

FAITH FOR ALL OF LIFE

Faith for All of Life
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PROCLAIMING THE AUTHORITY OF GOD'S WORD OVER EVERY AREA OF LIFE AND THOUGHT

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The Meaning of Eschatology

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A brief dictionary definition of *eschatology* is, "The branch (of theology) that treats of death, resurrection, immortality, the end of the world, final judgment, and the future state" (Funk & Wagnalls). This is the usual popular understanding also. For premillennials, eschatology has to do with the aspects of last things cited above, with the emphasis on the rapture and the millennium. Amillennialists would differ in that they see no millennium and only a deepening growth of evil until judgment. Postmillennialists would stress a growth into a glorious millennial era.

The word *eschatology* comes from the Greek *eschatos*, meaning extreme, last, or least: *eschaton* is the nominative form of the word.

Because man is a religious creature, his being is purposive, goal-directed, and meaning-oriented. The meaning and the solution to a mathematical problem lie in the answer, the conclusion. We do not want problems without answers, nor stories with no ending. As a result, we tend to place great emphasis on *the end*, the last things. This is a very healthy demand, to a degree, but it can, beyond a point, warp our perspective. Martin Selbrede has called attention, after B. B. Warfield, to the way we read the parables in terms of the final end too often, rather than present realities, and we thereby miss the meaning of much of Scripture. We cannot read the Bible too heavily in terms of the end of all things, for to do so is to depreciate or negate the meaning of history. At times,

in terms of a purely end-time evaluation, some have negated the meaning of marriage and sexuality, because neither has any place in the world to come (Mt. 22:30); such a conclusion is contrary to the plain meaning of Scripture. The reality of time is not negated by eternity, and *the present* is important because it is the matrix and the foundation of *the last*.

Moreover, the word *eschatos*, according to [Hans-Georg] Link, in the Greek designated "the end-point of a continuously conceived succession of circumstances."¹ Link does not speak of the end-time but the end-point, a very important distinction. The end-point can come with the death of a man, or the judgment of a family, an institution, or a people. In this sense, history is continuously witnessing to end-points or *eschatons*.

This is the original Greek meaning; is it the meaning in the New Testament? Both Testaments speak of "the day of the Lord," and the day of the Lord, His judgment, has been a continuous and constant factor in history; it will culminate in the final and great day of the Lord, the final judgment. In the Bible, the *eschaton* is both an end-point which is repeatedly and constantly an historical fact, and also the end-time. We cannot limit to the one meaning only the Biblical *eschaton*.

There is another factor in Biblical eschatology. The prophetic announcements of the *eschaton* are usually a preface to the declaration of God's salvation,

so that to limit the *eschaton* to the last is to limit salvation to the end-time also, as some cults have done. Link noted, "Eschatological time will be stamped by Yahweh's saving activity."²

Thus the coming of John the Baptist was an *eschaton* in this sense. John proclaimed both a culminating judgment and salvation, declaring:

And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees; therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire; Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into his garner; but he shall burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire. (Mt. 3:10-12)

This is an announcement of an *eschaton*; so too is Paul's declaration in Romans 6:23, "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Both John and Paul stress an *eschaton* in time, and both stress the judgment-end and the salvation-end.

It should now be apparent that we cannot have a sound eschatology if we limit the *eschatos* to the end-time aspects only. *Very emphatically*, "death, resurrection, immortality, the end of the world, final judgment, and the future state" are important matters, and eschatological concerns, but if we limit eschatology to these things we warp Scripture.

To understand eschatology in the

fullest sense of the term, let us begin therefore with the Bible's first eschatological statements. We cannot be exhaustive, because page after page the eschatology of Scripture is set before us, but it is helpful to begin at the beginning and then to consider a sampling of relevant texts later:

And God said, let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth. (Gen. 1:26-28)

And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat; But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. (Gen. 2:15-17)

These are eschatological words: they set forth God's purpose and goal for man, as well as the end for disobedience. *First*, because man is created in God's image, man has a different *end* than the rest of creation. Man's *eschaton* is dominion under God over all the earth, and over all the creatures thereof. It is precisely because man is created in God's image that such an end is possible for him.

