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Symposium on
the Millennium

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Gary North, Editor

A CHALCEDON MINISTRY

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Chalcedon

P.O. Box 158

Vallecito, CA 95251

U.S.A.

To contact via email and for other information:

www.chalcedon.edu

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THE JOURNAL OF CHRISTIAN RECONSTRUCTION

This journal is dedicated to the fulfillment of the cultural mandate of Genesis 1:28 and 9:1—to subdue the earth to the glory of God. It is published by the Chalcedon Foundation, an independent Christian educational organization (see inside back cover). The perspective of the journal is that of orthodox Christianity. It affirms the verbal, plenary inspiration of the original manuscripts (autographs) of the Bible and the full divinity and full humanity of Jesus Christ—two natures in union (but without intermixture) in one person.

The editors are convinced that the Christian world is in need of a serious publication that bridges the gap between the newsletter-magazine and the scholarly academic journal. The editors are committed to Christian scholarship, but the journal is aimed at intelligent laymen, working pastors, and others who are interested in the reconstruction of all spheres of human existence in terms of the standards of the Old and New Testaments. It is not intended to be another outlet for professors to professors, but rather a forum for serious discussion within Christian circles.

The Marxists have been absolutely correct in their claim that theory must be united with practice, and for this reason they have been successful in their attempt to erode the foundations of the noncommunist world. The editors agree with the Marxists on this point, but instead of seeing in revolution the means of fusing theory and practice, we see the fusion in personal regeneration through God's grace in Jesus Christ and in the extension of God's kingdom. Good principles should be followed by good practice; eliminate either, and the movement falters. In the long run, it is the kingdom of God, not Marx's "kingdom of freedom," which shall reign triumphant. Christianity will emerge victorious, for only in Christ and His revelation can men find both the principles of conduct and the means of subduing the earth—the principles of Biblical law.

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CONTRIBUTORS

Greg L. Bahnsen, ThM, is assistant professor of theology at Reformed Theological Seminary in Jackson, Mississippi.

Bruce Bartlett, MA, is an economist for Congressman Jack Kemp (R-NY).

James B. Jordan, BA, is a student at Reformed Theological Seminary, Jackson, Mississippi.

Douglas Kelly, PhD, is pastor of First Presbyterian Church (U.S.), in Dillon, South Carolina.

Simon Kistemaker, PhD, is professor of Old Testament at Reformed Theological Seminary in Jackson, Mississippi.

Gary North, PhD, is editor of *The Journal of Christian Reconstruction*. His latest book is *None Dare Call It Witchcraft*.

Tommy W. Rogers, PhD, is a professional sociologist (unemployed) and a lawyer in Jackson, Mississippi.

R. J. Rushdoony, MA, BD, is president of Chalcedon. His latest book is *God's Plan for Victory*.

Norman Shepherd, PhD, is professor of systematic theology at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia.

John Sparks, JD, is professor of business administration at Grove City College in Grove City, Pennsylvania.

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

Gary North

The millennium. Secularists can hardly believe that anyone believes in such a thing. When President Carter was campaigning, he made the statement that he supported Israel because Israel today is a fulfillment of biblical prophecy. Liberal commentators, always supporters of Israel, were disturbed. They liked his conclusion, but they did not understand his reasons for making the conclusion. Yet millions and millions of Americans agree with his reasons; and millions of people in the South elected him, in part, because he was willing to make such “outlandish” statements.

Strictly speaking, the belief that modern Israel fulfills biblical prophecy is a theological aberration. Traditional postmillennialists, amillennialists, and premillennialists have never believed that national or geographical Israel is relevant this side of the rapture. Dispensational premillennialists also hold (officially) that the so-called “clock of prophecy” stopped ticking long ago. Some believe it stopped ticking at the resurrection, and others (ultradispensationalists) believe it stopped ticking with the conversion of Paul, while still others (hyper-ultradispensationalists?) believe it stopped ticking when Paul was imprisoned in Rome. But all of them say that the sixty-ninth week of Daniel ended in the first century, and that the seventieth week will begin only with the rapture, when the whole church will be caught up to Christ in the clouds. So, strictly speaking, nothing happening in Israel today can possibly be a fulfillment of prophecy. If it were, the clock of prophecy would be ticking again. At best, the events in Israel are mere “shadows” of fulfilled prophecy—events to be fulfilled after the rapture.

The problem is, unfortunately, that practically nobody speaks strictly when it comes to theology these days, especially concerning the doctrine of *eschatology*: the last things (events). Everyone talks about eschatology, but almost nobody studies it very thoroughly. It is a very difficult topic, one which scared both Luther and Calvin away from commenting on the Book of Revelation. Both men had ideas about the

millennium, but neither wrote a commentary on this forbidding book. Today, on the contrary, most fundamentalist Christians believe that they have very clear explanations for the Book of Revelation, and prophecy conferences can still draw crowds a century after they began to be popular in the United States.

Part of the reason why prophecy is popular today is that we are drawing near to the year 2000. According to Norman Cohn, whose book, *The Pursuit of the Millennium*, is a classic study of medieval prophetic traditions, the year 1000 did *not* have that much effect on the minds of medieval {2} Europeans. The years after 1100 did see the rise of interest in the millennium, he says, but tales about the supposed belief in the imminent return of Christ in the years after 950 are largely mythical, concludes Cohn. But when they write up our era, they had better acknowledge that within a significant substratum of American culture, concern with the year 2000 was important in this nation after 1950.

The year 2000 has been important in the minds of secularists since the seventeenth century, a point emphasized by the sociologist, Robert A. Nisbet.¹ There are a dozen recent secular books, at the minimum, about the year 2000. Herman Kahn's book on the subject became a bestseller.² But today the significance is only symbolic among secularists. A new century, a new millennium, is thought by most people to begin in the year 2000. (Actually, the twenty-first century begins on January 1, 2001, but practically nobody understands this. In fact, I don't understand it, but I'm reporting it anyway.)

The term "millennium" means a thousand years. The thousand years are mentioned only in Revelation 20. Theologians have debated its meaning and its application. Some millennialists have argued that the period of special blessings is indeterminate; it will last a long time, but not necessarily exactly a thousand years. Amillennialists deny that the term is to be taken literally at all; there will be no period of external, cultural blessings. Dispensationalists accept the thousand years as literal years. In short, there has been no agreement among Protestant circles over the years. Roman Catholics, since the time of Augustine, have

1. Robert A. Nisbet, "The Year 2000 and All That," *Commentary* (June 1968).

2. Herman Kahn and A. J. Wiener, *The Year 2000* (New York: Macmillan, 1967).

generally been amillennial in outlook, and eschatological questions within Roman Catholic circles have been confined to the last days of individuals, not the last times of a culture. Death, rather than the millennium, has been the focus of Roman Catholic theological concern.

How important is the question of eschatology? It is always important, since the Bible speaks about it. Historically, there have been periods in which the issue was more important than at other times. In the United States, eschatological or millennial issues were more central to the culture in 1640, 1740, and 1840 than in 1700, 1800, or 1900. There is no doubt that one's eschatological views will influence one's list of earthly priorities. If, as one dispensationalist leader once remarked concerning this pre-rapture world, "you can't [shouldn't] polish brass on a sinking ship," then his listeners ought to conclude that passing out simple gospel tracts is of greater importance and urgency than developing a distinctly Christian philosophy, economics, or chemistry. Of course, some dispensationalists are willing to consider Christ's words, "occupy till I come" (Luke 19:13), but in general they pay very little attention to this injunction. A few do, {3} but not many. They are too occupied in passing out tracts to bother much about occupying the seats of cultural influence.

Secularists in the United States have never heard of Hal Lindsey's book, *The Late Great Planet Earth*. Secularists never bothered to put it on any list of the bestsellers of the year. Yet this book has sold, as of 1976, 12,000,000 copies. This makes it the largest selling new title of the 1965–76 period. Its influence is enormous. The secularists will not acknowledge its existence, since they cannot explain its existence. Those who read it, however, are conditioned by its perspective not to have hope for the culture's future, a perspective driven home by Lindsey's later books. So the leaders of the culture will not acknowledge it, and those millions who have purchased it and agree with it are conditioned to their position as part of a culturally irrelevant remnant—the permanent remnant psychology.

Which kind of remnant are we? A permanent remnant, impotent culturally because the "times" are against us? Or a temporary remnant, whose era is coming? In answering this question, men will be faced with differing views of responsibility. The brass polishers will get little

help from the tract passers, at least little direct, conscious, deliberate help. It makes a difference what men believe about eschatology.

Norman Shepherd's essay is representative of a traditional, mild postmillennialism. In the early 1960s, few students at Westminster Theological Seminary, where Shepherd is a professor, understood that he and the late Professor John Murray were both mild postmillennialists. I recognized it when I heard Murray's comments in class about Romans 11, but these lectures had not yet been published. When I remarked to several classmates that Murray was obviously postmillennial, they assured me that I was confused. It couldn't be true. He was a Calvinist, and most Calvinists are amillennialists. Everyone knows this. (The statement is true; most Calvinists are Dutch, and all Dutch Calvinists are amillennialists.) A few may be historic premillennialists. None (except J. Marcellus Kik) was postmillennial, thought the students in 1964.

This is a strange fact. Neither Murray nor Shepherd talked about their postmillennialism. Murray's lectures in senior systematics sounded amillennial, although he assigned Charles Hodge's *Systematic Theology*, a distinctly postmillennial book. Shepherd assigned Gerhardus Vos's *Pauline Eschatology* to his students. ("Pauline Eschatology," he once commented, "was one of the nicest girls I ever dated.") The book is rigidly amillennial. The other faculty members were amillennial, except Paul Woolley, the church historian, who was known to be a historic premillennialist, but who never went into eschatological matters in the classroom. (I once asked Woolley what eschatological views were held by J. Gresham Machen, the founder of the seminary. Woolley replied that he had been a postmillennialist, {4} to the extent that he ever announced his views, which I gathered was infrequently.) So the chief Reformed seminary of the English-speaking world, 1929–65, minimized the Reformed heritage of postmillennialism. The other two Reformed seminaries of this period, Covenant Seminary and Faith Seminary, were premillennialist, though not dispensationalist.

Just to set the record straight, I started out as a standard, run-of-the-mill dispensationalist. In my senior year in college, I was introduced to ultradispensationalism (the church began after Acts 8, when Paul's ministry began), which is far more consistent than the standard version of dispensationalism. In a nutshell, the ultradispensationalists

accept the traditional dispensational position that the clock of prophecy stopped, and that the Church is part of a “great parenthesis”—not foreseen in the Old Testament. But Peter quotes Joel 2:28–32 as being fulfilled in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2:16–21). Therefore, conclude the ultradispensationalists, the clock of prophecy was still ticking at Pentecost, so Peter was not yet establishing the Church. The “great parenthesis” had not yet begun. Before I went further to become a hyper-ultradispensationalist (only Paul’s prison epistles are written to the Church), I sat in on Murray’s class on Romans, in the second semester of my first (and last) year of seminary. His exegesis of Romans 11, coupled with my reading of Revelation 12 in the light of his concept of genetic Israel, converted me to postmillennialism. My essay takes the postmillennial position of Murray, Kik, Hodge, Rushdoony, and the Puritans, and it applies this perspective to a topic dominated by amillennial Dutchmen: the doctrine of common grace. I conclude that common grace is essentially future grace, and that it is intimately linked with the application of biblical law to every sphere of life.

Greg L. Bahnsen surveys the definitions of millennialism and distinguishes them rigorously in terms of the central themes of each position. He then goes on to demonstrate that the postmillennial position has been the most widely held position within Calvinist circles virtually from the beginning until early in this century. His essay relies heavily on two books, Iain Murray’s *The Puritan Hope* and J. A. de Jong’s *As the Waters Cover the Sea: Millennial Revival and the Interpretation of Prophecy*. The latter book is less well known. It is one of the most thoroughly researched doctoral dissertations I have seen. It can be ordered from the Westminster Seminary Book Store, Chestnut Hill, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and it should be. Bahnsen, in his gentle, painstaking way, has exposed most of the anti-postmillennial critics as being lazy, uncritical, historically ignorant, and (by implication) downright fraudulent in their unwillingness to admit that traditional Calvinism was postmillennial prior to the turn of this century.

James Jordan follows through on Bahnsen’s analysis by demonstrating {5} that the preponderant eschatological tradition of the Southern Presbyterian Church was postmillennial, 1861–1900. Since that time, both premillennialism and amillennialism have replaced postmillenni-

alism as the dominant Southern Presbyterian eschatologies, but such was not the case in the beginning.

R. J. Rushdoony returns to a long-popular theme within both secular and post-1900 Christian circles: postmillennialism led to, and was swallowed up by, the social gospel. Not so, says Rushdoony; chronological description is no substitute for historical explanation. The early American settlers were basically postmillennial optimists. This was not a church-oriented postmillennialism, he says, but rather a kingdom-oriented optimism. Later on, however, pietism (and its implied cultural antinomianism) eroded the earlier optimism among the churches. This led to the convent mentality of retreat and pessimism of the orthodox churches that adopted pietism. The secularists perverted the earlier optimism, secularized it, and used it for their own purposes.

Elsewhere, Rushdoony has commented that modern Christians are positive toward the Bible but negative toward history and the possibilities for historical change open to Christians (premillennialism, amillennialism, and pietism-quietism-conventism). At the same time, the secularists have been positive about history, but negative toward the Bible. It is postmillennialism, and *only* postmillennialism, which is positive about both the Bible and history. Amillennialists, to use Rushdoony's trenchant phrase, are merely premillennialists without any hope at all for the historical future. (The premillennialists at least believe in an earthly kingdom under Christ's direct, personal rule, even though this will not happen until the pre-rapture debacle of history takes place.)

This issue of *The Journal of Christian Reconstruction* is not deeply exegetical. My essay attempts some exegesis, since it is a new topic for postmillennialism to deal with, but on the whole the articles are historical. The basic exegetical work has been done primarily by the Calvinists of the last century, and even earlier. No postmillennialist is likely to supersede J. A. Alexander's *Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah* where the Book of Isaiah is concerned. No one is likely to improve much on J. Marcellus Kik's exegesis in *An Eschatology of Victory* where clarity and brevity are concerned. The postmillennial commentaries on Romans 11 by Hodge, Haldane, and Murray still provide the basic introduction to the topic. A good commentary on Revelation is needed, but a good commentary on Revelation has been needed for

1,900 years. The bulk of the basic exegetical work has already been accomplished; it is the task of this issue of the **Journal** to remind contemporary Protestants, especially Calvinistic Protestants, of the heritage which they have lost. If we are successful in this task, then the exegetical work will follow.

1. SYMPOSIUM ON THE MILLENNIUM

JUSTICE TO VICTORY

Norman Shepherd

One of the most insidious weapons which Satan has been able to wield against the advancement of the Kingdom of God is the inculcation of the belief that though the Kingdom must be proclaimed throughout the world, the church really cannot expect that such proclamation will meet with any significant degree of success. One prominent writer in the field of international missions has given expression to the commonly held expectation in this way: “The New Testament clearly predicts that in spite of great victories of the Gospel amongst all nations the resistance of Satan will continue. Towards the end it will even increase so much that Satan, incarnated in the human person of Antichrist, will assume once more an almost total control over disobedient mankind (2 Thess. 2:3–12; Rev. 13).”

These words really constitute a confession of faith. More accurately they are a confession of anti-faith—anti-faith in Antichrist. If we were to find them in the anti-confession of a modern Satanist cult, they would not surprise us. At least we cannot conceive of a Satanist solemnly confessing that toward the end of human history, the Son of God, incarnate in the person of Jesus Christ, will assume an almost total control over obedient mankind.

Why are we as Christians so much more confident with respect to the victory of Antichrist than we are with respect to the triumph of Jesus Christ? Is the worldwide dominion of Satan toward the end of history so much more obviously and unambiguously a revealed truth of Scripture than is the worldwide dominion of Jesus Christ?

Just as faith in Jesus Christ is the source of the fruits of righteousness in the lives of believers, so anti-faith in Antichrist bears its own bitter fruit, and has done so to the harm of the missionary cause of the church. The prophecies of anti-faith are self-fulfilling. When the church proceeds to call and send missionaries with the settled conviction that conditions which are already bad are bound to get worse, that apostasy is bound to increase, and that the nations are bound to perse-

vere in their Godless blindness, how can the church pray *in faith*, that the results of its mission will be otherwise? Can the church really ask God to give the cause of worldwide missions worldwide victory if it is convinced that God will, as a matter of fact, {7} never give his church any such victory? Therefore, in spite of all that we profess with reference to the power of God and the grace of Christ, we are not really able to tap these resources of power and grace through believing prayer and action.

We may well rejoice in the great victories of which the quotation above speaks, but we lack a sense of overall progress in the great struggle we are called upon to wage just in the arena of this present age. The time is ripe for breaking this cycle of pessimism, defeat, and frustration which pervades the mission enterprise in both its national and international aspects.

When we seek to disciple men to Jesus Christ, we are not asking them to join the battle on the losing side. The strategy we develop for the battle—our missionary policy—should not be formulated in terms of short-range goals, in terms of winning a few skirmishes as a prelude to a more resounding defeat. The key to watchfulness as the church looks to the future is exactly what it was for the wise virgins in Jesus's parable—sound, long-range planning. Such planning gives the church the freedom it needs, time-wise, to lay solid foundations for the upbuilding of the Kingdom without being deflected from its goal by short-lived ups and downs.

Humanistic utopianism has spawned within the professing church a Theology of Hope, a Theology of Revolution, and a Theology of Liberation. Surely the evangelical answer to these theologies is not a Theology of Despair whose only consolation is the destruction of God's enemies at the second advent. God will indeed destroy His enemies in the day of judgment. If that is not true, Jesus has died in vain. But Jesus has not died in vain—and that also means that the mission inaugurated by His first coming is not a failure nor is it only a moderate success. It is with respect to the first coming that the Scripture tells us, "God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world; but that the world should be saved through Him" (John 3:17).

The modern Theology of Hope is really a counsel of despair because it does not arise out of the biblical gospel of sovereign grace which is

the power of God unto salvation. There is nothing to be gained by seeking an alliance with it. To do so would, indeed, be recruiting men for the losing side. But if we believe that the gospel is, in fact, the *power* of God unto *salvation*, then we have every reason to develop a truly biblical Theology of Hope.

The church may well be ready to recover this biblical emphasis. One striking phenomenon in our day has been the resonance that counseling techniques being developed by Jay E. Adams have found among evangelical pastors. Adams has pointed out that modern psychiatric practice almost invariably proceeds on two assumptions—that the treatment is going to take a long time, and that there is no guarantee that it will succeed. On that basis, hope is lost before recovery can begin. Over against this Adams has {8} insisted that the Christian counselor must proceed with the conviction that definite and recognizable improvement may be experienced in the foreseeable, if not immediate, future. His work has provided a welcome antidote to the pessimism and frustration besetting the pastor in his counseling practice.

But now, what of this same pastor in his evangelistic outreach, and what of the church in its advance through history? Is it to be another long, hard row to hoe with no real guarantee that anything of significance will result? Jesus says that the fields are white unto harvest. We must once again ask ourselves whether such texts as those noted in the quotation at the beginning of this article, 2 Thessalonians 2:3–12 and Revelation 13, really require us to think of an *end-time* apostasy and whether they really speak so unambiguously of progressively worsening and worldwide apostasy leading up to this final manifestation.

Instead of being intimidated by such passages, Christian ministers must begin to cultivate hope for themselves and for their people in terms of the power of the gospel. What is needed is what the title of a recently published volume of writings by J. Marcellus Kik calls “An Eschatology of Victory.” This, too, will prove to be a welcome antidote to the underlying pessimism to which our thinking and our evangelistic outreach have so long been geared.

Victory, as evangelicals conceive of it, often conjures up the image of a surviving remnant with fallen and slaughtered multitudes round about, or the vision of a host of resurrected saints from all ages gath-

ered together after the second advent. The question may well be posed, however, whether the New Testament requires us to associate victory exclusively with a sudden and dramatic reversal of a consistently downward trend, at the end of history as we know it now. The fact that God's people will be called upon to endure tribulation does not necessarily mean that the opposition will progressively gain the upper hand. Jesus does not ask us to keep a stiff upper lip, but to be of good cheer. By His first coming, by His death and resurrection, He has overcome the world (John 16:33).

"Victory" is a New Testament word. The vocabulary of victory is especially prominent in Revelation, but it is by no means restricted to that book. In a particularly illuminating passage (Matt. 12:9–21), Matthew uses the word in presenting a quotation from Isaiah 42:1–4. Though the word is not used in either the Hebrew of Isaiah or in the ancient Greek translation, the Septuagint, it answers fully to what Isaiah was describing:

After Jesus healed a man with a withered hand on the Sabbath, thereby provoking the wrath of official Judaism, the Pharisees went out and planned how to destroy him. Aware of these machinations, Jesus withdrew from a possible confrontation, but was followed by many sympathizers. The record tells us that He healed them all, and charged them to silence. {9} The citation which Matthew then introduces does more than simply account for the silence. It helps us to understand what is happening in the ministry of Jesus, and that is bound up with the fact that the passage from Isaiah has to do with the Gentiles. As the Jews begin to turn away from Jesus, Matthew reminds us in the language of Isaiah that the chosen servant of God will proclaim justice to the Gentiles. To be sure, the Jewish remnant is not rebuffed, but the ministry of Christ will now go out to the nations of the world.

The sequence is similar to the one described by Paul in Romans 11: blindness has come upon Israel in part so that the fulness of the Gentiles might be introduced to the glory of grace. This ministry of Christ to the Gentiles is no longer in the future as it was for Isaiah, but begins even in the lifetime of Jesus of Nazareth and continues on through the present age.

In terms of this ministry Jesus proclaims justice to the Gentiles (v. 18). But He does more than that: He leads justice to victory (v. 20).

Before we can grasp the scope of the victory, we must understand what is meant by justice. The word when translated from the Greek is our word “crisis,” and can mean judgment unto condemnation. But it makes little sense to say that Jesus’s response to the opposition of the Jews was the proclamation of condemnation to the Gentiles. On the contrary, the Gentiles learn to hope in the name of Jesus (v. 21), because the justice proclaimed is the righteousness of God. It is righteousness which meets the just judgment of God and of which Jesus is Himself the very embodiment.

It is also essential to realize that the justice which is led to victory may not be arbitrarily restricted to the righteousness of Jesus imputed to believers in terms of which their sins are forgiven and sinners are rendered acceptable to God. This is, of course, an indispensable element of gospel proclamation. Without it there is no gospel. But Isaiah 42:4 says that He will establish justice *in the earth* and the coastlands will wait expectantly for His law.

It is the justice for which we have so often, but so thoughtlessly and faithlessly, prayed, when we have asked that the will of God might be done in earth as it is in heaven. It is the righteousness in view in the Great Commission when we are sent out to teach men to observe all that Christ has commanded. Discipleship and obedience belong as much to the fulfillment of the Great Commission as do faith and forgiveness. The righteousness of God which Jesus embodies not only makes us acceptable to God but also transforms us into His image. It is for this reason that Paul declares that Christ Jesus has become for us righteousness and sanctification, and redemption (1 Cor. 1:30). Salvation contemplates renewal no less than pardon.

It is this justice, this righteousness, this salvation which Jesus will lead to victory. The success of Jesus’s ministry to the Gentiles will be in marked {10} contrast to what is an initial failure among the Jews. But Paul also holds forth in Romans 11 an ultimate victory with respect to the ancient covenant people as well. The victory begins with the remnant that follows Jesus and is healed. The smoldering wick is not snuffed out; on the contrary, with the tongues of fire on the day of Pentecost it bursts into flame, a flame that has been spreading ever since. Jesus is leading justice to victory.

The word “victory” is not used to tantalize and frustrate the church. It is not a carrot and stick device. If the net outcome of Jesus’s leading justice to victory is a world in which Antichrist “will assume once more an almost total control over disobedient mankind,” we would find ourselves hard put to distinguish such a victory from defeat. The victory of which Matthew speaks will answer to the definition of victory, and the church may freely use the word in full confidence that it will never prove an embarrassment either to Jesus or to His church.

Of course, even the salvation of one sinner is victory. Certainly the angels in heaven look at it that way (Luke 15:7), and Paul was enthusiastic about the remnant. But it is somewhat hasty to conclude that the victory of which Matthew 12:20 speaks ought, therefore, to be defined without reference to number. We are tempted to formulate such definitions in order to preserve the honor of Christ. We must say that Christ is victorious; but if we don’t readily see how large numbers can be converted, we exclude the notion from our definition of victory. In point of fact the problem may well be that we are slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken.

Isaiah writes of Jesus that He will not be disheartened or crushed until He has established justice in the earth (42:4). Both the Authorized and Revised Standard Versions read: *He will not fail or be discouraged*. Christ is surely no pessimist; and those who are refashioned into His image and serve under His leadership dare not be pessimistic either. Our Lord leads justice to victory. {12}

HERMAN

BY UNGER



"Have I got time for a cup of coffee?"

Therefore thou shalt keep the commandments of the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, and to fear him. For the Lord thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills; A land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil olive, and honey; A land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, thou shalt not lack any thing in it; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass. When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the Lord thy God for the good land which he hath given thee. Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes, which I command thee this day: Lest when thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt therein; And when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied; Then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the Lord thy God, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage; Who led thee through that great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought, where there was no water; who brought thee forth water out of the rock of flint; Who fed thee in the wilderness with manna, which thy fathers knew not, that he might humble thee, and that he might prove thee, to do thee good at thy latter end; And thou say in thine heart, My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth. But thou shalt remember the Lord thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as it is this day. And it shall be, if thou do at all forget the Lord thy God, and walk after other gods, and serve them, and worship them, I testify against you this day that ye shall surely perish. As the nations which the Lord destroyeth before your face, so shall ye perish; because ye would not be obedient unto the voice of the Lord your God.—Deuteronomy 8:6–20

For there is no respect of persons with God. For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law; (For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;) In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.—Romans 2:11–16

COMMON GRACE, ESCHATOLOGY, AND BIBLICAL LAW

Gary North

The concept of common grace is seldom discussed outside of Calvinistic circles, although all Christian theologies must come to grips eventually with the issues underlying the debate over common grace. The phrase itself goes back at least to the days of colonial American Puritanism. I came across it on several occasions when I was doing research on the colonial Puritans' economic doctrines and experiments. The concept goes back at least to John Calvin's writings.³

Before venturing into the forest of theological debate, let me state what I believe is the meaning of the word "grace." The Bible uses the idea in several ways, but the central meaning of grace is this: a gift given to God's creatures on the basis, first, of His favor to His Son, Jesus Christ, the incarnation of the second person of the Trinity, and, second, on the basis of Christ's atoning work on the cross. Grace is not strictly unmerited, for Christ merits every gift, but in terms of the merit of the creation—merit deserved by a creature because of its mere creaturehood—there is none. In short, when we speak of any aspect of the creation, other than the incarnate Jesus Christ, grace is defined as an *unmerited gift*. The essence of grace is conveyed in James 1:17: "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."

Special grace is the phrase used by theologians to describe the gift of eternal salvation. Paul writes, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2:8–9). He also writes, "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died

3. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1559), bk 2, chap. 2, sec. 16; bk. 2, chap. 3, sec. 3; bk. 3, chap. 14, sec. 2.

for us” (Rom. 5:8). God selects those on whom He will have mercy (Rom. 9:18). He has chosen these people to be recipients of His gift of eternal salvation, and He chose them before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4–6). But there is another kind of grace, and it is misunderstood. *Common grace* is equally a gift of God to His creatures, but it is distinguished from special grace in a number of crucial ways. A debate has gone on for close to a century {14} within Calvinistic circles concerning the nature and reality of common grace. I hope that this essay will contribute some acceptable answers to the people of God, though I have little hope of convincing those who have been involved in this debate for fifty years.

Background of the Debate

In 1924, the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) debated the subject, and the decision of the Synod led to a major and seemingly permanent division within the ranks of the denomination. The debate was of considerable interest to Dutch Calvinists on both sides of the Atlantic, although traditional American Calvinists were hardly aware of the issue, and Arminian churches were (and are still) completely unaware of it. Herman Hoeksema, who was perhaps the most brilliant systematic theologian in America in this century, left the CRC to form the Protestant Reformed Church. He and his followers were convinced that, contrary to the decision of the CRC, there is no such thing as common grace.

The doctrine of common grace, as formulated in the disputed “three points” of the Christian Reformed Church in 1924, asserts the following:

1. There is a “favorable attitude of God toward mankind in general, and not alone toward the elect,” Furthermore, there is “also a certain favor or grace of God which he shows to his creatures in general.”
2. God provides “restraint of sin in the life of the individual and in society,”
3. The unregenerate, “though incapable of any saving good ... can perform such [much?] civic good.”⁴

4. Cornelius Van Til, *Common Grace* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1954), 20–22.

These principles can serve as a starting point for a discussion of common grace. The serious Christian eventually will be faced with the problem of explaining the good once he faces the biblical doctrine of evil. James 1:17 informs us that all good gifts are from God. The same point is made in Deuteronomy, chapter 8, which is quoted as the introduction to this essay. It is clear that the unregenerate are the beneficiaries of God's gifts. None of the participants to the debate denies the existence of the gifts. What is denied by the Protestant Reformed critics is that these gifts imply the *favor of God* as far as the unregenerate are concerned. They categorically deny the first point of the original three points.

For the moment, let us refrain from using the word grace. Instead, let us limit ourselves to the word *gift*. The existence of gifts from God raises a whole series of questions:

Does a gift from God imply His favor? {15}

Does an unregenerate man possess the power to do good?

Does the existence of good behavior on the part of the unbeliever deny the doctrine of total depravity?

Does history reveal a progressive separation between saved and lost?

Would such a separation necessarily lead to the triumph of the unregenerate?

Is there a common ground intellectually between Christians and non-Christians?

Can Christians and non-Christians cooperate successfully in certain areas?

Do God's gifts increase or decrease over time? Will the cultural mandate (Gen. 1:28) be fulfilled?

The Favor of God

This is a key point of dispute between those who affirm and those who deny the existence of common grace. I wish to save time, if not trouble, so let me say from the outset that the Christian Reformed Church's 1924 formulation of the first point is defective. The Bible does not indicate that God in any way favors the unregenerate. The opposite is asserted: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God

abideth on him” (John 3:36). The prayer of Christ recorded in John 17 reveals His favor toward the redeemed and them alone. There is a fundamental ethical separation between the saved and the lost. God hated Esau and loved Jacob, before either was born (Rom. 9:10–13).

What are we to make of the Bible’s passages that have been used to support the idea of limited favor toward creatures in general? Without exception, they refer to *gifts* of God to the unregenerate. They do not imply God’s favor. For example, there is this affirmation: “The Lord is good to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works” (Ps. 145:9). The verse preceding this one tells us that God is compassionate, slow to anger, gracious. Romans 2:4 tells us He is longsuffering. Luke 6:35–36 says,

But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil. Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.

1Timothy 4:10 uses explicit language: “For therefore we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe.” The Greek word here translated as “Saviour” is transliterated *soter*: one who saves, heals, protects, or makes whole. And the most frequently cited passage used by those who {16} defend the idea of God’s favor to the unregenerate is Matthew 5:44–45:

But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.

It is understandable how such verses, in the absence of other verses that more fully explain the nature and intent of God’s gifts, could lead men to equate God’s favor and gifts. Certainly it is true that God protects, heals, rewards, and cares for the unregenerate. But none of these verses indicates an attitude of favor toward the unregenerate beneficiaries of His gifts. Only in the use of the word “favor” in its slang form of “do me a favor” can we argue that a gift from God is the same as His favor. Favor, in the slang usage, simply means *gift*—an unmerited gift from the donor. But if favor is understood as an attitude favorable to

the unregenerate, or an emotional commitment by God to the unregenerate for their sakes, then it must be said, God shows no favor to the unrighteous.

One verse in the Bible, above all others, informs us of the underlying attitude of God toward those who rebel against Him despite His gifts. This passage is the concomitant to the oft-quoted Luke 6:35–36 and Matthew 5:44–45. It is Proverbs 25:21–22:

If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink: For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the Lord shall reward thee.

Why are we to be kind to our enemies? First, because God instructs us to be kind. He is kind to them, and we are to imitate Him. Second, by showing mercy, we heap coals of fire on their rebellious heads. From him to whom much is given, much shall be required (Luke 12:47–48). Our enemy will receive greater punishment for all eternity because we have been merciful to him. Third, we are promised a reward from God, which is always a solid reason for being obedient to His commands. The language could not be any plainer. Any discussion of common grace which omits Proverbs 25:21–22 from consideration is not a serious discussion of the topic.

The Bible is very clear. The problem with the vast majority of interpreters is that they still are influenced by the standards of self-proclaimed autonomous humanism. Biblically, *love is the fulfilling of the law* (Rom. 13:8). Love thy neighbor, we are instructed. Treat him with respect. Do not oppress or cheat him. Do not covet his goods or his wife. Do not steal from him. In treating him lawfully, you have fulfilled the commandment to love him. In so doing, you have rendered him without excuse on the day of judgment. God's people are to become conduits of God's gifts to the unregenerate. {17}

This is not to say that every gift that we give to the lost must be given in an attempt to heap coals of fire on their heads. We do not know God's plan for the ages, except in its broad outlines. We do not know who God intends to redeem. So we give freely, hoping that some might be redeemed and the others damned. We play our part in the salvation of some and the damnation of others. For example, regenerate marriage partners are explicitly instructed to treat their unregenerate partners lawfully and faithfully. "For what knowest thou, O wife, whether

thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife” (1 Cor. 7:16)? We treat our friends and enemies lawfully, for they are made in the image of God. But we are to understand that our honest treatment does make it far worse on the day of judgment for those with whom we have dealt righteously than if we had disobeyed God and been poor testimonies to them, treating them unlawfully.

God gives rebels enough rope to hang themselves for all eternity. This is a fundamental implication of the doctrine of common grace. The law of God condemns some men, yet it simultaneously serves as a means of repentance and salvation for others (Rom. 5:19–20). The same law produces different results in different people. What separates men is the saving grace of God in election. The law of God serves as a tool of final *destruction* against the lost, yet it also serves as a tool of active *reconstruction* for the Christian. The law rips up the kingdom of Satan as it serves as the foundation for the kingdom of God on earth.

Christ is indeed the savior of all people prior to the day of judgment (1 Tim. 4:10). Christ sustains the whole universe (Col. 1:17). Without Him, no living thing could survive. He grants to His creatures such gifts as *time, law, order, power, and knowledge*. He grants all of these gifts to Satan and his rebellious host. In answer to the question, “Does God show His grace and mercy to all creation?” the answer is emphatically yes. To the next question, “Does this mean that God in some way demonstrates an attitude of favor toward Satan?” the answer is emphatically no. God is no more favorable toward Satan and his demons than he is to Satan’s human followers. But this does not mean that He does not bestow gifts upon them—gifts that they in no way deserve.

Total Depravity and God’s Restraining Hand

Law is a means of grace: common grace to those who are perishing, special grace to those who are elect. *Law is also a form of curse:* special curse to those who are perishing, common curse to those who are elect. We are all under law as creatures, and because of the curse of Adam and the creation, we suffer the *temporal* burdens of Adam’s transgression. The whole world labors under this curse (Rom. 8:18–23). Nevertheless, “all {18} things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose” (Rom. 8:28). As

men, we are all under law and the restraint of law, both physical and moral law, and we can use this knowledge of law either to bring us external blessings or to rebel and bring destruction. But we know also that all things work together for evil for them that hate God, to them who are the rejected according to His purpose (Rom. 9:17–22). Common grace—common curse, special grace—special curse: we must affirm all four.

The transgression of the law brings a *special curse* to the unregenerate. It is a curse of eternal duration. But this same transgression brings only a *common curse* to the elect. A Christian gets sick, he suffers losses, he is blown about by the storm, he suffers sorrow, but he does not suffer the second death (Rev. 2:11; 20:6, 14). For the believer, the common curses of life are God's chastening, signs of God's favor (Heb. 12:6). The difference between common curse and special curse is not found in the intensity of human pain or the extent of the loss; the difference lies in God's *attitude* toward those who are laboring under the external and psychological burdens. There is an attitude of favor toward the elect, but none toward the unregenerate. The common curse of the unregenerate is, in fact, a part of the special curse under which he will labor forever. The common curse of the elect man is a part of the special grace in terms of which he finally prospers. The common curse is nonetheless common, despite its differing effects on the eternal state of men. The law of God is sure. God does not respect persons (Rom. 2:11), with one exception: the person of Jesus Christ. (Christ was perfect, yet He was punished.)

But if the effects of the law are common in cursing, then the effects of the law are also common in grace. This is why we need a doctrine of common grace. This doctrine gives meaning to the doctrine of common curse, and vice versa. The law of God restrains men in their evil ways, whether regenerate or unregenerate. The law of God restrains "the old man" or old sin in Christians. Law's restraint is a true blessing for all men. In fact, it is even a temporary blessing for Satan and his demons. All those who hate God love death (Prov. 8:36b). This hatred of God is restrained during history. Evil men are given power, life, and time that they do not deserve. So is Satan. They cannot fully work out the implications of their rebellious, suicidal faith, for God's restraint will not permit it. But the common grace which restrains the totally

depraved character of Satan and all his followers is, in fact, part of God's special curse on them. Every gift returns to condemn them on the day of judgment, heaping coals of fire on their heads. However, the common grace of God in law must also be seen as a part of the program of special grace to His elect. God's special gifts to His elect, person by person, are the source of varying rewards on the day of judgment (1 Cor. 3:11–15). {19} Common grace serves to condemn the rebels proportionately to the benefits they have received on earth, and it serves as the operating backdrop for the special grace given to the elect. The laws of God offer a source of order, power, and dominion. Some men use this common grace to their ultimate destruction, while others use it to their eternal benefit. It is nonetheless common, despite its differing effects on the eternal state of men.

The Bible teaches that there is no good thing inherent in fallen man; his heart is wicked and deceitful (Jer. 17:9). All our self-proclaimed righteousness is as filthy rags in the sight of God (Isa. 64:6). Nevertheless, we also know that history has meaning, that there are permanent standards that enable us to distinguish the life of Joseph Stalin from the life of Albert Schweitzer. There are different punishments for different unregenerate men (Luke 12:45–48). This does not mean that God in some way favors one lost soul more than another. It only means that in the eternal plan of God there must be an eternal affirmation of the validity and permanence of His law. It is worse to be a murderer than a liar or a thief. Not every sin is a sin unto death (1 John 5:16–17). History is not some amorphous, undifferentiated mass. It is not an illusion. It has implications for eternity. Therefore, the law of God stands as a reminder to unregenerate men that it is better to conform in part than not to conform at all, even though the end result of rebellion is destruction. There are degrees of punishment (Luke 12:47–48).

But what is the source of the good that evil men do? It can be no other than God (James 1:17). He is the source of all good. He restrains men in different ways, and the effects of this restraint, person to person, demon to demon, can be seen throughout all eternity. Not favor toward the unregenerate, but rather perfect justice of law and total respect toward the law of God on the part of God Himself are the sources of the good deeds that men who are lost may accomplish in time and on earth. There are, to use the vernacular, "different strokes

for different folks,” not because God is a respecter of persons, but because the deeds of different men are different.

The work of the law is written on every man’s heart. There is no escape. No man can plead ignorance (Rom. 2:11–14). But each man’s history does have meaning, and some men have been given clearer knowledge than others (Luke 12:47–48). There is a *common knowledge* of the law, yet there is also *special knowledge* of the law—historically unique in the life of each man. Each man will be judged by the deeds that he has done, by every word that he has uttered (Rom. 2:6; Matt. 12:36). God testifies to His faithfulness to His word by distinguishing every shade of evil and good in every man’s life, saved or lost.

Perhaps a biblical example can clarify these issues. God gave the {20} people who dwelt in the land of Canaan an extra generation of sovereignty over their land. The slave mentality of the Hebrews, with the exceptions of Joshua and Caleb, did not permit them to go in and conquer the land. Furthermore, God specifically revealed to them that He would drive the people out, city by city, year by year, so that the wild animals could not take over the land, leaving it desolate (Ex. 13:27–30). Did this reveal God’s favor toward the Canaanites? Hardly. He instructed the Hebrews to destroy them, root and branch. They were to be driven out of their land forever (Ex. 23:32–33). Nevertheless, they did receive a temporal blessing: an extra generation or more of peace. This kept the beasts in their place. It allowed the Hebrews to mature under the law of God. It also allowed the Hebrews to heap coals of fire on the heads of their enemies, for as God told Abraham, the Hebrews would not take control of the promised land in his day, “for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full” (Gen. 15:16). During that final generation, the iniquity of the Amorites was filled to the brim. Then came destruction.

The Canaanites did receive more than they deserved. They stayed in the land of their fathers for an extra generation. Were they beneficiaries? In the days of wandering for the Hebrews, the Canaanites were beneficiaries. Then the final payment, culturally speaking, came due, and it was exacted by God through His people, just as the Egyptians had learned to their woe. They cared for the land until the Hebrews were fit to take possession of it. As the Bible affirms, “the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just” (Prov. 13:22b). But this in no way denies

the value of the sinner's wealth during the period in which he controls it. It is a gift from God that he has anything at all. He has restrained the sinners from dispersing their wealth in a flurry of suicidal destruction. He lets them serve as caretakers until the day that it is transferred to the regenerate.

The Hivites did escape destruction. They were wise enough to see that God's people could not be beaten. They tricked Joshua into making a treaty with them. The result was their perpetual bondage as menial laborers, but they received life, and the right to pursue happiness, although they forfeited liberty. They were allowed to live under the restraints of God's law, a far better arrangement culturally than they had lived under before the arrival of the Hebrews. They became the recipients of the cultural blessings given to the Hebrews, and perhaps some of them became faithful to God. In that case, what had been a curse on all of them—servitude—became a means of special grace. Their deception paid off (Josh. 9). Only the Hivites escaped destruction (Josh. 11:20).

In the day that Adam and Eve ate of the tree of knowledge, they died spiritually. God had told them they would die on that very day. But they did not die physically. They may or may not have been individually regenerated by God's Spirit. But they were the beneficiaries of a promise {21} (Gen. 3:15). They were to be allowed to have children. Before time began, God had ordained the crucifixion. Christ was in this sense slain from the very beginning (Rev. 13:8). He granted them time on earth. He extended their lease on life; had they not sinned, they would have been able to own eternal life. God greatly blessed them and their murderous son Cain with a stay of execution. God respected Christ's work on the cross. Christ became a savior to Cain—not a personal savior or regenerating savior, but a savior of his life. God granted Cain protection (Gen. 4:15), one of the tasks of a savior.

Once again, we see that history has meaning. God has a purpose. He grants favors to rebels, but not because He is favorable to them. He respects His Son, and His Son died for the whole world (John 3:15). He died to save the world, meaning to give it time, life, and external blessings. He did not die to offer a hypothetical promise of regeneration to "vessels of wrath" (Rom. 9:22), but He died to become a savior in the same sense as that described in the first part of 1 Timothy 4:10—not a

special savior, but a sustaining, restraining savior. God dealt mercifully with Adam and Adam's family because He had favor for His chosen people, those who receive the blessings of salvation. But that salvation is expressly *historical* in nature. Christ died in time and on earth for His people. They are regenerated in time and on earth. He therefore preserves the earth and gives all men, including rebels, time.

With respect to God's restraint of the total depravity of men, consider His curse of the ground (Gen. 3:17–19). Man must labor in the sweat of his brow in order to eat. The earth gives up her fruits, but only through labor. Still, this common curse also involves common grace. Men are compelled to cooperate with each other in a world of scarcity if they wish to increase their income. They may be murderers in their hearts, but they must restrain their emotions and cooperate. The division of labor makes possible the specialization of production. This, in turn, promotes increased wealth for all those who labor. Men are restrained by scarcity, which appears to be a one-sided curse. Not so; it is equally a blessing. This is the meaning of common grace; common curse and common grace go together.

The cross is the best example of the fusion of grace and curse. Christ was totally cursed on the cross. At the same time, this was God's act of incomparable grace. Justice and mercy are linked at the cross. Christ died, thereby experiencing the curse common to all men. Yet through that death, Christ propitiated God. That is the source of common grace on earth—life, law, order, power—as well as the source of special grace. The *common curse* of the cross—death—led to *special grace* for God's elect, yet it also is the source of that *common grace* which makes history possible. Christ suffered the "first death," not to save His people from {22} the first death, and not to save the unregenerate from the second death of the lake of fire. He suffered the first death to satisfy the penalty of sin—the first death (Adam did not die physically on the day that he sinned) and the second death (God's elect will never perish).

At some time in the future, God will cease to restrain men's evil (2 Thess. 2:6–12). As He gave up Israel to their lusts (Ps. 81:12; 106:15), so shall He give up on the unregenerate who are presently held back from part of the evil that they would do. This does not necessarily mean that the unregenerate will then crush the people of God. In fact, it means precisely the opposite. When God ceased to restrain Israel, Israel was

scattered. (True, for a time things went badly for God's prophets.) But the very act of releasing them from His restraint allowed God to let them fill up their own cup of iniquity. The end result of God's releasing Israel was their fall into iniquity, rebellion, and impotence (Acts 7:42–43). They were scattered by the Assyrians, the Babylonians, and finally the Romans. The Romans, too, were given up to their own lusts (Rom. 1: 24, 26, 28). Though it took three centuries, they were finally replaced by the Christians. The empire collapsed. The Christians picked up the pieces.

When God ceases to restrain men from the evil that they are capable of committing, it seals their doom. Separated from restraint, they violate the work of the law written in their hearts. Separated from God's law, men lose God's tool of cultural dominion. Men who see themselves as being under law can then use the law to achieve their ends. Antinomians rush headlong into impotence, for, denying that they are under law and law's restraints, they throw away the crucial tool of external conquest and external blessings. They rebel and are destroyed.

Wheat and Tares

The parable of the tares is instructive in dealing with the question: Does history reveal a *progressive separation* between the saved and the lost? The parable begins with the field which is planted with wheat, but which is sown with tares by an enemy during the night (Matt. 13:24–30, 36–43). The parable refers to the kingdom of God, not to the institutional church. "The field is the world," Christ explained (Matt. 13:37). The good wheat, the children of God, now must operate in a world in which the tares, the unregenerate, are operating. The servants (angels) instantly recognize the difference, but they are told not to yank up the tares yet. Such a violent act would destroy the wheat by plowing up the field. To preserve the growing wheat, the owner allows the tares to develop. What is preserved is *historical development*. Only at the end of the world is a final separation made. Until then, *for the sake of the wheat*, the tares are not ripped out.

The rain falls on both the wheat and the tares. The sun shines on both. {23} The blight hits both, and so do the locusts. Common grace and common curse: the law of God brings both in history. An important part of historical development is man's fulfillment of the cultural

mandate. New questions can be raised about the common grace of God, once the care of the field is entrusted to men. The regularities of nature still play a role, but increasingly fertilizers, irrigation systems, regular care, scientific management, and even satellite surveys are part of the life of the field. Men exercise increasing dominion over the world. A question then arises: If the devil's followers rule, will they care tenderly for the needs of the godly? Will they exercise dominion for the benefit of the wheat, so to speak? On the other hand, will the tares be cared for by the Christians? If Christians rule, what happens to the unrighteous?

This is the problem of *differentiation in history*. Men are not passive. They are commanded to be active, to seek dominion over nature (Gen. 1:28; 9:1–7). They are to manage the field. As both the good and the bad work out their God-ordained destinies, what kind of development can be expected? Who prospers most, the saved or the lost? Who becomes dominant?

The final separation comes at the end of time. Until then, the two groups must share the same world. If wheat and tares imply slow growth to maturity, then we have to conclude that the radically discontinuous event of separation will not mark the time of development. It is an event of the last day. It is a discontinuous event that is the capstone of historical continuity. Our entire era is referred to by the writer of the Hebrews as “these last days” (Heb. 1:2). We live in the last days, indicating that the death and resurrection of Christ was the last historically significant event that properly can be said to be discontinuous (possibly the day of Pentecost could serve as the last earth-shaking, kingdom-shaking event). So we should expect growth in our era, the kind of growth indicated by the agricultural parables.

What must be stressed is the element of continuous development. “The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field: Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof” (Matt. 13: 31–32). As this kingdom comes into maturity, there is no physical separation between saved and lost. That total separation will come only at the end of time. There can be major changes, even as

the seasons speed up or retard growth, but we should not expect a radical separation.

While I do not have the space to demonstrate the point, this means that the separation spoken of by premillennialists—the rapture—is not in accord with the parables of the kingdom. The rapture comes at the end of time. The “wheat” cannot be removed from the field until that final day, {24} when we are caught up to meet Christ in the clouds (1 Thess. 4:17). There is indeed a rapture, but it comes at the end of time—when the reapers (angels) harvest the wheat and the tares. There is a rapture, but it is a postmillennial rapture.

Why a postmillennial rapture, the amillennialist may say? Why not simply point out that the rapture comes at the end of time and let matters drop? The answer is important: We must deal with the question of the development of the wheat and tares. We must see that this process of time leads to Christian victory on earth and in time.

Isaiah 32 is a neglected portion of Scripture in our day. It informs us of a remarkable day that is coming. It is a day of “epistemological self-consciousness,” to use Cornelius Van Til’s phrase. It is a day when men will know God’s standards and apply them accurately to the historical situation. It is not a day beyond the final judgment, for it speaks of churls as well as liberal people. Yet it cannot be a day inaugurated by a radical separation between saved and lost (the rapture), for such a separation comes only at the end of time. This day will come before Christ returns physically to earth in judgment. We read in the first eight verses:

Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment. And a man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. And the eyes of them that see shall not be dim, and the ears of them that hear shall hearken. The heart also of the rash shall understand knowledge, and the tongue of the stammerers shall be ready to speak plainly. The vile person shall be no more called liberal, nor the churl said to be bountiful. For the vile person will speak villany, and his heart will work iniquity, to practise hypocrisy, and to utter error against the LORD, to make empty the soul of the hungry, and he will cause the drink of the thirsty to fail. The instruments also of the churl are evil: he deviseth wicked devices to destroy the poor with lying words, even when the needy speaketh

right. But the liberal deviseth liberal things; and by liberal things shall he stand.

To repeat, “The vile person shall be no more called liberal, nor the churl said to be bountiful” (v. 5). Churls persist in their churlishness; liberal men continue to be gracious. It does not say that all churls will be converted, but it also does not say that the liberals shall be destroyed. The two exist together. But the language of promise indicates that Isaiah knew full well that in his day (and in our day), churls are called liberal and vice versa. Men refuse to apply their knowledge of God’s standards to the world in which they live. But it shall not always be thus.

At this point, we face two crucial questions. The answers separate many Christian commentators. First, should we expect this knowledge to come instantaneously? Second, when this prophesied world of epistemological {25} self-consciousness finally dawns, which group will be the earthly victors, churls or liberals?

The amillennialist must answer that this parallel development of knowledge is gradual. The postmillennialist agrees. The premillennialist must dissent. The premil position is that the day of self-awareness comes only after the rapture and the establishment subsequently of the earthly kingdom, with Christ ruling on earth in person. The amil position sees no era of pre-consummation, pre-final judgment righteousness. Therefore, he must conclude that the growth in self-awareness does separate the saved from the lost culturally, but since there is no coming era of godly victory culturally, the amillennialist has to say that this ethical and epistemological separation leads to the defeat of Christians on the battlefields of culture. Evil will triumph before the final judgment, and since this process is continuous, the decline into darkness must be part of the process of differentiation over time. This increase in self-knowledge therefore leads to the victory of Satan’s forces over the church.

We now return to the question of common grace. The slow, downward drift of culture parallels the growth in self-awareness, says the amillennialist. This has to mean that common grace is to be withdrawn as time progresses. The restraining hand of God will be progressively removed. Since the amillennialist believes that things get worse before the final judgment, he has to see common grace as *earlier* grace

(assuming he admits the existence of common grace at all). This has been stated most forcefully by Van Til, who holds a doctrine of common grace and who is an amillennialist:

All common grace is earlier grace. Its commonness lies in its earliness. It pertains not merely to the lower dimensions of life. It pertains to all dimensions of life, but to all these dimensions ever decreasingly as the time of history goes on. At the very first stage of history there is much common grace. There is a common good nature under the common favor of God. But this creation-grace requires response. It cannot remain what it is. It is conditional. Differentiation must set in and does set in. It comes first in the form of a common rejection of God. Yet common grace continues; it is on a “lower” level now; it is longsuffering that men may be led to repentance.... Common grace will diminish still more in the further course of history. With every conditional act the remaining significance of the conditional is reduced. God allows men to follow the path of their self-chosen rejection of Him more rapidly than ever toward the final consummation. God increases His attitude of wrath upon the reprobate as time goes on, until at the end of time, at the great consummation of history, their condition has caught up with their state.⁵

Van Til affirms the reality of history, yet it is the history of continuous {26} decline. The unregenerate become increasingly powerful. But why? Why should the epistemological self-awareness described in Isaiah 32 necessarily lead to defeat for the Christians? By holding to a doctrine of common grace which involves the idea of the common favor of God toward all creatures (except Satan, says Van Til), he then argues that this favor is withdrawn, leaving the unregenerate a free hand to attack God’s elect. If common grace is linked with God’s favor, and God’s favor steadily declines, then that other aspect of common grace, namely, God’s restraint, must also be withdrawn. Furthermore, the third feature of common grace, civic righteousness, must also disappear. Van Til’s words are quite powerful:

But when all the reprobate are epistemologically self-conscious, the crack of doom has come. The fully self-conscious reprobate will do all he can in every dimension to destroy the people of God. So while we seek with all our power to hasten the process of differentiation in every dimension we are yet thankful, on the other hand, for “the day

5. Van Til, *Common Grace*, 82–83.

of grace,” the day of undeveloped differentiation. Such tolerance as we receive on the part of the world is due to this fact that we live in the earlier, rather than in the later, stage of history. And such influence on the public situation as we can effect, whether in society or in state, presupposes this undifferentiated stage of development.⁶

Consider the implications of what Van Til is saying. History is an earthly threat to Christian man. Why? His amil argument is that common grace is earlier grace. It declines over time. Why? Because God’s attitude of favor declines over time with respect to the unregenerate. With the decline of God’s favor, the other benefits of common grace are lost. Evil men become more thoroughly evil.

Van Til’s argument is the generally accepted one in Reformed circles. His is the standard statement of the common grace position. Yet as the reader should grasp by now, it is deeply flawed. It begins with *false assumptions*: 1) that common grace implies common favor; 2) that this common favor is reduced over time; 3) that this loss of favor necessarily tears down the foundations of civic righteousness within the general culture; 4) that the amillennial vision of the future is accurate. Thus, he concludes that the process of differentiation is leading to the impotence of Christians in every sphere of life, and that we can be thankful for having lived in the period of “earlier” grace, meaning greater common grace.

In response, I have to offer these criticisms. First, God does not favor the unregenerate at any time after the rebellion of man. Man is totally depraved, and there is nothing in him deserving praise or favor, nor does God look favorably on him. God grants the unregenerate man favors (not favor) in order to heap coals of fire on his head (if he is not part of the {27} elect) or else to call him to repentance (which God’s special grace accomplishes). Thus, God is uniformly hostile to the rebel throughout history.

