What are the teachings of Theonomy or Reconstructionism and how should we respond to them?

That is a good question. A so-called Christian movement is gaining momentum since the end of the 1960s in America, and has been known to be called “Christian Reconstructionism” or a branch of theology called Theonomy. What is it all about and how does it differ from our Reformed, Premillennial position? We shall discuss briefly here for the purpose of a needful warning ministry so that we can be cognizant of the teachings and doctrines of this so-called Christian movement.

What are the aims or purposes of the Reconstructionists? Essentially, the principal goal of Reconstructionism is the quest for sound, political and religious dominion of the world. How? Through the implementation of all the laws of God, that are taught in the Old Testament, in every nation. That is where they derive the word Theonomy, “theo” means God and “nomos” means law. To put it simply, it is to reinstate a Christian civil government which will enforce the moral, social, judicial and economic laws of the Old Testament. On a point of theology, especially eschatology, all Reconstructionists hold to a post-millennial position, that is to say, they believe that the world will get better and better, and Christ’s kingdom on earth will grow so mighty in size, strength and influence that the world will become totally Christianised before the return of the Lord. Many of them draw historical reference to the rule of Emperor Constantine who made Christianity an official religion in the Roman Empire during his reign in AD 313. Others quoted and recalled Oliver Cromwell (1599–1658), the Lord’s Protector who reigned during the Puritan era in England in the 1650’s, and Abraham Kuyper (1837–1910), a Dutch Reformed pastor and theologian who later became the Prime Minister of Holland, 1901–1905. None of these, in their rightful contexts, do not promote Theonomy at all. Some Charismatics have also embraced the teaching of Reconstructionism and look forward to a victorious scenario in the end times both in the great numbers to be converted and in a political religious supremacy of Christendom one day.

Words like Dominion Theology or Kingdom Theology are familiar words associated with Reconstructionists. It is a disturbing trend that there are books on Theonomy published under the Conservative Presbyterian Reformed Publishing Company. Reconstructionists see it as a duty of Christians to bring about a restored paradise on earth before the second coming of Christ. They anticipate on marked moral and spiritual
improvement in the world and a post-millennial perspective of eschatology. It will be an earthly kingdom patterned after the ideal framework for society given to Ancient Israel before the arrival of the monarchy system. Nations will be persuaded and coaxed to accept (hopefully) the Mosaic law-code and to have an ideal international administration as it were governed by the laws of God. The founder of this movement is Dr Roncas J. Rushdoony, an American Presbyterian minister and scholar in 1965. He formed the organisation known as Chalcedon Foundation. In 1973, he published his work “Institutes of Biblical Laws.” This marks the birth of the Reconstructionist movement. Another well-known Reconstructionist (and apologist) is Dr Greg Bahnsen who wrote “Theonomy in Christian Ethics,” a 650-page intensive work that is quite widely circulated (available in Singapore too). A third man is Dr Gary North who has written more than 25 books which promote the notion of Reconstructionism in different forms including economics and Christian investment and capitalism.

What is wrong about Reconstructionism? Briefly, the following can be said about the defective theology and teachings of Reconstructionism. Reconstructionists failed to realise that the world comes under the judgment of God and it is not the duty or calling of God’s people to administer law in a political or social sense. God has ordained civil magistrates and requires us to submit to their rightful exercise of that jurisdiction over us (Romans 13:1–7). In 1 Peter 2:13–14, we are similarly exhorted to obey the laws of the state, not to override or overthrow them.

Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well.

Dr Peter Masters notes that the Mosaic Law (held up by Reconstructionists as the perfect model for the world government) had no taxation, but only freewill offerings. Taxation came in only later during Solomon’s 12 taxation districts (Peter Masters, World Dominion—The High Ambition of Reconstructionism [1994]; p. 38). But, in the Gospel in Matthew 17:24–27, Jesus paid the tax required by the secular state. The New Testament church mounted no political campaign for governmental dominion. Paul, whose example is normative for us to imitate, commanded obedience to the secular states even though he faced up with ungodly worldly rulers (Romans 13:1–2; 1 Timothy 2:1–3).

