

The Word of Righteousness

The Millennial Age (2)

In eternity past God conceived His eternal purpose, and in time He is carrying it out according to His economical way and procedure. This economical operation of God began with creation and continued in His appearing to the patriarchs, the great men in the book of Genesis from Adam to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. God's operation was strengthened in His dealings with His covenanted people of the Old Testament, the nation of Israel, and it entered more fully into the organic realm of life in the church, His redeemed, regenerated, renewed, transformed, and ultimately glorified New Testament people. Following the glorious and visible return of Christ at the end of the church age, the work of God will reach its highest stage of accomplishment in the millennium, the thousand-year kingdom. At the end of the millennium, the heavens of the old creation will pass away, the earth and the works in it will be burned up, and new heavens and a new earth will be ushered in, in which righteousness will dwell (2 Pet. 3:10, 13). The center of the new heavens and new earth will be the New Jerusalem in eternity, the ultimate consummation of all God's work throughout the ages. In a general way, therefore, we may say that the universe is composed of three periods (Lee, *Life-study* 2594). The first period consists of the time before Adam, the preadamic age. The second period extends from Genesis 1:2 through the end of the coming millennium. This is the period of accomplishment, the time during which God accomplishes His eternal purpose (Eph. 1:9, 11; 3:11). The third period, the new heaven and the new earth with the New Jerusalem, will last for eternity (Rev. 21:1-2).

In the second period, the period of accomplishment between eternity past and eternity future, there also are three ages.¹ The first age, from God's creation of the heavens and the earth in Genesis 1:1 to the age of grace, is the age of the old creation. The old creation consists chiefly of our old man in Adam (Eph. 4:22), our natural being by birth. Thus, it does not have God's divine life and nature in it. Since, as to element and essence, only God Himself is new, His natural creation without His life and nature is old. In the age of the old creation, God operated in and through His earthly people, Israel, mostly in extrinsic ways that served as types, figures, and shadows of the realities yet to come. The second age, the age of grace, is the age of the new creation. Second Corinthians 5:17 says,

"If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old things have passed away; behold, they have become new." The new creation is the new man in Christ (Eph. 4:24), constituted of the believers, who are born of God and regenerated by the Spirit (John 1:12-13; 3:6), having God's life and nature wrought into them (vv. 15, 36; 2 Pet. 1:4) and having Christ as their inward and intrinsic organic constituent (Col. 3:10-11). Hence, the believers themselves are a new creation (Gal. 6:15), not according to the old nature of the flesh but according to the new nature of the divine life. In the age of grace, God is operating in and through His heavenly people, the church, intrinsically to produce the new creation in reality by saving sinners and perfecting the believers through the steps of His full, organic salvation (Rom. 5:10) unto the building up of the Body of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23; 4:16).

The third age—"the coming age" (Mark 10:30; Luke 18:30), "the age to come" (Heb. 6:5)—is the millennial age, the kingdom of one thousand years (Rev. 20:4-7), as the last and most crucial part of the accomplishment of God's eternal purpose. In this age the Lord will still accomplish many things, including the restoration of the fallen old creation, the restoration of Israel, the perfecting of the immature believers, the final testing of mankind, and the ultimate defeat of Satan. Since none of these items will be carried out to their full degree by the end of the church age, they await the millennial age for their completion. Then at the end of the coming age, and only then, will the work of God in His economy be ultimately consummated. Having put all His enemies under His feet, abolished all rule, authority, and power, and subjected all things to Himself, Christ will then deliver up the kingdom to His God and Father (1 Cor. 15:24-28), bringing in the eternal age in the new heavens and new earth with the New Jerusalem. In this article we will continue to present the truth concerning the millennium, the final age in the accomplishment of God's purpose, according to the light we have received from the Lord. Moreover, we will examine this truth in the light of the believers' accountability to Christ at His judgment seat (2 Cor. 5:10) and their consequent reward or punishment in the kingdom age.

The Augustinian Legacy of an Unscriptural Eschatology

In the previous installment of this department we saw that

the belief in and expectation of the Lord's appearance to bring in His kingdom of one thousand years was kept and taught by distinguished teachers of the early, post-apostolic times.² Philip Schaff notes that "the prominent chiliasm, or millennarianism, that is the belief of a visible reign of Christ in glory on earth with the risen saints for a thousand years, before the general resurrection and judgment," was the "most striking point in the eschatology of the ante-Nicene age" (*History* 614). This was the view of Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tertullian, and others. By the early third century, however, certain unenlightened men had begun to pervert the teaching of the millennium with an overly materialistic emphasis and even with sensual notions, as in the case of Cerinthus, the heretic. Because of this, the proper scriptural teaching was discredited and fell under opposition. Chief among the third-century opponents was Origen, who rejected the literal millennium not only on perceived moral grounds but as a natural part of his excessive and troubling allegorical method of interpreting both the Old and New Testaments.

The most decisive verdict was rendered by Augustine at the turn of the fifth century. He once held the opinion that the saints would rest and the glory of God would be displayed on the earth in a distinct age after the judgment but before the eternal age, as he expressed in "Sermon 259" with its definite millenarian tone. He later wrote, "This opinion would not be objectionable, if it were believed that the joys of the saints in that Sabbath shall be spiritual, and consequent on the presence of God," because by that time, the misspeaking of the persons mentioned above made the millennium appear to Augustine to consist of "immoderate carnal banquets" (719). In keeping with his moral hermeneutic that any Scripture should be interpreted symbolically if its literal understanding led to carnality, he reacted by composing a detailed exposition of Revelation 20:1-9, the chief millenarian text, that allegorizes almost every item in it, reducing the thousand-year kingdom to a mere picture of the present church age.

The eschatological formulation of late antiquity still lacked one crucial component. Both Origen and Augustine, like many early teachers in the church, believed that Christians who die in an impure, unsanctified, or unfaithful condition would enter into unbroken, eternal fellowship with God only after a period of disciplinary dealings, which if necessary would continue even after death, and in the worst case, not even begin until after death.³ Not willing to believe that this discipline would take place in the eternal age, and having denied an intermediate age after the church age and before eternity, Augustine was compelled to conjecture another world in which shortcoming believers are perfected through purgatorial punishments after death but during the present age. These speculations, which are clearly laid out in

The City of God and represent the presumably mature period of Augustine's thought, became the foundation for the teachings that would later become the Roman Catholic doctrine of purgatory. Thus, with Origen, Clement of Alexandria, and later Gregory the Great, Augustine is considered "the true father of purgatory" (Le Goff 61). Clouse notes that because of the changes wrought in the century of Constantine, "The time was ripe for a new eschatology to replace chiliasm" (*Manual* 80). This "new eschatology," due in great part to Augustine, was of two chief components. The first was the denial of a future, literal millennial reign of Christ, and the second was a belief in *tormenta purgatoria* for the saints in an unseen world after death. Thus, the Augustinian legacy of an alternative, unscriptural eschatology is the birth both of amillennialism and purgatory.

Medieval Modifications to Augustinian Amillennialism

The effect of the respective contributions of Origen,

Both Origen and Augustine believed that Christians who die in an impure, unsanctified, or unfaithful condition would enter into unbroken, eternal fellowship with God only after a period of disciplinary dealings. These speculations became the foundation for the teachings that would later become the Roman Catholic doctrine of purgatory.

Constantine, and Augustine on millenarian thought was decisive. Two additional contemporary events hindered any hope for a recovery of the apostolic and post-apostolic teaching of the millennium. First, the barbarian invasions of Rome brought to an end the classical period of learning, and since the teachings that survived this turn of history were largely those of Augustine, adopted by his follower Gregory the Great, these became the foundation of medieval belief. Second, the Pelagian controversy once again focused the attention of the church on more fundamental Christological issues. As a result, the fifth and later centuries produced no more great exponents of a literal future millennium, and Augustinian thought—including his eschatology, despite the weakness of his exegesis of Revelation 20—became the dominant theology of the ensuing Middle Ages and the received orthodoxy for centuries to come.

Over the next few hundred years, however, the Augustinian concept of the millennium was modified in

at least two basic ways. The first modification concerned the dating of the millennium. As to the actual start and end of the thousand years, Augustine had been ambivalent, offering two possible interpretations. First, he conjectured that the events of Revelation 20 would take place “in the sixth thousand of years or sixth millennium (the latter part of which is now passing), as if during the sixth day” (720). This is a fairly literal interpretation of the thousand years, using the analogy of the six days of creation suggested by the account in Genesis 1:2-31 and 2 Peter 3:8, which says, “With the Lord one day is like a thousand years and a thousand years like one day.” However, since he used the Jewish system of dating adopted by the Septuagint, Augustine believed that the sixth millennium had already begun and was mostly passed. Although Augustine was too faithful to the Lord’s word to attempt to set a date for His return (665; Acts 1:7), Oswald T. Allis calculates that Augustine’s chronology could be understood to predict the end of the millennium two and a half centuries later:

Living in the first half of the first millennium of the Church’s history, Augustine naturally took the 1000 years of Rev. xx. literally; and he expected the second advent to take place at the end of that period. But since he somewhat inconsistently identified the millennium with what then remained of the sixth chiliad of human history, he believed that this period might end about A.D. 650. (3)