Second, once the excess theological baggage of God’s supposed favor toward the unregenerate is removed, the other two issues can be discussed: God’s restraint and man’s civic righteousness. The activity of God’s Spirit is important to understand the nature of God’s restraint, but we are told virtually nothing of the operation of the Spirit. What we

6. *Ibid.*, 85.

are told is that *the law of God restrains men*. They do the work of the law written on their hearts. This law is the primary means of God's external blessings (Deut. 8); rebellion against His law brings destruction (Deut. 28). Therefore, as the reign of biblical law is extended through the preaching of the whole counsel of God, as the law is written in the hearts of men (Jer. 31:33–34; Heb. 8:10–11; 10:16), and as the unregenerate come under the sway and influence of the law, common grace must *increase*, not decrease. Remember, this has nothing to do with the supposed favor of God toward mankind in general. The central issue is the restraint by God inherent in the work of the law. This work is in every man's heart.

Third, the amillennial view of the process of separation or differentiation is seriously flawed by a lack of understanding of the power which biblical law confers on those who seek to abide by its standards. Again, we must look at Deuteronomy, chapter 8. Conformity to the precepts of the law brings external blessings. The blessings can (though need not) serve as a snare and a temptation, for men may forget the source of their blessings. They can forget God, claim autonomy, and turn away from the law. This leads to destruction. The formerly faithful people are scattered. Thus, the paradox of Deuteronomy 8: covenantal faithfulness to the law—external blessings by God in response to faithfulness—temptation to rely on the blessings as if they were the product of man's hands—judgment. The blessings can lead to disaster and impotence. Therefore, *adherence to the terms of biblical law is basic for external success*.

As men become epistemologically self-conscious, they must face up to reality—God's reality. Ours is a moral universe. It is governed by a law-order which reflects the very being of God. When men finally realize who the churls are and who the liberals are, they have made a significant discovery. They recognize the relationship between God's standards and the ethical decisions of men. In short, they come to grips with the law of God. The *law* is written in the hearts of Christians. The *work of the law* is written in the hearts of all men. The Christians are therefore increasingly in touch with the source of earthly power: biblical law. To match the power of the Christians, the unregenerate must conform their actions externally to the law of God as preached by Christians, the work of which they already have in their hearts. The

unregenerate are therefore {28} made far more responsible before God, simply because they have more knowledge. They desire power. Christians will some day possess cultural power through their adherence to biblical law. Therefore, unregenerate men will have to imitate special covenantal faithfulness by adhering to the demands of God's external covenants. The unregenerate will thereby bring down the final wrath of God upon their heads, even as they gain external blessings due to their increased conformity to the *external requirements* of biblical law. At the end of time, they revolt.

The unregenerate have two choices: conform themselves to biblical law, or at least to the work of the law written on their hearts, or, second, abandon law and thereby abandon power. They can gain power only on God's terms: acknowledgement of and conformity to God's law. There is no other way. Any turning from the law brings impotence, fragmentation, and despair. Furthermore, it leaves those with a commitment to law in the driver's seat. Increasing differentiation over time, therefore, does not lead to the impotence of the Christians. It leads to their victory culturally. They see the implications of the law more clearly. So do their enemies. The unrighteous can gain access to the blessings only by accepting God's moral universe as it is.

The Hebrews were told to separate themselves from the people and the gods of the land. Those gods were the gods of Satan, the gods of chaos, dissolution, and cyclical history. The pagan world was faithful to the doctrine of cycles: there can be no straight-line progress. But the Hebrews were told differently. If they were faithful, God said, they would not suffer the burdens of sickness, and no one and no animal would suffer miscarriages (Ex. 23:24–26). Special grace leads to a commitment to the law; the commitment to God's law permits God to reduce the common curse element of natural law, leaving proportionately more common grace—the reign of *beneficent common law*. The curse of nature can be steadily reduced, but only if men conform themselves to revealed law or to the works of the law in their hearts. The blessing comes in the form of a more productive, less scarcity-dominated nature. There can be *positive feedback* in the relation between law and blessing: the blessings will confirm God's faithfulness to His law, which in turn will lead to greater covenantal faithfulness (Deut. 8:18). This is the answer to the paradox of Deuteronomy 8: it need not

become a cyclical spiral. Of course, special grace is required to keep a people faithful in the long run. Without special grace, the temptation to forget the source of wealth takes over, and the end result is destruction. This is why, at the end of the millennial age, the unregenerate try once again to assert their autonomy from God. They attack the church of the faithful. They exercise power. And the crack of doom sounds—for the unregenerate.

The process of differentiation is not constant over time. It ebbs and {29} flows. Its general direction is toward epistemological self-consciousness. But Christians are not always faithful, any more than the Hebrews were in the days of the judges. The early church defeated Rome, and then the secular remnants of Rome compromised the church. The Reformation launched a new era of cultural growth, the Counter-Reformation struck back, and the secularism of the Renaissance swallowed up both—for a time. This is not cyclical history, for history is linear. There was a creation, a fall, a people called out of bondage, an incarnation, a resurrection, Pentecost. There will be a day of epistemological self-consciousness, as promised in Isaiah 32. There will be a final rebellion and judgment. There has been a Christian nation called the United States. There has been a secular nation called the United States. (The dividing line was the Civil War, or War of Southern Secession, or War Between the States, or War of Northern Aggression—take your pick.) Back and forth, ebb and flow, but with a long-range goal.

There has been progress. Look at the Apostles' Creed. Then look at the Westminster Confession of Faith. Only a fool could deny progress. There has been a growth in wealth, in knowledge, and in culture. What are we to say, that technology as such is the devil's, that since common grace has been steadily withdrawn, the modern world's development is the creative work of Satan (since God's common grace cannot account for this progress)? Is Satan creative—autonomously creative? If not, from whence comes our wealth, our knowledge, and our power? Is it not from God? Is not Satan the great imitator? But whose progress has he imitated? Whose cultural development has he attempted to borrow, twist, and destroy? There has been progress since the days of Noah—not straight-line progress, not pure compound growth, but progress nonetheless. Christianity produced it, secularism borrowed it, and

today we seem to be at another crossroad: Can the Christians sustain what they began, given their compromises with secularism? And can the secularists sustain what they and the Christians have constructed, now that their spiritual capital is running low, and the Christians' cultural bank account is close to empty?

Christians and secularists today are, in the field of education and other "secular" realms, like a pair of drunks who lean on each other in order not to fall down. We seem to be in the "blessings unto temptation" stage, with "rebellion unto destruction" looming ahead. It has happened before. It can happen again. In this sense, it is the *lack* of epistemological self-consciousness that seems to be responsible for the *reduction* of common grace. Yet it is Van Til's view that the increase of epistemological self-consciousness is responsible for, or at least parallels, the reduction of common grace. Amillennialism has crippled his analysis of common grace. So has his equation of God's gifts and God's supposed favor to mankind in general. {30}

The separation between the wheat and the tares is progressive. It is not a straight-line progression. Blight hits one and then the other. Sometimes it hits both at once. Sometimes the sun and rain help both to grow at the same time. But there is maturity. The tares grow unto final destruction, and the wheat grows unto final blessing. In the meantime, both have roles to play in God's plan for the ages. At least the tares help keep the soil from eroding. Better tares than the destruction of the field, at least for the present. They serve God, despite themselves. There has been progress for both wheat and tares. Greek and Roman science became static; Christian concepts of optimism and an orderly universe created modern science. Now the tares run the scientific world, but for how long? Until a war? Until the concepts of meaningless Darwinian evolution and modern indeterminate physics destroy the concept of regular law—the foundation of all science?

How long can we go on like this? Answer: until epistemological self-consciousness brings Christians back to the law of God. And the pagans imitate them or quit.

Law and Grace

The dual relationship between common law and common curse is a necessary backdrop for God's plan of the ages. Take, for example, the

curse of Adam. Adam and his heirs are burdened with frail bodies that grow sick and die. Initially, there was a longer life expectancy for mankind. The longest life recorded in the Bible, that given to Methuselah, Noah's grandfather, was 969 years. Methuselah died in the year that the great flood began.⁷ Thus, as far as human life is concerned, the greatest sign of God's common grace was given to men just before the greatest removal of common grace recorded in history. This is extremely significant for the thesis of this essay. The *extension of common grace to man*—the external blessings of God that are given to mankind in general—is a *prelude to a great curse for the unregenerate*. As we read in the eighth chapter of Deuteronomy, as well as in the twenty-eighth chapter, men can be and are lured into a snare by looking upon the external gifts from God while forgetting the heavenly source of the gifts and the *covenantal terms* under which the gifts were given. The gift of long life was given to mankind {31} in general, not as a sign of God's favor, but as a prelude to His almost total destruction of the seed of Adam. Only His special grace to Noah and his family preserved mankind.

Thus, the mere existence of external blessing is no proof of a favorable attitude toward man on the part of God. In the first stage, that of *covenantal faithfulness*, God's special grace is extended widely within a culture. The second stage, that of *external blessings* in response to covenantal faithfulness, is intended to reinforce men's faith in the reality and validity of God's covenants (Deut. 8:18). But that second stage can lead to a third stage, covenantal or ethical *forgetfulness*. The key fact which must be borne in mind is that this third stage cannot be distinguished from the second stage in terms of measurements of the blessings (economic growth indicators, for example). An increase of external blessings should lead to the positive feedback of a faithful cul-

7. Methuselah was 969 years old when he died (Gen. 5:27). He was 187 years old when his son Lamech was born (5:25) and 369 years old when Lamech's son Noah was born (5:28–29). Noah was 600 years old at the time of the great flood (7:6). Therefore, from the birth of Noah, when Methuselah was 369, until the flood, 600 years later, Methuselah lived out his years (369 + 600 = 969). The Bible does not say that Methuselah perished in the flood, but only that he died in the year of the flood. This is such a remarkable chronology that the burden of proof is on those who deny the father-to-son relationship in these three generations, arguing instead for an unstated gap in the chronology.

ture: victory unto victory. But it can lead to stage three, namely, forgetfulness. This leads to stage four, *destruction*. It therefore requires *special* grace to maintain the “faithfulness-blessing-faithfulness-blessing...” relationship of positive feedback and compound growth. But common grace plays a definite role in reinforcing men’s commitment to the law-order of God. Everyone in the Hebrew commonwealth, including the stranger who was within the gates, could benefit from the increase in external blessings. Therefore, the curse aspect of the “common grace-common curse” relationship can be progressively removed, and common grace either increases, or else the mere removal of common cursing makes it appear that common grace is increasing. (Better theologians than I can debate this point.)

Nevertheless, without special grace being extended by God—without continual conversions of men—the positive feedback of Deuteronomy 8 cannot be maintained. A disastrous reduction of blessings can be counted on by those who are not regenerate if their numbers are becoming dominant in the community. When regenerate Lot was removed from Sodom, and the unregenerate men who had been set up for destruction by God were no longer protected by Lot’s presence among them, *their* crack of doom sounded (Gen. 18, 19). And the effects were felt in Lot’s family, for his wife looked back and suffered the consequences of her disobedience (19:26), and his daughters committed sin (19:30–38). But it had been Lot’s presence among them that had held off destruction (19:21–22). The same was true of Noah. Until the ark was completed, the world was safe from the great flood. The people seemed to be prospering. Methuselah lived a long life, but after him, the lifespan of mankind steadily declined. Aaron died at age 123 (Num. 33:39). Moses died at age 120 (Deut. 31:2). But this longevity was not normal, even in their day. In a psalm of Moses, he said that “the days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength {32} labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away” (Ps. 90:10). The common curse of God could be seen even in the blessing of extra years, but long life, which is a blessing (Ex. 20:12), was being removed by God from mankind in general.

The book of Isaiah tells us of a future restoration of long life. This blessing shall be given to all men, saints and sinners. It is therefore a

sign of extended common grace. It is a gift to mankind in general. Isaiah 65:20 tells us, "There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed." The gift of long life shall come, though the common curse of long life shall extend to the sinner, whose long life is simply extra time for him to fill up his days of iniquity. Nevertheless, the infants will not die, which is a fulfillment of God's promise to Israel, namely, the absence of miscarriages (Ex. 23:26). If there is any passage in Scripture that absolutely refutes the amillennial position, it is this one. This is not a prophecy of the New Heavens and New Earth in their post-judgment form, but it is a prophecy of the pre-judgment manifestation of the preliminary stages of the New Heavens and New Earth—an earnest (down payment) of our expectations. There are still sinners in the world, and they receive long life. But to them it is an ultimate curse, meaning a *special curse*. It is a special curse because this exceptionally long life is a common blessing—the reduction of the *common curse*. Again, we need the concept of common grace to give significance to both special grace and common curse. Common grace (reduced common curse) brings special curses to the rebels.

There will be peace on earth extended to men of good will (Luke 2:14). But this means that there will also be peace on earth extended to evil men. Peace is given to the just as a reward for their covenantal faithfulness. It is given to the unregenerate in order to heap coals of fire on their heads, and also in order to lure rebels living in the very last days into a final rebellion against God.

An understanding of common grace is essential for an understanding of the final act of human history before the judgment of God. To the extent that this essay contributes anything new to Christian theology, it is its contribution to an understanding of the final rebellion of the unregenerate. The final rebellion has been used by those opposing postmillennialism as final proof that there will be no faith on earth among the masses of men when Christ returns. The devil shall be loosed for a little season at the end of time, meaning his power over the nations returns to him in full strength (Rev. 20:3). However, this rebellion is short-lived. He surrounds the holy city (meaning the church of the faithful), only to be cut down in final judgment (Rev. 20:7–15).

Therefore, conclude the critics of postmillennialism, there is a resounding negative answer to Christ's question: {33} "Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on earth" (Luke 18:8)? Where, then, is the supposed victory?

The doctrine of common grace provides us with the biblical answer. *God's law is the main form of common grace.* It is written in the hearts of believers, we read in Hebrews, chapters 8 and 10, but the work of the law is written in the heart of every man. Thus, the work of the law is universal—common. This access to God's law is the foundation of the fulfilling of the cultural mandate to subdue the earth (Gen. 1:28). The command was given to all men through Adam; it was reaffirmed by God with the family of Noah (Gen. 9:1–7). God's promises of external blessings are conditional to man's fulfillment of external laws. The reason men can gain the blessings is because the knowledge of the work of the law is common. This is why there can be outward cooperation between Christians and non-Christians for certain earthly ends.

From time to time, unbelievers are enabled by God to adhere more closely to the work of the law that is written in their hearts. These periods of cultural adherence can last for centuries, at least with respect to some aspects of human culture (the arts, science, philosophy). The Greeks maintained a high level of culture inside the limited confines of the Greek city-states for a few centuries. The Chinese maintained their culture until it grew stagnant, in response to Confucian philosophy, in what we call the Middle Ages. But in the West, the ability of the unregenerate to act in closer conformity to the work of the law written in their hearts has been the result of the historical leadership provided by the cultural triumph of Christianity. In short, special grace increased, leading to an extension of common grace throughout Western culture. Economic growth has increased; indeed, the concept of linear, compound growth is unique to the West, and the foundations of this belief were laid by the Reformers who held to the eschatology known as postmillennialism. Longer life spans have also appeared in the West, primarily due to the application of technology to living conditions. Applied technology is, in turn, a product of Christianity and especially Protestant Christianity.

In the era prophesied by Isaiah, unbelievers will once again come to know the benefits of God's law. No longer shall they twist God's revela-

tion to them. *The churl shall no longer be called liberal.* Law will be respected by unbelievers. This means that they will turn away from an open, consistent worship of the gods of chaos and the philosophy of ultimate randomness, including evolutionary randomness. They will participate in the blessings brought to them by the preaching of the whole counsel of God, including His law. The earth will be subdued to the glory of God, including the cultural world. Unbelievers will fulfill their roles in the achievement of the terms of the cultural mandate.

This is why a theology that is orthodox must include a doctrine of {34} common grace that is intimately related to biblical law. Law does not save men's souls, but *it does save their bodies and their culture.* Christ is the savior of all, especially those who are the elect (1 Tim. 4:10).

The blessings and cultural victory taught by the Bible (and adequately commented upon by postmillennialists) will not be the products of some form of pietistic, semi-monastic revivalism. The "merely soteriological" preaching of pietism—the salvation of souls by special grace—is not sufficient to bring the victories foretold in the Bible. The whole counsel of God must and will be preached. This means that the law of God will be preached. The external blessings will come in response to covenantal faithfulness of God's people. The majority of men will be converted. The unconverted will not follow their philosophy of chaos to logical conclusions, for such a philosophy leads to ultimate impotence. It throws away the tool of reconstruction, biblical law.

The great defect with the postmillennial revival inaugurated by Jonathan Edwards and his followers in the eighteenth century was their neglect of biblical law. They expected to see the blessings of God come as a result of merely soteriological preaching. Look at Edwards's *Treatise on the Religious Affectations*. There is nothing on the law of God in culture. Page after page is filled with the words "sweet" and "sweetness." A diabetic reader is almost risking a relapse by reading this book in one sitting. The words sometimes appear four or five times on a page. And while Edwards was preaching the sweetness of God, Arminian semilit-erates were "hot-gospel-ling" the Holy Commonwealth of Connecticut into political antinomianism.⁸ Where sweetness and emotional hot flashes are concerned, Calvinistic preaching is no match for antinomial sermons. The hoped-for revival of the 1700s became the Armin-

ian revivals of the early 1800s, leaving emotionally burned-over districts, cults, and the abolitionist movement as their devastating legacy. Because the postmillennial preaching of the Edwardians was culturally antinomian and pietistic, it crippled the remnants of Calvinistic political order in the New England colonies, helping to produce a vacuum that Arminianism and then Unitarianism filled.

Progress culturally, economically, and politically is intimately linked to the extension and application of biblical law. The blessings promised in Romans, chapter 11, concerning the effects of the conversion of *genetic* Israel (and we must emphasize the word “genetic”) to the gospel, will {35} be in part the product of biblical law.⁹ But they do not necessarily involve universal regeneration. The blessings only require the extension of Christian culture. For the long-term progress of culture, of course, this increase of common grace (or reduction of the common curse) must be reinforced (rejuvenated and renewed) by special grace—conversions. But the blessings can remain for a generation or more after special grace has been removed, and as far as the external benefits can be measured, it will not be possible to tell whether the

8. On the opposition to Edwards’s toleration of revivalism, not from theological liberals but from orthodox Calvinistic pastors, see Richard L. Bushman, *From Puritan to Yankee* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967). Bushman also explains how the Great Awakening was a disaster for the legal remnants of biblical law in the colony of Connecticut. The political order was forced into theological neutralism, which in turn aided the rise of Deism and liberalism.

9. John Murray’s excellent commentary, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1965), contains an extensive analysis of Romans 11, the section dealing with the future conversion of the Jews. Murray stresses that God’s regrafting in of Israel leads to covenantal blessings unparalleled in human history. But the Israel referred to in Romans 11, argues Murray, is not national or political Israel, but the natural seed of Abraham. This seems to mean genetic Israel. A major historical problem appears at this point: the bulk of those known as Jews are the heirs of a converted tribe of Turkish people, the Khazars. The Eastern European and Russian Jews come from this stock. They have married other Jews, however, the Sephardic or *diaspora* Jews who fled primarily to Western Europe. The Yemenite Jews, who stayed in the land of Palestine, also are descendants of Abraham. If the Israel referred to in Romans 11 is primarily genetic, then it may not be necessary that all Jews be converted. On the kingdom of the Khazars, see Arthur Koestler, *The Thirteenth Tribe* (New York: Random House, 1976). I wrote to Murray in the late 1960s to get his opinion on the implications of the Khazars for his exegesis of Romans 11, but he did not respond.

blessings are part of the *positive feedback program* (Deut. 8:18) or a *prelude to God's judgment* (Deut. 8:19–20). God respects His conditional, external covenants. External conformity to His law gains external blessings. These, in the last analysis (and at the last judgment), produce coals for unregenerate heads.

The postmillennial system requires a doctrine of common grace and common curse. It does not require a doctrine of universal regeneration during the period of millennial blessings. In fact, no postmillennial Calvinist can afford to be without a doctrine of common grace—one which links external blessings to the fulfillment of external covenants. There has to be a period of external blessings during the final generation. Something must hold that culture together so that Satan can once again go forth and deceive the nations. The Calvinist denies that men can “lose their salvation,” meaning their regenerate status. The rebels are not “formerly regenerate” men. But they are men with power, or at least the trappings of power. They are powerful enough to delude themselves that they can destroy the people of God. And power, as I have tried to emphasize throughout this essay, is not the product of antinomian or chaos-oriented philosophy. The very existence of a military chain of command demands a concept of law and order. Satan commands an army on that final day.

The postmillennial vision of the future paints a picture of historically incomparable blessings. It also tells of a final rebellion that leads to God's total and final judgment. Like the long-lived men in the days of {36} Methuselah, judgment comes upon them in the midst of power, prosperity, and external blessings. God has been gracious to them all to the utmost of His common grace. He has been gracious in response to their covenantal faithfulness to His *civil* law-order, and He has been gracious in order to pile the maximum possible pile of coals on their heads. In contrast to Van Til's amillennialist vision of the future, we must say: *When common grace is extended to its maximum limits possible in history, then the crack of doom has come—doom for the rebels.*

Epistemological Self-Consciousness and Cooperation

Van Til writes, “But when all the reprobate are epistemologically self-conscious, the crack of doom has come. The fully self-conscious reprobate will do all he can in every dimension to destroy the people of

God.” Yet Van Til has written in another place that the rebel against God is like a little child who has to sit on his father’s lap in order to slap his face. What, then, can be meant by the concept of increasing epistemological self-consciousness?

As the wheat and tares grow to maturity, the amillennialist argues, the tares become stronger and stronger culturally, while the wheat becomes weaker and weaker. Consider what is being said. As Christians work out their own salvation with fear and trembling, improving their creeds, improving their cooperation with each other on the basis of agreement about the creeds, as they learn about the law of God as it applies in their own era, as they become skilled in applying the law of God that they have learned about, they become culturally impotent. They become infertile, also, it would seem. They do not become fruitful and multiply. Or if they do their best to follow this commandment, they are left without the blessing of God—a blessing which He has promised to those who follow the laws He has established. In short, the increase of epistemological self-consciousness on the part of Christians leads to cultural impotence. I am faced with an unpleasant conclusion: *the amillennialist version of the common grace doctrine is inescapably antinomian*. It argues that God no longer respects His covenantal law-order, that Deuteronomy’s teaching about covenantal law is invalid in New Testament times. The only way for the amillennialist to avoid the charge of antinomianism is for him to abandon the concept of increasing epistemological self-consciousness. He must face the fact that to achieve cultural impotence, Christians therefore must not increase in knowledge and covenantal faithfulness. (Admittedly, the condition of twentieth-century Christianity does appear to enforce this attitude about epistemological self-consciousness among Christians.)

Consider the other half of Van Til’s dictum. As the epistemological self-consciousness of the unregenerate increases, and they adhere more {37} and more to their epistemological premises of the origins of matter out of chaos, and the ultimate return of all matter into pure randomness (the second law of thermodynamics: decay into entropy), it makes them confident. The Christian is humble before God, but confident before the creation which he is to subdue. This confidence leads the Christian into defeat and ultimate disaster, say amillennialists, who believe in increasing epistemological self-consciousness. In contrast,

the rebel is arrogant before God and claims that all nature is ruled by the meaningless laws of probability—ultimate chaos. By immersing themselves in the philosophy of chaos, the unbelievers are able to emerge totally victorious across the whole face of the earth, says the amillennialist, a victory which is called to a halt only by the physical intervention of Jesus Christ at the final judgment. A commitment to lawlessness, in the amillennial version of common grace, leads to external victory.

It should be clear by now that the amillennialist version of the relationship between biblical law and the creation is completely backwards. No doubt Satan wishes it were a true version. He wants his followers to believe it. But how can a consistent Christian believe it? How can a Christian believe that adherence to biblical law produces cultural impotence, while commitment to philosophical chaos—the religion of satanic revolution—leads to cultural victory? There is no doubt in my mind that the amillennialists do not want to teach such a doctrine, yet that is where their amillennial pessimism inevitably leads. Dutch Calvinists preach the cultural mandate, but they simultaneously preach that it cannot be fulfilled. But biblical law is basic to the fulfillment of the cultural mandate. Therefore, the amillennialist who preaches the obligation of trying to fulfill the cultural mandate without biblical law thereby plunges himself either into the camp of the chaos cults (mystics, revolutionaries) or into the camp of the natural-law, common-ground philosophers. There are only three possibilities: revealed law, natural law, or chaos.

This leads me to my next point. It is somewhat speculative and may not be completely accurate. It is an idea which ought to be pursued, however, to see if it is accurate. I think that the reason why the philosophy of Herman Dooyeweerd, the Dutch philosopher of law, has been so successful in Dutch Calvinist intellectual circles is that Dooyeweerd's theory of sphere sovereignty—sphere laws that are *not* to be filled in by means of revealed, Old Testament law—is consistent with the amillennial (Dutch) version of the cultural mandate. Dooyeweerd's system and amillennialism are essentially antinomian. This is why I wrote my essay, "Social Antinomianism," in response to the Dooyeweerdian professor at the Free University of Amsterdam, A. Troost.¹⁰ Either the Dooyeweerdians wind {38} up as mystics, or else they try to create a

new kind of “common-ground philosophy” to link believers and unbelievers. It is Dooyeweerd’s outspoken resistance to Old Testament and New Testament authority over the *content* of his hypothesized sphere laws that has led his increasingly radical, increasingly antinomian followers into Antichristian paths. You cannot preach the cultural mandate and then turn around and deny the efficacy of biblical law in culture. Yet this is what all the Dutch adherents to common grace have done. They deny the cultural efficacy of biblical law, by necessity, because their eschatological interpretations have led them to conclude that there can be no external, cultural victory in time and on earth by faithful Christians. Epistemological self-consciousness will increase, but things only get worse over time.

Amillennial Calvinists will continue to be plagued by Dooyeweerdians, mystics, natural-law compromisers, and antinomians of all sorts until they finally abandon their amillennial eschatology. Biblical law must be preached. It must be seen as the tool of cultural reconstruction. It must be seen as operating *now*, in New Testament times. It must be seen that there is a relationship between covenantal faithfulness and obedience to law—that without obedience there is no faithfulness, no matter how emotional believers may become, or how sweet the gospel tastes (for a while). And there are blessings that follow obedience to God’s law-order. Amillennialists, by preaching eschatological impotence culturally, thereby immerse themselves in quicksand—the quicksand of antinomianism. Some sands are quicker than others. Eventually, they swallow up anyone so foolish as to try to walk through them. Antinomianism leads into the pits of impotence and retreat.

What is meant by epistemological self-consciousness? In what ways does the wheat resemble the tares? In what ways are they different? The angels saw the differences immediately. God restrained them from ripping up the tares. He wanted to preserve the soil—historical process. Therefore, the full development of both wheat and tares is permitted by God. What must be understood is that *the doctrine of special grace in history necessarily involves the doctrine of common grace*. As the Christians develop to maturity, they become more powerful. This is not a

10. Gary North, “Social Antinomianism,” in *An Introduction to Christian Economics* (Nutley, NJ: Craig Press, 1973), chap. 31.

straight-line development. There are times of locusts and blight and drought, both for Christians and for satanists (humanists). There is ebb and flow, but always there is direction to the movement. There is maturity. The creeds are improved. This, in turn, gives Christians cultural power. Is it any wonder that the Westminster Confession of Faith was drawn up at the high point of the Puritans' control of England? Are improvements in the creeds useless culturally? Do improvements in creeds and theological understanding necessarily lead to impotence culturally? Nonsense! It was the Reformation that made possible modern science and technology. {39}

On the other side of the field—indeed, right next to the wheat—the awareness of the unbelievers also increases. But they do not always become more convinced of their roots in chaos. The Renaissance was successful in swallowing up the fruits of the Reformation only to the extent that it was a pale reflection of the Reformation. The Renaissance leaders rapidly abandoned the magic-charged, demonically inspired magicians like Giordano Bruno.¹¹ They may have kept the humanism of a Bruno, but after 1600 the open commitment to the demonic receded. In its place came rationalism, Deism, and the logic of an orderly world. They used borrowed premises and gained power. So compelling was this vision of mathematically autonomous reality that Christians like Newton (who helped create respect for mathematical regularity) and Cotton Mather hailed the new science as essentially Christian. It was so close to Christian views of God's orderly being and the creation's reflection of His orderliness, that the Christians unhesitatingly embraced the new science.

What we see, then, is that the Christians were not fully self-conscious epistemologically, and neither were the pagans. In the time of the apostles, there was greater epistemological awareness among the leaders of both sides. The church was persecuted, and it won. Then there was a lapse into muddled thinking on both sides. The attempt, for example, of Julian the Apostate to revive paganism late in the fourth century was ludicrous—it was halfhearted paganism, at best. Two centuries earlier, Marcus Aurelius, a true philosopher-king in the tradition

11. On the magic of the early Renaissance, see Frances Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* (New York: Vintage, [1964] 1969).

of Plato, had been a major persecutor of Christians; Justin Martyr died under his years as emperor. But his debauched son, Commodus, was too busy with his hundreds of concubines of both sexes to bother about systematic persecutions. Who was more self-conscious, epistemologically? Aurelius still had the light of reason before him; his son was immersed in the religion of revolution—culturally impotent. He was more willing to follow the logic of his satanic faith.

If a modern investigator would like to see as fully consistent a pagan culture as one might imagine, he could visit the African tribe, the Ik. Colin Turnbull did, and his book, *The Mountain People* (1973), is a classic. He found almost total rebellion against law—family law, civic law, all law. Yet he also found a totally impotent, beaten people who were rapidly becoming extinct. They were harmless to the West because they were more self-consistent than the West's satanists.

Marxists, however, *are* a threat. They believe in linear history (officially, anyway—their system is at bottom cyclical, however¹²). {40} They believe in law. They believe in destiny. They believe in historical meaning. They believe in historical stages, though not ethically determined stages such as we find in Deuteronomy. They believe in science. They believe in literature, propaganda, and the power of the written word. They believe in higher education. In short, they have a philosophy which is a kind of perverse mirror image of Christian orthodoxy. They are dangerous, not because they are acting consistently with their ultimate philosophy of chaos, but because they limit the function of chaos to one area alone: the revolutionary transformation of bourgeois culture. (I am speaking here primarily of Soviet Marxists.) And where are they winning converts? In the increasingly impotent, increasingly existentialist, increasingly antinomian West. Until the West abandoned its remnants of Christian culture, Marxism could flourish only in the underdeveloped, basically pagan areas of the world. An essentially Western philosophy of optimism found converts among the intellectuals of the East and Africa and Latin America, who saw the fruitlessness of Confucian stagnation and relativism, the impotence of demonic ritual, or the dead-end nature of demon worship. Marxism is powerful only to the extent that it has the trappings of Augustinianism, coupled

12. Gary North, *Marx's Religion of Revolution* (Nutley, NJ: Craig Press, 1968), 100-1.

with subsidies, especially technological subsidies and long-term credit, from Western industry.

There is irony here. Marx believed that “scientific socialism” would triumph only in those nations that had experienced the full development of capitalism. He believed that in most cases (possibly excepting Russia), rural areas had to abandon feudalism and develop a fully capitalist culture before the socialist revolution would be successful. Yet it was primarily in the rural regions of the world that Marxist ideas and groups were first successful. The industrialized West was still too Christian or too pragmatic (recognizing that “honesty is the best policy”) to capitulate to the Marxists, except immediately following a lost war. Marxists have long dominated the faculties of Latin American universities, but not U.S. universities. In 1964, for example, there were not half a dozen outspoken Marxist economists teaching in American universities (and possibly as few as one, Stanford’s Paul Baran). Since 1965, however, New Left scholars of a Marxist persuasion have become a force to be reckoned with in all the social sciences. The skepticism, pessimism, relativism, and irrelevance of modern “neutral” education have left faculties without an adequate defense against confident, shrill, vociferous Marxists, primarily young Marxists, who began to appear on the campuses after 1964. Epistemological rot has left the establishment campus liberals with little more than tenure to protect them. Since 1965, Marxism has made more inroads among the young intellectuals of the industrialized West than at any time since the 1930s—an earlier era of pessimism and skepticism about established values and traditions. Marxists are successful among savages, whether in {41} Africa or at Harvard—epistemological savages. Marxism offers an alternative to despair. It has the trappings of optimism. It has the trappings of Christianity. It is still a nineteenth-century system, drawing on the intellectual capital of a more Christian intellectual universe. These trappings of Christian order are the source of Marxism’s influence in an increasingly relativistic world.

In the last days, the satanists will still have the trappings of Christian order about them. Satan has to sit on God’s lap, so to speak, in order to slap His face—or try to. Satan cannot be consistent to his own philosophy of autonomous order and still be a threat to God. An autonomous order leads to chaos and impotence. He knows that there is no neutral

ground in philosophy. He knew Adam and Eve would die spiritually on the day that they ate the fruit. He is a good enough theologian to know that there is one God, and he and his host tremble at the thought (James 2:19). When demonic men take seriously his lies about the nature of reality, they become impotent, sliding off (or nearly off) God's lap. It is when satanists realize that Satan's official philosophy of chaos and antinomian lawlessness is a *lie* that they become dangerous. (Marxists, once again, are more dangerous to America than are the Ik.) They learn more of the truth, but they pervert it and try to use it against God's people.

Thus, the biblical meaning of epistemological self-consciousness is not that the satanist becomes consistent with Satan's official philosophy (chaos), but rather that Satan's host becomes consistent with what Satan *really* believes: order, law, and power are the product of God's order—that hated order. They learn to use law and order to build an army of conquest. In short, *they use common grace*—knowledge of the truth—to *pervert the truth and to attack God's people*. They turn from a false knowledge offered to them by Satan, and they adopt a perverted form of truth to use in their rebellious plans. They *mature*, in other words. Or, as C. S. Lewis has put into the mouth of his fictitious character, the senior devil Screwtape, when materialists finally believe in Satan but not in God, then the war is over. Not quite; when they believe in God, know He is going to win, and nevertheless strike out in fury—not blind fury, but *fully self-conscious fury*—at the works of God, *then* the war is over.

How, then, can we cooperate with such men? Simply on the basis of common grace. *Common grace has not yet fully developed*. Thus, some satanists respond to the knowledge of God's law written in their hearts. They have a large degree of knowledge about God's creation, but they are not yet willing to strike out against that world. They have knowledge through common grace, but they do not yet see what this means for their own actions. (To some extent, the Communists see, but they have not yet followed through.) The essence of Adam's rebellion was not intellectual; it was *ethical*. No one has argued this more forcefully than Van Til. {42} Thus, the mere addition of knowledge to or by the unregenerate man is not the essence of his status before God. He can have knowledge. It can be applied to God's creation and produce bene-

ficial results (and also holocaust). What of the *special curse*? What is his ethical relation to God? Common grace increases the unregenerate man's special curse. When common grace increases to its maximum, the special curse of God is revealed: total rebellion of man against the *truth* of God and *in terms of the common grace*—knowledge, power, wealth, prestige, etc.—of God, leading to final judgment. God does remove part of His restraint at the very end: the restraint on suicidal destruction. He allows them to achieve that death which they love (Prov. 8:36b). But they still have power and wealth, as in the Babylonian Empire the night it fell.

What can we conclude, then? There is no cooperation between the tribe of the Ik and the people of God. The Ik have nothing to offer the West. What can they contribute to Christians? They are a footnote, at best—a testimony to the impotence of Satan's official philosophy of chaos. Can we (not should we, but can we) cooperate with the Soviets? Of course. For one thing, they can teach us a great deal about military tactics and psychological warfare. They have taught us about brainwashing and its effects. We must know how such things work and how to avoid them. They have made some discoveries in pure science that are no doubt impressive, although they are almost completely dependent upon Western technology to put their discoveries into production. Pagans can teach us about physics, mathematics, chemistry, and many other topics. How is this possible? Because common grace has increased. They had several centuries of leadership from Christians, as well as Enlightenment figures who adopted a philosophy of coherence that at least resembled the Christian doctrine of providence. They cannot hold the culture together in terms of their philosophy of chaos—Satan's official viewpoint—but they still can make important discoveries. They use borrowed capital, in every sense.

When there is Christian revival and the preaching and application of the whole counsel of God, then Christians can once again take the position of real leadership. The unbelievers also can make contributions to the subduing of the earth because they will be called back to the work of the law written in their hearts. Common grace will increase throughout the world. But Christians must be extremely careful to watch for signs of ethical deviation from those who seemingly are useful coworkers in the kingdom. There can be cooperation for external

goals—the fulfilling of the cultural mandate which was given to all men—but not in the realm of ethics. We must watch the Soviets to see how *not* to build a society. We must construct countermeasures to their offenses. We must not adopt their view of proletarian ethics, even though their chess players or mathematicians may show us a great deal. The law of God as revealed {43} in the Bible must be dominant, not the work of the law written in the hearts of the unrighteous. The way to cooperate is on the basis of biblical law. The law tells us of the limitations on man. It keeps us humble before God and dominant over nature. We shall determine the accuracy and usefulness of the works of unregenerate men who are exercising their God-given talents, working out their damnation with fear and trembling.

Strangers within the gates were given many of the benefits of common grace—God’s response to the conversion of the Hebrews. They received full legal protection in Hebrew courts (Ex. 22:21; 23:9; Deut. 24:17). They were not permitted to eat special holy foods (Ex. 29:33; Lev. 22:10), thereby sealing them off from the religious celebrations of the temple. But they were part of the feast of the tithe, a celebration before the Lord (Deut. 14:22–29). Thus, they were beneficiaries of the civil order that God established for His people. They also could produce goods and services in confidence that the fruits of their labor would not be confiscated from them by a lawless civil government. This made everyone richer, for all men in the community could work out the terms of the cultural mandate.

We are told that the natural man does not receive the things of the spirit (1 Cor. 2:14–16). We are told that God’s wisdom is seen as foolishness by the unregenerate (1 Cor. 1:18–21). We are told to beware, “lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ” (Col. 2:8). There is an unbridgeable separation philosophically between unbelievers and believers. They begin with different starting points: chaos vs. creation, God vs. man. Only common grace can reduce the conflict *in application* between pagan and Christian philosophy. The ethical rebellion of the unregenerate lies beneath the surface, smoldering, ready to flare up in wrath, but he is restrained by God and God’s law. He needs the power that law provides. Therefore, he assents to some of the principles of applied biblical law and conforms himself

to part of the work of the law that is written on his heart. But on first principles, he cannot agree. And even near the end, when men may confess the existence of one God and tremble at the thought, they will not submit their egos to that God. They will fight to the death—to the second death—to deny the claims that the God of the Bible has over every part of their being.

Thus, there can be cooperation in the subduing of the earth. But Christians must set forth the strategy and the tactics. The unregenerate man will be like a paid consultant; he will provide his talents, but the Lord will build the culture.

We cannot argue from common grace to common ground. We cannot do so because with the increase of common grace we come closer to that final rebellion in all its satanic might. Common grace combines the efforts {44} of men in the subduing of the earth, but Christians work for the glory of God openly, while the unregenerate work (officially) for the glory of man or the glory of Satan. They do, in fact, work to the glory of God, for on that last day every knee shall bow to Him (Phil. 2:10). The wealth of the wicked is laid up for the just (Prov. 13:22). So there are no common facts, ethically speaking. At the last day, when their rebellion begins, all of Satan's host will know about the facts of God's world, for common grace will be at its peak. Nevertheless, they turn their backs on God and rebel. All facts are interpreted facts, and the *interpretation*, not the facts as such—there are no “facts as such”—is what separates the lost from the elect. Inevitably, the natural man *holds back* (actively suppresses) the truth in unrighteousness (Rom. 1:18).¹³ No philosophical “proofs” of God (other than a proof which begins by assuming the existence of the God revealed in the Bible) are valid, and even the assumption of the existence of the God of the Bible is not sufficient to save a man's soul.¹⁴ Only God can do that (John 6:44). There is no common ground philosophically, only metaphysically. We are made in God's image by a common Creator (Acts

13. Murray, *Romans*, commenting on Romans 1:18.

14. Van Til, *The Defense of the Faith* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1963), attacks the traditional Roman Catholic and Arminian proofs of God. They do not prove the God of the Bible, he argues, only a finite God of the human mind.

17:24–31). Every man knows this. We can, as men, only remind all men of what they know. God uses that knowledge to redeem men.

The unbeliever uses *borrowed intellectual capital* to reason correctly—correctly in the sense of being able to use that knowledge as a tool to subdue the earth, not in the sense of knowing God as an adopted son knows Him. His conclusions can correspond to external reality sufficiently to allow him to work out his rebellious faith to even greater destruction than if he had not had accurate knowledge (Luke 12:47–48). He “knows” somehow that “2 plus 2 equals 4,” and also that this fact of mental symmetry can be used to cause desired effects in the external realm of nature. Why this mental symmetry should exist, and why it should bear any relation to the external realm of nature, is unexplainable by the knowledge of natural man, a fact admitted by Nobel prize-winning physicist, Eugene Wigner.¹⁵ Christians, having the doctrine of creation, can explain both. So the unbeliever uses borrowed intellectual capital at every step. Christians can use some of his work (by checking his findings against the revelation in the Bible), and the unbeliever can use the work of Christians. {45} The earth will be subdued. The closer the unbeliever’s presuppositions are to those revealed in the Bible (such as the conservative economist’s assumption of the fact of economic scarcity, corresponding to Gen. 3:17–19), the more likely that the discoveries made in terms of that assumption will be useful. By useful, I mean useful in the common task of all man, subduing the earth. Thus, there can be cooperation between Christians and non-Christians.

Conclusion

Unbelievers appear to be culturally dominant today. Believers have retreated into antinomian pietism and pessimism, for they have abandoned faith in the two features of Christian social philosophy that make progress possible: 1) the dynamic of *eschatological optimism*, and

15. Eugene Wigner, “The Unreasonable Effectiveness of Mathematics in the Natural Sciences,” *Communications on Pure and Applied Mathematics* 13 (1960):1–14. See also Vern Poythress, “A Biblical View of Mathematics,” in Gary North ed., *Foundations of Christian Scholarship* (Vallecito, CA: Ross House Books, 1976), chap. 9. See also his essay in *The Journal of Christian Reconstruction* 1 (Summer 1974).

2) the tool of the cultural mandate, *biblical law*. We should conclude, then, that either the dissolution of culture is at hand (for the common grace of the unregenerate cannot long be sustained without leadership in the realm of culture from the regenerate), or else the regenerate must regain sight of their lost truths: postmillennialism and biblical law. For common grace to continue, and for external cooperation between believers and unbelievers to be fruitful or even possible, Christians must call the external culture's guidelines back to God's law. They must regain the leadership they forfeited to the speculations of self-proclaimed "reasonable" apostates. If this is not done, then we will slide back once more, until the unbelievers resemble the Ik and the Christians can begin the process of cultural domination once more. For common grace to continue to increase, it must be sustained by special grace. Either unbelievers will be converted, or leadership will flow back toward the Christians. If neither happens, we will return eventually to barbarism.

Understandably, I pray for the regeneration of the ungodly *and* the rediscovery of biblical law and accurate biblical eschatology on the part of present Christians and future converts. Whether we will see such a revival in our day is unknown to me. There are reasons to believe that it can and will happen. There are also reasons to doubt such optimism. The Lord knows.

We must abandon antinomianism and eschatologies that are inherently antinomian. We must call men back to faith in the God of the whole Bible. We must affirm that in the plan of God there will come a day of increased self-awareness, when men will call churls churlish and liberal men gracious (Isa. 32). This will be a day of great external blessings—the greatest in history. Long ages of such self-awareness unfold before us. And at the end of time comes a generation of rebels who know churls from liberals and strike out against the godly. They will lose the war.

Therefore, *common grace* is essentially *future grace*. There is an ebb and flow throughout history, but essentially it is future grace. It must not {46} be seen as essentially prior or earlier grace. Only amillennialists can hold to such a position—antinomian amillennialists at that. The final judgment appears at the end of time against the backdrop of common grace. The *common curse* will be at its *lowest* point, the pre-

lude to *special cursing* of eternal duration. The final judgment comes, just as the great flood came, against a background of God's external benefits to mankind in general. The iniquity of the Amorites will at last be full.

Does the postmillennialist believe that there will be faith in general on earth when Christ appears? Not if he understands the implications of the doctrine of common grace. Does he expect the whole earth to be destroyed by the unbelieving rebels before Christ strikes them dead—doubly dead? No. The judgment comes before they can do their work. Common grace is extended to allow unbelievers to fill up their cup of wrath. They are vessels of wrath. Therefore, the fulfilling of the terms of the cultural mandate through common grace is the final step in the process of filling up these vessels of wrath. The vessels of grace, believers, will also be filled. Everything is full. Will God destroy His preliminary down payment on the New Heavens and the New Earth? Will God erase the sign that His word has been obeyed, that the cultural mandate has been fulfilled? Will Satan, that great destroyer, have the joy of seeing God's word thwarted, his handiwork torn down by Satan's very hordes? The amillennialist answers yes. The postmillennialist must deny it with all his strength. There is continuity in life, despite discontinuities. The wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just. Satan would like to burn God's field, but he cannot. The tares and wheat grow to maturity, and then the reapers go out to harvest the wheat, cutting away the chaff and tossing the chaff into the fire. Satan would like to turn back the crack of doom, return to ground zero, return to the garden of Eden, when the cultural mandate was first given. The fulfillment of the cultural mandate is the final act of Satan that is positive—an extension of common grace. After that, common grace becomes malevolent—absolutely malevolent—as Satan uses the last of his time and the last of his power to strike out against God's people. When he uses his gifts to become finally, totally destructive, he is cut down from above. *This final culmination of common grace is Satan's crack of doom.*

And the meek—meek before God, active toward His creation—shall at last inherit the earth. A renewed earth and renewed heaven is the final payment by God the Father to His Son and to those He has given to His Son. This is the postmillennial hope.

Postscript

By now, I have alienated every known Christian group. I have alienated the remaining Christian Reformed Church members who are orthodox by siding with the Protestant Reformed Church against Point 1 of the 1924 Synod. {47} There is no favor in God's common grace. I have alienated the Protestant Reformed Church by arguing for postmillennialism. I have alienated the premillennialists by arguing that the separation between wheat and tares must come at the end of history, not a thousand years before the end (or, in the dispensational, pretribulational premillennial framework, 1007 years before). I have alienated postmillennial pietists who read and delight in the works of Jonathan Edwards by arguing that Edwards's tradition was destructive to biblical law in 1740 and still is. It leads nowhere unless it matures and adopts the concept of biblical law as a tool of victory. I have alienated the Bible Presbyterian Church, since its leaders deny the cultural mandate. Have I missed anyone? Oh, yes, I have alienated postmillennial Arminians (if such there be) by arguing that the rebels in the last day are not backslidden Christians.

Having accomplished this, I hope that others will follow through on the outline I have sketched relating common grace, eschatology, and biblical law. Let those few who take this essay seriously avoid the theological land mines that still clutter up the landscape. There are refinements that must be made, implications that must be discovered and then worked out. I hope that my contribution will make other men's tasks that much easier.

THE *PRIMA FACIE* ACCEPTABILITY OF POSTMILLENNIALISM

Greg L. Bahnsen

In this article I discuss the recent decline in the espousal of postmillennialism, defend it as a basic system of theological thought against certain misguided criticisms, elaborate its key tenet in contrast to amillennialism and premillennialism, and supply a general defense of its acceptability in the light of the history of Reformed theology. What shall be demonstrated is that its recent unpopularity has been unjustified and that the position must be taken quite seriously by all who adhere to Reformation Christianity.

The Recession of Adherence to Postmillennialism

The years shortly after the turn of the twentieth century witnessed a general decline in the published advocacy of postmillennial eschatology. Conspicuous among the influences generating this popular disenchantment were three factors, best understood in their unrefined and early stages in the nineteenth century.

Liberalism

First, the 1800s brought the entrenchment of rationalistic higher criticism of Scripture, and consequently skepticism regarding Christian dogma, in the academic centers of theology. Late seventeenth-century thought was characterized by the Enlightenment's insistence on the intellectual standard of autonomous reason (i.e., scholarship uncontrolled by biblical presuppositions). The effects of this are evident in early eighteenth-century Deism and critical "lives of Jesus" (e.g., by Reimarus and Paulus) which aimed to eradicate belief in genuine miracles or supernatural intervention in the world, and to discredit the reliability of Scripture as a historical record. Toward the end of the century, Kant taught that a genuinely transcendent God could have no connection with the phenomenal world of time and space. He said that the historical statements of Scripture die with the events themselves;

thus, we must go beyond the text in order to find abiding moral-doctrinal value. Such an outlook opens the door completely to a naturalistic and critical treatment of the Bible in its historical teachings (whether past or future). When we come to the nineteenth century, we {49} find higher criticism fostered by men working under the general influence of Kant and Hegel. In the 1830s Strauss introduced the mythological interpretation of Scripture. Later Holtzmann set theological *teaching* over against religious *experience* in the interpretation of biblical writers. Wrede took things a step further by maintaining that the scriptural documents are not reliable historical works but rather *theologized reconstructions*. The overall outcome was the discrediting of Scripture's historical accuracy and the undermining of the objectivity of its theology. Ernst Troeltsch explained the critical approach to the Bible, saying that any occurrence must be understood in terms of its probable, *immanent*, historical antecedents; thus is assured the naturalistic autonomy of the historian in reconstructing the past and interpreting the future. Such an approach challenged confidence in anything Scripture (as a supernatural, infallible, verbal revelation) had to say, including its philosophy of history. Postmillennialism, because of its assumptions of a sovereign God, resurrected Savior, and powerfully present Spirit, was clearly not congenial with the assumptions of criticism.

Evolutionary Progressivism

As a *second* factor, we should think back upon the influence of Kant and Hegel mentioned above. In his early book, *Idea of a Universal History*, Kant had taught that a "secret plan" inherent in nature drives man to build a rational, international, civil order. An even bolder metaphysical account of inevitable progress in the historical process was given in Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* and throughout his dialectical philosophy. According to Hegel, the theme of history is the actualization of the Absolute in time; the self-development of Spirit is seen in the successive types of social organizations and the careers of world-historical peoples. The history of the human race, which follows its own inherent course of development embodying a rational principle, is toward greater freedom, the highest form of which could be found in the Germanic world, romanticism, and maintenance by the state of the orders and social groups of civilized life.

Naturalistic, humanistic optimism about historical progress was given its most popular boost, however, in Charles Darwin's theory of evolution as found in his 1859 bestseller, *The Origin of Species*. Reception of this doctrine guaranteed the initial, uncritical adoption of secular optimism. With theological leaders approving of the interpretation and evaluation of Scriptures in the light of autonomous research and philosophy, it was quite natural that evolutionary speculation came to be *read into* the Bible's teaching on creation and history. Moreover, with the reduction of religion and revelation to matters of morality (under the influence of Kant), higher critics and liberals could deprecate orthodox *theology* while still maintaining {50} an understandable interest in the personal *ethics* and social reform fostered by Scripture.

These combined elements in turn produced the *secularization* of conservative, supernaturalistic, biblical postmillennialism. The result was evident in the Christian Socialist movement in England and the social gospel movement in America. Walter Rauschenbusch, for example, in his *A Theology for the Social Gospel*, spoke of the "millennium" coming through natural development as an ideal society expressing the communal brotherhood of man. Shirley Jackson Case's *The Millennial Hope* spoke of the long process of humanity evolving and rising higher in the scale of civilization and attainment; the world is constantly growing better, society's ills are to be remedied by education and legislation, and the responsibility for bringing in the millennium is man's own—to be produced in his own strength. This modernistic perversion of God's truth, this antithesis to redemptive revelation and supernatural salvation, called for strenuous and godly opposition by orthodox churchmen. However, in their zeal to stand against the liberal tide, large numbers of Christians threw the baby out with the bathwater. In disdain for the evolutionary social gospel, sincere believers were led to reject Christian social concern for an exclusively internal or *other-worldly* religion, and to substitute for the earlier belief in a progressive triumph of Christ's kingdom in the world, a new, *pessimistic* catastrophism with respect to the course of history.

Dispensationalism

The church might have had the doctrinal strength necessary to throw off critical and modernist incursion, had not a *third* factor been subverting its doctrinal and working strength. This third factor in the

decline of postmillennialism was the rise and popularization of dispensational, pretribulational rapturism. As late as 1813, the English missionary leader, David Bogue, could speak of premillennialism as an astonishing “aberration” of previous days. However, that strictly minority position had recently been rekindled by numerous eschatological predictions and alleged prophetic fulfillments at the time of the French Revolution and the rise of Napoleon. When Napoleon marched on Rome, some thought the Man of Sin was about to be deposed. George Faber saw Napoleon himself as “the king of the North” (from Daniel 11), James Bicheno viewed Louis XIV as the Beast (of Revelation 13), and Samuel Horsley took Napoleon to be the Antichrist and Voltaire the “mystery of iniquity.” Imaginations flourished. William Miller predicted that Christ would return in 1843.

In 1825 Edward Irving, one time assistant to Thomas Chalmers in Glasgow, began to preach that Christ’s premillennial return was *imminent* (a doctrine he learned from the layman, Hatley Frere). When a Roman Catholic priest in South America, Manuel Lacunza, wrote *The Coming {51} of the Messiah in Glory and Majesty* under the pseudonym of an allegedly converted Jew, Ben Ezra, Irving was attracted to the premillennialism of the treatise. In 1826 he published an edition of the English translation with his own lengthy introductory essay. Irving gained great popularity and carried his eschatology to Scotland in 1828 and 1829, where evangelical ministers received his teaching coolly; Chalmers characterized Irving’s doctrine as woeful, mystical, pernicious, and violently allegorical. At the turn of the decade, Irving was endorsing the revival of charismatic gifts and subverting the doctrine of Christ’s sinless nature and the doctrine of imputed righteousness. Being deposed from the Church of Scotland, Irving founded the Catholic Apostolic Church in 1832, dying two years later.

What is important for our purposes is to see that premillennialism, which was a minor position in 1813, gained a significant following by the 1830s. This was fostered by the Albury Park prophetic meetings, as well as those at Powerscourt. Henry Drummond opened his home for conferences on prophecy between 1826 and 1830, where Irving set forth his system of thought. At the Irish estate of Lady Powerscourt, Irving continued his conferences between 1831 and 1833. J. N. Darby, a man who would emerge as a leader in this eschatological school of

thought, was present at the 1831 Powerscourt meeting. Previously, in 1828, Darby had begun meeting with the Brethren movement, being disaffected with the established church. In premillennialism he found the explanation for the church's defects: namely, decline is inevitable and judgment for the world is close at hand. The main outline of Darby's premillennialism was inherited from Irving's teaching. However, Darby went on to embellish it with strict distinctions among Israel, the church, and the millennial Jews, as well as a dispensational outlook on history (namely, God has utilized various plans for dealing with man; when one fails, God introduces a new one). In addition, Darby published the doctrine that the church would be secretly raptured prior to the Great Tribulation, which would afflict the world as a precursor to Christ's return in judgment and the establishment of the millennium on earth. This novel teaching was apparently first advanced in the studies made at the Albury Conferences, perhaps by Irving himself; others claim that it originated in a tongue utterance by a member of Irving's church, and yet others attribute it to prophetic vision experienced by a Scottish woman, Margaret Macdonald. Whatever the specific source, the relevant point is that the belief appeared and gained popularity around 1830, being popularized in the publication of Darby's dispensational premillennialism.