Is Theonomy or Reconstructionism theologically sound, biblically defensible and consistent with Calvinism? Let Robert Godfrey comment,

The appeal of Theonomy, like that of many contemporary Christian movements, is its simplicity and apparently biblical character. The great complexities and frustrations of the secular modern world had many to look for easy solutions but in a fallen world, solutions to great political problems are not always easy. The approach of Theonomy is a novel one in the Reformed Community and uses the Scripture in a way that is alien to Reformed Christianity. Rushdoony called Calvin's view of the civil law “heretical nonsense.” Calvin called a form of theocratic thinking remarkably
like Theonomy “false and foolish.” When it comes to law and civil government, Calvin and Theonomy do not have much in common (William Barker and Robert Godfrey, Theonomy: A Reformed Critique [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990]; p. 312).

While we decry Antinomianism that is so rampant today as many have no respect for the laws of the Lord, we do not also want to swing to the other extreme and propagate Theonomy and its demands in a Mosaic penological code today. The ceremonial and civil laws given in the Mosaic economy were abrogated and no longer necessary today. Israel lived under a theocracy and as a chosen peculiar nation, God had stringent regulations and rule for them, for that specified purpose and people for that period of time. The moral laws of God, like the 10 Commandments, are perennial and still are binding on us. It is to be obeyed not in letter only but much more in the spirit. Nowhere in the New Testament does the Holy Writ suggest any form of political or physical Christian dominance or kingdom over the present world. Our hope is in the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and not in human prowess and man’s puny political stratagems or devices to dominate this sin-laden perverse generation which will be judged by God one day. Theonomy or Reconstructionism has no place for the true believers of Christ. We will submit to the Lord Jesus Christ, the King of Kings and wait patiently for His visible, physical, imminent advent to judge and redeem His people in His own good time and not rely on the political agenda of Theonomists to adapt the civil and judicial laws of Moses and apply it in a depraved and unregenerate world destined for destruction.

Jack Sin

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Important Events and Missions Concerns of the Church

We request the church to pray for and support the following events of the church that are forthcoming and for those involved in them.

Covenant BP Church India 10th Anniversary will be held on the 5 July 2015 and a Maranatha BP Church mission team of 5 will be there, consisting of Han Kin Kheng, Chen Ching Hong, Irene Tan, Angie Sin and Pastor.

We will be ordaining Belin as an elder and appointing Libin as a deacon after examining them carefully for the church for the first time. We will also meet up with Rev Dr George Skariah and Bessy our faithful missionaries and Praven, our staff worker and minister in New Covenant BP Church in Varthor Village. This is an important positive step in the practice of Presbyterian polity and the management of the mission church.
There is a good progress report by Rev Dr George Skariah on the building for the additional two floors and there will be a dedicatory prayer for the new structure. We continue to pray and support the work of the gospel as they reach out to the Kannada people as well as the children as well in the Saturday VBS, 2 seminars, village outreach and visitation which we will join where we are there. Do uphold the team in prayer that we will minister the word effectively to both young and old.

Elder Steven Ng and his committee will lead Maranatha BP Church in the 25th Anniversary celebrations dinner, while Dn Shaun Ng and his committee will coordinate the 25th anniversary commemorative magazine, Angie Sin is leading in the anniversary choir song item and Fong Li Heng and Scott Ng are busy with the preparation of the anniversary video, with others serving in different capacities during the anniversary service. Let us prepare our hearts to offer praises and thanks to God.

A new Chinese book entitled Spiritual Lessons from Jonah and Scriptural Insights into Life will be published by the end of the month of July that will cater to the spiritual needs of our Chinese brethren in Country X as well as in the Chinese service in our BPCs. There will be a missions team of 4 who will be ministering the word in 3 locations in Country X from 25 July to 6 August especially to meet up with Pr Barnabas Song and assist him in the starting of the new church. There will be the teaching on the book of Joshua in 5 days to a group of leaders of the local churches and gospel meetings and services as well.

