

May 2001

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Chalcedon report

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FAITH FOR ALL OF LIFE FAITH FOR ALL OF LIFE FAITH FOR ALL OF LIFE

CHRISTIANITY'S
GLORIOUS
FUTURE:

OPTIMISTIC ESCHATOLOGY

R. J. Rushdoony on Man's Creation and Dominion

P. Andrew Sandlin on Planning for Defeat

Mark R. Rushdoony on Why be Optimistic?

Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr. on

Recent Developments in the Eschatological Debate

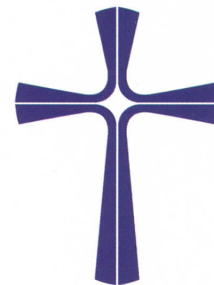
Thomas Schirrmacher on

William Carey's Postmillennialism and World Missions

... and much more!

CHALCEDON FOUNDATION

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Dear Readers,

R. J. Rushdoony has passed into the Lord's presence. Since from the very beginning he was a vital, central force in Chalcedon's ministry, our friends and supporters may be wondering about Chalcedon's future now that his earthly labors are over.

You are entitled to know what we intend to do.

Rush was an unabashed postmillennialist. He was future-oriented, not past-oriented. In his final years, unlike many other octogenarians, he did not pine for "the good old days." He wanted Chalcedon to survive him and press forward with even greater Biblical fidelity and holy vigor. This is just what we intend to do.

Let us say first, however, that we do not intend to "replace" Rush, either as separate individuals or as a leadership duo. Rush's divinely bestowed gifts and talents were unique. His work which those gifts and talents helped produce is irreplaceable. We do not claim to share those remarkable talents. In short, we are not R. J. Rushdoony, and we will not try to be. We can only use the talents and abilities the Lord has given us. We hope that you will understand and be patient as we lead Chalcedon with the gifts and talents with which we have been blessed.

Rush believed that Chalcedon was not about personalities, including his own, but the truth for which he faithfully and uncompromisingly stood. Rush's earthly labors are over, but the cause to which he selflessly dedicated his life continues. It is this cause to which we energetically rededicate ourselves and Chalcedon.

We can't replace Rush, but we can, with the Lord's and your help, carry forward his vision: working to bring all areas of life and thought under God's authority as revealed in the Bible, equipping the godly individual to live in terms of God's law, and confronting our present evil culture with an explicitly Biblical, world-conquering message. This is just what Rush would want us to do, and, even more importantly, it is what we believe the Word of God demands that we do.

We want to move forward with great grace and humility. We do not claim to have all the answers. We covet your support and prayers. If you have suggestions about how we can do things better, we'd love to hear them. We really need you. Please help us.

In due time, we will offer more specific outlines of our future plans. For now, though, we want you to know that we are moving forward with great confidence and boldness, resting our hope in the sovereign, Triune God, Who has sustained and expanded Chalcedon in the past and present, and Who we trust will take us to even greater heights in the future, for His glory.

Sincerely for Christ the King,

Mark R. Rushdoony, President

P. Andrew Sandlin, Executive Vice President

May 2001

Chalcedon report

#430

A Monthly Report Dealing with the Relationship of Christian Faith to the World

Christianity's Glorious Future: Optimistic Eschatology

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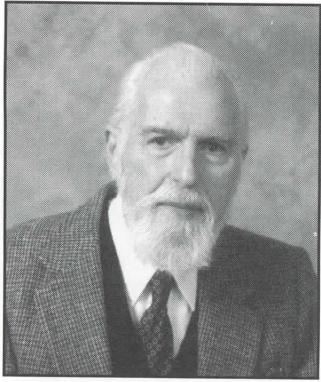
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Man's Creation and Dominion

By Rev. R. J. Rushdoony

What was God's purpose in creating man? David answers this question, but much earlier God, in Genesis 1:26, tell us that it is dominion, and David, in Psalm 8:6ff., restates this saying, "Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands: thou has put all things under his feet." What God and His Word state so emphatically should be basic to the church's ministry, but it is not. In fact, one important observer has said that only Chalcedon holds to and teaches dominion theology. But David sees this dominion calling of man as a basic aspect of being "crowned ... with glory and honor" (v. 5).

The church in the main has lost its dominion mandate and calling. As a result, instead of being the source of the world's culture, the church is a shallow reflection of humanistic culture, man-centered and not God-centered. As Psalm 8:2 makes clear, our calling and our purpose should be to "still the enemy and the avenger."

God created man to exercise dominion and to subdue the earth under Him (*Gen. 1:26*). When man fell into sin, God chose a people and commissioned them to this same task (*Jos. 1:1ff.*). But Israel failed and was replaced by the church, which was commissioned to the same task (*Mt. 28:19-20*). The church now, instead of wanting victory and dominion

in the face of tribulation, wants rather to be raptured out of it. Will not God give rather tribulation than rapture to such a people? Should they not tremble before God and change their ways?

A strong people of God are told that the Lord even ordains strength "out of the mouth of babes and sucklings" which "still the enemy and the avenger" (v. 2). Now the mouths of famous preachers ordain weakness and retreat.

The dominion God promises to His people is total: it applies to every sphere. The mark of God's being is absolute dominion, and this is His promise to His people.

The Lord's Prayer is, in essence, a prayer for dominion: "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (*Mt. 6:10*). For most churchmen, the use of the Lord's Prayer is a "vain repetition" rather than marching orders. Too many churches need to pray, "God have mercy on us, for we have neither prayed nor lived as we should."

We must seek God's dominion over ourselves and our world with all our heart, mind, and being. We must recognize that no church is truly Bible-believing if it rejects God's dominion and our calling in Him to bring all things under His dominion, beginning with ourselves.

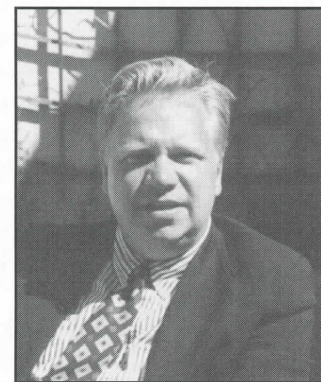
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Planning for Defeat

By Rev. P. Andrew Sandlin



A Passionately Pessimistic Eschatology

In 1973, Herman Hanko, prominent minister within the Protestant Reformed Church, declared in a lecture:

In the first place, many that strongly advocate Christian social involvement almost always fall into the error of post-millennialism. That is, the error of teaching that the Kingdom of Jesus Christ is realized here in this present world by a slow but steady process of social, economic and political evolution. We must look therefore, for the realization of the Kingdom of Christ here in the midst of this present world. In fact, it seems almost as if there is something inevitable about falling into the error of post-millennialism when speaking of the Christian's social calling....

What is the relationship between our social calling and the Lord's return?

There are several truths that underlie the answer which we must give to this question. In the first place, if we are to take this whole matter seriously, we must, above all else, take seriously the matter of sin. And, in connection with the whole question of sin, we must take seriously the question of sovereign predestination. This is not something which we drag in by the back door in order to give to this whole question some kind of coloring. This is essential to the problem. The point is this: that in the context of sin, of a sinful world, of a world of depraved, totally depraved people, there is no solution to the world's problems. There cannot be. These problems have their origin in sin. They are conceived, as it were, in the womb of sin and they are brought forth by means of sin, and they exist because sin is an ever present reality in life. This is precisely why all the world's attempts to solve these problems are necessarily going to make these problems worse....

In the second place, we know from Scripture that it is the Lord's purpose, in the midst of the history of this world, to save only a remnant. The Church is always, to use the graphic and dramatic words of Isaiah, "A hut in a cucumber patch, a besieged city. If the Lord of Hosts had not left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as unto Sodom and we should have been like unto Gomorrah." We know that. We know therefore, that as far as the majority of the world's population is concerned, there will always only

be efforts to solve these problems in the context of sin. And that will prove wholly unsatisfactory.

In the third place, because sin lies at the roots of all social problems, the ultimate solution to these problems is the Cross. That is where all the social problems are resolved, because that is where atonement was made for sin. That is where sin was defeated, where the power of sin was destroyed. But because the solution of those social problems is in the Cross, the solution to those social problems is limited therefore, to those for whom Christ died. That is, the solution to those problems is to be found within the context of the Church of Jesus Christ....¹

This is a striking example of *eschatological pessimism* — the highly popular but profoundly defective notion, either that God has predestined the growth of apostasy within the church and pervasive evil in the wider society, or that at best we can expect spiritual success only within the church but that God has predestined the increase of evil outside the church. On this point, many *amillennialists* like Hanko agree with dispensational *premillennialists*. Premillennialism is the idea that Christ will return to earth *before* the thousand-year era of holy peace described in Revelation 20 and establish an earthly kingdom, probably right in Jerusalem.² Amillennialists do not identify the thousand years as an era of earthly peace at all, but believe that it consists of Jesus Christ's present heavenly reign mediated within the church, or the reign of the saints who have died and gone on to be with the Lord.³ Postmillennialism, by contrast, is the idea that Jesus Christ will return *after* an age of Gospel Victory predicted by the Old Testament prophets and attested by the New Testament apostles.⁴ Fortunately, there are a few non-dispensational premillennialists and "optimistic amillennialists," who do share with postmillennialists an optimism over the future of the gospel.⁵ Postmillennialism, however, is the only eschatological viewpoint that is *inherently* optimistic. There can be no such thing as a *pessimistic* postmillennialist.⁶

The Bitter Fruits of Pessimistic Eschatology

A pessimistic premillennialism or a pessimistic amillennialism has dominated most of the Western

church of the last hundred years. Pessimistic premillennialism (almost always in the form of dispensationalism) dominates the fundamentalist and evangelical wings of the conservative church. Pessimistic amillennialism tends to dominate the Reformed and “higher” churches. What binds these perspectives together is not agreement on the details of eschatology, but rather concord on the predestined defeat of the kingdom of God, Christ’s church, and the gospel in human culture and society. The best they can hope and pray for is a quiet, but passionate, individual devotional life; a devoted Christian family; and, at best, increased attendance and zeal in the local church or, perhaps, denomination (in the words of Hanko, a “remnant”). There is no hope that the gospel of Jesus Christ will increase in potency over time, that we can expect incrementally increasing conversions as we move ahead toward the Second Coming of Christ. There is no hope that the Great Commission of Matthew 28:18-20 will actually be fulfilled — that the church will, in fact, disciple the nations before the Second Advent. There is no assurance that there can ever again be such a thing as a Christian culture or Christian civilization⁷ — where family, church, media, agriculture, science, technology, education, and politics are willingly subject to the authority of Christ the King and His infallible Word, the Bible.⁸ In fact, some supporters of the pessimistic eschatology decry the historic Christian idea of *Christendom*, entire societies Christianized, the great heritage of the Middle Ages and the Protestant Reformation.⁹

The eschatology of the pessimists truly is a self-fulfilling prophecy: God has predestined the increasing defeat and irrelevance of His kingdom, His church, and His gospel; therefore, we must create a version of Christianity that conforms to our (lack of) expectations; and, sure enough, as a result of dedication to a theology of irrelevance and impotence, the kingdom, church, and gospel become increasingly irrelevant and impotent.

The pessimists’ evangelistic outreaches often reduce to little more than fire-insurance forays into the “devil’s world” to snatch a few souls and get them into the church. Their personal educational philosophy involves either sending their children to godless, humanistic government schools, with the hope that an hour of Sunday school and an hour of entertaining worship on Sunday will purge away the school’s “bad, bad” teachings, or erecting Christian day schools whose only real objective is segregating Christian children from evil influences. There is no recognition of the educational objective of training a covenant seed to do warfare against the Devil and his minions and, from generation to generation, gradually recapturing an entire nation and culture for Jesus Christ.

