religious persuasions.--Library Journal It is sometimes said in a review of a well-written and insightful account of an important person's life that it is the biography the subject deserves. That can be said of this fine book, but I say it with a sense of sadness. It is the chronicle of a brilliant thinker who, as [McVicar] observes at one point, increasingly displayed no 'ability to cooperate with anyone who disagreed with his interpretation of Scripture, no matter how minor or insignificant the distinction.'" --Richard J. Mouw, First Things Not only is this volume a much-welcomed contribution to the scholarship of religious conservatism and evangelicalism in America, it also serves a model for scholars who are writing about persons whose opinions differ markedly from their own.--H-Net sA superb biography featuring remarkable research and erudite, readable prose.--Political Science Quarterly Intimate and richly contextualized. Will inspire future chroniclers to grant Rushdoony a wider berth.--Journal of American History The first book to take seriously the Christian Reconstruction movement and one of its primary architects R.J. Rushdoony....McVicar has done a great service in providing scholars and other interested readers with an excellent overview of Rushdoony and Christian Reconstructionism.--Church History and Religious Culture Buy it. Read it. Critique it. Learn from it." --Faith for All of Life McVicar is a careful writer. . . . He goes out of his way to place the radicalism of the Reconstructionists in context.--Books Culture The prose is engaging, and McVicar manages to clearly explain the theological, institutional, and social history of Christian Reconstruction.--American Historical Association McVicar . . . has produced a landmark work describing the rise and eventual fall of Reconstructionist thought. This fine work is highly recommended.--Publishers Weekly, starred review Far surpass[es] in scope and depth of research anything previously written about Rushdoony or the movement he birthed.--H-Catholic, H-Net sA first-rate beginning in seeking to detail the life and significance of a man and to take the measure of the movement that he founded, which continues, in various forms, to exert influence in American culture, religion, and politics.--Mid-America Journal of Theology [Christian Reconstruction] will remain the standard socio-historical interpretation of Rushdoony for many years to come.--Reformation 21 This book is the most comprehensive study of Christian Reconstructionism to date, and the most detailed study of its founder R. J. Rushdoony. Making use of extensive, previously untapped archival materials, it details the movement's influence on post-World War II American conservatism, an issue that has been much discussed but little documented by previous writers. It sets the standard for scholarship on this important and still timely topic.--Michael Lienesch, University of North Carolina McVicar's groundbreaking book is a welcome addition to our understanding of recent American history. McVicar explicates R. J. Rushdoony's role in late-twentieth-century debates over religion and politics, as well as his influence among religious conservatives and in the culture at large. An invaluable contribution to the study of American politics, religion, and the intersection of the two.--Diane Winston, University of Southern California About the Author Michael J. McVicar is assistant professor of religion at Florida State University.