Clearly, that date did not prove to be accurate. Augustine had also suggested that the thousand years of Revelation 20 referred to the duration of the present age. Again, whether or not he had in mind a literal figure, it was not beyond the medieval mind to take it as such, and since the first coming of Christ served as a rational starting point of the thousand years, Christendom looked to the year A.D. 1000 for the fulfillment of all the events of the end time—the Lord’s return, the defeat of Antichrist, the resurrection, the judgment, and the commencement of the eternal age. The great expectation for the year 1000 was not due simply to the impressive roundness or completion attributed to such a figure; it was a direct consequence of Augustinian amillennialism. However, when this fateful year did not fulfill expectation, the date was moved to 1033, dating from the death and resurrection of Christ, and at least once again to 1065, since March 25 of that year marked the coincidence of Good Friday and the Day of the Annunciation.⁴ Clearly, these too were disappointments. As D. H. Kromminga notes,

Two at least of the three possibilities which Augustine had left open for interpreting Rev. 20 and its millennium had become antiquated. The millennium had proven to be not coextensive with the Christian period of the sixth millennium of human history nor with the whole of that millennium of history. (117)

This is very important, because it determined which part of Augustine’s interpretation would survive into the later Middle Ages. Although Augustine had reduced the millennium of Revelation 20 to allegorical symbols, his teaching was still received at first in a kind of historical way, seeing the millennium as an actual period of time having already begun or soon to begin in the course of the church age.⁵ However, because of the failure of the end-time prophecies around the year 1000, the medieval interpretation of the Scriptures lost much of its apocalyptic zeal, flavor, and imagery, and the kingdom of God began to be equated simply with the present, visible church, a thought for which Augustine had laid the groundwork. This was a second, more significant adjustment to the prevailing Augustinian thought. Stanley Grenz and David Wright conclude,

In keeping with this outlook, church theologians gave little attention to predictions concerning the end of the age and a future golden era on earth. The dominant eschatology was a modified Augustinianism that linked the institutional church to the kingdom of God. (Grenz 45)

This interpretation, coupled with his emphasis on the church as the kingdom, led to notions that Augustine could not have envisaged: in the Middle Ages, the church was viewed as the place where God’s rule was exercised on earth through a papal monarch. (Wright 15)

Augustine had opened the door for such misuse by his allegorization of Revelation 20:4, in which he interpreted the “thrones” of the overcoming martyrs as signifying the positions held by the hierarchy in the church (726). In the mainstream of church doctrine, the expectation of a distinct thousand-year reign of Christ on the earth was now lost, and in its place was the visible, present Catholic Church of the Middle Ages, which viewed Augustine’s “millennium,” the kingdom of God, as splendid cathedrals of stone and reigns of popes. Both developments of the Middle Ages—the false setting of dates for the end of the age and the strengthening of the temporal power of the visible Catholic Church—were further deviations from the truth of the Scriptures, and both were fed by the errors of the Augustinian amillennial system.

The Failure of a Recovery of Scriptural Eschatology in the Reformation

At the time of the Reformation, Christian eschatology had little interest in the historical consummation of the age. It was, instead, concerned mainly with the future status of individuals with respect to death, heaven, hell, and purgatory. The great revelations that God gave to Martin Luther and the Reformers did not require an advance in eschatology, and they certainly did not seem to

require further light concerning the thousand-year kingdom. *Sola fide* and *sola scriptura* related primarily to the individual's salvation and conscience in following the Lord outside of Roman Catholicism. In this sense, the Reformation focused on the spiritual realities in the present time and had room only for "individual eschatology." Luther himself considered the book of Revelation to have little value, and he was not even convinced of its divine inspiration: "Because its interpretation is uncertain and its meaning hidden, we, too, have let it alone hitherto, especially since some of the ancient Fathers held the opinion that it was not the work of St. John, the Apostle" (480).⁶ The only help he could glean from Revelation was in a historical interpretation that culminates in the battle between the gospel and the papacy. The thousand years of chapter 20, he taught, were simply the first millennium of church history in which the Turks and Jews had been restrained, but those years were long over by Luther's time. This was the only application he could find for Revelation, without which the book was of no use to him.

John Calvin likewise saw no place for a literal millennium, and in fact he seems to have thoroughly misunderstood and misrepresented its teaching. In defense of the resurrection unto eternal life, he writes,

A little later there followed the chiliasts, who limited the reign of Christ to a thousand years. Now their fiction is too childish either to need or to be worth a refutation. And the Apocalypse, from which they undoubtedly drew a pretext for their error, does not support them. For the number "one thousand" [Rev. 20:4-7] does not apply to the eternal blessedness of the church but only to the various disturbances that awaited the church, while still toiling on earth. On the contrary, all Scripture proclaims that there will be no end to the blessedness of the elect or the punishment of the wicked...If their blessedness is to have an end, then Christ's Kingdom, on whose firmness it depends, is but temporary. (21:995-996)

As is clear from the above, Calvin's notion of the thousand years is that they replace the eternal age, the age without end. This idea of his is surprising, since no proponent of the literal, future millennium spoke of it in those terms. Contrary to Calvin's misunderstanding, the proper teaching of the millennium does not limit the reign of Christ to one thousand years. Rather, it teaches that Christ's inward and hidden rule in the saints during the church age will be extended and consummated by His outward reign over all the nations on earth. Moreover, the future millennium does not stand in contrast to the eternal blessedness of the saints, as if to assign an end to that glorious state at the completion of the thousand years. Since Calvin's repugnance of this teaching does not correspond to any serious interpretation of the millennium,

we may simply conclude that he had little interest in the subject and directed his attention to other matters. As we shall see shortly, this disdain of an important scriptural teaching was a shortcoming and a failure on the part of the Reformers.

Misunderstanding the Events at the End of the Age

The major components of Reformed Augustinian eschatology can be understood by the interpretation of Revelation 20 in *The City of God*, Book 20.² The first tenet of this belief is that the kingdom of God is both fulfilled in the church today and consummated in the coming age. When Jesus began His earthly ministry, He announced, "The kingdom of the heavens has drawn near" (Matt. 4:17). He told the Pharisees, "If I, by the Spirit of God, cast out the demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you," and, "Behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you" (12:28; Luke 17:21). Paul told the Colossians that the Father has "delivered us out

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of the authority of darkness and transferred [μετέστησεν, aorist] us into the kingdom of the Son of His love" (Col. 1:13), and he exhorted the believers to enter into the kingdom of God through many tribulations (Acts 14:22). Likewise, John was a fellow partaker "in the tribulation and kingdom and endurance in Jesus" (Rev. 1:9). Moreover, the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, which are enjoyed by the believers in the proper church life today (Rom. 14:17). We affirm this truth—not as amillennial but as the revelation of the New Testament. The historic premillennialist George Eldon Ladd distinguished between the present fulfillment of the kingdom in this age and its eschatological consummation in the age to come:

The Kingdom of God is the redemptive reign of God dynamically active...This Kingdom, which will appear as an apocalyptic act at the end of the age, has already come into human history in the person and in the mission of

Jesus...The Kingdom of God involves two great moments: fulfillment within history, and consummation at the end of history. (218)

From this point, though, we will state some of the other major claims of Reformed Augustinian amillennialism and point out their flaws. Although space does not allow anything near a thorough or even treatment of these issues, a few representative arguments should suffice to demonstrate the errors of this system. First, amillennialism claims that the coming of the kingdom in its full manifestation will follow Christ's appearing, the resurrection of all the dead, and the final judgment nearly simultaneously with no intervening millennial reign of Christ on the earth. A common text used to illustrate this sequence is Matthew 13:37-43, which says that the wheat and the tares continue together until the consummation of the present age. Then at the time of the Lord's coming, the tares will be collected and cast into the furnace of fire, and the righteous will shine forth like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. According to the amillennial interpretation, this means that the manifestation of the kingdom occurs at the time of the judgment at the great white throne of Revelation 20:11-15; thus, there is no intervening age between the two events.

The flaw in this understanding, however, is that the judgment of the tares is not that of Revelation 20. The kingdom of the heavens was established with the "sons of the kingdom" (Matt. 13:38), the regenerated believers; however, Satan, the evil one, has planted many false believers in the world alongside the genuine ones, forming the outward appearance of the kingdom, which today is called Christendom. The Lord will allow the wheat and the tares to grow together in the world until the end of this age. Then the first two persons to be cast into the lake of fire will be Antichrist and the false prophet, after the battle at Armageddon (Rev. 19:20). Following them, the tares, the false believers, will be cast into the lake of fire at the time of the Lord's coming back. This will be a special and particular judgment upon them, because they have confused, frustrated, and damaged God's economy. There will be no need for them to pass through the judgment at the great white throne. Following this, the Lord will set up His throne, the throne of David in Jerusalem (Luke 1:32-33; Matt. 19:28; Jer. 3:17), to judge the Gentiles who remain alive at His coming, and afterward He will reign on the earth together with the overcoming saints in the thousand-year kingdom. At the end of the millennium, the unbelieving dead will be resurrected to stand before the great white throne of judgment; this is the "resurrection of judgment" in John 5:29. This brief chronology serves to illustrate that Matthew 13 should not be interpreted to confuse the judgment of the tares before the millennium with that of the unbelieving dead after the thousand years.

An Absurd "Millennium" in the Present Evil Age

The amillennial teaching asserts that the symbolic thousand years began with the Lord's first coming and represent the entire church age up to His second coming. This requires, among other things, the thought that Satan has been bound for the entire New Testament age. Revelation 20:2 and 3 say,

He laid hold of the dragon, the ancient serpent, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years and cast him into the abyss and shut it and sealed it over him, that he might not deceive the nations any longer until the thousand years were completed.