Similarly, the pessimists’ familial strategy dismisses any concern for pressing Christ’s kingdom in the earth and reclaiming the world’s culture. Husbands

and fathers do not recognize their calling to take leadership in the family, and to work toward leadership and advancing roles in their life’s vocations. Parents do not recognize their Christian calling to train up warriors for the faith (*Ps. 127:5*). Covenant children are not confronted with their calling to be ambassadors for Christ, preparing themselves to penetrate specific areas of modern life with Biblical Christianity and the long-term objective of assuaging the tide of evil and reestablishing a godly society.¹⁰

The eschatological pessimists are planning for defeat, and their plan is working to perfection.

The only cure for this eschatological disease is the adoption of a radical, world-conquering eschatological optimism, a postmillennialism driven by the power of the Spirit of God that excites and energizes God’s people with a vision of hope and victory.¹¹

We will never enjoy victory if we constantly plan for defeat.



¹ Available at http://www.prca.org/pamphlets/pamphlet_72.html.

² John F. Walvoord, *The Millennial Kingdom* (Findlay, OH: Dunham, 1959).

³ Anthony A. Hoeksema, “Amillennialism,” in ed., Robert G. Clouse, *The Meaning of the Millennium* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1977), 155-187.

⁴ Loraine Boettner, *The Millennium* (no loc.: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1957).

⁵ Donald G. Bloesch, *Essential of Evangelical Theology* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1979), 2:189-204. Charles H. Spurgeon, “The Sure Triumph of the Crucified One,” *Spurgeon’s Sovereign Grace Sermons* (Edmonton, Alberta, Canada: Still Waters Revival Book, 1990).

⁶ For an even-handed treatment of the variations of Christian eschatology, see Millard Erickson, *Contemporary Options in Eschatology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1977).

⁷ J. Gresham Machen, “Christianity and Culture,” *Education, Christianity, and the State*, in ed., John W. Robbins (Jefferson, MD: Trinity Foundation, 1987), 45-59. See also Christopher Dawson, *The Historic Reality of Christian Culture* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1960).

⁸ H. Henry Meeter, *The Basic Ideas of Calvinism* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1960 edition).

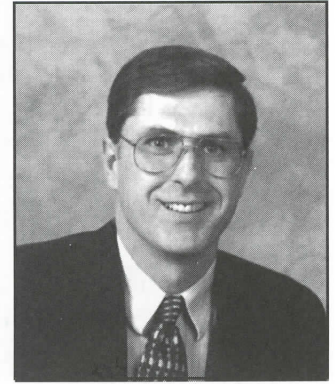
⁹ Michael Horton, “Defining the Two Kingdoms: One of Luther’s and Calvin’s Great Discoveries,” *Modern Reformation*, September/October, 2000, 21f.

¹⁰ P. Andrew Sandlin, *We Must Create a New Kind of Christian* (Vallecito, CA: Chalcedon, 2000).

¹¹ Additional works championing postmillennialism include Greg L. Bahnsen, *Victory in Jesus*, in ed., Robert R. Booth (Texarcana, AR: Covenant Media, 1999); John Jefferson Davis, *Christ’s Victorious Kingdom* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1986); Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., *He Shall Have Dominion* (Tyler, TX: Institute for Christian Economics, 1992); J. Marcellus Kik, *An Eschatology of Victory* (no loc.: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1975); Keith A. Mathison, *Postmillennialism: An Eschatology of Hope* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1999); and Rousas John Rushdoony, *God’s Plan for Victory* (Fairfax, VA: Thoburn Press, 1980).

Why be Optimistic?

By Rev. Mark R. Rushdoony



Man, created a religious being, is dependent on faith. He has a mind and reasoning abilities, just as he has lungs and the power of respiration. But reason does not characterize man's nature any more than does breath. Man is a creature of faith because he was created and placed in a world that is greater than he and which does not owe its existence or explanation to him. Still, we regularly elevate ourselves as paragons of wisdom and understanding, sometimes even while professing dependence on God.

Twenty-three years ago, when I was preparing to leave Northern Virginia and come work with my father at Chalcedon, a minister commented to me that he liked my father's ideas, except his belief in postmillennialism. "I just don't see that happening in today's world," he said. I have heard many similar comments since that time. But his words betrayed the error of his thinking. In speaking of what he *saw*, he was not talking about *eschatology* which is belief about the end times. He was talking about foresight or prescience, personal knowledge of that which is to come. He could look about him and rationally say that his eye saw and his mind could detect no evidence of God's victory within history. But prescience is the weakest basis for anything, especially optimism. It is of little value when we know we are so fallible. Prescience is usually about seeing the present and extrapolating it into the future.

Eschatology is not about what we see and understand, nor is it about what we think. It is about what we believe about the end of human existence. We can be optimistic about our end and the world we see about us if we believe in God. We can be optimistic because we believe in Who He is and what He says. Our eschatology, or doctrine of last things, must come from our theology, our doctrine of God. It is our doctrine of God that determines our view of last things. Some with very negative end-time beliefs are very optimistic. This can be true because it is great faith in God that makes one optimistic. Despite

gloomy end-time scenarios, many still have great confidence because of their faith in God.

What we believe must not be based on what we see; this is the fallacy of rationalism. If you are a rationalist, your mind can take you almost anywhere and convince you of your wisdom therein. What we believe about the end times must be based on Who we believe in; we must see the big picture. History is God's device. It has a beginning and an end. God is, was, and always shall be on the throne. We can therefore be confident that all things work together for good to them that love God. We know our victory over sin and death is assured because of Christ's atonement two thousand years ago. Why not be optimistic, when "the sufferings of this present world are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (*Rom. 8:18*)?

So, why do Christians tend to be so pessimistic? They tend to see only what they see with their eyes. This is rationalism, but Scripture tells us to see in terms of what we believe. Scripture calls this walking by faith. We serve a mighty God. How mighty is our faith in Him?

When we see only with our eyes (as good rationalists do) we focus on ourselves and our world. We see all the sin, evil, and rebellion. We see so much of it that we can start to think of it as normative. Even those with good theology can so focus on evil that they mentally put the kingdom of God into a remoteness that is inconsistent with their confession. Theoretical, theological optimists are too often practicing pessimists. For years my father had a yellowed card on his refrigerator which read, "Why pray when you can worry?" It is only by walking in terms of our faith that we avoid looking about and being consumed in worry and pessimism.

Men do tend to think and act in terms of their understanding of what they see (both physically and theologically) before them. An end-time theology of doom and gloom does tend to discourage even those with genuine and submissive faith. If they are taught

to believe that God is instrumental in the world's downward spiral, they must overcome a great tendency not to act in a defeatist manner. Sometimes their desire to be optimistic takes on a peculiarly twisted, dark side. Too many times I have heard, "Isn't it wonderful that there is so much evil? It means Jesus is coming soon." Then too, there is a logic to pessimism if you believe God chooses to be marginal in history. It takes extreme effort not to act and think in terms of what you believe. If you believe that evil must come to control the world, you will feel helpless and overwhelmed in its various manifestations. Few such people are able to avoid the resulting escapism and defeatism.

It is all right to be saddened by sin and to lament evil. Christ wept over Lazarus and Jerusalem. But always we must take solace not in what we see, but in Whom it is we believe. The Psalmist tells us to hope in God. When we are confident that our times are in God's sovereign, caring hands, we can learn hope because the end times are in those same hands. Walk by sight as a rationalist and your future is one of worry and pessimism. Walk by faith and the future is as bright as God is good.



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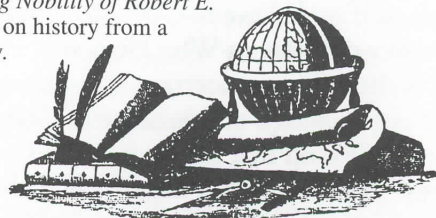
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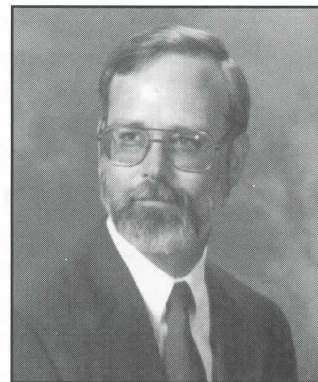
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Recent Developments in the Eschatological Debate

By Rev. Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr.



Eschatology is so often abused today that it has become a source of positive embarrassment to the integrity of the Christian Faith and Biblical Christianity. Two insightful books documenting this dismal state-of-affairs are Dwight Wilson's *Armageddon Now* and Francis Gumerlock's *The Day and the Hour*. A steady flow of recalculated cries for the end perennially rings out from the hollow shelves of Christian trinket stores. Even the smooth entering of a new millennium has not stalled the flow of the dispensational Chicken Littles. It would seem that all one needs in order to be a "prophecy expert" today is either a steady supply of Dapper Dan and access to television air time, or a computer graphics program and a money-hungry publisher. No new developments here!

Yet, despite such abuse, eschatology remains a vitally important aspect of Biblical revelation. Indeed, we should consider eschatology as the *whole movement* of Biblical revelation rather than simply an individual *locus* of systematic theology. As Walter Dumbrell has keenly noted: the entire flow of Scripture progresses "from creation to new creation by means of divine redemptive interventions."¹ Eschatology is the message of all Scripture, the story of the outworking of redemption. Hence, a *careful* study of eschatological developments within evangelical theology is an important task for the student of Holy Writ.

Background

In this article I will mention three recent developments in the eschatological debate. I chose these for two reasons: they directly impact the *Chalcedon Report* audience; and they are making a significant impact in broader evangelical circles. In the mid-1990s, Darrell L. Bock and C. Marvin Pate, two editors involved in Zondervan's CounterPoints series, approached me about these three matters, which are: (1) the radical transformations within dispensationalism; (2) the remarkable resurgence of postmillennialism; and (3) the re-emergence of orthodox preterism.

When Darrell Bock (then of Dallas Theological Seminary) called me in 1994 about joining with him in producing *Three Views on the Millennium and Beyond* (1999), he particularly mentioned his interest in distinguishing this new work from Clouse's *The Meaning of the Millennium* (1977), now two decades old. He noted that it was now quite dated. Not only were three of the four authors deceased (Ladd, Boettner, and Hoeksema), but the eschatological landscape had undergone fundamental changes (except for amillennialism, which is so bland and general as to be asking of prophecy: "Hey, bro! Wha's happnin?"). Bock surprised me when he noted that *neither* classic dispensationalism *nor* historic premillennialism would be included (as in Clouse's work) — due to the rising prominence of progressive dispensationalism. Furthermore, he requested that I present the re-invigorated postmillennial view which included theonomy and preterism.

Progressive dispensationalist Marvin Pate (of Moody Bible Institute) first called me in 1996 to see if I would be interested in contributing to *Four Views on the Book of Revelation*. He specifically expressed his appreciation for my preterist writings, noting that they had influenced him in developing his own understanding of the Olivet Discourse and the Book of Revelation. His *Doomsday Delusions* favorably cited some of my works. Furthermore, he commented that the *Four Views* book would present *two* dispensational views of Revelation: classic dispensationalism and progressive dispensationalism, noting that they fundamentally differ in their analysis of Revelation, the capstone of Biblical prophecy. Gone were the days of classic dispensational hegemony. Thus, progressive dispensationalism was asserting itself in the marketplace of ideas, and beginning to shake up the old-line dispensational establishment. And orthodox preterism was beginning both to gain a hearing and to be granted a seat at the table. No longer was the decked stacked against it.

These remarkable episodes in my own experience suggest to me the significance of the three matters I have chosen to highlight in this article.

The Radical Transformations within Dispensationalism

The newer form of dispensationalism is much more theologically astute than the naive sensationalism of its predecessor. It represents a giant step forward in theological discussion, making huge concessions to covenantal theology. In addition, its theologians are of much greater competence, men who are making serious contributions to evangelicalism in a wide range of theological fields.