The effect of the teachings rising out of these years was a drastic pessimism which precluded the courage to face liberal defections (indeed, such defections were expected and inevitable) or to undertake long-term projects for the church. For example, F. W. Newton declared that the imminent return of Christ "totally forbids all working for earthly objects distant {52} in time." Social and political endeavor was no longer seen as legitimate; note, for example, Zahn's criticism of Calvin because "he considered it his task to make the secular authorities submissive to his interpretation of the Divine commandments." Missions had to abandon the aim of establishing Christian institutions and concentrate simply on the conversion of individual souls, as A. A. Hodge astutely observed of premillennial strategy. The visible church was depreciated, its pastoral office deemed unnecessary, and its historic doctrine disregarded. In Geneva, 1840, Darby declared that restoration is impossible in this dispensation, that it is delusive to expect the earth to be filled with the knowledge of the Lord prior to His advent, and

that we must expect a constant progression of evil.¹⁶ Hope was cut out of the heart of Christendom. As one might expect, such pessimistic predictions as to the value and effect of the church on earth tended to become self-fulfilling prophecies.

Darby's dispensational, pretribulational rapturism was enhanced in America by his visit here at the request of D. L. Moody, who later founded a college dedicated to such thinking. It was also advanced in the vastly popular Prophecy Conference movement, especially in the first decade of this century. However, dispensational premillennialism, with its decided emphasis upon the rapture, a distinction between Israel and the church (as well as law and grace), and the inevitably meager results of the church's preaching of the gospel in the world, was given its greatest impetus by the publication of the *Scofield Reference Bible* in 1909. C. I. Scofield had been greatly affected by Darby's writings, and through his reference notes the system gained widespread popularity. Events which soon followed in world history convinced advocates of this theory that Scripture had rightly been interpreted as teaching advancing lawlessness and the imminent end of the age.

Thus, the three factors of *liberalism*, *evolutionary progressivism*, and *dispensationalism* came to exert simultaneous pressure on Christendom in the early twentieth century, resulting in the unpopularity of biblical postmillennialism. People were now inclined to distrust progressive hopes (if they were fundamentalists) or discount biblical predictions for history (if they were liberals). Furthermore, believers and unbelievers alike had been trained to interpret the Bible in terms of *extrabiblical* considerations (secular scholarship for the modernists, world events for the dispensationalists). The combined outcome was a definite skepticism about the church's progress {53} on earth prior to the second coming of Christ in glory; the outcome was also a tendency to do "newspaper exegesis" of the Scriptures. Given this setting, and the

16. For the discussion of the rise of pretribulational rapturism see J. A. De Jong, *As the Waters Cover the Sea: Millennial Expectations in the Rise of Anglo-American Missions 1640–1810* (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1970), 163–64, 191–92; Iain H. Murray, *The Puritan Hope: A Study in Revival and the Interpretation of Prophecy* (London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1971), 187–206, 284–87; cf. Dave MacPherson, *The Unbelievable Pre-Trib Origin* (Kansas City: Heart of America Bible Society, 1973), *passim*.

propagation of secularized theology along with pretribulational pessimism, conservative postmillennialism was bound to suffer abuse.

Misguided Ground for Rejecting Postmillennialism

It must be observed that postmillennialism lost favor (and today remains held in disfavor) with conservative theologians for manifestly unorthodox and insufficient reasons. Extrabiblical reasoning, as well as lazy or poor scholarship, has intruded itself into Christian discussions of eschatology.

Newspaper Exegesis

Alva J. McClain says of postmillennialism: “This optimistic theory of human progress had much of its own way for the half-century ending in World War I of 1914. After that the foundations were badly shaken; prop after prop went down, until today the whole theory is under attack from every side. Devout Postmillennialism has virtually disappeared.”¹⁷ J. Barton Payne’s massive *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy* mentions postmillennialism only once, and that merely in a footnote which parenthetically declares that “two world wars killed this optimism.”¹⁸ Merrill F. Unger dismisses postmillennialism in short order, declaring, “This theory, largely disproved by the progress of history, is practically a dead issue.”¹⁹ John F. Walvoord tells us that “in eschatology the trend away from postmillennialism became almost a rout with the advent of World War II” because it forced upon Christians “a realistic appraisal of the decline of the church in its power and influence.”²⁰ Hence he says that “in the twentieth century the course of history, progress in Biblical studies, and the changing attitude of philosophy arrested its progress and brought about its apparent discard by all schools of theology. Postmillennialism is not a current issue in millena-

17. “Premillennialism as a Philosophy of History,” in W. Culbertson and H. B. Centz, eds., *Understanding the Times* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1956), 22.

18. *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), 596.

19. “Millennium,” *Unger’s Bible Dictionary*, rev. ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1961), 739.

20. John F. Walvoord, *The Millennial Kingdom* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1959), 9.

rianism.”²¹ He accuses it of failing to fit the facts of current history, of being unrealistic, and of being outmoded and out of step.²² Jay Adams recognizes postmillennialism as a “dead issue” with conservative scholars, since it predicts a golden age while the world awaits momentary destruction; he agrees with the above authors that the “advent of two {54} World Wars ... virtually rang the death knell upon conservative postmillennialism.”²³ Adams apparently offers his own opinion that Boettner’s long-range postmillennialism “is too difficult to grant when Christians must face the fact of hydrogen bombs in the hands of depraved humanity.”²⁴ Hal Lindsey’s *The Late Great Planet Earth* captures well the attitude of these previous writers, stating that “there used to be” a group called “postmillennialists” who were greatly disheartened by World War I and virtually wiped out by World War II. Lindsey’s (poorly researched) conclusion is this: “No self-respecting scholar who looks at the world conditions and the accelerating decline of Christian influence today is a ‘postmillennialist.’”²⁵

The sad fact is that our Christian brothers mentioned above should be embarrassed by what they have written and concluded; the attitude and reasoning they have set forth is woefully lacking as respectable Christian scholarship. By means of such newspaper exegesis, one could *just as well discount the return of Christ in glory*, saying, “where is the promise of his coming?” (cf. 2 Peter 3:1–4). This *reductio ad absurdum* must be reckoned with. The fact that an era of gospel prosperity and world peace has not yet arrived would no more disprove the Bible’s teaching that such an era shall be realized (in the power of God’s Spirit and the faithfulness of Christ’s church to its great commission) than the fact that Christ has not yet returned disproves the Bible’s teaching that such an event shall take place!

21. *Ibid.*, 18.

22. *Ibid.*, 35–36.

23. Jay E. Adams, *The Time Is at Hand* (Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1970), 2.

24. *Ibid.*, 4.

25. Hal Lindsey (with C. C. Carlson), *The Late Great Planet Earth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1970), 176.

The only question is *whether* the *Bible* actually teaches these things. If it does, then “let God be true but every man a liar” (Rom. 3:4). The newspaper has no prerogative to challenge God’s word of truth. Nor do those who read the newspapers. As faithful disciples of Christ, we are to trust God as the sovereign controller over human history, “who works all things after the counsel of His own will” (Eph. 1:11), “declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose’ ” (Isa. 46:10), so that “none can stay his hand” (Dan. 4:35). With the Psalmist we should declare, “Whatever the Lord pleases, he does, in heaven and on earth” (115:3). If God says something is to happen, then it shall happen; it is to our discredit if we are men of little faith with respect to his promises.

Just imagine the following scenario: devout Simeon is in the temple looking for the consolation of Israel (cf. Luke 2), when a popular Jewish theologian comes in and tells him, “Simeon, your hope of a personal Messiah is a dead issue, an idealistic anachronism. Your unrealistic theory {55} has been disproved by the course of history and discarded by all schools; it is out of date, outmoded, and no longer a current issue. No self-respecting scholar who looks at the world conditions and remembers the four hundred years of silence from God believes as you do; prop after prop has gone down, and the events that have come upon our nation have killed the optimism of your theory.” Would any conservative theologian say that Simeon’s belief had been refuted or incapacitated by such considerations? Would any think him justified in no longer treating it as a vital position worthy of scriptural consideration? Of course not. Likewise biblical postmillennialism cannot be thus dismissed.

Misrepresentation

Postmillennialism has not only been discarded in this century on clearly unorthodox grounds; it has also been made a straw man so that modern advocates of the other schools of interpretation can easily knock it down and get on to other interests. The worst possible interpretation is put on postmillennial tenets, or the eccentric aspect of some postmillennial writer’s position is set forth as representing the basic school of thought. As instances of these procedures we can note the following. Hal Lindsey says that postmillennialists believe in the

inherent goodness of man,²⁶ and Walvoord says that the position could not resist the trend toward liberalism.²⁷ He also accuses it of not seeing the kingdom as consummated by the Second Advent.²⁸ William E. Cox claims that postmillennialism is characterized by a literal interpretation of Revelation 20.²⁹ Adams portrays the postmillennialist as unable to conceive of the millennium as coextensive with the church age or as a present reality,³⁰ for he (according to Adams) must see it as exclusively future—a golden age just around the corner.³¹ Finally, it is popularly thought and taught that postmillennialism maintains that there is an unbroken progression toward righteousness in history—that the world is perceptibly getting better and better all the time—until a utopian age is reached. Geerhardus Vos portrays the postmillennialist as looking for “ideal perfection” when “every individual” will be converted, and some will become “sinless individuals.”³² {56} All of the above claims are simply inaccurate. The Calvinist, Loraine Boettner, certainly does not believe in man’s inherent goodness, and B. B. Warfield can hardly be accused of not resisting liberalism. That A. A. Hodge did not see the second coming of Christ as the great day of consummation is preposterous. J. Marcellus Kik and many others insisted on a figurative interpretation of Revelation 20. Certain sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Dutch theologians, as well as Jonathan Edwards and E. W. Hengstenberg, were all postmillennialists who saw the millennium as a present reality in their own days. David Brown, James H. Snowden, B. B. Warfield, and Marcellus Kik among others saw the millennium as coeval with the interadventual age (in which there would be progressive growth for the church in numbers and influence). Charles

26. *Ibid.*

27. Walvoord, *Millennial Kingdom*, 34.

28. *Ibid.*, 31.

29. William E. Cox, *Amillennialism Today* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1966), 64.

30. Adams, *Time*, 9–10; as we will see below, the possibility of such a claim rests merely on a terminological issue: does the word “millennium” denote the same thing as “kingdom (church) age” or more pointedly a segment of the latter? Either way, Christ’s reign has been realized, and the millennium is *not* set in contrast to the church age.

31. *Ibid.*, 2, 41.

32. *Outline of Notes on New Testament Biblical Theology*, 89–90.

Hodge, Snowden, and Boettner were all postmillennialists who explained that the growth of Christ's kingdom in the world suffers periodic crises, and Boettner has especially stressed the fact that it grows by imperceptible degrees over a long period. Finally, anyone who thinks of postmillennialism as a utopian position misunderstands one or the other in their historically essential principles. Indeed, a chapter in Boettner's book, *The Millennium*, is entitled, "The Millennium not a Perfect or Sinless State," contrary to the misrepresentations of Vos. Nobody has ever propounded, in the name of evangelical postmillennialism, what Vos claimed (*least* of all his Princeton colleagues or predecessors). Therefore, the recent opponents of postmillennialism have not been fair to its genuine distinctives, but rather have misrepresented it as a general category of interpretation. This surely provides no firm ground for rejecting the position.

Two-edged Criticisms

A third infelicitous way in which postmillennialism has been disposed of is by means of (allegedly) critical considerations which in fact apply *as much* to the *other* eschatological positions as to postmillennialism. For example, it has been contended that there is incoherence among various postmillennialists rather than a unified theology, and in connection with this criticism it is observed that postmillennialism is adhered to by extremely divergent theological schools.³³ However, this is just as true of amillennialism and premillennialism; numerous details differ among proponents of these positions (indeed, one is inclined to think that they are more extensive and significant differences than those among postmillennialists), but this says nothing about the truth of their central tenets. Then again, postmillennialism is sometimes thought to be falsified through imputing guilt to it by association, observing that it has sometimes been held in some form by Unitarians and liberals. But "premillennialism" has {57} been advocated by the apostate Jews and modern cultists, and "amillennialism" is endorsed by neo-orthodox dialectical theology. The fact that there are functional similarities between various evangelical and heretical theologians does not in itself settle the key question of which position is taught by God's word; *whichever* millennial position is *scriptural*, it is

33. Walvoord, *Millennial Kingdom*, 23, 34, 36.

nonetheless subject to misuse and misappropriation. Hence the use of one of these positions by an unorthodox writer does nothing in itself to discredit the position.

A further criticism which cannot be applied uniquely to postmillennialism is that it interprets biblical prophecy both figuratively³⁴ and literally.³⁵ The premillennialists see symbolic interpretation as a failure of nerve, and amillennialists take literal understanding of prophecy as crude and insensitive. But the fact remains that none of the three schools interprets biblical prophecy exclusively in either a literal or figurative fashion. (And, by the way, nobody really adheres to the rule, "Literal where possible," as is evident from the respective treatments of the beast of Revelation, which *could* possibly be a literal monster but obviously is not.) *All three* schools end up finding *both* kinds of literature in the prophetic passages, and it is dishonest to give an opposite impression. If anything, the fact that postmillennialism is seen as too literal by amillennialists and too figurative by premillennialists perhaps suggests (certainly does not prove) that it alone has maintained a proper balance. The upshot is this: the charge of subjective spiritualization or hyperliteralism against any of the three eschatological positions cannot be settled *in general*; rather, the opponents must get down to hand-to-hand exegetical combat on *particular* passages and phrases.

Premature Charges

Finally, in addition to the misguided and failed attempts to dismiss postmillennialism based on (1) newspaper exegesis, (2) misrepresentation, and (3) the application of two-edged criticism (which applies to the critic as well as the position criticized), there are current-day charges against the position which are *premature or unfounded*. To this category belongs the allegation that postmillennialism is founded on Old Testament passages rather than New Testament evidence,³⁶ that the New Testament knows nothing of the proclamation of a semi-golden age.³⁷ Such statements do not bear their own weight in the face

34. *Ibid.*, 24–25, 34.

35. Cox, *Amillennialism*, 20, 136; Adams, *Time*, 15.

36. George L. Murray, *Millennial Studies* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1960), 86–87.

37. Adams, *Time*, 13.

of postmillennial appeals to New Testament passages like the kingdom growth parables of Matthew 13, the {58} apostle John's teachings about the overcoming of Satan and the world (e.g., John 12:31–32; 16:33; 1 John 2:13–14; 3:8; 4:4, 14; 5:4–5), Peter's Pentecost address (Acts 2:32–36, 41), Paul's declaration that all Israel shall be saved (Rom. 11:25–32), his resurrection victory chapter in 1 Corinthians 15 (esp. vv. 20–26, 57–58), the statements of Hebrews 1–2 about the subjection of all enemies to Christ in the post-ascension era (1:8–9, 13; 2:5–9), and numerous passages from Revelation, notably about the vastness of the redeemed (7:9–10), the open door for missionary triumph and the Christian's reign with Christ over the nations (2:25–27; 3:7–9), the submission of the kingdoms of this world to the kingdom of Christ (11:15), and the utter victory of gospel proclamation (19:11–21). Opponents of postmillennialism may wish to dispute its interpretation of such passages, but it is groundless for them to allege without qualifications and without detailed interaction with postmillennial writings that the position is not taken from the New Testament itself.

Further premature criticisms would include Walvoord's accusation that postmillennialism obscures the doctrine of Christ's second coming by including it in God's providential works in history,³⁸ and Adams's charge that it confounds the millennium with the eternal state—since it takes Old Testament prophecies of kingdom peace and prosperity and illegitimately applies them to the New Testament mention of the millennium, and thereby winds up with the dilemma that either there is no need for a new heavens and earth (to which the Old Testament prophecies really apply) or else the millennium is frustrated.³⁹

Walvoord has failed to grasp adequately the postmillennialist's philosophy of history; it is not the case that the postmillennialist fails to distinguish providence from consummation, but *rather* that he sees providence as well orchestrated to subserve the ultimate ends of consummation. And in connection with this understanding, he recognizes that the New Testament speaks of Christ "coming" in *various* ways (contrary to Walvoord's apparent thought that there is only one single

38. Walvoord, *Millennial Kingdom*, 33.

39. Adams, *Time*, 9, 14, 99; Adams applies these comments to "unrealized millenialists," among whom he counts postmillennialists.

sense in which Christ “comes,” namely, at his return in glory)—for example, in the first-century establishment of his kingdom (Matt. 16:28), in the person of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (John 14:18, 28; cf. v. 16; Acts 2:33; 1 Cor. 15:45; 2 Cor. 3:17), in fellowship with the repentant and obedient believer (Rev. 3:20; John 14:21–23), in historical judgment upon nations (Matt. 24:29–30, 34; Mark 14:61–62), and upon churches (Rev. 2:5, 16). Such “comings” of the Lord are part of God’s providential government of pre-consummation history and are *in addition* to Christ’s visible and glorious {59} coming in final judgment (2 Thess. 1:7–10). The postmillennialist does not obscure the second coming with providence.

Nor does he, as Adams said, confound the millennium with the eternal state; the postmillennialist clearly knows the difference between the two. It is just that he disagrees with Adams that certain Old Testament prophecies pertain exclusively to the eternal state. *Prior* to amillennialists and postmillennialists engaging in full exegetical debate over such passages, it would be just as legitimate for the postmillennialist to accuse *Adams* of confounding the eternal state with the millennium. The postmillennialist has a sound rationale for connecting relevant Old Testament passages with the New Testament millennium, in that these passages (according to postmillennialist claims) speak of the pre-consummation prosperity of Christ’s kingdom, and the millennium is precisely the pre-consummation form of His kingdom. Such Old Testament passages are taken to be (at least in part) predictions concerning a pre-consummation state of affairs because they speak of things which are inappropriate to the eternal state (e.g., opposition to the kingdom, evangelism, kingdom growth, national interaction, death, etc.). Again, the opponents of postmillennialism may dispute its interpretation of such passages, but it is premature to accuse the position of confounding two openly recognized distinct entities (namely, the millennium and eternity) prior to refuting the exegetical reasoning of the position. Postmillennialism is not suspect *in advance*, any more than amillennialism is.

A further groundless criticism of postmillennialism as a system is Adams’s claim that it has even less reason to expect a semi-golden age in history than does the premillennialist, since there is nothing but sinful, non-glorified humanity to produce it, and that it has no explana-

tion for the anticipated sudden change of conditions in the world at the end of history.⁴⁰ Such statements are unwarranted, for the postmillennialist sees the powerful presence of Christ through the Holy Spirit as sufficient reason to expect success in the church's great commission (cf. Matt. 28:18–20), and he takes the release of Satan from the post-resurrection restraints on his deceiving power over the nations as adequate explanation of the change of world conditions at the very end of the age (just as Adams does). Such tenets have been made well known in post-millennial teaching, and thus Adams's criticism is an obvious oversight of what is an important element of the position criticized.

A similar reply is called for with respect to Walvoord's criticism that postmillennialism deprives today's believer of the hope of Christ's imminent return.⁴¹ The fact is that postmillennialism never claimed to salvage the {60} doctrine of the any-moment return of Christ; indeed, distinctive to it is the *denial* of the imminent physical return. The New Testament definitely indicates that the coming of the Lord is a delayed event, and that the Christian should expect to see precursor signs of its approach.⁴² It is not to come upon him as an unexpected thief (1 Thess. 5:4), for he believes the Scriptures that certain things must first occur (cf. 2 Thess. 2:1–3, etc.). Indeed, it was the error of the foolish virgins to expect the imminent coming of the bridegroom (Matt. 25:1–8). Hence postmillennialism can hardly be faulted for not preserving a doctrine which it does not, by the very nature of its position, think should be preserved (cf. Matt. 25:5, 19).

We must conclude, then, that current-day writers have offered no good *prima facie* reason for ignoring or rejecting postmillennialism as an important theological option for biblical believers. It has been unwarrantedly dismissed in the past fifty years on the basis of newspaper exegesis, misrepresentation, two-edged criticisms, and premature

40. *Ibid.*, 12, 87.

41. Walvoord, *Millennial Kingdom*, 32–33.

42. Cf. O. T. Allis, *Prophecy and the Church* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1945), 173–74. This fact should clearly not be taken to imply that the Christian knows the actual day or hour of Christ's return; Christ did not even claim such knowledge (Mark 13:32), and it is not for us to know God's secret decree for the commencement of this event (Luke 12:40; Acts 1:6). Our duty is simply to be in faithful preparation for it (Matt. 24:46; 25:19–23; Mark 35–36).

or unfounded charges. Postmillennialism deserves to be taken seriously and considered in the light of Scripture; quick dismissal or ignoring of it in recent years has no good justification.

The Distinctive Essentials of the Three Positions

In the preceding section of this discussion there was occasion to note that postmillennialism had been misrepresented in its basic position. This causes us to ask, just what are the fundamental differences among premillennialism, amillennialism, and postmillennialism? That is, what is the distinctive outlook of each position, its essential and central characteristic?

Here many people are prone to be misled, becoming entangled in questions which are subsidiary and indecisive with respect to the *basic dogmatical* outlook of pre-, a-, and postmillennialism. What this means is that they take important *exegetical* issues pertaining to the millennial question and attempt to use them to *delineate* the three fundamental *theological* positions; however, these particular exegetical issues are *not decisive* for the *central* and general claims of the school of thought. Perhaps some examples would be helpful.

When we come to discuss the *distinctive essentials* of premillennialism, amillennialism, and postmillennialism, there are many interpretive questions pertaining to scriptural teaching about the millennium which, while very important for the Christian to consider, are not definitionally crucial at this {61} particular *topical* point; that is because adherents of *different* basic schools of thought have *agreed* on particular answers to these questions. For instance, we can ask about *the nature of the "first resurrection"* of Revelation 20:5. Does it refer to a bodily resurrection, the regeneration of the believer, or his passage at death to the intermediate state in heaven? Such a question usually separates premillennialists from the other two positions, since premillennialism insists on the first option; however, adherents of both amillennialism and postmillennialism have been known to endorse each of the last two options. Likewise, the question of the *immanency of Christ's return* tends to be answered in a cross-categorical manner; some premillennialists deny it in practice (post-tribulationists), while others propound it, just as amillennialists are split by those who accept it and those who reject it. The question does not serve us well in the

particular project of finding the distinctive essentials of each of the three eschatological schools. Further subsidiary or theologically indecisive issues would pertain to such things as whether the Christian martyrs receive a special blessing during the millennium, whether the millennium pertains to the intermediate state at all (amillennialists and postmillennialists have agreed in various ways on this question), whether the church is an expression of Christ's kingdom (recent premillennialists have come to grant this point), whether a future period of unprecedented tribulation with a personal Antichrist awaits the world and/or church (all three positions have espoused, or can accommodate, such an opinion), whether the "one thousand" of Revelation 20 is symbolic or literal (again, all three positions have or could answer this both ways). Such questions as these are of momentous significance for the Christian in his faith and practice, and this writer has definite convictions on each one of them. However, these issues and many more like them are not the *telling* differences among the three *theological schools* of premillennialism, amillennialism, and postmillennialism.

In order to get down to the really basic differences among these three positions as distinct schools of thought we can begin by outlining their respective central claims.⁴³ *Premillennialism* holds that (1) Christ will

43. The following descriptions of the tenets of each school will be numbered in such a way that it facilitates cross-reference and comparison among the three positions.

As we progressively work toward the essential, hard-core issue separating the three schools of eschatology, the reader should keep in mind that the individual nuances of each millennial writer preclude a *rigid* organization and elaboration of the tenets of the three schools. Thus it goes without saying that in the broader summaries and general statements which follow we are of necessity still dealing with approximations. Not every single adherent of a perspective has endorsed each and every statement I make for that perspective in what follows. For example, the professed premillennialists John Gill and Charles Spurgeon have (quite inconsistently and uncharacteristically) held to important beliefs of postmillennialism—particularly the great success of the church on earth prior to the *parousia*. Again, a few postmillennialists have not taught an apostasy at the very end of history. However, in the analysis which follows, I have attempted to represent widespread, current convictions among noted adherents of the three schools. The summaries *do* approximate a general consensus of opinion, but the summaries remain just that—summaries, with the built-in disadvantages of such. A topical, rather than personal, study of eschatological opinions requires nothing less.

{62} return physically prior to the millennium, and that (2) the millennium is a period of righteousness, peace, and prosperity for Christ's kingdom on the earth. There will be (3) a significant historical delay or gap *between* the return of Christ at the first resurrection *and* the judgment of the wicked at the second resurrection, just prior to the inauguration of the eternal state. (This gap corresponds to the millennial kingdom of earthly prosperity for God's chosen people.) Therefore, (4) the millennium is distinct from the current church age, being a future interim period between Christ's return and the final judgment. (5) The specific nature of the millennial kingdom will be seen in the national prosperity of the restored Jewish state with Christ ruling bodily from Jerusalem and militarily subduing the world with the sword. (However, some premillennialists de-emphasize this Jewish element and simply stress that the millennium is a preparatory stage for the church; the Old Testament nation, the New Testament church, the millennium, and the eternal state are all seen as developing stages in the kingdom.) Thus, (6) the Old Testament prophecies of prosperity are required to be taken literally as pointing ahead to a Jewish state separate from the church and necessitating a radical discontinuity between Israel and the church. Finally, (7) the church's preaching of the gospel through the whole earth prior to Christ's return will prove to be of no avail culturally; the world will become a hopeless wreck, increasingly getting worse and worse, climaxing in the tribulation at the very end of the church age.

By contrast, *amillennialism* says that (1) Christ will return after the millennium. (2) It maintains that there will be no millennium in the sense of a semi-golden era of earthly prosperity for the kingdom; instead, the millennium is restricted to the blessings of the intermediate (heavenly) state (some restricting its blessing to the martyrs there) and/or the purely inward spiritual triumphs experienced by the church on earth (i.e., Christ ruling in the believer's heart). Basically, then, amillennialism denies that there will be any visible or earthly expression of Christ's reign over the entire world; as D. H. Kromminga says, "the millennium is a spiritual or heavenly millennium." (Note: the *church* is a *visible* form of Christ's kingdom in the world, according to many amillennialists; however, the church will *not* make all the *nations* disciples of Christ and gain a dominant or widespread influence throughout the world, but will rather remain a remnant of believers

representatively spotted across the globe, which is unable to effect a period of [comparative] justice and peace.) (3) The return of Christ at the end of the church age will synchronize with the general {63} resurrection and general judgment of all men, believers and unbelievers alike. Therefore, (4) the millennium is the present interadventual age. (5) There will be no conversion or subduing of the world by Christ during the millennium, but rather the world will see a more or less parallel development of good and evil, with evil intensifying toward the end of the church age. Thus, (6) the Old Testament prophecies of prosperity are required to be taken completely figuratively as pointing ahead to the eternal state or the internal spiritual condition of the church, thus propounding continuity between Old Testament Israel and the New Testament church. Finally, (7) the world is moving toward a time of increasing lawlessness, and the preaching of the gospel throughout the world will not achieve outstanding and pervasive success in converting sinners (i.e., the overall discipling of the nations).

Postmillennialism, as the name implies, holds that (1) Christ will return subsequent to the millennium, which (2) represents a period which will see growth and maturation of righteousness, peace, and prosperity for Christ's kingdom on earth (visibly represented by the church) through the gradual conversion of the world to the gospel, as well as a period for the glory and vindication of the saints in heaven. (3) The return of Christ will synchronize with the general resurrection and general judgment at the end of the church age. Therefore, (4) the millennium or kingdom of Christ is a present reality spanning the interadventual age. (Some postmillennialists have used the eschatological vocabulary in such a way that the "millennium" represents the latter day, publicly discernible, prosperity of the interadventual "kingdom.") (5) The specific nature of the millennial kingdom on earth will be the international prosperity of the church (new Israel), its growth (through the conversion of the world by the sword of the Spirit), and its influence in society and culture. Thus, (6) the Old Testament prophecies of prosperity for the kingdom are both figuratively and literally interpreted according to the demands of context (both local and wider) as pointing ahead not simply beyond the church age to a restored Jewish kingdom or the eternal state (thus rendering the visible church on earth something of a parenthesis for the most part), but

to the visible prosperity of Christ's established kingdom on earth, climaxing in the consummated glory of the eternal state; there is continuity between Old Testament Israel and the New Testament church (new Israel), which eventually will include the fulness of converted physical Israel grafted back into the people of God. Finally, then, (7) over the *long range* the world will experience a period of extraordinary righteousness and prosperity as the church triumphs in the preaching of the gospel and the discipling of the nations through the supernatural agency of the Holy Spirit; however, the release of Satan at the very end of the age will bring apostasy from these blessed conditions. {64}

The Heart of the Matter

Although it leaves some details and qualifications out, the above description basically summarizes the distinctive thrust of the various millennial options. We now need to *narrow down* even further the treatment of each school of thought to its key distinctives (allowing for differences of interpretation within each school, as well as cross-category agreement on certain exegetical points).

All three positions *agree* that, while there may be terminological differences (e.g., the application of the words “kingdom,” “millennium,” “tribulation,” etc.), in practical outworking the church is a divinely established institution, Christ will return in judgment upon a lawless or apostate world, and the believer's *ultimate hope* is in the perfectly golden, new heavens and earth which will be established in the consummated kingdom of the eternal state. Moreover, none of the positions denies that there is or will be a millennium of some kind; none anticipates that it will be a *completely perfect* age. Further, no one *completely* identifies the kingdom and millennium as coextensive with each other, for each agrees that the kingdom as a *pre-consummation as well as consummation* form or stage—the millennium being restricted in some fashion to the former category. Thus the key distinctives among pre-, a-, and postmillennialism can be further specified by the following analysis of the *pre-consummation* form of the *kingdom*.

There are some who hold that (I) the pre-consummation form of the kingdom prophesied in the Old Testament is *not realized* during the *interadventual* age at all, but pertains exclusively to the *millennial* age of *prosperity* that *follows* the *church age* and begins with Christ's return. These are usually dispensational premillennialists. Then there are

those who hold that (II) the pre-consummation form of the kingdom is realized during the *interadventual* age; they fall into two subdivisions. First, we have those who say (A) that the *church age* is *not* inclusive of the *millennium* but separate from it as a future age of prosperity after Christ's return (however, the church and the millennium both express God's kingdom). Here we have advocates of historic premillennialism (or post-tribulationists). Secondly, we have those who say (B) that the *church age* is inclusive of (or identical with) the *millennium*, thus having the pre-consummation kingdom extend from Christ's first to His second advent. These proponents in turn fall into two groups: those teaching that (1) the *millennial* age on earth is a time of visible prosperity for the kingdom, or those asserting that (2) only the eternal state realizes the promise of prosperity for the kingdom. Respectively, these are postmillennialists and amillennialists.

From this outline it becomes apparent that there are *two major watersheds* {65} in eschatological teaching among evangelical conservatives. The first has to do with *chronology*, the second pertains to the *nature* of the millennial kingdom. The first key question is: Is the church age inclusive of the millennium? (Alternatively: Will the end-time events of Christ's return, the resurrection, and judgment *synchronize* with each other?) Such a question separates premillennialists (who answer no) from amillennialists and postmillennialists (who both answer yes). The second and subsequent key question is: Will the church age (identical with or inclusive of the *millennial* kingdom) be a time of evident prosperity for the gospel on earth, with the church achieving worldwide growth and influence such that Christianity becomes the general principle rather than the exception to the rule (as in previous times)? This question separates amillennialists (who answer no) from postmillennialists (who answer yes).

These questions also reveal the *basic agreement between amillennialism and premillennialism* that the great prosperity for Christ's kingdom which is promised in Scripture is *not* to be realized at all *prior* to His return in glory, thus concluding the *church age* to lack evident earthly triumph in its calling and endeavors. Robert Strong, in expositing and defending amillennialism, states, "Amillennialism agrees with premillennialism that the Scriptures do not promise the conversion of the world through the preaching of the gospel" (*The Presbyterian Guard-*

ian, January 10, 1942). The amillennialist, William E. Cox, says further, “Premillenarians believe the world is growing increasingly worse, and that it will be at its very worst when Jesus returns. Amillenarians agree with the premillenarians on this point.”⁴⁴

Our foregoing discussion of the three eschatological schools of thought has centered around the concept of the kingdom and its various qualifications (time and pre-consummate nature), thereby revealing that the most fundamental and telling question in distinguishing the unique mark of each position has to do with the *course of history prior to Christ’s return* (or, the evident prosperity of the great commission). Jay Adams’s concern with the realized or unrealized nature of the “millennium” is *not* the real issue which marks out a central and unique position in eschatology, for amillennialism is *not* (contrary to Adams’s claim) the only position which sees the millennium as established at Christ’s first advent and coextensive with the present church age. A noted postmillennialist, J. Marcellus Kik, has said, “The millennium, in other words, is the period of the gospel dispensation, the Messianic kingdom.... The millennium commenced either with the ascension of Christ or with the day of Pentecost and will remain until the second coming of Christ.”⁴⁵ Many other postmillennialists concur with {66} Kik here. And even those earlier postmillennialists who saw the millennium as a later segment of the interadventual period held that the messianic kingdom had been established during Christ’s first advent; thus, the “kingdom” was realized, and the “millennium” represented the coming triumphant (yet imperfect) part of the kingdom (i.e., church) age. Hence Adams’s question leads to a *terminological*, rather than a substantive, disagreement. (And note, even some recent premillennialists, e.g., G. E. Ladd, grant that the kingdom in some sense has been established already.)

What is really at stake is the question of the *future prospects on earth* for the *already established* kingdom. Shall it, prior to Christ’s return, bring all nations under its sway, thereby generating a period of spiritual

44. Cox, *Amillennialism*, 5.

45. J. Marcellus Kik, *An Eschatology of Victory* (Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1971), 17. This statement was originally made in a lecture at Westminster Theological Seminary in 1961.

blessing, international peace, and visible prosperity? Shall the church, which has been promised the continual presence of Him who has been given all power in heaven and earth, be successful in making disciples of all nations as He commanded? On this basic and substantive issue—one which succeeds in separating out the three millennial schools—it becomes apparent that the *essential distinctive* of postmillennialism is its scripturally derived, sure expectation of gospel prosperity for the church during the *present* age. Premillennialists and amillennialists agree in rejecting this hope, and then separate from each other in explaining the (*prima facie*) scriptural grounds for that hope. The premillennialist looks for kingdom prosperity in history, but it has a distinctively Jewish nature and is separated from the true Israel of God (Christ's church). The amillennialist expects no sure prosperity for the kingdom in history on the earth, reserving the scriptural teaching of an age of justice and peace exclusively for the realm beyond history.

Summation

In summary, the premillennialist maintains that there will be a lengthy gap in the end-time events into which the millennium will be inserted after Christ's return; the millennial kingdom will be characterized by the prosperity of a restored Jewish state. The amillennialist denies any such gap in the end-time events, looking for Christ to return after a basically non-prosperous millennial age. And the postmillennialist is distinguished from the two foregoing positions by holding that there will be no gap in the end-time events; rather, when Christ returns subsequent to the millennial, interadventual, church age, there will have been conspicuous and widespread success for the great commission. *In short*, postmillennialism is set apart from the other two schools of thought by its essential *optimism* for the kingdom in the *present* age. This confident attitude in the power of Christ's kingdom, the power of its gospel, the powerful {67} presence of the Holy Spirit, the power of prayer, and the progress of the great commission, sets postmillennialism apart from the essential pessimism of amillennialism and premillennialism.

Alva J. McClain observes the following about amillennialism:

In the Bible eschatological events are found at the end of but *within* human history. But the "eschatology" of Barth is both above and beyond history, having little or no vital relation to history. Dr. Berkhof

has written a valuable summary and critical evaluation of this new school of “eschatology.” ... But what Berkhof fails to see, it seems to me, is that his own Amillennial school of thought is in some measure “tarred with the same brush,” at least in its doctrine of the established Kingdom of God. According to this view, both good and evil continue in their development side by side through human history. Then will come catastrophe and the crisis of divine judgment, not for the purpose of setting up a divine kingdom *in* history, but *after* the close of history. Hope lies only in a new world which is *beyond* history. Thus history becomes merely the preparatory “vestibule” of eternity; and not a very rational vestibule at that. It is a narrow corridor, cramped and dark, a kind of “waiting room,” leading nowhere *within* the historical process, but only fit to be abandoned at last for an ideal existence on another plane. Such a view of history seems unduly pessimistic in the light of Biblical revelation.⁴⁶

Perhaps the major difficulty with McClain making this statement is that he overlooks that his own premillennialism is “tarred with the same brush” as that of amillennialism. Boettner’s statement about premillennialism is appropriate here:

Premillennialism or Dispensationalism thus looks upon the preaching of the Gospel as a failure so far as the conversion of the world is concerned, and sees no hope for the world during the present dispensation. It regards the Church as essentially bankrupt and doomed to failure as each of the five preceding dispensations supposedly have ended in failure, and asserts that only the Second Coming of Christ can cure the world’s ills.... Another corollary of this belief is that the benefits of civilization that have been brought about through the influence of the Church are only illusory, and that all this will be swept away when Christ comes.... This being the logic of the system, it is not difficult to see why the outlook as regards the present age should be pessimistic. If we feel the whole secular order is doomed, and that God has no further interest in it, why, then of course we shall feel little responsibility for it, and no doubt feel that the sooner evil reaches its climax the better. To hold that the preaching of the Gospel under the dispensation of the Holy Spirit can never gain more than a very limited success must inevitably paralyze effort both in the home church and on the mission field. Such an overemphasis on the other-worldliness cannot but mean an underemphasis and neglect of the here and now.... It would be hard to imagine a theory more pessimistic, {68}

46. McClain, “Premillennialism,” 22–23.

more hopeless in principle or, if consistently applied, more calculated to bring about the defeat of the Church's program than this one.⁴⁷

The thing that distinguishes the biblical postmillennialist, then, from amillennialism and premillennialism is his belief that Scripture teaches *the success of the great commission in this age of the church*. The optimistic confidence that the world nations will become disciples of Christ, that the church will grow to fill the earth, and that Christianity will become the dominant principle rather than the exception to the rule distinguishes postmillennialism from the other viewpoints. All and *only* postmillennialists believe this, and only the refutation of that confidence can undermine this school of eschatological interpretation. In the final analysis, what is characteristic of postmillennialism is not a uniform answer to any one particular exegetical question (e.g., regarding "the man of sin," "the first resurrection," "all Israel shall be saved," etc.), but rather a commitment to the gospel as the power of God which, in the agency of the Holy Spirit, shall convert the vast majority of the world to Christ and bring widespread obedience to His kingdom rule. This confidence will, from person to person, be biblically supported in various ways (just as different "Calvinists" can vary from each other in the precise set of passages to which they appeal for support of God's discriminating soteric sovereignty). The postmillennialist is in this day marked out by his belief that the commission and resources are with the kingdom of Christ to accomplish the discipling of the nations to Jesus Christ prior to His second advent; whatever historical decline is seen in the missionary enterprise of the church and its task of edifying or sanctifying the nations in the word of truth must be attributed, not to anything inherent in the present course of human history, but to the unfaithfulness of the church.

The Reformed Heritage of Postmillennialism

With an understanding, then, of the distinctive character of postmillennialism, it is important to go on and see that this position is not eccentric in terms of the outlook of orthodox theology, nor is it a recent innovation (associated, as some erroneously say, with the rise of nine-

47. Loraine Boettner, *The Millennium* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1957), 352–54.

teenth-century humanistic optimism). Rather, *the postmillennial hope has been the persistent viewpoint of most Reformed scholars from the sixteenth century into the early twentieth century*. In light of that fact, the position deserves to be examined again today for its biblical support and not lightly dismissed as somehow an obvious theological mistake. That is, there is no *prima facie* reason to reject postmillennialism as foreign to the thinking of the {69} most respectable theological teachers or the unwitting parallel to specific secular movements. The position has been endorsed by the most dependable and outstanding theologians and commentators from the Reformation to the present.

John Calvin

Reformed theology (as distinguished from evangelical or Lutheran theology) takes as its father the indisputable theological master of the Protestant Reformation, John Calvin. The heritage of postmillennialism in Reformed theology can be traced to the Calvinian corpus of literature. J. A. De Jong, in his doctoral dissertation at the Free University of Amsterdam (*As the Waters Cover the Sea*), asserted that “John Calvin’s commentaries give some scholars cause for concluding that he anticipated the spread of the gospel and true religion to the ends of the earth.”⁴⁸ J. T. McNeill, the editor of Calvin’s *Institutes of the Christian Religion* for the Library of Christian Classics, speaks of “Calvin’s conception of the victory and future universality of Christ’s Kingdom throughout the human race, a topic frequently introduced in the Commentaries.”⁴⁹ In his recent study, *The Puritan Hope*, Iain H. Murray stated that “Calvin believed that Christ’s kingdom is *already* established, and, unlike Luther, he expected it to have a yet greater triumph in history prior to the consummation.”⁵⁰ The judgment of these men (and those secondary sources upon which they depend) is certainly well grounded in Calvin’s writings.

About the view that Christ would have a literal one-thousand-year reign upon the earth (namely, premillennialism), Calvin said, this “fiction is too childish either to need or to be worth a refutation.” At the

48. De Jong, 8.

49. *Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion*, vol. 2, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 904 n. 76.

50. Murray, 40.

same time, he indicated his implicit disagreement with the view (fostered by later amillennialists) that the millennium pertains to the intermediate state of the saints (i.e., their disembodied heavenly rest subsequent to physical death and prior to the general resurrection); according to Calvin, the “one thousand” of Revelation 20 pertains to “the church while still toiling on earth.”⁵¹ Nor would Calvin have agreed with the position that says the millennial triumph of the saints is simply the spiritual (invisible) victories in the Christian’s heart or the internal blessings privately experienced by the church (namely, one school of amillennial interpretation). With particular application to the kingdom of Christ, he said, “it would not have been enough for the kingdom to have flourished internally.”⁵² Calvin saw {70} the Psalmist as saying that the prosperity and strength of the King of God’s choosing must be *visible and publicly acknowledged*; Christ must be *shown victorious* over all His enemies *in this world*, and His kingdom must be demonstrated to be immune from the various agitations currently experienced in the world.⁵³ In his commentary on 2 Thessalonians 2:8, Calvin declared:

Paul, however, intimates that Christ will in the meantime, by the rays which he will emit *previously to his advent*, put to flight the darkness in which antichrist will reign, just as the sun, before he is seen by us, chases away the darkness of the night by the pouring forth of his rays.

This victory of the word, therefore, will show itself in this world.... He also furnished Christ with these very arms, that he may *rout his enemies*. This is a signal commendation of true and sound doctrine—that it is represented as sufficient for putting an end to all impiety, and as destined to be *invariably victorious, in opposition to all the machinations of Satan....* [emphasis added]

For Calvin, the kingdom of Christ was viewed as established at the first advent and continuing in force until the second advent. During this interadventual period, the church is destined to experience widespread success; throughout history it will bring all nations under the sovereign sway of Christ. To this interadventual period Calvin referred many of the glorious prophecies about the Messiah’s kingdom found in

51. *Institutes*, bk. 3, chap. 25, sec. 5.

52. Commentary at Ps. 21:8.

53. *Ibid.*, with v. 17.

the Old Testament. “The saints began to reign under heaven when Christ ushered in his kingdom by the promulgation of his Gospel.”⁵⁴ Commenting upon the Isaiah 65:17 prophecy of God’s creating new heavens and a new earth, Calvin said:

By these metaphors he promises a remarkable change of affairs; ... but the greatest of such a blessing, which was to be manifested at the coming of Christ, could not be described in any other way. Nor does he mean only the first coming, but the whole reign, which must be extended as far as to the last coming.... Thus the world is (so to speak) renewed by Christ ... and even now we are in the progress and accomplishment of it.... The Prophet has in his eye the whole reign of Christ, down to its final close, which is also called “the day of renovation and restoration.” (Acts iii.21).... The glory of God shines ... never more brightly than in the cross, in which ... the whole world was renewed and all things restored to order.⁵⁵

About Isaiah 2:2–4, Calvin had the following to say: “... while the fullness of days began at the coming of Christ, it flows on in uninterrupted progress until he appears the second time for our salvation.” During this time “the church, which had formerly been, as it were, shut up in a corner, would now be collected from every quarter. {71} ... The Prophet here shows that the boundaries of his kingdom will be enlarged that he may rule over various nations.... Christ is not sent to the Jews only, that he may reign over them, but that he may hold sway over the whole world.” The triumphant progress of the church, reigning under Christ, will be remarkable down through history; the soteric restoration of the world will be increasingly evident as all nations come under the rule of the Savior. Such was Calvin’s hope, his biblical philosophy of history.

The scepter of Christ’s kingdom by which He rules is “his Word alone,” and Satan with his power falls to the extent that Christ’s kingdom is upbuilt through the power of preaching.⁵⁶ Calvin boldly proclaimed that “the labor of Christ and of the whole Church, will be glorious, not only before God, but likewise before men.... Hence it follows, that we ought to have good hopes of success.”⁵⁷ “We must not

54. Commentary at Dan. 7:27.

55. Commentary at John 13:31.

56. *Institutes*, bk. 4, chap. 2, sec. 4 and bk. 1, chap. 14, sec. 18; cf. Commentary at Ish. 11:4.

doubt that our Lord will come at last to break through all the undertakings of men and make a passage for his word. Let us hope boldly, then, more than we can understand; he will still surpass our opinion and our hope.”⁵⁸

The confidence of the Reformer was clearly expressed in his expositions of the Lord’s Prayer at the second petition (“Thy kingdom come”):

Now, because the word of God is like a royal scepter, we are bidden here to entreat him to bring all men’s minds and hearts into voluntary obedience to it.... Therefore God sets up his Kingdom by humbling the whole world.... We must daily desire that God gather churches unto himself from all parts of the earth; that he spread and increase them in number; ... that he cast down all enemies of pure teaching and religion; that he scatter their counsels and crush their efforts. From this it appears that zeal for daily progress is not enjoined upon us in vain.... With ever-increasing splendor, he displays his light and truth, by which the darkness and falsehoods of Satan’s kingdom vanish, are extinguished, and pass away.... [God] is said to *reign* among men, when they voluntarily devote and submit themselves to be governed by him.... By this prayer we ask, that he may remove all hindrances, and may bring all men under his dominion.... We therefore pray that God would exert his power, both by the Word and by the Spirit, that the whole world may willingly submit to him.... The substance of this prayer is, that God would enlighten the world by the light of his Word,—would form the hearts of men, by the influences of his Spirit, to obey his justice,—and would restore to order, by the gracious exercise of his power, all the disorder that exists in the world.... Again, as the *kingdom* of God is continually growing and advancing to the end of the world, we must pray every day that it *may come*: for to whatever extent iniquity abounds in the world, to such {72} an extent *the kingdom of God*, which brings along with it perfect righteousness, is not yet *come*.⁵⁹

This prayer for the evident success of the Great Commission will *not be in vain*, according to Calvin; our *hope* for success *should be bold*, for we *must not doubt* that Christ will accomplish this purpose in the

57. Commentary at Isa. 49:6.

58. Cited by Murray, *Puritan Hope*, xii.

59. *Institutes*, bk. 3, chap. 20, sec. 42, and commentary at Matthew 6:10 (*Harmony of the Evangelists*).

world. Here we have the postmillennial vision for preconsummation history.

Calvin's belief that the nations will be disciplined and become obedient to Christ's word was expressed over and over again in his writings.

Our doctrine must stand sublime above all the glory of the world, invincible by all its power, because it is not ours, but that of the living God and his Anointed, whom the Father has appointed king that he may rule from sea to sea, and from the rivers even to the ends of the earth; and so rule as to smite the whole earth and its strength of iron and brass, its splendor of gold and silver, with the mere rod of his mouth, and break them in pieces like a potter's vessel; according to the magnificent predictions of the prophets respecting his kingdom (Dan. 2.34; Isa. 11.4; Ps. 2.9).⁶⁰

God not only protects and defends [the kingdom of Christ], but also extends its boundaries far and wide, and then preserves and carries it forward in uninterrupted progression to eternity.... We must not judge of its stability from the present appearances of things, but from the promise, which assures us of its continuance and of its constant increase.⁶¹

The Lord opens his reign with a feeble and despicable commencement for the express purpose, that his power may be more fully illustrated by its unexpected progress.⁶²

In commenting upon Isaiah 54:1–2, Calvin speaks of the “extraordinary fertility of the Church” as the kingdom is increased, and he uses the image of growth from childhood to manhood in explaining that “the work of God will be extraordinary and wonderful.” With reference to Psalm 67, Calvin calls attention to the new and unprecedented blessing that will come when the Gentiles are called and all nations participate in the saving knowledge of God; as the word of salvation is diffused throughout all the earth, said Calvin, all the ends of the earth will submit themselves to the divine government. At Psalm 22:27 (“All ends of the earth shall remember and turn to Jehovah”) Calvin again speaks of the whole world giving the willing obedience of true godliness to the promised Messiah.

60. *Institutes*, Prefatory Address to King Francis I of France.

61. Commentary at Isa. 9:7.

62. Commentary at Matthew 13:31 (*Harmony of the Evangelists*).

The triumphant reign of the Messiah over the entire world will be accomplished as the nations come to a saving knowledge of God, held Calvin. “The knowledge of God shall be spread throughout the whole world; {73} ... the glory of God shall be known in every part of the world.”⁶³ In his *Sermons* on the pastoral epistles, Calvin declared that “the knowledge of God must shine generally throughout all the world and every one must be a partaker of it”; therefore, “we must take pains to bring all them that wander out of the way of salvation: and we must not only think upon it for our life time, but for after our death.”⁶⁴ It was precisely because of Calvin’s confidence in Scripture’s promise that the gospel would be so prosperous as to bring the nations to submission to Christ that he alone was active in sending out missionaries—unlike the medievals and his fellow Reformers, who expected the imminent end of the world (e.g., Luther expected it in his own lifetime).

Because Christ has committed to ministers “his Gospel, which is the sceptre of his kingdom, ... they exercise in some sort his power”—a power by which they subdue to Christ’s dominion the whole world.⁶⁵ According to Calvin, Psalm 47 “contains ... a prophecy of the future kingdom of Christ. It teaches that the glory which then shone under the figure of the material sanctuary will diffuse its splendor far and wide; when God himself will cause the beams of his grace to shine into distant lands, that kings and nations may be united into fellowship with the children of Abraham.” “When God is called *a terrible and great King over all the earth*, this prophecy applies to the kingdom of Christ.... The prophet, then, when he declares that the Gentiles will be subdued, so that they will not refuse to obey the chosen people, is describing that kingdom of which he had previously spoken. We are not to suppose that he here treats of that secret providence by which God governs the whole world, but of the special power which he exercises by means of his word.... By these words he intimates that the kingdom of God ... would be extended to the utmost boundaries of the earth ... so as to occupy the whole world from one end to the other.”⁶⁶ “The Church shall not be limited to any corner of the world, but shall

63. Commentary at Isa. 66:19.

64. Cited by Murray, *Puritan Hope*, 84.

65. Commentary at Ps. 45:16.

be extended as far and wide as there shall be space throughout the whole world.”⁶⁷

It must be clear by this point that *Calvin endorsed the central tenet of postmillennialism*, the optimistic confidence that the gospel of Christ shall convert the vast majority of the world some time prior to the return of the Lord in judgment and glory. Speaking of Psalm 72, Calvin taught that

the kingdom of Christ ... was to be extended from the rising of the {74} sun to the going down thereof.... The meaning then is, that the king chosen by God in Judea will obtain so complete a victory over all his enemies, far and wide, that they shall come humbly to pay him homage.... This verse [11] contains a more distinct statement of the truth, that the whole world will be brought in subjection to the authority of Christ.... The nations will be convinced that nothing is more desirable than to receive from him laws and ordinances.... David ... breaks forth in praising God, because he was assured by the divine oracle that his prayers would not be in vain.... David, therefore, with good reason prays that the glory of the divine name may fill the whole earth, since that kingdom was to be extended even to the uttermost boundaries of the globe.

Expressions of this conviction are manifold throughout the commentaries. For instance, “... the Father will deny nothing to his Son which relates to the extension of his kingdom to the uttermost parts of the earth.”⁶⁸ In the same place Calvin indicates that he understood Psalm 2 to predict that men will subdue the whole world to God Himself and embrace all lands and nations under His dominion. In introducing Psalm 110, he explains, “In this psalm David sets forth the perpetuity of Christ’s reign, and the eternity of his priesthood; and, in the *first* place, he affirms, that God conferred upon Christ supreme dominion, combined with invincible power, with which he either conquers all his enemies, or compels them to submit to him. In the *second* place, he adds, that God would extend the boundaries of this kingdom

66. Commentary at Ps. 47:2–3, 7–8; cf. Commentary at Isa. 60:3 for a similar image of the light diffusing throughout the whole world, starting in one place and spreading to every corner; “the church shines with such brightness as to attract to herself nations and princes.”

67. Commentary at Isa. 60:4.

68. Commentary at Ps. 2:8.

far and wide.... Christ should not reign as King upon mount Zion only, because God would cause his power to extend to the remotest regions of the earth.” Calvin adds that this kingdom continues to spread and prosper.

Of the scope of this prosperity, Calvin said:

The import of the whole is, that Christ would so rule far and wide, that the farthest would live contentedly under his protection, and not cast off the yoke laid on them.⁶⁹

The worship of God will flourish everywhere.... The law which had been given to the Jews would be proclaimed among all nations, so that true religion might be spread everywhere.... Since then it is necessary that the worship of God should be based on the truth, when God declares that his name would become renowned in every place, he doubtless shows that his law would be known to all nations, so that his will might be known everywhere....⁷⁰

Lest there be any misunderstanding of Calvin’s {75} meaning, it should be observed that in his Isaiah commentary he makes it abundantly clear that these prophecies of prosperity and worldwide growth do *not* pertain simply to an *ordinary* effect of the gospel on the nations; the prophets envision not merely the placing of the church in a few localities over the earth, but rather the extraordinary—indeed, incredible—triumph of the kingdom throughout the world. The church goes forth, not simply to battle (with periodic or spotted conversions from place to place), but to *incredible* victory (namely, the discipling of *the nations as such*).

Although those things which the Lord promises are concealed, for a time, from the eyes of men, yet believers perceive them by faith; so that they have a firm belief and expectation of the accomplishment of them, however incredible they may appear to others.... He speaks of the extension of the Church which he had formerly mentioned; but it was of great importance that the same things should be frequently repeated, because it appeared to be incredible that the Church ...

69. Commentary at Zech. 9:10 (“his dominion shall be ... even to the ends of the earth”).

70. Commentary at Mal. 1:11 (“For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering; for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the Lord of hosts”).

would be restored and spread throughout the whole world ... to the astonishment of all ... spread far and wide through every part of the world.

In the same place Calvin spoke of “obedience, which the whole world shall render to God in the church.” With the infallible truth of God’s word as his foundation and confidence, then, Calvin affirmed, “there is nothing which we ought to desire more earnestly than that the whole world should bow to the authority of God.”⁷¹

A further insight to Calvin’s optimistic philosophy of preconsummation history is afforded us in his prayers. Two examples are offered here. The Reformer’s strength of faith is evident as he prayed, “Grant, I say, that we may raise our eyes upward, and consider how much power thou hast conferred upon thine only-begotten Son. Grant, also, that he may rule and govern us by his Spirit, protect us by his faithfulness and guardianship, and compel the whole world to promote our salvation.” In the same lecture series he prayed, “May we never grow weary, but learn to overcome the whole world...”⁷² After Hosea lecture 34, Calvin prayed, “O grant, that we, being mindful of these benefits may ever submit ourselves to thee, and desire only to raise our voice for this end, that the whole world may submit itself to thee, and that those who seem now to rage against thee may at length be brought, as well as we, to render thee obedience, so that thy Son Christ may be Lord of all...” Calvin’s biblically grounded hope shines forth with brilliance in his prayer, “May we daily solicit thee in our prayers, and never doubt, but that under the government of thy Christ, thou canst again gather together the whole world, though it be miserably dispersed, so that we may persevere in this warfare to the end, until we shall at length know that we have not in vain hoped {76} in thee, and that our prayers have not been in vain, when Christ shall exercise the power given to him for our salvation and for that of the whole world.”⁷³

Thus we conclude that Reformed theology was launched with a post-millennial perspective, a heartfelt confidence in the promises of Scrip-

71. Commentary at Isa. 60:4, 16.

72. Prayers at the end of the 9th and 65th lectures in the Daniel commentary.

73. Prayer at the end of the 97th lecture on the Minor Prophets (following Micah 7:15).

ture to the effect that Christ would subdue the whole world with the gospel. The dogmatics, commentaries, and prayers of Calvin form a beautiful and orchestrated presentation of an eschatological hope which would become a doctrinal distinctive and motivating power throughout the history of reformed Christianity.

Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries

Postmillennialism was evident in the successors of Zwingli. When Zwingli died in 1531, he was succeeded in the chair of theology at the University of Zurich by Theodor Bibliander, who “foresaw an age when humanity would be united as one flock under one Shepherd.... Bibliander believed that this age of true faith, love, knowledge, and holiness would dawn through the preaching of the evangelical faith of the Reformation. Justice, peace, humanity, wisdom, and the spread of science would characterize this era.”⁷⁴

Upon Zwingli's death, Martin Bucer became the leader of the Reformed churches in southern Germany and Switzerland. Later, under Edward VI, he came to England in 1549 as Regius Professor of Divinity at Cambridge University. Bucer was convinced that the future conversion of the Jewish people is guaranteed by Paul's teaching in Romans 11:25–26. This same optimism was expressed by the Strassburg reformer and later professor at the Universities of Zurich and Oxford, Peter Martyr, in his 1558 commentary on Romans; he insisted that “Israel” in Romans 11 has to be taken literally and not figuratively. David Paraeus, the Heidelberg expositor, shared this belief with Bucer and Martyr. For such men, the history of the church would witness a spectacular triumph of the gospel when even the Jews, who had historically rejected and crucified the Messiah, would be brought to submit to him.

Theodore Beza, the renowned New Testament scholar who taught at Lausanne and the Geneva academy, became leader of the Swiss Calvinists after Calvin's death in 1564. He taught that there will come a time when the *world* is restored to spiritual life again, a time when the Jews *also* will come to profess the gospel. The future conversion of the Jews was taught in the marginal note for Romans 11:26 in the 1560 *Geneva Bible*, produced by Scottish and English refugees; the note read:

74. De Jong, *As the Waters Cover the Sea*, 8.

{77} “He sheweth that the time shall come that the whole nation of the Jews, though not every one particularly, shall be joined to the church of Christ.” Thus, *optimism* for the success of the church’s Great Commission characterized the early Reformers.

Rooted deeply in the Reformation tradition were expectations of greater, more glorious days for the church on earth.... While most Protestants concurred with Calvin’s condemnation of the extreme chiliasm ... they were nevertheless optimistic about the course of history in the sixteenth century. This optimism took several forms: anticipation of the approaching fall of the Roman Catholic and Turkish Antichrists; hope for the conversion of the Jews and many heathen to the Reformed faith; predictions of an age of peace, unity among Christians, and a great decline in the power of Satan and evil; the belief in the destined wealth and prestige of the Protestant powers. These hopes were found both on the Continent and in Britain.... After the initial days of the Reformation many heirs of that movement—both Lutheran and Reformed, theologians as well as scientists—expressed in one form or another their optimism regarding the dawn of an era of growth, purity, and unity for the church.⁷⁵

The postmillennial hope of the early Reformers planted a seed which blossomed in the seventeenth century. In 1609 Thomas Brightman’s optimistic exposition of the book of Revelation, *Apocalypsis Apocalypseos*, was published; in it he aimed to instill courage in the church amidst present persecutions by pointing out the Scripture’s promise of an era of triumph for the church on earth. This era will be characterized by the conversion of the Jews and the fulness of the Gentiles, the downfall of the papacy and the Turks, tranquility and a revitalized church, and Christ ruling the nations by His word. The influential Puritan and Elizabethan theologian, William Perkins, taught at Cambridge and St. Andrews; in his commentary on Galatians (published posthumously in 1617) he said, “The Lord saith, *All the nations shall be blessed in Abraham*: Hence I gather that the nation of the Jews shall be called, and converted to the participation of this blessing ... before the end of the world we know.”⁷⁶ Three years later, in 1620, one of the earliest and most popular Puritan commentaries on Romans, Elnathan Parr’s *Plain Exposition*, declared:

75. *Ibid.*, 7, 12.

76. Cited in Murray, *Puritan Hope*, 42.

The casting off of the Jews, was our Calling; but the Calling of the Jews shall not be our casting off, but our greater enriching in grace, and that two ways: First, in regard of the company of believers, when the thousands of Israel shall come in, which shall doubtless cause many Gentiles which now lie in ignorance, error and doubt, to receive the Gospel and join with them. The world shall then be a golden world, rich in golden men, saith Ambrose. Secondly, in respect of the graces, which shall then in more abundance be rained down upon the Church.⁷⁷ {78}

The title of Henry Finch's 1621 work is indicative of the Puritan hope: *The Worlds Restauration; or The Calling of the Iewes, and (with them) of all the Nations and Kingdoms of the earth, to the faith of Christ*. A similar outlook was propounded in sermons before Parliament by William Strong, George Gillespie, and Robert Baillie, in dogmatic works by John Owen, Thomas Manton, John Flavel, and Moses Wall, and in biblical commentaries by Dickson, Hutcheson, Greenhill, and Durham. The postmillennial understanding of world history was firmly entrenched in the early decades of the 1600s.

The popular Puritan preacher, Richard Sibbes, was appointed lecturer at Cambridge in 1610. Two quotations from him suffice to indicate his future hope for the church:

The Jews are not yet come in under Christ's banner; but God, that hath persuaded Japhet to come into the tents of Shem, will persuade Shem to come into the tents of Japhet, Gen. 9.27. The "fullness of the Gentiles is not yet come in," Rom. 11.25, but Christ, that hath the "utmost parts of the earth given him for his possession," Ps. 2.8, will gather all the sheep his Father hath given him into one fold, that there may be one sheepfold and one shepherd, John 10.16.

Let no man therefore despair; nor, as I said before, let us despair of the conversion of those that are savages in other parts. How bad soever they be, they are of the world, and if the gospel be preached to them, Christ will be "believed on in the world." Christ's almighty power goeth with his own ordinance to make it effectual.... And when the fulness of the gentiles is come in, then comes the conversion of the Jews.⁷⁸

77. Cited in *ibid.*, 46–47.

78. Cited in *ibid.*, 43, 92.

Perhaps the most famous theologian of the 1630s and 40s was the Puritan leader in Boston, John Cotton. The texts which appear on the title page of his farewell sermon to those sailing for New England on the *Arbella* in 1630 (viz., 2 Sam. 7:10; Ps. 22:27, 30–31) evidence his belief that all nations of the world will come to acknowledge the living and true God; the colonists were to bear in mind that God's millennial purposes must be served by their efforts (especially in the evangelization of the Indians). Cotton soon came to New England himself, and in 1642 he produced three significant millennial studies. In *The Pwring Out of the Seven Vials*, Cotton exposted the hope of a future ideal church which, after the fall of Antichrist (i.e., Roman Catholicism), will consist in united Jews and Gentiles. This era will witness the widespread "rising of men from spiritual death to spiritual life" and consequently the revitalization of the church (*The Churches Resurrection or the Opening of the 5th and 6th verses of the 20th Chapter of the Revelation*); this will also be, after the Turkish downfall, an age of peace and rest for the church (*A Brief {79} Exposition of the whole Book of Canticles*). Cotton's writings did much to propagate the postmillennial interpretation of unfulfilled prophecy; his opinions were quite influential on many other writers. Furthermore, it is clear from Oliver Cromwell's correspondence with Cotton, as well as the history of the New England colonies, that Cotton's postmillennialism guided and motivated significant social and political leaders of his age.

Postmillennialism was prevalent not only in England and New England, but also in Scotland. Robert Baillie, a Scottish commissioner to the Westminster Assembly, wrote in 1645:

We grant willingly that the nation of the Jews shall be converted to the faith of Christ; and that the fulness of the Gentiles is to come in with them to the Christian Church; also that the quickening of that dead and rotten member, shall be a matter of exceeding joy to the whole Church. But that the converted Jews shall return to Canaan to build Jerusalem, that Christ shall come from heaven to reign among them for a thousand years, there is no such thing intimated in the Scriptures in hand.⁷⁹

79. *A Dissuasive from the Errors of the Time*, chap. 11: "The Thousand Years of Christ his visible reign upon earth is against Scripture," cited in Murray, *Puritan Hope*, 50.

It was in the environment of this widespread Puritan postmillennialism that the Westminster Assembly met and formulated its doctrinal declarations. Samuel Rutherford, renowned Presbyterian writer at St. Andrews and one of the Scottish commissioners to the Westminster Assembly with Baillie and Gillespie (whose postmillennialism has been mentioned above), shared the postmillennial perspective:

I shall be glad to be a witness, to behold the kingdoms of the world become Christ's. I could stay out of heaven many years to see that victorious triumphing Lord act that prophesied part of his soul-conquering love, in taking into his kingdom the greater sister, that kirk of the Jews ... ; to behold him set up as an ensign and banner of love, to the end of the world.

I mean not any such visible reign of Christ on earth, as the Millenaries fancy.

Yet we are to believe, Christ ... shall reign a victorious conquering King to the ends of the earth. O that there were nations, kindreds, tongues and all the people of Christs habitable world, encompassing his throne with cries and tears for the spirit of supplication to be poured down upon the inhabitants of Judah for that effect.⁸⁰

Among the English delegates to the Westminster Assembly were men like William Gouge, Joseph Caryl, and Edward Reynolds. Gouge, a well-known Presbyterian, not only published postmillennial works of other authors, but wrote his own (e.g., *The Progress of Divine Providence*, {80} 1645) and declared this hope before the House of Lords. Gouge referred to “particular promises concerning a future glory of the Christian church” as found in the Old Testament prophecies, the words of Christ and His apostles, and especially in the book of Revelation; according to him, they do *not* apply to the world to come, but to the “glorious estate” of the church *prior* to the day of judgment—an estate characterized by the calling and conversion of the Jews and the fulness of the Gentiles into one visible church. Caryl was a leading Independent, a strong promoter of missions, and a friend of John Owen. He wrote the address “To the Reader” in the 1655 Eliot (missionary) tract and the preface to the 1660 tract, both of which were strong with millennial overtones. In them he spoke of the increase of Christ's kingdom to the ends of the earth in fulfillment of biblical prophecies; the mis-

80. Cited in Murray, *Puritan Hope*, 53–54, 98.

sionary endeavor is a step toward the greater harvest of the future for the church. Reynolds wrote the address “To the Reader” for the 1659 Eliot tract, calling upon the English to support New England missions because

it is the Ardent prayer of all that love the Lord Jesus in sincerity, that his Kingdome may be enlarged, and the glorious light of the *Gospell* may shine forth into all Nations, that all the ends of the world may see the salvation of our God, that the *Stone* cut out without hands may become so great a mountain as to fill the Earth, that the *Idols* may be *utterly abolished*, and the *Gods of the Earth famished*, and that all the Isles of the Heathen may worship the only true God....⁸¹

Perhaps it is worth mentioning, as well, that Thomas Manton, who wrote the “Epistle to the Reader” for the Westminster Confession of Faith, was also an expressed postmillennialist; his confidence in the church’s power over Satan is manifest when he therein says, “The devil hath a great spite at the kingdom of Christ.... [However,] O how sweetly and successfully would the work of God go on, if we would but all join together in our several places to promote it!”

In the light of the above opinions, it is not difficult to interpret relevant statements of the Westminster Standards as to the eschatological perspective they advance. De Jong observes that the early English Calvinists defended the view that a time of increased spirituality will crown the course of earthly history. According to his research, proponents of an optimistic view of history in the 1640s shared the anticipation of the fall of the Church of Rome (the Antichrist), the swarming of Jews and Gentiles into the true church, and an era of true faith and blessing among all men.⁸² We have seen how commissioners to the Westminster Assembly, convened by Parliament in 1643, freely expressed this confidence. That it should become incorporated into the Westminster documents is not surprising. In *The {81} Directory for the Publick Worship of God*, the section treating “Of Publick Prayer before the Sermon,” we read that we are “to pray for the propagation of the gospel and kingdom of Christ to all nations; for the conversion of the Jews, the fulness of the Gentiles, the fall of Antichrist....” In *The Confes-*

81. Cited in De Jong, *As the Waters Cover the Sea*, 54.

82. De Jong, *ibid.*, 119, 77.

sion of Faith itself, the pope is identified as the Antichrist (15.6) and Christ is said to overcome all the enemies of the redeemed by His almighty power and wisdom in a manner consonant with His wonderful dispensation (8.8); for the latter assertion the Confession cites Psalm 110:1; 1 Corinthians 15:25–26; Colossians 2:15; and Malachi 4:2–3, passages which pertain to the pre-consummation (i.e., prior to the general resurrection, 1 Cor. 15:21, 23), interadventual (i.e., beginning with Christ's work during His first coming, Col. 2:14–15; cf. John 12:31–32; 1 John 3:8), ascended ministry of Christ (cf. the use of Ps. 110 in Acts 2:33–36; Heb. 1:2–4, 13) wherein the saints participate in the Savior's triumph over the forces of wickedness (Mal. 4:3; cf. Gen. 3:15 with Rom. 16:20; John 16:33 with 1 John 5:4). *The Larger Catechism* reinforces this teaching, saying, "Christ executeth the office of a king, in calling out of the world a people to himself, and giving them officers, laws, and censures, by which he visibly governs them; ... restraining and overcoming all their enemies, and powerfully ordering all things for his own glory, and their good..." (answer to question 45). *The Directory* cited above amplifies by praying "for the deliverance of the distressed churches abroad from the tyranny of the antichristian faction, ... for the blessing of God upon the reformed churches ... and for our plantations in the remote parts of the world: more particularly for that church and kingdom whereof we are members, that therein God would establish peace and truth, the purity of all his ordinances, and the power of godliness; prevent and remove heresy, schism, profaneness, superstition, security, and unfruitfulness under the means of grace...." The view that the church will effectively defeat its opposition and disciple all nations is reinforced by statements elsewhere: "... after a most special manner [the providence of God] taketh care of his Church, and disposeth all things to the good thereof" (*Confession* 5.7); the ascended Christ "doth gather and defend his Church, and subdue their enemies" (*Larger Catechism*, question 54), and in the gospel ordinances God's covenant "is held forth in more fullness, evidence, and spiritual efficacy, to all nations, both Jews and Gentiles" (*Confession* 7.6).

Thus, the Westminster divines looked forward to the overthrow of the Roman Antichrist, the expansion of the true church by the conversion of the Jews and fulness of the Gentiles, and an age of blessing upon

the church through the rule of Christ. They believed in the visible prosperity of the gospel and the future accomplishment of the Great Commission. With reference to the Lord's Prayer, *The Larger Catechism* declares, "In the {82} second petition, (which is, *Thy kingdom come*,) ... we pray, that the kingdom of sin and Satan may be destroyed, the gospel propagated throughout the world, the Jews called, the fulness of the Gentiles brought in; the church furnished with all gospel-officers and ordinances, purged from corruption ... and made effectual to the converting of those that are yet in their sins, ... and that he [Christ] would be pleased so to exercise the kingdom of his power in all the world, as may best conduce to these ends" (answer to question 191). The Scripture texts cited are again common to the early literature of postmillennialism (e.g., Ps. 67; 68:1, 18; Mal. 1:11; Rom. 10:1; 11:25–26; Rev. 12:10–11). The Reformed theology of the Westminster Standards looks ahead to the worldwide advance of the gospel, bringing conversion in large measure (indicated by the calling of the Jews and fulness of the Gentiles) in all the world, and prosperity for the true church of Christ. As De Jong says, "... in the context of the views current then, Westminster's formulation must be seen as a deliberate choice of mild, unsystematized, postmillennial expectations."⁸³ Therefore, we see that there was a solid and consistent testimony to postmillennial eschatology in Reformed circles from Calvin to Westminster. This confidence was not speculative in nature, but rather rooted in Scripture and practical in its effects:

Anglo-American missions were the fruit of these enlivened expectations.... Presbyterian and Independent millennialists were her strongest supporters and leaders in the propaganda and financial drives on her behalf.... Uncountable guarantees of this glorious day were found throughout the Old and New Testaments and were used throughout the missionary literature to amplify the understanding of and quicken desires for it. The early work was seen as leaven, a mustard seed, a bruised reed and smoking flax, a day of beginnings and small things, the harvesting of first fruits. All these figures guaranteed greater things to follow. Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, was seen as riding forth to victory on a white horse. Knowledge of the Lord was being spread to all nations, from sea to sea, to the ends of the earth. He was

83. *Ibid.*, 38.

claiming the nations as his heritage. Fields were white unto harvest. The everlasting gospel was being proclaimed. The stone cut out of the mountain was crushing earthly kingdoms and would soon fill the earth with Christ's kingdom. Clearly the first fulness of the Gentiles was being completed and would be followed by widespread conversions of both Jews and Gentiles.

... many leading Puritans in England and America wrote and endorsed missionary propaganda in the 1640s and 1650s. Their support was predicated on the belief that through missions the glorious gospel day would dawn. It should be noted that this faith was based on many Old and New Testament passages of hope and not on a few {83} select verses. Many Biblical images and figures of speech were used to describe the period that had already begun.⁸⁴

The influence of postmillennialism on missionary enterprises in England was phenomenal.⁸⁵ A series of eleven booklets was published in London between 1643 and 1671, designed to promote support for missions; named after one of their prominent authors, they came to be known collectively as the "Eliot tracts." The signers of these tracts were advocates of postmillennialism. Thomas Shepherd was the editor of the 1648 tract, and in it we read:

This little we see is *something* in hand, to *earnest* to us those things which are in hope; something in *possession*, to assure us of the rest in promise, when the ends of the earth shall see his glory, and "the Kingdoms of the world shall become the Kingdoms of the Lord and his Christ, when hee shall have Dominion from Sea to Sea, and they that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him." And if the *dawn* of the *morning* be so delightfull, what will the clear day be? If the *first fruits* be so precious, what will the *whole harvest* be? If some *beginnings* be so full of joy, what will it be when God shall *perform* his *whole* work, when "the whole earth shall be full of the knowlege of the Lord, as the waters cover the Sea," and East and West shall sing together the song of the Lamb?⁸⁶

84. *Ibid.*, 77–78, 55.

85. The reader is recommended to consult recent works by De Jong and Murray, mentioned above, for a detailed survey of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century history of missions in millennial perspective. Much of the information in the present essay is derived from these sources.

86. Cited in De Jong, *As the Waters Cover the Sea*, 52.

This tract was forwarded by twelve prominent Puritans to the Parliament, saying, “The utmost ends of the earth are designed and promised to be in time the possessions of Christ....”⁸⁷ In the introduction to the 1653 tract, Richard Mather declared:

The Amplitude, and large Extent of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ upon Earth, when “the Heathen shall be his Inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the Earth his possession; and when all Kings shall fall down unto him, and all Nations do him service, all contrary Kingdoms and Powers being broken in pieces and destroyed,” is a thing plainly and plentifully foretold and promised in the Holy Scriptures; *Psal.* 2.8 and 22.7 and 72.11 and 86.9 *Dan.* 2.35. 44,45. and 7.26,27. *Zech.* 14.9.⁸⁸

John Eliot defined the kingdom of Christ as a condition prevailing “when all things among men are done by the direction of the word of his mouth,” and thus applying to individuals, churches, states, and the eternal kingdom in heaven. According to him, Christ desires “to bring all the World subject to be ruled in all things by the Word of His mouth.” Eliot taught that {84} Christ’s kingdom on earth will grow to unprecedented proportions and be established to the ends of the earth in both civil and ecclesiastical affairs. “The Gospel shall spread over all the Earth, even to all the ends of the Earth; and from the rising to the setting Sun; all Nations shall become the Nations and Kingdoms of the Lord and his Christ.”⁸⁹ The perspective in which missions work is to be seen is also evident from the Scripture texts cited on the title pages of the Eliot missionary tracts: e.g., Job 8:7; Zephaniah 2:11; Zechariah 4:10; Malachi 1:11; Matthew 13:13, 33.

In addition to its stimulus to missions, the postmillennial hope was influential on men of letters (e.g., John Milton), scientists (e.g., Sir Robert Boyle), and politicians (e.g., Oliver Cromwell). English sea power came to be viewed as an avenue for enlightening the heathen, as evidenced in the writings of John Norden, John Davis, and Richard Hakluyt. The last named, as well as men like Edward Johnson, put colonization in the same light. The English colonies were taken as agencies for advancing the kingdom of God in the world, as can be

87. Cited in Murray, *Puritan Hope*, 94.

88. Cited in De Jong, *As the Waters Cover the Sea*, 55.

89. Cited in *ibid.*, 75.

seen from the charter of the Massachusetts Bay colony, the colonial seal (depicting an Indian uttering the Macedonian call, “Come over and help us”), and the title of, for instance, John Oxenbridge’s book, *A Seasonable Proposition of Propagating the Gospel by Christian Colonies on the Continent of Guiana*. With evangelization and colonization came the foundation of schools and catechetical interests. New civil communities were organized, and older societies (e.g., the Indians) were often reorganized along explicitly Christian lines. For instance, John Eliot’s total program for missions aimed to establish Christ as the Indians’ lawgiver, judge, and king, just as John Cotton aimed to do among his own people in New England. All in all, postmillennialism brought a total vision for subduing the world to Jesus Christ, beginning with widespread conversions, and continuing into the reform and prosperity of ecclesiastical, intellectual, and social affairs.

We can complete our survey of postmillennialism in the 1600s by noting quickly the most significant statements of this hope in the last half of the century. The leading Independent theologian of the age in England was undoubtedly John Owen. In October of 1651 he preached before the House of Commons, the title of his sermon being, “The Advantage of the Kingdom of Christ in the Shaking of the Kingdoms of the World.” Therein he explained the kingdom of God as spiritual control of Christians resulting in obedient conformity to the word of Christ. The anti-Christian kingdoms then being shaken will, according to Owen, be replaced with the triumph of Christ’s reign, signaled by the conversion of the Jews. Certain things will characterize this time:

That God in his appointed time will bring forth the kingdom of the {85} Lord Christ unto more glory and power than in former days, I presume you are persuaded. Whatever will be more, these six things are clearly promised:

Fulness of peace unto the gospel and the professors thereof, Isa. 11.6,7, 54.13, 33.20,21; Rev. 21.15.

Purity and beauty of ordinances and gospel worship, Rev. 11.2, 21.3....

Multitudes of converts, many persons, yea, nations, Isa. 60.7,8, 66.8, 49.18–22; Rev. 7.9.

The full casting out and rejecting of all will-worship, and their attendant abominations, Rev. 11.2.

Professed subjection of the nations throughout the whole world unto the Lord Christ, Dan. 2.44, 7.26,27; Isa. 60.6–9;—the kingdoms become the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ (Rev. 11.15).....

*A most glorious and dreadful breaking of all that rise in opposition unto him, Isa. 60.12—never such desolations, Rev. 16.17–19.*⁹⁰

Owen's postmillennial confidence was rooted in the assured promises of Scripture rather than an autonomous reading of world history, for even in a time of decline and despair (... *if Popery Should Return Upon Us*, 1680), the promise of God will stand firm. "Though our *persons* fall, our *cause* shall be as truly, certainly, and infallibly victorious, as that Christ sits at the right hand of God. The gospel shall be victorious. This greatly comforts and refreshes me."⁹¹

William Strong, an Independent like Owen, also preached noteworthy postmillennial sermons before the powers that be (1648, 1653, 1654), wherein he emphasized the triumph of the church over all her enemies, Christ's dominion over all kingdoms, and the millennium of the "Churches Peace and glory" which will come, not by physical force, but by "conversion." Strong argued that Christ will not rule on earth in person during this time, but rather will entrust this rule to His saints. In his book, *A Confutation of the Millenarian Opinion* (1657), Thomas Hall argued against the error of premillennialism as well; the fact that "the great sensible and visible happiness of the Church on earth before the Ultimate Day of Judgment is prophesied in the Word of God"⁹² does not prove Christ's personal appearance on earth at that time, but only supports the optimism for gospel prosperity advanced by the Puritan postmillennialists.

The most significant doctrinal statement from seventeenth-century Independents (and later endorsed by American Congregationalists in 1680 and 1706) was drawn up at a 1658 conference held in the chapel of the old Savoy Palace. In agreement with the eschatology of the Westminster divines, the representatives at Savoy (which included John Owen) declared: {86}

90. Cited in Murray, *Puritan Hope*, 38.

91. Cited in *ibid.*, xii.

92. Cited in *ibid.*, 51.

We expect that in the latter days, Antichrist being destroyed, the Jews called, and the adversaries of the kingdom of his dear Son broken, the churches of Christ being enlarged and edified through a free and plentiful communication of light and grace, shall enjoy in this world a more quiet, peaceful, and glorious condition than they have enjoyed.⁹³

Twenty years later, a commissioner to Savoy, John Howe, preached a series of sermons on Ezekiel 39:29 which were subsequently published under the descriptive title: *The Prosperous State of the Christian Interest Before the End of Time, by a Plentiful effusion of the Holy Spirit*. Howe taught “that there shall be a permanent state of tranquillity and prosperity unto the church of Christ on earth,” characterized by internal prosperity for the church as well as external peace and cessation of persecution. Through the Holy Spirit, Christianity will flourish by means of the ministers of the state (who “shall universally concur, or very generally, in the practical acknowledgment that Christ is King of kings, and Lord of lords, willingly resign, as it were, their sceptres, or hold them only in a direct and designed subordination and subserviency to him and his sceptre”) and ministers of the church (who “shall know how to speak to better purpose, with more compassion and sense, with more seriousness, with more authority and allurements, than we now find we can”). The direct influence of the Spirit on individuals will show itself in two great effects: “(1) In numerous conversions; and (2) In the high improvement and growth of those who sincerely embrace religion, their eminent holiness....” Thus, with the decline of hostilities and wars in the world and with the increase of the church in both extent and glory, “religion shall not be an inglorious thing in the world always.”⁹⁴ Another important postmillennialist we could mention here in passing would be Stephen Charnock (1628–80), a proctor at Oxford, ejected from the ministry under the Restoration of Charles II, and author of one of the classic Reformed treatments of theology proper, *The Existence and Attributes of God*.

When we turn to Scotland and the Netherlands, it becomes obvious that postmillennialism in the seventeenth century was an internation-

93. Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, vol. 3, 4th ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1877), 723.

94. The quotations from Howe’s work are taken from Murray’s reprint of it as appendix 1 of his above-mentioned text.

ally endorsed position. Quotations from two leading Scottish Covenanters during the “killing times” are illustrative. Richard Cameron, preaching on Psalm 46:10, said:

You that are in hazard for the truth, be not troubled: our Lord will be exalted among the heathen. But many will say, “we know He will be exalted at the last and great day when He shall have all the wicked on His left hand.” Yes; but says He, “I will be exalted in the earth.” {87} He has been exalted on the earth; but the most wonderfully exalting of His works we have not yet seen.... The Church of Christ is to be so exalted that its members shall be made to ride upon the high places of the earth. Let us not be judged to be of the opinion that some men in England called the Fifth-Monarchy men, who say that, before the great day, Christ shall come in person from heaven with all the saints and martyrs and reign a thousand years on earth. But we are of the opinion that the Church shall yet be more high and glorious, as appears from the book of Revelation, and the Church shall have more power than ever she had before.⁹⁵

Cameron’s hope was built on Scripture, not current events, as is clear from the fact that he preached these words three days before his death on the Ayrsmoss moors. Another Covenanter leader who was martyred was James Renwick, whose death in 1688 came just two years before the reconstitution of the Presbyterian Church. Renwick proclaimed, “There have been great and glorious days of the gospel in this land; but they have been small in comparison of what shall be.”⁹⁶

The same optimism characterized Dutch theology; postmillennialism was popular in the Netherlands among the leaders of the so-called “Second Reformation” and had significant influence on early Dutch missions. Berkhof says:

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries several Reformed theologians in the Netherlands taught a form of Chiliasm, which would now be called Postmillennialism. Among them were such well-known men as Coccejus, Alting, the two Vitringas, d’Outrein, Witsius, Hoornbeek, Koelman, and Brakel.... The prevailing view was that the gospel, which will gradually spread through the whole world, will in the end become immeasurably more effective than it is at present, and will usher in a period of rich spiritual blessing for the Church of Jesus

95. Cited in Murray, *Puritan Hope*, 54–55.

96. Cited in *ibid.*, xiii.

Christ, a golden age, in which the Jews will also share in the blessings of the gospel in an unprecedented manner.⁹⁷

The 1689 work of Jacobus Koelman is particularly noteworthy for the familiarity it shows with English millennial writers. His contemporary, Herman Witsius (died 1708), exercised a heavy influence on commentators and missions leaders. He taught that

... when the fulness of the Gentiles is brought in, *all Israel shall be saved*, that is, as our Dutch commentators well observe, not a few, but a very great number, and in a manner the whole Jewish nation, in a full body.... To this restoration of Israel shall be joined the riches of the whole church, as it were, life from the dead, Rom. 11:12. The apostle intimates, that much greater and more extensive benefits {88} shall redound to the Christian church from the fulness and restoration of the Jews ... ; greater, I say, *intensively*, or with respect to degrees, and larger with respect to *extent*.... For there is a certain fulness of the Gentiles, to be gathered together by the successive preaching of the gospel, which goes before the restoration of Israel, of which ver. 25, and another richness of the Gentiles, that comes after the recovery of Israel.⁹⁸

Therefore, we cannot avoid concluding that international Calvinism, for the first two centuries of its history, anticipated an era of peace and prosperity when the gospel will have converted the world nations; Reformed theology was pervasively aligned with the postmillennial hope, advocated by a wide variety of dogmaticians and expositors, preachers and politicians, in a variety of places and circumstances, and rooted in an extensive variety of scriptural passages from the Old and New Testaments.

The effects were felt in ecclesiastical, intellectual, political, and various social domains.

The Eighteenth Century

In 1700 Samuel Willard called upon his hearers in *The Fountain Opened* to show diligence in prayer as well as in the training of their children in preparation for the days of spiritual prosperity that would accompany the calling of the Jews, the fulness of the Gentiles, and the

97. Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 4th ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1939), 716.

98. *Economy of the Covenants*, cited by Kik, *Eschatology of Victory*, 8.

destruction of Antichrist. These were, as we have seen, common themes in the preceding century. Once again the postmillennial hope would gain the support of the leading lights of the period. The famous Calvinistic commentator, Matthew Henry, preached these words on New Year's Day, 1707:

The year of the revival of primitive Christianity in the power of it, will be the year of the redeemed. This we wish, we hope, we long to see, both at home and abroad.... When the bounds of the church will be enlarged by the conversion of Pagan and Mahometan nations to the faith of Christ, and the spreading of the gospel in foreign parts.⁹⁹

Of Isaiah 2:2–4, Malachi 1:11, and Psalm 72:8–11 Henry wrote in his commentaries:

Now it is here promised ... that Christianity shall be openly preached and professed ... , that it shall be firmly fixed and rooted ... , that it shall not only overcome all opposition, but overtop all competition.... The spiritual worship which it shall introduce shall put down the idolatries of the heathen.... Multitudes shall embrace the Christian faith. They shall flow into it, as streams of water, which denotes the abundance of converts that the gospel should make....

Instead of his being worshipped and served among the Jews only, a {89} small people in a corner of the world, he will be served and worshipped in all places, *from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same; in every place*, in every part of the world, *incense shall be offered to his name*; nations shall be disciplined, and shall speak of the wonderful works of God....

Religion shall flourish under Christ's government.... Righteousness shall abound and be in reputation, shall command and be in power.... Christ's kingdom shall be extended very far, and greatly enlarged; considering, 1. The extent of his territories ... 2. The dignity of his tributaries.

These quotations are but representative samplings of Matthew Henry's eschatological convictions about world history. Similar expressions can be found in men like Thomas Boston, the renowned author of *Human Nature in Its Fourfold State*, and the Connecticut preacher, Adams, of New London. In 1716 the former preached, "There is a day coming in which there shall be a national conversion of the Jews.... That will be a lively time, a time of a great outpouring of the Spirit, that

99. Cited in Murray, *Puritan Hope*, 113.

will carry reformation to a greater height than yet has been.” Likewise the latter preached in 1721, “Oh! that the Lord would arise and have mercy upon Zion, that the time to favour it, the set time may come, that the whole earth may be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea!”¹⁰⁰

The extent to which postmillennialism had become engrained in the thought of the period is perhaps indicated in the commentaries, prayers, and hymns of the general era. Postmillennial commentaries were published by Daniel Whitby in 1703 (on the New Testament, with a special treatise on the millennium), William Lowth in the years between 1714 and 1725 (on the prophets), and Charles Daubuz in 1720 (on Revelation). Often the prayers of the period which are recorded for us¹⁰¹ petition the Lord for the latter-day glory of the church, the triumph of the gospel throughout the world, the conversion of the Jews, and bringing in of the fulness of the Gentiles. In 1679 Walter Smith drew up rules for the praying societies and said, “... all that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity ... will long and pray for the out-making of the gospel-promises to his Church in the latter days, that King Christ would go out upon the white horse of the gospel, conquering and to conquer, and make a conquest of the travail of his soul, that it may be sounded that the kingdoms of the world are become his, and his name called upon from the rising of the sun to its going down.” Toward that end Smith went on to direct prayer for the engrafting of the Jews, the enlightenment of the pagan world, and correction of all heresy. {90}

Reformed piety breathed postmillennial confidence through its hymns as well (and the hymns it inspired outside of Reformed circles also), as evidence from two centuries proves. Isaac Watts succeeded John Owen in London’s Mark Lane pulpit and was responsible for sponsoring and prefacing works by Jonathan Edwards; he stood between the greatest English and American theologians of the times. In 1719 he led the church to sing, “Jesus shall reign where’er the sun, Does his successive journeys run; His kingdom stretch from shore to shore, Till moons shall wax and wane no more”; also, “This is the day the Lord hath made; He calls the hours his own; Let heav’n rejoice, let earth be

100. The previous two quotes are cited in *ibid.*, 113–14.

101. Examples from the last half of the 1600s are given in Murray, *ibid.*, 100–3.

glad, And praise surround the throne. Today he rose and left the dead, and Satan's empire fell; Today the saints his triumph spread, and all his wonders tell." In 1746 even Charles Wesley testified to the same confidence: "His kingdom cannot fail, He rules o'er earth and heav'n.... He sits at God's right hand Till all his foes submit, and bow to his command, And fall beneath his feet: Lift up your heart, lift up your voice; Rejoice, again I say, rejoice." Benjamin Beddome wrote in 1769: "Shout, for the blessed Jesus reigns; Through distant lands his triumphs spread.... Gentiles and Jews his laws obey; Nations remote their off'rings bring, And unconstrained their homage pay, To their exalted God and King. O may his holy church increase, His Word and Spirit still prevail, While angels celebrate his praise, And saints his growing glories hail." The beautiful 1772 hymn of William Williams should be given in full:

O'er the gloomy hills of darkness,
Cheered by no celestial ray,
Sun of Righteousness, arising,
Bring the bright, the glorious day;
Send the gospel To the earth's remotest bounds.

Kingdoms wide that sit in darkness,
Grant them, Lord, the glorious light;
And from eastern coast to western
May the morning chase the night,
And redemption, Freely purchased win the day.

Fly abroad, thou mighty gospel,
Win and conquer, never cease;
May thy lasting, wide dominions
Multiply and still increase;
Sway thy sceptre, Saviour, all the world around.

Edward Perronet's popular hymn of 1779, "All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name!," takes as one of its stanzas: "Let ev'ry kindred, ev'ry tribe, On this terrestrial ball, To him all majesty ascribe, And crown him Lord of all."

In 1781 John Morison sang, "To us a Child is born, To us a Son is giv'n, Him shall the tribes of earth obey, Him all the hosts of heav'n....

His pow'r increasing, still shall spread, His reign no end shall know;
Justice shall guard his throne above, And peace abound below." In 1795
William Shrubsole swelled the treasury of musical theology with this
short but excellent piece: {91}

Arm of the Lord, Awake, awake!
Put on thy strength, the nations shake,
And let the world, adoring, see
Triumphs of mercy wrought by thee.

Say to the heathen from thy throne:
"I am Jehovah, God alone."
Thy voice their idols shall confound,
And cast their altars to the ground.

Let Zion's time of favor come;
O bring the tribes of Israel home;
And let our wond'ring eyes behold
Gentiles and Jews in Jesus' fold.

Almighty God, thy grace proclaim
In every clime of every name;
Let adverse pow'rs before thee fall,
And crown the Saviour Lord of all.

Shortly after the turn of the nineteenth century, Thomas Kelly produced a good number of postmillennial hymns, including "Zion's King Shall Reign Victorious," "Look, Ye Saints, the Sight Is Glorious," "Hark! Ten Thousand Harps and Voices," and "Zion Stands by Hills Surrounded." In these we sing phrases such as, "Spread abroad the Victors fame," "Jesus rules the world alone," and "All her [Zion's] foes shall be confounded." The church's confidence was lifted again with William Hurn's 1813 hymn:

Arise, O God, and shine
In all thy saving might,
And prosper each design
To spread thy glorious light:
Let healing streams of mercy flow,
That all the earth thy truth may know.

Bring distant nations near
 To sing thy glorious praise;
 Let ev'ry people hear
 And learn thy holy ways:
 Reign, mighty God, assert thy cause,
 And govern by thy righteous laws.

Send forth thy glorious pow'r,
 That Gentiles all may see,
 And earth present her store
 In converts born to thee:
 God, our own God, thy church O bless,
 And fill the world with righteousness.

To God, the only wise,
 The one immortal King,
 Let hallelujahs rise
 From ev'ry living thing:
 Let all that breathe, on ev'ry coast,
 Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

Five years later, these words appeared in a James Montgomery hymn: "See Jehovah's banner furled, Sheathed his sword; he speaks—'tis done, And the kingdoms of the world Are the kingdoms of his Son. He shall reign from pole to pole With illimitable sway...." In 1819 Reginald Heber gave the church one of its greatest missionary hymns, "From Greenland's Icy Mountains"; in it we sing, "Salvation! O salvation! The joyful sound proclaim, Till each remotest nation Has learned Messiah's Name. Waft, waft, ye winds, his story, And you, ye waters roll, Till like a sea of glory It spreads from pole to pole." In the well-known hymn by Sabine Baring-Gould, "Onward, Christian Soldiers" (1875), the church declares in song: {92} "At the sign of triumph Satan's host doth flee; On then, Christian soldiers, On to victory: Hell's foundations quiver At the shout of praise, Brothers, lift your voices, Loud your anthems raise."¹⁰² Examples could be multiplied virtually without end, and we could

102. The preceding hymns can be found in the *Trinity Hymnal* (Philadelphia: Orthodox Presbyterian Church, 1961), numbers (in order of mention) 374, 326, 149, 226, 298, 373, 218, 163, 372, 217, 225, 275, 386, 300, 383, 490.

investigate the significance of the musical renditions of particular psalms (e.g., 67, 72) as well. But enough has been said to demonstrate the thoroughgoing optimism for the gospel which was expressed by the church in this age—expressed in its sermons, its expositions of Scripture, its prayers, and pervasively in its hymns.

The fuller gospel day prophesied in both Testaments was often set before the S.P.G. (Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts) as an incentive, encouragement, and hope for the first thirty-five years of the eighteenth century; numerous texts were utilized to show a coming era when the church should increase and prosper, eventually filling the whole world. These sermons were preached by a wide variety of Anglican leaders (e.g., Stanhope, Ash, Chandler, Waddington, Pearce). The work of missions was placed in the same context of millennial optimism by the influential Boston judge, Samuel Sewall, in his *Phaenomena quaedam Apocalyptica* (2nd ed., 1727). But in addition to missionary activity, the postmillennial hope stimulated the famous “awakenings” of the early eighteenth century; in turn, the awakenings occasioned even wider acceptance of postmillennialism as men looked to the gospel and the Spirit as able to generate a new era on earth. This confidence was almost simultaneously expounded by Jonathan Edwards in America, Robert Millar and John Willison in Scotland, John Erskine, George Whitefield, and John Wesley in England, and Johannes Bengel in Germany.¹⁰³ “Calvinistic millennialism ‘controlled the mind of the period,’” says De Jong.¹⁰⁴ It was a common hope of both Old Light (e.g., Sergeant, Chauncy, Appleton) and New Light (e.g., Bellamy, Hopkins, J. Sewall, Prince, Pemberton, Buell) Presbyterians of America.

Selected statements from prominent leaders of this period give a portrait of early eighteenth-century eschatology. In America Benjamin Coleman, preaching a series on Haggai 2:7 (1727), said, “We look for the days, when the blessed Saviour of men shall be *more* the desire of the nations than he yet has been,” when the church would be enlarged through extensive conversions among Jews and Gentiles. In 1723

103. Cf. De Jong, *As the Waters Cover the Sea*, 120ff.; see also Murray’s quote from Bengel, *Puritan Hope*, 132.

104. *Ibid.*, 119.

Solomon Stoddard cited Psalm 2:8 and 72:7 to call for missionary work among the Indians. His grandson, Jonathan Edwards, was a key figure in the Great Awakening and one of the most notable theologians and philosophers of {93} American history. He once said, “My mind has been much entertained and delighted with the scripture promises and prophecies, which relate to the future glorious advancement of Christ’s kingdom upon earth!”¹⁰⁵ In his *A History of the Work of Redemption*, Edwards maintained that the kingdom of Christ must step by step displace the kingdom of Satan in the period between Christ’s resurrection and the consummation of all things. This will happen through preaching, and in the power of the Holy Spirit. The worldwide extent of Christ’s rule is guaranteed, he said, by “many passages of scripture that can be understood in no other sense.” In the coming period there will be advanced peace, holiness, and material prosperity. Christ’s kingdom shall be universal:

The visible kingdom of Satan shall be overthrown, and the kingdom of Christ set up on the ruins of it, everywhere throughout the whole habitable globe. Now shall the promise made to Abraham be fulfilled, that “in him and in his seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed”; and Christ now shall become the desire of all nations, agreeable to Haggai 2:7. Now the kingdom of Christ shall in the most strict and literal sense be extended to all nations, and the whole earth.... What can be more universal than that in Isa. 11:9, “For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.” ... So it foretold in Isa. 45:22, that all the ends of the earth shall look to Christ, and be saved. And to show that the words are to be understood in the most universal sense, it is said in the next verse, “I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, that unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear.” So the most universal expression is used. Dan. 7:27, “And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High God.” You see the expression includes *all* under the *whole heaven*.¹⁰⁶

Edwards was quite moved, as well, by the undying hope of David Brainerd that the banner of Christ would unfurl around the globe, joyously drawing all nations into the church and bringing prosperity to

105. Cited in *Ibid.*, 125.

106. Cited in Kik, *Eschatology of Victory*, 7.

the gospel. Charles Chauncy proclaimed that Scripture promises that the kingdom of Christ shall be spread to all nations of the earth (1742), and Nathaniel Appleton declared that “the Knowledge of the Truth shall spread, and fill the Earth, as the Waters do the Seas.”¹⁰⁷ In 1740 Thomas Prince delivered a message entitled “The Endless Increase of Christ’s Government,” and David Brainerd’s friend, Samuel Buell, would speak of “the many promises, which have respect to the magnificent Enlargement, Light, Purity, Glory and Felicity, of the Divine Redeemer’s Kingdom, in these last Days.”¹⁰⁸ The American Calvinists were staunch adherents, then, to a scriptural optimism about the history of Christ’s kingdom on the earth. {94}

In the book, *The Fulfilling of the Scripture* (reprinted five times by 1726), the Scottish writer Robert Fleming Sr. substantiated the hope for the conversion of the Jews, a flourishing and united church, and a gradual securing of victory for the church. Robert Millar, in his 1723 publication, *The History of the Propagation of Christianity*, looked for the evangelization of the world when Christianity will be established around the globe. As the kingdoms of the world bow to Christ, doctrinal error and denominationalism will wane, he held. John Willison wrote *The Balm of Gilead... And A Scripture Prophecy of the Increase of Christ’s Kingdom, and the Destruction of Antichrist*, which saw eight editions by 1786; although Christ’s kingdom has experienced at times diminution, “The increase of Christ’s kingdom and glory in the world is absolutely certain and necessary. It must infallibly be, for God hath said...” His fellow Scottish ministers were called upon to take away all “hindrances of the kingdom of Christ, so that his dominion may spread from sea to sea, thro’ all nations of the earth.”¹⁰⁹ John Erskine hoped that the Scottish revival was hastening the day when the knowledge of Christ will fill the earth.

Similar sentiments and declarations could be illustrated from leaders in the Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge (S.S.P.C.K.) like Alexander Webster, John Gillies, John Gibson, and James Brown; they could be matched with similar statements from

107. Cited in De Jong, *As the Waters Cover the Sea*, 139.

108. Cited in *ibid.*, 141.

109. Cited in *ibid.*, 144.

leaders in other missionary organizations: for instance, the Church Missionary Society (Henry Venn, John Newton, Richard Cecil, Thomas Scott, Charles Simeon), the London Missionary Society (Henry Hunter, George Burder, John Eyre, Melville Horne, David Bogue), the Baptist Missionary Society (William Carey, Andrew Fuller), not to mention the New York and Glasgow Missionary Societies, or the continued flow of postmillennial thought in the later S.P.G. (e.g., Shute Barrington, Richard Terrick, Martin Benson, Thomas Hayter, Robert Drummond, William George, Edward Cresset, etc.) and S.S.P.C.K.¹¹⁰ Their messages and sermon texts, as well as book titles, signify their postmillennial confidence (e.g., Gibson, *The Unlimited Extent and Final Blessedness of God's Spiritual Kingdom*, 1768; Brown, *The Extensive Influence of Religious Knowledge*, 1769; Hunter, "The Universal Extent, and Everlasting Duration of the Redeemer's Kingdom," 1780; Toller, *The Coming and Enlargement of the Kingdom of God*, 1779; Wither, *The Happy Tendency and Extensive Influence of the Christian Dispensation*, 1788; Snodgrass, *Prospects of Providence Respecting the Conversion of the World to Christ*, 1796; etc.).

Statements from David Bogue and George Whitefield [WHITfield] will serve to represent the spirit of postmillennialism then prevalent. Bogue {95} asserted that ignorance of Christ is due to the negligence and indifference of Christians in propagating their faith:

One means, and indeed the greatest and most effectual for introducing the glory of the latter days, is the preaching of the gospel.... Let it also be remembered, that whenever the sacred Scripture speaks of the conversion of the world to Christ, and specifies the means by which it is to be accomplished—that means is always the preaching of the gospel.... In order to introduce the Millennium, many thousands of ministers like them [viz., Knox and Whitefield] will God raise up, and send forth into the harvest and he will crown their labors with extraordinary success. From a multitude of such laborers in every country, what may not be expected!¹¹¹

Whitefield is known to have longed for the day when all Israel would be saved, and he was wont to pray, "Fulfill Thy ancient promises, and

110. For a discussion of the above-named, see De Jong, *As the Waters Cover the Sea*, 148–55, 165–93.

111. Cited in Murray, *Puritan Hope*, 234.

let Thy Son have the heathen for His inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession.”¹¹² In 1763 Whitefield wrote of the Christian’s duty to anticipate great revivals:

The Scriptures are so far from encouraging us to plead for a diminution of divine influence in these last days of the gospel that on the contrary, we are encouraged to expect, hope, long, and pray for larger and more extensive showers of divine influence than any former age hath ever yet experienced. For, are we not therein taught to pray, “That we may be filled with the fulness of God,” and to wait for a glorious epoch, “when the earth shall be filled with the Knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the seas”?¹¹³

Clearly, then, the eschatological hope of the eighteenth-century Christian leaders in England and Scotland was identical with that of American Calvinists, like Jonathan Edwards. Therefore, De Jong is certainly justified in speaking of the “seventeenth and eighteenth century vision of the global spread of Christian knowledge” and “the expectation of an era when knowledge of and faith in Christ would be universal.”¹¹⁴

Returning briefly to America, we should note that the same postmillennial confidence which characterized the first part of the eighteenth century was prominent as well at the end of the century, being carried forward by the Edwardeans. Joseph Bellamy, a leader among them, preached a famous sermon on the millennium in 1758, which was republished in 1794; in it he argued on the basis of the increased fertility of the long millennial period that, in the last analysis, many more will be saved than lost. Another Edwardean leader, Timothy Dwight, served as president of Yale from 1795, where he led an apologetic battle against infidelity. He promoted revival and preached often on millennial themes, holding that the conversion of the Jews is contingent upon the widespread conversion of the Gentiles. In a {96} 1798 sermon, he looked for the capitulation of Moslems and Jews to Christ, as well as the latter-day glory of the church. In 1800 he composed the well-known hymn, “I love Thy Kingdom, Lord,” wherein he taught the church to sing: “Sure as thy truth shall last, To Zion shall be

112. Cited in Murray, *ibid.*, 150.

113. Cited in De Jong, *As the Waters Cover the Sea*, 153.

114. De Jong, *ibid.*, 1.

giv'n The brightest glories earth can yield, And brighter bliss of heav'n." But perhaps the most important millennial writer of this period was Samuel Hopkins, who is well known for his extensive involvement in missions projects. Hopkins saw an essential connection among revival, missions, and the millennium. In 1793 he produced his two-volume systematic theology with an appendix entitled, "A Treatise on the Millennium." In it, he demonstrated from Scripture that Christ's church must come in this world to a state of prosperity—a doctrine expounded in every major section of the Bible and especially Revelation 19. Hopkins interpreted Revelation 20 figuratively and said that the millennium will be characterized by peace, holiness, benevolence, knowledge, and joy. Science and technology will develop remarkably and commerce improve. Financial prosperity and general health will see an upswing. Agriculture, as well as the mechanical arts, crafts, or trades will all see vast improvement. More leisure will allow the pursuit of education and understanding; books will spread rapidly. Mankind will be unified under God's blessing, and the church will rid itself of schisms as discipline becomes charitable and pure. That is, widespread cultural transformation will accompany the global conversion of mankind; indeed, such blessings will depend upon the majority of men hearing the gospel in repentant faith and leading lives which evidence radical spiritual transformation. In 1801 Hopkins wrote a sermon which clearly stated that Christ will reign until His enemies are subjugated and until all earthly kingdoms become His own. Thus, the mission effort of the church "will, in some way, though unknown to us, serve to promote and hasten on the happy day when the Heathen shall be given to Christ for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession."¹¹⁵

Just as in the seventeenth century, so also in the eighteenth, Calvinistic postmillennialism generated not only interest in revival and missions, but also *the transformation of all areas of life so as to serve the glory of God and advance His rule in the world*. In 1797 Neil Douglas of Scotland preached on "Messiah's Glorious Rest in the Latter Days," defining the reign of Christ as the conversion of the nations through

115. Cited in *ibid.*, 212. Hopkins's *Treatise* has been reprinted by Arno Press of New York.

prayer, missions, the overthrow of idolatry, and God's historical judgments on guilty nations. Douglas was a social reformer, and he placed social reform in this postmillennial context. Preachers like John Love, David Bogue, and Robert {97} Winter emphasized that when the knowledge of the Lord becomes universal, "it will act as a leaven on life and culture in general,"¹¹⁶ thus bringing a general abhorrence of war and mutual compassion between men and nations, and calling for educational, agricultural, industrial programs to be fostered by kingdom-building Christians. These programs were never the substance of preaching, but always integrated with living faith in Christ. De Jong comments, "Such full-orbed Christianity would dominate the millennium. Winter regarded the society's comprehensive approach to the whole man as consistent with the character of the latter days." In our own day, we see a resurgence of this interest in sanctifying all areas of life to Christ, not merely our worship and evangelistic witness. Those concerned with such matters do well to investigate their postmillennial roots; one can ask whether premillennialism or amillennialism can honestly and consistently promote or generate this "full-orbed Christianity" and "comprehensive approach to the whole man." A pessimistic philosophy of history, coupled with an often excessive otherworldliness, is unavoidably detrimental, if not fatal, for the evangelistically informed pursuit of the cultural mandate. The church historian, Kenneth Scott Latourette, comments about the Christianity which emerged from the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century awakenings:

This Protestantism was characterized by an abounding vitality and a daring unequalled in Christian history. Through it, for the first time, plans were seriously elaborated for bringing the Christian message to all men and to make the life of all mankind conform to Christian ideals.¹¹⁷

This active and conquering Protestantism was steeped in postmillennial eschatology: "Prior to 1810 ... simple chiliasm [i.e., postmillennialism], with its strong emphasis on the gradual arrival of the

116. Cited in *ibid.*, 171.

117. *A History of the Expansion of Christianity*, vol. 4 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1945), 65.

promised kingdom through preaching and conversion, was in vogue.... Simple chiliasm had become universal in Anglo-American churches by this period.”¹¹⁸

The Nineteenth Century

It is recognized on virtually all sides that postmillennialism was a strong position in the nineteenth century—so much so, in fact, that some erroneously characterize the outlook as the pale reflection of nineteenth-century humanistic optimism. By and large, the works of prominent postmillennialists from this century are available in reprints. For these previous two reasons, it is not so necessary to concentrate in detail upon the works of the period to demonstrate Reformed adherence to postmillennial eschatology. {98} However, a short survey is still appropriate, indicating that the best-known biblical and theological scholars were of this persuasion.

In England and Scotland, the conviction that the Jews would be converted, resulting in even further blessings for the Gentiles, was propagated by the minister, Walter Tait (1811), the popular preacher, William Cooper (1796), and missionaries Robert Johnston (*The Conversion of the Jews; and Its Bearing on the Conversion of the Gentiles*, 1853), and Claudius Buchanan (1808). It was advanced in commentaries by Robert Haldane and Thomas Chalmers, as well as in works by Robert M. M'Cheyne, Henry Hunter (*The Rise, Fall, and Future Restoration of the Jews*, 1806), and Archibald Mason (*Sixteen Discourses from Romans 11.25–27*, 1825; and *The Conversion of the Jews*, 1839). It was widely endorsed and acted upon. William McBean strongly advocated missions in the Scottish General Assembly, saying, “it ought also to be our endeavor to hasten the time when the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth ‘as the waters cover the sea.’”¹¹⁹ The renowned Scottish missionary, Alexander Duff, declared in 1840, “Never for a moment lose sight of the grand ulterior object for which the Church was originally constituted, and spiritual rights and privileges conferred, viz. the

118. De Jong, *As the Waters Cover the Sea*, 164, 166.

119. Cited in Murray, *Puritan Hope*, 161.

conversion of the world.”¹²⁰ Similar statements could be given from men like John Love, David Livingston, and John G. Paton.¹²¹

Postmillennialism was a great stimulus to American missions as well. In 1805 Joseph Eckley encouraged the Society for Propagating the Gospel among the Indians and Others in North America by speaking of the day when the knowledge of the true God will fill the earth. Notable sermons to the same effect were preached by Joseph Barker in 1806 (on Ps. 67:7) and Abiel Holmes in 1808 (on Ps. 72:17); noteworthy also is John Livingston’s sermon before the New York Missionary Society in 1804. Jonathan Pomeroy reminded the Hampshire Missionary Society in 1806 that Christian knowledge was to be universal and the worship of God reformed as men unitedly worship Him. In 1820 S. E. Dwight interpreted the second petition of the Lord’s Prayer for the Foreign Missionary Society of Boston; according to him, it referred to the reign of peace, joy, and righteousness still to appear through the work of the church. William Collins elaborated three themes for the Baptist Missionary Society in 1806: the conversion of the Jews, the gathering of the Gentiles, and the Christianization of the world as indisputably taught in God’s word. It was explicitly a postmillennial eschatology which brought about the formation of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. In 1812 the Board’s first five missionaries were ordained, at which time a professor of theology at {99} Andover, Leonard Woods, preached that divine prophecy guarantees an era of millennial glory when all nations and people will praise and fear God; the universal knowledge of Christ is our unalterable object, Woods claimed. As human kingdoms and empires are shaken and fall, the kingdom of God will grow and increase to cover the globe. The extension of Christ’s kingdom over the entire world and the realization of a glorious era assured by prophecy were themes set forth by other A.B.C.F.M. leaders, for instance, Samuel Worcester (*The Kingdom of the Messiah*, 1813), Jedidiah Morse (*The Gospel Harvest*, 1815), Alexander Proudfit (*The Universal Extension of Messiah’s Kingdom*, 1822), and America’s greatest missionary leader of the last century, Rufus Anderson.

