

Moyers on Christian Reconstruction

By Samuel L. Blumenfeld

It was nice to see so many familiar faces on prime-time television -- R. J. Rushdoony, Rev. Morecraft, Bob Thoburn, Arnie and Barbara Simkus. And everyone looked good and sounded good. Technically, it was a beautiful job -- from the bucolic views of Vallecito to the sunny Simkus kitchen. It showed people -- specifically Christians -- in the process of reconstructing America, not just talking about it: writing books, building churches, teaching children, getting involved in politics. But hovering over the entire presentation was the question: are these people a danger to democracy?

The questions Moyers posed Rush were the expected ones, the difficult ones concerning the Bible's references to capital offenses, and Rush answered them forthrightly. The punishments called for in the Bible were not necessarily those Rush preferred or advocated. In any case, he made it quite clear that he opposed coercion and that a reconstructed America could only come about when and if the vast majority of people had voluntarily accepted the Bible as their moral standard.

Moyers focussed on the issue of democracy because that is the liberal skewer on which all values are cooked. And that's probably why Moyers never adequately defined democracy, because in America the word evokes aromas, feelings, and images but not much thought. Moyers ignored the fact that the Founding Fathers warned us of the perils of democracy. ^{He made} ~~making~~ it seem as if Rush were the first in

American history to cite the dangers of majority rule. And of course virtually no time was given to showing what majorities can do to minorities when not restrained by God's law. After all, Hitler was put into power by a majority of Germans voting under the most democratic and permissive government the Germans had ever had, the Weimar Republic.

Also, there was no one to correct Norman Geisler's misrepresentations of Christian Reconstruction. The idea that Reconstructionists can, or even want to, impose their rule over the United States against the will of the majority is so preposterous as to be laughable. Unfortunately, many people will believe Geisler or, at the least, use Geisler's words as justification for their wildest nightmares about the religious right.

And so the major issue that was bandied about was the potential use of coercion by civil government to impose the rule of "the righteous." Obviously, "the righteous" were referred to in the pejorative sense: self-styled Biblical moralists who want to impose their moral values on others. Yet, no mention was made of the coercion liberals are presently using against Christian schools and home schoolers in this tolerant, humanistic democracy. The stories of harassment, prosecution and jailing of Christian parents have found no responsive chord among the celebrants of pluralism and variant lifestyles.

Democracy, Moyers inferred, is a system of tolerance, in which variant lifestyles and values systems live side by side in competitive but brotherly harmony. Such a system might indeed be ideal if all lifestyles were acceptable to God. But the Bible clearly tells us what is permissible and what is not.

Not surprisingly, Gary North emerged as the heavy in this debate, even though he refused to be taped or interviewed by Moyers. Moyers simply quoted North at his worst, and that was enough to set the skewer spinning and the juices boiling.

Yet, on the whole, what emerged from the video was, I believe, basically positive -- all the criticism of Christian Reconstruction notwithstanding. What emerged was an image of Christians in control of themselves, leading productive lives, providing life-saving spiritual answers to a society in the throes of social, cultural, and moral disintegration. Yet, nothing can come of the movement if people are repelled by it. And it obviously has repelled such moralists as Norman Geisler.

But Rushdoony wrote in _____ Schizophrenia in 1961, "For Scripture, the godly man is the saved man, not the self-consciously good man. It is not a contrast between moral and immoral but between godly and ungodly, holy and wicked, and the moral man, as witness the Pharisees, can epitomize ungodliness."

What attracts people to Christian Reconstruction is its adherence to Biblical principles, its reliance on God's word as a guide to living, its uncompromising stand on the vital moral issues of the day, its strong support of family life, its advocacy of economic freedom, its vision of Christian liberty, its hope for the future. It is a movement of godly parents anxious to raise a new godly generation. That is why Christian Reconstruction is particularly strong among home schoolers.

Another positive point made by Moyers is that the Reconstruction

movement is attracting people from all denominations, from all races. It is even attracting Jews. The scenes in the Atlanta church gave the impression of enormous potential power to Reconstructionism when fired with charismatic energy. Obviously, Moyers viewed this potential development more with apprehension than joy.

So the positive seemed to outweigh the negative in this production. Even though this is not what Moyers may have intended. Clearly, what we saw was Christian Reconstruction seen through the eyes of a troubled liberal, sophisticated enough not to see modern Calvinists as witch-burning bigots, but betraying his prejudices by way of his focus. I came away feeling that Moyers is of two minds concerning Christian Reconstruction: he liked Rushdoony but tended to believe Geisler. Which means there is hope for Moyers. He may convert!