Historical Survey

Craig Blaising and Darrell Bock categorize three distinct forms of dispensationalism: (1) "Classic dispensationalism" includes the earliest phase of dispensationalism from the time of John Nelson Darby (1800-1882), through C. I. Scofield (1843-1921) up to and including Lewis Sperry Chafer (1871-1952). (2) "Revised dispensationalism" began to percolate in the 1950s and 60s, reaching its full strength and additive influence with Charles Ryrie's *Dispensationalism Today* (1965) and the *New Scofield Reference Bible* (1967). In addition to Ryrie, noted proponents include J. D. Pentecost and J. F. Walvoord. Populist revised dispensationalists are presently in a state of denial over this transmogrification (and by "denial" I do not mean a river in Egypt). (3) "Progressive dispensationalism" began to emerge and take shape in the mid-1980s through discussion among thinking dispensationalists at the annual Evangelical Theological Society meetings. Leaders in this school of eschatological thought include Darrell L. Bock, Craig L. Blaising, and Robert Saucy.

Theological Summary

Progressive dispensationalism is clearly not your father's dispensationalism (nor your favorite televangelist's). Radical changes distinguishing it from its antiquated forbears include:

(1) A rejection of simplistic literalism in hermeneutics. Progressive dispensationalists pretty much adopt a *genuine* grammatical-historical-theological theory of interpretation — like the rest of the evangelical world.

(2) A revision of the Israel-church distinction, allowing that Israel and the church are two peoples that would even continue into eternity; revised dispensationalism maintained that distinction only in terms of the earthly outworking of redemption.

(3) A breaking down of the walls of separation between the dispensations. Their dispensations are

not discrete, unmixed time frames, but rather evolving stages of historical development. Contained within any particular dispensation are the seeds of the next dispensation so that the dispensations gradually *progress* (hence the name). This allows that Christ is *now* enthroned as king — in anticipation of His coming earthly-millennial rule.

Numerous additional issues could be highlighted. But these three are sufficient to establish a *radical* (and welcome) transformation within dispensationalism.

Bibliographical Sources

Essential texts for studying the issues include:

Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock, eds., *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church: The Search for Definition* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992).

Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock, *Progressive Dispensationalism: An Up-to-Date Handbook of Contemporary Dispensational Thought* (Wheaton, IL: Bridgepoint, 1993).

For a shrill revised dispensationalist response, see: Wesley R. Willis and John R. Master, eds., *Issues in Dispensationalism* (Chicago: Moody, 1994).

The Remarkable Resurgence of Postmillennialism

Contrary to popular opinion, postmillennialism has *never* disappeared from the theological scene. Nevertheless, after suffering a radical decline in the early part of the twentieth century, it has experienced a remarkable, major, and notable renaissance in the past thirty years.

Historical Survey

Three of the leading figures in keeping postmillennialism alive during the 1950s were Reformed writers, J. M. Kik (*An Eschatology of Victory*, 1975; actually a compilation of published articles from 1948, 1955, and 1961); Roderick Campbell (*Israel and the New Covenant*, 1954; Foreword by O. T. Allis); and Lorainne Boettner (*The Millennium*, 1957). Boettner even participated in Clouse's *The Meaning of the Millennium* four views book (1977) — though his advanced age affected his argument.

Postmillennialism's recent resurgence has come about (largely) due to the publishing of postmillennial works in the 1970s and early 80s by the Banner of Truth in Britain and Christian Reconstructionists in America (through the Chalcedon Foundation and the Institute for Christian Economics). Key figures in this publishing revival were J. A. DeJong, *As the Waters Cover the Sea* (1970), Iain Murray (*The Puritan Hope*,

1971), Erroll Hulse (*The Restoration of Israel*, 1982), R. J. Rushdoony (*Thy Kingdom Come*, 1970; *God's Plan for Victory*, 1977), Gary North, and Greg L. Bahnsen (the latter two through articles in the *Journal of Christian Reconstruction*).

As noted above, the revival of postmillennialism has gained wider recognition and more visible standing. The recent Zondervan publication of *Three Views of the Millennium and Beyond* (1999) included my distinctly Reconstructionistic brand of postmillennialism in this broad market publication (it sold out of its first two printings in its first forty-five days). A flood of postmillennial books in the late 1980s and 1990s has inundated the evangelical landscape, including: John J. Davis' *Christ's Victorious Kingdom* (1986), David Chilton's *Paradise Restored* (1987), North's *Millennialism and Social Theory* (1990), Gary DeMar's *Last Days Madness* (1991), my *He Shall Have Dominion* (1992), Alexander McLeod's *Governor of the Nations* (rep. 1993), Andrew Sandlin's *Postmillennial Primer* (1997), Keith Mathison's *Postmillennialism* (1999), and Bahnsen's *Victory in Jesus* (1999). A recent noteworthy "convert" to postmillennialism is R. C. Sproul, who invited me to speak on postmillennialism and preterism at his 1999 National Conference in Orlando.

Theological Summary

The essence of postmillennialism (contrary to naive perceptions) is *not* its interpretation of Revelation 20, but rather, it is *optimism* regarding the progress of the gospel in history before the end comes. Anyone who believes that the gospel of Jesus Christ will exercise a dominant influence in the affairs of men at some point in history is a postmillennialist — whether he likes it or not (optimistic amillennialism is an oxymoron).

A development within the postmillennial tradition since the 1960s — but becoming especially strong by the late 1980s — is Christian Reconstructionism, involving "theonomic" ethics ("theonomy" = "God's law"). Theonomic postmillennialism (a feature of Christian Reconstructionism) combines the inter-advental gradualism of the modern generic variety of postmillennialism with the socio-political interests of the older Puritan form. The theonomic postmillennialist sees the gradual return to Biblical norms of civil justice as a consequence of widespread gospel success through preaching, evangelism, missions, and Christian education. The judicial-political outlook of Reconstructionism includes the application of those justice-defining directives contained in the Old Testament legislation, when properly interpreted, adapted to new covenant conditions, and relevantly applied. With a core theological sub-structure firmly rooted in the

absolute sovereignty of God (classic Calvinism), Christian Reconstructionists not only have a confident hope in the future (postmillennialism) but also a vision of *how* that optimistic future will operate in the social and political arenas (theonomy).

Bibliographical Sources

Foundational texts for studying postmillennialism today include:

Greg L. Bahnsen, *Victory in Jesus: The Bright Hope of Postmillennialism* (Texarkana, AK: CMF, 1999).

Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., *He Shall Have Dominion: A Postmillennial Eschatology* (2d. ed.: Tyler, TX: Institute for Christian Economics, 1997).

Keith A. Mathison, *Postmillennialism: An Eschatology of Hope* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1999).

The Re-emergence of Orthodox Preterism

The word "preterist" is based on a Latin word *praeteritus* meaning "gone by," *i.e.*, past. "Preterism" holds that many judgment prophecies of the New Testament came to pass in the first century, within the very generation of their utterance. Though these several prophecies were in the future when written, they are now in *our* past.

Historical Survey

Many mistakenly assume that evangelical preterism burst upon the eschatological scene through Reconstructionist publications, such as Chilton's *The Great Tribulation* (1987), my *The Beast of Revelation* (1989), and DeMar's *Last Days Madness* (1991) (all were former students of Bahnsen at Reformed Theological Seminary in the 1970s). Actually amillennialist Jay Adams' *The Time is at Hand* (1966) was an (early) important seminal text that helped spark the (later) preterist revolution. It was even used by Bahnsen at RTS in his "History and Eschatology" course. Other pre-resurgence books include Campbell's *Israel and the New Covenant* (1954), Kik's *The Eschatology of Victory* (1975), and Cornelis Vanderwaal's *Search the Scriptures* (1978).

Nevertheless, preterism has recently been *exegetically justified* and *evangelically popularized* largely by Reconstructionist writers. And once again, major Christian publishers have recently helped fuel the debate: Thomas Nelson's release of Steve Gregg's *Revelation: Four Views: A Parallel Commentary* (1996), Zondervan's *Four Views on the Book of Revelation* (1998), and Kregel's *The Great Tribulation: Past or Future?* (1999). Gary DeMar is presently

discussing a publishing venture with Thomas Nelson which would release even more preterist books in the broader market. Furthermore, R. C. Sproul has wholeheartedly adopted orthodox preterism and even published a major work on the subject: *The Last Days According to Jesus* (1998).

Unfortunately, a distortion of preterism is currently gaining advocacy — a view variously designated as “hyper-preterism” (Gentry), “Hymenaenism” (Sandlin), or “pantelism” (Jonathan Seriah). A cult-like enthusiasm fuels this unorthodox movement, which teaches that the total complex of end time events transpired in the first-century: the Second Advent, the resurrection, the rapture of the saints, and the great judgment. It is to preterism what hyper-Calvinism is to historic Calvinism: a theological pushing beyond Biblical constraints. This view is not supported by any creed or any council of the church in history.

A “Foreword” to one work from this movement inadvertently highlights the (all too typical) problem: “John [Noe] is not a professional theologian. He has had no formal seminary training, but that may be an advantage.” Then again, lacking training in Biblical languages, careful study of exegetical principles, in-depth instruction in systematic theology, and formal schooling in historical theology may not be helpful at all. (This book by John Noe received a scathing review in the December, 2000, *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*. Sadly, this review will dissuade some readers from even considering the orthodox root from which hyper-preterism mutated. I have had numerous letters from folks turning against preterism because of these bizarre excesses.)

The origins of this modern movement arise from and are fueled by many Christians either presently or previously within the Church of Christ sect (e.g., Max King, Tim King, Ed Stevens, and others). Some hyper-preterists have even become Unitarians; see Ed Stevens’ own lamentation: “Wanda Shirk & PIE,” *Kingdom Counsel* (April 1994-Sept. 1996): 3-17. Others have begun to apply the Biblical references about hell to the events of A.D. 70, thereby denying the doctrine of eternal punishment. See: Samuel G. Dawson, “Jesus’ Teaching on Hell: A Place or an Event?” (Puyallup, WS: Gospel Themes, 1997). The theological structure of the movement appears to be continually mutating. Of course, such should be expected when the position decries creedal moorings and rejoices in being adrift on a sea of untrained theologues. (I guess the hyper-preterists are our gadfly-answers to the dispensationalist embarrassments such as Jack Van Impe and the LaLonde brothers.)

For helpful rebuttals to hyper-preterism, see: Gentry, *He Shall Have Dominion: A Postmillennial Eschatology* (2d. ed.: 1997), App. C.

Jonathan Seraiah, *The End of All Things* (1999).

R. C. Sproul, “. . . in Like Manner,” *Tabletalk* 24:12 (December 2000): 4-7.

Vern Crisler, “The Eschatological A Priori of the New Testament: A Critique of Hyper-Preterism,” *Journal of Christian Reconstruction* 15 (Winter, 1998): 225-56.

Keith Mathison, *Postmillennialism* (1999), App. C.

Mathison is currently editing a multi-author response to the hyper-preterists. It should be complete in 2002.

Theological Summary

Orthodox preterism is not so much an eschatological system as a hermeneutic tool. It recognizes the interpretive significance of: (1) time-frame indicators (e.g., *Mt. 24:34; Mk. 9:1; Rev. 1:1, 3*); (2) audience relevance (e.g., the Seven Churches enduring tribulation, *Rev. 1:4, 9*); and (3) the possible non-literal character of apocalyptic imagery (“falling stars” may indicate “collapsing governments”). However, evangelical preterism refuses to allow one or two time-tied texts to become a black hole that sucks in all other texts that are merely similar. That is, preterism should not make the mistake of averring *similarity entails identity*, which is the informal logical fallacy known as converse accident (i.e., hasty generalization). That is, just because two texts are *similar* does not mean they are speaking of the *same* events (consider the various “Day of the Lord” prophecies in the Old Testament).

Orthodox preterism views the great tribulation (*Mt. 24:21* cp., *v. 34*) and Revelation’s judgment passages (*Rev. 1:1, 3; 22:6, 10*) as being fulfilled in the first century. Consequently, preterism works nicely with (but is not *demanded* by) postmillennialism.

Bibliographical Sources

Gary DeMar, *Last Days Madness* (Atlanta: American Vision, 1994).

Kenneth Gentry, *Perilous Times: A Study in Eschatological Evil* (Texarkana, AK: CMF, 1999).

