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Christian Reconstructionism

Religious Right Extremism Gains Influence—Part One

The Christian Right has shown impressive resilience and has rebounded dramtically after a series of embarrassing televangelist scandals of the late 1980's, the collapse of Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority, and the failed Presidential bid of Pat Robertson. In the 1990's, Christian Right organizing has gone to the grassroots and now exerts wide influence in American politics across the country.

There is no doubt that Pat Robertson's Christian Coalition gets much of the credit for this successful *strategic* shift to the local level. But another largely overlooked reason for the persistent success of the Christian Right is a *theological* shift over the past three decades. The catalyst for the shift is Christian Reconstructionism—arguably the driving ideology of the Christian Right today.

The significance of the Reconstructionist movement is not its numbers, but the power of its ideas and their surprisingly rapid acceptance. Many on the Christian Right are unaware that they hold Reconstructionist ideas. Because as a theology it is controversial, even among evangelicals, many who are consciously influenced by it avoid the label. This furtiveness is not, however, as significant as the potency of the ideology itself.

Generally Reconstructionism seeks to replace democracy with a theocratic elite that would govern by imposing their interpretation of "Biblical Law." Reconstructionism would eliminate not only democracy but many of its manifestations, such as labor unions, civil rights laws, and public schools. Women would be generally relegated to hearth and home. Insufficiently Christian men would be denied citizenship, perhaps executed. So severe is this theocracy that it would extend capital punishment beyond such crimes as kidnapping, rape, and murder to include among other things, blasphemy, heresy, adultery, and homosexuality.

"All law is religious in nature, and every non-Biblical law-order represents an anti-Christian religion."

—R.J. RUSHDOONY, INSTITUTES OF BIBLICAL LAW

Reconstructionism has expanded from the works of a small group of scholars to inform a wide swath of conservative Christian thought and action. While many Reconstructionist political positions are commonly-held conservative views, what is significant is that Reconstructionists have created a comprehensive program, with Biblical justifications for far right political policies. Many post-WW II conservative anti-communist activists were also, if secondarily, conservative Christians. However the Reconstructionist movement calls on conservatives to be Christians first, and to build a church-based political movement from there.

For much of Reconstructionism's short history it has been an ideology in search of a constituency. But recently its influence has grown far beyond the founders' expectations. As Reconstructionist author Gary North observes, "We once were shepherds without sheep. No longer."

WHAT IS RECONSTRUCTIONISM?

Reconstructionism is a theology that arose out of conservative Presbyterianism (Reformed and Orthodox), which proposes that contemporary application of the laws of Old Testament Israel, or "Biblical Law," is the basis for reconstructing society towards the Kingdom of God on earth.

Reconstructionism argues that the Bible is to be the governing text for all areas of life—such as government, education, law, and the arts, not merely "social" or "moral" issues like pornography, homosexuality, and abortion. Reconstructionists have formulated a "Biblical worldview" and "Biblical Principles" by which to examine contemporary matters.

Reconstructionist theologian David Chilton succinctly describes

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this view: "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."

More broadly, Reconstructionists believe that there are three main areas of governance: family government, church government, and civil government. Under God's covenant, the nuclear family is the basic unit. The husband is the head of the family, and wife and children are "in submission" to him. In turn, the husband "submits" to Jesus and to God's Laws as detailed in the Old Testament. The Church has its own ecclesiastical structure and governance. Civil government exists to implement God's Laws. All three institutions are under Biblical Law, the implementation of which is called "theonomy."

THE ORIGIN OF RECONSTRUCTIONISM

The original and defining text of Reconstructionism is *Institutes of Biblical Law*, published in 1973 by Rousas John Rushdoony—an 800 page explanation of the Ten Commandments, the Biblical "case law" that derives from them, and their application today. "The only true order," writes Rushdoony, "is founded on Biblical Law. All law is religious in nature, and every non-Biblical law-order represents an anti-Christian religion." In brief, he continues, "every law-order is a state of war against the enemies of that order, and all law is a form of warfare."

Gary North, Rushdoony's son-in-law, wrote an appendix to *Institutes* on the subject of "Christian economics." It is a polemic which serves as a model for the application of "Biblical Principles."

Rushdoony and a younger theologian, Rev. Greg Bahnsen, were both students of Cornelius Van Til, a Princeton university theologian. Although Van Til himself never became a Reconstructionist, Reconstructionists claim him as the father of their movement. According to Gary North, Van Til argued that "There is no philosophical strategy that has ever worked, except this one; to challenge the lost in terms of the revelation of God in His Bible...by what standard can man know anything truly? By the Bible, and *only* by the Bible." This idea that the correct and only way to view reality is through the lens of a Biblical worldview is known as presuppositionalism.

According to Gary North, Van Til stopped short of proposing what a Biblical society might look like or how to get there. That is where Reconstructionism begins. While Van Til states man is not autonomous and that all rationality is inseparable from faith in God and the Bible, the Reconstructionists go further and set a course of world conquest or "dominion," claiming a Biblically prophesied "inevitable victory."

Reconstructionists also believe that "the Christians" are the "new chosen people of God," commanded to do what "Adam in Eden and Israel in Canaan failed to do...create the society that God requires." Further, Jews, once the "chosen people," failed to live up to God's covenant and therefore are no longer God's chosen. Christians, of the correct sort, now are.

Rushdoony's *Institutes of Biblical Law* consciously echoes a major work of the Protestant Reformation, John Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. In fact, Reconstructionists see themselves as the theological and political heirs of Calvin. The theocracy Calvin created in Geneva, Switzerland in the 1500's is one of the political models Reconstructionists look to, along with Old Testament Israel, and the Calvinist Puritans of the Massachusetts Bay Colony.

CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

Epitomizing the Reconstructionist idea of Biblical "war fare" is the centrality of capital punishment under Biblical Law. Doctrinal leaders (notably Rushdoony, North, and Bahnsen) call for the death penalty for a wide range of crimes in addition to such contemporary capital crimes as rape, kidnapping, and murder. Death is also the punishment for apostasy (abandonment of the faith), heresy, blasphemy, witchcraft, astrology, adultery, "sodomy or homosexuality," incest, striking a parent, incorrigible juvenile delinquency, and in the case of women, "unchastity before marriage."

According to Gary North, women who have abortions should be publicly executed, "along with those who advised them to abort their children." Rushdoony concludes: "God's government prevails, and His alternatives are clear-cut: either men and nations obey His laws, or God invokes the death penalty against them."

Reconstructionists insist that "the death penalty is the maximum, not necessarily the mandatory penalty." However, such judgments may depend less on Biblical Principles than on which faction gains power in the theocratic republic. The potential for bloodthirsty episodes on the order of the Salem witchcraft trials or the Spanish Inquisition is inadvertently revealed by Reconstructionist theologian Rev. Ray Sutton, who claims that the Reconstructed Biblical theocracies would be "happy" places, to which people would flock because "capital punishment is one of the best evangelistic tools of a society."

The Biblically approved methods of execution, include burning (at the stake for example), stoning, hanging, and "the sword." Gary North, the self-described economist of Reconstructionism, prefers stoning because, among other things, stones are cheap, plentiful, and convenient. Punishments for non-capital crimes generally involve whipping, restitution in the form of indentured servitude, or slavery. Prisons would likely be only temporary holding tanks, prior to imposition of the actual sentence.

People who sympathize with Reconstructionism often flee the label because of the severe and unpopular nature of such views. Even those who feel it appropriate that they would be the governors of God's theocracy often waffle on the particulars, like

capital punishment for sinners and nonbelievers. Unflinching advocates, however, insist upon consistency. Rev. Greg Bahnsen, in his book *By This Standard*, writes: "We...endorse the justice of God's penal code, if the Bible is to be the foundation of our Christian political ethic."

More recently, Reconstructionism has adopted "covenantalism," the theological doctrine that Biblical "covenants" exist between God and man, God and nations, God and families, and that they make up the binding, incorporating doctrine that makes sense of everything. Specifically, there is a series of covenant "structures" that make up a Biblical blueprint for society's institutions. Reconstructionists believe that God "judges" a whole society according to how it keeps these covenantal laws, and provides signs of that judgment. This belief can be seen, for example, in the claim that AIDS is a "sign of God's judgment."