Second, we see a fact generally neglected, namely, that God's first eschatological word for man includes marriage, sex, and procreation: "Be fruitful, and multiply." While there is neither

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Our Help Is in... Man?

In *Politics of Guilt and Pity*, R. J. Rushdoony notes: "Because of the influence of Pietism, in recent centuries the church has withdrawn from many of the problems which once deeply concerned the Christian world."

According to webservice Wikipedia, pietism's "weaknesses" include "a separation of Christians from the world."

As many churches withdrew from worldly concerns in the 19th and 20th centuries to concentrate on Christians' "personal experience" of Christ, people hoping for a solution to this world's problems had to turn somewhere.

Where did they turn?

Socialism, communism, fascism: Proponents of these various "isms" promised (and still promise) to solve all the world's problems through civil government. The results of these statist experiments are so well-known that it seems incredible anyone can still expect a civil government to achieve an earthly paradise. The death camps of Nazi Germany, the government-generated famines of the Soviet Union, Cambodia's killing fields — certainly these hopes turned out to be false.

Psychology, psychiatry, and the therapeutic society: If we can't whip the state into shape, maybe we can hope to heal the world by healing ourselves. In *A Nation of Victims*, author Charles Sykes notes, "One expert [psychiatrist] estimated that 20% of Americans 'are affected by diagnosable psychiatric disorders....'" No wonder we've got problems. Sykes continues, "By the 1990s, the movement toward 'two shrinks in every pot' extended virtually down to infancy. Children as young as age five were being introduced to therapeutic support groups by schools...." Despite the continual

growth of the mental health industry, no one has detected a net increase in global sanity.

Science and technology: Rushdoony noted that in 1957, an astronomer named Kenneth Heuer proposed the construction of an artificial sun to replace the old one — rather like changing a light bulb. While we're waiting for the new, improved sun, scientists have offered such schemes as human cloning, embryonic stem cell research, and artificial intelligence as solutions to humanity's problems. Bestselling author Michael Crichton exposed the bogus science behind the environmental movement in his 2004 novel, *State of Fear*. But the vacuity of the scientific "answer" has been a favorite theme for writers and movie-makers since Mary Shelley wrote *Frankenstein* 200 years ago.

Evolution: If we can't legislate, coerce, psychoanalyze, or invent ourselves to perfection, maybe nature can do it for us. Enter the Theory of Evolution, which in its popular-culture form, predicts that species evolve into higher and better forms through the blind process of natural selection. Man, of course, will evolve, too. The highly-evolved human of the distant future will be as superior to us as we are to the primitive ape-men of the distant past. We may even wind up, as Rush joked, with "macro-life, 'a new form of gigantic size which has for its cells individual human beings, plants, animals and machines.'" What we are to do while waiting thousands or millions of years for nature to take its course, the evolutionists don't tell us.

Surely we're better off if "Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth" (Ps. 124:8).

Eschatology and Psychology

By Mark R. Rushdoony

“[E]schatology gives us the framework of history. It tells us the nature and direction of events, describes God’s judgment and victory in history, and gives us the meaning of our lives in the context of God’s plan.”¹



Man operates in terms of faith, not reason. Man’s reasoning, or thought, derives from what he believes to be true.

Whether called a starting point, given, basis, or presupposition, one’s faith determines how truth itself is understood.

Much of modern man’s faith lies in himself, either collectively in humanity, or a certain group, or as an autonomous individual who has the ability to determine truth. Such men will see faith and religion as evolutionary outworkings of man’s psychology; for the humanist, everything has its origin in man.

Eschatology, or the end times of history, is not a product of human psychology. Rather, one’s faith-based eschatology creates one’s psychology.