R. C. Sproul, *The Last Days According to Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998).



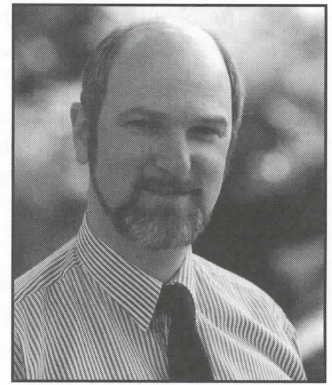
¹ William Dumbrell, *The End of the Beginning* (Homebush West NSW, Australia: Lancer, 1985), 161.



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William Carey's Postmillennialism and World Missions

By Rev. Thomas Schirrmacher



Carey's Theology — The Missing Link

William Carey is considered the Father of Protestant missions.¹ His book, *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens*,² was written in 1792, the beginning of the so-called Great Century³ (1792-1914) between the French and the Russian Revolutions. For the centennial anniversary, none less than the mentor of German missiology, Gustav Warneck, wrote, "Thus, the year 1792 may be considered the true birthdate of modern missions."⁴ Less than twenty days after the publication of the *Enquiry*, Carey preached his sermon on Isaiah 54:2-3 and began to disseminate it with a clear appeal for missions to his fellow pastors,⁵ which soon led to the foundation of the mission society, The Particular Baptist Mission. The first mission society without state supervision, it was founded on different lines than the Anglo-Saxon honor societies.⁶

Much has been written about Carey and his colleagues, their mission field in Serampore, and their achievements in printing, in Bible translation, in teaching and in many other areas.

Strangely enough, however, little attention has been paid in his numerous biographies to his theology, as expressed in his major work. (The only exception I know of is Iain Murray's study, *The Puritan Hope*.) This failure is probably due to the fact that Carey's theology differs from that of the presently predominant, post-classical mission societies, which happily claim him as their father, although he was a Calvinist and a postmillennialist. Even the two dissertations which discuss his achievements⁷ ignore large areas of his theology. Neither mention his eschatological views, which played a major role in his decisions. The best description — interestingly, actually a biography of his first wife⁸ — mentions his personal optimism in the chapter on "Attitudes Towards the Future," but not his optimistic perspective on world missions, which he derived from his postmillennial theology.

Postmillennialism in the *Enquiry*

Let's examine the central indications of Carey's postmillennialism in the *Enquiry*.

Carey had two questions about the Great Commission: 1) Was the Great Commission directed only to the apostles, or is it valid for all Christians of all eras; 2) Can the Great Commission be fulfilled?

To the first question, Carey points out that the Great Commission is binding "even to the end of the age" (*Mt. 28:20*).⁹ One of his best arguments for the validity of the Commission is the fact that it includes the command to baptize, which all churches and theologians consider valid.¹⁰ If the Great Commission was directed only to the apostles, the churches would have to stop baptizing people.

The answer to the second question arises out of Carey's postmillennial expectation of missions' final success. Premillennialism, which molded post-classical missions, assumed no such achievement, but only the conversion of a minority from each nation.

In his introduction, Carey expresses no doubts that God would build His kingdom on this earth to the same extent as the devil's present government:

*Yet God repeatedly made known his intention to prevail finally over all the power of the devil, and to destroy all his works and set up his own kingdom and interest among men, and extend it as universally as Satan had extended his.*¹¹

Very early in the *Enquiry*, Carey refutes objections to the continuing validity of the Great Commission on eschatological grounds:

It has been said that some learned divines have proved from Scripture that the time is not yet come that the heathen should be converted; and that first the witnesses must be slain, and many other prophecies fulfilled. But admitting this to be the case (which I much doubt) yet, if any objection is made from this against preaching to them immediately, it must be founded on one of these things; either that the secret

purpose of God is the rule of our duty, and then it must be as bad to pray for them, as to preach to them; or else that none shall be converted in the heathen world till the universal downpouring of the Spirit in the last days. But this objection comes too late; for the success of the gospel has been very considerable in many places already.¹²

On the one hand, he questions his own eschatological view, but on the other, he objects to any interpretation which prohibits the present carrying out of the Great Commission. The Christian must make his decisions not according to the unknown mysteries of God's will but according to His clear, revealed commandment. Carey here follows Calvin's distinction between God's sovereign will, providence, and His moral will, duty.¹³

Carey drew his argument against the predominant view of the day, that the witness must first be slain, from Jonathan Edwards' detailed discussion.¹⁴

The other argument that Carey would have accepted against missions would have been the lack of converts in the heathen world. This, however, was refuted by reality. Interestingly, Carey fails to mention the expectation of the universal pouring out of the Holy Spirit, which was to initiate the great conversion of the heathen, which was, after all, his own opinion. Because this view could also have been used against missions, he emphasized the role of the Great Commission as a commandment rather than eschatological opinions as the basis of our plans and actions.

Towards the end of the *Enquiry*, Carey defines his eschatological view more clearly, but the complete picture becomes clear only in the light of the postmillennial views of the day. Carey emphasizes that the prophesied growth of the kingdom of God should not make the believer passive, but increases the obligation to missions.

If the prophecies concerning the increase of Christ's kingdom be true, and if what has been advanced concerning the commission given by him to his disciples being obligatory on us, be just, it must be inferred that all Christians ought heartily to concur with God in promoting his glorious designs, for he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit.¹⁵

At the same time, he sees the first signs of the approaching expansion of the kingdom of God in the social and political arena, but above all, in the open doors.

[Y]ea, a glorious door is opened, and is likely to be opened wider and wider, by the spread of civil and religious liberty, accompanied also by a diminution of

the spirit of popery; a noble effort has been made to abolish the inhuman Slave-Trade, and though at present it has not been so successful as might be wished, yet it is hoped it will be preserved in, till it is accomplished.¹⁶

In Carey's view, Biblical eschatology does not refute God's commandments, but supports them. Thus, in discussing future promises, he can also allude to Christian responsibility and failure.

If an holy solicitude had prevailed in all the assemblies of Christians in behalf of their Redeemer's kingdom, we might probably have seen before now, not only an open door for the gospel, but many running to and fro, and knowledge increased; or a diligent use of those means which providence has put in our power, accompanied with a greater blessing than ordinary from heaven.¹⁷

Carey's interpretation of Zachariah was inspired by Jonathan Edwards's¹⁸ interpretation, which was popular at the time:

It is as represented in the prophets, that when there shall be a great mourning in the land, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon, and every family shall mourn apart, and their wives apart, it shall all follow upon a spirit of grace, and supplication. And when these things shall take place, it is promised that there shall be a fountain opened for the house of David, and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness — and that the idols shall be destroyed and the false prophets ashamed of their profession. Zech. xii. 10. 14. - xiii. 1, 6. This prophesy seems to teach that when there shall be a universal conjunction in fervent prayer, and all shall esteem Zion's welfare as their own, then copious influences of the Spirit shall be shed upon the churches, which like a purifying fountain shall cleanse the servants of the Lord. Nor shall this cleansing influence stop here; all old idolatrous prejudices shall be rooted out, and truth prevail so gloriously that false teachers shall be so ashamed as rather to wish to be classed with obscure herdsmen, or the meanest peasants, than bear the ignominy attendant on their detection.

The most glorious works of grace that have ever took place, have been in answer to prayer; and it is in this way, we have the greatest reason to suppose, that the glorious out-pouring of the Spirit, which we expect at last, will be bestowed.¹⁹

In the *Enquiry*, Carey not only thinks and argues from a postmillennialist position, but he finds his examples among postmillennialist missionaries and theologians.

The Calvinist (Puritan) missionaries mentioned as examples in the second and third chapters of the *Enquiry* were missionaries to the Indians, John Eliot (1604-1690) and David Brainerd (1718-1747). Carey's original models, they too came from the sphere of Jonathan Edwards's influence. Both were postmillennialists²⁰ and believed that numerous conversions would occur at the end of time, *i.e.*, at the beginning of the millennium, prior to Christ's return. (Carey read and continually re-read Edwards's biography of Brainerd.)

A postmillennialist, Johnathan Edwards, the Calvinist evangelist and the leading American theologian of his day, called for a world wide prayer chain for world missions in his pamphlet, "A Humble Attempt to Promote Explicit Agreement and Visible Union Among God's People in Extraordinary Prayer for the Revival of Religion and the Advancement of Christ's Kingdom on Earth."²¹ In referring to this work in the *Enquiry*, Carey mentions the British edition provided by John Sutcliffe in 1789, which together with the American edition of 1747 had strongly influenced the Baptists of Northumberland since 1784. In his arguments for postmillennial hope in the *Enquiry*, Carey sometimes used the same Scripture quotations as Edwards, particularly those from Zechariah.

Besides Edwards, Eliot, and Brainerd, the *Enquiry* also mentions the seaman, James Cook (1721-1779), whose logbook he had studied diligently. Cook's last voyage, described in part in his logbook of 1779, was published in 1784, and in 1785, reprinted by the *Northampton Mercury* in a series of pamphlets. Carey writes, "My attention to missions was first awakened after I was at Moulton, by reading the *Last Voyage of Captain Cook*."²²

Carey also became aware of the immense possibilities for missions of the new expeditions in the geographical descriptions of the *Northampton Mercury*, one of the oldest English weekly newspapers. Without question, world wide exploration and the new possibilities for travel inspired postmillennialism as much as the rising of Protestant world missions did.

Not only Carey, but also his mission society and his team were postmillennialists. A. Christopher Smith, writing about Carey, his colleague John Marshman, and their representative at home, says:

*In mission theology, the Serampore Fraternity members were at the fore in declaring that the world would be evangelized properly only after the Holy Spirit was poured forth. Rufus Anderson was perhaps even more sanguine and triumphalist in his millennialist expectations.*²³

The significance of postmillennialism (and of the Calvinist doctrine of predestination) can also be seen in another aspect: "Another remarkable feature of the *Enquiry* is that the argument of 'perishing heathen' is never used."²⁴

Carey believed that the heathen were lost without Christ. He builds his arguments for missions, however, on positive ideas rather than on negative ones, which distinguishes him strongly from other methods of supporting missions.

Carey's Struggles for Social Change

Carey's involvement in the battle against social injustice was also an element of his missionary work, as well as in the *Enquiry*, as is evident in the texts already cited on religious freedom and the slave trade. These endeavors point to his Calvinist background, which considers possible the Christianization of a nation in ethical and social-political concerns.²⁵ Shortly after his arrival in India in 1802, he began an investigation on the commission of the governor into religious killings in Hindu India, and soon attained the prohibition of the ritual killing of children — babies were annually thrown into the Ganges once a year on the Island of Saugor.²⁶ After a lifelong battle, in 1826 he was able to obtain the prohibition of *sati*, the incineration of widows.²⁷ Both prohibitions were by and large successful.

Carey was just as outspoken in his opinions on slavery and the caste system, which he in no case wanted to allow within the church, even at the cost of advantages for his missionary efforts. In this point, he differed from the Halle-Danish mission and from the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge (SPCK), which retained the caste system even in the Lord's Supper. Carey insisted that the convert break with the system before being baptized. He wrote:

*Perhaps this is one of the greatest barriers to conversion with which the devil ever bound the children of men. This is my comfort, that God can break it.*²⁸

In this he was in harmony with his fellow workers. So Ward insisted that the missionaries would dig the graves for missionaries and other Europeans and, thus, did a job which was even forbidden for members of the lowest casts.

Carey's achievements in translating the Scripture and in preserving Indian languages, particularly his grammars, are uncontested. He aided in doubling the number of Bible translations in the eighteenth century from thirty to nearly sixty, and played a

major role in keeping these languages from dying out by making them written languages.

The team founded forty-five free schools with about 10,000 pupils of all social classes, the still extant Serampore College, and several newspapers in English and native languages to further the education of the Indian people. Serampore College, modeled on the universities of Copenhagen and Kiel, was India's first university.