120. Cited in *ibid.*, 178.

121. Cf. *ibid.*, 179–83.

We see, then, that if one wishes to find evidence of postmillennialism, he need only to look to the great missionary movements of the church prior to the twentieth century. The growth of Christian missions cannot properly be understood apart from the eschatology which stimulated it. Abundant evidence of postmillennialism is to be found among the biblical scholars and theologians of the era as well. The finest systematic theology of the early nineteenth century was written by Dr. John Dick and published in Scotland in 1834. In it he asserts:

However improbable it may seem that the whole world should be Christianized, we know that God is able to perform what he has promised. The great revolution commenced immediately after our Saviour's ascension.... A future generation will witness the rapidity of its progress; and long before the end of time, "the knowledge of the Lord will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea." Christianity will gain a complete triumph over all false religions; and the visible kingdom of Satan will be destroyed or reduced within narrow limits, during the happy period when, in the figurative language of the Apocalypse, "he shall be bound."¹²²

In 1850 John A. James wrote *The Church in Earnest*, saying that "if the world is never to be converted to Christ ... then would infidelity triumph and exultingly affirm that the Son of God had *not* destroyed the works of the devil—that the gospel had been partially, and to a great extent, a failure, and therefore was a fable." But James was not persuaded that the church would have to face such a conclusion: "A brighter era is destined to arrive; a golden age is to dawn upon us, when the prediction of prophets, and the descriptions of apostles, are all to be fulfilled, and the earth be full of the knowledge of the Lord."¹²³ In his 1851 work, *History of the Christian Religion and Church*, J. A. W. Neander wrote, "Strong and certain was the conviction of the Christians that the church would come forth triumphant out of its conflicts, and, as it was its destination to be a world {100} transforming principle, would attain to dominion of the world."¹²⁴ The nonconformist leader, William Jay (died 1853), once said:

122. Cited in Kik, *Eschatology of Victory*, 11.

123. Cited in *ibid.*, 9–10.

124. Cited in Murray, *Puritan Hope*, xii.

We have many express assurances in the Scriptures, which cannot be broken, of the general, the universal spread and reign of Christianity, which are not yet accomplished. Nothing has yet taken place in the history of Divine grace, wide enough in extent, durable enough in continuance, powerful enough in energy, blessed enough in enjoyment, magnificent enough in glory, to do anything like justice to these predictions and promises. Better days, therefore, are before us, notwithstanding the forebodings of many.¹²⁵

A similar postmillennial eschatology is taught by the famous German exegete, E. W. Hengstenberg (1802–1869), who was a professor at the University of Berlin and an opponent of the liberalism of Schleiermacher. In this regard, Hengstenberg's work on the Psalms and Revelation should be especially noted. These works were translated into English by another great Bible scholar of the last century, Patrick Fairbairn (1805–1874). Fairbairn wrote extensively on scriptural interpretation, and his 1856 book on *Prophecy* is still a classic. He there taught that "Christ shall reign until His enemies have become His footstool, and shall cause the knowledge of the Lord to cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. The word of prophecy can never reach its full accomplishment till this result is attained."¹²⁶ In his discussion of Revelation 20, Fairbairn speaks of the time when Christians will have "grown so many in number and so powerful in influence, that every sphere of life shall be penetrated by their agency, and every region of earth be willingly obedient to their sway." Fairbairn recognized that the age which experiences worldwide conversions will, of necessity, see a sanctification in outward culture as well: "What a remodelling shall it not need to bring along with it of the political and social fabric!"¹²⁷ For many years, a book considered to be a standard on the subject of eschatology was *The Second Advent*, by the Scottish Presbyterian, David Brown. Written in 1846 (and revised 1849, reprinted many times), the book was a strong apologetic for postmillennialism and an attack on premillennialism. As an example of Brown's outlook we notice his treatment of the parables in Matthew 13: "The *growing* character of the

125. Cited in *ibid.*, xiv.

126. Cited in Kik, *Eschatology of Victory*, 11.

127. For the previous two quotes, see *The Interpretation of Prophecy* (London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1964), 474, 461–62.

kingdom, taught by the ‘mustard seed,’ and the *penetrating* and *assimilating* character, taught by ‘the heaven,’ go on till ‘the whole (earth) is leavened,’ and all the world ‘have been brought to lodge in the branches of the mighty tree of life.’”¹²⁸ {101}

Among those who are still held in highest esteem for their exegetical and theological acumen are the scholars of “Old Princeton” Seminary; their writings have remained in print because they are valuable research tools and dependable guides for finding what the word of God has to say. While fallible, the opinions of these men are not lightly dismissed. One of the clearest nineteenth-century witnesses to the biblical basis for postmillennialism was raised by these men. Archibald Alexander, who founded Princeton Theological Seminary in 1812, was a postmillennialist. His son, Joseph Addison Alexander, was one of the finest commentators and Bible scholars of all time. J. A. Alexander’s eschatological confidence in the victory of the church on earth is expressed repeatedly in his 1846 commentary on Isaiah; for instance, on Isaiah 2:2–4, he says, “The Prophet sees the church, at some distant period, exalted and conspicuous, and the nations resorting to it for instruction in the true religion, as a consequence of which he sees war cease and universal peace prevail.”¹²⁹ The renowned dogmatist, Charles Hodge, and his son and grandson (A. A. Hodge and C. W. Hodge) were adherents of the postmillennial hope. In his outstanding work, *Systematic Theology*, Charles Hodge wrote, “The Scriptural doctrine therefore, is consistent with the admitted fact that separate nations, and the human race as a whole, have made great advances in all branches of knowledge and in all the arts of life. Nor is it inconsistent with the belief that the world under the influence of Christianity is constantly improving, and will ultimately attain, under the reign of Christ, millennial perfection and glory.” Also, “The common doctrine of the Church stated above, is that the conversion of the world, the restoration of the Jews, and the destruction of Antichrist are to precede the second coming of Christ.”¹³⁰ In his *Outlines of Theology*, A. A. Hodge says, “The Scriptures, both of the Old and New Testament,

128. Cited in Walvoord, *Millennial Kingdom*, 28–29.

129. *Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1971), 96.

clearly reveal that the gospel is to exercise an influence over all branches of the human family, immeasurably more extensive and more thoroughly transforming than any it has ever realized in time past. This end is to be gradually attained through the spiritual presence of Christ in the ordinary dispensation of Providence, and ministrations of his church.”¹³¹ Finally, we can observe the strong postmillennial convictions of Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield (1851–1921). His commentary on Revelation 19 is excellent:

The section opens with a vision of the victory of the Word of God, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords over all His enemies. We see Him come forth from heaven girt for war, followed by the armies of {102} heaven.... The thing symbolized is obviously the complete victory of the Son of God over all the hosts of wickedness.... The conquest is wrought by the spoken word—in short, by the preaching of the gospel.... What we have here, in effect, is a picture of the whole period between the first and second advents, seen from the point of view of heaven. It is the period of advancing victory of the Son of God over the world.... As emphatically as Paul, John teaches that the earthly history of the Church is not a history merely of conflict with evil, but of conquest over evil: and even more richly than Paul, John teaches that this conquest will be decisive and complete. The whole meaning of the vision of Revelation 19:11–21 is that Christ Jesus comes forth not to war merely but to victory; and every detail of the picture is laid in with a view precisely to emphasizing the thoroughness of this victory. The Gospel of Christ is, John being witness, completely to conquer the world.... A progressively advancing conquest of the earth by Christ’s gospel implies a coming age deserving at least the relative name of “golden.”¹³²

The Reformed heritage in eschatology, represented by the theologians of Old Princeton Seminary, is without doubt solidly postmillennial.

That heritage was not limited to Princeton, however, nor to the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. (Northern Presbyterian). At Union

130. Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1968), 2:94; 3:861.

131. A. A. Hodge, *Outlines of Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, [1860] 1972), 568.

132. B. B. Warfield, “The Millennium and the Apocalypse,” *Biblical Doctrines* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1929), 647–48, 662.

Theological Seminary (Virginia), the Calvinist dogmatist, W. G. T. Shedd (1820–1894), shared and taught the postmillennial perspective. In his *History of Christian Doctrine*, Shedd says that the universal teaching of the church was that the second coming of Christ will not occur prior to the conversion of the fulness of the Gentiles and the calling of the Jews—the preaching of the gospel victoriously to all nations.¹³³ Such was certainly the conviction of the greatest theologians of the Southern Presbyterian Church (P.C.U.S.), J. H. Thornwell and Robert L. Dabney. Thornwell, in writing against premillennialism, said, “if the Church could be aroused to a deeper sense of the glory that awaits her, she would enter with a warmer spirit into the struggles that are before her. Hope would inspire ardour.... It is our unfaithfulness, our negligence and unbelief, our low and carnal aims, that retard the chariot of the Redeemer. The Bridegroom cannot come until the Bride has made herself ready. Let the Church be in earnest after greater holiness in her own members, and in faith and love undertake the conquest of the world, and she will soon settle the question whether her resources are competent to change the face of the earth.”¹³⁴ Dabney’s *Lectures in Systematic Theology* shows that he taught that prior to Christ’s return there must be the overthrow of Romanism, “the general triumph of Christianity over all false religions, in all nations,” and the conversion of {103} the Jews.¹³⁵ Dabney was quite perceptive in saying that premillennialism “disparages the present, the dispensation of the Holy Ghost, and the means committed to the Church for the conversion of sinners. It thus tends to discourage faith and missionary effort. Whereas Christ represents the presence of the Holy Ghost, and this His dispensation, as so desirable, that it was expedient for Him to go away that the Paraclete might come. John xvi.7. Pre-Adventism represents it as so undesirable that every saint ought to pray for its immediate abrogation. Incredulity as to the conversion of the world by the ‘means of grace,’ is hotly, even scornfully, inferred from visible results and experiences, in a temper which we confess appears to us the same with that of unbelievers in 2 Peter 3:4.”¹³⁶ Finally, it is to be noticed that postmillen-

133. Cf. Kik, *Eschatology of Victory*, 10.

134. Cited in *ibid.*, 6.

135. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, reprinted 1972), 838.

nialism characterized not only the Northern and Southern Presbyterian Churches in America, but was also endorsed by the Reformed Presbyterian Church, as evidenced in its 1901 “Reformed Presbyterian Testimony” from Belfast:

Prophecy shows that a time is coming when the Kingdom of Christ shall triumph over all opposition and prevail in all the world. The Romish antichrist shall be utterly destroyed. The Jews shall be converted to Christianity. The fulness of the Gentiles shall be brought in and all mankind shall possess the knowledge of the Lord. The truth in its illuminating, regenerating and sanctifying *efficacy* shall be felt everywhere, so that the multitudes of all nations shall serve the Lord. Knowledge, love, holiness, and peace shall reign through the abundant outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Arts, sciences, literature, and property shall be consecrated to the advancement of the kingdom of Christ. The social institutions of men shall be regulated by gospel principles, and the nations as such shall consecrate their strength to the Lord. Oppression and tyranny shall come to an end. The nations, instead of being distracted by wars, shall be united in peace. The inhabitants of the world shall be exceedingly multiplied, and pure and undefiled religion shall exert supreme dominion over their hearts and lives so that happiness shall abound. This blessed period shall be of long duration. It will be succeeded by a time of general defection from truth and holiness, and of the prevalence of irreligion and crime. This will immediately precede the second coming of the Son of man from heaven.¹³⁷

This quick survey of leading Christian thinkers in the nineteenth century has established, therefore, that the postmillennialism which characterized John Calvin, the second generation reformers, the early English Puritans, the Westminster Assembly, Presbyterians and Independents in England, American and Scottish Calvinists, German and Dutch scholars, the great missions movements and awakenings, early American Presbyterians {104} (whether Old Light or New Light), and various social and intellectual movements—this same postmillennialism continued with driving force among missionary leaders, ecclesiastical leaders, Christian writers in England, Scotland, Germany, and America, leading Presbyterians in the Northern, Southern, and Reformed Presbyterian Churches, as well as the great Princeton theolo-

136. *Ibid.*, 839–40.

137. Cited in Kik, *Eschatology of Victory*, 8–9.

gians. One cannot draw back from concluding that *postmillennial eschatology is central in the heritage of Reformed theology*; optimism for the church's endeavors on earth is deeply engrained in historic, international Calvinism. The preceding survey, then, exhibits the groundlessness of Berkhof's contention that amillennialism is "the only view" expressed or implied in the historic confessions of the Church "and has always been the prevalent view in Reformed circles."¹³⁸ Such a claim cannot stand up in the face of solid and pervasive original-source testimony. So also, claims that postmillennialism originated with Daniel Whitby in 1703, or was generated in the environment of nineteenth-century, humanistic optimism, are deprived of credibility. The Reformed heritage is *permeated* with postmillennial eschatology. This surely does not demonstrate that the postmillennial belief is correct; however, it cannot but commend the position to our attention and demand our scriptural examination of the doctrine. It is nothing less than precarious for us to sweep aside lightly the testimony of so many expert and trustworthy theologians of repute. One's theological tradition may be wrong, but it cannot be ignored. Therefore, all who affirm the truths of Reformed theology ought carefully to consider and weigh the teaching of postmillennialism rather than thoughtlessly or hastily brushing it aside—always, of course, in the Reformation spirit of *sola Scriptura*!

Conclusion

The present essay has not attempted to prove the truth of postmillennialism; only responsible scriptural exegesis can do, or fail to do, that. However, *the way has been cleared* for an honest consideration and possible demonstration of the position's veracity. I have attempted to clarify just what postmillennialism at base teaches in order that the position itself, rather than subsidiary matters, might be central in one's consideration. Further, I have aimed to dismiss popular prejudices and distortions, as well as to point out inadequate excuses for rejecting postmillennialism. The recent decline of adherence to postmillennialism does not stem from advances in Bible scholarship or a strong tex-

138. *Systematic Theology*, 708. The same preconceived and baseless *assumption* is cited as *fact* by George Murray, *Millennial Studies*, 87.

tual refutation of it, but rather from the incursions of autonomous rationalism, secularization, failing faith, new interpretations (based on a faulty hermeneutic at best, a new {105} “vision” at worst), and newspaper exegesis. Contemporary accusations against postmillennialism have rested on misrepresentations of it, and the arguments urged against it have been nontelling (since applicable to all three schools and irrelevant in determining the truth of the position); further, postmillennialism has been wrongly rejected on the basis of unfounded or premature allegations. All and all, no good reason has been offered in recent years for laying aside postmillennial belief. Moreover, far from being eccentric or minimally followed, the position can claim the support of the leading Reformed scholars in the past four hundred years. This is the state of the case, then, at present. There is no *prima facie* reason for ignoring or dissenting from postmillennialism. Quite the contrary, its initial credentials look very good indeed. When contemporary and unwarranted prejudice is laid aside, postmillennialism has a strong and serious claim on the attention of every faithful student of the Bible. And in the light of the history of Christian thought, it would be absurd to hold that prophetic matters are too secondary to warrant our attention; in fact, the most *practical* of issues is at stake, not to mention one of the most *central* of scriptural themes—namely, the kingdom of God. Because *all* Scripture is inspired of God and *profitable* for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness, in order that men of God may be perfectly furnished unto every good work, we must look upon eschatological indifference, agnosticism, and liberty as departures from the full authority, benefit, and sanctifying power of God’s word.

A SURVEY OF SOUTHERN PRESBYTERIAN MILLENNIAL VIEWS BEFORE 1930

James B. Jordan

Eschatology is that locus of systematic theology that deals with the structure of history and with things future. This essay does not deal with the subject of the structure of history except in a general way, nor with the matter of personal eschatology (death, the intermediate state, heaven and hell), nor with the last judgment. We limit ourselves to the future of history, the prophesied course of events as understood by Southern Presbyterians.

To do justice to this topic would require a dissertation, which is prohibited by the requisite length of this essay. Thus, the various foci of eschatological discussion must be left relatively untouched, save as they are relevant to the thought of an important individual. Our main concern must be to determine whether there was any consensus among Southern Presbyterians on the millennial question, and if so, what it was. A comprehensive study would also investigate such questions as the identification of the Man of Sin, the future of Roman Catholicism and Islam, the method of interpreting the Revelation of St. John, the future of the Jews, the attack of Gog and Magog, and many other topics of debate among theologians.

There are three possible millennial views, as follows:

1. Postmillennialism, which holds that the world will be converted through the preaching of the gospel, and evil will be suppressed for an extended period before Christ's return.
2. Amillennialism, which holds that the growth of Christ's kingdom will be paralleled by a growth of Satan's until Christ returns.
3. Premillennialism, which basically is the same as amillennialism, save that when Christ returns He is to set up a 1,000-year kingdom on the earth before the final judgment and the entrance of the righteous and the wicked into their permanent estates.

The amillennial and premillennial positions have a common lack of optimism regarding the victory of the gospel through the give and take

processes of history. The premillennial and postmillennial views have in common a belief that there will be a period, however introduced, in which God's original purposes for His first creation will be realized before it is destroyed {107} by fire and the New Earth introduced. As the reader can see, the millennial question is the basic one as regards the future of the world. The other areas mentioned above are secondary to it.

The Southern Presbyterian church came into existence in 1861 when the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. passed a resolution declaring its "obligation to promote and perpetuate, so far as in us lies, the integrity of these United States...."¹³⁹ The Southern men had hoped to keep war politics out of the church; having failed, they withdrew. The men involved in this division had, of course, been active for some time previous. The *Southern Presbyterian Review* had been begun in 1847, and obviously Presbyterianism had been in the South for two centuries.

From the material available to me, I was not able to uncover the precise views of more than a few of the early Southerners. It is not hard to guess, however, which view was theirs. Samuel Davies (1723–1761), father of the first presbytery of Virginia, held to the postmillennialism common to his age. In a sermon preached in 1756, "The Mediatorial Kingdom and the Glories of Jesus Christ," he said,

We have the strongest assurances that Jesus will yet take to him his strong power, and reign in a more extensive and illustrious manner than he has ever yet done; and that the kingdoms of the earth shall yet become the *kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ*.¹⁴⁰

Davies went on to speak of the coming conversion of the Jews, and of a long and glorious time for the kingdom ahead.

Hampden-Sydney College and Liberty Hall Academy were both opened in 1776 in Virginia. Samuel Stanhope Smith was rector of Hampden-Sydney and William Graham was rector at Liberty Hall. Both were pupils of John Witherspoon, the great New England divine who signed the Declaration of Independence and whose influence was

139. *Minutes of the General Assembly of the PCUSA, 1861*, 329–30.

140. Samuel Davies, *Sermons*, vol. 1 (New York: Robert Carter and Brothers, 1853), 197.

so very marked at the Constitutional Convention. Witherspoon's views can be seen from the following statement: "We plead the cause that shall finally prevail. Religion shall rise from its ruins; and its oppressed state at present should not only excite us to pray, but encourage us to hope for its speedy revival."¹⁴¹ In the context of his times, and considering his Scottish Presbyterian background, it is difficult to see this as anything other than postmillennial. Further evidence for the views of William Graham comes from his pupil Archibald Alexander. Alexander was postmillennial.¹⁴² He taught {108} at Hampden-Sydney for several years before moving north to found Princeton Theological Seminary. The eschatological views of the great Princeton theologians are well known—Joseph Addison Alexander, Charles Hodge, Archibald Alexander Hodge, Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield (a Kentuckian), all were postmillennialists.¹⁴³

It may surprise the reader to read it confidently asserted that these men were postmillennial. It is commonly and falsely assumed by many today that the Reformed theological tradition is predominantly amillennial, or that postmillennialism is an aspect of twentieth-century liberalism. This myth has recently been exploded by several detailed studies. Historical optimism runs through the work of John Calvin.¹⁴⁴ From his detailed study of the evidence, De Jong finds that the Westminster Standards reflect postmillennialism: "In the context of the views current then, Westminster's formulation must be seen as a deliberate choice of mild, unsystematized, postmillennial expectations."¹⁴⁵ Postmillennialism was the commonly accepted view among the Puritans, the Scottish Presbyterians, and the continental Reformed.¹⁴⁶

141. John Witherspoon, *Works*, vol. 2 (Philadelphia: William W. Woodward, 1802), 477.

142. See "Christianity in Its Nature Aggressive," in Archibald Alexander, *Practical Truths* (New York: American Tract Society, n.d.), 34.

143. J. Marcellus Kik, *An Eschatology of Victory* (Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1971), 4ff.

144. See Greg L. Bahnsen's essay elsewhere in this issue; and J. A. De Jong, *As the Waters Cover the Sea: Millennial Expectations in the Rise of Anglo-American Missions, 1640–1810* (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1970), 8.

145. De Jong, *ibid.*, 38.

Thus, the historian would be surprised if these early Southerners were anything else but postmillennial.

It is difficult to know how to organize the material to be presented, but a fair assessment can be gained if the Southern Presbyterian journals are surveyed, the faculties at Southern theological seminaries examined, and a sample taken of those clergymen who published material on the subject.¹⁴⁷

Discussions in the Journals

The *Southern Presbyterian Review* commenced quarterly publication in 1847. A perusal of the first six volumes reveals that these Presbyterians were interested in a very wide range of subjects outside of the normal bounds of theology. There was a breadth of interest among them that is sadly lacking in most twentieth-century theological journals. Mathematics, physics, economics, geology, anthropology, linguistics, literature, and many other areas were taken up in articles, as well as philosophy and theology. Of fifteen articles and reviews that touch the millennial question, only three took any position other than postmillennialism, and all of these were after {109} the War Between the States. After 1868, millennialism does not seem to have aroused so much interest as formerly, and no essays on the subject appear.

In December 1847, Benjamin M. Palmer (1818–1902), pastor then of First Presbyterian Church at Columbia, South Carolina, wrote an essay on “The Intellectual and Moral Character of the Jews,” in which he looked forward to the future conversion of the Jews, viewing their state of dispersion and their exceptional intellectual abilities as preparation for “an extraordinary labor in the Missionary service.”¹⁴⁸

146. For further evidence, see De Jong’s and Kik’s works referenced above, and Iain Murray, *The Puritan Hope* (London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1971). Dutch postmillennialists included Coccejus, Alting, the two Vitringas, d’Outrein, Witsius, Hoornbeek, Koelman, and Brakel.

147. The material presented is necessarily limited to what was available to the writer at Reformed Theological Seminary. More than enough was available, however, for fairly solid conclusions to be drawn.

148. Benjamin M. Palmer, “The Intellectual and Moral Character of the Jews,” *Southern Presbyterian Review* (hereinafter *SPR*) 1, no. 3 (December 1847): 30–55.

An article entitled “The Certainty of the World’s Conversion” appeared a year later. The author was a missionary in West Africa, the Rev. J. L. Wilson. It seems that some were in doubt as to whether or not the world actually would be converted. Wilson likened this to the doubt of the disciples who, when Jesus said that it was “easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God,” replied, “Who then can be saved?” The Lord’s reply, “With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible,” gives the key also to the future conversion of the world.¹⁴⁹

In the following issue there was a review of James McDonald’s *A Key to the Book of Revelation*. The unidentified reviewer expressed agreement with McDonald’s postmillennial views.¹⁵⁰ Again, in 1851 there was a review of David Brown’s *Christ’s Second Coming* in which an unnamed reviewer articulated his concurrence with Brown’s postmillennialism.¹⁵¹ In the July 1850 issue there was a review of a sermon preached in New Jersey by the Rev. Charles K. Imbrie. Imbrie had given out a premillennial eschatology, and the reviewer expressed his dissatisfaction therewith.¹⁵²

An article appeared in the October 1850 issue entitled “Reflections upon Heaven,” by the Rev. E. P. Rogers. Commenting on the statement, “there will be no more sea” (Rev. 21:1), Rogers remarked,

I have said nothing of the influence which the sea is to exert on the universal diffusion of pure religion. This influence has been made a distinct subject of prophecy itself. “Because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles will come unto thee.” The ocean is now bearing on its waters to the most distant lands, the news of salvation. The missionary is going to tell the distant heathen of Christ who came to seek and to save them which were lost. The Bible is going to them, to shed its benign and elevating influences {110} on lands dark and wretched, in moral midnight and degradation. Commerce is beginning to awake to her high mission, as the handmaid of religion, and is preparing rapidly the way for the univer-

149. J. L. Wilson, “The Certainty of the World’s Conversion,” *SPR* 2 (December 1848): 427–41.

150. *SPR* 2 (March 1849): 598.

151. *SPR* 5 (July 1851): 167–68.

152. *SPR* 4 (July 1850): 149.

sal spread of Christianity. Every ship which crosses the waters, will soon be a holy ark, bearing the treasures of religion, to some far distant continent, or lonely isle,— and the distant tribes will shout with joy when they catch the first glimpse of her approaching sails. The office of the sea will not be accomplished until its winds and waves have borne the tidings of redemption to every clime, and cast the anchor of the Gospel —Hope, on every shore.¹⁵³

During these prewar years, E. F. Rockwell, first a pastor and later a professor at Davidson College, North Carolina, contributed two essays. In the first of these, entitled “The Millennium,” he argued that Christ would come at the beginning of the millennium in power and greatness, not in person, but as He had come at the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. Christ would personally return at the end of the millennium.¹⁵⁴ In a later article, “The Prophetic Period of 1260 Years,” he stated that the period of papal domination of the church would end “and is succeeded by a theocracy with Christ at the head, and the saints take the kingdom. For when they reign, He reigns.”¹⁵⁵ Again, this was a common postmillennial construction. In 1858, the Rev. John G. Shep-
person, a pastor in Virginia, contributed a lengthy essay (seventy pages), “On the Conversion of the World.”¹⁵⁶ His article began, “Next to the hope of personal salvation, is the hope of the conversion of the world. No doubt, there will be some wicked men till the end of time; but the time is coming when they will be rare exceptions to the general rule.”

Immediately after the War Between the States (also known to some unlettered persons as “the Civil War”), the *Review* lost its previous millennial solidarity. In December 1866, two articles were printed detailing views diametrically opposed. The Rev. Thomas Smyth, whose work will be assessed later in this essay, propounded a very vigorous post-millennialism;¹⁵⁷ but the Rev. John H. Bocock argued in an equally assiduous manner that world conditions were continually worsening

153. *SPR* 4 (October 1850): 170–71.

154. *SPR* 5 (July 1851): 52–73.

155. *SPR* 11 (January 1859): 606–26.

156. *SPR* 10 (January 1858): 520–33; 11 (April, October): 42–68, 449–70.

157. Thomas Smyth, “The Scriptural Doctrine of the Second Advent,” *SPR* 17 (December 1866): 509–51.

and that Christians should look to the early personal return of the Saviour to set up His 1,000-year reign.¹⁵⁸ The fact that Bocock had served as a chaplain with the Army of the Confederacy may account in some ways for his pessimism.

The next volume also contained two essays on eschatology, this time both pessimistic. An unsigned article, "The Resurrection," argued for {111} a mild premillennialism.¹⁵⁹ The Rev. H. B. Pratt, in an essay, "The Hope of the Gospel," professed uncertainty on the matter, but rejected postmillennialism outright. He tended to believe that the world would *not* be converted, and thus may best be seen as an amillennialist.¹⁶⁰

Finally, in October 1868, James B. Ramsay, pastor at First Presbyterian Church in Lynchburg, Virginia, entered a strongly postmillennial piece entitled "History of the Spiritual Kingdom."¹⁶¹ Ramsay's postmillennialism also came out in his commentary on the first eleven chapters of Revelation, a work which circulated well and which contained a lengthy introduction by Charles Hodge.¹⁶²

From issues of *The Presbyterian Quarterly* one also derives the impression that Southern Presbyterianism was predominantly postmillennial. Between 1887 and 1900 four essays on eschatology appeared. A lengthy article appeared in the first volume on "The Restoration of the Jews" by A. W. Miller, pastor in Charlotte, North Carolina.¹⁶³ The order of future events according to Miller was that first the Jews would be converted, and then the nations of the world. The Jews would be restored to Palestine *after* conversion. This was a standard postmillennial scheme among the Presbyterian churches.

The Rev. W. A. Alexander of Canton, Mississippi, argued for postmillennialism against premillennialism in "The Comings of the Lord"

158. John H. Bocock, "The Future Kingdom of Christ" *ibid.*, 467–92.

159. *SPR* 18 (November 1867): 501–19.

160. *Ibid.*, 519–66.

161. *SPR* 19 (October 1868): 465–502.

162. James B. Ramsay, *The Spiritual Kingdom* (Richmond, VA: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1873), 518 pages. The penultimate chapter, "The Vitality and Triumph of a Pure Spiritual Testimony," discloses Ramsay's optimistic views.

163. *The Presbyterian Quarterly* (hereafter PQ) 1 (1887): 61ff., 249ff.

in 1898.¹⁶⁴ In 1900, a postmillennial interpretation of Revelation 20 was entered by the Rev. Luther Link of Evergreen, Alabama.¹⁶⁵ The singular exception to this optimistic consensus was A. W. Pitzer, of the District of Columbia, whose “The Blessed Hope of the Lord’s Return,”¹⁶⁶ was simply a setting forth of Darbyite dispensationalism, a view with no roots in the Reformation but which was fast becoming popular in the United States at this time. The dispensational form of premillennialism was influential on many twentieth-century Presbyterians, though the Southern Presbyterian church went on record against it.

The *Union Seminary Magazine* (later *Review*) reflected traditional biblical Presbyterianism into the 1930s, but thereafter lost its way in modernism. In 1909, C. R. Vaughan of Union Theological Seminary, Richmond, Virginia, wrote a critique of “The Premillennial Theory.”¹⁶⁷ {112} Vaughan identified his own position and, as he saw it, the position of the Reformed churches as postmillennial: “It is generally agreed [among the premillennialists—J.B.J.] that the theory of the postmillennialists, which is the common faith of the Church in all its various branches, is mistaken.”

Another apparent postmillennialist was Eugene C. Caldwell, professor of Greek New Testament at Union. Caldwell’s article, “A Kingdom That Shall Stand Forever,” includes the following: “The stone cut without hands symbolizes the Kingdom of God which is superhuman in its origin, feeble in its beginning, gradual in its progress, universal in extent, invincible in strength, and of perpetual duration.”¹⁶⁸ This statement seems to be more postmillennial than anything else, though it is conceivable that it might have been made from another position.

T. Cary Johnson, also a professor of systematics at Union, contributed an optimistic essay entitled “The Signs of the Times,” in which he wrote that despite the rough days ahead, glorious times yet await the

164. *PQ* 12 (1898):187ff.

165. Luther Link, “Revelation XX and the Millennial Reign,” *PQ* 14 (1900): 173ff.

166. *PQ* 12 (1898):82ff.

167. *Union Seminary Magazine* 20 (1909): 277ff.

168. *Union Seminary Review* (hereinafter *USR*) 33 (January 1922): 112.

kingdom. "Jesus Christ is on the throne. He is going to disciple all the nations of the earth.... further triumph is ahead for the church."¹⁶⁹

By this time, however, the premillennial and amillennial positions had picked up enough support to acquire equal time. Premillennial essays by pastors appeared in 1919 and 1920.¹⁷⁰ An amillennial advocate contributed in 1928.¹⁷¹ Finally, a decidedly anti-postmillennial essay on "The Second Coming" appeared in 1924 by Thornton C. Whaling.¹⁷² Whaling served in the chair of theology at both Columbia Seminary and Louisville Seminary. He confessed to agnosticism in the premillennial-amillennial choice, but was firm in his rejection of post-millennialism.

From this survey of the journals, the postmillennial position seems to emerge as the predominant Southern Presbyterian position up to 1930.

Positions of the Theologians

The two major seminaries in the South were Union Theological Seminary at Hampden-Sydney College in Virginia and Columbia Theological Seminary in South Carolina, later in Georgia. The former began operating in 1812, the latter in 1828.

Doubtless the greatest theologian to serve at Union was Robert Louis Dabney (1820–1898). Dabney taught at Union from 1853 to 1883. He taught philosophy and political economy at the University of Texas from 1883 to 1894 and concurrently lectured at Austin Theological Seminary, which had just opened. {113}

Dabney was one of the most brilliant men that American Christianity has ever produced. His *Defence of Virginia* was called by Richard Weaver "at once the bitterest and the most eloquent" defense of the Southern cause.¹⁷³ Dabney's devastating critique of Northern indus-

169. *USR* 35 (October 1923): 47–48.

170. S. J. Cartledge, "The Second Coming of Christ," *USR* 30 (January 1919); C. O'N. Martindale, "The Coming of the Lord, Our Hope," *USR* 32 (October 1920).

171. S. L. Morris, "The Subjugation and Doom of Satan," *USR* 39 (July 1928).

172. *USR* 35 (April 1924).

173. Richard M. Weaver, *The Southern Tradition at Bay* (New Rochelle, NY: Arlington House, 1968), 140.

trial capitalism has also been assessed recently as remarkable.¹⁷⁴ It is as a theologian of the first rank, however, that Dabney is best known.

We shall cite Dabney's views in larger measure than others, both out of respect for his stature and influence (His *Lectures in Systematic Theology* was reprinted six times from 1878 to 1927) and because Dabney in his writings locked horns with the innovative premillennialism of his day. A classic postmillennial outline of the future is found in his *Lectures*:

Before this second advent [the return of Christ—J.B.J.], the following events must have occurred. The development and secular overthrow of Antichrist, (2 Thess. 2:3–9; Dan. 7:24–26; Rev. 17, 18:) which is the Papacy. The proclamation of the Gospel to all nations, and the general triumph of Christianity over all false religions, in all nations. (Ps. 72:8–11; Is. 2:2–4; Dan. 2:44, 45; 7:14; Matt. 28:19, 20; Rom. 11:12, 15, 25; Mark 13:10; Matt. 24:14). The general and national return of the Jews to the Christian Church. (Rom. 11:25, 26). And then a partial relapse from this state of high priority, into unbelief and sin. (Rev. 20:7, 8).¹⁷⁵

The force of Dabney's polemic against other views is best felt in an essay, "The Theology of the Plymouth Brethren."¹⁷⁶ Dabney devotes five pages to what he calls the "*Locus Palmarius*" of the Plymouth theology—premillennialism. Dabney makes seven points against this view, but a full discussion of these would occupy too much space here. Two are of especial note. Dabney declares that premillennialism is "directly against our standards."¹⁷⁷ As he saw it, the Westminster Confession and Catechisms ruled out premillennialism by teaching that there is only *one* physical resurrection at the end of history, not *two* separated by the millennium. Second, Dabney issued a devastating critique of one of the most common and recurring fallacies of eschatological belief. It is often argued that the New Testament teaches that Christ

174. David H. Overly, "When the Wicked Beareth Rule: A Southern Critique of Industrial America," *Journal of Presbyterian History* 48 (1970): 130–42.

175. Robert L. Dabney, *Lectures in Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1972), 838.

176. Robert L. Dabney, *Discussions*, vol. 1 (London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1967), 169–228.

177. *Ibid.*, 213.

may return to the earth at any time, and that belief in an “any moment coming” is a great incentive to holiness. The postmillennialist rejects both of these arguments, but many pre- and amillennialists espouse them. Longing for the immediate return of Christ is seen as a {114} sign of spirituality. Dabney’s argument is that since it is simply not true that Christ is returning until the *last* generation, all *previous* generations anxiously awaiting His return would have been *deceived*. Since we are sanctified by the *truth* (John 17:17), a delusive looking for the return of Christ *cannot* have a sanctifying influence. In Dabney’s words:

And it cannot be necessary to the highest edification and “love of the Lord’s appearance” for us, in our day, to expect the advent rather than our death, because Paul, Augustine, Calvin, could not have done so. Had they cherished that hope, time has now stubbornly proved that they would have erred. Was *delusion*, then, a desirable means of Christian edification?¹⁷⁸

We must now assess Dabney’s successors at Union. C. R. Vaughan, who taught from 1893 to 1896, and T. C. Johnson, 1891 to 1930, have already been found to have been postmillennialists. Givens B. Strickler taught from 1896 to 1913, and was also a postmillennialist.¹⁷⁹ There was, however, at least one dissenter, Thomas E. Peck, who taught from 1860 to 1893. Peck rejected as groundless “the expectation of those who look for the millennial glory of the church under *this* dispensation.... There is to be no *gradual* declension of evil; it is to *grow* till the harvest, and to be *suddenly* extirpated as by lightning from heaven.”¹⁸⁰ The reference to “*this* dispensation” leads this writer to suspect that there were to be millennial glories in the *next*, but the available writings of Peck do not indicate whether he was amillennial or premillennial.

178. *Ibid.*, 210.

179. See William McC. Miller, “Calvinists on the Number of the Saved,” *USR* 43 (October 1931): 100ff. Strickler is cited among those who believed that the number of persons in heaven would greatly outnumber those in hell because of the large number of people saved in the millennium.

180. Thomas E. Peck, *Miscellanies*, vol. 3 (Richmond, VA: The Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1897), 302.

We pass now over to Columbia, where the preeminent figure surely was James Henley Thornwell. Thornwell's was one of the most subtle theological and philosophical minds of American Presbyterianism. Sadly, he lived to be but fifty years of age (1812–1862), nor did he live to produce a work of systematic theology as did Dabney. Thus, his work has gone little noticed until recent years, when the resurgence of Puritan Calvinism in the American South and in Britain has brought out his thinking to light again. Thornwell did not turn his attention specifically to eschatology, but in a review of Robert J. Breckinridge's *Knowledge of God, Subjectively Considered*, he commented on the mild premillennialism of Breckinridge:

We may differ from Dr. Breckinridge as to the competency of the Gospel dispensation, under augmented measures of the Spirit, to subdue the world to Christ, but we are heartily at one with him as to the duty of the Church to preach the Gospel to every creature. We may differ {115} from him as to the state of things preceding and introduced by the second advent of Christ, but we are at one with him as to the necessity of watching and praying and struggling for His coming. It is the great hope of the future, as universal evangelization is the great duty of the present. If the Church could be aroused to a deeper sense of the glory that awaits her, she would enter with a warmer spirit into the struggles that are before her. Hope would inspire ardour. She would even now rise from the dust, and like the eagle plume her pinions for loftier flights than she has yet taken. What she wants, and what every individual wants, is faith—faith in her sublime vocation, in her Divine resources, in the presence and efficacy of the Spirit that dwells in her—faith in the truth, faith in Jesus, and faith in God. With such a faith there would be no need to speculate about the future. That would speedily reveal itself. It is our unfaithfulness, our negligence and unbelief, our low and carnal aims, that retard the chariot of the Redeemer. The Bridegroom cannot come until the Bride has made herself ready. Let the Church be in earnest after greater holiness in her own members, and in faith and love undertake the conquest of the world, and she will soon settle the question whether her resources are competent to change the face of the earth. We are content to await the progress of events.¹⁸¹

181. James H. Thornwell, *Collected Writings*, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1974), 48–499.

Juxtaposing his confidence in the gospel to conquer the earth with his statement that the Bride must be ready before the Bridegroom appears, there can be little doubt that Thornwell was postmillennial.

Thornwell's successors at Columbia included B. M. Palmer, whom we have met earlier, and Thornton C. Whaling, who served from 1911 to 1921. As earlier demonstrated, the former was postmillennial, the latter was not. The greatest of Thornwell's successors, however, was on all accounts John L. Girardeau.

Girardeau (1825–1898, served Columbia 1876–1895) was also postmillennial, though not as thoroughly so as most. His eschatological views are summarized by a former student, W. S. Bryan, in George A. Blackburn's biography of Girardeau.¹⁸² Girardeau believed in an imminent collapse of Satan's forces and a sudden introduction of the millennium. In a sermon, "The Signs of the Times—In the World,"¹⁸³ he stated:

The great future event to which the signs of the times are believed to point is the beginning of the Millennium—a period to be characterized by certain distinctive features, such as the extrusion of the Devil from this world for a thousand years, and the reintroduction of his influence at the close of that period; the cessation of war and the universal prevalence of peace; the general outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the {116} nations; the restoration of the Jews and the Israelites to their own land, and their conversion to Christianity and incorporation into the Christian Church as the true and full development of their own ancient church; the overthrow of Mohammedanism and its elimination from the world; the downfall and utter destruction and passing away of the Papal apostasy; the obliteration of Paganism with all its hydra-headed idolatry; the banishment from the world of all false forms of Christianity and all manifestations of infidelity in its protean shapes; the suppression of all that can be called Antichrist, either organized or personal; and the universal reign of Christ with the subjection of all kings, organizations and nations to Him.

Girardeau was for a long time uncertain as to whether the pre- or postmillennial construction was proper. "If the question be, whether

182. George A. Blackburn, *The Life Work of John L. Girardeau* (Columbia, SC: State Company, 1916), 372–76.

183. John L. Girardeau, *Sermons* (Columbia, SC: State Company, 1907), 90–112. See also a sequel, "The Signs of the Times—In the Church," 113–35.

Christ will come in His second glorious Personal Advent to introduce the Millennium, I would answer: I do not certainly know.”¹⁸⁴ Girardeau slightly favored the postmillennial view that Christ would come invisibly to introduce the millennium, at the time his views were recorded by Bryan. Blackburn adds, “During his later years he leaned clearly to the Spiritual coming of Christ to introduce the millennium.”¹⁸⁵

Girardeau’s predictions are illustrative of a certain class of date-setting postmillennialists whose prophetic schemes are continually outdated by history. We shall therefore prolong our discussion of Girardeau in order that this phenomenon may be comprehended more easily. In an essay, “On the Destiny of the Church of Rome,” written in 1893,¹⁸⁶ he maps out the future for us in detail. After identifying the pope as the Antichrist, he writes:

But listening to prophecy, we learn that before the close of this ante-millennial period, another power will arise—Daniel’s willful king—who, after first supporting, will destroy the papal system as such, absorb it into his own gigantic imperialism, and arrogating to himself universal secular and ecclesiastical supremacy, will strike a last desperate blow at the existence of the true Christian religion before the mediatorial Sovereign shall introduce his millennial reign. This, I take it, will be the final and consummate development of Antichrist before the millennium.¹⁸⁷

After an extensive defense and discussion of this matter, he moves on: “The conclusion which seems justified by these arguments is that we must date the 1,260 years of the domineering course of the papal beast, the Church of Rome, from the early part of the seventh century, and very probably from the year 606.”¹⁸⁸ He defends this 1866 date for the beginning {117} of the end of the papacy by a detailed discussion of the unification of Italy which, he writes, broke the back of the papal temporal power.¹⁸⁹

184. Blackburn, *Life Work*, 375.

185. *Ibid.*, 376.

186. John L. Girardeau, *Discussions of Theological Questions* (Richmond, VA: The Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1905), 228–72.

187. *Ibid.*, 229.

188. *Ibid.*, 266.

189. *Ibid.*, 268–70.

After the 1,290 years of papal domination, there are seventy-five more years of tribulation prior to the inauguration of the latter-day glory, according to Girardeau. These numbers are taken from Daniel 12:11–12. The following is to ensue:

Somewhere in the seventy-five supplementary years popery and Mohammedanism will be *completely* destroyed (This will take place *before* the destruction of the final anti-Christian, infidel beast and the false prophet, which will be effected near the close of the seventy-five years), the final Antichrist will be manifested, and the Jews and Israelites will be restored to their own land; and at their close the battle of Armageddon, the battle of that great day of God Almighty, will be fought, the beast and the false prophet cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, and the glorious period ushered in, when Satan will be bound, universal peace will bless the world, the Spirit will be poured out on all flesh, and JESUS will reign from sea to sea, and from pole to pole.¹⁹⁰

The reader will notice that by this scheme, the millennium began in 1941! It is postmillennialism of *this* sort that may fairly be said to have been killed off by World Wars I and II. By no means, however, was this type of schema universal among nineteenth-century postmillennialists.

The last Columbia theologian we shall examine is William Swan Plumer, who served from 1867 to 1880. Plumer (1802–1880) pastored several churches in the South and later served at Western Theological Seminary in Pennsylvania before coming to Columbia. He wrote more than twenty-five volumes, including commentaries on Psalms, Romans, and Hebrews. Commenting on Romans 11, Plumer argues that the phrase “and so all Israel shall be saved” (v. 26) “simply designates the great body of Jacob’s descendants, who shall be living when the Jews shall turn to the Lord and accept their Messiah.”¹⁹¹ When will this take place? “...Verses 12, 15 clearly assert, as nearly all admit, that the conversion of the Israelites is the precursor of the conversion of all nations; so that the Gentiles brought into Christ’s kingdom after the Jews shall generally turn to God will be far more numerous than before, and the great change in Israelites will be life from the dead to

190. *Ibid.*, 271.

191. William Swan Plumer, *Commentary on Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publishers, 1971), 553.

other nations.”¹⁹² Commenting on Psalm 72, he writes, “Though Christianity has not yet gained sufficient influence to expel national contests from among men, yet finally it shall cause men to ‘learn war no more.’”¹⁹³ Again, {118} “There is hope for the heathen in the promises and prophecies of God’s word, vv. 8–11. Tholuck: ‘The most *uncivilized*, the most *distant*, and most *opulent* nations shall pay their homage to him.’”¹⁹⁴ Plumer clearly was postmillennial.

Three smaller seminaries must now be assessed briefly. Austin Seminary in Texas enjoyed the labors of both Dabney and T. C. Johnson in the 1880s. Johnson went on from there to Union. As both men were postmillennialists, a clear optimism was being set forth to the students there at that time.

Louisville Theological Seminary, in Kentucky, profited from the services of Thornton Whaling from 1921 to 1929. As has been demonstrated, Whaling was anti-postmillennial. In the nineteenth century, however, a clear postmillennial note had been sounded by Francis R. Beattie, professor of systematic theology from 1893 to 1906. Beattie had previously held the chair of apologetics at Columbia Seminary, from 1888 to 1893. In his analysis of *The Presbyterian Standards*, Beattie wrote that as regards the end of the world, “it is evident that the Standards teach what is now known as the postmillennial view of time and purport of the second advent of Christ.”¹⁹⁵ Further, Beattie wrote that “... we pray for deliverance, that the gospel may be spread throughout the world, that the Jews may be called into the kingdom, and that the fulness of the Gentiles may be brought in.”¹⁹⁶

Finally, we must say a word about Robert J. Breckinridge (1800–1871), professor of theology at a seminary in Danville, Kentucky, from 1853 to 1869. Breckinridge’s views were rather singular, in that while he was a premillennialist, he saw the last judgment as occurring at the

192. *Ibid.*, 552.

193. William Swan Plumer, *Commentary on Psalms* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1975), 703.

194. *Ibid.*, 707.

195. Francis R. Beattie, *The Presbyterian Standards* (Richmond, VA: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1896), 166.

196. *Ibid.*, 342.

beginning of the 1,000 years, and identified the millennium with the new heavens and new earth. The millennium was for him apparently only a pre-taste of heaven, and not another dispensation of warfare between God and evil.¹⁹⁷

John Breckinridge, the brother of Robert, served churches in the North, but was, like his brother, a native Kentuckian. John died young at the age of forty-three in 1841. He was postmillennial, and one of his last remarks was, “I am a poor sinner who has worked hard, and had constantly before my mind one great object—the conversion of the world.”¹⁹⁸ {119}

Positions of the Pastors

A large number of ministers have already been sampled. B. M. Palmer, for instance, taught at Columbia for only a few years before moving to New Orleans’s First Presbyterian Church, which he pastored from 1865 to 1902. There are, however, some outstanding men who published essays or volumes on the millennial question whose views have not yet been assessed, and it is to these that we now must turn our attention.

Samuel J. Cassels, a minister in Norfolk, Virginia, in 1846 published a book entitled *Christ and Antichrist*. His perspective was postmillennial:

The result of the overthrow of Antichrist will be the establishment upon earth of the glorious kingdom of Christ. As the destruction of the Jewish temple and the dispersion of the Jewish nation, were to precede the universal spread of the gospel, and seemed necessary to its general reception, so the overturning of this nominally Christian, but really antichristian power, appears to be demanded in the providence of God, to the general enlightenment of the world.¹⁹⁹

In summary, “Thus will the downfall of Popery be the signal for the universal triumph of pure Christianity.”²⁰⁰ He concludes his discus-

197. Robert J. Breckinridge, *The Knowledge of God, Subjectively Considered* (New York: Robert Carter and Brothers, 1859), 669ff.

198. Albert H. Freundt, “John Breckinridge,” in *The Encyclopaedia of Christianity*, vol. 2 (Marshallton, DE: National Foundation for Christian Education, 1968), 157.

199. Samuel J. Cassels, *Christ and Antichrist* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1846), 339.

sion, "Scattered Jew will, in the mean time, be regathered, and Jew and gentile, yea, a ransomed world, will rejoice in him, who is the 'Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last.'"²⁰¹

One of the most impressive and erudite of the Southern Presbyterian divines was Thomas Smyth, whom we have met earlier in our survey of the *Southern Presbyterian Review*. Smyth was born in Ulster in 1808, but moved to the United States, becoming pastor of the Second Presbyterian Church in Charleston, South Carolina, in 1834. He served the congregation there until he died in 1873. Though not a Southerner by birth, he made the Southern cause his own.²⁰² Smyth wrote on a great many subjects; his works fill ten volumes with 8,000 pages. One of his most famous productions was *The Unity of the Human Race*. Commenting on his views, one recent analyst has written, "[Smyth] charged that the covert motive for the attack on Genesis was often a desire to degrade the African in order to justify barbaric treatment of him, and he explicitly acknowledged that the Genesis account 'made every man a brother,' an acknowledgement that evoked criticism even from the *New York Democratic Review*."²⁰³ Smyth published a very erudite essay advancing the post {120} millennial view in 1856, entitled "Christians, Christ's Representatives and Agents for the Conversion of the World."²⁰⁴ That this work was published "by Request of the Synod of South Carolina" indicates widespread sympathy with his views. Smyth stands in contrast with Girardeau in advocating a gradual conversion and transformation of the world by the power of the gospel. The first two propositions of his paper are these: 1) The Kingdom of Christ Destined to Become Universal; and 2) The Universality of the Kingdom of Christ to Be Brought about through the Instrumentality of Man.

200. *Ibid.*, 340.

201. *Ibid.*

202. See Thomas Smyth, *Works* (Columbia, SC: R. J. Bryan Co., 1910), vol. 7, "The War of the South Vindicated and the War of the North Condemned."

203. E. Brooks Holifield, "Thomas Smyth: The Social Ideas of a Southern Evangelist," *Journal of Presbyterian History* 51 (1973):37.

204. Smyth, *Works*, vol. 7, 45–91.

T. V. Moore (1818–1871) pastored in Richmond and in Nashville. He is best known for his commentaries on Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. Moore's postmillennialism can be seen from the following extracts:

The kingdoms of the world are but scaffolding for God's spiritual kingdom, to be thrown down when their purpose is accomplished (Haggai 2:6).²⁰⁵

The kingdom of Christ makes peace between God and man, and in its ultimate results will make peace between man and man, and destroy all that produces discord and confusion, war and bloodshed on the earth (Haggai 2:9).²⁰⁶

[The Jews] have been kept intact among all the changes, as if reserved for some great destiny in the future, when they shall be brought in with the fulness of the Gentiles.²⁰⁷

That the tendencies of Christ's kingdom are to universal peace and universal piety, we need not pause to argue, and that these tendencies shall yet be fully embodied, we believe as well from the voice of history as from the voice of prophecy. We have only to patiently labor, and patiently wait, and the white banner of the lowly king shall in due time be unfurled from every mountaintop, and over every valley, and men be brother-murderers and brother-haters no more.²⁰⁸

A. P. Foreman, who pastored in several Southern communities, published in 1878 a volume entitled *Prophecy*, building largely on Patrick Fairbairn's work on the same subject. Foreman distinguished two stages in the history of the Christian faith, a stage of "witnessing" and one of "ascendancy."²⁰⁹ On Revelation 20:1–3 he wrote, "This simply sets before us in striking symbol the loss of Satan's power and influence in the world during a definite period."²¹⁰ {121}

Robert P. Kerr, a minister in Richmond, authored *The Voice of God in History*, a brief universal history from a biblical viewpoint. He wrote, "If the church is to conquer the world, how is she to do it? The answer

205. T. V. Moore, *Haggai and Malachi* (London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1968), 80.

206. *Ibid.*, 87.

207. *Ibid.*, 90. On the Jews, see also Moore, *Zechariah* (London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1968), 115, 125, 164, 203.

208. Moore, *Zechariah*, 151.

209. A. Foreman, *Prophecy* (St. Louis, MO: Presbyterian Publishing Co., 1878), 481ff.

210. *Ibid.*, 463.

is not far to seek: by preaching the gospel to every creature.”²¹¹ Again, “Christ in his own way is bringing the world into subjection to himself, and the evolution of his great plans is called providence.”²¹²

A collection of the sermons of Moses D. Hoge of Richmond was published in 1904. In “The Universal Religion” Hoge preached a highly optimistic postmillennialism, climaxing with this: “All the nations shall ultimately be gathered into one common brotherhood.”²¹³

A third Richmond divine expressed his postmillennial hopes in 1923. Reversing the more traditional order of events, Russell Cecil believed that the conversion of the Jews would be brought about only *after* the fulness of the Gentiles had come in.²¹⁴

Lastly, we find a *Handbook of Prophecy* published in 1906 by James Stacy, minister at Newnan, Georgia.²¹⁵ Stacy was postmillennial, and included a lengthy argument against premillennialism in an appendix.

Conclusion

This discussion of Southern Presbyterian divines has, of course, not been exhaustive, but neither has it been selective. The discussion has been limited to those men whose writings were available to the author at Reformed Theological Seminary, and if the postmillennial position seems favored, this is only because it apparently was indeed the common view of Southern Presbyterianism up until the 1930s. By the 1930s, and increasingly thereafter, modernism, Arminianism, and dispensationalism had made great inroads among the Southern Presbyterians, and thus the traditional Calvinism had become but one voice among many. Only in very recent years, especially at Reformed Seminary in Jackson, Mississippi, has there been a revival of historic Southern Presbyterianism. One finds with this a renewed eschatological

211. Robert Kerr, *The Voice of God in History* (Richmond, VA: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1890), 275.

212. *Ibid.*, 279.

213. Moses D. Hoge, *The Perfection of Beauty, and Other Sermons* (Richmond, VA: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1904), 121.

214. Russell Cecil, *Handbook of Theology* (Richmond, VA: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1923), 101.

215. (Richmond, VA: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1906).

optimism, as several of the professors are either postmillennialists or amillennialists of the sort who look for future progress and victories for the kingdom. Thus, it seems that the postmillennial consensus of the last century may enjoy a revival in the days to come.