What a man believes matters. This is why preachers preach, teachers teach, and parents nurture their children. We can assume the belief behind most eschatology is the infallibility of God’s Word. But just as differing beliefs about man’s nature, human will, baptism, and the covenant have great implications for how they are practiced, so too will differing ideas about eschatology.

Eschatology, first of all, depends very much on one’s view of God and His Christ, and that view will dictate how we see our redemption, our callings, and our sanctification as well as the end of history.

God is not bound by time; He created it. God is distinct from the creation, human history, and the constraint of time. As men, we cannot step back in time, or before it, or forward in it. But for God, all human history, in both its total scope and individual parts, is His decree. His decree was from before the foundations of the world, and He always has the beginning and end of the Creation before Him. No part of human history is past and no part is future to Him.

As creatures, in the image of God, we can only accept this truth and order our finite thinking in terms of it. Our view of God and His governance of time and eternity always determine our eschatology. Eschatology is thus “the framework of history” which “gives us the meaning of our lives in the context of God’s plan.”

Eschatological studies usually center around the timing and nature of the Millennium and the return of Christ. That is a very Christian perspective; before the birth of Christ, eschatology was concerned with His first coming.

Eschatology is about not just *the* end time, but about *all* end times. Noah’s family certainly would have viewed the flood as an eschatological event. Babel, the exodus from Egypt, the end of the monarchy, the Ascension, and the opening of the covenant to Gentiles, were all great eschatological events.

So too have been many events since.

Two decades ago many churchmen viewed communism as the great threat to Christianity. Why then, after its fall, do they not see that event as a great end point in history? Eschatology is about all the end points of history, all the changes and judgments that mark God’s direction of its course. The Christian church’s interest in the Millennium and Second Coming is merely about the next great eschatological event.

Premillennialism

Premillennialism is the belief that Christ will physically return before the Millennium and rule over an earthly Kingdom. Most premillennialism is dispensational — that is, it divides history into seven (more or less, depending on the variation) dispensations. In each of these dispensations God is said to deal differently with men. We are now, since Pentecost, said to be in the sixth (at least according to C. I. Scofield, whose study Bible margin notes long popularized the doctrine), that of grace.² Most of Scripture is held to pertain to either the first five dispensations or the last, the Kingdom or Millennium.

Most of Scripture, though held to be inspired, is considered not binding. Virtually all dispensationalists reject the applicability of Old Testament laws; some reject even the Ten Commandments as belonging to a previous dispensation. Some also reject the Lord’s Prayer and the gospels themselves

for their references to “the Kingdom” which, they believe, is future. Although its extreme form has, in recent years, declined in popularity (revived somewhat by the *Left Behind* series), most evangelicals and even many ostensibly Reformed churches are committed to at least a truncated dispensationalism, with law as the old dispensation and grace as the new.³

Dispensationalism posits a changing God. It must reject God’s law, based upon the assumption (another word for faith) that each dispensation represents a different divine plan. The assumption that law and grace are opposed is the product of dispensationalism’s sway over modern theology. It is thus not only future eschatology that directs our thinking: our view of past eschatological events controls how we think, act, and view the church and its message today.

Most Premillennialism teaches that the church will be taken away, or raptured, before the Millennium. It sees the “church age” as one of progressive defeat at the hands of the increasingly powerful forces of Satan. It believes Satan is winning and it thinks and acts accordingly. A few years ago it was common to hear dispensational premillennialists declare, “Isn’t it wonderful how bad things are? It means Jesus is coming soon.”

The Millennium, in this view, will be a new dispensation under a new way of divine government of Christ’s immediate authority. The Kingdom itself is only partly the reign of Christ: it is, to a large extent, a revived Jewish Kingdom with the modern state of Israel at the forefront. Some of the most adamant Western supporters of the early Zionism movement, the creation of Israel after WWII, and its ongoing supporters have been, for obvious reasons, premillennial dispensationalists. Israel was and is seen as a harbinger of the imminent change from one dispensation to the next. The

dispensational faith produced Christian thought and action which helped shape the Middle East and international politics in our times.