The New Testament speaks of the disposition of the devil in several ways. In Matthew 12:29 the Lord said, "How can anyone enter into the house of the strong man and plunder his goods unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will thoroughly plunder his house." The house here signifies the kingdom of Satan, the strong man is Satan, the evil one, and the goods are the fallen people, who are under Satan as his vessels, his instruments, for his use. According to the context of the chapter, when the Lord cast out demons, He first bound Satan. In like manner, when preaching the gospel of the kingdom for the deliverance of fallen people (Col. 1:13; Acts 26:18), the believers must first pray to bind Satan. Hebrews 2:14 also tells us that the Lord partook of blood and flesh that through death He might "destroy him who has the might of death, that is, the devil."

However, the Bible also warns us, "Be sober; watch. Your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking someone to devour" (1 Pet. 5:8). According to the context of 1 Peter, to watch is to be vigilant as in warfare, particularly against the anxiety that the enemy brings in while the believers suffer persecution. *Walks about* indicates the devil's constant and aggressive activity, according to his scheme to destroy men, and *seeking* warns the believers of the danger of being devoured by God's adversary. During the church age, Satan is also the accuser of the brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night (Rev. 12:10). Up to the present time, the evil one is still carrying out this pernicious work, as he did at the time of Job and Joshua (Job 1:9; 2:4-5; Zech. 3:1-2). The Lord called Satan the "ruler of the world" (John 14:30), and Paul tells us that our wrestling is "against the rulers, against the authorities, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenlies" (Eph. 6:12). *World-ruler* is κοσμοκράτωρ, "a ruler of the whole world, a world-lord" (Vine 989). The world-rulers are the rebellious angels, who followed Satan in his rebellion against God and who now rule, not in the abyss but in the heavenlies, over the nations of the world—such as the prince of Persia and the

prince of Greece (Javan) in Daniel 10:20. To be sure, we receive by faith the sentence of destruction that has been proclaimed against Satan, and we fight the spiritual warfare by putting on the whole armor of God. However, to claim that in the present age Satan is fundamentally bound and shut up in an abyss is against the plain revelation and clear warning of the New Testament. Kim Riddlebarger hedges and defends the amillennial position by saying,

With the first advent of Jesus Christ and the coming of his kingdom, Satan was, in some sense, bound from the beginning of our Lord's messianic ministry...It does not mean that all Satanic operations cease during the millennial age...The binding of Satan simply means that Satan cannot deceive the nations until he is released at the end of the millennial age...He cannot deceive God's people *en masse* nor can he attack the covenant community with relative impunity as he did before the coming of the Messiah...The angel restrains Satan's evil activities. His binding does not eliminate them. (210-212)

Even this ameliorated statement is difficult to juxtapose with the actual history of the church. If we take *en masse* to mean "in great numbers" or "to the greatest extent," we may easily argue that for many periods of history the church lay in darkness and decline, and God's people were indeed deceived *en masse*, as when all who were in Asia turned away from Paul's ministry (2 Tim. 1:15), and as when the Bible was locked up and kept from people in the dark centuries of the Middle Ages. Throughout history the covenant community has suffered grievous attacks from God's enemy, with or without impunity. It is beyond reason to consider the condition of the "present evil age" (Gal. 1:4), the "crooked and perverted generation" (Phil. 2:15), and the history of degraded and apostate Christendom and still maintain that the church has, for these past twenty centuries, lived and reigned with Christ during a glorious "millennium." A much more adequate and realistic interpretation of "bound him for a thousand years" and "not deceive the nations" is necessary to make the Reformed teaching seem other than peculiar, or even absurd. Nathaniel West concludes,

The absurdity of this view is seen in this that it makes the Millennial reign on earth, which begins with our Lord's Return, to be that of His Sojourn in Heaven, a Millennium during which the bodies of God's saints are still under the empire of death, and the "Times of the Gentiles" are still running on; times of affliction and woe, and God-opposed world power! Israel is still nationally cast away, and in their national grave. The Colossus of Gentile power still stands erect on Israel's prostrate form. The Apostasy is still deepening, the Tares yet ripening among the Wheat. Antichrist is still undestroyed, the Nations, as Nations, are still raging, the whole tide of

church-corruption, false philosophy, false science, swelling to its height; a millennium of boundless ambition, avarice, and lust of military conquest in the name of religion and missions, intemperance, oppression and crime of every sort, heresies and schisms of gigantic character, wars, dragonnades, and inquisitions, persecutions pagan and papal; Satan's own; a millennium begun by devoting the Apostles to the axe, Christians to the lions and the flame, and sending John to Patmos, as a prisoner for the truth and testimony of Jesus, to write his great Apocalypse! (273)

Characteristics of the Biblical Millennium

In contrast, the characteristics of the thousand-year reign of Christ revealed in the Scriptures are altogether different from the situation of the anti-God world and degraded religion, including apostate Christendom, of the present age. In the millennium, Satan will be bound in fact, not merely "in some sense." He will no longer be a world-lord,

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nor will he walk about seeking someone to devour. Rather, he will be cast into the abyss, and his power over men and nations will be broken (Rev. 20:1-3; Isa. 14:15; Ezek. 28:8, 17). Moreover, Antichrist's kingdom as the culmination of human government throughout human history will be overthrown and crushed (Rev. 19:20-21; Dan. 2:34-35, 44).

All the nations of the world will become Christ's inheritance, and the limits of the earth will be His possession (Psa. 2:6, 8-9; Dan. 7:14, 27; Rev. 11:15; 19:15). The nation of Israel will be gathered together and restored, and her apostasy will be cleansed in righteousness and holiness (Matt. 24:31; Isa. 11:12; Matt. 17:11; 19:28; Acts 3:21; Rom. 11:26; Isa. 4:2-6; Zech. 14:20-21). At that time, Christ will sit upon the throne of David, taking the house of Jacob—the nation of Israel—as the center of His reign, through which He will rule over the entire world as His kingdom (Isa. 9:7; Jer. 23:5-6; Mark 11:10; Luke 1:32-33; Acts 1:6; 15:16), and He will reign in righteousness and

justice by coming like showers to water the people of the earth, causing all the nations to be rained on by Christ and to be happy under His dominion (Psa. 72). This is not the condition of the present age.

During the thousand years, the overcoming believers will shine forth like the sun in the kingdom of their Father, they will share Christ's authority over the nations, and they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years (Matt. 13:43; Rev. 2:26-27; 20:6). All the nations will go up from year to year to Jerusalem to entreat the favor of Jehovah, and the repentant Jews who are regenerated through the new covenant will be priests to care for them, teaching them to know God's way and God's person, teaching them to serve and worship Him, and bringing them into the presence of God that they may be enlightened, corrected, and favored with all the riches of God (Zech. 8:20-23; 14:16; Isa. 2:2-3; 61:6).

Universal peace will prevail in righteousness, and there will be no more war (2:4; Micah 4:3; Zech. 9:10). Moreover, everything cursed through the fall of man will be restored, delivering the old creation from the poisonous element of Satan and resulting in a pleasant, peaceful, and loving situation (Matt. 28:19; Acts 3:12; Isa. 11:1-10; 30:26; 65:20-25); such things will not be miraculous but rather normal and common. Clearly, neither the earth nor the church has experienced such glories at any point in the present age, needless to say for any duration that we may call a "thousand years." The present-age millennium envisioned by Augustine can be seen in history only by the most oblique allegorization that denies the real situation in this age.

Nevertheless, the view of a strictly symbolic millennium was adapted by the Reformation without change, and the emphasis of eschatology remained on the "last things" of the individual. In a brief summary of Reformation eschatology, John R. Franke concludes,

Luther and Calvin challenged the Catholic church on many key teachings—but not on the doctrine of last things...Beginning with Martin Luther's 95 *Theses*, the major Reformers challenged many medieval church doctrines, but with eschatology, they seemed mostly satisfied with this traditional emphasis and teaching. (20)

The exception to this statement, of course, is the complete rejection of Augustine's purgatory by the Reformers. Where the heretical Roman Catholic tradition impinged upon the truth of redemption and satisfaction for sins by the blood of Christ alone, Calvin could never remain aloof, so he condemned this "deadly fiction of Satan" to the fullest degree (20:676). However, this was the only improvement of the Reformation in the field of eschatology. Augustine's denial of a future millennium as an age for

the final completion of God's economy contributed to his need to speculate on an other-worldly place of purgatorial torments. Because of this, adherence to the Augustinian formula of amillennialism was a shortcoming and failure on the part of the Reformation.

As Charles Ryrie points out, "Protestantism has never fully recovered from the eschatology of the Roman Catholic church as it was developed during the Middle Ages" (*Basis* 30). That the same great teachers who vehemently condemned Augustine's teaching of purgatory should have thoroughly accepted and propagated his teaching of the symbolic non-millennium is a testimony that the Reformation left the work of the recovery of biblical truth still unfinished. This failure should be considered as a fulfillment of the Lord's word to the church in Sardis: "I have found none of your works completed before My God" (Rev. 3:2).

Church Reform, Apocalyptic Fantasies, and the Seeds of Postmillennialism

John Walvoord notes that "postmillennialism arose partly from the success and partly from the failure of the Augustinian view" (20). Even as the medieval church sought to maintain Augustinian amillennialism, the appeal of a glorious, thousand-year reign of Christ and His saints was not lost at the popular, unofficial level. It was in the Middle Ages that speculative theories of the millennial kingdom began to demonstrate their dynamic capacity for change and adaptation according to then present historical developments. These appeared, for example, in the Sibylline Oracles, the collection of apocryphal, poetic prophecies that dated back to early Jews and Christians.