Pr Barnabas Song managed to rent a place to start the new church soon and it will cost our church S$537 a month to support it and we are also supporting his family (Ting Ting is pregnant) in the full time ministry with S$800 per month. Those who have a spiritual burden to support this new reformed church may designate your tithes and offerings to the China mission fund or inform the church treasurer. Let us continue to uphold them in prayer in the preaching of the gospel and the building up of the new flock in due time.

The MBPC Family Day on 7 August 2015 (Friday) will be made known to all soon by Dns Royce Yeo, Shaun Ng and Hong Che Hwee.

The Chinese Evening Service will celebrate their 8th Thanksgiving Anniversary on 6 September 2015 with a special Service, message, dinner and a free book for everyone.

The present Church van will reach its 10 years by May 2016 and we need to prepare for the purchase of the new van as the Lord leads. Following the updates of the latest COE as for the commercial vehicles, we will need to raise about S$90,000 by May next year. Any assistance is welcomed to support the needful area of the ministry of transporting our Chinese workers to church and members to the English Prayer Meeting, NBCs, VBS and other occasions.

There will also be a missions trip to Myanmar to minister to the 35 orphans in the
Immanuel Orphanage Home which MBPC is supporting and to preach to the Immanuel Evangelical Presbyterian Church. There will also teaching on the book of Jonah in the Biblical Reformed Seminary in Myanmar from 8-14 September 2015 led by Dn Ng Thiam Koon. All those interested to join us, please inform him by 12 July 2015.

2 Corinthians 1:11 says, ‘Ye also helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons thanks may be given by many on our behalf’ and the church is to be united in one spirit in fulfilling the Great Commission. Let us continue to support and intercede faithfully for one another engaged in the work of the gospel and for the growth of the church of the Lord.

Jack Sin

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**Camp Reflections**

*Chen Kai Ling*

This is my 4\textsuperscript{th} church camp in Maranatha BP Church. I am glad to attend this year's event in Tanjong Putri Golf Resort to learn more about God. The camp was special to me because campers get to stay together in big villas and we were staying in the same villa with the speakers!

For the children program, Teacher May San from Olivet BP Church was our teacher. She was kind to us and I learnt many precious lessons about God. We watched the video on the story of Perpetua the Martyr and learnt how to stand up for God and not ourselves. Teacher May San also thought us to recite memory verses.

The church camp was wonderful and I would like to thank the camp commander and organisers for planning the camp in such wonderful place with good speakers to teach us the word of God. I also thank God for giving us good weather and health for all campers.

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*Han Kin Kheng*

**The Many-Fold Blessings of GOD at the Church Camp**

As I recollect my very first Maranatha BP Church Camp in 2014, I cannot help but continuously give thanks to GOD for His great love, pardon, patience and faithfulness for me, a sinner, saved by grace through Jesus Christ.

Who am I to deserve all that He had done for me? It always blows my mind when I ponder over it. So, what have I done for GOD? It is obvious! I have been sinning against Him by being lukewarm and even at times, disinterested to do things concerning His Word. I have fallen into the snares of temptation! I felt very miserable. But, GOD is so merciful and gracious that He provided me an avenue to revive my spiritual life – to attend the recent MBPC camp at Tanjung Puteri Resort, Johore, Malaysia from 16 to 20 June 2015.

GOD is fully in-charge of my life. I believe and trust in GOD. I had to clear two 'obstacles' just as I was all ready to make my way to attend the camp. I thanked GOD for directing my footsteps to meet up with the fellow campers at MBPC, instead of attending to the two obstacles.