Reconstructionist Rev. Ray Sutton writes that "there is no such thing as a natural disaster. Nature is not neutral. Nothing takes place in nature by chance...Although we may not know the exact sin being judged," Sutton declares, "what occurs results from God."

CHRISTIAN HISTORICAL REVISIONISM

Part of the Reconstructionist worldview is a revisionist view of history called "Christian history," which holds that history is predestined from "creation" until the inevitable arrival of the Kingdom of God. Christian history is written by means of retroactively discerning "God's providence."

Most Reconstructionists, for example, argue that the U.S. is a "Christian Nation" and that they are the champions and heirs of the "original intentions of the Founding Fathers." This dual justification for their views, one religious, the other somehow constitutional, is the result of a form of historical revisionism that Rushdoony frankly calls "Christian revisionism."

Christian revisionism is important in understanding the Christian Right's approach to politics and public policy. If one's political righteousness and sense of historical continuity is an article of faith, what appear as facts to everyone else fall before the compelling evidence of faith. Whatever does not fit neatly into a "Biblical worldview" becomes problematic, perhaps a delusion sent by Satan.

BILL INTERPRETS THE BIBLE FOR HIMSELF, AND FINDS IT REMARKABLY COMPATIBLE WITH HIS OWN CONVICTIONS.

The invocation of the Bible and the Founding Fathers are powerful ingredients for good religious-nationalist demagoguery. However, among the stark flaws of Reconstructionist history is the way Christian revisionism distorts historical fact.

For example, by interpreting the framing of the Constitution as if it were a document inspired by and adhering to a Reconstructionist version of Biblical Christianity, Reconstructionists make a claim that denies the existence of Article VI of the Constitution. Most historians agree that Article VI, which states that public officials shall be "bound by oath or affirmation to support this Constitution; but no religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under the United States," was a move toward disestablishment of churches as official power brokers, and the establishment of the principle of religious pluralism and separation of church and state.

R.J. Rushdoony, in his influential 1963 book, *The Nature of the American System*, claims that "The Constitution was designed to perpetuate a Christian order," then asks rhetorically: "Why then is there, in the main, an absence of any reference to Christianity in the Constitution?" He argues that the purpose was to protect religion from the federal government, and to preserve "states rights."

Once again, however, such a view requires ignoring Article VI. Before 1787, most of the colonies and early states had required pledges of allegiance to Christianity, and that one be a Christian of the correct sect to hold office. Part of the struggle toward democracy at the time was the disestablishment of the state churches—the power structures of the local colonial theocracies. Thus the "religious test" was a significant philosophical matter. There was little debate over Article VI, which passed unanimously at the Constitutional Convention. Most of the states soon followed the federal lead in conforming to it.

Reconstructionist author Gary DeMar, in his 1993 book *America's Christian History: The Untold Story*, also trips over Article VI. He quotes from colonial and state constitutions to prove they were "Christian" states. And of course, they generally were, until the framers of the Constitution set disestablishment irrevocably in motion. Yet DeMar tries to explain this away, claiming that Article VI merely banned "government mandated religious tests"—as if there were any other kind at issue. He later asserts that Article VI was a "mistake" on the part of the framers, implying that they did not intend disestablishment.

By contrast, mainstream historian

The Leaders

FOUR RECONSTRUCTIONISTS STAND OUT AS LEADERS OF THE MOVEMENT:

Rev. R.J. Rushdoony is the head of the Chalcedon Foundation, located in Vallecito, California. An activist in the John Birch Society in the 1960s, Rushdoony (like most Reconstructionists) neatly merges the JBS worldview with conservative Christianity. He has published over 30 books and is a longtime conservative movement leader, serving on the executive committee of the Council for National Policy, as well as on the advisory board of Howard Phillips' Conservative Caucus. Born in 1916, he studied at the University of California at Berkeley, the Pacific School of Religion, and received his Ph.D. from Valley Christian University in Fresno, California. He established the Chalcedon Foundation in 1965, from which he has since waged ideological war. Although he is an ordained Orthodox Presbyterian minister and former missionary, he does not currently attend any church.

Dr. Gary North heads the Institute for Christian Economics in Tyler, Texas. He is a gleefully acerbic and prolific writer, known for his take-no-prisoners radical rhetoric. He has a Ph.D. in History from the University of California at Riverside. His many books include *Backward Christian Soldiers: An Action Manual for Christian Reconstruction*. Like Rushdoony, he has been a close collaborator with conservative activist Howard Phillips. Through his non-profit Institute for Christian Economics and his for-profit Dominion Press, he is perhaps the leading publisher of books on Reconstructionism. He attends Good Shepherd Reformed Episcopal Church in Tyler, Texas (formerly Westminster Presbyterian Church).

Dr. Greg L. Bahnsen is an ordained minister in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and a leading Reconstructionist theologian. His major work, *Theonomy in Christian Ethics*, has been described as a "bombshell in the evangelical theological community" because it argued that the Old Testament penal code—"every jot and tittle"—should be applied today. His Ph.D. is from the University of Southern California. He is currently Pastor of Covenant Community Church in Placentia, California and a resident scholar at the Southern California Center for Christian Studies.

Rev. Joseph Morecraft is a popular preacher and blunt proponent of Reconstructionism. Pastor of Chalcedon Presbyterian Church in Marietta, Georgia and publisher of the *Counsel of Chalcedon*, a leading Reconstructionist magazine, he is the author of *Liberty and Justice for All: Christian Politics Made Simple*. Morecraft ran, unsuccessfully, as the 1986 GOP Congressional candidate to succeed the late Rep. Larry McDonald (R-GA), his close colleague and chairman of the John Birch Society.

Garry Wills sees no mistake. In his book *Under God: Religion and American Politics*, he concludes that the framers stitched together ideas from "constitutional monarchies, ancient republics, and modern leagues ....but we (the U.S.) invented nothing, except disestablishment... No other government in the history of the world had launched itself without the help of officially recognized gods and their state connected ministers." Disestablishment was the clear and unambiguous choice of the framers of the Constitution, most of whom were also serious Christians.

Even Gary North (who holds a Ph.D. in History) sees the connection between Article VI and disestablishment and attacks Rushdoony's version of the "Christian" Constitution. North writes that "In his desire to make the case for Christian America, he (Rushdoony) closed his eyes to the judicial break from Christian America: the ratification of the Constitution." North says Rushdoony "pretends" that Article VI "does not say what it says, and it does not mean what it has always meant: a legal barrier to Christian theocracy," leading "directly to the rise of religious pluralism."

North's views are the exception on the Christian Right. The falsely nostalgic view of a Christian Constitution, somehow subverted by modernism and the Supreme Court, generally holds sway. Christian historical revisionism is the premise of much Christian Right political and historical literature and is being widely taught and accepted in Christian schools and home schools. It informs the political understanding of the broader Christian Right. The popularization of this perspective is a dangerously polarizing factor in contemporary politics.

A MOVEMENT OF IDEAS

As a movement primarily of ideas, Reconstructionism has no single denominational or institutional home. Nor is it totally defined by a single charismatic leader, nor even a single text. Rather it is defined by a small group of scholars who are identified

with Reformed or Orthodox Presbyterianism. The movement networks primarily through magazines, conferences, publishing houses, think tanks, and bookstores. As a matter of strategy, it is a self-consciously decentralized, and publicity-shy movement.

Reconstructionist leaders seem to have two consistent characteristics: a background in conservative Presbyterianism, and connections to the John Birch Society (JBS).

In 1973 R.J. Rushdoony compared the structure of the JBS to the "early church." He wrote in *Institutes*: "The key to the John Birch Society's effectiveness has been a plan of operation which has a strong resemblance to the early church; have meetings, local 'lay' leaders, area supervisors or 'bishops.'"

The JBS connection does not stop there. Most leading Reconstructionists have either been JBS members or have close ties to the organization. Reconstructionist literature can be found in JBS-affiliated American Opinion bookstores.