POSTMILLENNIALISM VERSUS IMPOTENT RELIGION

Rousas John Rushdoony

The clear-cut preeminence in history, from the seventeenth century to the present, of Great Britain and the United States has many factors and causes behind it, but the powerful and energizing motive force has been the effect of a postmillennial faith. Bryan W. Ball titles his study of eschatological thought in English Protestantism to 1660 *A Great Expectation*.²¹⁶ It was more than that: it was a great expectation which also fueled a great performance.

In analyzing briefly that effect of postmillennialism in American history, it is necessary to begin by dealing with some popular myths on the subject. *First*, especially since the publication of H. Richard Niebuhr's *The Kingdom of God in America* (1937), it has been widely assumed that postmillennialism led to the social gospel. Since Niebuhr first delivered the content of his book as a series of lectures in 1936 at the Harvard Divinity School, part of the problem may be in some of the looser phrasing of his thesis at certain points. The heart of the problem, however, has been a simplistic confusion in the minds of many that historical succession means necessary logical connection and succession. Hence, it is held, because postmillennialism was the original kingdom of God idea in America, the social gospel idea of the kingdom of God is a logical and necessary product of postmillennialism. This "proves" too much. Niebuhr gives us three stages in the theological motive forces of American history: a) the kingdom of God, God as sovereign, a Calvinistic, postmillennial faith; b) the kingdom of Christ, Arminian, revivalistic, and concerned with soul-saving, amillennial and premillennial in eschatology; and c) the social gospel kingdom of God, modernistic, humanistic, and socialistic (or statist). It is highly illogical and irrational to jump from "a" to "c"; if Calvinistic,

216. Bryan W. Ball, *A Great Expectation* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1975).

postmillennialism is the cause, then Arminianism and revivalism are also its logical products! Then too we must hold that Arminian revivalism led to the social gospel and to modernism! But history is not merely logical development; it involves rival faiths and their rise and fall. We have here three different religious perspectives, very much at odds with one another. That the original Calvinistic postmillennialism left its mark on what followed is readily to be granted; that Arminian premillennial revivalism, amillennial institutionalism, and the modernistic social gospel are very different things from Calvinistic postmillennialism and not its products must be as readily granted.

Niebuhr's work is historical *description*, not an analysis of causation in {123} history.²¹⁷ If we read meaning in history in humanistic terms, we derive all meaning from history. We then either despair of meaning, or, after Hegel, see a meaning which requires a logical sequence. If meaning is theological, it is from beyond history but manifest in history. Because H. Richard Niebuhr has no answer to the meaning of history, his analogy is confused.

Second, there is a common confusion between the postmillennial faith and ideas of Manifest Destiny and imperialism. The influence of Manifest Destiny ideas and imperialistic impulses has been vastly overrated by many scholars, and too often confused with the Christian postmillennial hope. Although Merk is misused by many who have read him casually, his study of *Manifest Destiny and Mission in American History* is careful to distinguish among these three. Manifest Destiny meant continentalism, the absorption of North America and the establishment of free institutions throughout the continent. Imperialism was interested in annexing or gaining territories anywhere in terms of world power. Both ideas had a following, but neither commanded American life and thought. As Merk notes, after speaking of the ideas of Imperialism and Manifest Destiny as "traps" from which the United States extricated itself,

A truer expression of the national spirit was Mission. This was present from the beginning of American history, and is present, clearly, today. It was idealistic, self-denying, hopeful of divine favor for national aspi-

217. H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Kingdom of God in America* (Chicago: Willett, Clark, 1937; reprint, Harper Torchbook).

rations, though not sure of it. It made itself heard most authentically in times of emergency, of ordeal, of disaster. Its language was that of dedication—dedication to the enduring values of American civilization.²¹⁸

It seems strange that these distinctions among Manifest Destiny, Imperialism, and Mission (postmillennialism) have not been noted by many scholars. Thus, Cherry's excellent collection of source materials, *God's New Israel*, assumes that all three are actually one, postmillennialism!²¹⁹

Third, some writers, notably Tuveson, assume that gradualism and Christian progress mean secularism.²²⁰ Are we then to assume that revolution and historical cynicism are Christian? Tuveson is clearly influenced, both in *Millennium and Utopia* and in *Redeemer Nation*, by Reinhold Niebuhr, a debt he acknowledges.²²¹ The hostility to postmillennialism in {124} Tuveson and others is either based on a Niebuhrian cynicism with respect to biblical faith and with respect to history, or else shares a common faith with those who, having denied the God of history, are led logically to deny meaning and direction to history and to all things else. Quite logically, too, Karl Barth and others felt closer to amillennial and premillennial thought, because a despair of history was for them a mark of truly existential faith.

Thus, all who rely on the Neibuhrs, Tuvesons, and others for their critique of postmillennialism are on very dangerous grounds.

The postmillennial motive was strong in the very discovery and exploration of the Americas. We cannot begin to understand Christopher Columbus apart from his faith. Historians, because they are generally ignorant of the various schools of thought in eschatology, either call all of them simply "millenarianism," equating all schools, or, like

218. Frederick Merk, *Manifest Destiny and Mission in America: A Reinterpretation* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1963).

219. Conrad Cherry, ed., *God's New Israel: Religious Interpretations of American Destiny* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1971).

220. Ernest Lee Tuveson, *Millennium and Utopia: A Study in the Background of the Idea of Progress* (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1972), 139–140.

221. *Ibid.*, xi n. Tuveson comments on H. Richard Niebuhr's *Kingdom of God in America* in *Redeemer Nation: The Idea of America's Millennial Role* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 233.

Felipe Fernandez-Armesto, also describe them all as mysticism.²²² But Columbus sailed with the prophecies of Isaiah in mind: the whole earth was to be brought under the dominion of Christ the King.²²³ Any careful reading of Richard Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques, and discoveries of the English Nation* (1589, 1598), makes clear how great the millennial motive was in the early explorers. True, there were exceptions, but the whole age of exploration and discovery had roots in a new interpretation of eschatology.

The *early settlers* included those whose expectation and hope were expressions of classical humanism. The new lands were probably an earthly paradise, as yet untainted by Christianity, and peopled by noble savages who were naturally good. The *builders*, however, were predominantly those who came to establish God's new Israel, and to make of America a startingpoint for the conquest of the whole earth for Jesus Christ. Colonial America is not understandable apart from that hope. The revival of postmillennial thought, after a drift into other eschatologies, took place with Jonathan Edwards and his followers. Indeed, Heimert finds it impossible to understand the American mind apart from this postmillennial impulse. It is for him basic to knowing the motive force and meaning of American history.²²⁴

It is important, therefore, to note some of the key points which gave postmillennialism in America so great a vitality, as well as an ascendancy over other forms of postmillennial thought. {125}

First, in America, from its earliest days, it was believed to be a Christian duty, indispensable to the establishing of God's new Israel, to turn to biblical law. God's law provided God's plan for God's order, it was held. This presented some problems. The English crown clearly regarded royal law, not biblical law, as the foundation of an English colony. Moreover, since not all colonists were Christian, the pressure towards pragmatic legislation was also strong. All the same, despite

222. Felipe Fernandez-Armesto, *Columbus and the Conquest of the Impossible* (New York: Saturday Review Press, 1974), 199–200.

223. See Bjorn Landstrom, *Columbus* (New York: Macmillan, 1966), 155–56. See also Simon Weisenthal, *Sails of Hope*, for a related hope (New York: Macmillan, 1973).

224. See Alan Heimert, *Religion and the American Mind* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966).

compromises and adjustments, biblical law became the common law of American courts.

Haskins writes of two mistakes concerning early American law which are obstacles to our understanding. The first is the view that the law of the colonies was essentially English common law, a commonly held opinion. The second error presupposes that, with a common English background, colonial law was basically the same everywhere.²²⁵

Each colony, however, developed its own legal tradition in terms of its theological background and local experience.

This emphasis on law is important to an understanding of American history. The successors to the colonial clergy in importance were, in the nineteenth century, lawyers. Up to at least 1860, Americans had a strong liking for pulpit oratory and a lawyer's oratory. The history of orations in America, and their impact on society, needs studying. Basic to this history and to the orations is the primacy of law—God's law, however understood—as of central importance to American life.

Postmillennialism in America was emphatic that the new Israel of God is a law order, and its efforts were directed to the creation of God's law order.

Second, postmillennialism in America was not church-oriented as is the case today in England. The influence of Christianity on American life has been very great, the influence of churches vastly less. The reason for this difference lies in the definition of the church. The word *church* as commonly used is not what the New Testament means by the word translated as *church*. The English word *church* comes from the Greek adjective *Kyriakos*, as used in *Kyriakon doma* and *Kyriake oike*, and it means the Lord's house. It refers to a building or else to an institution. The New Testament word rendered as "church" is *ecclesia*, and is to be equated rather with the "kingdom of God." It is in essence the same as the Old Testament terms for the covenant people: *'edhah* ("congregation") and *qahal* ("assembly"). These terms, like *ecclesia*, can mean the entire covenant people, the civil order, the religious order, the army or host, and more. The New Testament *church* is the kingdom of

225. George Lee Haskins, *Law and Authority in Early Massachusetts* (New York: Macmillan, 1960), 4ff.

God in all its aspects, worship, civil order, welfare, education, etc. Whenever Roman Catholicism and Protestantism equate the New Testament “church” with the *institutional* {126} *church*, the result is either a church imperialism—the church claiming jurisdiction everywhere—or a monastic church—a withdrawal into the institution of worship as the Christian man’s only legitimate domain. The prevalence of postmillennialism was a factor in Colonial America in preventing the growth of church imperialism. It also militated against the all too common idea of the church as a retreat, or a convent, cut off from the ugly world, an idea basic to premillennial and amillennial views.

Third, pietism in Europe has done much to undermine the relevance of Christian faith to history. Such works as William Gurnall’s *Christian in Complete Armor* reduce the dimensions of the Christian warfare to a purely internal one, with Neoplatonic overtones, so that the Christian spends his life in inner warfare rather than conquest in Christ’s name. The impact of pietism has been deadly. Some forms of pietistic postmillennialism exist in the English-speaking world, which hold to soul-saving as the sole means to God’s kingdom, and the church as the only Christian institution. This means a radical neglect of all other areas of life. But every area of life has a duty to serve and glorify God. The state, school, family, vocations, arts, sciences, and all things else must be Christian, because Christ’s lordship is total. Christian faith makes a total claim: it is more than all or nothing; it is all commanded by Christ or all condemned by Him. There is no partial salvation of either man, his life, or his society: Christ demands the totality as His due, and He will command it.

Postmillennialism thus believes that man must be saved, and that his regeneration is the startingpoint for a mandate to exercise dominion in Christ’s name over every area of life and thought. Postmillennialism in its classic form does not neglect the church, and it does not neglect also to work for a Christian state and school, for the sovereignty and crown rights of the King over individuals, families, institutions, arts, sciences, and all things else. More, it holds that God has provided the way for this conquest: His law. *Every word* that God speaks is law; it is binding on man. Grace, love, and law are only contraries in a pagan view; in God, they serve a common purpose, to further His kingdom and glory.

Amillennialism and premillennialism are in retreat from the world and blasphemously surrender it to the devil. By their very premises, either that the world will only get worse (amillennialism), or that the Christian hope is the rapture (premillennialism), they cut the nerve of Christian action. Who, reading Hal Lindsey's new book, *The Terminal Generation*, will embark on such godly ventures as a Christian school, work to establish Christian political goals, biblical law, and the like? A widely circulated book awhile back predicted that Jesus would come again on September 6, 1975. The author, Dr. Charles Taylor, has since amended his book. *Get All Excited, Jesus Is Coming Soon*, with an "Update Addenda," which sets a new date, September 25, 1976, stating, "This is not a prediction. But {127} it is a real possibility." *Eternity Magazine*, in commenting on this, has a similar expectation, premillennial, but, as Raymond L. Cox concludes, we should expect Him any day: "I certainly will be looking for Jesus' return on September 25, 1976, if He doesn't come on September 24! Believers should be looking for Him on September 24 if He hasn't come by September 23. For the only date-setting which is truly biblical is the text of a popular plaque: 'Today? Perhaps!'"²²⁶

If we hold that the world can only get worse, or that we will soon be raptured out of it, what impetus is left for applying the word of God to the problems of this world? The result is an inevitable one: premillennial and amillennial believers who profess faith in the whole word of God number *conservatively* 25 percent of the American population. They are also the most impotent segment of American society, with the least impact on American life.

To turn the world-conquering word of the sovereign, omnipotent, and triune God into a symbol of impotence is not a mark of faith. It is blasphemy.

226. Raymond L. Cox, "The Dating Game," *Eternity*, September 1976, 25.

2. CHRISTIAN RECONSTRUCTION

BIBLICAL LAW: RECONSTRUCTION OF THE CRIMINAL LAW: RETRIBUTION REVIVED

John A. Sparks

“... and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution....”—Hebrews 2:2 (RSV)

“The punishment of a wrongdoer should be equal to the measure of his sin.”—State v. English, 242, Iowa 248, 46 N.W. 2d. 13 (1951).

Introduction

No term has been more maligned in the study of law than “retribution.” In American jurisprudence, the term retribution is usually mentioned only in connection with criminal law. At worst it is regarded as a disguise for vengeance²²⁷ and, at best, a traditional but outdated justification for punishment.²²⁸ Likewise, most European jurists and criminologists from Beccaria on have shunned retribution.²²⁹ Today, even among the advocates of strict “law and order” policies, retribution is frequently treated as an embarrassing and perplexing justification for

227. Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr., *The Common Law* (Boston, 1881), 45.

228. Sol Rubin, *The Law of Criminal Correction* (St. Paul, MN: West Publishing Co., 1973), 742–43. Rubin cites several cases where retribution is mentioned as an important justification for punishment. But he concludes: “Sometimes retribution is mentioned together with other purposes, but more often today, courts reject retribution and declare that the purpose of the penal law is deterrence, or reformation, or both” (742–43). See also Gerhard O. W. Mueller, “Punishment, Corrections, and the Law,” *Nebraska Law Review* 80 (1966): 45. According to Mueller, a correctional system whose aim is retributive “deserves to be scrapped.”

229. To discover the anti-retributive flavor of continental jurisprudence one has only to consult the writings of Cesare Beccaria, Cesare Lombroso, Gabriel Tarde, Enrico Ferri, Raffaele Garofalo, Gustav Aschaffenburg, and Hermann Mannheim. For an example of recent opposition to retribution, see Mons. Marc Ancel, *Social Defense: A Modern Approach to Criminal Problems* (New York: Schocken Books, 1966).

punishment. Though they are opposed to what they regard as the permissiveness of today's criminal law, they wish to avoid grappling with the religious presuppositions of retribution. Therefore, they rely instead on what they believe is a sounder justification for punishment—deterrence.

But retribution is not a convenient, temporal concept that can be ignored by man without consequences. Instead, it is an irreplaceable {129} keystone which has been set in place by God to maintain coherent meaning and order in the juridical sphere of creation. "If we are to have *coherence* in our experience, there must be a correspondence of our experience to the eternally coherent experience of God."²³⁰ Consequently, to the extent that man has spurned retribution, the opposite of order and meaning has blossomed. The evidence is unmistakable. Criminal jurisprudence has lost its direction. The resulting disorder of thought has been clearly translated into day-to-day ambivalence, indecision, and unrest in the administration of criminal law and punishment. The bitter promise offered by the continued substitution of speculative social and psychological theories for creation-ordering retribution is increasing injustice to criminal and victim alike. This article seeks to revive an interest in retribution as an enduring foundation upon which to reconstruct criminal jurisprudence.

The Keystone of the Juridical

The systematic defense of retribution as the keystone of all that is juridical is primarily the work of two schools of thought—the Dutch cosmonomic school and the Westminster presuppositionalists.²³¹ Therefore, the following discussion draws heavily from the members of both schools.

The temporal order displays various spheres of meaning.²³² Man's knowledge, though not exhaustive,²³³ has allowed him to discover the existence and content of many of these meaning-spheres. The numerical, the spatial, the logical, the economic, the social, and the juridical spheres, as well as other spheres, have become known to him. To the

230. C. Van Til, *An Introduction to Systematic Theology*, 1949, 25; quoted by Rousas John Rushdoony, *By What Standard?* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1971), 12.

extent that he has comprehended this order, he has constructed various theoretical disciplines (the special sciences) {130} which are intended to explore each individual sphere. Thus, the realm of the numerical is studied by mathematics; the realm of the historical by history; the realm of the biotic by biology, and so forth.

Furthermore, each sphere contains a central essence, a nucleus, in which is embodied the fundamental thrust of the particular modal sphere.²³⁴ Said another way, each sphere is capped by a keystone which holds the sphere together. For example, the keystone of the biotic modality is “life”; of the aesthetic modality, “harmony”; and of the economic modality, “scarcity.” This keystone is richly pregnant with positive multiple meaning, but it also acts negatively to delimit the boundaries of the modality and thus to *guarantee the relative sovereignty of each modal sphere*. It naturally follows that the keystone of a particular modality must also be the beacon star which is continuously consulted by the discipline whose task it is to discover meaning within that sphere. Each sphere and each keystone is founded in the creation order.

231. The use of these titles is suggested by Frances Nigel Lee in his *A Christian Introduction to the History of Philosophy* (Nutley, NJ: Craig Press, 1969), 222–39. The most important figures of the two schools on the matter of retributive justice and biblical law are Hermann Dooyeweerd and R. J. Rushdoony. Their works will be cited frequently below. Other writers have defended retribution in individual essays or portions of books. See, for example: Leon Morris, *The Cross in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1965), 385–86; C. S. Lewis, “The Humanitarian Theory of Punishment,” in *God in the Dock* (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1970), 287; Walter Berns, “Justified Anger: Just Retribution,” *Imprimis* (Hillsdale College, Hillsdale, MI) (June 1974): 3; H. B. Acton, ed., *The Philosophy of Punishment: A Collection of Papers* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1970), especially essays by J. D. Mabbott and K. G. Armstrong. Many still defend retribution as *one of several* justifications for punishment, See Norval Morris, “The Future of Imprisonment: Toward a Punitive Philosophy,” *Michigan Law Review* 1161, at 1173:72.

232. Hermann Dooyeweerd, *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*, vol. 2 (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1969), part 1.

233. Rushdoony, *By What Standard?*, 12.

234. Dooyeweerd, *Critique*, vol. 2, 75.

The reader who is unfamiliar with the general theory of the modal spheres may nevertheless find it relatively easy to accept the view that the keystone of the biotic sphere is “life”; or that the central essence of the aesthetic sphere is “harmony.” However, to claim that the “pariah,” retribution, is the nucleus of all that is juridical is a position which is unlikely to be met with easy acceptance.²³⁵ Therefore, such a stance requires considerable explanation and defense.

Retribution in the Calm of Contract Law

The meaning of the word “retribution” is sullied by associations with literal retaliation, instinctual vengeance, uncontrolled self-help, and “primitive” legal systems. These associations have been the by-products of an emotionally charged battle in the arena of criminal jurisprudence. In order to avoid the rekindling of that still-smoldering debate, the discussion of the principle of retribution, for the present, will be intentionally divorced from criminal law and, instead, taken up on the seemingly neutral ground of the law of *contract damages*.

Such an approach may seem inappropriate to anyone who is familiar with a standard course of law study. What can the redressing of civil contract injuries have to do with a doctrine of punishment? That quite legitimate question can be answered in part by looking at the etymon of the word “retribution.” Retribution, at root, means to repay (*re*, back + *tribuere*, to pay). *Black’s Law Dictionary*, in fact, reinforces this long-ignored, etymologically sound meaning of retribution by pointing out that formerly the word was sometimes used as the equivalent of civil “recompense,” {131} that is, *repayment*.²³⁶ Retribution, at very base, has to do with repayment which is not necessarily criminal.

With this meaning in mind it is instructive to turn briefly to the most fundamental rule of contract remedies—the principle of compensatory damages. As every beginning law student knows, a successful plaintiff in a contract action is entitled to receive compensatory damages. Stated another way, the injured party is entitled to be paid a recompense for the loss which the defendant’s breach has caused him. Is the likeness between the “recompense” of contract damages and the “repayment” of

235. *Ibid.*, 129.

236. *Black’s Law Dictionary*, 4th ed. (St Paul, MN: West Publishing Co., 1951), 1480.

retribution merely an example of similar but separate concepts? No. What is revealed is the pervasiveness of the retributive principle within the juridical sphere. Consequently, though at first it may seem to be contrived, I would suggest that the repayment required by the rule of compensatory damages should be regarded as retribution. The compensatory damages rule is a particular outcropping of the underlying principle, retribution.

The analysis cannot stop here, for there is more than simply the idea of “paying back” to be found in the contract rule. The theorem is not one of unguided recompense. Instead, a standard exists by which the level of damages must be measured. It is said that damages are to be neither more nor less than the reasonably foreseeable loss caused by the breach.

An additional dimension is introduced. *Proportionality* between the injury and the repayment is required.²³⁷ This element of proportionality, this “dueness,” is another aspect of the principle of retribution manifesting itself in a special rule of law. In order fully to appreciate the importance of the condignity required, it is only necessary to observe what would happen if the damages in a contract case were artificially fixed either above or below the amount judged necessary to repay the wrong. Immediately, it would be said that justice had not been done, which would be to say that proportional, condign repayment for injury caused, had not been made. Thus, the rule of compensatory damages reveals the retributive principle of “condign recompense.”

The compensatory damages rule is a type and an antitype at the same time. The rule, in a sense, prefigures and is prefigured by the principle of retribution. Retribution is simultaneously both the model for and copy of the compensatory damages rule. There is an interrelationship of meaning between the “particular” rule and the “general” principle by which they reinforce one another. One is not a Platonic universal and the other an unreal particular, however. Both are part of an integral reality of creation. {132} Each typifies and shadows the other, yet each remains separate and identifiable.²³⁸

237. Dooyeweerd, *Critique*, vol. 2, 130–31; Rousas John Rushdoony, *Institutes of Biblical Law* (Nutley, NJ: Craig Press, 1973), 229–30.

It is well beyond the scope of this article to develop fully the presence of the retributive principle of the law of contracts and in other fields of law. However, even cursory consideration will reveal condignity in the law of restitution, in the requirement of genuineness of assent in contract law, as well as in many other fields of the law. What has been attempted so far is to begin to establish the meaning of retribution in the relative *calm* of contract law. With this preparation the meaning of retribution in the criminal law can now be explored.

Retribution in the Criminal Law

The root meaning of retribution, “to repay,” is easily transplanted from the realm of contract into the soil of the criminal law. Such an operation is possible precisely because of the basic sameness of the keystone which holds both areas together. Although in contract law the repayment is referred to as damages, while in the criminal law the repayment is called punishment, the language of repayment abounds in the criminal law. Criminals frequently are said to have “paid for what they did,” or to have “paid their debt,” or to have “paid a price.” Such terminology, no matter how untutored, reflects the common understanding that the punishment that follows the crime is essentially a retributive transaction.

That which was seen earlier in contract law is also true of criminal law. The retributive principle of repayment does *not* mean an unbridled paying back. Repayment, in order to be truly retributive, must be proportional.²³⁹ In a phrase which captures the essence of the condignity required, it is said that “the punishment should fit the crime.” Repayment must correspond in quality and quantity to the offense.²⁴⁰ If it is either more or less than that which is warranted by the *delict*, it will be regarded as either excessive or permissive. In the criminal law,

238. Rousas John Rushdoony, *Thy Kingdom Come* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1971), 97–99. These pages contain an excellent discussion of typological reasoning.

239. Dooyeweerd, *Critique*, vol. 2, 130–31.

240. Gustave F. Oehler, *Theology of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1883), 222; in Rushdoony, *Institutes*, 229–30.

therefore, retribution discloses itself as *punishment* which is proportionate and condign.

It is quite understandable at this point to want to ask the question: To what specifically is the punishment to be proportionate? What does condignity mean? Against what standard can it be determined if a particular punishment *does* fit a given crime? The short answer is that ultimate guidance must come from God's law-word and from a judiciary and legislature dedicated to conforming the positive to God's law. Rushdoony's {133} *Institutes of Biblical Law* discloses how far our present positive laws have strayed from the creation order and, what is of more concern, how little most jurists care about that departure. However, raising the question of the specific shape that a godly order would take is getting the cart well before the horse. What is needed first is the recognition, which is presently lacking, that (1) there ought to be proportionate repayment for criminal acts, and (2) that the content of proportionality has been revealed to men if they will allow themselves to see it.

The Attacks Against Retribution

The preceding paragraphs have concentrated on building a positive understanding of retribution. But the attacks directed against retribution by intellectuals have been so severe and sustained that an anti-retributive pall, like the yellow fog of Eliot's "Prufrock," has settled over every part of modern society. This anti-retributivism has an origin in one or more of the following contentions: retribution is (1) grim, literal equivalence of crime to punishment, (2) revenge, and (3) primitive. It is worthwhile to examine each of these contentions.

Equivalence—A Literal "Eye for an Eye"?

Does retribution, rightly understood, require that the punishment be exactly equivalent to the crime? For example, must a criminal who strikes out the eye of his victim pay by relinquishing his own eye? Undergraduate texts give the impression that the answer to the above question is "yes" or, at least, "probably." Commonly, under the heading of "justifications for punishment," retribution is identified with the "eye for an eye" language (*jus talionis*) of the Pentateuch. Little more by way of explanation is offered about the Hebrew law, because the author is anxious to move on to more "forward looking," "humane" explanations

of punishment.²⁴¹ Consequently, the reader is left to consider whether or not both retribution and biblical law require a rigid equivalence *in kind* between wrong and repayment. The lingering suspicion of unworkability and cruelty left by the usual sketchy presentation, coupled with the statement that retribution is little more than “private vengeance,” moves the reader to conclude that retribution and biblical law are unsupportable. Such a conclusion is unfounded. That the *jus talionis* of Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy²⁴² is not to be taken literally becomes clear when one contemplates the Hebrew law as a whole and not as isolated provisions. {134}

First, in Exodus, where the oldest Hebrew example of the *jus talionis* appears, there are specific examples of the prevalence of a legal device which was intended to *mitigate* literal equivalence. *Composition*, as the device is called, allowed the satisfaction of a wrong or injury by money payment or in some other way than in kind.²⁴³ The presence of a different device than composition—compensation—also worked against “eye for an eye” literalism. For example, if a man struck another with a fist or stone in a quarrel, the relief allowed to the injured party was not that the same be done in return, but that the liable party pay for the lost time and medical expenses of the one injured.²⁴⁴

Yet another device of the Hebrew code which permitted the operation of rule other than literal equivalence was the city of refuge. A literal life for a life was not required by the law in the case of an unintentional killing.²⁴⁵ Instead, cities of refuge were designated, to which the accused could flee pending judgment.²⁴⁶ If a lack of intent was shown, then he was not required to forfeit his life and had refuge

241. See Hazel B. Kerper, *Introduction to the Criminal Justice System* (St. Paul, MN: West Publishing Company, 1972), 62; Edwin H. Sutherland and Donald R. Cressey, *Criminology* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1970), 326; Lois L. Higgins and Edward A. Fitzpatrick, *Criminology and Crime Prevention* (Milwaukee, WI: Bruce Publishing Company, 1958), 263.

242. Exodus 21:23–25; Leviticus 24:19–20; Deuteronomy 19:21.

243. Exodus 21:22, 30, 34.

244. Exodus 21:18–19.

245. Exodus 21:13; Numbers 35:22–26; Deuteronomy 19:4–5.

246. Numbers 35:10–34; Deuteronomy 19:1–13; Joshua 20:1–9.

from the avenger. The Hebrew law contained many other provisions requiring repayment in some way other than literal equivalence.²⁴⁷

The existence of composition, compensation, and other penalties which were not repayment in kind, illustrates that biblical law was not governed by a principle of literal, mechanical retaliation. Rushdoony has written that the principle of punishment called for by the *jus talionis* was, instead, that of proportionality.²⁴⁸ The gravity of the punishment must reflect the moral gravity of the crime, but only in a *proportionate* sense and *not* in the sense of literal equivalence. The exhortation to give eye for eye and tooth for tooth was no more than a concrete way to encourage condign repayment and to discourage unproportionate repayment. The retribution of biblical law was not the law of precise reciprocation but, instead, a richer, more complex rule of proportional recompense. The English jurist, Sir Edward Coke, understood the difference between proportional likeness (*talis* = of the same sort) and exact equivalence (*idem* = same). He wrote, “*Talis non est eadem; nam nullum simile est idem.*”²⁴⁹ (“What is like is not the same; for nothing similar is same.”)

Retribution as Revenge

According to another view, one which is endorsed by many modern {135} jurists and criminologists, retributive justice is an expression of instinctual revenge.²⁵⁰ The renowned American jurist, Oliver Wendell Holmes, called retribution “a disguise for vengeance.”²⁵¹ Harvard law professor and criminologist, Sheldon Glueck, referred to retribution as “sublimated social vengeance,” “a hate reaction.”²⁵² Dr. William A. White, whom Glueck cites, regarded retributive punishment as a means by which “society pushes off its criminal impulses upon a substitute.”²⁵³ Von Holtzendorf wrote that retribution was the effect of

247. See, for example, Exodus 22:1, 4, 9.

248. Rushdoony, *Institutes*, 229–31; see also H. L. A. Hart, *Punishment and Responsibility* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 233–34.

249. Coke, 4 *Institutes* 18, cited in *Black's Law Dictionary*, 1626.

250. Dooyeweerd, *Critique*, vol. 3, 136.

251. Holmes, *Common Law*, 45.

252. Sheldon Glueck, *Crime and Correction: Selected Papers* (Millwood, NY: Kraus Reprint Company, 1973), 75–76; original edition: Cambridge, 1952.

anger and of the feeling of revenge.²⁵⁴ Even the supposed champion of retribution, the Victorian jurist, Sir James Stephen, described retributive punishment as gratifying the passion for revenge, which he colorfully compared to a sexual appetite being calmed by marriage.²⁵⁵ In the popular press as well, retribution is portrayed as meaning that the “government has a right to be as brutal and vengeful as its worst citizens!”²⁵⁶

The position that the juridical demand for retribution is at root a feeling of revenge is one of the gravest confusions impairing the reconstruction of criminal justice. What is revenge and how has it come to be entangled with retribution?

The urge for revenge is a discernible psychological feeling-drive.²⁵⁷ It has been described as a psychical reaction which follows certain sensory impressions.²⁵⁸ The revenge response is “rigidly bound up with biotic stimuli.”²⁵⁹ Due to its nature, revenge is properly studied by psychology and psychiatry, that is, by those disciplines on which the responsibility for the examination of “feeling” falls.²⁶⁰

However, during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, psychological (as well as sociological and biotic) concepts have improperly intruded themselves into other spheres of meaning. In particular, criminal jurisprudence has been the target of a salvo of alien psychical theorems that have been relentlessly directed toward its central retributive keystone. {136} Herman Mannheim summarizes well what has happened: “The history of the criminal law in most civilized countries

253. William A. White, *Insanity and the Criminal Law* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1923), 13–14.

254. Quoted in Gustav Aschaffenburg, *Crime and Its Repression* (Montclair, NJ: Patterson Smith Publishing Corp., 1968), 251; reprint of 1913 work.

255. Sir James Stephen, *History of the Criminal Law of England*, vol. 2 (London, 1883), 80.

256. Daniel St. Alban Greene, “Death Row: The Final Ghetto,” *The National Observer*, November 9, 1974, 12.

257. Dooyeweerd, *Critique*, vol. 2, 134.

258. J. M. Spier, *Introduction to Christian Philosophy* (Nutley, NJ: Craig Press, 1966), 74.

259. Dooyeweerd, *Critique*, vol. 2, 177.

260. *Ibid.*, 111.

shows ... a continuous inclination to depart from the orthodox legal point of view in favor of greater concessions to psychiatry.”²⁶¹

If one returns to the earlier quotations from Glueck and others about revenge and retribution, one finds substantial evidence of the encroachment of psychical concepts into the juridical meaning-sphere.

First, the terminology is heavily psychological—“sublimated,” “reaction,” “emotion,” “infantile,” “feeling,” and “impulse.” Though this could be merely an example of colorful interdisciplinary allusion, such is not the case. Instead, the *substance* of what is claimed against retribution indicates modal encroachment.

Glueck’s description of retribution illustrates the intrusion well. He calls retribution “*sublimated social vengeance*,” based on an “*emotion of vengeance*” and “*infantile*,” “*hate-reaction*” (emphasis mine). Glueck’s thesis is that man would like to display his elementary, infantile feeling of revenge. But, because its bare, forthright manifestation would be unacceptable to society (or to the super-ego, in Freudian sense), it must be partially diverted from its original aim to a new, socially acceptable aim. For example, what heretofore had been a reaction of personal revenge might be transformed into jurisprudential disapproval of the wrong. The process is called sublimation. But, Glueck would say that although this fierce instinctual urge of vengeance is redirected and now acceptable, nevertheless, it remains little more than a thinly disguised feeling which has been renamed retribution.

What Glueck and others have done is improperly to magnify the importance of the psychical feeling of revenge to the point where it is considered both the *origin* and the lasting *essence* of juridical retribution.

Retribution itself is not a feeling, and its origin is not found in the feeling of revenge. Just because the development in men of higher sensibilities, such as a juridical, is commonly preceded by the appearance of more basic human feelings, like revenge, this is no reason to conclude that that feeling of revenge is the origin of the juridical.²⁶² Retribution is a complex higher principle whose origin is a rich amalgam of

261. Herman Mannheim, *Comparative Criminology* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1967), 337.

262. Dooyeweerd, *Critique*, vol. 2, 112–13.

moral love, logical distinction, and righteous condignity. Only by the most tenuous of threads strung along the most tortuous of routes can it be said that retribution is attached to revenge.

Neither does retribution contain revenge as its present essence. In fact, retribution invariably *opposes* unbridled revenge. Retribution binds every {137} exercise of will within limits.²⁶³ What is completely just from a retributive standpoint may very well leave revenge unsatisfied. Retribution is not a burning thirst; it is the arm which restrains such a disparate urge from becoming rapacious. The distinction between the very real human emotion of revenge and juridical retribution is not the modest difference between a bare urge and one that is reluctantly sublimated. It is the striking contrast between a particular psychical feeling-drive on the one hand and the broad, complex ordering principle of the entire juridical sphere on the other.

Retribution and the Primitive

Opponents of retributive justice have sometimes tried to link retribution with the primitive. Retribution has been described as coming out of a “primitive root,”²⁶⁴ being an “antiquated doctrine,”²⁶⁵ and being characteristic of the law in its “primitive stage.”²⁶⁶ Critics have regarded it as “primitive confusion”²⁶⁷ or as the advocacy of a return to “atavistic ritual.”²⁶⁸ What is the true relationship between primitive societies and retribution?

One must conclude that in primitive societies, fully differentiated and developed retributive justice is sought in vain.²⁶⁹ Equating the inarticulate tribal ways of the Murngins of northern Australia, or of the Ashanti of Africa, for example, with a mature civilized retributive system, is indefensible. Primitive law can boast few explicitly formulated

263. *Ibid.*, 134.

264. Glueck, *Crime and Correction*, 56.

265. George W. Paton, *A Textbook of Jurisprudence*, 4th ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 359 (quoting W. McDougall).

266. Ancel, *Social Defense*, 90.

267. Hart, *Punishment and Responsibility*, 235.

268. Greene, *National Observer*, 12.

269. Dooyeweerd, *Critique*, vol. 2, 177.

jural postulates.²⁷⁰ There is no knowledge “of the theoretical concepts of juridical facts, juridical ground, and juridical effects.”²⁷¹

However, contained in even primitive tribal laws, there exists “a rude standard of proportion.”²⁷² The recognition of this rough condignity by primitive law is evidence of the presence of retribution, though in rudimentary form. Two things should be immediately noted. First, the existence of rudimentary retribution in primitive society does not make modern retribution primitive any more than the existence of the rudiments of art, music, commerce, or literature in primitive society makes their modern equivalents primitive. Second, rudimentary retribution has always opposed what is potentially the most destructive kind of lawlessness in primitive society—the blood feud. Retribution does *not* derive from the {138} blood feud. Instead, it curbs, restrains, and limits this species of private vengeance. Whether one speaks of the “feud” of Scotland and northern England, the “faida” of Saxon law, or the blood-fight of other primitive societies, it is a false notion to suppose that there was a time when private vengeance prevailed unopposed by retribution.²⁷³ The feud marks the absence of law, not law’s origination. Retribution, albeit crude, brings a halt to private war. Apparently, many primordial and pagan societies of men have known enough of God’s creation order to avoid the utter chaos of unchecked internecine strife.²⁷⁴

Worthy of note is the different pejorative meaning attached to the label “primitive” by modern positivism. When the positivists refer to retribution as primitive, they do not mean that it can be found in rudimentary form in primitive society, nor do they confuse the blood feud with retribution. Instead, to the positivists, a legal system based upon anything resembling a godly order is a regression to the primal theological stage of meaning. Their evolutionary framework further requires that references to imperatives, to transcending ideas of law, or

270. E. Adamson Hoebel, *The Law of Primitive Man* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1964), 68.

271. Dooyeweerd, *Critique*, vol. 2, 136.

272. *Ibid.*

273. Hoebel, *Primitive Man*, 329–30.

274. Romans 1:19–20.

to ultimate principles, be eschewed as “metaphysical.” Of course, to the positivist, legal thought finds its apex in the study of present positive laws by scientific means. Autonomous man will raise himself by means of the data that *he* will verify and shape.

Therefore, retribution, which claims to be an enduring part of God’s created order and claims *not* to owe its genesis to empirical science, does not deserve, in the eyes of the positivist, the appellation “modern.” It is the hoary vestment of some bygone theological age and nothing more.

There is no clearer case of the improper elevation of logic, science, and human reason to a place of ascendancy over all the other dimensions of creation than that presented by positivism. Its utter bankruptcy is apparent, for by its strained, narrow definition of “modern scientific jurisprudence,” it relegates to the category of “primitive” part or all of the American, English, Roman, and Hebraic legal systems, each of which finds its roots in God’s creation order.

Conclusion

Retribution is the keystone of juridical meaning. In the field of criminal jurisprudence it requires punishment proportionate to the evil deed. Retribution is not literal equivalence of payment, nor is it to be confused with the psychical feeling of revenge. Though it appears in primitive law, it accomplishes in a rudimentary way the restraint, control and limitation which, in more advanced societies, blossoms into mature retributive justice. Its origin is not in empirical science, but in God, who created order and maintains it.

THE PROPHETIC OFFICE AND PUBLIC EXHORTATION: AMOS AND HOSEA

Simon Kistemaker

AMOS

Amos is well known to us because he is one of the twelve minor prophets listed in the last part of the Old Testament. If we are honest with ourselves, we must confess that apart from a particular text, for example, “Prepare to meet your God,” we do not know much about the content of Amos’s book; we are not too well informed about the time and circumstances which marked the life of this particular prophet; and we do not quite know why Amos was called to prophesy.

Therefore, permit me to introduce you to Amos. His name can be translated perhaps as “burden bearer.” We know nothing of his family. He is like Melchizedek “without father and without mother.” That is, his family line is of no importance. Amos tells us a little bit about his occupation. He was a shepherd and a grower of sycamore figs. He was not an ordinary shepherd. On the contrary, he was a cattleman, a dealer. He went to the marketplaces to buy and to sell. Besides his cattle business, Amos also cultivated figs. How much land he possessed, or how wealthy Amos may have been, is not known. And it really does not matter. What is of importance is the fact that he was not a professional prophet. He was a down-to-earth farmer. He saw life as it really was in that time. With discerning eye and sensitive ear, Amos was fully aware of the needs of his day.

Location

We read that he was an inhabitant of the village of Tekoa. This little village is located only twelve miles straight south of the city of Jerusalem. Bethlehem is halfway between Jerusalem and Tekoa. That means that Amos was by nationality a citizen of the southern kingdom of

Judea. He prophesied in the time of Uzziah, king of Judah, and the days of Jeroboam II, king of Israel.

Before I say something about the times in which Amos lived, let me provide some more information on the geographical locality of Tekoa. The place is situated on the mountain ridge which stretched southward into the Negeb desert. Modern *Tekua* is located 2,800 feet above sea level; by comparison 2,700 feet in altitude. From Tekoa you can see the chasm of the Dead Sea with the red-colored mountains of Moab to the east of it. Between Tekoa and the Dead Sea lies a wilderness which has been described as the most desolate on earth. It is a waterless land unfit for agriculture. Only in the spring of the year are sheep and goats able to find some green grass. It seems reasonable to assume that Amos {140} kept his sheep most of the year more towards the west of Tekoa. He may have had property in the lowlands west of the Judean hills to grow his sycamore trees.

Amos knew his environment. He lived close to nature; the lion and the bears were the enemies of his flock; the locusts came to devour the spring crop when it began to sprout; and the serpent bit a man at home leaning his hand against the wall. He talked about the grass, the desert fire, the drought, and a basket of summer fruit.

Times

Amos lived in a time of great prosperity. It was during the middle of the eighth century BC (about 750 BC) that Israel to the north and Judea in the south enjoyed a period of peace and prosperity. According to 2 Kings 14:25, Jeroboam II restored the borders of Israel from Hamath in the north to the Dead Sea in the south. He ruled the territory at one time occupied by Solomon. In the southern kingdom Uzziah extended his territory to include Edom and Elath at the Gulf of Agaba.

People traveled freely from town to town and area to area. Citizens of the northern kingdom of Israel made pilgrimages to Beersheba, which is situated along the southern borders of the kingdom of Judah. And Amos's occupation brought him to the wool markets of the northern cities. Because of this freedom in travel, Amos learned about the social conditions in Judah and Israel. Amos prophesied toward the end of King Uzziah's life approximately 750 BC. He prophesied two years

before the earthquake, and this event took place when Uzziah entered the Temple to offer incense. The king was stricken with leprosy (2 Chron. 26:19). The prophet Zechariah relates that an earthquake took place in the days of Uzziah (Zech. 14:5). And it is Josephus who says that the earthquake happened when Uzziah burned incense in the Temple.

In other words, Amos was a contemporary of Isaiah (see Isa. 6:1), of Jonah (see 2 Kings 14:25), and of Hosea (Hos. 1:1).

Conditions

Israel prospered and fell into moral decay. Israel demonstrated the validity of the triangle: rise, shine, decline. While Israel basked in wealth, corruption oozed out of all the mazes of its moral fabric. The merchants in the cities were reaping rich profits (Amos 8:4–6); “when will the Sabbath end, so that we can start selling again? Then we can overcharge, use false measures, and fix the scales to cheat our customers. We can sell worthless wheat at a high price. We’ll find a poor man who can’t pay his debts, not even the price of a pair of sandals, and buy him as a slave.”

The rich merchants owned two homes: a winter house and a summer house. They had furnished their homes with beautiful furniture inlaid with ivory. And for their feasts they provided grade A veal and mutton.

Corruption of justice was the order of the day. The rich became richer, and the poor, poorer. The small businessman had been forced to close shop. The rich {141} merchant and the landowners seemingly had absolute control of the economy. The poor were at their mercy. Poor people lived in one-room huts. Even the more stable homes of the poor had to be repaired after every violent rainstorm, when the roof, made of straw mixed with mud and lime, caved in. The homes were generally devoid of furniture. The poor man’s diet consisted of bread made in the form of flat cakes. Vegetables in season were beans, lentils, and cucumbers. Fruits were grapes, figs, pomegranates, and raisins. Meat was served only at festive occasions. The contrast between rich and poor was striking, startling, and bitter.

The moral fiber of the nation was unraveling and coming apart. Government was corrupt and immorality spread like the blight of sum-

mer. Judges accepted bribes, twisted justice, and cheated people out of their rights (Amos 5:7). They persecuted just men, and they kept the poor from getting justice in the courts (v. 12). It was a time in which the prudent man kept quiet. Justice was turned into poison, and the right came out as wrong (6:12).

The religious life in Israel was closely linked to its morality. Instead of worship services in the place where God wanted the people to praise Him, they went to Bethel and to Dan. In these places Jeroboam I (successor of Solomon) had instituted idol worship by having the people bow down to golden images of young bulls. Heathen worship came to expression in temple prostitution. Young women dedicated themselves to the goddess Astarte as prostitutes. These women, so the teaching went, had a share in promoting the fertility of the land. Amos saw the abominable immorality. He observed a father and his son meeting each other on the way to the same temple prostitute. He saw sexual perversion in the guise of religion.

God had told the Israelites to shun idol worship. He had expressly forbidden temple prostitution. He called it a profaning of His holy name.

Israel, because of its peace and prosperity, merely enjoyed an Indian summer. Soon the icy blast of a northerly wind would terminate the life of sin and shame, and bring the tidings of impending exile.

Message

The message of Amos can be summed up in this one sentence: "Samaria must be destroyed!" Amos had to pronounce judgment upon the nation of Israel and upon the nation of Judah. God told him to speak.

Instead of going to the marketplace with wool or sheep, Amos went to Samaria and Bethel with a divine message. He proclaimed God's Word at the altars of Bethel and in the streets of Samaria. When Amos had spoken, he again assumed his status of cattleman and fruit grower. How fitting. Amos said, "I am not the kind of prophet who prophesies for pay. I am a herdsman, and I take care of fig trees. But the Lord took me from my work as a shepherd and ordered me to go and prophesy to his people Israel. So now listen to what the Lord says" (7:14ff). {142}

The lesson which we can learn here is that a person does not have to have a seminary degree, does not have to be ordained in the ministry, and does not have to draw a salary from a local congregation in order to proclaim the Word. At the God-ordained moment Amos became a prophet. He spoke because he had to. When he was finished, he went back to his daily occupation. Whenever God calls anyone to witness, he or she must temporarily lay aside his or her occupational duties and speak out boldly for the Lord. We should never be afraid to assert, "This is what the Bible says." All of us, to be sure, are "burden bearers." All have the name Amos.

Indeed, the Church of Jesus Christ would be severely hampered if only pastors could speak authoritatively. Every believer, by virtue of his threefold office of prophet, priest, and king, must speak for Christ. What I am saying is that the Church is not made up of only pastors. The Church consists of believers. And every believer must speak when God calls him or her to witness.

How did Amos speak? He began by pronouncing judgment upon the nations neighboring Israel. He denounced Syria to the northeast. Why did God want him to speak words of impending doom on Syria? Because the Syrians had treated the inhabitants of Gilead with utmost cruelty: threshing instruments were raked over the backs of Israelite captives. The Syrians had touched the apple of God's eye. In spite of all the sin and iniquity, the people of Israel were still God's people. He did not forget the inhumane treatment the captives of Israel had received.

From the northeast, Amos turned to the southwest: Philistia. These people had carried off entire populations of cities and sold them into slavery to Edom. Gaza is mentioned because it was the leading city in Philistia. Situated along the trade routes to the land of Edom in general and the Gulf of Aquaba in particular, Gaza had kidnapped the population of entire cities in Israel and sold the people as slaves.

Tyre, in the northwest, was also implicated in the slavetrading of Israelite captives. Upon Tyre, as well as on Edom and Philistia, God pronounced just judgment. Edom was charged with hunting down his brother, Israel, and showing no mercy.

Besides Edom there were the more distant relatives, Ammon and Moab. These, too, had sinned grievously and the Lord had not forgot-

ten. Their punishment was due. Their time was up, and Amos was chosen to hand them the verdict.

We can readily understand that Amos had an attentive audience in Israel when he began pronouncing judgment upon the surrounding nations. The Israelites remembered the sufferings of their fellow citizens very well. When Amos mentioned their cruel deeds and as a prophet of God foretold their doom, he heard voices of approval. These were the enemies of Israel, and consequently the enemies of God. Let them perish and long live Israel!

The message of Amos, however, did not stop with that to the surrounding {143} nations. Judah was next on the list. Amos brought the word of the Lord: “The people of Judah have sinned again and again, and I will surely punish them. They have despised my teachings and have not kept my commands. They have been led astray by the same false gods that their ancestors served. So I will throw fire down on Judah and burn down the fortresses of Jerusalem” (2:4–5).

This was news, bad news. The people in Israel had not expected this. If God destroyed the heathen nations, no one in Israel would object, but now God told the Israelites that He would burn down the city of Jerusalem. That could not be. Judah with Israel was God’s covenant people. Certainly God would not touch the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Why was Judah singled out? Because the people had despised God’s teachings and had not kept His commands. That was sufficient. They were guilty. The law of God condemned them. They sinned by willfully transgressing the Ten Commandments.

But Amos did not stop. He continued. He now introduced the inevitable: God’s judgment upon Israel. God said, “The people of Israel have sinned again and again, and I will surely punish them” (2:6). How had the Israelites sinned? Their sins consisted of corrupt administration of the law, oppression of the poor, immorality, and self-indulgence in the name of religion. These charges hit home. Amos, in the name of God, brought a list of accusations against them. Innocent people were sold out by unjust judges and greedy creditors took advantage of the enslaved poor. “They sell into slavery honest men who cannot pay their debts, poor men who cannot repay even the price of a pair of sandals”

(2:6). We would say, in our idiom, that the poor simply did not have the wherewithal.

These poor suffered oppression. They were trampled down into the dust of the ground. They were denied justice. Justice was meted out in the city gate where the elders of Israel took their place. Here the poor, oppressed people had to appear. But instead of honesty, integrity, and righteousness, they experienced corruption, depravity, and injustice at the hands of the elders, that is judges, in the gate.

The very name of God was dishonored. The Israelites had not only borrowed the Baal worship, they had also instituted temple prostitution. They believed that the fertility of women serving as prostitutes at Baal's shrine would ensure the fertility of lands and herds. Israel was no longer married to the Lord, the God of Israel. Israel had married Baal.

Self-indulgence, in the name of religion, had become a way of life. The rich took garments from the poor as collateral in loans. Though the Law of God specified that clothing must be returned before night-fall, the rich in Israel took these garments and used them for shameful nocturnal orgies near the altars of Baal.

What was the verdict? God said, "And now I will crush you to the ground, and you will groan like a cart loaded with grain. Not even fast runners will escape; strongmen will lose their strength and soldiers will not be able to save {144} their own lives" (2:13–14). At another place God said, "I am watching this sinful kingdom of Israel, and I will destroy it from the face of the earth" (9:8).

The message which Amos brought was: Israel, the northern kingdom, must be destroyed.

Manner

We simply do not know how long Amos prophesied. It could very well be that after he had brought the message of doom, he returned to Tekoa. It really does not matter whether he prophesied once or whether his ministry was extended over a period of time. What is of importance is the manner of his appearance.

The last part of chapter seven is a report of the encounter of Amaziah, priest of Bethel, and Amos, cattleman-fruitgrower divinely called to prophesy.

I am sure that Amos had prophesied in the streets and marketplaces of Samaria, and that he had addressed the crowds in Bethel. But he had not yet been confronted with the religious hierarchy of Israel. I feel that the clergy had ignored him—they regarded him as a public nuisance. They hoped that before long he would realize that no one took notice of him, and that it would be best to go home and stay there.

Chapters seven and eight seem to indicate the season of the year, that it was the fall. “The grass was starting to grow again” (7:1) and “the basket of fruit” (8:1) point toward the month of October. If this is the case, we may assume that the people of Israel had come to Bethel for the national day of Thanksgiving.

Amos was also among the crowd. At the opportune time, he addressed the multitude. He told them his vision of locusts devouring every green thing in the land. He told them about his vision of fire, which God prepared to punish the people. He told them about his vision of the plumbline. He concluded his message by saying that God would destroy the places where Isaac’s descendants worshipped, and that the dynasty of King Jeroboam would come to an end.

This was the spark in the clergy’s brushpile. Amos advocated open rebellion. And this could not be tolerated. Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, had to take action. He quickly sent word to King Jeroboam in Samaria: “Amos is plotting against you among the people. His speeches will destroy the country. This is what he says, ‘Jeroboam will die in battle, and the people of Israel will be taken away from their land into exile’ ”(7:10–11).

When the king did not respond, Amaziah took it upon himself to address Amos. He did not have the power to arrest this prophet from the neighboring state of Judah, but he could send him away. “That’s enough, prophet! Go on back to Judah and do your preaching there. Let *them* pay for it. Don’t prophesy here at Bethel anymore. This is the king’s place of worship, the national temple” (7:12–13).

The words are familiar because we hear them daily. Separation of church and state has come to mean that the teachings of God’s Word should only be heard {145} within the four walls of a church building. No religion in the classrooms of our schools: grade school, high school, college, university. How effective this has become is apparent when you watch a quiz show on TV. When simple Bible questions, such as,

“what is the second book in the New Testament?” are asked, the ignorance on the part of the participants is appalling.

God says in His law, “You shall not kill.” When you speak against abortion because of this divine command, the opposition you encounter does not come from our elected members of congress, but from the clergy. You are told to preach elsewhere. You are naive, uninformed, and legalistic. You preach the law “You shall not kill,” but you fail to preach love. And that is what counts, you see.

Amos came to Bethel, which means “House of God.” But in the house of God was not room for the Word of God. In many religious circles today all kinds of teachings are honored except the teachings of Scripture.

Application

All of us have the name Amos. All of us have a burden in this world: making the name of God holy, praying and working so that His kingdom may come, and obediently doing His will. That is our burden.

We see social ills all around us. Injustice, immorality, murder. Though the number of Bibles sold in the U.S. is at an all-time high, Bible knowledge and its application to daily life is at an all-time low. God has given us His law and that law is perfect; it is unchangeable, valid for all times and all places. Human laws are subject to constant change. If this were not the case, our lawmakers in Washington would be out of work. Human laws are valid for given times, circumstances, and areas. God’s laws are universal and permanent. God’s laws are applicable to all people, regardless of culture, color, race, or religion. They were the same in Amos’s day as they are today. The people of the eighth century in Israel disobeyed God’s laws and were pronounced guilty. Amos read the verdict. God will punish you, Amos said; He will shake the people of Israel like grain in a sieve. He will shake them among the nations to remove all who are worthless. The sinners among the people will be killed in war (9:9–10).

God’s laws are disobeyed today. Look, God said, “You shall have no other gods before Me.” But either witchcraft, Satan worship, or transcendental meditation are found on nearly every large college or university campus today, it is reported. Moreover, material possessions have become the “graven image” of many people in the Western world.

Affluence has taken the place of a dependence upon God. Thus the second commandment in the Decalogue is violated.

God says, "You shall not use My name in vain." Society today has degenerated so far that profanity (using God's name in vain) is regularly heard on the three TV networks. Decent speech has given way to profanity by popular demand. The fourth commandment of God's law concerns the day of rest. We {146} are told that God created heaven and earth in six days and rested on the seventh. We are to follow this divine example and rest. We celebrate the first day of the week in commemoration of Christ's resurrection. How this day is desecrated in today's world can be seen in the business world, in the world of sports and entertainment, and in the work shifts of modern industry.

Authority is openly flaunted. Because of the breakdown of the family structure, children do not know who their father is. They grow up without instruction, love, correction, and discipline. They have no respect for civil authority, for the law of the land, and for society in general. The commandment "Honor your father and mother so that it may be well with you" has little or no meaning at all.

If you wish to learn how to kill, simply watch TV any day in the afternoon or evening. Murder is literally the order of the day. The public is educated how to take someone's life. The results indicate that this type of programming brings macabre dividends in the streets. Since 1968 crime is up 30 percent. Our urban centers are becoming murder cities, U.S.A. "You shall not kill" is a law which seems outmoded.

Immorality, adultery, "free love," pornography, lesbianism, sodomy—these are terms applicable to the affluent twentieth-century western world. Anyone who dares to say "you shall not commit adultery" is laughed to scorn.