Finally, through the Agricultural Society of India, founded in 1820, he did much to improve India's farming system. E. Daniel Potts writes, "Those who follow Colin Clark's lead in thinking that contributions to the development of India would ultimately be of far greater benefit than hand-to-mouth poor relief will applaud the advanced thinking of William Carey."²⁹

In 1993 many Indian linguists, scientists, historians, and theologians gathered for a jubilee symposium, emphasizing the great achievements of Carey for all branches of Indian society.

Carey and his colleagues were, however, no instruments of the colonial government. Their activities "led them to cooperate or, more often, conflict with the constituted authorities."³⁰

The *Enquiry* shows how Carey argued for native leadership, which aroused criticism not only in politics, but also in the church. In 1834, fifty missionaries (six Europeans, Anglo-Indians, and Indians) were working in Serampore with Carey's team of nineteen. The British General Baptists, in particular, criticized the Particular Baptists' preference for native workers, which hindered many good British missionaries from working in Serampore. Carey pled for the "modern" principle that missionaries should be able to make decisions independent of their mission boards, which led to the most difficult crisis of the Serampore mission station and to a temporary dissolution of the ties between the station and the mission board.



¹ Ralph D. Winter, Steven C. Hawthorne, ed., *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement* (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1981), 227-228. E. Daniels Potts, *British Baptist Missionaries in India 1793-1837: The History of Serampore and its Missions* (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1967), 5, criticizes this view.

² Edition used: William Carey, *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens* (London: The Carey Kingsgate Press, 1961).

³ Charles L. Chaney, *The Birth of Missions in America* (South Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1976), xi.

⁴ Gustav Warneck, "Zum Jubiläumsjahr der evangelischen Mission," *Allgemeine Missions-Zeitschrift* 19 (1892), 3-4. Warneck mentions Carey's predecessors, but considers their efforts private attempts, while Carey initiated the systematic spread of the evangelical faith. In Serampore, Carey and his team took over the work of the Herrnhuter missionaries, Schmidt and Grassmann, who began their work in 1777. Schmidt died twelve years later, the station was closed in 1787, and Grassmann returned to Europe in 1792; from A. Schillbach, "William Carey: Eine Jubiläumserinnerung," *Zeitschrift für Missionskunde und Religionswissenschaft* 7 (1892), 175-183, 219-227, and 8 (1893), 29-38. For a thorough comparison of the two positions, see Aalbertinus Hermen Oussoren, *William Carey, Especially his Missionary Principles*, Diss.: Freie Universitt Amsterdam (Leiden: A. W. Sijthoff, 1945), 219-269.

⁵ Mary Drewery, *William Carey* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979), 39. James R. Beck, *Dorothy Carey: A Biography* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979), 65-66. Gustav Warneck, "Zum Jubiläumsjahr der evangelischen Mission," *op. cit.*, 3.

⁶ R. Pierce Beaver, *All Love Excelling: American Protestant Women in World Mission* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1968), 15-17.

⁷ Aalbertinus Hermen Oussoren, *William Carey, Especially his Missionary Principles*, *op. cit.*, includes excellent historical discussion of his life, 19-121; E. Daniels Potts, *British Baptist Missionaries in India 1793-1837: The History of Serampore and its Missions*, (Cambridge: University Press, 1967), contains the most thorough work on Carey and the work of his team in India.

⁸ James R. Beck, *op. cit.* This work rises above the usual prejudices against Carey's marriage to an uneducated woman, for which one might find the following example: W. Bieder, "William Carey 1761-1834," *op. cit.*, 153-173. After the death of his first wife, Carey was happily married for 13 years (1807-1821) with the linguistically gifted Danin Charlotte Rumohr. His third wife, Grace Hughes, survived him. Both these marriages are little known. See also A. Christopher Smith, "William Carey," *op. cit.*, 248.

⁹ William Carey, *Enquiry*, 9.

¹⁰ *ibid.*, 9. See also James R. Beck, *Dorothy Carey*, *op. cit.*, 63.

¹¹ William Carey, *Enquiry*, 5.

¹² William Carey, *Enquiry*, 12.

¹³ See Johannes Calvin, *Unterricht in der christlichen Religion: Institutio Religionis Christianae* (Neukirchen, Germany, 1988), 129 (1st book, chapter 18 Kap, paragraph 4) and 234f; similarly Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, ed. by James T. Dennison, vol. 1 (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1992), 220-222; and Thomas Schirrmacher, *Ethik* Vol. 1 (Neuhausen, Germany: Hänssler, 1994), 723-732.

¹⁴ Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, Vol. 2 (1834/1974, repr. Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1992), 278-315. See also Peter Kawerau, *Amerika und die orientalischen Kirchen*, *op. cit.*, 72-73.

¹⁵ Carey, *Enquiry*, 79.

¹⁶*ibid.*, 79.

¹⁷*ibid.*, 80.

¹⁸See Brian Stanley, *The History of the Baptist Missionary Society 1792-1992*, *op. cit.*, 13 and Frank Deauville Walker, *William Carey*, *op. cit.*, 59.

¹⁹Carey, *Enquiry*, 78-79.

²⁰See W. O. Carver, *Missions in the Plan of the Ages*, *op. cit.*, 213-282; Iain Murray, *The Puritan Hope*, *op. cit.*, 93-103.

²¹Boston, 1748; printed in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, Vol. 2 (1834/1974; repr. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1992), 278-315.

²²*ibid.*, 49.

²³A. Christopher Smith, "The Edinburgh Connection: Between the Serampore Mission and Western Missiology," *Missiology: An International Review* 18 (1990) 2, 185-209.

²⁴Aalbertinus Hermen Oussoren, *William Carey, Especially his Missionary Principles*, *op. cit.*, 129.

²⁵Aalbertinus Hermen Oussoren, *William Carey, Especially His Missionary Principles*, *op. cit.*, 189-190.

²⁶E. Daniels Potts, *British Baptist Missionaries in India 1793-1837*, *op. cit.*, 141-144; Frank Deauville Walker, *William Carey*, *op. cit.*, 197-199; Basil Miller, *William Carey*, *op. cit.*, 93.

²⁷The most detailed study can be found in E. Daniel Potts, *British Baptist Missionaries in India 1793-1837*, *op. cit.*, 144-157. Texts by Carey are printed in Pearce Carey, *William Carey*, *op. cit.*, 170-173. Cf. Brian

Stanley, *The History of the Baptist Missionary Society 1792-1992*, *op. cit.*, 44-45; A. Schillbach, "William Carey als Bahnbrecher der evangelischen Mission," *op. cit.*, 181-182; Frank Deauville Walker, *William Carey*, *op. cit.*, 199-201; Basil Miller, *William Carey*, *op. cit.*, 137-138; Kellsye Finnie, *William Carey*, *op. cit.*, 141-143; James R. Beck, *Dorothy Carey*, *op. cit.*, 170-171; G. Schott, *William Carey, der Vater der gegenwärtigen Missionsbewegung*, *op. cit.*, 27-30.

²⁸William Carey's diary, quoted in Mary Drewery, *William Carey*, 79.

²⁹*ibid.*, 70-71.

³⁰*ibid.*, 169-204 describes the relationship to the colonial government in detail.



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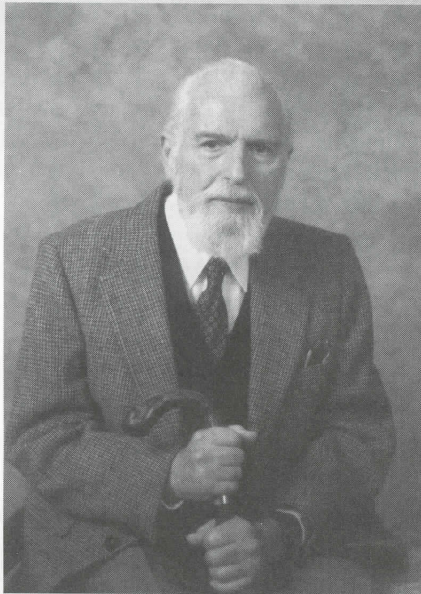
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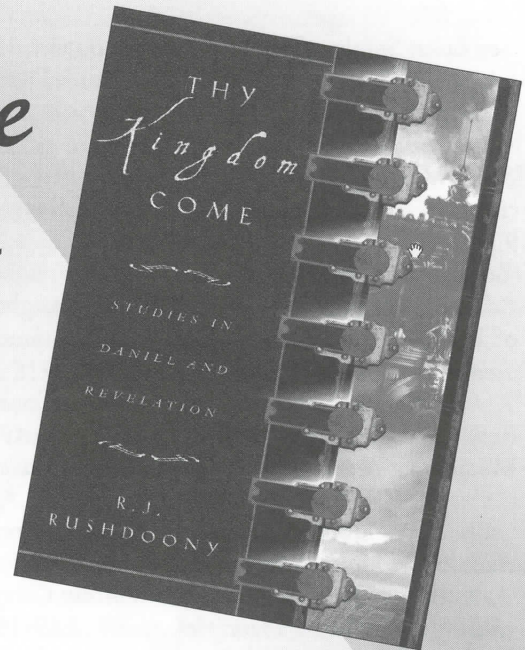
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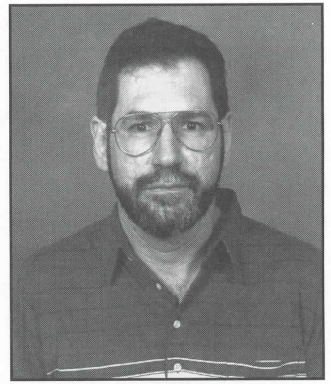
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Postmillennial Judgment

By Joseph P. Braswell



The judgment-scene Christ presents in Matthew 25:31-46 best fits a *postmillennial* view of eschatology. I mean this in two senses, with especial emphasis upon the second sense that will be explained below.

First, in contrast to premillennial interpretation, this judgment is not one which precedes the millennial kingdom — an order Christ will ostensibly establish after His return. It is, therefore, a postmillennial judgment in the sense that the Second Coming is postmillennial; it is postmillennial in the sense that the present (interadvental) age is the millennial period and this judgment occurs at the conclusion of this age (*ergo*, after the millennium). It is thus postmillennial in the sense in which amillennialists and postmillennialists agree among themselves, and over against premillennialists, in rejecting the idea of a future (postadvental) millennium.

Second, however, and chiefly, I mean that this judgment is postmillennial in contrast to how both amillennialists and premillennialists tend to view world conditions at the time of Christ's return. Far from a situation of widespread unbelief and wickedness (what amils and premils expect), there is reason to conclude from this depiction of judgment that the world has been impacted by the gospel and the nations have been discipled. My thesis is that the judgment portrayed in Matthew 25:31ff. deals exclusively with *covenant peoples* who are products of Christian families and cultures (and Christian education) and belong to confessionally orthodox Christian churches (are baptized and catechized), who worship Christ, (even, if, in some cases, only with their lips) and formally acknowledge Him as King of kings and Lord of lords (Ruler of the kings of the earth). The world Christ returns to is predominantly a *Christian* world, a world in which theonomy is the norm of societal practice and profession of Christian Faith is widespread — the cultural norm.

In this particular depiction of the Last Judgment, we have no mention of a resurrection of the dead. Far from picturing a raising to life of all who have ever lived throughout all the ages of mankind, no previous generations are brought into view here.

Rather, when the nations are gathered for judgment, it seems to be only the *living* — people who are alive at the time of the *parousia* — who are depicted as those assembled before the Son of Man.