New editions of the Oracles were constantly modified to recast the characters of Revelation in the persons and events of the Middle Ages. Such apocryphal prophecies frequently promised the reuniting of the Eastern and Western Empires, the defeat of the Saracens and Turks, the defeat of the northern pagans (Goths and Scandinavians, presumed to be Gog and Magog), and the conversion of the Jews. They also commonly spoke of coming powerful emperors who would bring in a glorious Christian rule for a century or more, inevitably followed by Antichrist, who would be defeated at the coming of the Lord Jesus. Because this peculiar, extrabiblical form of millennialism typically promised a golden era for the saints prior to the coming of Antichrist and the Lord Jesus, it may be considered as the first seed of postmillennialism, the teaching that the glorious reign of Christ with His saints on the earth for a thousand years (literal or figurative) would precede Christ's second coming.

The greatest break with traditional Augustinian eschatology was the application of this new, popular millennialism

to church reform. Augustine had argued very effectively that the church in the present age is the visible kingdom of God, and this view was held for many centuries. By the end of the early Middle Ages, however, the formal, institutional church had suffered so much corruption that some felt it no longer possible to call it the kingdom. To this segment of Christian thinkers, the kingdom seemed once again to be something in the future, and the way to attain it was through church reform. Thus, the later Middle Ages saw a resurgence of millennialism, but this new hope was clearly practical, not apocalyptic, in the context of the present age, not the one to come. It was born from highly fanciful and apocryphal prophecies and emperor myths, on the one hand, and by the growing consciousness of the decline of the church, on the other. As we shall see, however, the expectation of a golden era of universal victory for the church prior to the Lord's return does not match the biblical revelation of the nature of the present age.

This early postmillennial thought received a theological expression through Joachim of Fiore, a late twelfth-century Cistercian abbot, who is called the "fountainhead of much of the millenarian thinking of the Middle Ages" (Grenz 47). Joachim defined three main periods of history, corresponding to the three of the Divine Trinity: the period of the Father, the period of the Son, and the period of the Spirit. The latter, commencing in A.D. 1260, would be the consummation of the kingdom of God, in which the church would enter into a new spiritual order of monastic contemplation, the Latin and Greek churches would be reunited, the Jews would be converted, and a time of universal joy and knowledge of the Lord would be ushered in. The expectation of a golden age of the Holy Spirit prior to the coming of Christ, despite its peculiar and apocryphal formulation, is a clear forerunner of modern postmillennialism. Even if Joachim's trinitarian division of history was no longer taken seriously after the fourteenth century, his expectation of "a glorious final Church Age, brought about through the ordinary operation of the Word and the Spirit" remains the basic paradigm behind postmillennialism until today (Kromminga 132).

The Puritan Revision of Millenarianism

The strongest development of postmillennial teaching was that of the English and American Puritans of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The first important and influential English revision of the Augustinian concept after the Reformation was made by the Calvinist preacher, Thomas Brightman. His *Commentary on Revelation*, published in 1615, sets forth a historicist interpretation of Revelation. He saw the seven epistles of chapters 2 and 3 as representing seven periods of the church, from its beginning to the then present day. The seven seals and seven trumpets of chapters 4 through 11,

and the first three bowls in chapter 16, all represented completed historical events. Only the last four bowls remained to be executed, which Brightman said would bring, respectively, the increase of God's word, the destruction of Rome, the conversion of the Jews, and the destruction of the papacy and the Turks. He applied further historical interpretations to the events of Revelation 20, by which he calculated a future, latter-day glory of the saints on the earth and the full conversion of the Jews, to be followed directly by Christ's second coming. This was a significant deviation from the Augustinian position, especially in that it reflected an optimistic view of the last period of world history with Jerusalem at the center of a converted Jewish nation and a world filled with the knowledge of God, all before the coming of Christ (Toon 26-31).

Similarly, John Owen—Dean of Christ Church, Oxford, and chaplain to Oliver Cromwell—expected the latter-day glory to come soon upon events already transpiring in

The later Middle Ages saw a resurgence of millennialism, born from highly fanciful and apocryphal prophecies and emperor myths and by the growing consciousness of the decline of the church. Its expectation of a golden era of universal victory for the church prior to the Lord's return, however, does not match the biblical revelation of the nature of the present age.

his own century. The forthcoming time of "Zion's glory" would include peace, the spread of the gospel, the conversion of the Jews, purity in worship, the subduing of all God's enemies, and the nations of the world becoming the kingdom of our Lord and His Christ (Toon 39; Rev. 11:15). Likewise, Daniel Whitby of Salisbury wrote that the nations would be converted, the Jews restored, and the papacy defeated in a thousand-year golden age of universal peace and righteousness. All these things, they believed, would be accomplished "in this world," that is, before the second coming of Christ, as stated in the Savoy Declaration of 1658:

We expect that in the latter days, Antichrist being destroyed, the Jews called, and the adversaries of the kingdom of his dear Son broken, the churches of Christ being enlarged and edified through a free and plentiful communication of light and grace, shall enjoy in this world a more quiet, peaceable, and glorious condition than they have enjoyed. (Schaff, *Creeds* 723)

The hope for the pre-advent latter glory was brought to the English colonies in the New World with the immigration of the Puritans. Both in old and New England, John Cotton's sermons on Revelation followed on a similar line as Brightman's. Cotton saw chapter 20 as referring to the condition of the godly on the earth after papal power in religion and politics is destroyed. The first resurrection involves the reformation of the church (vv. 4-5), and the martyrs are powerful ministers of the word whose preaching would result in the world being freed from satanic influence, signified by the binding of Satan for a thousand years (v. 2). Like Brightman, he expected the millennium to enter the world through a universal preaching in the power of the Holy Spirit, as a precondition for the coming of Christ. Millenarian expectations flourished in America during the revivals of the Great Awakening in the 1730s and '40s. Jonathan Edwards, the most notable preacher of that time, optimistically wrote,

It is not unlikely that this work of God's Spirit, so extraordinary and wonderful, is the dawning, or, at least, a prelude of that glorious work of God, so often foretold in Scripture, which, in the progress and issue of it, shall renew the world of mankind...We cannot reasonably think otherwise, than that the beginning of this great work of God must be near. And there are many things that make it probable that this work will begin in *America*...It gives us more abundant reason to hope that what is now seen in *America*, and especially in *New England*, may prove the dawn of that glorious day. (381, 383)

The kingdom, Edwards believed, would not be established at the visible coming of Christ. It would advance gradually in the present age with the increase of the practical rule of Christ in man and society. Moreover, it would bring great light and knowledge, holiness, worldwide peace and love, and even temporal prosperity:

Such a spiritual state as we have just described, has a natural tendency to health and long life...to procure ease, quietness, pleasantness, and cheerfulness of mind, also wealth, and a great increase of children; as is intimated in Zech. viii. 5. (610)

Postmillennial optimism, not only for the church but also for American society, dominated American Protestantism into the nineteenth century, eventually going so far as to provide a theological justification for Christian involvement in many social issues, such as the antislavery and temperance movements (Grenz 58).⁷

The Postmillennial Denial of the Nature of the Present Age

As we consider modern postmillennialism, we can point

out the deficiency in this view, which has been systematized in the writings of James H. Snowden, Charles Hodge, Augustus Hopkins Strong, Benjamin Warfield, David Brown, and Loraine Boettner, among others. Strong's statement is characteristic of these teachers:

Through the preaching of the gospel in all the world, the kingdom of Christ is steadily to enlarge its boundaries, until Jews and Gentiles alike become possessed of its blessings, and a millennial period is introduced in which Christianity generally prevails throughout the earth... This millennial blessedness and dominion is prior to the second advent...Under special influence of the Holy Ghost, the spirit of the martyrs shall appear again, true religion be greatly quickened and revived, and the members of Christ's churches become so conscious of their strength in Christ that they shall, to an extent unknown before, triumph over the powers of evil both within and without. (1008-1013)

Thus, the future millennium is a "golden age of spiritual prosperity during this present dispensation, that is, during the Church age," in which, "Christian principles will be the rule, not the exception," after which "Christ will return to a truly Christianized world" (Boettner 14). This view appropriates all the prophecies in both the Old and New Testaments concerning Christ's universal rule over the nations as occurring, eventually, in the church age. In particular, Revelation 19:11-21 is seen as the struggle between the forces of good and evil for the duration of the present age. The emphasis of this system, therefore, is the belief in the ultimate victory of the gospel to bring all the nations to Christ. The advancement of the gospel will be such that "the saved shall far outnumber the lost," and "those whose name are not written [in the book of life] are the exceptional—we may even say, rare—cases" (35). It is not necessary for the purposes of this article to debate the proportions of the multitudes of the redeemed and of the enemies of Christ (Rev. 7:9; Joel 3:13-14). It is needful only to demonstrate that postmillennialism, in general, confuses the things of the present age with those of the age to come. The errors of this teaching can then be judged by that criterion.