Stealing does not merely refer to robbery, shoplifting, or the sly art of the pickpocket. Stealing refers also to the employer who pays his employee substandard wages. "The worker deserves his wages." And it refers to the laborer who, because of laziness and carelessness, refuses to put in an honest day's work. Loafing on the job is stealing just as much as the worker who steals tools on the job. "You shall not steal" is a most relevant commandment today.

"He that throweth mud loseth ground" is a saying often applied to a campaigning politician. Presently we are in a time in which integrity,

honesty, sincerity, uprightness, candor, and love for one's neighbor are in short supply. The application of the golden rule has been neglected. If you cannot say anything good about your neighbor, don't talk.

Greed is the word which describes labor-management, consumer-merchant, and constituency-government relations. The writer in Proverbs humbly prays, "Give me neither poverty nor riches. Feed me with the food that is my portion" (Prov. 30:8). But this humility has been absent in business, labor unions, industry, and government. In short, the tenth commandment, "You shall not covet," is most relevant in today's world.

In every sector of life the Christian sees the sad effects of society's transgression of God's law. Whenever and wherever there is transgression of a law, there are serious consequences. If I transgress the law of gravity, I get hurt. If I transgress any of the ten commandments, I stand guilty before God and must receive my due reward. {147} Of course, from my vantage point, I cannot begin to construct programs of action. It is better to see your calling in the light of God's Word in general and the book of Amos in particular. Amos was called by God, was filled with His Spirit, and became the prophet of the hour. When God calls you to speak in a given situation, know that it is not you who speaks but the Spirit of God who is speaking through you (Matt. 10:20).

HOSEA

The name Hosea is of the same root which gave rise to the names of Joshua and Jesus. It probably means "bearer of salvation." Whereas Amos means burden bearer, Hosea means salvation bearer.

Hosea was a rather common name in Israel. We may compare it to such common names as Charles or Henry in our culture and times. Of Hosea, the prophet, we know very little. He was the son of Beerī, but that says very little. We do not even know what he did for a living. Some say he was a prophet of priestly descent. Others say he was a farmer because he readily speaks of life on the farm. And still others venture to say that he must have been a middle-class citizen, probably a baker by trade. But all these conjectures are far from convincing. Really they are of little help when we consider that not the man's person is significant but his prophetic office.

Hosea lives his married life in complete service of the Lord. The word of the Lord is a lesson in visual education in the life of Hosea. The Lord tells him to get married, instructs him what to call his children, and orders him to continue to love his adulterous wife. Hosea is an obedient prophet in his love life. Should we ask Hosea, "How's your love life?" his answer would be, "Terrible!"

God commands, Hosea obeys. By the way, God also used the marital status of other prophets to teach the Israelites a lesson. God told Jeremiah not to marry and Ezekiel that he should not mourn the death of his wife. Hosea had to marry an unfaithful woman to show visibly the unfaithful relationship of the people of Israel to the God of Israel.

Times

Hosea prophesied in a time when anarchy, conspiracy, idolatry, and hypocrisy were the order of the day. The last six rulers of the Kingdom of Israel reigned in quick succession. Hosea does not even mention their names. Of these six, four died a violent death. One ruled only a month, another half a year, and still another only two years. In short, the last thirty-five to forty years of the kingdom of Israel were marked by an alarming state of confusion, a lack of stability of the leaders, and no sense of direction among the people.

Panic seized the leaders, confusion plagued the people. In a time when God was ignored or forgotten, Hosea was called to prophesy. God called him to teach the nation a visible lesson of God's love for His covenant people. God ruled His {148} people even though they lived apart from Him in complete and willful ignorance.

Hosea informs us that he received a message from the Lord during the time that Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah were kings of Judah, and Jeroboam was king of Israel. Uzziah and Jeroboam were contemporaries; Uzziah loved the Lord, but Jeroboam "did evil in the sight of the Lord and made Israel to sin."

By way of the introduction of his book, Hosea shows that he is a successor to Amos and a contemporary of the prophet Micah. Hosea began preaching when the nation of Israel enjoyed great prosperity during the reign of Jeroboam II, which ended about 745 BC, and he concluded his ministry when the nation rocked and reeled because of violence and anarchy, in the final years of its existence.

Whether Hosea lived to witness the invasion of the Assyrian forces is hard to say. He must have heard of the fall of the coastal plain in 734 BC and of Galilee and Trans-Jordania in 733 BC. The exile was at hand. Hosea prophesies about the idolatrous people of Israel that their “idol will be carried off to Assyria as tribute to the great king. Israel will be disgraced and put to shame because of the advice she followed. Her kings will disappear, like foam on the water” (10:6–7). Israel was old and weary. Yet Israel did not realize its own precarious position. In short, the ship of state was sinking.

What was it like to live in Israel during the last decades of its existence? Well, for one thing, society was thoroughly demoralized. The Lord describes the Israelites in these words: “They make promises and break them; they lie, murder, steal, and commit adultery. Crimes increase, and there is one murder after another” (4:2). Conditions were terrible. Family life was broken down. Hopelessness and despair gripped the hearts of those who loved the Lord. They saw that a nation without God failed to function. Exile was inevitable.

Religious Life

Israel had never fully occupied the Promised Land. Canaanites continued to live in Israel from the days of Joshua until the time of the exile. Because of the Canaanite religion, against which Joshua had warned the people, Israel was led astray and came to an end. Joshua, at the end of his life, said to the elders of Israel, “If you ever go back and cling to the rest of these nations, these which remain among you, and intermarry with them, so that you associate with them and they with you, know with certainty that the Lord your God will not continue to drive these nations out from before you; but they shall be a snare and a trap to you, and a whip on your sides and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from off this good land which the Lord your God has given you” (Joshua 23:12–13).

In the book of Hosea the name Baal appears. This was the god of the Canaanites. You will remember that it was King Ahab, in the time of Elijah, who had introduced Baal worship at the instigation of Jezebel, his wife. In that time only seven thousand Israelites still worshipped the Lord. All the others had turned to Baal worship. {149}

God pronounced judgment upon the house of Ahab by appointing Jehu, the son of Nimshi, to execute Jezebel and Ahab's descendents. In the property of Jezreel the dogs ate the lifeless body of Queen Jezebel, who at the command of Jehu had been thrown out of a second-story window (2 Kings 9:33ff). Ahab's family was completely wiped out because God had pronounced a curse upon him for introducing Baal worship. Moreover, Jehu killed all the worshippers of Baal and eradicated Baal out of Israel (2 Kings 10:28).

Gradually, however, Baal worship was introduced again in Israel, and by the time Hosea was prophet in the second half of the eighth century before Christ, just before the exile of the ten tribes, Baal worship was as common as in the day of King Ahab. Whereas in Elijah's time only seven thousand still served the Lord, in Hosea's day Baalism had become the religion of the masses. The words of Joshua were about to be fulfilled: "You perish from off this good land."

Why was Baalism such a terrible offence against God so that wherever it is mentioned in the Old Testament the anger of the Lord blazes? The answer is that the worship of Baal was highly immoral, utterly sensual, and disgustingly shameful. The worship of Baal was conducted by priests who in the name of religion practiced licentiousness in open fields, under green trees, and at high places. Grain, wine, olive oil, silver, and gold were brought as offerings to these priests. At the sites of worship, images of the goddess of fertility, Ashtoreth, were erected. Archaeologists in the last decades have excavated innumerable figurines of the goddess Ashtoreth in Israel. These figurines display an exaggerated emphasis on the sexual parts of a female.

Ashtoreth was regarded as the goddess who would guarantee fertility to man, beast, and plant. When in the fall and winter nature lay dormant, the people were told that Ashtoreth would bring new life. Man's longing for the resurgence of life had to be brought to her attention. This could only be done by visibly demonstrating man's mysterious power to bring forth life. By having physical intercourse with a Baal priestess, man brought his need to the attention of the goddess. Religiously this was called "sacred prostitution." It was fornication, adultery.

Sacred prostitutes were present at every Baal shrine. They contributed to the moral decline of the nation. Divorce was rampant because

husbands went to the Baal shrine and wives became unfaithful to their spouses. Baal worship, therefore, disrupted the basic unit of society: the family. The result was unbridled sexual permissiveness. The Lord summed it up as follows: “As a result, your daughters serve as prostitutes, and your daughters-in-law commit adultery. Yet I will not punish them for this, because you yourselves go off with temple prostitutes, and together with them you offer pagan sacrifices. As the proverb says, ‘A people without sense will be ruined’” (4:13–14). Though Scripture does not indicate the physical health of the population, we would not be amiss in assuming that venereal disease was rampant in Israel.

Far too much do we resort to the use of euphemisms so that we begin to {150} take the euphemism for reality. A good example of this is that we buy gasoline for 49.9 cents per gallon. We say and wish to think that we buy it for 49 cents, whereas we know we pay 50 cents. That is euphemism. When we read in Scripture that the Israelites played the harlot and joined themselves to Baal of Peor, in the land of Moab, before they entered the Promised Land, we like to spiritualize. We say that playing the harlot really means serving an idol. Israel, married to the Lord God, now became unfaithful by worshipping a Moabite idol.

However, the account in Numbers clearly indicates that the worship of Baal was sexual deviation and licentiousness. The people disrobed and danced naked the so-called cultic dances. Men and women imbibed strong drink and then publicly engaged in sexual intercourse. The book of Numbers relates that God instructed Moses to have everyone who had engaged in such sexual intercourse be put to death (Num. 25:4–5). God’s anger blazed forth upon the Israelites.

This is the message the Old Testament brings: the Baal worshipper, because of sexual licentiousness, meets death by divine judgment. God says, in effect, my people are a holy people.

Hosea’s Marriage

The Lord God had made a covenant with the people of Israel at Mount Sinai. This covenant really was a marriage contract. And the breaking of the marriage vows would be when the Israelites adopted another religion. Scripture calls this “adultery.” For example, in Deuteronomy 22:22 we read: “If a man is found lying with a married woman,

then both of them shall die, the man who lay with the woman, and the woman. Thus you shall purge the evil from Israel.”

Extreme measures, you say. But remember who gives this law to the Israelites through the mouth of Moses. God speaks. He is in control. He shows the people of Israel how deeply they have fallen into sin. It is God who tells Hosea to get married so that the people may learn a lesson by way of visual aids.

The Lord said to Hosea, “Go and get married; your wife will be unfaithful, and your children will be as bad as she is. My people have left me and become unfaithful” (1:2). Love is tender, is personal, is intimate. Love does not tolerate a third party. Yet God told Hosea to get married. God even informed the prophet about the stability of his marriage.

Hosea married Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim. That means that Hosea married according to the custom of his day. We would say: duly registered. Gomer was a lady of instability. She was fickle. And Hosea knew very well that they didn’t match. But he probably expected improvements because of his personal influence. Hosea’s faithfulness and stability were well known.

We may be sure that the people did some talking behind Hosea’s back, and as time progressed they told him to his face that his choice was not the best. However, everything seemed to go well in the manse of Hosea. Before the first year of married life was passed, parental joy filled the heart of Hosea. Gomer, his wife, gave birth to a healthy baby boy. Hosea perhaps mused that everything was {151} going well with them despite the word of the Lord. However, no sooner had the child been born when the Lord said to Hosea, “Name him ‘Jezreel,’ because it will not be long before I punish the king of Israel for the murders that his ancestor Jehu committed at Jezreel. I am going to put an end to Jehu’s dynasty. And at that time in Jezreel Valley, I will destroy Israel’s military power” (1:4–5).

What a name! Jezreel. In the Hebrew language the spelling of Jezreel differs from the word Israel by only one letter. Israel was a name of prestige, but Jezreel was a name of shame. Jezreel was a constant reminder of Queen Jezebel, who had taken Naboth’s vineyard by force and had Naboth killed. At Jezreel Queen Jezebel was killed and her body was consumed by marauding dogs. Jezreel was a place of divine

judgment upon Baal worshippers. God said, “Call your son Jezreel, Hosea, because in the Valley of Jezreel I will end the kingdom of Israel.” Suppose that you would call your firstborn son “judgment is coming.” Everybody would say, “how strange,” and ask “why?” And suppose you would say, “I have called my son ‘judgment is coming’ because the downfall of the United States is about to happen. God has pronounced severe judgment upon our nation.” I am sure that countless people would smile in disbelief. Yet Jezreel means “judgment is coming.” The name pointed to a battlefield. In the Valley of Jezreel the decisive battles were fought. And with Assyrian forces occupying Galilee to the north of the Valley of Jezreel, the name of Hosea’s firstborn son was all the more meaningful.

The account of Hosea’s family life continues. “Gomer had another child, and this time it was a girl” (1:6). What a tragedy lies back of these few words. Indescribable grief on the part of Hosea is locked up in the clause “Gomer had another child.” To come straight to the point: Gomer had gone out with other men, had become pregnant, brought a baby girl into the world, and intimated that Hosea adopt her as his own child. Gomer had played the harlot. We have no indication in this verse that she had become a temple prostitute in the worship of Baal, but in the second chapter of Hosea’s prophecy she is called a shameless prostitute in the service of Baal.

The Lord spoke again: “Name her ‘Unloved,’ because I will no longer show mercy to the people of Israel or forgive them” (1:6). *Lo-ruhamah* was the Hebrew name Hosea had to give the child of Gomer. *Lo-ruhamah* means “no mercy.” We can well imagine the ridicule and laughter of the people when they heard such a strange name. And we can somewhat understand the grief and despair which filled the heart of faithful Hosea.

The account goes on. “After Gomer had weaned her daughter, she became pregnant again and had another son” (1:8). Once again Hosea’s wife had gone out with other men, most likely in the service of Baal worship, and had come back to Hosea pregnant. In due time she gave birth to her third child, a baby boy. “The Lord said to Hosea, ‘Name him “Not-My-People,” because the people of Israel are not my people, and I am not their God’ ” (1:9).

When anyone asked the name of this child, and heard “not-my-people,” he {152} would say, “that figures, because Gomer is a prostitute.” But people who were more serious-minded asked why Hosea gave the children such strange names. They were told by Hosea: as you see my married life, so you see Israel’s wedded life to the Lord God. You wonder why I married an unfaithful wife, why I care for illegitimate children, and why I keep loving my wife and her children. Look, my life is a reflection of your life with the Lord. God made a covenant with the people at Mount Sinai. He signed a marriage contract with His wife Israel. But Israel has broken her marriage vows. She no longer “loves, honors, and obeys” her Husband, the Lord God of Israel. Instead she has embraced the Baal worship. The gifts the Lord had given her, such as grain, wine, olive oil, silver, and gold, she has brought to the house of Baal.

Hosea knew the law. He could have gone to the elders of Israel and told them that his wife had played the harlot. Perhaps the elders of Israel would have laughed him to scorn because the law was outdated for them. But Hosea did not go to court to sue for divorce. God told him, “Go and love a woman who is committing adultery with a lover” (3:1). Hosea had to buy Gomer back. He paid fifteen silver coins and seven bushels of barley. She became his wife again. God wanted Israel to be His wife. He longed to take her back. He loved her. Hosea saved his wife from a life of degradation and ultimate destruction.

Application

Names do not mean much today. My last name means box maker. Undoubtedly one of my forebears in the seventeenth century was a box maker by trade. The name applied to him because it informed the public about his occupation. But the name does not mean anything to or for his descendants except to differentiate them.

Hosea is a name with a message. It means “bearer of salvation.” Hosea comes from the Hebrew verb “to help,” “to save.” By way of transliteration into the Greek language the name Hosea became Jesus. Jesus, therefore, is the bearer of salvation. And this is exactly what the angel of the Lord told Joseph, the husband-to-be of Mary: “She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins” (Matt. 1:21).

How do we understand the verb “to save?” Unfortunately, a word takes on different connotations in the course of time. To save in common speech means either to keep, to store away, or to economize. But the biblical meaning of “to save” has nothing in common with catchy advertisements. To save refers to restoration of life. It refers to making life complete, whole. A bearer of salvation is, therefore, a person who seeks to restore life to its proper meaning, to its original intention.

How did God design family life? God created human beings, Adam and Eve, as male and female and intended them to live together “within the bond of holy wedlock.” Paul comments on God’s creation ordinance: “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and will be united to his wife, and the two will {153} become one flesh.” He says, “Each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband” (Ephesians 5:33).

Marital faithfulness is a rare quality in a world filled with immorality. Take, for example, our university and college campuses. When students register they can pick their own dormitory roommates regardless of sex. Students who have not had heterosexual or homosexual experiences are considered prudes, squares, not “with it.” Marriage is regarded as an agreement to live together as long as it is of mutual interest to both parties. However, the agreement is not binding in any way at all. Whenever the husband or wife wishes to terminate the arrangement, the marriage is dissolved. This is life on today’s campuses. It is a sea of immorality.

News magazines on a regular basis describe the current mores of western society. Homosexual acts, wife-swapping, vasectomies, in brief, anything which has to do with sex is discussed, often in detailed fashion. The news reporters cater to public demand. However, by means of their reporting they reveal the moral level of the public. And that has fallen to an all-time low.

The Christian is the one who must stem the tide of licentiousness. He has the knowledge of God’s revelation and therefore knows the purpose and the fulness of life. “My people are doomed because they do not acknowledge me” (Hosea 4:6), says the Lord through Hosea. The Bible is the bestseller in the book business, and yet people are spiritually ignorant. People do not know the Lord and His Word; and because of their lack of knowledge they literally perish. The Christian must be

the bearer of salvation; he must be the restorer of life; he must make life complete, whole, perfect. The Christian is Hosea.

Divorce is becoming increasingly common. Statistics show that the ratio of divorce in the United States is one divorce to 2.56 marriages. In some circles invitations are being sent to relatives, friends, and acquaintances to attend a divorce reception similar to attending a wedding reception. Yet this display of external courtesy is mere sham. It hides frustration, fear, and despair. Instead of freedom, which divorce is supposed to bring, divorcees become enslaved to loneliness. They feel forsaken. Their world seems to have come to an end. Some, in time, need psychiatric help. Others resort to alcohol or drugs. A few commit suicide. Divorcees often discover that dissolving marriage brings them more problems than they had before the divorce.

For this reason modern society is not interested in marriage for real. Variations to the marriage vow "till death do us part" are suggested and promoted. Students in campus dormitories live together, have sex together, discuss mutual problems, perhaps even quarrel together. They act and live as if they are married, but do not commit themselves to each other. They know it isn't for real. They really aren't married. Their marriage is a mere act.

Closely related to this is communal living. Both sexes live together in a house, apartment, or dormitory with the understanding that each occupant belongs to {154} all or rather that no one belongs to anyone in particular. Concepts of fidelity and faithfulness are foreign to communal living. Because all vestiges of marriage are absent, only a gradual dehumanization can occur. And dehumanization results in destruction.

In addition to these variations there is the so-called tandem marriage. This means that the first marriage is a mere trial. Of course, bride and groom say their vows. Before the law they are legally married, but both husband and wife have the tacit understanding that the arrangement is on a trial basis. They have made up their minds that unless there is compatibility, the marriage will be dissolved. After the divorce, new partners are found to engage in a second marriage more durable than the first trial arrangement.

Society in regard to these marriage variations is paying a tremendous price. Children born into these pseudo-marriages suffer incalcu-

lable grief. Moral depravity devastates the partners of these marriages. These marriages, which are not for real, are arranged merely for sex. And sex, when it does not have the sanctity of marriage, is exploited and leads to perversion and human degradation.

Western society is ill. It has contracted the contagious disease of marriage sickness. And this is a social disease which cripples the life of our nation. Here is where the breakdown of our moral structure occurs. This disease, usually, continues its devastating work. It spreads. It infects other sectors of life. It debilitates. Instead of love, there is hatred. Instead of harmony, there is bitterness. Instead of joy and happiness, there is despair and emptiness. Instead of purpose and direction, there is frustration.

Answer

Why do I spend so much time on the subject of marriage and divorce? Because the matter is of such vital importance to the well-being of our nation. The basic unit of our nation is the individual family. Families, therefore, are the building blocks of the nation's structure. A solid building only exists when all the individual blocks are sound.

When we are told that the ratio of divorce to marriage is 1 to 2.56, we are speaking here in terms of 40 percent. Of a total of one hundred marriages, forty end up in divorce. To use the illustration of a building again, 40 percent of the building blocks have disintegrated. A building thus weakened is in sad state of repair. It may totter and fall with a great crash. And that is the moral state of the union today.

Hosea was called by the Lord to live a life of faithfulness with a wife of loose morals in order to point up God's faithfulness and Israel's moral and spiritual decline. Hosea showed his love by taking his wayward wife into his arms. He pointed out the way of repentance and restoration. God did not abandon His people, but through His prophet called the nation to repent, to believe, and to live a life of faithfulness.

Hosea was interested in the physical and spiritual welfare of his wife. As a {155} prophet he was vitally concerned about the spiritual life of the nation. Hosea was the bearer of salvation. He faithfully proclaimed the Word of God. He showed his steadfast love in his family life. No one could doubt Hosea's intention. His was a life of love and faithfulness spent in saving others.

What does that say to us? We look at the rapid deterioration of the moral standards of our nation. We see the climbing divorce rate breaking down the family unit. We observe the spread of this social disease in all sectors of life. And we sadly conclude that our nation will experience sudden collapse. As other great empires fell because of immorality, so the United States will cease to exist.

We confront a world reveling in sexual sin, sadly paying the inescapable penalties of breaking God's law. We confront a world living in gross ignorance of divine laws. Man knows the laws of nature, such as the law of gravity, but he is unacquainted with God's law concerning marriage, morality, and purpose of life. We are the ones who have that information. We may not keep that information to ourselves. In the words of Paul each one of us must say, "what I received I pass on to you" (1 Cor. 15:3). In a world of darkness, we who have the light must show others the way of salvation.

We have to go to Scripture to find help on the subject of marriage. The Bible speaks with great candor about sex, because the Bible wants to show us the fulness of life. Someone may object and say that today's society is not interested in hearing the commandment "You shall not commit adultery," and therefore words from Scripture will fall on deaf ears.

When Paul on his second missionary journey came to the city of Corinth, he knew that he had arrived at *the* city of immorality. Throughout the Mediterranean world the city of Corinth had become a byword. "To corinthianize" meant "to commit fornication." Into a world thoroughly demoralized, Paul brought the Gospel. Paul had to teach them about creation: God created heaven and earth, created male and female. God brought Adam and Eve together and instituted marriage. Paul taught the people in Corinth the Christian view of marriage. Several years after Paul's ministry in Corinth, he wrote extensively about morality. "Flee from sexual immorality," he said, "each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband" (1 Cor. 6:18; 7:2).

It is striking that Paul and Peter in their letters say so much about married life. This was the problem they faced in the decadent pagan society. They, guided by the Holy Spirit, set themselves to teaching them the truths of God's revelation. They, blessed by the power of the

Word and the applicatory work of the Spirit, raised the level of morality. They brought salvation. Paul puts it in these words: “Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is the head of the Church, his body, of which he is the Saviour. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant {156} church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless” (Eph. 5:22–27).

Peter exhorted husbands to be considerate of their wives and to treat them with respect, “as heirs of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers” (1 Peter 3:7). Husbands and wives receive the gracious gift of life from God and therefore they are to pray to Him in thankfulness.

All this may sound a bit idealistic to people who have little or no knowledge of Scripture. We are living in an age of individualism in which each person is doing his own thing. But the Bible says that a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. The Bible says what God has joined together, let man not separate.

You and I, who have received God’s revelation, must bring the message of salvation to those who are living in spiritual ignorance and consequently are perishing. Bring the message of salvation and when people listen, pray that the Holy Spirit will open their hearts to receive it. Pray that marriage partners may seek each other’s spiritual well-being.

When a husband seeks to become fully acquainted with the Bible and wants to follow the Lord Jesus Christ, he desires nothing more than family life in which the Lord Jesus is the head, and in which the Lord Jesus is the unseen guest at every meal time, the silent listener to every conversation.

I may not be presumptuous and predict the downfall of the United States because of moral degradation. All I can do is assess the conditions and then in true biblical fashion, as Hosea of old, show the pathway of life. In that respect I am a bearer of salvation. I must be instrumental in turning the tide by giving the world an alternative to

the secular view of marriage and love. I must show the world the way of life. I must lead men, women, and children to Jesus.

I conclude with the words of the psalmist, who expressed his confidence in the Lord in this prayer:

“Lord, you show me the path that leads to life,
Your presence fills me with joy,
And your help brings pleasure forever.”
—Psalm 16:11

THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION: PRO AND CON

Bruce Bartlett

From the first moment when the Industrial Revolution became an observable phenomenon, there has been controversy over its origins and consequences. Very broadly, the protagonists can be divided into two groups: the optimists and the pessimists. The optimists tend to be favorable toward the Revolution, see a continuous rise in the standard of living as a result, and generally favor capitalism and the market economy. The pessimists, on the other hand, are unfavorable toward industrialization, see a decline in the worker's standard of living (at least until about 1850) or else a decline in the "quality" of life, and generally favor some form of socialism.

One of the earliest debates on the subject took place between the great Whig historian Thomas Babington Macaulay and Robert Southey, a Tory and the Poet Laureate of England. To Southey, the manufacturing system was "a system more tyrannical than that of the feudal ages, a system of actual servitude, a system which destroys the bodies and degrades the minds of those who are engaged in it." This view was typical among high Tories, but they were challenged in the strongest terms by Macaulay, in his review of Southey's book:

The laboring classes of this island, though they have their grievances and distresses, some produced by their own improvidence, some by the errors of their rulers, are on the whole better off as to physical comforts than the inhabitants of any equally extensive district in the world. For this reason, suffering is more acutely felt and more loudly bewailed here than elsewhere.... When we compare our own condition with that of our ancestors, we think it clear that the advantages arising from the progress of civilization have far more than counter-balanced the disadvantages arising from the progress of population. While our numbers have increased tenfold, our wealth has increased a hundred-fold. Though there are so many more to share the wealth now existing in the country than there were in the sixteenth century, it seems certain that a greater share falls to almost every individual than fell to

almost any corresponding class in the sixteenth century.... This is no reason for tolerating abuses or for neglecting any means of ameliorating the condition of our poorer countrymen. But it is a reason against telling them, as some of our philosophers are constantly telling them, that they are the most wretched people who ever existed on the face of the earth.²⁷⁵ {158}

This particular exchange took place in 1830. At approximately the same time, we can see the early beginnings of what was to evolve into Marxian socialism. David Ricardo had vastly extended the range of the newly discovered science of political economy with his *Principles of Political Economy and Taxation*, published in 1817. While continuing the attack on mercantilism begun with Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* and generally favoring *laissez faire*, Ricardo made one fundamental error, just as Smith had, in putting forth the labor theory of value. This one aspect of the classical economic system was to lead logically to Marxism. For if the only value a commodity has is in the value of the labor that went into it, then it follows that the capitalist contributes nothing to the production process and must, therefore, be an exploiter. In this respect, all that Marx wrote and advocated is perfectly consistent with classical economics.

Though most classical economists continued to believe in liberalism and free trade, this contradiction in their system made it increasingly difficult to combat intellectually the socialism being promoted by people like Robert Owen. It was not until the discovery of marginal utility in the 1870s that economists had the ammunition to knock out the Ricardian underpinnings of Marxism. The outstanding contribution toward demolishing this was Eugen von Böhm-Bawerk's famous essay, "Karl Marx and the Close of His System" (1896), published in English in 1898.

In spite of this, as we well know, Marxism has gone on to become the most important political ideology of this century. With the rise of Marxism and socialism as significant intellectual, political, economic, and social forces, a new dimension has been added to the debate over the Industrial Revolution. Marx's own great work, *Das Kapital*, was vir-

275. From Macaulay's essay, "Southey's Colloquies on Society," *Edinburgh Review* (January 1830), reprinted in *The Works of Lord Macaulay: Essays*, vol. 2 (New York: Hurd & Houghton, 1871), 132–87.

tually just a history of the Industrial Revolution from the perspective of the labor theory of value. In support of his materialistic interpretation of history, the Revolution was made to look as bad as possible. The “immiseration” of the working class by the forces of capitalism and industrialization was used to justify a theory of class warfare and the overthrow of capitalism itself.

In the late-nineteenth century and into the twentieth, the idea that workers were somehow worse off as a result of industrialization came to be the accepted opinion. Arnold Toynbee, the uncle of the twentieth century’s Toynbee, in his standard account, *Lectures on the Industrial Revolution in England* (1884), paints this bleak picture of Adam Smith’s time:

There were dark patches even in his age, but we now approach a darker period—a period as disastrous and as terrible as any which a nation ever passed; disastrous and terrible, because, side by side with a great increase of wealth was seen an enormous increase of pauperism; and production on a vast scale, the result of free competition, led to {159} a rapid alienation of classes to the degradation of a large body of producers.²⁷⁶

Soon afterwards, there appeared similar interpretations of the Industrial Revolution in Sidney Webb’s *Labor in the Longest Reign* (1897) and the Hammonds’ *Village Laborer* (1911). These were only the first of many widely circulated books by these authors, and all of them took the worst possible view of early industrialization. It should be remembered, however, that “in their preoccupation with the debit side of the industrial revolution ... the Webbs and Hammonds were only expanding in greater detail the traditional view held by most English economic historians.”²⁷⁷

All along, the pessimistic argument owed much to a very simplistic methodology. Given their preconceived assumption that workers were worse off, it was a simple matter to collect data that confirmed this belief. After all, no one has ever maintained that *everyone* was better off as a result of industrialization; only that the vast majority of people were better off than they had been previously, or would have been had

276. Arnold Toynbee, *The Industrial Revolution* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1956), 57.

277. R. M. Hartwell, *The Industrial Revolution and Economic Growth* (London: Methuen, 1971), 82–83.

the population continued to increase without industrialization. Unfortunately, this was much more difficult to see, and hard evidence to prove it did not yet exist. Meanwhile, the wretched masses in the cities offered what seemed to be massive proof to the contrary.

It is a well-known truism that many, perhaps even most, of the complex phenomena of history and life are not what they initially seem to be. An example would be the seemingly obvious fact that the introduction of machinery eliminates jobs. This is manifestly not true, for “persistent effort to think the problem through shows that this belief is the result of a logical fallacy, of stressing one effect of the assumed change and leaving out others.”²⁷⁸ Thus it was left for the pessimists to pick up the obvious, but insignificant, facts to prove their case, while proof of the contrary was much more difficult to see.

By mid-century there were some isolated attempts to look beneath the facade of misery and discern the truth about the Industrial Revolution. Macaulay had an intuitive belief that workers were better off, but he really could not prove it. It was not until Tooke and Newmarch began collecting hard economic data for their *History of Prices* that there was evidence for the beneficial effects of the factory system. Unfortunately, theirs was an obscure technical work with little impact on thinking. Arrayed against it was Frederick Engels’s *Condition of the Working Class {160} in England in 1844*. He too accumulated much data, erroneous though it was, and showed the immiseration of the masses. It remained essentially unchallenged for three-quarters of a century and had much influence in shaping the views of Toynbee, the Webbs, and the Hammonds, who popularized it in their widely read works.

Meanwhile, the economists, operating in a separate arena from the social historians, continued to do the investigating and collecting of facts which were ultimately to topple the pessimist case. In the 1890s, A. L. Bowley and G. H. Wood published a series of articles studying the course of wages throughout the Industrial Revolution. Wood’s work can be found in “The Course of Average Wages Between 1790 and 1860” for the *Economic Journal* in 1899. Bowley’s work was collected

278. F. A. Hayek, “History and Politics,” in *Capitalism and the Historians*, ed. F. A. Hayek (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1954), 24.

together into his *Wages in the United Kingdom in the Nineteenth Century*, published the following year. They both concluded that the average standard of living had risen steadily from 1800 to 1850. Yet despite the fact that this material was available before the Hammonds produced their widely read books, they took no notice of it. The popular interpretation continued to be that of Toynbee and Engels.

In 1926 the tide began to turn. The publication of J. H. Clapham's *Economic History of Modern Europe* made a serious challenge to the pessimists. Using a wealth of data from Bowley, Wood, and others, Clapham bluntly stated that real wages rose for almost every class of worker continuously from 1790 onward. This conclusion was further supported the same year by Dorothy George's *London Life in the Eighteenth Century* and W. H. Hutt's article for *Economica*, "The Factory System of the Early Nineteenth Century."

By the 1940s the optimist position was the increasingly accepted one. Significant contributions of this period include T. S. Ashton's book, *The Industrial Revolution, 1760–1830*, and his famous article in the *Journal of Economic History*, "The Standard of Life of the Workers of England, 1790–1830." Ludwig von Mises's treatise on economics, *Human Action*, also contributed to the destruction of myths about the Industrial Revolution.

In 1951, as if to nail the coffin shut, F. A. Hayek organized a symposium of economists and historians to lay to rest the pessimist argument. Published as *Capitalism and the Historians*, it is a thoroughgoing defense of capitalism and the Industrial Revolution. In his contribution to the collection, Ashton could state with confidence, "Generally it is now agreed that for the majority the gain in real wages was substantial."²⁷⁹

The extent to which an idea has taken hold can usually be measured by the position of the major textbook writers. In the early 1950s, R. M. Hartwell found that there was still heavy reliance on the pessimistic view.²⁸⁰ {161} By the 1960s, Paul Samuelson had this to say in his best-selling economics text:

279. T. S. Ashton, "The Treatment of Capitalism by Historians," in *ibid.*, 39.

280. Hartwell, *Industrial Revolution*, 85.

It used to be fashionable for economic historians to dwell on the evils of the Industrial Revolution and the poverty ridden condition of the masses in the disease-producing cities.... However true their lurid picture of industrial factory towns, the earlier historians erred in thinking that conditions were worse than in the preindustrial era.... Furthermore, poverty is never so obvious in the country as in the industrial cities, where it forces itself on the observer.... Modern historians therefore emphasize that the conditions of the industrial present, inadequate as they may seem, are nevertheless great improvements over the previous periods of commercial enterprise and agrarian feudalism.²⁸¹

It should be noted that Samuelson was writing primarily to an American audience. Thus, to an American observer, the debate may now seem settled in favor of the optimists; in England it still rages. Unable to refute the documentation of Clapham, Ashton, and others, the pessimists have given up trying to prove that workers were materially worse off as a result of industrialization. They now concentrate on the more subjective and qualitative aspects of workers' lives. They concede that workers were physically better off, but argue that the quality of their lives declined nonetheless.

In England, this new form of the debate has centered on an idyllic interpretation of the life of the yeoman. He is seen as virtually forced from the pleasant, happy countryside to the teeming, ugly cities by greedy capitalists. The Marxist, E. J. Hobsbawm, has been instrumental in pursuing this line of attack. He was met squarely, however, by the liberal, R. M. Hartwell, in a barrage of essays. More recently, Brian Inglis has taken the Hobsbawm thesis to new heights of mythology in his *Poverty and the Industrial Revolution*. He was met immediately, though, with a point-by-point counterattack from W. H. Hutt, in the November 1972 issue of *Encounter*.

The extent to which the myth of the yeoman persists can be seen in a book by C. Northcote Parkinson, *Left Luggage*. This book is noteworthy because it is an attack on socialism. Yet the author weakens his argument considerably by accepting wholeheartedly the unprovable assertion that life in the country is superior to that in the city. Since

281. Paul Samuelson, *Economics: An Introductory Analysis*, 7th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967), 106.

industry undeniably brought workers from the country to the city, *ergo*, the Industrial Revolution is condemned and support given to the immiseration thesis. Ludwig von Mises has been particularly eloquent in refuting this naive viewpoint:

The truth is that economic conditions were highly unsatisfactory on the eve of the Industrial Revolution. The traditional social system was not elastic enough to provide for the needs of a rapidly increasing {162} population. Neither farming nor the guilds had any use for the additional hands.... The number of people for whom there was no room left in the rigid system of paternalism and government tutelage of business grew rapidly. They were virtually outcasts. The apathetic majority of these wretched people lived from the crumbs that fell from the tables of the established castes. In the harvest season they earned a trifle by occasional help on farms; for the rest they depended upon private charity and communal poor relief.... The factory owners did not have the power to compel anyone to take a factory job. They could only hire people who were ready to work for the wages offered to them. Low as these wage rates were, they were nonetheless much more than these paupers could earn in any other field open to them. It is a distortion of facts to say that the factories carried off the housewives from the nurseries and the kitchens and the children from their play. These women had nothing to feed their children. These children were destitute and starving. Their only refuge was the factory. It saved them in the strictest sense of the term, from death by starvation.²⁸²

The pessimists continue to ignore this. They point to the grimy factories, the low wages, the long working hours, and forget that it was these very same factory workers who were getting the full benefit of the factory's production. The pessimists seem to think that the factories were turning out fine silks for royalty, rather than cheap cottons for the masses.

Previously, clothing had been very expensive, since wool was the only fabric available. To make their wool clothes last as long as possible, people did not wash them, for fear of wearing them out prematurely. This created highly unsanitary conditions and helped to spread disease. The introduction of cheap cotton fabric put an end to all this and would seem, therefore, to be a definite qualitative improvement. As

282. Ludwig von Mises, *Human Action: A Treatise on Economics* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1949), 614–15.

Joseph Schumpeter reminds us, “The capitalist achievement does not typically consist in providing more silk stockings for queens but in bringing them within reach of factory girls in return for steadily decreasing amounts of effort.”²⁸³ Yet in spite of everything, the pessimists continue to decry the introduction of cheap cotton as part of the decline in quality of worker’s lives because of the pessimists’ preference for wool.

The improvements wrought by the Industrial Revolution could be, and have been, named at length, but the opposition shows no sign of weakening. Recently, one of the principal protagonists, Hartwell, has confessed that he never understood why this was so. “At first,” he says, “I assumed that historical argument could be settled simply by refutation of error. I assumed, for example, that historical myths based on false facts would {163} disappear by confronting ‘false’ facts with ‘true’ facts. I believed, indeed, that historical controversy was concerned primarily with truth and error. I soon realized, however, that much debate in history was not about ‘facts’ but about ‘values,’ about how the world should be and not how it actually was. Most important historical debate, I finally decided, was ideological dispute.”²⁸⁴

To be sure, from the very beginning, the debate over the Industrial Revolution has been shaped by political and social factors. Like other famous historical debates, like that over the decline of Rome or the French Revolution, the conclusions have political implications. Indeed, this particular debate has been unusually ideological because it is one of the key intellectual battlegrounds between the two most important ideologies of the day—between those of a Marxist-collectivist-socialist persuasion, and those with a liberal-individualist-capitalist point of view. It was inevitable that historians would be caught in the dispute, as each side appealed to history for justification.

In the so-called Third World today, underdeveloped nations are searching for a shortcut to industrialization. The appeal of socialism and state planning is great, because the leaders of these nations have no desire to give up their power and are able to sell it to their people by

283. Joseph A. Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, 3rd ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1950), 67; see also Ashton, “Treatment of Capitalism,” 37.

284. R. M. Hartwell, “History and Ideology,” *Modern Age* (Fall 1974): 381.

pointing to the apparent success of Soviet Russia and China. They are bolstered, however, by being able to point out the evils of industrialization in England put forth by the pessimists. In other cases, nations genuinely want to choose the best path to development, but find the socialists far more energetic in putting forth their views.

Until the Russian Revolution, even the pessimists like Toynbee had to admit that the state was a negative factor in development. "The essence of the Industrial Revolution," he said, "is the substitution of competition for the Mediaeval regulations which had previously controlled the production and distribution of wealth."²⁸⁵ To Macaulay, of course, the issue was even clearer:

It is not by the intermeddling of ... the omniscient and omnipotent State, but by the prudence and energy of the people, that England has hitherto been carried forward in civilization; and it is to the same prudence and the same energy that we now look with comfort and hope. Our rulers will best promote the improvement of the nation by strictly confining themselves to their own legitimate duties, by leaving capital to find its most lucrative course, commodities their fair price, industry and intelligence their natural reward, idleness and folly their natural punishment, by maintaining peace, by defending private property, by diminishing the price of law, and by observing {164} strict economy in every department of the state. Let the Government do this; the People will assuredly do the rest.²⁸⁶

Since the victory of the Bolsheviks, unfortunately, the issue has not been so clear. The Communists have paraded their successes in massive propaganda displays, while the West can only apologize for its wealth. In fact, its benevolence toward the underdeveloped nations has helped to hasten state planning. Foreign aid, by being directed at governments rather than private enterprise, encourages socialism and discourages the efficient use of resources.²⁸⁷

Developmental economists study such issues closely, and also look at the work of economic historians in an effort to find a formula for

285. Toynbee, *Industrial Revolution*, 58.

286. Macaulay, "Southey's Colloquies," 187.

287. See Milton Friedman, "Foreign Economic Aid: Means and Objectives," *Yale Review* (Summer 1958): 500–16; James W. Wiggins and Helmut Schoeck, eds., *Foreign Aid Reexamined: A Critical Appraisal* (Washington: Public Affairs Press, 1958).

industrialization. The Industrial Revolution in England has particular significance because it is the only case in which industrial development took place without stimulus from outside. As a consequence, developmental economists are debating nearly the same issues that economic historians have argued about for a century and a half. Some of the most current aspects of this debate can be found in P. T. Bauer's *Dissent on Development*, wherein he argues vigorously against the planners in favor of the market economy.

Bauer, like Hartwell, has remarked about the incredible controversy and bitter opinions that have met his work. The problem is typical of almost any pro-capitalist writer, whether he be economist, historian, or whatever. This is because of the nature of the adversary. In his classic, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, Joseph Schumpeter analyzed this bias against capitalism:

It is an error to believe that political attack arises primarily from grievances and that it can be turned by justification. Political criticism cannot be met effectively by rational argument. From the fact that the criticism of the capitalist order proceeds from a critical attitude of mind, i.e., from an attitude which spurns allegiance to extra-rational values, it does not follow that rational refutation will be accepted. Such refutation may tear the rational garb of attack but can never reach the extra-rational driving power that always lurks behind it ... so capitalism stands its trial before judges who have the sentence of death in their pockets. They are going to pass it, whatever the defense may hear; the only success victorious defense can possibly produce is a change in the indictment.²⁸⁸

As we have seen, the debate over the Industrial Revolution has indeed {165} followed Schumpeter's outline. No matter how conclusive the evidence in favor of industrialization and capitalism may appear, it is never enough to satisfy the critics. When the quasi-rational arguments of the anticapitalists are so thoroughly refuted as to force their abandonment, the argument merely shifts ground. In this case, the early evidence of a declining standard of living was finally dispelled by Clapham and laid to rest by Ashton. The only result was that a new, more sophisticated challenge arose, conceding the rise of material well-being but claiming that the quality of workers' lives declined nonethe-

288. Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, 144.

less. This new twist makes a final judgment impossible, because individual values defy logical analysis.

3. DEFENDERS OF THE FAITH

STONEWALL JACKSON

Douglas Kelly

The military career of General Thomas J. Jackson—known to the ages as “Stonewall” Jackson—was like a bright meteor in the evening sky: sudden in its rise to glory, and equally sudden in its descent. What seventeenth-century Bishop Hall says about Elijah, we could apply to Jackson: “He comes in like a tempest, who went out in a whirlwind.”

The young Republic of America had scarcely celebrated seventy-four years of independence from Great Britain when it was engulfed in the raging, devastating flames of what the Southerners called “the Second War for Independence.” More Americans were killed in this war than any other in all its history. The devastation to the country and the personal grief and ensuing bitterness of millions were on a scale immeasurably larger than the 1776 War of Independence.

Out of the blackness of this tragic holocaust—so costly for the South in heartbreaking defeat and bitter, humiliating reconstruction—there still shines a sanctifying light from the faces of consecrated Christian leaders in that struggle, men whose lives and memories still shed a hal-
lowing glow on the passing generations.

Few American leaders, if any, either Southern or Northern, have ever stood so close to the throne of God as Thomas J. Jackson. The humility, purity, and tender love of a crucified Saviour, and the glorious splendor of a risen Lord, are reflected in the attributes of this man.

Samuel Rutherford, Scottish saint and Westminster divine, said, “I am made of extremes.” So was Jackson. On the one hand, he was a quiet, self-effacing, home-loving, evangelical Christian. What has been inappropriately said of the pantheistic philosopher Spinoza, could properly be said of Jackson: “He was a God-intoxicated man” (cf. Eph. 5:18). His was a deep, vigorous piety rooted in a life “hid with Christ in God.”

On the other hand, he was a military genius of the highest order, who has been considered by experts in the science of war as equal to Napoleon on the European scene, and possibly superior to such Amer-

ican heroes as Generals George Washington, John Pershing, and Douglas MacArthur. Stonewall Jackson led 15,000 Confederate troops to a brilliant victory over 65,000 Federals at Winchester, Virginia. At Fredericksburg, 35,000 Southerners, inspired by the example of General Jackson, routed 125,000 {167} Northern troops. The battle in which Jackson lost his life, Chancellorsville, saw 125,000 Federals put to flight by 45,000 Confederates. He never lost a battle.

Jackson's prayers and active efforts to promulgate the gospel among his troops were answered when a major revival broke out in the Confederate Army, with particular fervency in the regiments under his command. His "unsung" victorious leadership in the spiritual realm has counted for more than the military conquests that made him famous.

Early Life

Jackson had to begin learning what it meant to struggle against great odds from early childhood days. Thomas J. Jackson was born in Clarksburg, Virginia (now West Virginia), of "Scotch-Irish" parentage (i.e., Scottish Presbyterians, who were first on the plantation of Ulster before coming to the American colonies). He was born in 1824.

Already in the heredity, as well as in the environment of Jackson, one notices the providential grace of God at work, using all things to shape a chosen vessel for a coming hour in history. He came from distinguished, intelligent, believing forebears. One of his Jackson ancestors had served in the American Army with Andrew Jackson, who later was President of the United States. The men discovered that they were related. Their forefathers had come from the same parish in Northern Ireland. Others of his immediate ancestors served as district judges and in the U.S. Congress.

He lost his father at a very early age. Soon the family estate was dissipated. His poor Christian mother took in sewing in her struggle against poverty. She tried to teach her children the things of the Lord. Eventually she remarried, and in a short time died. Thomas was only eight. Though his soul was pierced with sorrow, he never forgot the prayers of his affectionate mother as the tow-headed boy stood by her deathbed. Robert L. Dabney, his biographer, says of those prayers: "She had no other legacy to leave him than her prayers; but these availed to

shield him through all the untoward incidents of his orphanage and his eventful life; and they were answered by the most glorious endowments of grace and virtue which the heart of a dying parent could crave for a child—a cheering instance of God’s faithfulness to his people and their seed.”²⁸⁹

For the next few years Jackson lived with various aunts and uncles, once going off with an older brother for a year-long trip down the Ohio River. They returned from this Huck Finn-type adventure in ill health and poverty, but wiser. His somewhat restless older brother died soon after. {168} Most of his remaining childhood was spent on the farm of a bachelor uncle, who, though not a professing Christian (that region of Virginia was not well churchied at that time), and very fond of horse racing, still was a decent, respected man; a diligent farmer and miller, he was always good to young Thomas. Stonewall received the best education that the region could offer, and, due to his work and rural recreations, began to overcome his ill health and develop a strong constitution.

Even before he was of legal age, the local authorities had such confidence in this young man that they appointed him constable in the county (with responsibility to collect overdue taxes, debts, etc.). In this at times unpleasant business, he showed himself a model of diligence, courtesy, and, when necessary, toughness and courage. Though young Thomas Jackson had the advantage in one sense of a natural modesty, yet at the same time he had a powerful ambition to advance in the world. At this stage, he was not yet a professing Christian. In later years, he often gave hearty thanks that after his conversion God took this natural drive of ambition and rechanneled it into a deeper longing for the glory of God. But such was not yet the case.

None can doubt, however, that God used this ambition long before his conversion to lead this youth to the place where He wanted him to be.

289. Robert L. Dabney, *Life of General Jackson*, reprint of 1865 ed. (Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle Publications, 1976), 12.

The U.S. Military Academy

Thomas Jackson greatly desired a military career. He began seeking appointment to the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, New York. Odds were against him—an ordinary person from a remote rural district—because the limited number of openings had to be obtained directly through the influence of a U.S. congressman in Washington. Sons of privileged families in influential districts usually received the appointments. In the providence of God, though, a young appointee from Western Virginia dropped out of the military academy after two or three months, leaving one seat open. Jackson heard about this and vigorously prodded various important friends and relatives to intercede with the congressman on his behalf for the position. Much to his boyish delight, Jackson received the appointment and rushed to West Point, dressed in his baggy homespun garments. He took with him a few possessions in a leather saddlebag, and practically no money, but a heart filled with enthusiasm and determination to achieve.

It was not easy for Jackson at West Point. He was three months behind his class, not to mention his inferior academic background. But this difficulty was to the orphan boy what difficulty had always been: a spur to greater achievement, increased zeal, and deeper development of moral character. All through Jackson's life, the profound principle of Romans 5 would be proved true again and again: "Tribulation produces ... character" (New International Version). In the three following years at West Point, he {169} rose continually higher in his class. Though he had the gift of much native intellect, the key to his achievement here—as indeed throughout his life—was the early rising and persistent, uncomplaining hard work. In a word, even before his conversion, he knew something of the meaning of self-sacrifice. A knowledge of the Saviour would transform this into something infinitely more beautiful, but before "faith came," he was already learning that one must deny self now in order to attain any worthy goal later. An invisible hand was at work in his ambition and zealous labor.

Upon graduation from the academy, Jackson was given a commission as officer in the U.S. Army. Soon after, he saw active service in the war against Mexico. Here his usual hard work and tireless persistence were combined with outstanding bravery in face of mortal danger to win the respect of his men and fellow officers, and gain him immediate

promotion. He, who all his life had the strictest regard for truth, later said that this was the only time in his career when he knowingly told a lie. In spite of the dire possibility of a torrent of bullets being rained down from a battery of sharpshooters, he eagerly yelled to his men that it was not dangerous to surge forward. They yielded to his leadership, and though they were very much in danger of slaughter, not a man was hurt. Their brave advance helped discomfit the Mexicans and turn the tide of battle. Clearly, a more-than-ordinary officer was in the making. In this obscure position, he exhibited many of the same traits that would ere long be admired by a watching world in his meteoric rise to fame. "His conduct ... will be found to contain," says his biographer, Professor Dabney, "every evidence of bravery, thirst for distinction, coolness, and military talent ... comprehending all the advantages and perils of his situation at once, he proposed rather to exercise the further audacity of storming the battery before him, than to attempt a disastrous retreat exposed to its fire."²⁹⁰

Into the Light

Mexico City, after its defeat by the Americans, extended its hospitality to the soldiers who were garrisoned there for some months. The officers in particular were courteously entertained by the aristocracy. Jackson was housed in a monastery, and thoroughly appreciated the surroundings: the food, the people, and the leisure. While there, he, who could never waste time, redeemed the free hours by learning Spanish (which his wife in her biography says he often used to her in terms of endearment). But while in the pleasant ambiance of Mexico City, he began the study of something that would prove to be unspeakably more significant in his subsequent destiny than the knowledge of Spanish. For the first time, he seriously pressed forward to know the truth about Christianity, and, {170} military-like, to know what would be his duty in regard to it.

What was the state of Jackson's soul at this stage in life? His biographers have noted the providential mercy of God in keeping him from bad habits and dissipating sins. Can one trace the influence of a dying mother's prayers here? Even so, because of his "unchurched" back-

290. *Ibid.*, 51.

ground, Jackson was almost totally unlettered in the basic elements of Christianity. Two contrary religious systems now began almost simultaneously to influence him: Roman Catholicism and evangelical Christianity. His soul had a deep longing to know the truth. What would be the outcome?

Jackson was favorably impressed with two or three of the Roman ecclesiastics who lived in the compound where he was billeted. He began putting spiritual questions to them, whereupon they sent him to the archbishop of Mexico, who gladly conversed with this young American officer in the hope of converting him to Catholicism. Jackson found the archbishop to be an intelligent, congenial, eloquent man. But with all the archbishop's attention and learning, Jackson was still unsatisfied with his explanations. Jackson, years afterwards, confided to his chief of staff, Dabney, that after his talks with this respected prince of the church, he was "clearly convinced that the system of the Bible and that of Rome were irreconcilable, and that the true religion of Jesus Christ was to be sought by him elsewhere."²⁹¹

For about two more years, Jackson was still seeking and still "in suspense." But all the time he was making gradual progress towards the Light. We noted earlier that evangelical Christianity began to touch him at about the same time as the Roman Church. Jackson's immediate military superior, the devout Colonel Frank Taylor, began to pray for him, and after much prayer commenced instructing him directly in the basics of the Christian religion. Jackson, with his childlike sincerity and military sense of duty, resolved then to study the Bible thoroughly to know its truth in order to meet its requirements. "It seems to have been almost a law of his nature even before it was sanctified, that with him, to be convinced in his understanding of a duty was to set straightway about its performance."²⁹²

After the war, he was transferred to Fort Hamilton, New York, as was Colonel Taylor. There, under the influence of Taylor's prayers and Christian fellowship, and the preaching of the (Episcopalian) chaplain, the Reverend Parks, Jackson, to quote his biographer, "arrived at a comfortable hope of salvation, insomuch that he felt it his duty and

291. *Ibid.*, 57.

292. *Ibid.*, 55.

privilege to apply for baptism.... His enquiries into the claims of the different denominations of Christians were still continued ... without any final conclusion.”²⁹³ Jackson {171} was baptized by the Episcopalian chaplain, with the understanding that he was not a member of the Episcopal denomination, but of the body of Christ, and at length would join the church that he considered most scriptural.

Church, Home, and College at Lexington, Virginia

Jackson would soon find a true ecclesiastical home and welcome rest to his seeking soul in the mother denomination of his Scots-Irish forebears: the Presbyterian Church of Lexington, Virginia. He was appointed professor there in the Military Academy of Virginia (“the West Point of the South”). Immediately, he began to attend the preaching of the venerable Calvinist minister—the Reverend W. S. White. For some months Jackson had a problem with the Reformed doctrine of absolute sovereignty, but, like hymn writer Augustus Toplady, after praying and studying it through, became one of the firmest and happiest of Calvinists.

He was faithful at all services, and he never missed Wednesday night prayer meeting. After being elected deacon, he encouraged many more to attend. He came to believe that at least a tithe was incumbent upon Christians, and he never gave less. Later in life, he gave a much higher percentage. Jackson took a particular delight in the sabbath day, and, like his noble contemporary, Robert M’Cheyne in Scotland, did everything he could to halt the transmission of mail on the Sabbath. Years later, shortly before his death, he was still urging men in the top counsels of the Confederate Government to hallow the Lord’s Day in this way.

Family worship was near and dear to him. Twice daily he kept the flame of devotion high on the family altar, requiring black servants as well as family to be present. Though he was part of a slaveholding society, the constraining love of Christ in him knew no social or racial bounds. “He was indeed the black man’s friend,” writes Dabney. “His prayers were so attractive to them, that a number of those living in his quarter of the town petitioned to be admitted on Sabbath nights, along

293. *Ibid.*, 60.

with his own servants, to his evening domestic worship.”²⁹⁴ Later he established a Sabbath school for the black people, which he personally organized, taught, disciplined, and prayed over. Manifold and lovely were the fruits of this endeavor in the black community. Many were converted, and characters were morally transformed.