This does not mean that this is an altogether different, separate event from the appearing of all Christians before “the Judgment-seat of Christ” or the appearance of all the dead before “the Great White Throne,” as dispensationalists insist. We are not to take all the details literally or read too much into the omissions, but we must instead understand the point Jesus intends in this image of judgment.¹ He addresses His *disciples* only, leaving others out of view as irrelevant to His main point in this specific issue-context. His purpose in Matthew 25:31ff. is to elaborate further upon the same point He has already made in the warnings, exhortations, and parables of judgment in the preceding context of this discourse (*Mt. 24:42-25:30*), and this single purpose controls His emphases and omissions — His manner of depiction. The overriding issue here is the faithful stewardship of the disciple-community, the readiness of those who call Him Lord to give an accounting of their service to Him. This is judgment of the *covenant* people, the historical household of Faith (the baptized, those who profess faith and are called by His name); it examines the worthiness of those within the empirical-historical, externally-covenanted community (the visible church) to enter the kingdom, gauging their suitability for eternal life according to the discharge of covenantal stewardship. It is a judgment exclusively focused upon those living at the time of the Second Coming, who are the *coram hominibus* numbered among the community of Christ's disciples (having the covenant signs and the Faith of the community) and continuing as members in good standing of the community. It is these heirs-apparent, not mankind in general, who are to be divided into sheep and goats, according to the works they have done — or have failed to do — in service to their professed Lord.

This is evident from the fact that even the “goats” call Him *Lord* (*v. 44*). This judgment-scene thus alludes back to the point Christ made in Matthew

7:21-23. Not everyone who calls Him Lord will enter the Kingdom, only those who do the will of the Father. In other ways these “goats” may have appeared to be disciples, doing much in Christ’s name, but they have not exercised a faithful and wise stewardship in bringing forth the works of righteousness that characterize genuine faith. Though they may have made what we would regard as a credible confession of faith, have been faithful in the assembling together of corporate worship, the “faith” they have is nevertheless found wanting, and Christ has never truly known them as His sheep. While they are not truly elect and regenerate, from a covenantal perspective they are not sinners and the ungodly (those outside the *visible* church); they are not covenantally counted as unbelievers or “of the world.” By all appearances — by appropriate, covenantal standards of outward identification with the people of God — they are Christians: products of the baptizing, discipling, teaching work of the church in fulfillment of the Great Commission. Though genuine fruit of the Spirit (*Gal. 5:22-23*) is present, these “goats” likely give evidence of some work of the Spirit short of regeneration within the covenant community (cf. *Heb. 6:4-5*). This judgment-scene deals with the separation of the tares from the wheat within the mixed company of the historical church alive on earth at the end of history.

Before proceeding further, it must here be emphasized that the parable of the wheat and tares (*Mt. 13:24-30*) does not speak of the *world* as a common field that is co-inhabited by both believers and unbelievers throughout this age. The parable is not concerned with the parallel growth of two cities — the City of God and the City of Man — in the world-at-large. The contrast of wheat to tares does not set *church* over against *world* (“world” in its ethical sense as world-in-rebellion or as the *Adamic* order). The tares are not the citizens of the historical City of Man, those outside the covenant and making no profession of faith. That the field is the world (*v. 38*) speaks simply of the dissemination of the disciple-community throughout the world, to the uttermost parts of the earth (extensive inclusiveness). The covenant people are not confined to Israel; it is a worldwide, *international* community. Thus, reference to the world does not take us outside the covenantal boundaries, beyond the church, to comprehend within its scope both societies in their historical expression as distinct communities. The parable is concerned only with the earthly-historical City of God, the visible church; it sees this covenantal community itself as a mixed company of both wheat and tares — genuine believers and counterfeits. Tares are within the church, not outside. Satan has planted false believers — counterfeit disciples — in the midst of God’s covenantal plantation, and the

mixture of true and false will characterize the church throughout this age, until Christ separates the real wheat from that which is spurious at the harvest-time. In view in Matthew 25:31ff. is the sifting of the disciple-community that is living at the time of Christ’s return.

Yet, it is *all nations* that are gathered to this intra-covenantal judgment. The gospel has been preached throughout the world before the end (*Mt. 24:14*). The Great Commission has been fulfilled, and the nations have been discipled, baptized, and instructed in the Lord’s commandments (*Mt. 28:19-20*). The obedience of faith among all nations has been secured by the proclamation of the gospel. These are *Christianized* nations, comprised of those who have formally professed faith in Christ and have received the covenant signs and *catechesis*. This is the postmillennial aspect of this depiction of judgment. Christ is not separating pagan, heathen unbelievers from Christians; He is rather discriminating among His servants, dividing the faithful from the unfaithful. The unregenerate He deals with here are not outward atheists and secular humanists, or idolaters, or Hindus and Muslims, etc.; they are outwardly (*i.e.*, at least *nominally*) Christian, the product of an extensive and intensive evangelical penetration of all societies and cultures that has stamped the nations with the Faith and has produced widespread (near-universal) external conformity to it. By this time, the knowledge of the Lord has covered the earth as the waters cover the sea and the leaven of the gospel has thoroughly infiltrated every culture.

We do not know the proportion of nominal disciples (goats) to the faithful (sheep), and we have no warrant from Matthew 25:31ff. for assuming that the former are in the majority. However, we can conclude from this passage that the nations are predominantly Christian in character at the time of Christ’s return, that judgment of the nations — far from being a judgment of predominantly ungodly peoples of manifest unbelief and rebellion — is to be a judgment that separates wheat from tares, a judgment that discriminates among peoples who are within the covenantal boundaries and are called by the name of the Lord. It is what a judgment by Christ of the members of your local church might be, only on a grander scale.

What then of the prediction of end-time (postmillennial) rebellion we find in Revelation 20:7-10? Where does this fit? Indeed, Matthew 24:36-41 expands the depiction of Second-Advental judgment-execution to include the destruction of the wicked (those who are overt unbelievers — apostates who have thrown off the covenant yoke).² Obviously, not everyone living at the end of history is within the scope of the covenant as a disciple in

outward appearance and form of life. There are rebels; there is a historical form of expression of the City of Man on earth at this time, a community marked by explicit unbelief and blasphemy. These rebels (and there seems to be a sizeable number of them) make an aborted attempt to overthrow the camp of the saints and reassert the historical dominance of the City of Man after long being suppressed by the cultural ascendancy of the City of God. Does this fact weigh against what has been said regarding Matthew 25:31ff.? Can we still speak of this passage as depicting postmillennial judgment of a *Christian* world? What explains the presence of rebels if the world has been Christianized prior to the end?

As postmillennialists, we believe that the gospel will be carried to the uttermost parts of the earth and bear miraculous fruit. The righteousness of God is revealed by means of the gospel, and we are instruments of that righteousness. The preaching by Christ's witnesses will be effective, and the kingdom will have a marked impact upon world-history, affecting nations and societies and cultures. The times of messianic woes — birth pangs of great tribulation and tumult — will pass, and the fruit of righteousness and peace will have social consequences as widespread cultural blessings of peace and prosperity. The world will not continue in a state of perpetual crisis, constantly disrupted by a series of disasters and catastrophes; it will not be continually disturbed by Sodom-like overt wickedness or the lawlessness of tyrants and their reigns of terror and warmongering. Conditions improve and stabilize as the effects of the gospel transform societies. The prevalence of Christian values serves as a check upon destabilizing and disintegrative forces in society and promotes true justice. Righteousness exalts nations and bears peaceable fruit. People can begin to lay aside their fears and worries, feel secure, and pursue their day-to-day lives in peace, enjoying a settled normalcy.

It is for this reason that we are warned by Christ in Matthew 24:42-25:30 against allowing the relative peace and safety of such a settled and undisturbed life to lull us to sleep. We must not grow negligent or slothful in praying "Thy Kingdom come" and "Come, Lord Jesus" in keeping our priorities straight concerning what is our blessed hope. The snare of peace and prosperity — fruits of the gospel's impact upon a culture — is that it can breed forgetfulness and complacency (cf. *Dt.* 8:6-20). Accordingly, many who are not themselves *personally* believers in Christ, but who nevertheless enjoy by covenantal common grace (as a living off of borrowed cultural capital) the socio-economic benefits of Christian civilization, will be wholly unprepared for that day of reckoning and will be called into account for not

wisely investing the talents entrusted to them as common-grace beneficiaries of a gospel-permeated, *Christianized* society. Divine beneficence and longsuffering that ought to have led to repentance, in the wake of hardhearted ingratitude and refusal to give glory to God, at last evokes the wrath of God and becomes the basis of a greater condemnation commensurate with the greater responsibility attending the magnitude of the covenantal blessings bestowed.

At the very end, Satan is loosed once more to deceive the nations³ and gather them to rebellion. However, he gathers them in a *figurative sense*, not geographically (into one location) or as a literal army mustered for physical battle. He unites the City of Man in spirit in a renewed *spiritual* struggle against the City of God. The City of Man emerges from the underground once more to assert openly its self-consciously anti-theistic agenda and challenge the City of God.

Revelation 20 gives no hint of a renewed persecution, of a new time of tribulation. The City of Man is gathered only to be suddenly and swiftly destroyed. It follows Satan only to plunge headlong to its own destruction; God has permitted it to be gathered under Satan to this end. Judgment consumes the rebels before they can wreak havoc upon the established order, before they can disrupt the peace or do any harm. Their offensive proves utterly futile because it is to be preempted by the *parousia*.

The *status quo* of peace and safety continues without war or violence or any notable disruption of the routines of ordinary life (*Mt.* 24: 37-39). The populace remains unaware of impending doom because there are no rumors of impending war,⁴ no disturbances of the peace by preparations for the sort of global conflict many "prophecy experts" associate with Armageddon. There are no signs that mass destruction may be imminent through a heightening of tensions that could plunge the nations into all-out warfare. No one is particularly worried; all is calm, and normalcy continues. This precludes any notion of a penultimate triumph of wickedness, a great tribulation, or an Armageddon. Indeed, the rallying cry of the City of Man is that of "peace and safety" before sudden destruction befalls (*1 Thes.* 5:2-3), for Satan has deceived the nations to turn in their heart from the Lord and deny in self-deception ("the lie" — *2 Thes.* 2:10-11) the true basis of the peace and prosperity that has been long enjoyed.

In this self-deception, the ungodly reassert the humanistic Babel-dream of the City of Man and thus repudiate the gospel-foundation of the latter-day culture. The City of God is thus *philosophically* opposed in a war of ideas, and the City of Man unsuccessfully seeks to claim the fruits of culture for

itself (c.f. *Dt. 8:7-20*) when, without warning, the crack of doom suddenly sounds to bring this revolt to naught before it can truly get underway. The wrath of man is exposed but not allowed to express itself in violence to the City of God, and the ungodly are consumed as chaff as Christ quickly returns to glorify His saints.

We do not know the relative size of the City of Man *vis a vis* the City of God. We cannot say which constitutes the majority at the time of the end. The proportionate strength of the City of Man is such that it constitutes a genuine threat to dominion of the City of God apart from divine intervention, and it is a growing movement, but this does not necessarily mean that it has greater numbers, that there are more rebels than disciples at the end. We simply cannot assign relative sizes to the two camps with anything like dogmatic certainty, but it is altogether unwarranted to think that the City of God has been reduced to but a remnant or “little flock” — a marginalized minority that is overwhelmed by the size of the opposition camp. If Satan’s time is indeed brief, and the rebellion is squelched quickly before any great reversal (the actual overthrow of the cultural dominance of the City of God) can occur, it is hardly likely that the rebels outnumber the disciples, that the former are anything more than a dedicated minority only beginning to gain strength and flex muscle before Christ comes in judgment.

If we view the end-time Satanic rebellion in this manner, we can sustain the interpretation of Matthew 25:31ff. that I have proposed. In Matthew’s sense of the nations as *the Gentile world*, the nations are largely Christian at the end of time, calling Jesus Lord. The Great Commission has met with tremendous success. The fact that there are more counterfeits within the covenant community (tares, goats) and some more virulent unbelievers outside the covenant (nations in Revelation’s sense) in no way mitigates against this interpretation.