The postmillennial system centers around the belief that the present age is, or is becoming, a golden one. Boettner says, "Today we are living in an era that is relatively golden as compared with the first century of the Christian era," plainly contending, "the world is growing better...We live in the day of advancing victory...Before Christ comes again we shall see a Christianized world" (33, 38). As signs of this inevitable progress, he cites advances in evangelistic and missionary activity and the widespread publication of the Bible. Surprisingly, though, he also eagerly points to improvements in

political freedoms, social and economic conditions, the status of women and children, medical care, miracle drugs, health and sanitation, advances of science, international goodwill, and increased giving for foreign aid. He justifies this by explaining, "The great material prosperity of which the Bible speaks as accompanying the millennial era will be, to a large extent, the natural result of the high moral and spiritual life of that time." He sees this by-product of moral and spiritual prosperity already characteristic of the "partially Christianized" nations, that is, of the Protestant portions of Europe and America. It is these enlightened countries, he contends, that lead the world in transportation, electronics, radio, television, and atomic power (38-49, 51-52), which he presumes to be further signs of the advancement of the gospel. Speaking of the material, intellectual, ethical, and social advance of human civilization, Snowden says, "All this is the coming of Jesus Christ into the world and the development of his kingdom" (262). Such a presumption, however, is a gross failure to discern the condition of the age of man from the advance of God's move.

We must emphasize that Snowden and Boettner do not speak for the liberal, humanistic school of pseudo-millennialism, and it is shallow and unfair of critics to accuse all postmillennialists of being secular and utopian. Like all evangelicals, they condemn the non-Christian program of human betterment through mere social works. However, this causes their lack of discernment to be all the more surprising, and even dismaying. Paul told the Philippians, "That you may be blameless and guileless, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverted generation, among whom you shine as luminaries in the world" (2:15). *World* here is κόσμος, the satanic world system, the dark, corrupted world, which is usurped by Satan, the "ruler of this world" (John 12:31). First John 5:19 tells us that "the whole world lies in the evil one." God created man to live on the earth for the fulfillment of His purpose, but His enemy, Satan, in order to usurp the God-created man, formed an anti-God world system on this earth by systematizing men with religion, culture, education, industry, commerce, entertainment, and even the indulgence in necessities for their living, such as food, clothing, housing, and transportation. All these things find their consummation in the material Babylon prophesied in Revelation 18, which deals in the cargo of ornaments, clothing, furniture and decorations, spices, food, transportation, and employment (vv. 11-13). Nevertheless, the abundance of these things is considered, in the postmillennial system, to be a sure sign of the present advance of the gospel in the power of the Spirit.

The best interpretations of the four great beasts of Daniel 7 identify them as the four historic empires rising from the Mediterranean Sea ("the Great Sea," v. 2): Babylon, Medo-

Persia, Greece, and Rome. Out of the fourth beast, ten nations will arise (the "ten horns," v. 24; Rev. 17:12) to constitute the kingdom of Antichrist in the end times. Because of this, we may conclude that material Babylon will find its greatest advancement and consummation in Europe, particularly in its commercially enriched nations. Thus, it is altogether contrary to the biblical revelation, both of the nature and of the consummation of the present age, to gauge the progress of the gospel by the material, economic, and cultural advancement in "the Protestant nations of western Europe and in the United States" (Boettner 53). The prophecies of the Old Testament clearly foretell a golden and prosperous age of Christ's reign over the nations. However, these cannot be fulfilled as long as Satan is the "god of this age" (2 Cor. 4:4) and human government is a beast in the eyes of God. Rather, they will be manifested in the restoration of the old creation in the millennial kingdom (Matt. 19:28), according to "the powers of the age to come" (Heb. 6:5), not by human social and scientific prowess, and they will be characterized by

God created man for the fulfillment of His purpose, but Satan formed an anti-God world system by systematizing men with religion, culture, education, industry, commerce, and entertainment. In the postmillennial system, however, the abundance of these things is considered to be a sure sign of the present advance of the gospel in the power of the Spirit.

righteousness, not by the elements and traffic of Babylonian commerce.

An Unreasonably Deferred Millennial Kingdom

To illustrate the steady improvement of the world as a by-product of the spread of the gospel, Boettner asserts, "International incidents which only a few years ago would have resulted in wars are now usually settled by arbitration" (39). Writing in 1957, his optimism is naïve and startling, for perhaps in no other century than his own were the evils of human nature, government, and society so horrifically manifested, and to the greatest degree these evils occurred in the so-called Christianized nations of the world.⁸ No teacher of postmillennialism can remain credible unless he admits that the golden era of the reign of Christ has not yet begun. To accommodate this fact, Boettner admits, "Several more centuries, perhaps even millenniums, may be required" for the gradual, normal work of the Spirit to produce a Christian world

(45). “There is no substantial ground for assuming that the end is near,” he claims; “the world...may, for all we know, continue another 2,000 or 200,000 years” (135-136). This is not Boettner’s feeling alone. Snowden says similarly,

The kingdom of God has plenty of time ahead of it...Both the earth and man will probably continue for another hundred million years...We find in the Scriptures clear intimations and indications that the second coming of Christ with the end of the world is yet a long way off...It will take millenniums for the gospel to leaven the whole mass of humanity...Vast vistas of time stretch out before it in which our world will develop its resources and man will grow into maturity...We have good grounds, then, for believing that the end of the world, with its attendant events of the second coming of Christ, the general resurrection and the final judgment, is yet a very remote event. (78-81)

However, this is not how the original teachers of this view saw it. The Puritans of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries framed this system based on a firm hope that the latter-day glory of the saints would soon dawn. The Reformation, the deposing of Charles I, Cromwell’s Commonwealth, and the Great Awakening in America were all interpreted as significant landmarks to signal the imminent overthrow of Antichrist and the bringing in of the kingdom. Those founders of modern postmillennialism were not insensible of setbacks, but they in no wise postponed the kingdom beyond the foreseeable future. The teaching of an extremely deferred kingdom violates the pristine, though inaccurate, hope of the Puritans, and it is not according to the pattern of the Scriptures.

Boettner asserts that the turn to the millennium will “follow the law of all of the other great periods in the history of the Church” (59), but nowhere yet in the history of the move of God among man can we see a “law” that allows for a two-hundred-thousand-year church age. Such a claim is the last appeal of the failed postmillennial hope, exposing that this teaching is so tarnished by its inability to match the realities of the present age that it must adapt and transform itself in an unreasonable way. Moreover, contrary to its claim of an optimistic belief in the power of the gospel and the work of the Spirit, the remotely distant millennium postpones the full reign of Christ indefinitely and extremely. This too does not follow any “law” of Scripture.

The true nature of the church age is revealed in several passages in the New Testament. In Matthew 5:4 the Lord told His disciples, “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.” The Lord’s call to mourn matches the condition of this age:

The entire situation of the world is negative toward God’s economy. Satan, sin, self, darkness, and worldliness predominate among all people on earth. God’s glory is insulted, Christ is rejected, the Holy Spirit is frustrated, the church is desolate, self is corrupt, and the whole world is evil. God wants us to mourn over such a situation. (Recovery Version, note 1)

In many more words could we describe the fallen state of the world, as well as the apostate condition of Christendom, that will progress alongside the church until the end of the age (Matt. 24:37-39; Luke 18:8; 21:25-26; 2 Thes. 2:3-12; 2 Tim. 3:1-7; Rev. 2:4-5, 13-16, 20-23; 3:1-3, 15-17). Concerning the wheat (the children of the kingdom) and the tares (the false believers), the Lord said, “Let both grow together until the harvest” (Matt. 13:30). This indicates that both kinds will not only remain until the “consummation of the age” (v. 39) but will even flourish and grow to maturity. West affirms,

Blind to the fact that the inward corruption of the Church keeps pace with her outward expansion,...[the postmillennial teaching] remains a stranger to the truth that the End-Time will reveal these two contradictory facts as concurrent, viz. the deepening of apostasy and the extension of the gospel, enormous missionary activity, and enormous departures from the truth. (278)

Postmillennialists call this pessimistic, an impotent and futile presentation of the gospel (Boettner 29), but it can hardly be more pessimistic than waiting innumerable millennia for the full manifestation of the kingdom, as some of their teachers propose. The Lord’s word in Matthew 24:4-13 is a further prophecy of the condition on earth from Christ’s ascension to the consummation of the age. In this passage the Lord spoke of false Christs, nation rising up against nation, famines, earthquakes, the believers being delivered up to tribulation and death, the nations hating the believers, false prophets, multiplied lawlessness, and the love of many growing cold. Nevertheless, as this dark age progresses, the gospel of the kingdom will also be preached (v. 14), sinners saved, believers edified and perfected, and the overcomers matured in life to build up the Body of Christ and prepare the bride of Christ for His soon coming. Then when Christ returns, the overcoming saints from all the ages will participate in the uttermost enjoyment of Christ and the glorious reign with Him as their reward in the thousand-year kingdom on the earth. This will be the true sign of the power of the gospel and the work of the Holy Spirit in the church age.