Indeed, the conspiracist views of Reconstructionist writers (focussing on the United Nations and the Council on Foreign Relations, among others) are consistent with those of the John Birch Society. A classic statement of the JBS worldview, *Call It Conspiracy* by Larry Abraham, features a prologue and an epilogue by Reconstructionist Gary North. In fact, former JBS chairman Larry McDonald may himself have been a Reconstructionist. Joseph Morecraft has written that "Larry (McDonald) understood that when the authors of the U.S. Constitution spoke of law, they meant the law of God as revealed in the Bible. I have heard him say many times that we must refute humanistic, relativistic law with Biblical Law."

As opposed to JBS beliefs, however, Reconstructionists emphasize the primacy of Christianity over politics. Gary North, for example, insists that it is the institution of the Church itself to which loyalty and energy are owed, before any other arena of life. Christians are called to Christianity first and foremost, and that Christianization should extend to all areas of life. This emphasis on Christianity first has political implications because, in the 1990's, it is likely that the JBS worldview is persuasive to more people when packaged as a *Biblical* worldview.

A GENERATION OF RECONSTRUCTIONISTS

Reconstructionism's decentralist ideas have led to the creation of a network of churches, across a number of denominations, all building for the Kingdom. One Reconstructionist pastor writes that the leadership of the movement is passing to hundreds of small local churches that are "starting to grow, both numerically and theologically. Their people are being trained in the Reconstruction army. And at least in Presbyterian circles...we're Baptizing and catechizing a whole generation of Gary Norths, R.J. Rushdoonys and David Chiltons."

North writes that this percolation of ideas, actions, and institutions is largely untraceable. "No historian," he says, "will ever be able to go back and identify in terms of the primary source documents, (what happened) because *we* can't possibly do it."

Part of the reason for this is that Reconstructionism cloaks its identity, as well as its activities, understanding the degree of opposition it provokes. For example, Gary North was caught donating Reconstructionist books, (mostly his own) to university libraries under the pretense of being an anonymous alumnus. What might seem a small matter of shameless self-promotion— getting one's books into libraries to influence American intellectual life by hook or by crook—is actually part of the larger strategy of covert influence and legitimation.

Similarly, while claiming to be reformers, not revolutionaries, Reconstructionists recognize that the harsh theocracy they advocate is revolutionary indeed. Gary North warns against a "premature revolutionary situation," saying that the public must begin to accept "the judicially binding case laws of the Old Testament before we attempt to tear down judicial institutions that still rely on natural law or public virtue. (I have in mind the U.S. Constitution)." Thus, radical ideas must be gently and often indirectly infused into their target constituencies, and society at large. The vague claim that God and Jesus want Christians to govern society is certainly more appealing than the bloodthirsty notion of justice as "vengeance" advocated by the Reconstructionists.

The claim that they do not seek to impose a theocracy from the top down—waiting for a time when a majority will have converted and thus want to live under Biblical Law—is consistent with Reconstructionists' decentralist and anti-state populism, which they often pass off as a form of libertarianism. Even so, there is an inevitable point when the "majority" would impose its will. North bluntly says that one of his first actions would be to "remove legal access to the franchise and to civil offices from those who refuse to become communicant members of Trinitarian churches." Quick to condemn democracy as the idea that the law is whatever the majority says it is, North *et al.* would be quick to cynically utilize a similar "majority" for a permanent theocratic solution.

THE TIMING OF THE KINGDOM

One of the variations within Reconstructionism is the matter of the timing of the Kingdom, as defined by when Christians take power. For example, Rev. Everette Sileven of Louisville, Nebraska thinks the Kingdom is overdue. (Rev. Sileven is best known for his battle with the state in the mid-1980's, when he refused to certify the teachers in his private Christian school as required by state law). In 1987 Sileven predicted the crumbling of the economy, democracy, the judicial system, and the IRS before 1992. From this crisis, he believed, the Kingdom would emerge.

Rev. David Chilton has a longer-term vision. He believes the Kingdom

may not begin for 36,000 years. Most Reconstructionists, however, would argue for the Kingdom breaking out within a few generations, possibly even the next.

A general outline of what the reconstructed "Kingdom," or confederation of Biblical theocracies, would look like emerges from the large body of Reconstructionist literature. This society would feature a minimal national government, whose main function would be defense by the armed forces. No social services would be provided outside the church, which would be responsible for "health, education, and welfare." A radically unfettered capitalism (except in so far as it clashed with Biblical Law) would prevail. Society would return to the gold or silver standard or abolish paper money altogether. The public schools would be abolished. Government functions, including taxes, would be primarily at the county level.

Women would be relegated primarily to the home and home schools, and would be banned from government. Indeed, Joseph Morecraft, states that the existence of women civil magistrates "is a sign of God's judgment on a culture." Those qualified to vote or hold office would be limited to males from Biblically-correct churches.

Democratic values would be replaced by intolerance of many things. R. J. Rushdoony, Reconstructionism's leading proponent, writes that: "In the name of toleration (in contemporary society) 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." He also advocates various forms of discrimination, in the service of anti-unionism: "an employer has a property right to prefer whom he will in terms of color, creed, race, or national origin."

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF RECONSTRUCTIONISM

The leaders of Reconstructionism see themselves as playing a critical role in the history of the church (and of the world). They envision themselves salvaging Christianity from modern fundamentalism as well as theological liberalism. Because they are both conservative movement activists and conservative Christians seeking to pick up where the Puritans left off, they have constructed a theology that would provide the ideological direction and underpinning for a new kind of conservatism. It is, as well, a formidable theology designed to take on all comers. In order to wage a battle for God's dominion over all aspects of society, they needed a comprehensive analysis, game plan, and justification. This is what Reconstructionism provides to a wide range of evangelical and other would-be conservative Christians. New Right activist Howard Phillips believes that Reconstructionism, as expressed by Rushdoony and North, has "provided (evangelical Christian) leaders with the intellectual self-confidence" to become politically active, whereas many previously were not. Many conservatives apparently felt that they had no positive program, and had been left in the role of reactionaries, just saying no to modernism and liberalism. Reconstructionism offers a platform that encompasses the religious and the political.

Many Christian Right thinkers and activists have been profoundly influenced by Reconstructionism. Among others: the late Francis Shaeffer, whose book, *A Christian Manifesto*, was an influential call to evangelical political action that sold 2 million copies and John Whitehead, President of the Rutherford Institute (a Christian Right legal action group).

Francis Shaeffer is widely credited with providing the impetus for Protestant evangelical political action against abortion. For example, Randall Terry, the founder of Operation Rescue, says: "You have to read Schaeffer's *Christian Manifesto* if you want to understand Operation Rescue." Shaeffer, a longtime leader in Rev. Carl McIntire's splinter denomination, the Bible Presbyterian Church, was a reader of Reconstructionist literature but has been reluctant to acknowledge its influence. Indeed, Shaeffer and his followers specifically rejected the modern application of Old Testament law.

The Rutherford Institute's John Whitehead was a student of both Schaeffer and Rushdoony, and credits them as the two major influences on his thought. The Rutherford Institute is an influential conservative legal advocacy group which has recently gained considerable legitimacy. Given this new legitimacy, it is not surprising that Whitehead goes to great lengths to deny that he is a Reconstructionist. However, perhaps he doth protest too much. Rushdoony, introducing Whitehead at a Reconstructionist conference, called him a man "chosen by God." Consequently, he said, "There is something very important...at work in the ministry of John Whitehead." Rushdoony then spoke of "*our* plans, through Rutherford, to fight the battle against statism and the freedom of Christ's Kingdom."

The Rutherford Institute was founded as a legal project of R. J. Rushdoony's Chalcedon Foundation, with Rushdoony and fellow Chalcedon director Howard Ahmanson on its original board of directors. Whitehead credits Rushdoony with providing the outline for his first book, which he researched in Rushdoony's library.

COALITION ON REVIVAL

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, an umbrella organization which has brokered a series of theological compromises among differing, competing conservative evangelical leaders. These compromises have had a Reconstructionist orientation, thus increasing the reach and influence of Reconstructionism.

Founded and headed by Dr. Jay Grimstead, COR has sought in this way to create a transdenominational

theology—a process that has involved hundreds of evangelical scholars, pastors and activists, and the creation of a series of theological statements epitomized by the "Manifesto of the Christian Church."