¹ Jesus often speaks in graphic, picturesque figures that are not intended to be detailed, literal descriptions of states of affairs. He often, for illustrative purposes, borrows from the cultural stock of common and familiar apocalyptic imagery in order to paint His canvas or provide a set of props for the drama He presents with a storyteller’s flair. The manner of depiction sometimes contains exaggerations or employs details that are designed to establish suitable setting or that serve only as embellishments of emphasis to drive home His point. To interpret Him correctly, we need to be mainly concerned with the overall impression created by the whole scenario, a total picture that is controlled by the single point of exhortation or warning that He intends to illustrate and press upon His audience in an

evocative and provocative manner, not with a careful analysis of every single detail that treats these as literally intended bits of inside information or specific descriptions of what the future will be like. If we fail to do this we will inevitably find a passage like Matthew 25: 31ff. to be irreconcilable with a passage like 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17 or Revelation 20:11-15 and join the dispensationalists in positing multiple judgments. In Matthew 25:31ff., Jesus is not intending to present the whole of the general judgment, the order of its proceedings, the location of the action, nor even necessarily a description of what will actually happen in one particular part of it (how a portion of it will literally proceed). Such concerns miss the point, driving us to artificial attempts of harmonizing.

² This action of judgment-execution, occurring at the *parousia*, speaks of a consuming of the ungodly enemies that occurs *prior to* the scene of Matthew 25:31ff. The historical City of Man is totally removed from the scene before Christ sifts the wheat and the tares (sheep and goats). Those *taken* are those who fall under destructive judgment-action, who are taken away by the flood of outpoured wrath (*Mt. 24:37-39*). The “taking” is not a depiction of a rapture that delivers saints while leaving behind sinners for judgment. The manifestly ungodly sinners are out of the picture; those left behind are those who remain unscathed to stand in the intra-covenantal judgment of Matthew 25:31ff.

³ We must note that Matthew and Revelation each mean something different by “the nations.” In Matthew, the nations are to be understood in terms of that gospel universalism that does not restrict the scope of the New Covenant to Israel only. Israel is regarded as unbelieving and superseded by the church, and the church is commissioned to go out and disciple the nations, bringing many *Gentiles* from east and west to sit at table in the Kingdom. Thus, when Matthew 25:31 speaks of gathering the nations, they are gathered as that which was the mission-field of the gospel so that the fruit of evangelization can be harvested from among nations that have been disciplined according to the Great Commission. In contrast, Revelation portrays the antithesis between church and world (unbelieving world) under the image of the OT covenantal distinction between Israel and the nations. “Nations” stands for the ungodly, the sinners — those outside. Satan’s gathering of the nations against the camp of the saints (Zion) is his gathering of *unbelievers*.

⁴ Matthew 24: 4-35 deals with the destruction of Jerusalem in A. D. 70, not with events surrounding the Second Advent at the end of history.



The late Joseph P. Braswell did undergraduate and graduate work in philosophy at the University of South Florida, but his real interest was in theology and Biblical studies. He published several articles in various journals (including the Westminster Theological Journal, Journal of Christian Reconstruction, and the Chalcedon Report).

“Unconscious Postmillennialists”

By Richard Paul Edelman



The scene is still quite clear in my memory. It was in the spring of 1998, and I was driving home from the fundamentalist Baptist church that I was then attending. Kingsway, as this recently founded church called itself, took a militant premillennial stand, and believed firmly in the pretribulation rapture. For years I had had doubts about this position, as many of the books I had studied took the view that the church would have to endure part of the tribulation first in order to be purified. But a recent guest speaker had defended the pretribulation position very effectively, and so I determined to “go along with the crowd.”

During the ride home, I turned on the radio and began listening to a Christian station. A new song came on — one that I had never heard before, and have not heard since. With a strident pretribulation message, the song climaxed with its chorus, “The class of 2000 is getting ready to leave!” Allowing myself to be “caught up” (raptured?) by the stirring music, I looked forward with eager anticipation to the soon-coming solution to all my problems.

About three years have gone by since that incident, and I can say, thank God, that I now know that the eager anticipation that many have with regard to the rapture has more to do with a fleshly desire to escape one’s problems than with any true yearning to “be with the Lord.” I have come to see that it is anything but a godly response when one hopes to be whisked away in order to avoid the tribulation that may fall upon others. It is an understandable response in an immature Christian, but it should cause those who think they are mature to question themselves deeply as to why they are content — no, “enraptured” — to think of billions being “left behind” to be tormented and killed.

But there is an even more important issue. The pretribulation rapture scenario, as well as the larger dispensational premillennialism upon which it is founded, is simply not true. It is based on poor, sloppy Biblical scholarship, and is usually accepted by people who have simply had it passed on to them as though it were the only interpretation of proph-

ecy. Now, I shall not, in this brief article, attempt to present the case for godly Christian dominion on earth — that has already been done by qualified scholars, and doubtless most readers of this magazine are familiar with this view of eschatology. What I intend to present are a few brief anecdotes which should encourage us that the tide *is* turning! With the passing of the “critical year” 2000, without either the tribulation or the rapture occurring, people are moving, albeit unconsciously, toward an eschatology of optimism, victory, and dominion.

Take, for example, the pastor of my church. On paper, he is committed to premillennialism, and has expressed his view that pretribulationism is the most likely of the various rapture scenarios. He frequently alludes to the possibility of the “any-moment rapture.” But — and this is a big “but” — he also makes comments that indicate that he is moving in a new direction: the direction of victory and optimism.

Let me give just two examples. As we planned a Christian outreach for the festival held each December by the residents of our small village, our pastor urged us not to try to pressure people to be converted in “one fell swoop.” He said that it was more important to plant seeds, to build bridges, and to make contacts with the non-Christians in the community. The purpose, he said, was to begin a process of slow growth which, in thirty years, would make our church the most respected one in our community. Now, that kind of long-range planning may seem inconsistent with the preaching of one who accepts pretribulationism, but that is just the point! Many people are being led gently by the Holy Spirit to gradually “leave behind” their eschatologies of defeat. They could, perhaps, not continue to lead if they were forced, suddenly, to change their end-time views all at once. And many of those whom they teach probably could not cope with such a drastic change, either. Half-consciously, though, people are being led into a future-orientation.

Perhaps an even more striking example is a sermon preached by my same pastor recently on 2 Timothy 3

— long a favorite portion of end-times speculation. The problem for many is verse 9, which tells us that the schemes of evildoers during these “perilous times” will be foiled, “for their folly shall be manifest unto all men.” Now, if anything totally fails to correlate with the usual end-times scenario, it is verse 9. One would think that it might read, “their folly shall be manifest unto few, and they shall take over the world!” Now, the pastor did not point out this contradiction, but he went on to preach a message that could truly be called “dominionist.” He told us that we need not fear the evil around us, because the Spirit of Christ, living within us, has power over the devil and all those under his control. Thus, he went on, we can raise godly children in the midst of our corrupt society — hardly a message that goes along with the view that “Satan is alive and well on planet earth,” and that the Antichrist will soon set up his one-world government! Perhaps few in the congregation caught the significance just alluded to above, but seeds were planted — perhaps unconsciously — for the development of an optimistic eschatology of the victory of God’s church.

Another interesting development was pointed out to me by the head of the women’s ministry at my church. Her son-in-law is the pastor of a church that is moving, more consciously, toward a dominionist eschatology. This lady frequently visits her son-in-law’s church, and she reported that the younger people there are being energized by the vision that is being held out to them now. Earlier, before the move toward eschatological optimism, many of them felt that there was no point in getting involved with the world — after all, wasn’t all of human history about to come to an end? Now, however, they are learning that their “labour is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Cor. 15:58), and they are coming out of their indrawn attitudes.

Another interesting and encouraging anecdote concerns a letter I sent to a pretribulational radio preacher (David Jeremiah), confronting him for his praise of those who used to “pack” prophecy conferences. I pointed out to him that all the predictions had failed to materialize, presented the case for a preterist interpretation of prophecy, and challenged him to read R. J. Rushdoony’s *Institutes of Biblical Law*. The response was a generic, “sweetness and light” letter from his assistant. Dispensational premillennialists have no idea how to answer the dominionist challenge. They are unfamiliar with our arguments and cannot defend their collapsing house of cards.

There are many more examples that could be cited. The key point is that we have turned an important corner with the passing of the year 2000. This shift in eschatological views will continue,

especially (one hopes) as Christians recognize that the election of George W. Bush to replace Bill Clinton is a sign that the devil is not about to take over this country or the world. More importantly, dispensationalist exegesis of Matthew 24 requires that the generation referred to in verse 34 be taken to mean the generation that saw Israel reorganized as a state in 1948. All those who were adults at that time are now past their “threescore and ten” years. As this generation grows smaller in numbers, so will the numbers of those who still hold to this flawed understanding of prophecy. No doubt they will change the rules again, and say that the crucial date is 1967, when Israel re-took Jerusalem, but all they will be able to do is buy a little time. By the middle of this century, dispensationalism will be just about totally dead — but, long before then, its fatal illness will loosen its hold on millions of deceived Christians, who are even now being prepared for a shift in their outlooks.

Once this happens, we will find that an attitude of eschatological optimism produces an entirely different kind of Christian. For we are not simply talking about end-times theories, but about how one views God and His purposes. Does God bring people to salvation simply to enable them to avoid Hell, and to help a few others to do so ... or is redeemed man “summoned to create the society God requires” (Rushdoony, *Institutes*, Vol. 1, 4)? When millions of Christians complete this change in their worldview, they will devote their lives to building a Bible-based society, and establishing godly order in every area of human existence. They will then be bolstered by the certainty that “of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end” (Isa. 9:7), and they will in time make God’s enemies his footstool (Ps. 110:1). There will be no possibility of ultimate defeat for this army whose victory is guaranteed by Almighty God.

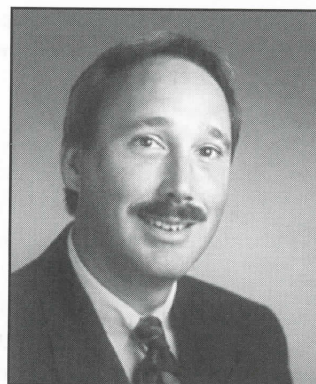


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The Financial Value of God's Law

Part One: Property Laws

By Rev. Craig R. Dumont, Sr.



"Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from Your law." Psalm 119:18

"Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day." Psalm 119:97

Psalms 119 has long been a favorite of mine and, the older I get, the more I understand the writer's infatuation with God's law. As God's grace has allowed me to mature in Christ, it seems as though every day a new revelation of "wondrous things" from God's law crystallizes and is manifested in such a way as to glorify God and embolden His people. In the midst of what many call a "post-modern" crisis in which we're told that there is no objective truth and everyone is free to make up his own "reality," the goodness, grace, mercy, and power of God and His eternal law become ever more conspicuous and irrefutable.

"Wondrous things from [God's] law" are so bright and glorious as to almost blind a person who sets his eyes upon the wealth of meticulously researched and painstakingly documented books that have unwittingly (and perhaps even unwillingly) declared that God is true and every rebellious way of man a lie. I couldn't move away from this realization as I recently read through two highly publicized and controversial books, *The Mystery of Capital: Why Capitalism Triumphs in The West And Fails Everywhere Else* by Hernando De Soto and *The Case For Marriage: Why Married People Are Happier, Healthier, And Better Off Financially* by Linda J. Waite and Maggie Gallagher. Both books, covering different topics with completely different goals, highlight the fact that if God's laws are adhered to, incredible financial benefits follow. In other words, there is a statistically measurable and unmistakably significant financial value inherent in God's law that lifts people out of poverty and despair and allows them to establish and expand their wealth, whether it is on a national scale, as De Soto proves, or at the individual level, as established by Waite and Gallagher.

De Soto is the President of the Institute for Liberty and Democracy in Peru and is one of the world's foremost economic thinkers. His book, *The Mystery of Capital*, while not extremely long (258 pages, including the appendix), is breathtaking in the sheer quantity and quality of research that was undertaken and then brilliantly interpreted through the author's analytical insights.

Before I get into the *specific* laws of God that *directly* produce wealth, let me mention a vital component of capital creation that De Soto identifies but fails to trace to its source; it is an aspect of the Christian Faith that has made direct application of law exponentially more profitable. While De Soto never speculates regarding the origins of what he comes to understand as indispensable for wealth (*i.e.*, capital) creation, he doesn't shy away from clearly articulating what lies otherwise unnoticed as a perquisite for all he spells out: Wealth, specifically in terms of capital formation, is first and foremost the result of the ability to conceptualize!