The Rapture represents a personal victory for believers, but not a social victory. It represents no advance of the gospel or faithfulness. The premillennial church has therefore been focused on soul saving, not sanctification of believers to serve God. It has been a faith in defeat and the blessing of rescue from that defeat by means of the Rapture — an instantaneous evacuation from the battlefield.

Amillennialism

Amillennialism sees no millennium in history, and the hope of victory as largely a reference to heaven. It sees a parallel development of good and evil, of God’s Kingdom and of Satan’s. That of Satan will progressively predominate until the coming of Christ at the end of the world.

Amillennialists see Christ’s victory in heaven, but not in history. Their eschatological belief is in the certainty of defeat. Some have, traditionally, been opposed to much Christian action as a diversion from the spiritual work of the church, though in recent years there has been a strong movement among amillennialists to see the church’s work in much broader terms. Not as ready to dismiss the law as are dispensational premillennialists, they have often reduced it to a spiritual law of personal piety; but this view, too, has in recent years been broadened.

In recent years, those amillennialists who have been influenced but not entirely persuaded by postmillennialism have jokingly referred to themselves as “optimistic amillennialists.” This tongue-in-cheek oxymoron betrays the inconsistency of much of the older amillennial thinking with the obligation to Christian action many now feel com-

pelled to undertake.

To both premillennialists and amillennialists, God’s decree is the historical defeat of the church. They see the creation mandate as doomed by sin (though amillennialists do not generally deny its applicability). Their faith relegates their thoughts and actions to the saving of souls before the end. Christian Reconstruction, even if deemed a godly pursuit, is seen as certain to fail.

The dispensational premillennialist is antinomian, with a frequent contempt for God’s law as inferior to grace. He falsely believes that law was once, in another dispensation, the way of salvation, but now he opposes God’s law because he believes man is saved by grace in the present dispensation. The amillennialist does not reject the law as much as he sees it a matter of personal piety alone.

Both premillennialism and amillennialism tend to surrender the world to Satan. The church is seen as moving toward defeat while snatching souls from the fire as it is able. Both positions see the future as blocked to the success of the Christian faith. Premillennialism sees victory only in the earthly reign of Christ, which is to take place in the next dispensation after the end of the church age of grace. Amillennialism sees victory only in eternity. Neither have a strong eschatological reason for Christian action.

Postmillennialism

Postmillennialism sees Christ as Lord progressively triumphing through His people, accomplishing in time and history all the prophesies of a world submitted to God, in which His power and reign are acknowledged, and which will see a great material and spiritual reign of peace and righteousness. It sees the second coming of Christ and the end of the world as coinciding after that long millennial reign.

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Chalcedon and the Study of Last Things

By Christopher J. Ortiz



Jack Trout, the guru of corporate branding, once wrote, “Real motivation starts with the weapon of a differentiating idea.”¹ In the “era of killer competition,” as he refers to it, market leadership is the result of differentiating the position of an idea. Distinction creates clarity, and clarity attracts advocates who can, as Habakkuk said, *run with the vision* (Hab. 2:2).

R. J. Rushdoony never studied the principles of corporate branding, but he provided you and me with a clear and distinct vision for the cultivation of Christian civilization. He illustrated the glorious picture of the triumphant Christ and the active role of His royal priesthood subduing all spheres to His kingly rule. But this thesis is not mere optimism. Optimism, the covenant faithfulness of God’s people, and the efficacious instrument of God’s law together would usher in the triumphant age.

The differentiating factor of Christian Reconstruction is that it rests upon the enduring standard of God’s law. While other paradigms espouse the optimism of the Biblical world and life view, there is a curious absence of any exposition of Biblical law. This is a gross misconception and one that must be remedied — but it’s not the only delusion. What else is cultural victory but God blessing a faithful people who adhere to His commandments?