The leadership has significantly overlapped with the Christian Right, and has included: John Whitehead, Don Wildmon of the American Family Association, televangelists Tim LaHaye and D. James Kennedy, Randall Terry of Operation Rescue, Houston GOP activist Steven Hotze, Rev. Glen Cole of Sacramento, CA, 1993 Virginia GOP Lt. Governor candidate Michael Farris, lobbyist Robert Dugan of the National Association of Evangelicals, former U.S. Congressmen Bill Dannemeyer (R-CA) and Mark Siljander (R-MI), as well as such leading Reconstructionists as R. J. Rushdoony, Gary North, Joseph Morecraft, David Chilton, Gary DeMar of American Vision, and Rus Walton of the Plymouth Rock Foundation.

A major focus of COR has been to reconcile the two main evangelical eschatologies (end-times theologies). Most evangelicals in this century have been pre-millenialists—that is, Christians who generally believe that it is not possible to reform this world until Jesus returns (the Second Coming), which will be followed by a 1000-year rule of Jesus and the Christians. The other-worldly orientation of pre-millenialism has tended to keep the majority of evangelicals on the political sidelines.

A minority of evangelicals are post-millenialists, believing that it is necessary to build the Kingdom of God in the here and now before the return of Jesus is possible. Thus, for post-millenialists, Jesus will return when the world has become perfectly Christian, the return crowning 1000 years of Christian rule. This eschatology urges political involvement and action by evangelicals, who must play a critical role in establishing Christian rule.

COR has sought to establish a "non-quarreling policy" on matters of eschatology, and has emphasized building the Kingdom of God *in so far as it is possible* until Jesus returns. This neatly urges political involvement and action, without anyone having to say how much can actually be accomplished. It reconciles the difference over eschatology that has divided evangelicals, and opens the door to political involvement and action without requiring either of the two sides to abandon its eschatology.

While COR is not an overtly Reconstructionist organization, much of COR doctrine is clearly Reconstructionist in orientation. Among other things, COR calls for exercising Christian dominion over 17 "spheres" of life—including government, education, and economics. COR chief Jay Grimstead has been hard-pressed, in the face of controversy, to explain the role of Reconstructionism in COR, but in a letter to COR members he gave it his best shot: "COR's goals, leadership and documents overlap so much with those of Christian Reconstruction that in the eyes of our enemies we...are a monolithic Reconstructionist movement. The fine technical distinctions we make between ourselves," he explains, "are meaningless to these enemies of Christ. To them, anyone who wants to rebuild our society upon Biblical Principles... is a Reconstructionist. So we must simply live with the Reconstructionist label, and be grateful to be in the company of brilliant scholars like Greg Bahnsen, Gary North, and R.J. Rushdoony."

Grimstead can't help acknowledging the significance of Reconstructionism to the Christian Right: "These men were rethinking the church's mission to the world and how to apply a Christian worldview to every area of life and thought 10 to 20 years before most of the rest of us had yet awakened from our slumbers. We owe them a debt of gratitude for pioneering the way into Biblical world changing, even if we can't accept everything they teach."

Grimstead's fig leafs notwithstanding, a number of COR Steering Committee members have had to drop out because even mere association with Reconstructionism was too hotly controversial. One evangelical critic observes, however, that those who signed the COR documents or "covenants" had to be "willing to die in the attempt to establish a theonomic political state. This statement makes the COR Manifesto-Covenant more than just a covenant; it is a blood covenant, sworn on the life of the signers."

A key, if not exclusively Reconstructionist, doctrine uniting many evangelicals is the "dominion mandate," also called the "cultural mandate." This concept derives from the Book of Genesis and God's direction to "subdue" the earth and exercise "dominion" over it. While much of Reconstructionism, as one observer put it, "dies the death of a thousand qualifications," the commitment to dominion is the theological principle that serves as the uniting force of Christian right extremism, while people debate the particulars.

Christian Reconstructionism is a stealth theology, spreading its influence throughout the religious right. Its analysis of America as a Christian nation and the security of complete control implied in the concept of dominion is understandably appealing to many conservative Christians. Its apocalyptic vision of rule by Biblical Law is a mandate for political involvement. Organizations such as COR and the Rutherford Institute provide political guidance and act as vehicles for growing political aspirations.

Part Two will examine in further detail the extent of the influence of Reconstructionism within the Christian Right and the significance of its role for the right's political work. Specific examples of Reconstructionist political successes, especially within the home schooling movement and in seizing electoral power at the local level, will be discussed.

—by Fred Clarkson

END OF PART ONE

Fred Clarkson is a free-lance journalist who lives in New York City.

(Write or call for information on footnotes for this article)

In Their Own Words

The Christian Right World View

Michael Lienesch

Redeeming America: Piety and Politics in the New Christian Right

University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1993. 260 pp., plus footnotes and index.

In *Redeeming America*, Michael Lienesch examines conservative Christian beliefs and values in order to present the overall world view of what he calls the "New Christian Right." Choosing some past and present key players—Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson (important national leaders), James Robison and Anita Bryant (prominent local partisans), and finally, Jim and Tammy Bakker and Pat Boone (movement celebrities)—Lienesch relies on the words of the players themselves, using their published autobiographies and "the books they produce in ever-proliferating numbers" to paint a portrait of the leadership of the radical Religious Right.

While focussing on these seven leaders, Lienesch does not ignore dozens of other important movers and shakers in the movement. Fundamentalists, Charismatics, Evangelicals, and Reconstructionists, representing the chief doctrinal sectors within conservative Christianity, are all well-represented. And, importantly, they are easily located in the book's excellent index.

Lienesch has identified five components of the beliefs and values of the New Christian Right that appear consistently in their writings, devoting a chapter to each. He begins with a chapter called "Self," which examines the first step of the authors' journeys—conversion. After the defining experience of conversion brings "self" under the control of the Biblical mind-set, that world view defines and organizes the other components of New Christian Right beliefs: "Family," "Economy," "Polity," and "World."

Lienesch correctly emphasizes that the key to understanding the New Christian Right is to understand *conversion* and its many implications. Using his seven key players' autobiographical stories as a guide, he divides conversion into three steps. The first is "Preparation," which encompasses "sin" and feelings of worthlessness before conversion. Looking for a pattern that applies to all seven, Lienesch finds that: "For all their differences, the autobiographies are alike in telling stories of people searching for security." He describes their conversion experiences as a search for identity.

The next step in conversion (which Lienesch describes as a process: a beginning rather than an end) is "Salvation." Duly converted, each subject felt complete and secure for the first time. For some, conversion related closely to career choice. The conversions of Jerry Falwell, Jim Bakker, and Pat Robertson were followed by a calling to preach. In each case, personal crisis was turned into a career.

The final step in Lienesch's schema of conversion is called "Participation." Each of the seven New Christian Right leaders entered a quest to prove herself or himself to society, on society's terms. Though early in their lives each had little interest in politics, after conversion they looked for material reward for their faith—not simply for personal gain, but as proof of God's endorsement of their ministries. Lienesch concludes that: "Beginning within the inmost reaches of oneself, conversion is not complete until it is professed and put into practice in the world, transforming not only the soul but also society."

While personal conversion stands resolutely at the center of New Christian Right autobiography, giving meaning, order, and security to each life, all see themselves as God's tool to convert society. This is the important link between their own conversion and their social and political activity. Rev. Tim LaHaye describes salvation as a two-step process: "Repent of our personal and national sins, bringing revival to the land." Salvation, in other words, must transcend the individual and reach out to the nation, and, ultimately, the world.

The second consistent component in New Christian Right beliefs and values is "Family." No other subject has been treated so thoroughly by Christian conservatives. And when it comes to family, according to writer John L. Kater, Jr., "the issue at stake is power." Lienesch adds: "Anxious defenders of a contemporary form of patriarchy, they insist that men act as authorities, that wives submit to their husbands, and that children obey their parents. Men are to be men and women women; differences between the sexes are clearly defined, and deviations are punished severely."

Conservative Christians believe that a well-ordered family will protect its members against the corruption of the outside world. The purpose of families, says Tim LaHaye, is to "insulate the Christian home against all evil forces." Following this reasoning, having gay children indicates failure in the Christian home. One wonders how Phyllis Schlafly, who has an openly gay son, and other prominent leaders of the New Christian Right who have gay (albeit closeted) offspring, deal with this.