The genius of the West was to have created a system that allowed people to grasp with the mind values that human eyes could never see and to manipulate things that hands could never touch. Centuries ago, scholars speculated that we use the word "capital" (from the Latin for "head") because the head is where we hold the tools with which we create capital.... [C]apital has always been shrouded in mystery because, like energy, it can be discovered and managed only with the mind. (Emphasis mine.)

Credit the "genius of the West," or the ability to think conceptually to God's demand (encoded in law) that His people not create images to worship. As one writer has noted, the exclusion of images and the emphasis upon written law forced the Hebrews to rise above all other people and required conceptual thinking as an act of worship:

The Decalogue, the Second Commandment, prohibits the Israelites from making concrete images of anything. "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water beneath the earth." I wondered then, as so many others have, as to why the God of these people would have included instructions on how they were to symbolize, or not symbolize, their experience. It is a strange injunction to include as part of an ethical system unless its author assumed a connection between forms of human communication and the quality of a culture.... The God of the Jews was to exist in the Word and

through the Word, an unprecedented conception requiring the highest order of abstract thinking.¹
(Emphasis mine.)

This is true and, indeed, Christians as a regular part of their Faith are used to thinking conceptually in terms of the Trinity, Christ's two natures coexisting without confusion, atonement and reconciliation, and in many other areas.² Faith itself brings with it both the requirement and the ability to raise our level of thinking, for faith is "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Those things that are conceptualized are then communicated in such a way as to "allow people to grasp with the mind values that human eyes could never see and to manipulate things that hands could never touch."

For quite some time, I have been intrigued with the power of words, both written and spoken, and the incredible significance they hold in our daily life. In *The Death of Literature*, author Alvin Kernan points out that "words are not pale isolated things but magical in their ability to evoke, shape, control things.... Words work in the world, they make people rich and poor, happy and sad, wise and foolish, and what better proof can there be of their meaningfulness and power?" Kernan also notes that "words are the foe of reality" because of their ability to lift man above what is simply real into the sphere of what is true. Ruth Anshen, in her introduction to the book *Language and Thought*, goes as far as to state, "[W]ords are the ultimate symbols of ideas and that the power of life or death lies in the tongue. The word is power." So powerful are words that Wilhelm von Humboldt, a philosopher of language, stated, "We are human not because we have language but because we are language."

The West, from the rise of Christianity, but especially from the Reformation on, placed a premium upon words and conceptual thinking as opposed to images, and its development was based upon implementing written laws which governed their people and, therefore, avoided requiring people to bow before an arbitrary leader who symbolized god-man in Eastern thought.³ This led to the formation and formalization of an understandable system of order from which mutual trust could emerge and thrive.

So from the beginning of *The Mystery of Capital*, by uncovering and reporting on the indispensable aspect of conceptual thinking in the creation of wealthy nations, we find God's glory displayed. Thereafter De Soto moves to make sure it's not simply displayed, but unmistakably proclaimed!

Proceeding from this "conceptual order," the foundational evidence that De Soto uncovers is that the West is wealthy because it has developed extremely strong property rights laws, so much so that he states that, "If capitalism had a mind, it would be

located in the legal property system." One of the amazing statistics that he produces is that "[T]he total value of the real estate held but not legally owned by the poor of the Third World and former communist nations is at least \$9.3 trillion," or "as much as the total value of all the companies listed on the main stock exchanges of the world's twenty most developed countries." However holding, and even controlling property is not sufficient to unlock and unleash potential and create the capital needed to generate wealth! In other words, God is good to all, but because men and nations reject Him, the blessings He has placed in front of them have become an area of frustration and stagnation.

The problem is that "without formal [titled] property to extract their economic potential and convert it into a form that can be easily transported and controlled, the assets of developing and former communist countries are like water in a lake high in the Andes — untapped stock of potential energy." Without a doubt, concludes De Soto, these nations must provide legal titles to the people who are controlling the property in the extralegal system that has come to dominate all these economies.

Although many economists, philosophers, and politicians look to ground property rights in many different areas (or use those same areas to deny that property rights even exist), God's Word alone is the unchanging and authoritative source of law which demands the recognition of private property rights and their protection. For example, "natural law" varies from person-to-person and what is seen as "natural" to one is viewed as abnormal to another. Those looking to ground property rights in the authority of civil government find themselves sitting atop constantly shifting sand as political theory changes almost from election to election (or from coup to coup).

God's declaration that man is entitled by His law, a law which transcends all man-made laws, arguments, and philosophies, to own private property is highlighted by at least two of the Ten Commandments: the Eighth which says, "You shall not steal;" and the Tenth which strikes at the heart of the entire matter, "You shall not covet your neighbor's wife; and you shall not desire your neighbor's house, his field, his male servant, his female servant, his ox, his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor's." In addition to these two direct commands, God's law is further clarified when even as He commands "you shall not steal," He fleshes that command out, in terms of private property, by stating in Deuteronomy 19:14:

You shall not remove your neighbor's landmark, which the men of old have set, in your inheritance which you will inherit in the land that the Lord your God is giving you to possess.

It is reiterated and underscored in Deuteronomy 27:17; Proverbs 22:28; 23:10; and Job 24:2. We further see God's sovereign rule over property in the case of King Ahab, his evil wife, Jezebel, and Naboth, a man who owned a vineyard. While King Ahab and Jezebel schemed to illegally deprive Naboth of not only his property, but also his life, God cursed the King and his wife. Fiat law springing from political expediency or theory cannot trump God's eternal laws. The king is under the law, and the political realm or the arena of civil government ministry exists solely to enforce God's stated law and His law alone.

De Soto, through extensive research, establishes that a strong adherence to property rights not only protects a person's home, but also is a catalyst to further capital generation. While the author never connects this with Biblical law, the Christian clearly comes to an understanding that God graciously gives man the tools, "the ability to gain wealth," by establishing the right to own and make decisions concerning property. (That God can and does also grant wealth any other way He desires is readily acknowledged.) Unraveling the "mystery of capital," De Soto finds, requires submission to God's law dealing with property.

However when De Soto talks about "the legal property system," he is referring to far more than just the right of people to legally own property, as vital as that is. Indeed, protecting property is important, but it doesn't even close to suffice. What is required is that "both the security of ownership and that of transactions" must be present if a nation and its people are to prosper. This is true in the West, with an emphasis upon the *security of the transaction*. "Security is principally focused on producing trust in transactions so that people can more easily make their assets lead a parallel life as capital. In most developing countries, by contrast, the law and the official agencies are trapped by early colonial and Roman law, which tilt toward protecting ownership. They have become custodians of the wishes of the dead."

What De Soto means is this: Times change and so do circumstances. Legally maintaining an artificially sustained status quo means being trapped in the past and ensures underdevelopment, neglect, and poverty. Property that serves as farmland today may be much more valuable as a subdivision or industrial park tomorrow. Of course to create a subdivision (which means exactly that — a tract of land surveyed and divided into lots for purposes of sale) or industrial park, a person must be able to permanently transfer (sell) some or all of his property to others. A person must be able to divest himself of his property if he is ever even to conceive of that subdivision or industrial park and is to extract (from conceptualization) the most value from it and turn it into an asset that generates capital.

Property ownership is a crucial element of wealth creation, but it is not sufficient simply to protect property. Indeed, making property inalienable is counterproductive and leads to poverty. By eliminating the risk of forfeiting property by defaulting on a debt, no creditor will, for example, loan money to start or expand a business. Also, by permanently vesting property ownership with an individual or family, otherwise potential buyers will not waste their imagination in visualizing creative and productive future uses for a property that cannot be legally and completely transferred, or as the author pointedly writes:

[W]hat made this [formal property] stake meaningful was that it could be lost. A great part of the potential value of legal property is derived from the possibility of forfeiture. Consequently, a great deal of its power comes from the accountability it creates, from the constraints it imposes, the rules it spawns, and the sanctions it can apply. In allowing people to see the economic and social potential of assets, formal property changed the perception in advanced societies of not only the potential rewards of using assets but also the dangers. Legal property invited commitment.

The lack of legal property thus explains why citizens in developing and former communist nations cannot make profitable contracts with strangers, cannot get credit, insurance, or utilities services: They have no property to lose.

To facilitate the ability to transform property into capital, an entire law system must be in place, there must be adequate laws against fraud (enforcement of a system of just weights and measures), deception (You shall not bear false witness) and theft (You shall not steal):

As a result of integration [of many laws], citizens in advanced nations can obtain descriptions of the economic and social qualities of any available asset without having to see the asset itself. They no longer need to travel around the country to visit each and every owner and their neighbors: the formal property system lets them know what assets are available and what opportunities exist to create surplus value. Consequently, an asset's potential has become easier to evaluate and exchange, enhancing the production of capital.

... The Western emphasis upon security of transactions allows citizens to move large amounts of assets with very few transactions. How else can we explain that in developing and former communist nations people are still taking their pigs to market and trading them one at a time, as they have done for thousands of years, whereas in the West, traders take representations of their rights over pigs to the market?... They are able to make deals for huge quantities of pigs with little concern about the security of transactions.

The importance of the security of transactions also requires that covetousness be acknowledged and kept in check! Claims upon property must be limited to owners and any secured creditors, and boundaries clearly set forth excluding all others. In other words:

What are the effective means to exclude other claimants? In developing and former communist nations, such questions are difficult to answer. For most goods, there is no place where the answers are reliably fixed. That is why the sale or lease of a house may involve lengthy and cumbersome procedures of approval involving all the neighbors. (Emphasis mine.)

Rather than being some victimless subjective crime or “personal heart condition,” the coveting (controlling, manipulating — can anyone say “zoning boards?”) of neighbors’ property is not only an objective and tangible situation, but financially destructive as well.

De Soto clearly demonstrates the financial value of being able to do business on the basis of trust — a trust possible because laws exist and are enforced that require adequate and accurate representations. Along with government agencies which track and record all the transactions, many private entities undergird and further validate the law by guaranteeing the authenticity of the deals. These include escrow and closings organizations, abstractors, appraisers, title and fidelity insurance firms, mortgage brokers, trust services, title insurance companies (which cover involved parties for specified risks) and private custodians of documents.

Rather than being a drag on the economy, obedience to God’s law liberates man to realize and take full advantage of the assets he has before him. The bottom line is that a law-based nation spends its time in more productive ways than investigating in exhaustive detail every transaction. And a nation that accepts and integrates God’s full law system finds itself witnessing an exponential increase in wealth. “The effects of an integrated property process mean that Westerners’ houses no longer merely keep the rain and cold out. Endowed with representational existence, these houses can now lead a parallel life, doing *economic* things they could not have done before. A well-integrated legal property system in essence does two things: First, it tremendously reduces the costs of knowing the economic qualities of assets by representing them in a way that our senses can pick up quickly; and second, it facilitates the capacity to agree on how to use assets to create further production and increase the division of labor... The connection between capital and modern money runs through property,” and property must, if a nation hopes to escape “third-world” status, be governed by God’s unfailing law.

Hernando De Soto proves that when it comes to property, Biblical law is a beautiful law which clearly holds “wondrous things” for those whose eyes have been opened by the Spirit. Biblical law frees people from humanistic bondage and compels an obedient people to declare, “Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day.”

Next month — Part Two: The Financial Value Of Marriage Laws



¹ Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death*.

² For more on these subjects, see Rushdoony’s *One and the Many* and *The Foundations of Social Order*. Also see the section on Anselm and his thinking on the atonement and reconciliation in Harold J. Berman’s book, *Law and Revolution* (“The Legal Implications of the Doctrine of the Atonement,” 179).

³ For more on how Eastern thought and religious beliefs trapped people in stagnation and poverty, see *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations* by David S. Landes. His section on China concerning time and clocks is especially fascinating.



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