The Beginnings of the Recovery of the Truth among the Puritans

It is sometimes the claim of critics that the teaching of

the coming of Christ to establish a thousand-year reign on the earth is a new or recent introduction. Rather, this teaching is in the category of recovered truth, scriptural truth taught by the apostles and held in the early church, which was lost in the degradation of the church but discovered anew in subsequent centuries by the Lord's faithful seekers. Ryrie points out, "Premillennialism was certainly the faith of the Church centuries before the Brethren and Darby" (*Basis* 33). Citing the fresh light from the Scriptures received by Luther and Calvin as examples, he concludes, "Discovery and refinement of doctrine does not mean at all that such doctrine is extra-Biblical" (18). Calvin himself defended his teaching from those who called it "novelty":

I do not at all doubt that it is new to them...That it has lain long unknown and buried is the fault of man's impiety. Now when it is restored to us by God's goodness, its claim to antiquity ought to be admitted at least by right of recovery. (20:15-16)

In this principle of recovery, we can begin to find the premillennial expectation of a thousand-year reign of Christ on the earth among a few notable teachers in the seventeenth century, such as Johann Alsted, a leading German theologian who contributed prominently to the victory of the Calvinists at the Synod of Dort in 1618. Like others at his time, Alsted interpreted the elements of Revelation according to the progress of world history. His *Diatribes de Mille Annis Apocalypticis* was an important foundational work in premillennialism after the Reformation. According to a literal interpretation of Revelation 20:4 and 5, Alsted taught that the martyrs of Christ would be resurrected bodily before the thousand years to reign on the earth with Christ as a reward, but the rest of the dead would take part in a second physical resurrection after the millennium (Clouse, "Rebirth" 48; Faust 371-372). Joseph Mede is considered to be the first English Puritan millenarian, and his *The Key to the Revelation* was highly influential in the recovery of the premillennial interpretation of Revelation in the English-speaking world. He clearly saw the thousand-year kingdom as literal, bounded by two bodily resurrections:

The seventh Trumpet, with the whole space of 1000 years thereto appertaining, [signifies] the great Day of Judgment, circumscribed within two resurrections, beginning at the judgment of Antichrist, as the morning of that day, and continuing during the space of 1000 years granted to new Jerusalem (the Spouse of Christ), upon this Earth, till the universal resurrection and judgment of all the dead. (Clouse, "Rebirth" 59)

The belief in the literal millennium was, he wrote, "The opinion of the whole orthodox Christian church in the age immediately following St. John" (Taylor 107). Like

Alsted, he also taught that the thousand-year kingdom would be a reward enjoyed not by all Christians but only by the overcoming believers, the martyrs of Revelation 20:4:

As they suffered with Christ in the time of his patience, so should they be glorified with Him in the reign of his victory before the universal resurrection of all...These *saints of the first resurrection should reign here on earth in the new Jerusalem* in a state of beatitude and glory partaking of the divine presence and vision of Christ their king. (168, 171)

William Twisse, James Usher, and Thomas Goodwin also followed or adapted the premillennial teachings of Alsted and Mede, as did other leading figures in the Westminster Assembly. The work of Mede was also used by many English writers, intellectuals, and lecturers in the seventeenth century, including John Milton, Isaac Newton, Samuel Hartlib, and Henry More, and they

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exercised much influence over Congregational and Independent ministers in England and Wales. In America, the premillennial coming of Christ was affirmed by Increase Mather, Cotton Mather, and many of their contemporaries. The younger Mather wrote,

It is well known, that in the earliest of the primitive times the faithful did, in a literal sense, believe the "second coming" of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the rising and the reigning of the saints with Him, a thousand years *before*, the rest of the dead live again...The doctrine of the Millennium *is truth*. (Peters 541-542)

A Further Recovery of the Truth through the Brethren

At least by the beginning of the seventeenth century, many Reformed Protestants were becoming increasingly assured that the true sense of many portions of Scripture was their plain, literal meaning. By the middle of that century, a renewed study of Hebrew and the prophecies

of the Old Testament revived an interest among the Puritans concerning the condition and disposition of the Jews. Even earlier than this, the 1557 and 1560 editions of the Geneva Bible included notes on Romans 11 explaining that *Israel* referred to the nation of the Jews, not to the church in the allegorical sense taught by Calvin. Based on the literal interpretation of Scripture and the hope for the future of Israel, many Puritans began to expect not only the salvation of the Jews in the end times but also the restoration of the nation of Israel.

Later, the world events of the early nineteenth century, such as the French Revolution and Napoleon's occupation of Rome and capture of Pius VII, stirred students of the Bible to reconsider the end-time prophecies of Daniel and Revelation. This renewed interest in prophecy and the future of Israel was compounded with the belief in the premillennial coming of Christ to provide the basis for the dispensational understanding of the Bible, which was systematized by John Darby and the Brethren. According to this scheme, the history of God with man is divided into dispensations, distinct periods of time for the operation of God according to His specific revelation. Darby identified the millennium as a distinct dispensation of one thousand years after the second coming of Christ and before the general resurrection and judgment.

Darby's dispensationalism was received and taught by many notable teachers, including A. T. Pierson, William Kelly, W. H. Griffith Thomas, Harry Ironside, Arno Gaebelein, and R. A. Torrey. It was also confirmed in later-nineteenth-century Bible conferences on prophecy, such as the Niagara Bible Conference of 1878, and it became the staple of the Bible institute movement in America. The most influential means for the dissemination of this teaching is The Scofield Reference Bible, which was first published in 1909. Moreover, it was upon these truths that nineteenth and twentieth century writers built to further elucidate the kingdom as a time of reward for the overcoming believers and discipline for the defeated ones. These teachers include Robert Govett, G. H. Lang, and D. M. Panton. Since the time of Darby and the Brethren, the belief in the future, literal millennium entered into the mainstream of Christian understanding. This was truly an item of the Lord's recovery of lost truths that began with the Reformation.

Dispensationalism and the Unique Economy of God for His Unique Goal

Nevertheless, we must avoid misunderstanding by pointing out that we cannot affirm the entirety of the teaching of dispensationalism, which is troubled by a number of factors that have ensnared the truth of the millennium in doctrinal difficulties and unnecessary controversy.

Specifically, dispensationalism teaches that God maintains two separate economies for the church and for Israel. Darby lays the groundwork for the sharp distinction between Israel and the church by stating that all Old Testament prophecies concerning Israel are for the earthly Israel only, not the heavenly church by any extension of allegory:

Prophecy applies itself properly to the earth; its object is not heaven. It was about things that were to happen on the earth; and the not seeing this has misled the church...The privilege of the church is to have its portion in the heavenly places; and later blessings will be shed forth upon the earthly people. The church is something altogether apart—a kind of heavenly economy, during the rejection of the earthly people. (376)

By itself, this statement may be acceptable; the church is truly heavenly (Eph. 2:6), and its blessings, present and future, are not material. However, the development of this thought leads clearly to an extreme conclusion:

The dispensationalist believes that throughout the ages God is pursuing two distinct purposes: one related to the earth with earthly people and earthly objectives involved, while the other is related to heaven with heavenly people and heavenly objectives involved. (Chafer 448)

Two separate economies of God, says Ryrie, is the *sine qua non* of dispensationalism (*Dispensationalism* 39). Israel fulfills "a purpose of God peculiarly for them," while the church has "its own divine purpose and destiny" (Walvoord 223-224), being merely a parenthesis, an intercalation, in the true economy of God, which centers instead around national Israel as the kingdom of God. As such, the church is "a separate purpose of God" (247), "not fulfilling or advancing the program of events revealed in the Old Testament" (231). It is "wholly unforeseen and is wholly unrelated to any divine purpose which precedes it or which follows it" (*Dispensationalism* 150). Thus, although the church will have its secondary place in the millennium, the primary focus of that dispensation will be the theocratic kingdom, the reestablishment of the political and racial nation of Israel, which will then be "the central vehicle of the manifestation of God's grace in the millennial kingdom" (Walvoord 136).

Ryrie says that this sharp distinction between Israel and the church must be maintained *consistently*. According to Walvoord, this means that the two parallel economies of God will abide even into *eternity*: "Israel will continue as a nation and will be dealt with as a nation by God. Israel's distinct place and promises are apparently eternal" (157). Lewis Sperry Chafer asserts this more strongly, concluding that Judaism and Christianity, both as viable religions, each have their respective and eternal future hopes:

Though Judaism and Christianity have much in common, they never merge the one into the other. Having each its own eschatology reaching on into eternity, any attempt to fuse these two systems in the interests of a mere idealistic unity of the Scriptures is doomed to fail...The Word of God distinguishes...between God's consistent and eternal earthly purpose, which is the substance of Judaism; and His consistent and eternal heavenly purpose which is the substance of Christianity, and it is as illogical and fanciful to contend that Judaism and Christianity ever merge as it would be to contend that heaven and earth cease to exist as separate spheres. (410)

In addition, Darby taught that the new covenant, as mentioned both in the Old and New Testaments, belongs to earthly Israel alone, but Ryrie proposes two new covenants, one for Israel and one for the church, which are "distinct and not merged into one" (*Dispensationalism* 174). According to this view, these distinct and unmergeable covenants eventually result in two brides for the Triune God. In his note on Hosea 2:2, Scofield says,

Israel is described as the wife of the Lord...This relationship is not to be confounded with that of the Church to Christ (Jn. 3:29). In the mystery of the divine Trinity both are true...Israel is, then, to be the restored and forgiven wife of the Lord; the Church is the virgin wife of the Lamb...Israel will be the Lord's earthly wife (ch. 2:23); the Church, the Lamb's heavenly bride (Rev. 19:7). (920)

We believe that the extremities of dispensationalism, which we have mentioned here in part, are not consistent with the revelation of the church as the unique, eternal purpose of God (Eph. 3:11). Moreover, the notions of two eternal and unmergeable purposes, economies, covenants, people, and brides of the Triune God are an unreasonable stretch of biblical interpretation, resulting in a confusion not only of the purpose and economy of God but eventually of the Triune God Himself. We plainly concur that the Bible speaks in distinct terms concerning the remnant of Israel that will repent and be saved at the end of the great tribulation and enter into the millennium as priests to the nations in the earthly section of the manifestation of the kingdom. However, any distinction of the roles of the glorified saints and the saved remnant of Israel during the millennium will be temporary for that dispensation only. Eventually, all of God's work of the new creation in all the dispensations within the old creation will consummate in the one, unique New Jerusalem, the universal incorporation of the union and mingling of divinity with redeemed, transformed, and glorified humanity. As such, the New Jerusalem is the union and mingling of all God's redeemed through all the ages of the forefathers, the law,

grace, and the kingdom with the processed and consummated Triune God. It is composed of all the Old Testament saints, signified by the names of the twelve tribes on the gates of the New Jerusalem, and the New Testament saints, signified by the names of the twelve apostles on its foundations (Rev. 21:12, 14), for the mutual dwelling of God and man and His enlargement and expression for eternity.