The Doctrine of First Things

In his inspiring monograph on postmillennialism, R. J. Rushdoony wrote: “Eschatology, the doctrine of last things, is also the doctrine of first things because it is concerned with the goal of history. Of necessity, goals determine present-day action.”²

This concept contradicts the widely held view that any study of eschatology is an exercise in irrelevance. The doctrinally befuddled stumble because the study of *last things* is reduced to guesswork on how and when history will end — not on how history is to be transformed. This is why Chalcedon continues to press the issue of theonomic postmillennialism.³ We want to motivate believers to obedience *now* with the allure of a victorious future. “We are not motivated to action unless we know the purpose for our action.”⁴ In other words, if we know our destination in advance, we can do a much better job of getting there.

It is here that we must work for change. We should reorient our thinking to place greater emphasis upon individual hearkening to God’s law as well as the application of it to our spheres of influence. So much of life is lived “in the meantime” that our tendency is to downplay the importance of routine obedience because we’re oblivious to its long-term implications. Only a pronounced doctrine of the future will make noble our “everydays.”

Eschatology and Salvation

Another reason for the neglect of eschatology is the perception that “saving souls” is the central objective of God’s eternal decree. Therefore, much time, effort, and expense is spent on evangelistic outreach and equipping. Without demeaning contemporary evangelism, Rushdoony sought to lift our vision higher to the comprehensive Kingdom of God:

[I]f in terms of Matthew 6:33, we believe that the Kingdom of God and His righteousness or justice must have priority in our lives, then we will not have a self-centered view of salvation. Our personal salvation is not the focus and goal of the Gospel but simply the starting point. The goal is God’s Kingdom, His purpose for humanity and the world.⁵

At Chalcedon, we see this point as imperative in our dialogue with mainstream Christianity. The widespread belief of a soon-coming end of the world and the idea that our only concern should be our personal salvation are the two most devastating hindrances to building Christian civilization. When millions of Christians simply wash their hands of contemporary culture, we only delay the day of genuine societal transformation.

The Eschatology of Victory

We took the title of this issue from the book *Eschatology of Victory* by J. Marcellus Kik. This dynamic little volume was edited and titled by the late

R. J. Rushdoony, and he considered it the best title he ever gave a book. Post-millennialism is the eschatology of victory. That's why it's grown in popularity in the last four decades. Despite the deluge of "last days" literature, there is a growing number of perceptive believers who will not accept that the church is destined to lose in history. Our desire is to spread the net even wider to gather a greater number of Christians who will embrace the victorious gospel and the accompanying social responsibilities.

No other doctrine has been more central to my personal transformation than eschatological optimism! I long for the day when this view will be the norm in every church and home. ■

1. Jack Trout, *Differentiate or Die: Survival in Our Era of Killer Competition* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2000), 70.
2. Rousas John Rushdoony, *God's Plan for Victory: The Meaning of Postmillennialism* (Vallecito, CA: Chalcedon Foundation, 1997), 3.
3. "Theonomic," meaning "God's law," is being linked to "postmillennialism" to demonstrate that the victorious advance of God's rule in history is contingent upon the obedience of His people.
4. *Ibid.*, 3.
5. *Ibid.*, 3.

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Is the Church Back on Track?

If the "church victorious" got off track in the 19th and 20th centuries, are there any signs that it may be getting back on?

Websource *In The Agora* notes, "Many researchers argue that Christianity is the fastest growing religion in the world and it will soon become the world's largest faith."

Philip Jenkins, professor of History and Religious Studies at Penn State University, comments in his book, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (Oxford University Press), "While secular movements like communism, feminism, and environmentalism have gotten the lion's share of our attention, the explosive southward expansion of Christianity in Africa, Asia, and Latin America has barely registered on Western consciousness."