His first wife was the daughter of President Junkin of the nearby Washington College. After only fourteen months, he lost his wife and infant in death. This was a sore loss to one who for the first time had his own little home, and thus set double value by it. But he sincerely submitted to the sovereignty of God and “kissed the hand that smote him.” He was content in the midst of his sorrow in the knowledge that a divine heart of love and an omnipotent throne of grace were “ordering his way.” {172}

Was Providence using these sorrows to wean him even more from this world, so that God could entrust him with the otherwise dangerous gifts of power and glory? As Samuel Rutherford said in a letter to William Gordon, “... When the day of visitation comes, and your old idols come weeping about you, ye will have much ado not to break your heart. It is best to give up in time with them, so as ye could at a call quit your part of this world for a drink of water, or a thing of nothing.”²⁹⁵

After this sorrow, friends urged him to visit Europe, which he did, finding it to be a time of healing and refreshing pleasure. In about two years, he remarried, this time Miss Mary Anna Morrison, a devoted Christian, and daughter of the distinguished Presbyterian minister and founder of Davidson College in North Carolina. This wife, who bore him two daughters, the first of whom died in infancy, proved to be one of the best gifts God ever gave him. Their home in Lexington was a sanctuary of joy, peace, and delight to him.

In the Military Academy of Lexington (VMI), Jackson was an able, utterly fair, and respected professor; but some of his pupils complained that he was difficult to follow. He did not have the ability in the classroom that he had on the battlefield.

294. *Ibid.*, 94.

295. Quoted in Jock Purves, *Fair Sunshine* (London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1968), 153.

During this period, he had serious eye trouble. Dr. Moses D. Hoge, in his *Oration* on Jackson, says this about his courage in face of threatening blindness: "... He sat in his study during the still hours of the night, unable to use book or lamp—with only a mental view of diagrams and models, and the artificial signs required in abstruse calculations, holding long and intricate processes of mathematical reasoning with the steady grasp of thought, his face turned to the blank, dark wall, until he mastered every difficulty and made complete preparations for the instructions of the succeeding day."²⁹⁶

Civil War and International Fame

That persistence was soon to pay rich dividends on a vastly expanded field—not for a small classroom, but for a great nation at war for its freedom. To make a long story short, soon after the onslaught of this ghastly war (the first war in which truly modern weaponry was widely used), Jackson's merits as an exceptionally brilliant, courageous leader—an officer's officer—were recognized on every hand, and he rapidly rose to power. Here was a man God could trust with authority. The higher he rose, the humbler he became. Dabney notes how his pre-regenerate ambition had been transmuted into the sincerest, burning desire that Christ {173} should have all the glory.

In place of harbouring Cromwell's selfish ambition ... Jackson crucified the not ignoble thirst for glory which animated his youth, until his abnegation of self became as pure and magnanimous as that of Washington.... The piety of Jackson continually repaired its benignant beams at the fountain of divine light and purity, becoming brighter and brighter unto the perfect day. His nature grew more unselfish, his aims more noble, his spirit more heavenly....²⁹⁷

More and more, Jackson was marked by a continual cheerfulness and serene faith, so that in the small things of daily life as well as in larger public duties, he seemed as one basking in the presence of God. It had not always been so with him. To reach this place where conscience was so habitually flooded with the light of God was no less a

296. Moses D. Hoge, *Inauguration of the Jackson Statue—Oration* (Richmond, VA: Wm. Ellis Jones Book and Job Printer, 1885), 15.

297. Dabney, *Life*, 113–14.

struggle for him than for any other Christian who submits his all to the discipline of the cross. John B. Lyle, a middle-aged bachelor, and eminently spiritual elder in the Lexington Church, was a “father in the Lord” and intimate counselor of soul to Jackson. Through Lyle, Jackson came to see the indispensable value of constant, tender seeking of entire conformity to the will of God in every possible area of life. Elder Lyle was a “Mr. Greatheart” in the spiritual pilgrimage of Jackson. “The good man taught him that connexion between hearty obedience and access to the Throne of Grace.... It was largely due to his guidance that Jackson attained to that thoroughness which marked all his subsequent Christian life.”²⁹⁸ His wife reports that his favorite hymn was, “How happy are they who their Saviour obey.”

Nowhere was his Christian thoroughness more evident than in his genuine self-effacing modesty. A model of humility was the letter he wrote to his pastor on the very day he was catapulted to national fame, when his bravery turned the tide of battle and earned him the never-dying name of “Stonewall.” Dr. Hoge describes the scene:

The day after the first battle of Manassas, and before the history of that victory had reached Lexington in authentic form, rumor, preceding any accurate account of that event, had gathered a crowd around the post office awaiting with interest the opening of the mail. In its distribution, the first letter was handed to the Rev. Dr. White. It was from General Jackson. Recognizing at a glance the well-known superscription, the doctor exclaimed to those around him, ‘Now we shall know all the facts!’ This was the bulletin: ‘My dear Pastor,—In my tent last night, after a fatiguing day’s service, I remembered that I had failed to send you my contribution for our colored Sunday-school. Enclosed you will find my check for that object, which please acknowledge at your earliest convenience and oblige— ‘Yours faithfully, Thos. J. Jackson.’

Not a word about a conflict which electrified a nation! Not an allusion {174} to the splendid part he had taken in it; not a reference to himself, beyond the fact that it had been a fatiguing day’s service. And yet that was the day ever memorable in his history—memorable in all history—when he received the name which is destined to supplant the name his parents gave him—STONEWALL JACKSON. When his brigade of twenty-six hundred men had for hours withstood the iron

298. *Ibid.*, 104–5.

tempest which broke upon it without causing a waver in its line, and when, on his right, the forces under the command of the gallant General Bee had been overwhelmed in the rush of resistless numbers, then was it that the event occurred which cannot be more graphically described than in the burning words of his biographer: 'It was then that Bee rode up to Jackson, and with despairing bitterness exclaimed, "General, they are beating us back." "Then," said Jackson, calm and curt, "we will give them the bayonet." Bee seemed to catch the inspiration of his determined will, and, galloping back to the broken fragments of his overtaxed command, exclaimed, "There is Jackson, standing like a stone wall. Rally behind the Virginians!" At this trumpet-call a few score of his men reformed their ranks. Placing himself at the head, he charged the dense mass of the enemy, and in a moment fell dead with his face to the foe. From that, Jackson's was known as the Stonewall Brigade. The letter written to his pastor in Lexington on the day following that battle gives the keynote to his character. Nor on any occasion was he the herald of his own fame...."²⁹⁹

In numerous instances after winning a battle, he gave credit and glory to the Lord God of Hosts. Typically he would telegraph the Confederate Government at Richmond as follows: "God blest our arms with victory at McDowell Station yesterday"; and then give this order to his troops: "... I request you to unite with me this morning in thanksgiving to Almighty God ... and in praying that He will continue to lead you on from victory to victory, until our independence shall be established, and make us that people whose God is the Lord."³⁰⁰

The self-denial he had known in pre-Christian days was deepened. He uncomplainingly parted with that which was dearest to him on earth for the cause, as he saw it, of God and country. "Never was there a home dearer than his own; but he left it, never again to cross its threshold. From that as we are told, he never asked, nor received a furlough—was never absent from duty for a day, whether sick or well, and never slept one night outside the lines of his own command."³⁰¹

The detailed accounts of his never-failing, brilliant strategy and tactics in leading the Southern troops to an almost unbelievable string of

299. Hoge, *Inauguration*, 18–19.

300. Mary Anna Jackson, *Memoirs of Stonewall Jackson* (Louisville, KY: Prentice Press, 1895), 288.

301. Hoge, *Inauguration*, 15.

victories {175} over immensely larger hordes of soldiers with vastly superior equipment (superior at least in bulk and availability) will never cease to thrill the reader of his biography. He had a wisdom and insight for split-second battlefield decisions that made some think he was “inspired.” Thoughtless of self, he rode the front line of furious battles as though he were dwelling “in the secret place of the Most High.” So he was. His was a life of constant prayer, lived, as Dabney says, “as ever in his great Taskmaster’s eye.”³⁰² Often he was seen on the battlefield on his horse, eyes closed and hands upraised—interceding with God. Once asked what it meant “to pray without ceasing,” he replied to the effect that when washing in the morning, he prayed to be washed whiter than snow in the blood of Christ. When eating he prayed to feast on the bread of life and drink of the water of life.³⁰³ Jackson’s black servant, Jim, used to say “that he could always tell when there was going to be a battle. Said he: ‘The general is a great man for praying night and morning—all the time. But when I see him get up several times in the night besides, to go off and pray, then I know there is going to be something to pay; and I go straight and pack his haversack, because I know he will call for it in the morning.’”³⁰⁴

Stonewall encouraged his wife in a letter of May 11, 1859: “See if you cannot spend a short time each evening after dark in looking out of your window into space, and meditating upon Heaven with all its joys unspeakable and full of glory; and think what the Saviour relinquished in glory when he came to earth, and of His sufferings for us; and seek to realize with the Apostle, that the afflictions of the present life are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”³⁰⁵

The heaven-sent piety of Jackson made him one of the finest generals of both armies, and caused him to consecrate all the efforts he legitimately could for the reformation of society and glorifying of God in political life. His zeal for the Sabbath has been mentioned. He spared no pains to see that a large and effective corps of evangelical chaplains was supplied for the Confederate Army. Beyond that, he had a vision

302. Dabney, *Life*, 737.

303. Mary Anna Jackson, *Memoirs*, 124.

304. *Ibid.*, 288.

305. Dabney, *Life*, 123.

for Constitutional reformation, or at least reinterpretation. Jackson felt that the popular American doctrine of separation of church and state had gone too far by the mid-nineteenth century. He astutely foresaw that this “separation” was coming to mean not a friendly independence of church and state, but a practical disestablishment of orthodox Christianity, and in its place a growing establishment of secular materialism and humanism. Jackson hoped that after a Southern victory he would see congressional action that would clearly establish biblical Christianity (though of course nonsectarian) as the officially encouraged religion of the land. This noble hope was “nipped {176} in the bud” by his early death, and the disastrous Southern defeat by the far more “liberal” secular Northern states. Still, his vision of glorifying God in all of human life—especially in politics—was not unlike the successful Dutch Calvinist, Abraham Kuyper, of the next generation.

Revival in the Confederate Army

Possibly the most expensive and longest enduring influence of his vigorously pious soul on the ranks of national society was an indirect influence, mediated through the massive revival in the Confederate Army, which he so earnestly prayed for and promoted as army commander. During the winter months of rest in 1863 in particular, Jackson's large section of the army practically became a church. Log houses were constructed for worshipping during week days. They were like beehives, constantly humming with one fervent prayer meeting after another. On the Sabbath, only the open fields and hills could contain the mass of worshipping soldiers. Apparently much of the most effective preaching was of a strong Calvinist nature. The sovereign God of grace was honored. He poured out His Spirit in return. “... Many was the bearded cheek, which had not been blanched amidst the horrors of Sharpsburg (a sanguinary battle), which was now wet with silent tears.”³⁰⁶

R. L. Dabney, who was personally present (as Jackson's chief of staff), and who was no minor theologian, called this movement a genuine “religious reformation ... which bore the fruits of a true work of God's grace.... There was a glorious reformation in many souls to true holi-

306. *Ibid.*, 585.

ness, diminishing permanently the wickedness of the camps ... it was the uniform testimony of even the ungodly, that the commands most largely blessed by this reform became the most effective in the service of their country.”³⁰⁷ Dr. Lacy estimates that some 150,000 Southern soldiers experienced a saving work as the glorious river of life rolled through the army.³⁰⁸

One wonders if, with the exception of the Scottish covenanter regiments and Cromwell’s English army, there has ever been such an evangelical Christian army as that of the Confederacy after this revival. The revival had at least two far-reaching effects. First, and most obviously, it was used to fill heaven with the ordained ranks of God’s elect of that generation. Dr. Lacy, in *Revivals in the Midst of the Years*, states, “... a vast number of recent converts must have been among that innumerable company of young confederates, who ‘stormed the thousand gates that lead to death.’ ”³⁰⁹ {177}

Secondly, through the influence of those who survived—a great company of converted veterans, who returned home after the war—the Southern States became more evangelical than ever. A defeated land became known as the “Bible belt.”³¹⁰ The victorious Northern States (whose army was often manned with Unitarian chaplains alongside true believers) experienced no revival, and with all their material prosperity and power were increasingly deluged with soulless secular humanism.³¹¹ Which country really won and which really lost? The principle of Romans 8:28 applies here as everywhere else: those called ones who love God are ever the gainers for it.

307. *Ibid.*, 586.

308. Benjamin Rice Lacy Jr., *Revivals in the Midst of the Years*, reprint of 1943 ed. (Hopewell, VA: Presbyterian Evangelistic Fellowship, Inc., 1968), 141.

309. *Ibid.*

310. There are, of course, many other historical facts in addition to this one, that have played an important part in making the South a Bible-believing region.

311. This is not to obscure the fact that there have always been large numbers of the finest evangelicals in the North. Nevertheless, as a generalized historical tendency, it is true that the North has tended to secularism, while the South has held on to a Christian world and life view.

The Swelling of Jordan

That verse of Romans 8, one of the great loves of Stonewall's life, was an unspeakably serene comfort to his soul after he was accidentally shot by his own men during the greatest military victory of his career, the Battle of Chancellorsville. There, due to his almost inspired leadership, 45,000 Confederates repulsed 125,000 Federals. But what a loss was General Stonewall Jackson! His right arm had to be amputated, his other hand was badly mangled, and soon he contracted deadly pneumonia. He was taken behind battle lines to the relative safety of the house of Mr. and Mrs. Chandler at Guinea's Station (Virginia), where his devoted, weeping wife was rushed to his side. He tried to caress his baby daughter with his remaining lacerated hand. The peace of one who intimately knew the sovereign God was resting upon him. He thus rested in the confidence that the "accident" was part of God's gracious plan. His wife and brother-in-law sang to him his beloved 51st Psalm to the tune of "Old Hundredth." A truly happy man realized he was at the Gates of Eternal Day.

He mentioned to his wife that he would like to die on the hallowed Sabbath. His wish was granted. Before he had known a single defeat, before his country had begun to go down, in the height of his powers and zenith of his earthly glory, God removed him from the desolation to follow. His last words were these to his beloved wife: "Let us pass over the river and rest under the shade of the trees."

4.

BOOK REVIEWS

BOOK REVIEWS

The Puritan Hope: A Study in Revival and the Interpretation of Prophecy, by Iain H. Murray.

Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, (1971) 1975. 299 pp.

Reviewed by Tommy W. Rogers

The author observes that when the Teutonic barbarians overturned Rome and reduced the stable world to chaos in the fifth century AD, many in the Church were convinced that the world had no future and that the end of the Age was at hand. In the gloom of the fourteenth century such tracts appeared as “The Last Age of the Church.” Many in terms similar to that old title have been subsequently written, and have enjoyed particular success in the last few years. Murray, by contrast, suggests that the view that “the end is not yet” is not so patently unscriptural as it is often represented. In fact, “in the absence of certain evidence to the contrary, the possibility that history is not about to close cannot be other than a real one” (xix).

Murray briefly traces his own view from one dominated by the perspective “that growing evil must dominate the world-scene until Jesus Christ comes again in power and glory” until which time “the gospel must be preached ... though with not anticipation that large numbers of the human race will receive it” (xv), to the view that the second advent of Christ and the end will occur together. Murray identifies this view with “all the Confessional statements of the Reformed Churches four hundred years ago” (xvii).

Murray rejects the now dominant view in evangelical circles of a worsening period of apostasy and darkness till the end of the church period followed by the return of Christ to usher in a millennial period. Murray’s view is that at the time of the second advent Christ will return to mark the end (1 Cor. 15:23–24), the restoration (Acts 3:21), and the last judgment (Matt. 19:28), not to initiate a millennium. The Scottish Confession of Faith (1560), the Belgic Confession (1561), and the Heidelberg Catechism (1563) all repeated the belief of the return of Jesus Christ as coincident with the day of judgment:

We believe, according to the word of God, when the time appointed by the Lord (which is unknown to all creatures) is come, and the number of the elect complete, that our Lord Jesus Christ will come from heaven, corporally and visibly, as he ascended with great glory and majesty, to declare himself Judge of the quick and the dead, burning this old world with fire and flame to cleanse it. And then all men will personally appear before this great Judge, both women and children, that have been from the beginning of the world to the end thereof.

The Calvinistic view that all conversion work must occur before the second advent makes one amenable to an optimistic interpretation as to whether Scripture prompts us to expect yet a time of wider blessing for the Church before the advent. Murray's conclusion is that there "is at least one event, namely, a great revival, which is both promised and, as yet, unaccomplished" (xxi) and that we are to look forward to the pre-advent fulfillment in history of some of the greatest of Old Testament predictions. {179}

This emergence from Doubting Castle to the view of an optimistic future for the work of the Church is neither the product of nor conducive to the theological liberalism which believes in the upward progress of man through the coming of a better secular world. On the contrary, it promotes the view expressed by one of the last great representatives of Puritan theology, J. H. Thornwell, that "if the Church could be aroused to a deeper sense of the glory that awaits her, she would enter with a warmer spirit into the struggles that are before her" (xxii).

The Puritan Hope may be described as a broad outline of the Puritan attitude toward history and how their perspective developed from faith in the promises of Scripture regarding Christ's kingdom based on a theology which proclaimed the controlling plan of God behind all events. For the Puritans, Murray states, there was an immense optimism which gained doctrinal ascendancy when Pauline and Calvinistic orthodoxy possessed the thinking of the Church. Murray feels that the loss of this orthodoxy has meant that "the Church herself has largely lost confidence in her mission to the world" (225–26).

The question of unfulfilled prophecy was reopened in the turmoil of ideas that accompanied the Reformation. Luther regarded himself as living at the close of history, while Calvin felt that Christ's kingdom, *already* established, would have a yet greater triumph in history. Murray, drawing on a number of mainstream Puritans whose beliefs were

searched out from their sermons and commentaries, contends that the belief that “the kingdom of Christ would spread and triumph through the powerful operations of the Holy Spirit poured out upon the Church in revivals” (51) was a central facet in the Puritan view of man and the role of the Church in accomplishing God’s sovereign will.

Rejecting the naturalistic view of inevitable progress in history which came to characterize the intellectual climate of the nineteenth century, the whole Calvinistic theology of the Puritans asserted that the sovereign purpose of God, as indicated by promises of Scripture yet unfulfilled, pointed to a sure hope of great outpourings of the Spirit in the future. Transmission of this belief in advancement of the kingdom through revivals in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries became one of the most powerful influences in the spiritual history of Britain and America.

The Puritans viewed the Church “as a divine institution, provided by her head with laws, government and officers, sufficient by his blessing for the full realization in history of the promise that Christ ‘shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth’” (Ps. 72:8). Had they adopted the short-term view, Murray states, the problems of the Church in their time may justifiably have seemed hopeless. Anwoth pastor Samuel Rutherford, writing in 1635, shortly before he was sentenced to confinement at Aberdeen for contending for the Church, wrote:

The Antichrist and the great red dragon will lop Christ’s branches ... under the feet of those who carry the mark of the beast; but the Plant of Renown, the Man whose name is the Branch, will bud forth again and ... In the name of the Son of God, believe that buried Scotland ... shall rise ... and there shall be a new growth after the old timber is cut down. (97)

The Puritan hope was retained through the dreary years of the eighteenth century and the “formalism, coldness of heart, indifference to religion, and worldliness holding sway over the populations” (112) in England, Wales, and the American colonies in the period which followed the Restoration of Charles II in 1660 and which marked a period of some eighty years’ declension.

Murray traces the reversal of this near expellation of religion in the Church of {180} England and noticeable decline in Puritan purity and

zeal through the new age of revival and worldwide missions originated by Christians in the Puritan tradition which followed in the eighteenth-century awakening. Murray feels that no lesson is more important than the demonstration in the eighteenth-century revival that “the practical demonstration of scriptural preaching, accompanied by the power of the Spirit of God, is *the* divine means for extending the kingdom of Christ” (127).

The author feels that the “inspiration which gave rise to the first missionary societies of the modern era was nothing other than doctrine and outlook which, revitalized by the eighteenth-century revival, had come down from the Puritans” (135).

Murray traces the decline of the Reformation view concerning the advent and tribulation, the envelopment of evangelical Christendom in premillennialism, and the effect of this alteration in the dominant doctrinal view. The latter consequence is described as “the eclipse of hope” in the sense of an expectation that the Church would yet advance to claim vast numbers of the inhabitants of the earth as Christ’s inheritance.

When the nineteenth century dawned, premillennialism was at a very low ebb. David Bogue, preaching in 1813, described the aberration as in such “direct opposition to the whole tenor of doctrinal parts of the sacred volume” (187) as to be one of the astonishing oddities of Church history. At Dr. Bogue’s last public engagement, he closed the meeting with a prayer of, “Thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven: let all nations call the Saviour blessed, and the whole earth be filled with thy glory.” This year of his death was, unbeknown to Bogue, to mark the public commencement of a revolution in prophetic thought.

The leader in this change of direction was Edward Irving, a great orator and minister of the Church of Scotland at Hatton Garden, who taught that “the Church, far from being on the threshold of a new era of blessing, was about to enter a ‘series of thickcoming judgments and fearful perplexities’ preparatory to Christ’s advent and reign” (188). Through J. N. Darby (1800–1882), outstanding prophetic leader of the Brethren, whose lineal influence may be traced through Henry Morehouse, D. L. Moody, Moody Bible Institute, and C. I. Scofield, the premillennial prophetic system was carried to all parts of the English-

speaking world and premillennialism was made the norm for English-speaking evangelicals.

Murray possibly overstates the case of the extent to which the premillennial doctrine can be unilaterally held to have foreclosed all working for earthly objects distant in time (i.e., plowing and sowing because the Lord is sure to come prior to the harvest). It may well be true, however, that substitution of “If the Lord tarry” for James’s “If the Lord will” prompted an attitude of tarrying devoid of the old hope. Murray feels that this altered outlook affected every area of life, including the “political and social endeavors, such as marked the lives of a number of prominent Christians in the Reformation and Puritan period” (203). Murray concurs with J. C. Ryle’s “An Estimate of Thomas Manton” (1870) that the Puritans, as a body, did more to elevate the national character than any class of Englishmen. The reason owed to “their theology and within that theology an attitude to history and to the world which distinguished them as men of hope” (xxi).

The genuine hallmark of the Puritan outlook was a view of the world “not so much as a world from which individual souls must escape, but rather as the property of Christ to whose kingdom the earth and the fulness thereof must belong” (xxii). The Puritan hope infused its adherents with energy and resolution about an optimistic {181} future. The Puritan conviction was that ages when there is an outpouring of the Spirit of God are ages marked by faithful use of the Word of God:

... They knew that times and seasons are ordered by God and observed that every era of great advance has generally been preceded by the establishment of firm doctrinal foundations through years of patient sowing, accompanied not infrequently by suffering.... Christians in their successive generations are but one agency in the hands of God, and for the Puritan, with his long-term view, it concerned him little whether he was called to sow or to reap.... For men of this noble school neither promising circumstances nor immediate success were necessary to uphold their morale in the day of battle. (235).

Such optimism carries no taint of liberalism. Association of progress with the social gospel ideas of a universal fatherhood of God and of a basically good human race capable of unlimited improvement through enlightened legislation and education has made evangelical Christians suspicious of all teaching which views future world history as hopeful. However, worldwide success of the gospel does not rest upon the false

goal of an earthly utopia. Murray points out that the liberal view of progress prevailed “not because it had Puritan belief to build upon but just because the hold of the old theology upon the Churches had grown so weak” (210).

The view that the victories of the Church will yet be far more extensive does not make the promise of the second advent any less of a glorious hope. The influence of expectancy of the second coming is not nullified when Christians do not believe that the event must necessarily be close to them in time. The duty of watchfulness is still just as great. The “nearness” of Christ’s return, properly understood, is consistent with the passage of many centuries. If the belief were required of all Christians that the advent must be just at hand in point of time, then all the generations of Christians except the last would be required to believe a deception (212).

The Puritan viewpoint was entirely against such preoccupation with the “other world” that it militated against the calling of honoring Christ by fulfilling present duties. They recognized that the wonders of the world to come are not revealed to us in order that we may live our present lives in sadness asking how much longer it must last. At the same time, there was a never-absent note in Puritan preaching about “the last things.” The Puritans were aware, however, “that attention to prophecy, instead of producing a moral and sanctifying effect, can merely promote speculative curiosities and intellectual pride” (85). Puritan pastors were aware of the danger of giving prophecy a place disproportionate to its importance with a resulting imbalance in spiritual character which prophetic interest has too often encouraged.

Puritan beliefs on prophecy were not focused on speculative areas of thought, but were integrated with the fundamentals of the faith such as the Person of Christ, the Church, and prayer. Puritan thought was governed by “the whole concept of Christ’s leadership and sovereign glory in the carrying out of man’s redemption, and ... the truth that the mediatorial work of Jesus ... for the gathering and perfecting of his Church continues, and its ultimate success rests securely upon the position which Christ now occupies. Lordship is his present possession” (87–88). The mediatorial reign of Christ was the basis of Puritan optimism. The Reformers and Puritans were made strong by their concept of Christ as the conquering King.

Belief that revivals come through the preaching of scriptural truth underscored the importance which the Puritan school of Christianity placed on the need for its preachers and missionaries to be thoroughly educated in the doctrines of Scripture. {182} Hope respecting the future did not rest on the assumption “that God will work regardless of the failures of his Church, but rather that God will recall the Church and especially her ministry to that standard of full commitment to the gospel of Christ which Scripture commands” (233). Murray states that the whole Puritan conviction respecting the future success of the gospel rested upon the foundation of His work—His work of substitution, His state of humiliation, His ransom of multitudes, His continuing work, and His contemporary presence by the Spirit until the end of the world.

In contrast to the millenarian missionary style which seeks exclusively for the conversion of individual souls, the Puritan view recognized the necessity for planting Christian institutions. The Puritans did aim at individual soul winning. They viewed every hearer as bound shortly for another world. Murray questions whether any other school of evangelical preachers has so brought the implications of eternity home to men’s consciences as they were enabled to do. This did not, however, nullify their adherence to scriptural injunction to occupy and subdue.

The privilege of the Christian (as Reverend Mr. Tennett responded upon being goaded by George Whitfield of the great consolation of being soon relieved of the responsibilities of his earthly sojourn and being at home with Christ) is “to serve my Lord and Master as faithfully as I can, until he shall think proper to call me home” (219) and not be found wanting at his coming. “Blessed is that servant, that his Lord when he cometh shall find so doing” (219).

My Years With Ludwig von Mises, by Margit von Mises.

New Rochelle, NY: Arlington House, 1976. 191 pp. \$9.95.

Reviewed by Gary North

This biography of Mises is a rewarding one. His widow writes well, has a remarkable memory, and understands the ways of scholars. She understands the importance of Mises's work. She also informs the reader about facets of Mises's personality that were known only to a handful of people, and sometimes known only to her.

Mises was her senior by about fifteen years. He was born in 1881 and died in 1973. He published his first book in 1902 at age twenty-one, before he received his doctorate, which he earned in 1906. In 1912, he published *The Theory of Money and Credit*, which became a pathbreaking work. In 1920, he published his classic essay on the impossibility of rational economic calculation in a socialist economy, and in 1922 he expanded it into the book, *Socialism*, which was to change the thinking of dozens of key young scholars in Europe. After World War I, he served as an advisor and high official in the Austrian Chamber of Commerce, which was part of the government. His private seminar (a tradition among the great scholars of Austria and Germany) drew students like F. A. Hayek, Wilhelm Röpke (Ludwig Erhard's teacher), Lionel (now Lord) Robbins, and others. Mrs. Mises did not meet him until 1925, when his career was well established.

Mrs. Mises was already a widow with two young children. A former actress, she had given up the stage at the request of her late husband, and she supported her family by translating English language plays into German. She says that Mises loved her from the beginning, but that he feared the responsibilities of a family. He was afraid that his work would suffer. He did not marry her until after her children were grown, in 1938. While she fails to mention it, his literary output between 1922 and 1940 was not that exceptional. It was after he married her that he reached the next plateau in his career. She does say that his most productive {183} period was 1944–69, after he had come to the United States (89). In terms of original thinking on his part, this is an over-

statement, but in terms of consolidating and popularizing his work, it is certainly true.

Several fascinating facts come to light in this biography. She says that he refused to take a high paying position in 1929 with the Austrian Credit Anstalt, the most prestigious banking firm in Austria. He told her a great economic crash was coming and that he did not want his name associated with the firm (31). It failed in 1931, toppling what remained of the whole European economy. He later chided Joseph Schumpeter, his former classmate and a more famous (in America) economist, for having been Minister of Finance of Austria during the great inflation of 1923 and with having been president of the Biedermann Bank when it failed in the 1930s (64).

Mises left Austria in 1934 to take a teaching position at the Graduate Institute of Geneva. He knew what was in store for Austria from the Nazis. In 1938, Nazis entered his mother's home in Austria and confiscated his library and his manuscripts; he never saw them again. For some reason, Mrs. Mises fails to mention that Mises was a Jew—a marked man in a Nazi-occupied country. She explains their hostility in terms of their opposition to his free-market writings, which is only part of the story (35). She escaped from Austria in 1938, and they were married soon after.

She recalls vividly their six years in Geneva. He taught only two hours a week, yet was well paid. He associated with world-famous scholars, like Röpke, Hans Kelsen, Gottfried Haberler, William Rappard, and Louis Baudin, author of a neglected work on the socialist empire of the Incas, which Mises later helped to get published in this country. He adapted to marriage quite readily, she says. Even his temper disappeared after a few years (44).

He was a true scholar, thinking constantly. She says that it took him an hour and a half to bathe, shave, and dress. He said that he had his best thoughts as he shaved (50). These habits did not change when he came to America. "He hated any disturbance while he worked, and I would say that he started working in the bathroom. More than once he was so deeply in his thoughts that he forgot to turn the faucet off, and only when his feet were deep in water did he realize what was happening around him" (71).

They fled Europe in the summer of 1940, crossing the Swiss border into France, and from France into Spain. They waited a month in Lisbon for a ship to the United States. They wanted to get an earlier ship out, but the city was filled with refugees, and others also wanted on board. She offers this insight into his personality: “And I spent half a day on the telephone calling the Export Lines office. Lu made no further move. He could neither relax nor enjoy what he was doing. He was uprooted. For the first time I noted what I later so often had the opportunity to see: he could fight for a cause, but never for himself. And when he could not work he was listless. He once told me: ‘A writer who has something to tell needs a pencil and a sheet of paper—that’s all.’ Looking back, I think Lu forgot something more important: a writer also needs peace of mind” (60–61).

In America, the first few years were difficult. He had been offered a job at the University of California at Berkeley, but he decided that New York City was the intellectual center of the country. They had to move five times in the city during the first year, and he grew tired of having to move his library. He received a \$2,500 grant from the National Bureau of Economic Research in 1941, and this was renewed until 1945. He wrote nine articles for the *New York Times*, for \$10 each. From 1943 to 1954, he worked closely with the National Association of {184} Manufacturers, though Mrs. Mises does not record that he received any pay for this. He lectured around the country. Lawrence Fertig, a columnist, and Henry Hazlitt saw to it that Mises was never penniless. Still, Mises struggled. He got a job with New York University in 1945 as a visiting professor, teaching a two-hour seminar weekly and receiving \$1,000 a semester. He taught at NYU until 1969, and his students included Hans Sennholz, Israel Kirzner, and a number of scholars who went on in other academic fields.

She says that he became an American, year by year, and that he was happy to receive his citizenship in 1946. He thought of himself as an American from that time on (70). He had great hopes for America. Though she mentions it only indirectly, his pessimism later increased over the years concerning America’s future.

Mises believed in the power of ideas. She includes a fragment from a speech he gave to the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce in 1943:

The arena in which the fate of the West will be decided is neither the conference room of the diplomats, nor the offices of the bureaucrats, not the capitol in Washington, not the election campaigns. The only thing which really matters is the outcome of the intellectual combat between the supporters of socialism and those of capitalism. The masses, those millions of voters who are supreme in democracy, have to learn that they are deluded by spurious doctrines and that only market society and free enterprise can bring them what they want: prosperity. But in order to persuade the crowd, you have first to convince the elite, the intellectuals and the businessmen themselves. (90).

No wonder Mises was a pessimist from 1912 until he died. The battle for ideas went to the socialists from the turn of the century until the present. After 1950, the socialists won in the United States. The Chamber of Commerce and the National Association of Manufacturers were the first ones to applaud President Nixon in August of 1971, when he declared a price freeze. New York University was at war with Mises almost from the beginning, never giving encouragement to students to take his courses, although his prestige (and lots of money from the Volker Fund) kept him on the faculty. One student in the NYU economics department was told by his advisor that he could take Mises's seminar on his own, but that he would not be given credit for it on his official program. "Mises' theory is a religion, not economics," said the advisor (141). The elite, as Mises knew so well, believe in socialism in our century. Since he had faith only in ideas—ideas held by the elite—the willful, perverse, and deeply religious rejection of capitalism by the elite on nonrational grounds offered Mises no hope. The "review" of his book, *Planned Chaos*, that appeared in the *American Economic Review* in 1946 stands as the most savage, unthinking, irrational review that ever appeared in that Establishment journal. The elite who knew of Mises occasionally attacked him, but most preferred to ignore him, to pretend he was not alive. Hayek describes the effect Mises's *Socialism* had on his generation in the 1920s—Röpke, Robbins, Ohlin, and the others:

It was not easy. Professor Mises' teaching seemed directed against all we had been brought up to believe. It was a time when all the fashionable intellectual arguments seemed to point to socialism and when nearly all "good men" among the intellectuals were socialists. Though the immediate influence of the book may not have been as great as one might have wished, it is in some ways surprising that it had as

great an influence as it did. Because for the young idealist of the time it meant the dashing of all his hopes; and since it was clear that the world was bent on the cause whose destructive nature the work pointed out, it {185} left us with little but black despair. And to those of us who knew Professor Mises personally, it became, of course, soon clear that his own view about the future of Europe and the world was one of deep pessimism. How justified a pessimism we were soon to learn. (A 1956 speech by Hayek, reprinted as appendix 2; quote appears on p. 190.)

Anyone who doubts that Mises was shabbily treated by the academic establishment, especially by the Keynesians who took over the nation's institutions of higher propaganda after 1950 (once the older generation had retired or died off), can learn of the way the enemy works in chapter 8 of the book, "The Story of *Human Action*." We are dealing with vicious, unprincipled, evil men—not men who simply have bad ideas, but snakes. Mises's great error—an error shared, unfortunately, by Hayek and others who are defenders of the free market—is that he did not acknowledge the total depravity of man and the specific depravity of the socialist-Keynesian elite. They are religious fanatics. The battle is only secondarily a battle of rational arguments; the chief battle is emotional and religious. But rationalists like Mises and Hayek are ill-equipped to fight a religious war. They do not acknowledge the truth of that unnamed faculty advisory's claim: Mises's theory is religious doctrine. So is that of the unnamed advisor. The rationalists cannot grasp this fact. As R. M. Hartwell has said, the battle is ideological, not factual (see Bruce Bartlett's essay, above, pp. 162–63).

Yale University Press, under the editorship of Eugene Davidson, published Mises's books from 1944 until the mid-1960s. Yale took *Human Action*, the 900-page tome, and published it in 1949. It made money for them, going through six printings. In 1959, Davidson resigned, and his successors wanted to abandon Mises. Unfortunately, *Human Action* was one of the few profitable books this subsidized vanity press had on its list. They wanted the royalties. The result of their plans was the second edition of *Human Action*, published in 1963—the most frightful printing job that any university press has perpetrated on an unsuspecting public that I have ever seen. Typographical errors abound, typefaces of different intensity appear, one page is missing, one page is repeated: a typesetter's nightmare. They refused to allow

Mises to see the galley proofs. They did not send him a complimentary author's copy. They hiked the price of the book from \$10 to \$15. Mrs. Mises reprints most of Hazlitt's enraged review of this atrocity—a review which I clipped and have in my files (*National Review*, May 5, 1964). Hazlitt was correct; it was a calculated disaster.

Mises was deeply hurt. Mrs. Mises reports that it was one of the worst experiences of his life. He was a gentleman of the old, dead European culture; now he was getting a taste of the treatment handed out by the jackals of anticulture—the prestige elite who train the minds of the sons and daughters of the suicidal middle classes and upper classes who subsidize the Yales and Harvards of our disintegrating culture.

When Henry Regnery offered to bring out the third edition of *Human Action* in 1966, Yale University Press was only too happy to oblige. For a price, of course. Now they could abandon this man's books, yet still rake off the royalties, reducing the annual deficit of this academic vanity press. They dropped all of his other books, too. As Mrs. Mises writes:

But one thing is sure. The ideological differences that may have existed between Ludwig von Mises and the Yale University Press did not hinder the Press from “taking its cut.” All through the years, the Press insisted on its contract and its percentage. Every year, when the Yale statement arrived, Lu read it and then gave it to me without a word. But the shrug of his shoulders and the {186} slight gesture of contempt revealed his feelings more clearly than words ever could. (114)

The academic world of the Keynesian era buried Mises. The pre-Keynesian generation in America was unfamiliar with his work. Few American scholars can read foreign languages; the language exams in graduate school are a meaningless, ridiculous ritual that is still practiced only for the sake of tradition and as a means of screening out candidates for degrees who refuse to put up with the charade. This has always been true of American graduate schools; they want to pretend that they produce scholars as broadly trained as those who have attended European universities. In cultural matters, this is a joke. American PhDs are narrow specialists—technicians. So the men who might have used Mises's work to defend themselves from the Keynesians prior to 1945 did not know of his writings; and those who came after Yale's 1944 decision to publish Mises did not read “old fashioned”

economists, unless they happened to be early socialists or incomprehensible mathematical economists. Only nonprofessional economists, journalists, businessmen, and assorted free market defenders bothered to read Mises's works until quite recently. There is not a single tenured professor in any economics department in America, with the exception of two men at New York University (one of whom is questionable), who is a serious follower of Mises and who is allowed to teach graduate students. No highly respected university has a Mises follower on its tenured staff. There are approximately a dozen PhDs in economics in the U.S. who are known to be followers of Mises. He was effectively buried. He knew it, too. As his wife records, "When I once told Lu: 'Lu, darling, even you have to agree, you are famous.' He smiled and answered: 'You can recognize the importance of an author only by the frequency of references to his work by other scholars written at the end of a page—under the line' " (156). The sign of academic success is your name, not up in lights, but down in footnotes. Mises's name never gets in English-language footnotes. Not ever in approved general economics textbooks, seldom in specialized histories of economic thought (such as in Haney's, his left-wing colleague at NYU), never in the economics journals. The one reference to him that is ever found is for his essay on economic calculation under socialism, and it is always followed by the outright lie that the Polish communist economist, Oscar Lange, refuted Mises's criticism of socialist planning. Mises's name has been successfully flushed down the academic "memory hole" (Orwell's brilliant term for historical oblivion—enforced historical oblivion).

F. A. Hayek was given the Nobel Prize in economics less than a year after Mises's death. Officially, the award went to him because of his early work—before *The Road to Serfdom* (1944). Skeptics have argued that Hayek's award was given as a counter to the co-winner in 1974, the socialist Gunnar Myrdal. Other skeptics have said the committee deliberately waited until Mises was dead. Hayek's work in the 1930s was basically a series of amplifications of ideas offered first in Mises's *Theory of Money and Credit* and *Socialism*. This criticism of the Nobel committee overlooks the obvious: nobody in authority remembered Mises in 1974. His books have not been assigned to a class of budding economists since the 1930s, and probably not then, except in German-speaking countries. It was Hayek who publicized Mises's ideas, and

only a tiny handful of specialists know where Hayek got his ideas, since nobody has read Mises in the economics guild if he is under seventy. The award should have gone to Mises in 1969. But who remembered Mises as late as 1949? Only amateurs.

Compared to Mises and his seminar students of the 1920s, today's economists are false giants surrounded by real pygmies. This should not blind us to the fact {187} that the "Austrian School of Economics," personified by Mises, is dead. Its few remaining adherents are either middle-aged men buried in obscure colleges or philosophical anarchists. The younger PhDs in economics who claim to be followers of Mises are all anarchists—narrow, overspecialized, single-language, and unaware of the sources of Mises's vast philosophical and cultural knowledge. They are PhD's in *economics*, unlike Mises, Hayek, and Röpke, who were trained in the law, took their degrees in law, and who received their educations in liberal arts institutions that did not recognize economics as a separate discipline. The men who still follow Mises and who have some tenuous relationship with the academic world are either anarchists or Christians, and Mises did not agree with either group. The Austrian School, as a university movement, is dead. We are waiting around for *rigor mortis* to set in. Only Israel Kirzner, at NYU, still holds up the flag of the traditional Austrian School. The intellectual world which made it possible for Mises's ideas to circulate was destroyed, first by Hitler, then by Keynes, and now—at best—by Milton Friedman and his followers.

This biography belongs on the shelf of everyone who reads Mises's work. Few economists will buy it, obviously, but a lot of serious amateurs will buy it. The amateurs still read Mises, and for this reason the long-term fate of Mises's ideas has been taken out of the hands of the university bureaucrats. This is one reason why, in two centuries, people may still be reading Mises when Keynes and his epigones will be forgotten, or regarded as a grim joke. To be dependent for the survival of your work on the tenured incompetents who staff the universities today is to face oblivion. Mises's ideas will be modified drastically, but the contributions will survive. The amateurs, not the professionals, will keep reading Mises. Truth survives; tenured orthodoxy does not.

***Sane Asylum*, by Charles Hampden-Turner.**

San Francisco: San Francisco Book Co.,
distributed by Simon & Schuster, 1976. 296 pp. \$10.

Reviewed by Gary North

Standard rehabilitation therapies that are designed by PhDs and put into operation by government-financed organizations do not work. They seldom rehabilitate criminals, alcoholics, drug addicts, and other social deviants, and when they do, the cost per person rehabilitated is little short of astronomical. The failure of conventional, statist rehabilitation programs over the last century is visible to all but the most religious defenders of the “salvation by statist law” philosophy.

The problem which critics face is the standard response, “But what else can we do?” A reasonable answer is, “better nothing than something, if ‘something’ is an expensive failure,” but this answer does not convince traditionalists, policy makers, and those who have a vested interest in the continuation of the programs now in operation. Critics have to be able to point to an alternative—one which has a higher rate of success, a lower cost, or both. The seeming lack of successful programs of private therapy has reduced the effectiveness of the critics of the conventional programs.

Unquestionably, the most successful program outside the civil government is Alcoholics Anonymous, a voluntary, privately financed, self-help program. The key to AA's success is its close conformity with the biblical principle of rehabilitation and restitution. First, the individual must acknowledge his full responsibility for his condition. Second, he agrees to make restitution, wherever possible, to those who have been harmed by his actions. Third, he calls on a personal higher power than himself to assist him. The combination of a sense of complete dependence {188} and full responsibility is implicitly Christian, and programs of rehabilitation that do not combine both aspects of men's actions will be predictably less successful in producing personal reformation and victory over a perceived defect in character.

The AA program, while not secular, is nondenominational and deliberately narrow in its goals. It seeks to help men and women to

become sober and stay sober. It does not involve itself in any other programs: religious, educational, political, or whatever. It has succeeded in getting people sober better than any other single program which is available to the general public. Converts to religious groups that require sobriety also have high success rates, but the broad goals of such religious organizations necessarily call men to other goals—goals that in some cases can place men in tension-filled situations that may lead them back to drink. Thus, the AA program appears to be more successful in achieving its narrow goals than programs that include sobriety as only one of many necessary human goals. But its success is closely related to its essentially Christian approach to healing.

There have been newer, more radical groups that have challenged conventional government rehabilitation programs, but which have gone beyond the narrow perspective of AA. One of these is Synanon, the California-based “halfway house” for narcotics addicts and alcoholics. Synanon emphasizes personal responsibility for one’s actions, but to bring this point home to its participants, the founders devised a “deprogramming” program of psychological breakdown and reconstruction. Long sessions of shouting, sleeplessness, personal attacks by others against a man’s character and motivations, and an atmosphere of controlled hostility are varied with periods of hard physical labor, following orders, and dependence on the organization for innumerable personal needs, both economic and psychological. A schizophrenic world of fearful attacks and total dependence is created by these tactics. Men, rather than God, are the source of both the judgment and the authority. Rehabilitation is therefore as equally humanistic as the State’s, but decentralized, privately financed, and voluntary.

A spin-off of Synanon is the Delancey Street Foundation of San Francisco. Run by a witty, outspoken, opinionated, and charismatic former convict, John Maher [Myer], himself a product of Synanon, the Foundation is involved in the transformation of the lives of criminals, addicts, and other deviants. It is also committed to social change through political action. Delancey Street reminds us of the many self-help, voluntary programs designed and implemented by the late Saul Alinsky. Like Alinsky, Maher’s rhetoric is that of the socialist critic, yet he despises bureaucrats, middle-class liberals, do-gooders, and government-financed programs. He is convinced that federal aid will kill off

any successful program, that it is the tool of the power seekers who have become a part of the problem.

Because of Maher's "pox on both your houses" philosophy, it is difficult to classify him as a liberal-reformist or conservative-decentralist. Hampden-Turner, a U. C. Berkeley professor who spent over a year living in the Delancey Street headquarters, makes it quite clear what Maher is: a philosophically committed existentialist. His "wife"—present companion living in a trial marriage, a recommended policy of Delancey Street—was once Jean Paul Sartre's private secretary. Writes the author, "John and Mimi have made operative in their Foundation a central tenet of existentialism. If you accept your basic human predicament—that you have been convicted, stigmatized, truncated in the only life there is, that you cannot handle chemicals, that you need others to keep you sane—these *limitations* are the springboard of a new *freedom*." In short, "Only those persons prepared to keep alive the glaring paradox between their own present freedom and their past {189} slavery, *only* they, hold open the door for others to follow." The problem, philosophically speaking, is to define freedom, responsibility, liberation, the nature of man, or the issues of right or wrong, apart from some foundation other than the mind of self-proclaimed autonomous man in a universe which is supposedly lawless and random at bottom—if anything is meant by "bottom."

Synanon and Delancey Street live on borrowed capital philosophically. They teach men that the world they perceive under the influence of drugs or alcohol is not the real world. Quite correct; but if the world is ultimately random, by what standard can the reality of one's perceptions be judged? Why is a chemically induced vision less valid than sobriety? Why is work better than theft? Why is life outside prison walls preferable to life inside those walls? John Maher says he believes in traditional values—except traditional marriage, of course—but traditional values were created by a religious outlook fundamentally at odds with modern existentialism. As that older Christian perspective has been abandoned, the world which Maher despises—bureaucratic, power oriented, exploitative—has expanded the scope of its operations.

The basic techniques used by these "deprogramming" organizations are similar to the mind-expanding, personality-altering techniques of Eastern ascetics and mystics. They involve sensory deprivation, espe-

cially sleeplessness. The human body begins to respond in new ways after sixty hours without sleep, and the emotions, thought processes, and resistance to new lines of thought change with these alterations in the body's functions. The sessions at Delancey are called "Dissipations." They are well named.

The goal is the transformation of the personality. The technique, when administered by Chinese Communists, is called brainwashing. Self-criticism, public repentance, admissions of guilt before the attacking members of the "deprogrammers," and the reunification with the control group after the long sessions of criticism—becoming part of a highly structured, highly disciplined "family" of exiles—all are part of the basic pattern of brainwashing used by communist and other humanist groups. Some of the Jesus Freak groups have employed similar techniques. The personality is broken and then reshaped.

These techniques do accomplish their goal in a significant percentage of cases. This is the humanist's version of religious conversion. It is fast, brutal, thorough. It works far better than federal money, sociological surveys, official forms, and all the other baggage of government salvation by legislation. Being closer to the phenomena of regeneration, the techniques of these little humanist groups produce results—lasting results—in the form of socially acceptable citizens far more cheaply than any scheme devised by tenured government bureaucrats.

The pragmatist might say that Delancey Street Foundation is better than government-funded rehabilitation programs. In terms of results produced, meaning socially acceptable behavior on the part of the survivors of these programs, this would seem to be a correct conclusion. In terms of the philosophy of voluntarism, there is no question that Synanon and Delancey Street are superior organizations. By forcing men to face the fact of their own responsibility, they can produce more permanent transformations. But the root problems remain: ethical rebellion before God as well as society, denial of permanent standards, denial of the validity of inspired revelation (the Bible), assertion of humanistic tenets of human personality, and the need of a permanent institution that can support and guide men in their private activities.

The problem for Christians is the decided lack of Christian alternative programs for the rehabilitation of criminals. These are being developed, however. Charles {190} Colson's book and his activities with

prisoners are examples of the new evangelism. There have been some successful conversions, even among the Manson family. But these are basically nondenominational enterprises. They are not very theological in their approach. The institutional churches have not been very successful in creating programs comparable in results, though not in methodology, to Delancey Street. Until there are serious, successful Christian alternatives, the debates over the best approaches to rehabilitation will continue to be dominated by humanists.

Sane Asylum is a well-written account of the present operations of Delancey Street Foundation. It provides case histories of restored lives. It offers many of John Maher's snappy monologues about the bums, scum, and crooks that wind up in the halls of the Foundation, about the social workers who would like to run things on a safe, bureaucratically acceptable basis, and about the "straights" who live in the neighborhood. Maher has a theory about living space. He says that the cheapest living space is the rich man's. He rents a huge mansion in the best neighborhood of San Francisco, yet it costs less, per resident, to rent this home at \$2,000 per month than it costs to house the same number of men in the slums at \$130 per month per man. The "straights" who are established socially welcomed him in, but those who were successful real estate hustlers a few years ago resented the presence of these unsavory characters in their midst. Maher is a good enough sociologist to know the difference between *nouveaux riches* and society's established families.

The great weakness of this book is its vagueness concerning the history of Maher and the techniques adapted by Maher from his days at Synanon. Only the blurred outlines of Delancey Street's past appear. The few attempts by the author to describe the psychological effects of this kind of program are jargon-filled and unclear. Once again, we are reminded that there are limits on the ability of social scientists of top caliber—Berkeley's finest—to communicate in the English language when they become professional. But his descriptions of what goes on in the various "deprogramming" sessions are lively.

The author is concerned about the dualism of the program: personality breakdown, followed by heavy reliance on the Foundation's program and leaders. How do men learn self-reliance? How do they learn to deal with the real issues of applied ethics? How do they make the

transition back into the outside world? The book barely touches on one important fact, a fact mentioned by one of the Foundation's directors: "I've been concerned for some time that only a small proportion of our long-term residents are graduating in the prescribed manner. Most have just upped and left. I've known a number of these people before and after they left—and they're mostly leading constructive lives free of drugs and crime.... Yet they are not allowed to visit us.... My impression is that these people left because they didn't want the *burden* of formal graduation, the constant questioning in the Games, the live-in-work-out system, and the whole gamut of public discussion and scrutiny of their plans. They just want to go their own way quietly and without fuss." Maher then took strong exception to this analysis, defending the ostracism practice on the basis of pragmatic effects: how can people who ought to stay with the Foundation longer be convinced that the costs of leaving are high, if those who have left without formal sanctions come back to flaunt their success on the outside? In other words, the cult-like nature of the Foundation's program, with its all-night sessions and its charismatic leader, is enforced in a cult-like way: the threat of excommunication and ostracism. Delancey Street Foundation is rather like a church, only it is a church without a philosophy of {191} permanent standards. The alternative to a formal creed is unflagging obedience to the leaders.

Groups like Delancey Street and Synanon are new. They are still being operated by the founders. They are still small enough, struggling enough, and underfinanced enough to make survival depend upon an *esprit de corps*. They have not undergone what Max Weber called "the routinization of charisma." When the charismatic personalities die or become stodgy, what happens to their organizations? Delancey Street Foundation, the "sane asylum," has not yet proved its permanent contribution. The big test has not yet come. It works better than any program devised by the bureaucrats in the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, but that is not necessarily saying very much.

PUBLICATION SCHEDULE

VOLUME 4

Volume 4 (1977) of *The Journal of Christian Reconstruction* will feature symposiums on “education” and “the family.” Manuscripts dealing with either topic are now being reviewed for publication. Anyone wishing to submit a manuscript for consideration would be wise to clear the topic in advance with the editor. Manuscripts should be between twenty and forty pages in length, typewritten, and double-spaced. The University of Chicago’s *Manual of Style* is preferred, though not mandatory. If accepted, *The Journal* will pay the author \$75 upon publication. Shorter manuscripts (under fifteen pages) receive \$35. Book reviews (five to ten pages) receive \$10; books dealing with the symposium’s topic are preferred. Suggestions concerning the reprinting of important documents or published articles, if accepted, are worth \$20, if accompanied by a clear photocopy of the recommended piece.

Manuscripts suitable for publication in the sections on “Christian Reconstruction” and “Defenders of the Faith” are always given careful consideration, as are suggestions for reprinting. Again, it is wise to clear the topic in advance with the editor. Summaries of dissertations are acceptable.

DEADLINES:

EDUCATION: April 15, 1977

THE FAMILY: August 15, 1977

CONTACT:

GARY NORTH, *Editor*

P.O. Box 1608

Springfield, VA 22151

(703) 941-3354

THE MINISTRY OF CHALCEDON

(Pr. 29:18)

Chalcedon [kalSEEdon] is a Christian educational organization devoted exclusively to research, publishing, and cogent communication of a distinctly Christian scholarship to the world at large. It makes available a variety of services and programs, all geared to the needs of interested laymen who understand the propositions that Jesus Christ speaks to the mind as well as the heart, and that His claims extend beyond the narrow confines of the various institutional churches. We exist in order to support the efforts of all orthodox denominations and churches.

Chalcedon derives its name from the great ecclesiastical Council of Chalcedon (AD 451), which produced the crucial Christological definition: “Therefore, following the holy Fathers, we all with one accord teach men to acknowledge one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, at once complete in Godhead and complete in manhood, truly God and truly man ...” This formula directly challenges every false claim of divinity by any human institution: state, church, cult, school, or human assembly. Christ alone is both God and man, the unique link between heaven and earth. All human power is therefore derivative; Christ alone can announce that, “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth” (Matthew 28:18). Historically, the Chalcedonian creed is therefore the foundation of Western liberty, for it sets limits on all authoritarian human institutions by acknowledging the validity of the claims of the one who is the source of true human freedom (Galatians 5:1).

Christians have generally given up two crucial features of theology that in the past led to the creation of what we know as Western civilization. They no longer have any real optimism concerning the possibility of an earthly victory of Christian principles and Christian institutions, and they have also abandoned the means of such a victory in external human affairs: a distinctly biblical concept of law. The testimony of the Bible and Western history should be clear: when God’s people have been confident about the ultimate earthly success of their religion and committed socially to God’s revealed system of external law, they have been victorious. When either aspect of their faith has declined, they have lost ground. Without optimism, they lose their zeal to exercise dominion over God’s creation

(Genesis 1:28); without revealed law, they are left without guidance and drift along with the standards of their day.

Once Christians invented the university; now they retreat into little Bible colleges or sports factories. Once they built hospitals throughout Europe and America; now the civil governments have taken them over. Once Christians were inspired by “Onward, Christian Soldiers”; now they see themselves as “poor wayfaring strangers” with “joy, joy, joy, joy down in their hearts” only on Sundays and perhaps Wednesday evenings. They are, in a word, pathetic. Unquestionably, they have become culturally impotent.

Chalcedon is committed to the idea of Christian reconstruction. It is premised on the belief that ideas have consequences. It takes seriously the words of Professor F. A. Hayek: “It may well be true that we as scholars tend to overestimate the influence which we can exercise on contemporary affairs. But I doubt whether it is possible to overestimate the influence which ideas have in the long run.” If Christians are to reconquer lost ground in preparation for ultimate victory (Isaiah 2, 65, 66), they must rediscover their intellectual heritage. They must come to grips with the Bible’s warning and its promise: “Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he” (Proverbs 29:18). Chalcedon’s resources are being used to remind Christians of this basic truth: what men believe makes a difference. Therefore, men should not believe lies, for it is the truth that sets them free (John 8:32).

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