Another cluster of New Christian Right beliefs addresses "Economy." "For the New Christian Right," Lienesch writes, "the economy is a touchstone, a kind of totem or test by which its members define themselves as conservatives and distinguish themselves from their liberal and moderate counterparts." When it comes to economics, contemporary conservative Christians dismiss piety and assume that prosperity plays a legitimate part in God's plan for their lives. Leaders of the New Christian Right are largely

responsible for this perspective, and can be credited with convincing millions of Christians not to be suspicious of wealth.

This ploy has worked well for the Religious Right. The movement demands large amounts of money to facilitate its agenda. What better source than those who support its ideological goals? However, there is a limit to the number of people who will back a cause with hard-earned dollars. The leaders of the New Christian Right have found a way to bridge this gap, based on the Bible, no less. Raising billions of dollars from "tithes and offerings," they exploit conservative Christians, leaving them thinking they have given their money to God.

Shamelessly, these leaders inspire their followers to give beyond measure, even in times of scarcity. "I am as certain of this as of anything in my life," says Pat Robertson. "If you are in financial trouble, the smartest thing you can do is to start giving money away. Give tithes and offerings to the Lord."

Lienesch identifies "Polity" as his third category of beliefs and values, noting that political interest on the part of conservative Christians is a rather recent phenomenon. He adds that the movement's involvement in politics is perhaps the most important characteristic of the New Christian Right.

Webster defines "polity" as "the form or constitution of a politically organized unit," or "the form of government of a religious denomination." A combination of these two definitions serves to describe the New Christian Right's position and agenda, since the Religious Right is a political movement, probably more so than it is a religious movement. However, it uses ***religion*** to win votes and gain political power, and thus correctly should be considered theocratic. It attempts to find Biblical precedent to dictate the form of government, similar to the denominational manner of defining government within a religious body.

Drawing on the writings of Falwell, Robertson, and others, Lienesch illustrates why the New Christian Right believes America was founded by Christians, as a Christian nation. Falwell, for example, reaches this faulty conclusion by confusing the Declaration of Independence, which mentions God but is not the founding document of the U.S., with the Constitution, which does not mention God but is the nation's founding document.

> "God's kingdom is to be brought about through conquest . . . the purpose of Revelation is to strengthen us against the enemy, [and] prepare us to do battle."
>
> *R.J. Rushdoony*

It is in this chapter that Lienesch introduces Christian Reconstructionist thinking and demonstrates how this little-known element of the New Christian Right is influencing the movement. Considered on the fringe by many, Christian Reconstructionism has had a more-than-subtle influence on the Religious Right.

Reconstructionist Rus Walton, describes well how most of the leaders of the Religious Right sum up the present day. He says that their mission is to "Christianize America. To bring this nation back to God." This reflects the New Christian Right view that America has broken its covenant with God and drifted from its original purpose. "Thus," Lienesch says, "they are determined to bring their country back to its spiritual beginnings, reminding Americans repeatedly that theirs is a biblical republic."

The final component of Christian Right thought, attitudes toward the "World," are characteristically uncompromising. The New Christian Right is not only militantly nationalistic, but believes it has the moral responsibility to bring law and liberty to other countries.

Ultimately concerned with the end of the world (end-times theology) the New Christian Right sees a worldwide utopia only after the end of the existing world, as depicted in the apocalyptic visions of the New Testament's Book of Revelation. While there are many differing beliefs on this topic, the various factions do find grounds for agreement. R.J. Rushdoony, considered the father of Christian Reconstructionism, summarizes it neatly: "God's kingdom is to be brought about through conquest," and "the purpose of Revelation is to strengthen us against the enemy, [and] prepare us to do battle."

It is often difficult to understand the relationship among Fundamentalists, Charismatics, Evangelicals, and Reconstructionists, especially the political differences among these sectors of the Religious Right. Lienesch skillfully constructs an account of their beliefs, weaving together various facets of conservative Christianity by focussing on the areas where the groups share common bonds.

Redeeming America is an important book. In an objective and nonjudgmental style Michael Lienesch assembles a comprehensive account of the beliefs and world view of the leadership of the Christian Right. For students of the radical Religious Right, or those simply curious to understand their religious, political, economic, and social ideas, it is well worth the read.

—by Skipp Porteous

Skipp Porteous is president of the Institute for First Amendment Studies, based in Great Barrington, Massachusetts.

THE CHRISTIAN RIGHT AND THE 1992 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

Remember the rhetoric of the 1992 Republican Convention? Pat Buchanan, sputtering venomously about the culture war? The attacks on Hillary Clinton? Pat Robertson saying the Democratic Party's liberalism was an "insidious plague?" Well, research indicates that this showcasing of the right wing's social agenda didn't sway voters in large numbers, but religious belief and level of institutional religious participation did influence voting patterns.

According to University of Akron's John C. Green, three points emerge from the 1992 National Election Study: 1) religious voting blocs were very important in 1992, despite the enormous impact of economic distress; 2) on balance George Bush gained more votes on social issues than he lost (though these gains were dwarfed by his losses from the economy); 3) there is some evidence that Christian Right activists may have helped mobilize their constituency for the Republican ticket.

SHIFTING PARTY ALLIANCES?

Green, along with Lyman A. Kellstedt, James L. Guth, and Corwin E. Schmidt, co-authored a study presented at the September meeting of the American Political Science Association. The authors contend that "the basic building blocs of contemporary American party coalitions are ethno-religious groups, with their distinct values," and that while the economy was a crucial issue in 1992, "the voters' response to economic stress is best understood against the baseline of fundamental cultural cleavages." They found that those highly committed in all religious traditions were also more conservative on social issues. Finally, they note a significant "widening gulf between Evangelicals and Seculars," concluding that a new kind of party alignment may be appearing: a division between religious and non-religious voters, replacing the old ethno-religious politics based on cleavages among religious traditions.

SYNERGY AND THE CHRISTIAN RIGHT

Green sprouts up again, with Guth and Kevin Hill, to harvest election data for the article "Faith and Election: The Christian Right in Congressional Campaigns 1978-1988," in the February 1993 issue of *The Journal of Politics*. Here the authors found that the Christian Right was most active, and apparently successful when three factors converged: (1) the *demand* for Christian Right activism by discontented populations; (2) the *supply* of resources for such activism by religious organizations; and (3) *strategic choice* in the deployment of such resources by movement leaders. The authors see the Christian Right's recent emphasis on grassroots organizing as a strategic choice by the Christian Right, and conclude that "the conjunction of motivations, resources, and opportunities reveals the political character of the Christian Right: much of its activity was a calculated response to real grievances by increasingly self-conscious and empowered traditionalists."

POPE POPS GAY AND LESBIAN COUPLES

No surprise in the announcement by Pope John Paul II that the Roman Catholic Church opposes a proposed resolution in the European Parliament that would allow same-sex couples to marry and adopt children. But the Vatican newspaper added a nasty tone when it editorialized that gays and lesbians were an "aberrant deviation" and that "no man can take the place of a natural mother." The latter rather self-evident and inadvertently feminist remark characteristically belies a fundamental reality: that around the world two men, two women and single parents of both sexes are devoted to the task of raising children who find the situation quite natural.

COUNCIL FOR NATIONAL POLICY MEETING

Presentations at the 1993 Council for National Policy (CNP) meeting reflected traditional conservative concerns, but perhaps also foreshadow which issues will be hottest for the ultra-conservative right. As investigative reporter Russ Bellant observes, CNP is devoted to networking the "foremost right-wing activists and funders in the United States."

Paul Weyrich introduced Mayor John Norquist of Milwaukee who delivered the keynote speech, "School Choice: Education's Future." Weyrich, president of the Free Congress Foundation, has been the CNP's secretary-treasurer and is currently on the CNP board of Governors. "Health Care: Crisis or Bureaucratic Power Grab?" was the topic of Dr. Jane Orient, executive director of the Association of American Physicians and Surgeons. "Cut Outrageous Fees of Government Bureaucrats" was presented by Richard McCarthy, Jr. of The Paladin Group, and "How to Motivate Minorities on Traditional Family Issues," was the speech by Mrs. Jackie Cissell, director of social and cultural studies at the Indiana Family Institute.