After the conclusion of the dispensation of grace, God will change for the last time the way of His work of the new creation on the man of the old creation. He will set up His kingdom on earth (11:15) to carry out His administration, and by His absolute righteousness He will bring to a conclusion the different kinds of people among the human race, that He may accomplish His work of the new creation in the old creation. In this dispensation God, according to His righteousness, will use the manifestation of the kingdom of the heavens to reward the just men perfected in the old testament and the over-

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coming believers in Christ in the new testament that they may participate in Christ's kingship and joy. Moreover, according to His righteousness, God will perfect the immature believers in the new testament (in a place apart) and also will deal with all the Israelites who repent and believe in Christ at His coming back, causing them to become constituents of the new race in His new creation. Thus, God will complete the work of the new creation on the man of the old creation, a work that will produce and perfect a new race. Therefore, as the aggregate of the result of God's work of the new creation in all the dispensations within the old creation, the processed Triune God and the transformed tripartite man will be mingled as one to be a mutual dwelling place for His ultimate expression in eternity (Lee, *Life-study* 2693-2694).

Dealing with Negative Matters in the Millennium

As we mentioned at the beginning of this article, the second period of the universe is the period of

accomplishment, the time during which God accomplishes His eternal purpose. The second coming of the Lord Jesus will not end this period of accomplishment, because the old heaven and old earth will continue for another thousand years after the Lord's coming back. During the thousand years, the old heaven and old earth will remain in existence. At most, the millennium will be a time of restoration, but the heavens and earth will not be changed from the old to the new until the end of that time (Rev. 21:1).

The significance of this fact is that certain negative elements will still be present during the millennium. This is a cause for stumbling in those who wish to deny a future millennial kingdom on the earth. Riddlebarger speaks for the Reformed position: "The presence of evil in the millennial age is a problem from which all forms of premillennialism cannot escape" (223). As we will now see, however, the presence of negative matters during the thousand years simply confirms that the kingdom age will be a further step in God's accomplishment of His purpose.

First, although Satan will be bound, he will not be fully dealt with during the thousand years. Every system of interpretation of Revelation 20 must account for this fact. At the end of this time, Satan will be loosed from his prison, he will deceive the nations, and he will lead them in battle against the Lord (vv. 7-9). After this, he will be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet already will be (v. 10; 19:20). This will be the final destruction of Satan.

Second, the evil in human nature will not be completely dealt with during the millennium. Although all the nations will be subdued, at the end of that time Gog and Magog will rebel once again, proving that the element of rebellion in man will still be present. Riddlebarger suggests that the final rebellion in Revelation 20 is impossible to reconcile with the belief in a literal millennium:

If the premillennial position is correct, the golden age of the millennium where Christ reigns for one thousand years ends with *glorified men and women* revolting against the visible rule of Christ when Satan is released from the abyss at the end of that time...The idea of a "second fall" at the end of the millennium is so highly problematic that most amillennial interpreters rule out any form of premillennialism a priori. A fall of *glorified humanity* into sin after Christ's second advent means that eternity is not safe from the apostasy and the spontaneous eruption of sin in the human heart. (207-208, emphasis added)

This view, which is common to amillennial critics, expresses a great misunderstanding as to the nature of

the nations during the thousand years. The key to understanding the final rebellion is to know who the people on the earth are during the millennium. In the previous installment of this department, we distinguished between the three categories of persons at that time—the Old and New Testament overcomers, the saved remnant of Israel, and the nations.² During the great tribulation at the end of this age, Antichrist will persecute the believers and the Jews, God's chosen people who will be left on the earth. During this time, for the care of God's people, an eternal gospel will be preached to the nations (Rev. 14:6-7).

Those of the nations who fear God will care for His people in all the sufferings that befall them. Then when the Lord comes in glory, He will gather the surviving people of the nations before Him to separate the "sheep" from the "goats" (Matt. 25:31-46). This will be Christ's judgment of the living unbelievers before the millennium (Acts 10:42; 2 Tim. 4:1). It differs from His judgment of the dead at the great white throne after the millennium (Rev. 20:11-15). It is of utmost importance that we properly discern the nature of the judgment in Matthew 25. Verses 34 to 36 and 40 say,

Then the King will say to those on His right hand, Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty and you gave Me a drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in, naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me...Inasmuch as you have done it to one of these, the least of My brothers, you have done it to Me.

The gospel of grace proclaimed in the New Testament is, "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved" (Acts 16:31); "he who believes and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16); "everyone who believes into Him would not perish, but would have eternal life" (John 3:16); "for by grace you have been saved through faith" (Eph. 2:8); and, "not out of works in righteousness which we did but according to His mercy He saved us" (Titus 3:5). In John 3:5 the Lord said, "Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." In Matthew 25, however, those on the Lord's right hand are given to enter into the kingdom because they fed the Lord's brothers, gave them a drink, took them in, clothed them, visited them, and came to them in prison. This matches neither the rule of the Old Testament, in which the descendants of Adam are condemned under the law and saved in type through the offerings, nor the rule of the New Testament, in which the believers are saved by grace through faith in Christ and regenerated to enter into the kingdom. The judgment of the sheep and the goats "will not be according to

the laws of Moses nor according to faith, but according to their deeds. Hence, they are neither the Jews nor the church" (Nee 353).

The ultimate criterion of salvation is faith in Christ. At the final judgment in Revelation 20:11-15, the perishing unbelievers will be judged according to the "scrolls," which are a record of their works, but they will be cast into the lake of fire according to the book of life. That is, they will be condemned by the Lord because of their evil deeds, but they will perish because of their unbelief. Not believing in the Lord is the unique sin that causes people to perish (John 16:9). On the contrary, the believers are saved not because of their deeds, or even their works of faith, but because their names are written in the book of life. If the sheep in Matthew 25 are Christians, then their salvation is not by faith but by their good treatment of "the least of My brothers." Therefore, to interpret the sheep as regenerated believers is dispensationally erroneous.⁹

After the judgment at Christ's throne of glory, the sheep will be transferred into the millennium to be the people living under the kingly ruling of Christ and the overcoming believers (Rev. 2:26-27; 12:5; 20:4, 6) and under the priestly ministry of the saved Jews (Zech. 8:20-23). In this way they will inherit the coming kingdom on the earth. This class of people will neither be the overcoming believers nor the saved remnant of Israel. Thus, they will not be regenerated by the indwelling divine life, they will not be transformed by that life, and they will not possess glorified bodies as the overcoming saints will. Instead, they will simply be restored to the original state of man as created by God to be the people on the earth. It is mainly they who will enjoy the material blessings of God's restored creation, such as those prophesied in Isaiah 11 and 65. Thus, they are not "glorified men and women," as Riddlebarger misunderstands.

The people of the nations will bear offspring, as suggested by *nursing child* in Isaiah 11:8 and *infant and lad* in 65:20. However, because these people on the earth will be restored but not regenerated or transformed, they will be susceptible to evil, and the thousand years will be a time of testing and sifting for them. Eventually, because of Satan's instigation, some of the descendants of the sheep will rebel, and God will judge them (Rev. 20:8-9). This will not be a "second fall," "a fall of glorified humanity into sin," which Riddlebarger finds problematic, for none of the regenerated and glorified elect will take part in the apostasy. As a result of this final sifting of mankind, the rebellious nature of those who remain of the nations will be purified.

A third negative item still present in the millennium will be death, the last enemy (1 Cor. 15:26), which will be

cast into the lake of fire, not at the second coming of Christ but at the end of the millennium (Rev. 20:14). Isaiah 65:20 says,

There will no longer be in her / An infant who reaches the age of only a few days / Nor an old man who does not fill up his days; / For the lad will die at a hundred years of age, / And the sinner, being a hundred years of age, will be cursed.

This indicates that the curse of death will still be present on the restored earth, although its power will be greatly limited. The proper teaching of a thousand-year reign of Christ on the earth after His second coming does not maintain that the earth at that time will be in an ideal, perfected condition. On the contrary, three evil things—Satan, the rebellious nature of man, and death—will still exist, even though they are constrained, until the end of the millennium. This indicates that the millennium will be the last age in God's old creation, a time during which

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the Lord will finish His work to eliminate these three evil things from His eternal universe.

The Final Age of Completion in the Old Creation

As the final age in the old creation, the millennium will be the last and most crucial part of the accomplishment of God's eternal purpose (Lee, *Life-study* 2594-2595). All the negative matters that remain in the old creation will be cleared up, and all the work of God will be completed to consummate the New Jerusalem as the center of the new heaven and new earth for eternity. First, God will use the dispensation of the kingdom to accomplish His purpose by perfecting and completing His chosen people that they may be His eternal expression. The positive promises in Revelation related to the kingdom are always to him "who overcomes" (2:7, 11, 17, 26-28; 3:5, 12, 21; 21:7). In 2:26 the Lord said, "He who overcomes and he who keeps My works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations." The overcomers among

God's people will be priests, drawing near to God and Christ, and kings, reigning over the nations with Christ in the millennium as a reward for their overcoming. This reward will be given by the Lord to His faithful ones at His coming back (11:18; 22:12; Matt. 16:27).