The rest of the journey was a most edifying time spent learning GOD's word through the four thematic messages on Pursuing and Practicing Godliness and Sanctity in
Corporate Worship in the Church Today by Rev Dr Timothy Okman Ki, the morning devotions by Rev Dr Jack Sin and Preacher Yap Kim Chuan as well as the insightful and beneficial group discussions led by the various deacons and fellow brethren held in such a conducive environment to re-consecrate our lives to GOD. Running concurrently to the adult programme, we have from Olivet BPC, Sister May San’s labour of love to take charge of the junior campers who then presented an item on Consecration Night.

Besides the above, everything and everyone was well taken care of by the grace of GOD through the great effort and planning put in by the Camp Committee led by Dn Ng Thiam Koon.

All praise and glory to our GOD for His bountiful blessings for there was journey mercy, fine weather, good health and strength and a sumptuous spread of food! It was a timely event for the betterment of each camper, spiritually and physically enriched at the end of the camp.

The spiritual take-away lessons for me are as follows:

A) Definition / Duties of the Church – Worshipping, Witnessing, Working and Watching

B) Nature of the Church for Biblical Worship –

1) Timothy 3:15, ‘But if I tarry long, thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.’

2) Leviticus 10:1-2, ‘And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not. And there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD.’ (God is serious in our way of worship.)

C) Lessons from Rev Dr Timothy Okman Ki

à What is God to you? Why do we worship God? Is it for God or for Man? To declare God’s glory? To meet our needs?
   (John 4:23, ‘But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.’)

à A believer’s life is in the presence of God. Psalms 15:1-5 clearly defines the life of worshippers.
   (My sentiments exactly. . . just like my three-word philosophy as a former school teacher, ‘WALK MY TALK’.)

à Our mind forms our character. Obedience to God’s word is necessary.
à The Spirit of God abiding within us convicts and teaches us.

D) Lessons from Rev Dr Jack Sin
Six words for Victorious Christian Living (Psalms 27:1-14)
1) Fear (… of God is the beginning of wisdom)
2) Seek (… with all your heart)
3) Sing (… praises, psalms, hymns, spiritual songs)
4) Teach (… show / are you teachable?)
5) Believe (… the goodness of God and be saved)
6) Wait (… while waiting patiently, DO something positively but DON'T sin!)

A Consecrated Life of Fervent and Faithful Service to God (Romans 12:1-13)

1) Physical Dimension – v1 (also refer Proverbs 4:22-27)
2) Social Dimension - v2 (also refer James 4:4)
3) Mental / Intellectual Dimension (also refer Ephesians 4:17-18)
4) Spiritual Dimension (also refer Romans 15:32)
   Desires according to the will of God?
   What is ‘like’, may not be ‘what is right’!

Lessons from Preacher Yap Kim Chuan

Developing A Commitment to Christ (Luke 9:57-62)

1) Goodness – Christ equips us through His word for every trial, every challenge.
2) God enables you through His Holy Spirit
3) Grace of God encourages you.
4) Our response? To commit willingly and obediently unto God.

At the end of the camp during consecration night, I will heed the advice especially from Ezekiel 37:24 on the elements of spiritual revival (and Ezekiel 37:1-14) which says, ‘Walk in my judgments. Observe my statutes. Do them.’

To God be the glory given. Amen.

George Lai

My wife, Grace and I were greatly privileged to join the Maranatha BP Church camp this year. Grace always reminds me that nothing happens by chance or by coincidence - it is God’s plan for you.

Last December, we were visiting Grace's younger sister in Croydon, Melbourne when we attended the Sunday service at her church, Ebenezer BP Church. It so happens that
Pastor Jack Sin was the visiting pastor and that was his last sermon there before he and sister Angie returned back to Singapore.

I was totally impressed by Pastor Sin's sermon and after the service he invited me, Grace and our eldest daughter Francesca to visit the Maranatha BP Church in Changi. It was quite embarrassing that having stayed in Changi since 1983, we did not realise that there is a church in Changi. Each time on our way to and from Changi Village, we passed by and thought that the building is an extension of the Indian Temple nearby and besides, the name Maranatha sounds Indian.