Phyllis Schlafly co-chaired the CNP standing committee workshop on "Family" along with Mr. E. Peb Jackson. The standing committee on "Law and Justice" was co-chaired by Edwin Meese III, and

Judge Paul Pressler, while "Institutional Reform" was co-chaired by Pat Nolan and Richard Viguerie. Meese is currently president of CNP.

CNP gave its "Winston Churchill Award" to writer David Brock, whose articles in the *American Spectator* have ridiculed Anita Hill, among others. The award celebrates Churchill's famous quote, "Victory at all costs, for without Victory, there is no Survival." Former recipients include Rev. Donald Wildmon of the American Family Association, Rep. Woody Jenkins of the Louisiana State Legislature, Rep. Penny Pullen of the Illinois State Legislature, and Dr. Ralph E. Reed, executive director of the Christian Coalition. L.L. Bean heiress Linda Bean Folkers was "Master of Ceremonies" for a program where Rep. James M. Talent of Missouri gave the "Perspective of a House Freshman," and Hon. Dr. Ben Ngubane, Minister of Health, KwaZulu Government, South Africa, explained "South Africa: The True Story." According to the January 1994 *Freedom Writer* newsletter, some 200 persons attended the meeting.

Some CNP members of interest include Judie Brown, president of the American Life League; Kathleen Sullivan, chair of Eagle Forum of Illinois and founder and executive director of the National Catholic Coalition; John A. Stormer, author of *None Dare Call it Treason*, publisher of Liberty Bell Press, and the director of I Chronicles 12:332 Understanding the Times Ministry; and televangelist John Ankerberg.

The CNP executive committee includes Holland H. (Holly) Coors, vice chair and board of trustees for A Christian Ministry in the National Parks and on the board of directors, Adolph Coors Foundation; Dr. Edwin J. Feulner of the Heritage Foundation; former attorney general Edwin Meese, III, now with the Heritage Foundation; Howard Phillips of the Conservative Caucus; Reed Larson president of the National Right-to-Work Committee; and Lt. Col. Oliver L. North, among others.

Russ Bellant provides extensive details about the secretive CNP in the PRA/South End Press paperback book *The Coors Connection.*

1994 meetings of CNP: February 4-5, Palm Beach, Florida; May 6-7, Arlington, VA; and November 18-19, New Orleans, Louisiana.

For a list of CNP reports available to the public, or to request a membership application form, write to CNP, 3030 Clarendon Blvd., Suite 340, Arlington, Virginia 22201.

SCHOOL CENSORSHIP: YOUTH AND VAMPIRES

The February 1994 Education Reporter, published by Phyllis Schlafly's Eagle Forum Education and Defense Fund, continued its attack on the subjugation of Christian students to anti-Christian materials. This issue highlighted a 15-year-old student's protest against The Great Santini for "its violent and sacreligious passages," including a "vulgar parody of the 'Hail Mary.'" Responding to a charge of censorship by "those who believe that anything less than total liberalism is a form of censorship," this self anointed "champion of...students...too intimidated to speak out" argued "students [should] not have to have to grow up before their time [or] have perversion shoved down their throats...in the name of education." Another item highlighted a protest against the assignment of Dracula as the "sexual glorification of 'satanic behavior,'" quoting the student's mother's lament that in light of the incidents of vampirism in the area, "glorifying this behavior" is quite "unwise."

PRA's New Director

On January 31, I began work as Political Research Associates's new Director, a position that is both exciting and challenging. PRA's work in analyzing, monitoring and organizing against the American right wing is part of the infrastructure of progressive work in this country, as this issue's article by Fred Clarkson on Christian Reconstructionism, makes frighteningly evident.

I look forward to using my experiences in progressive movements, adult education, multicultural settings and academia to help PRA continue to move forward, to work with organizations and individuals across the country and to maintain the political independence, integrity and credibility that has been PRA's cornerstone to date. We all look forward to hearing your ideas, criticisms or suggestions.

CORRECTION

In the last issue of *The Public Eye*, the first "out-take" (quotation taken from the article and highlighted for emphasis) was mistakenly attributed to the author of the feature article, Deborah Toler. It was, in fact, a quote from Adolph Reed, Jr. The error was the editors'.

To the Editor

To the Editor:

Habari gani? (Greetings in Kiswahili)

I was quite pleased to read Deborah Toler's two part series on so-called "Black Conservatives." The research and analysis about this *genotypical* and *phenotypical* element of the African-American community will go a long way in aiding the on-going struggle for National Liberation and Freedom.

This is especially true when Ms. Toler points out how a segment of the African-American *petit bourgeoisie* is pre-occupied with how they are perceived by white America. This, on one level, was referred to by W.E.B. DuBois as 'The Double Consciousness Syndrome.' A new work, *Black Erotica,* also highlights the over concern of middle class African-Americans with the perception of Black people's sexuality.

Though I was quite pleased with the article, there are two issues which I feel must be clarified.

First, I, and many other African-American community activists consider bell hooks, Cornel West and especially Adolph Reed to be "Black Surrogates." This does not mean that hooks and West have not written books that provide Critical Insight and, on many levels, advance the social and material interests of African-Americans. They do. *Sisters of the Yam* and *Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black*, by bell hooks, are essential reading. West's *Race Matters* and the popular *Prophetic Fragments* help give a structural analysis of African-American problems. However, none of the three mentioned have challenged, at the level of epistemology, the paradigm that says that the ways of Europe and Europeans *is the way for all of humanity.* For West and hooks to be so talented, that is a tragic flaw.

Second, I am in no way surprised that the so-called "liberal" MacArthur Foundation awarded the "Genius Award" to Black Conservative Robert Woodson. How is this any different from the chief Black Surrogate Henry Louis Gates Jr. or the arch-conservative Stanley Crouch? In *A Life in Black History: Carter G. Woodson*, Jacqueline Goggins records that white, "liberal" foundations have always supported the Black Surrogates, but not the women and men who don't shuffle and dance for this "liberal" element. Many would think that racism and white supremacy is confined to the elements of the "white right."

Finally, women and men like Sonia Sanchez, La Francias Rodgers-Rose, Delores Aldridge, Maulana Karenga, Kofi Lomotey, Kalamu ya Salaam, Ivan Van Sertima, Marita Golden, Ntozake Shange and many other young African-American scholars are rarely mentioned, even in so-called "liberal" publications, while the so-called progressive publications cite only the Black Surrogates like hooks, West and Reed.

Again, the article was an excellent one, and I hope that other voices from the African-American community can gain exposure for their ideas, and not just those of Black Surrogates.

Stay strong. Love Always. In Unity, Love & Struggle

—Kwaku O. Kushindana

(The Editor retains the right to shorten and/or edit letters for clarity.)

Deborah Toler Responds:

Mr. Kushindana raises an important point which has long been a sore spot for me—the fact that most superb African American scholars and activists (not to mention Latino and Asian scholars and activists!) go unrecognized by the larger American society. It is still another testament to continuing American racism that even mediocre white scholars can achieve widespread name recognition while only a handful of outstanding scholars of color are allowed a hearing. In my own work, I always try to highlight the work of these unknown scholars of color. If you review my footnotes, you will find almost all of my scholarly references are to the work of people of color such as Patricia Hill Collins and Bonnie Dill Thornton. It is because of the political focus of the article that I did not mention some of my favorite cultural workers, including such people as Sonia Sanchez, Marita Golden, John Edgar Wideman, Ishmael Reed, Amiri Baraka and Ntozake Shange.

Space limitations force me to focus on Mr. Kushindana's key point, the issue of who is and is not a "Black Surrogate." He claims that the African American scholars I cited as among our most innovative and brilliant thinkers (who went largely unrecognized in the mainstream media in the 1980's) are "Black Surrogates" because none of them challenge European cultural hegemony.