After the resurrection and rapture of the saints (1 Cor. 15:23, 52; 1 Thes. 4:16-17), Christ at His judgment seat will judge the prophets and the saints (2 Cor. 5:10) to determine who among the saved is worthy of a reward and who needs further discipline. Those who are found to be defeated, unclean, or unfaithful will be excluded from the bright glory of the kingdom and will have no right to participate in Christ's reign in the millennium. Rather, they will be disciplined and perfected during the thousand years (Matt. 25:10-12, 30; 1 Cor. 6:9-10; Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 5:5). Only in the light of the reward of the kingdom or the loss of it can we rightly understand and properly apply the Lord's word concerning the overcomers at the conclusion of each of the epistles in Revelation 2 and 3. As a result of the Lord's operation in the excluded believers during the millennium, they will be prepared to fully enter into and participate in the New Jerusalem in the eternal age. This will be the fulfillment of the Lord's work to perfect and constitute all the believers, which will be a great accomplishment in His economy. It is regrettable that many in evangelical, fundamental Christianity find this future work of Christ on the defeated believers objectionable, but it is even more regrettable that Reformed Augustinian amillennialism finds it impossible.

A second great aspect of the Lord's operation in the millennium is the perfection of the Jews who will be saved at the end of the great tribulation. Christ's return to the earth to fight against and defeat Antichrist and his followers will result in Israel's household salvation, in which the remnant of Israel will see Christ descending in the air and will repent, call on Him, receive Him, and be saved and regenerated (Zech. 12:10; 14:4-5; Matt. 24:30; Rom. 11:26-27; Rev. 1:7). However, because the remnant of Israel will be saved only at the end of the age, they will still require a further, extended period of time to be perfected, just as believers today require the age of grace to be transformed and trained. The perfection of the late-saved Jews will be accomplished in the earthly section of the millennial kingdom, the kingdom of the Son of Man, which will be the restored nation of Israel, the kingdom of David (Matt. 13:41; Acts 1:6; Mark 11:10; Luke 1:32-33; 2 Sam. 7:12-13). This section of the millennial kingdom will be the realm for the saved Jews to be God's priests to teach the nations (Zech. 8:20-23; Isa. 2:2-3). In this new order, every Jew will be a priest, teaching the nations to know God and to serve Him. In this way God will use the millennium to perfect the Jews so that by the end of the thousand years all the saved Jews will be the

same as the perfected Christians. Then all the perfected Jews and Christians will be joined to be one kind of saint who, in the sight of God, will be the race of faith, the descendants of the one father, Abraham. Thereafter, in the new heaven and new earth, there will be no distinction between the Christian believers and the saved Jews. Together they will constitute the one, enlarged New Jerusalem as the one wife of the Lamb for eternity (Rev. 21:12, 14, 9).

Finally, as we have seen, the citizens of the millennial kingdom will be tested and sifted during the thousand years, especially by the great rebellion at the end of this time. The remnant of these living ones, whose rebellious nature will have been completely purged, will be transferred into the new earth and will be the nations, the people of God, around the New Jerusalem. They will be the "peoples" (λαοί, plural, v. 3)—not the sons—of God and will be the nations (τὰ ἔθνη, v. 24) who will walk by the light of the holy city, whose kings will bring their glory into it, and who will bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it (vv. 24-26). They will live on the new earth outside the New Jerusalem and will enjoy the common blessings in the new heaven and new earth. Moreover, as redeemed, restored, but unregenerated men, they will be maintained to live forever in their created state by the healing of the leaves of the tree of life (22:2). Therefore, in the new heaven and new earth, God will have both the new creation and the restored part of the old creation. The purging of the nations to produce the peoples in the new heaven and new earth should also be considered the work of the Lord in the millennium as the final age of accomplishment for the fulfillment of His eternal economy.

The Economy of the Biblical Eschatology

We must be careful to avoid the study of eschatology for the purpose merely of satisfying our curiosity, or even worse, of stirring up acrid doctrinal debate, which serves not to build up the Body of Christ but to divide it. Rather, we must have a heavenly vision (Acts 26:19) in order to properly serve God in our age according to the accurate light of His ultimate goal. Such a vision must be all-extensive, looking not only back in time but forward to the coming kingdom, the new heaven and new earth, and the New Jerusalem. Without receiving such an up-to-date, all-inheriting, and all-extensive vision, our work for the Lord will cast off the restraint (Prov. 29:18) of knowing where we are, what we are doing, what we are building up, and where we are destined to be. It is for this reason that we must distinguish what the work of God is in His economy, not only in the past and present but in the future as well.

As the greatest and ultimate sign in the Scriptures, the

New Jerusalem signifies the organic constitution of the processed Triune God mingled with His regenerated, transformed, and glorified tripartite elect. It is the composition of the totality of God's redeemed saints throughout the generations, who have been regenerated, transformed, and glorified. The preliminary manifestation of the New Jerusalem in the millennium will be composed of the overcomers from the old and new testaments. Strictly speaking, it will include neither the unperfected believers nor the saved but unperfected Jews. During the age of the millennium, God will use different ways to perfect the defeated Christians and the saved Jews. The defeated Christians, those believers who have not been perfected in the church age, will be excluded from the millennial kingdom and perfected apart from the bright glory of the kingdom. However, God's way to perfect the saved Jews during the millennium will be to put them into the position of priests of God to learn of God and to teach the nations. By these two means, both the defeated Christians and the saved Jews will be perfected (Lee, *Life-study* 2630).

Then after the millennium all the perfected Christians and the perfected Jews will be a single entity—the New Jerusalem—for the eternal expression of the processed Triune God. Outside the New Jerusalem will be the restored nations as the peoples on the new earth. The New Jerusalem will be the product of God's work of the new creation in the old creation, and the nations will be produced by God's work of restoration and purification on the old creation itself. All this will be the result, the consummation, of God's work throughout all the dispensations of the old creation, including the millennium, which will be the last and most crucial part of the accomplishment of God's eternal purpose. This is the economy of the biblical eschatology for the perfection of God's people, the preparation of the new heaven and new earth, and the consummating of the New Jerusalem, and it is the final component of the heavenly vision that must govern and direct our living and work today in the light of the coming kingdom.

by John Campbell

Notes

¹We are speaking here in a general way and are making no attempt to define *dispensations* in the classical sense.

²See "The Millennial Age (1)," *Affirmation & Critique*, April 2005, pp. 47-63.

³For a fuller discussion of this subject, see "Forgiveness in the Age to Come (1)," *Affirmation & Critique*, April 2004, pp. 56-69.

⁴Other apocalyptic theories predicted the end of the age from several decades before to several decades after A.D. 1000.

For the historical attestation of these predictions, researchers depend mainly on the writings of certain French and English monastics (Kromminga 117; Grenz 44; Clouse, *Manual* 26).

⁵For this reason, some have claimed that Augustine was actually postmillennial in his teaching. However, his exposition lacks the true components of postmillennialism, which we shall discuss subsequently.

⁶Luther refers specifically to the *Ecclesiastical History* of Eusebius, in which Dionysius's opinions against the authorship of Revelation are quoted extensively.

⁷The American belief in the imminent, or present, "millennial" kingdom is reflected in two cultural icons of the nineteenth century. The first is the "Peaceable Kingdom" series of paintings by Edward Hicks, a Quaker minister. The paintings illustrate the scene of the restored earth, as prophesied in Isaiah 11:6-8, in which "the wolf will dwell with the lamb; / And the leopard will lie down with the kid; / And the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; / And a young boy will lead them about." The backgrounds often depict William Penn signing the

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legendary treaty with the Lenape Indians at the foundation of Pennsylvania. The gloss on "Penn's Treaty with the Indians" says, "The leopard with the harmless kid laid down. / And not one savage beast was seen to frown. / When the great Penn his famous treaty made / With Indian chiefs beneath the elm tree's shade" (Bayou Bend Collection and Gardens, Houston, Texas). Clearly, this bespeaks the coming of the "millennial kingdom" in the New World. A second indicator of the postmillennial mood is the optimistic or mission-oriented hymns written during this time, such as the "Battle Hymn of the Republic," which begins, "Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord" (Julia Howe).

⁸The belief in a golden age prior to the Lord's coming seems to foster much naivety. Snowden revels in citing 1919 statistics concerning the increase in "professing" and "nominal" Christians in the world as a sign of the advance of the kingdom (265). Boettner follows him to joy in the statistics of 1957, proclaiming, "All of the false religions are dying. Christianity alone is able to grow and flourish under modern civilization" (43). This statement has proved to be wildly inaccurate, and since

both his and Snowden's statistics include nominal Christians as well as genuine, regenerated believers, they are also grossly unenlightened; they are leaven in the most pejorative sense (Matt. 13:33; 16:6, 11; 1 Cor. 5:6-8; Gal. 5:9; Lev. 2:5, 11).

⁹We are not unaware that some regard the works in Matthew 25:34-40 as works of faith, or the judgment here as being according to "evidence" for the sake of observers, as Lenski suggests (991-992). The works of faith, the works of the believers after their salvation, will be an issue at the judgment seat of Christ (Matt. 16:27; 1 Cor. 3:14; 2 Cor. 5:10; Heb. 10:35; Rev. 22:12), not at the judgment of the goats or the final judgment of the unbelievers in Revelation 20. As Walvoord points out, "It is characteristic of both the postmillennial and amillennial interpretations to merge all the Scriptural judgments connected with the second advent into one general judgment" (109). This merging is the source of the misunderstanding.

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