After we returned to Singapore, we attended Sunday service in Maranatha BP Church as well as fellowship at a pot luck held at Dn Peter Ong's condo.

We praise God for His Spirit's work behind our chance meeting with Pastor Jack Sin.

Soon after, our eldest son who attends Hope BP Church in Adelaide told us that he is planning to get married in May 2015. Grace expressed the hope that the marriage be solemnised in church and for that to happen, the couple must be baptized.

God is great because our daughter-in-law who is a born Catholic agreed to attend Catechism classes, eventually both of them were baptized in April 2015 and their marriage solemnised in May 2015 by none other than Pastor Okman Ki, our main speaker at this church camp.

Again this was no coincidence but God's plan because Pastor Ki was supposed to be the main speaker at Maranatha BPC camp two years ago. We were among the last to sign up for this church camp because we had committed ourselves to attend ARPC's camp from 10th to 14th June in KL and it is quite a challenge to pack again on the night of 15th June when the laundry is barely dry.

We praise God for Blessing us with the opportunity to join this camp for the first time and we thank God for the many edifying messages received at the talks, devotions and bible studies during the five days in camp.

We thoroughly enjoyed the fellowship of the Maranatha BP Chuch family be it on the bus journey to and from Tanjung Puteri Golf Resort, at the games, during our daily breakfast, tea break, lunch, dinner and even while walking back to the villa after night snack.

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Anya Ng

What I have learnt at the church camp

I have learnt many things about Elijah from auntie May San. King Ahab chose Queen Jezebel to be his wife, but God was displeased with Ahab for choosing Jezebel because she worshipped Baal and other idols instead of the true and living God. God told Elijah, a prophet to go and tell King Ahab to stop worshipping idols but Ahab would not listen. Queen Jezebel wanted to kill Elijah, so Elijah asked God for help by praying to him. God told Elijah to go to a widow’s house. Elijah obeyed. He came to a widow’s house and he was tired and he asked the woman for some bread and water. The woman told him that she only had a little bit of flour and oil left but Elijah said that she should make bread for him first. The widow listened to Elijah and gave him some bread and finished the flour and oil that day. The next day, she was surprised when she saw much flour and oil in the bottles. She realized that God performed the miracle. One day, the widow’s child got very sick and died. She ran to Elijah with her child lying in her arms and asked why God did this to her. Elijah was concerned and had pity on the little boy, so Elijah prayed fervently to God and God healed the little boy. After this miracle, the woman believed in God.

At the house where the evil queen and king lived, a terrible thing happened. The king saw a vineyard that belonged to Naboth and wanted to buy it from Naboth. But Naboth would not sell it as it was passed down from generation to generation. King Ahab returned home upset. When Jezebel knew the reason that Ahab was upset, she invited Naboth to her place for a meal. After that, the servants shouted to everyone that Naboth had said bad things about their god, Baal, and he had committed many great sins. The people were angry and stoned Naboth to death. Then Jezebel told King Ahab that the vineyard was all his. A few years later, King Ahab fought in a war. He was killed and died at the same place Naboth died. Jezebel was thrown from somewhere high and she died and stray dogs had licked her blood and ate her flesh.

Why I enjoyed the camp

à There were many fun and exciting activities that I took part in

à I like teacher May San because she taught us many meaningful songs, taught us how to make fruit tarts, and taught us art and craft.

à I learned and experienced many things such as horse riding and learned how to calm down and be brave because I am afraid of heights.

à I played table tennis and learned how to be careful. I played captain’s ball and learned how to jump, pass and catch the ball. I played bowling and learned how to aim and bowl

à I enjoyed doing things with my friends at the camp
Theme for the Quarter:

*Exploring and Applying Prophetic Lessons in our Lives*
*(Studies in the Book of Daniel)*
Rev Quek Kheng Kwang from Life BPC

speaks on *Access to and Peace with God* (Romans 5:1-11).

*Gospel Sunday.*

*[End of MM]*