I chose bell hooks, Cornel West, Angela Davis, June Jordan and Adolph Reed because their analyses of racism, sexism, classism, and homophobia parallel my own, namely that the vicious, corporate capitalism of Europe, the United States and Japan is the root source of these problems. And yes, I did take Political Research Associates's audience into account and consciously selected from among a number of progressive African American analysts those whose names

Eye Lashes

Graceless are Christian Reconstructionists,
New Testament forgiveness just gives them fits.
With sword, stone and fire
All heretics expire.
No mercy for secular humanists.

would be recognizable and whose books would be easily accessible.

While this may exacerbate the "select few" problem, I do not agree that these people are "Black Surrogates" because they do not challenge European paradigms. This is an extraordinarily complicated issue. I sense Mr. Kushindana is making the basic Afrocentric argument that the solution to problems African Americans face lies in rejecting the European paradigm and adopting an African-centered world view.

But what is a European paradigm? And what *is* an African-centered perspective? Afrocentrics themselves trace the birth of all great European ideas and principles to ancient Egypt, so how can they be "European?" In addition, I reject the Eurocentric notion that the as yet unrealized ideals of the Enlightenment are European in origin or exclusive to European thought. Nor do I believe, based upon my years of living and working in Africa, that it is possible to define an African world view or set of African principles unique to African peoples. The most cherished of so-called European ideals have been present in all the world's great cultures and belong to us all. In 1994, the reality is that we live in a world in which European-derived Western capitalist global hegemony distorts and destroys those ideals.

The scholars I chose to mention are vehement critics of that distortion and destruction, unequivocally challenging the racist, sexist, classist and homophobic reality of global capitalist practices. Precisely because they are in this sense unequivocal critics of "the ways of Europe and Europeans," they are, with the exception of Cornel West, largely confined to the pages of small progressive publications.

Finally, Mr. Kushindana's call for more exposure for other African American points of view in liberal and progressive publications raises two important issues. The first is the importance of distinguishing between progressive and liberal. *The Progressive* is a clear contrast to the newly liberal *Mother Jones*. Progressive publications take seriously the right of African Americans and other "subalterns" to define and represent ourselves. *Mother Jones* and its liberal ilk continue to claim the right to define us and prescribe for us.

Ironically, Mr. Kushindana's call for more exposure of alternative African American voices concedes the importance of the very publications he argues select "Black Surrogates." If being selected for publication in these journals defines one as a "Black Surrogate," then why would principled African Americans, particularly Afro-centric scholars, agree to appear in their pages? The real problem is that we need an African American owned and controlled publication with a mass, multi-racial readership which presents a wide array of progressive African American political perspectives.

Part of what I find so disheartening about the current Adolph Reed-Cornel West feud is that it is being fought in white publications, while the majority of African Americans have never heard of either of them. Unlike Mr. Kushindana, I am a big Adolph Reed fan and it hurts to see him wasting intellectual energy arguing with another gifted and progressive brother instead of both focussing on getting their messages out to more African Americans.

The key factor in determining if someone is a Black Surrogate is whether that person's analysis serves African Americans' interests. I firmly believe that the scholars I chose to mention serve African and all Americans' interests. If appearing in progressive white publications and not challenging principles erroneously labeled as "European," such as social democracy, economic justice, and basic human rights, makes someone a Black Surrogate, then, W.E.B. DuBois, Franz Fanon, Amilcar Cabral, Paul Robeson, C.L.R. James, Ida B. Wells and Walter Rodney, among others, were "Black Surrogates" all. Pretty good company I'd say.

RANDY SHILTS
1952–1994

Randy Shilts' death is a loss that should not go unmentioned. His pioneering work on AIDS, gays in the military and his demand for respect and dignity for the gay community will be missed. His message will continue as other, less recognized voices continue to assert the demands for equity for gays, lesbians and other disenfranchised groups.

The Public Eye

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Congratulations to Judith Glaubman and Laura Booth on the birth of their daughter, Rosa Geoffrey Booth, on January 30, 1994 and to Richard Levy and Lenore Balliro on the birth of their daughter, Rosa Isabella Levy, on December 12, 1993.

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BOOKS RECEIVED

A Selected, Annotated List

Segrest, Mab

Memoir of a Race Traitor

Boston, South End Press, 1994 (forthcoming).
288 pages with footnotes. $15.00.

This remarkable book by a white, southern lesbian is an account of her ten years of anti-Klan work in North Carolina in the 1980's and early 1990's. Weaving her personal and political education into a story of enormous power, she takes us into the world of those victimized by far right violence. The honesty and lack of self-importance, the poetic writing style, and the lesbian sensibility Segrest brings to her account of political struggle makes this book a must, especially for readers looking for a merger of political commitment and thoughtful introspection. Her final chapter, a history of racism in the U.S., is comprehensive and extremely useful as a tool for anti-racism training.

Churchill, Ward

Indians Are Us

Monroe, Maine: Common Courage Press, 1994
357 pages with footnotes, plus index.

Churchill's latest book is a collection of his essays on topics ranging from geno-cide against Native Americans to the dehumanizing use of Indian names for sports teams. It is an angry response to the dismissal of Indian grievances, comparing them instead to grievances the Jews might have brought against the Nazis. "Indians Are Us," the essay from which the book takes its title, is a critique of the Men's Movement and its parasitical appropriation of Indian spirituality and ritual. Churchill's writing is hard-hitting and accessible.

Magnet, Myron

The Dream and the Nightmare: The Sixties' Legacy to the Underclass

New York, William Morrow, 1993.
227 pages, plus footnotes and index.

Magnet, a cross between George Gilder and William Bennett, flails at sixties' ideologies for victimizing the poor. It is the "Haves" (there are four entries in the Index under "Haves") who are the cause of the pathologies of the underclass. These Haves (sixties activists) captured and determined public policy and culture for the last three decades; the result is the cultural impoverishment of the poor. The book is a good example of right-wing attacks on liberal social welfare policy. Eighties redistribution of wealth gets a pass, represented as a boon to society that the victimized underclass was rendered unable to exploit.

West, Cornel

Beyond Eurocentrism and Multiculturalism *(2 volumes)*

Monroe, Maine, Common Courage Press, 1993.
Vol. 1, 205 pp. Vol. 2, 244 pp.

These two volumes of West's lectures and essays, assembled by Common Courage Press, are intended to capture West's unedited voice in a self-conscious attempt to preserve the immediacy of hearing him in person. The reader sees aspects of West not seen elsewhere, especially his family background, his identity as a theologian, and the breadth of his inter-disciplinary knowledge and interests. The plea he raises for prophetic thought has a slightly baleful tone as he asks (especially when talking about multiculturalism) that people "demystify the categories in order to stay tuned to the realities." Multiculturalism, and other topics he discusses, are framed by his principal concern to defend, preserve, and extend democracy. A thoughtful and thought-provoking collection.

Byrnes, Timothy A.

Catholic Bishops in American Politics

Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 1991.
146 pp., plus footnotes, bibliography and index.

Byrnes, who teaches at Colgate University, has written an account of the synergistic relationship between the Catholic hierarchy's promotion of its own political agenda and the courtship of the Catholic Bishops by Democrats and Republicans. Emphasizing the period from *Roe v. Wade* to the late 1980's, Byrnes reviews how the church and the political parties each uses the other for its own purposes. This is meant to correct the dominant notion that it is the Catholic church that has inserted itself into politics. Rather, Byrnes sees the political courtship of the Catholic hierarchy (based on the Republican pursuit of political realignment) as an equally important factor. Although the book lacks a critical edge that would make for intriguing or provocative analysis, it contributes useful insights into the internal political struggle within the Catholic hierarchy.

Merkl, Peter H. and Leonard Weinberg, eds.

Encounters with the Contemporary Radical Right

Boulder, Westview Press, 1993.
227 pages, plus footnotes and index.

This collection of essays, part of a Westview Press series titled *New Directions in Comparative Politics*, assembles articles on the far right in France, West Germany, Italy, Romania and the Balkans, Russia, Israel, Britain, and the U.S. In order to facilitate comparisons, each country study addresses the radical right as both a social movement and a voting bloc, assessing the importance and role of each. Most also review the role of right-wing extremism in the country's recent history. Because students of the right in the U.S. tend to be ill-informed about the right in other countries, the book makes an important contribution by providing useful cross-cultural information. It is, however, narrowly targeted to an academic audience, and the article on the U.S. right, written by one of the editors, lacks depth and breadth.

America's Original Sin: A Study Guide on White Racism

Washington, DC, 1992. Edited by the editors of *Sojourners* magazine.
172 pp., plus appendices, including bibliography.

The work of *Sojourners*, an ecumenical Christian community and magazine based in Washington DC, is an expression of liberation theology. In pursuing its goal of spiritual renewal and social transformation, *Sojourners* has assembled a new and expanded edition of its magazine-format anti-racism study guide, *America's Original Sin*. The guide is organized as nine study sessions, each with articles and questions for discussion. The presumption of the readers' link to some form of religious belief is

implicit but not overwhelming, making the study guide useful to a wide range of groups. Overall, the essays are clear, politically uncompromising, and often richer for their slightly personal tone. One wishes for more Asian voices, and at least an acknowledgement of anti-Semitism, but the strong connection between activism and theory makes this an unusually good resource.

D'Antonio, Michael
Fall From Grace: The Failed Crusade of the Christian Right
New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1992. 253 pages, afterword, no index or footnotes.

Overlook the title's rather unfortunate premature forecast of the demise of the Christian Right and read the book for the rich narrative that humanizes leaders and followers in the right-wing fundamentalist, evangelical, and "born-again" movements. Originally published in 1989.

Felton, Eric
The Ruling Class: Inside the Imperial Congress
Washington, DC, The Heritage Foundation, 1993. Special abridged edition. 98 pp., plus index.

If you think the Heritage Foundation has gone mainstream, this nasty, superficial, and thoroughly partisan little polemic will correct that impression and remind you of its role as the right wing think tank behind the Reagan Administration. *The Ruling Class* is startlingly unscholarly, even for the Heritage Foundation, and stands in interesting contrast to Heritage's 1988 book, *The Imperial Congress*, which called for reassertion of the prerogatives of the Executive Branch. In this 1993 publication Heritage President Edwin Feulner, Jr., says, "It is not our intention merely to push the pendulum of government power back toward the executive branch." Couldn't be the change of occupants in that branch, could it?

Berry, Jason
Lead Us Not Into Temptation: Catholic Priests and the Abuse of Children
New York: Doubleday, 1992. 407 pages, index, source notes.

Berry blasts the institutionalized coverup by the Catholic hierarchy of priests who sexually molest children. Speaking with various voices as a parent, Catholic and journalist, Berry starts with a local incident in Louisiana and tracks the crisis across the country. Along the way he begins to differentiate pedophilia from homosexuality, then tries to unravel the complex demands of celibacy and sexual isolation within the priesthood. A challenging book filled with interviews that express diverse and frequently unpopular ideas and positions, synthesized and criticized by an author with strong personal sentiments, but a reporter's commitment to providing a wealth of material so readers can reach ther own conclusions.

Fritzsche, Peter
Rehearsals for Fascism: Populism and Political Mobilization in Weimar Germany
New York: Oxford University Press, 1990. 301 pages, bibliography, index, footnotes.

Fritzsche uses voting records and contemporary printed sources to show that disaffected middle-class populists in Weimar launched bitter attacks against both the government and big business. This populist surge was later harvested by the Nazis which parasitized the reactionary populists and moved their constituencies far to the right through demagoguery and scapegoating. Outstanding research that is even more compelling given the Perot and Buchanan constituencies.

Marable, Manning
The Crisis of Color and Democracy: Essays on Race, Class and Power
Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press, 1992. 261 pages, no index, footnotes, or bibliography.

A collection of Marable's syndicated columns and other essays which amply illustrates why Cornell West calls it "the best progressive commentary on Afro-American life" and why bell hooks says of Marable, "always willing to confront and challenge, his presence, his work, renews our spirit, gives us hope." Restless, radical, and reflective, the material remains accessible even when dissecting complex and controversial issues.

Editors of EIR
The Ugly Truth About ADL
Washington, DC: Executive Intelligence Review, 1992. 152 pages, index, chapter notes.

An ugly example of LaRouchite pseudo-reseach in which the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith is smeared in a baroque restatement of classic anti-Jewish conspiracy theories. B'nai B'rith is described as "the nominally Jewish secret society sponsored and controlled by the Scottish Rite of Freemasonry and by some of the leading British and American WASP families" and "an arm of the British Freemasonic treason." Simultaneously justifies ADL's description of the LaRouchites as prejudiced while making any serious critique of ADL policies more difficult to hear over the background noise of such obvious bigotry.

Eye Lashes

April is the cruelest month, according to Mr. Eliot. But I believe March is crueller. For March is Women's History Month, and from out of every crevice and dark hole, like Orcs scurrying from J.R.R. Tolkien's Minas Morgul, come she-things swinging their war-axes, craving blood and ideological battle. Behold, the wrath of Mordor.

Feminism is no longer an option; in this the Fourth Age of Middle Earth, it is a mandatory torture. It is in our textbooks, in our libraries, in our media, in our churches, in our businesses. We all must suffer through it. And now, unfortunately, we must pass through a secular Feast of Feminist Obsession on a yearly basis. We must intone our solidarity; worry about the statistical anomaly of the 70 cents each woman makes to each man's dollar; and strike our breasts (not theirs) and repent of the sins of patriarchy and male oppression.

James L. Sauer, Letter from Philadelphia [column], "Women's History Month," Chronicles, March, 1994, p. 42.

Winner of PRA's 1994 Golem Misogynist Imagery Award—and it's only March.

THE PUBLIC EYE Resources

The updated version of *Challenging the Christian Right: The Activists Handbook*, by Frederick Clarkson and Skipp Porteous is available in 3-ring binder format for $20 from the Institute for First Amendment Studies. P.O. Box 589, Great Barrington, MA 01230. Phone (413) 274-3786. Fax 274-0245. Also available is their newsletter: *Freedom Writer.* (six per year), $30. The $25 yearly membership includes a subscription.

People for the American Way carries a substantial amount of material on the religious right, including a very useful compendium *Hostile Climate: A State by State Report on Anti-Gay Activity*, published in November 1993. *Hostile Climate* is available for $6.95 including shipping. People for the American Way, 2000 M Street, N.W., Suite 400, Washington, D.C. 20036, or call (202) 467-4999.

Catholics for Free Choice has a list of current publications available in English with selected and additional material in Spanish. Send a stamped self-addressed envelope to Catholics for Free Choice, 1436 U Street, N.W., Suite 301, Washington, D.C. 20009, or call (202) 986-6093.

The University Conversion Project has produced the *UCP's Guide to Uncovering The Right On Campus.* More than 50 pages of background articles, resource lists, helpful hints, and charts offer the most comprehensive current study of right-wing campus activism and the money and ideas behind the scenes. This useful and informative publication is mandatory reading for any serious student of how the political right has manipulated both academic discourse, campus activism, and the national debate on culture and morals. Send $5.95 plus $1.00 shipping & handling to UCP, Box 748, Cambridge, MA 02142 or call (617) 354-9363.

THREE KEY BOOKS FOR STUDYING RECONSTRUCTIONISM:

Spiritual Warfare: The Politics of the Christian Right. Diamond, Sara (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1989).

Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism. Marsden, George M. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1991.)

Heaven on Earth? The Social and Political Agendas of Dominion Theology. Barron, Bruce (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervon, 1992).

The Winter 1993 issue of *Southern Exposure* has a major focus on environmental racism and how people of color are forging a movement for environmental justice. For a copy send $5 to the Institute for Southern Studies, 2009 Chapel Hill Road, Durham, N.C. 27707.

PRA has arranged with author Sara Djamond to circulate a collection of her recent articles on the religious and political right. The articles have appeared in *Z Magazine* and *Covert Action Quarterly* (some are co-authored with her colleague Richard Hatch). The photocopied set of 15 typeset articles (79 pages) is available for $5.00 including shipping.

ALSO AVAILABLE FROM PRA:

Groups Promoting Democratic Rights, Civil Liberties, Social Justice, Equality & Pluralism: A Selected List with Annotations, $2.00.

Reading List for Studying the History & Politics of the American Political Right: Covering/Uncovering the Culture Wars, 3.50.

The Public Eye
NEWSLETTER

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