According to Jenkins, the churches that have grown most rapidly are "far more traditional, morally conservative, evangelical, and apocalyptic than their Western counterparts.... Christianity is on the rise again and in more traditional forms than have been seen in many years."

Certainly, current events reflect the growing influence of Third World Christians. To name a few:

*To the despair of Western liberals, the Roman Catholic Church has elected a new pope, Benedict XVI, well known for his conservatism.

*African bishops, led by Peter Akinola of Nigeria, continue to pressure the worldwide Anglican Communion to resist and rein in liberal efforts to lead the denomination away from Biblically-based doctrine and morality.

*African delegates to the United Methodist Church's 2004 General Conference played a key role in convincing the UMC to reaffirm Biblical teachings on homosexuality.

This should not be surprising, according to Jenkins: Third World Christians, regardless of denomination, are "strongly conservative and orthodox," and often come into conflict with the liberal theologies and policies of Western churches.

As of 2000, there were some 2 billion Christians worldwide. This number is projected to grow to 2.6 billion by 2025 and 3 billion by 2050 — thanks to both a higher birth rate in the Third World and new conversions. In Africa alone, the number of Christians grew from 60 million in 1960 to 360 million in 2000. And according to Craig Kibler in *The Layman Online*, in China, as the number grows at a rate of 28,000 new converts a day, there are now an estimated 80 million Christians.

Kibler goes on to note that here at home, liberal or "mainline" American churches have seen their membership decrease, but conservative, evangelical church membership has increased.

The Presbyterian Church USA, for example, had 4.2 million members in 1965, but by 2001 was down to 2.49 million — a loss of 1.71 million, or 41% of its membership.

At the same time, new, conservative PCUSA branches have grown dramatically. Within the PCUSA, (conservative) Confession Church congregations increase an average of 1.8 churches and 589 members per day. Other PCUSA members have left for new conservative Presbyterian denominations. The Presbyterian Church in America grew, since 1973, from 41,000 members in 260 congregations to 360,000 members in 1,450 congregations in 2000. A 1981 offshoot, the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, founded with 12 congregations, grew to 190 in 19 years.

Glossary of Eschatological Terms

Abomination of Desolation. A phrase deriving from Daniel (9:27; 11:31; 12:31) which is cited by Christ in His Olivet Discourse (Mt. 24:15). In Dispensationalism this refers to the desecration of a future rebuilt Jewish Temple. That event occurs during a seven-year Great Tribulation which Dispensationalists believe precedes the Second Coming of Christ. The term actually refers to the physical and ritual desecration of the Temple in September, A.D. 70, when the Roman soldiers “brought their ensigns to the temple and set them over against its eastern gate; and there did they offer sacrifices to them” (Josephus, *Wars of the Jews*, 6:6:1). The phrase is found in the portion of the Olivet Discourse introduced by Jesus’ reference to the destruction of the first century Temple (Mt. 24:1-3) and ended by the declaration that “all these things” will occur in “this generation” (Mt. 24:34).

Amillennialism. An eschatological system which holds that the millennium was established in the first century by Christ and is John’s apocalyptic image of Christ’s kingdom rule. This kingdom has its source in Heaven and its effect in the hearts and lives of believers. The amillennialist teaches that no extensive period of divine peace and worldwide external blessings will prevail in earth history before the Second Coming of Christ. Rather, the kingdom’s presence operates within the lives of believers and through the ministry of the church while the church is under assault and despite the historical decline that worsens until the end.

Antichrist. This term refers to one thing in Scripture and quite another in popular eschatology. In popular eschatology (especially Dispensationalism) the Antichrist will be an evil religious-

political leader who arises during a future Great Tribulation. He becomes a worldwide tyrannical ruler imposing his evil will upon a deceived world while ruling from a rebuilt Jewish Temple. In Scripture the term only occurs in the epistles of John. In those passages we learn that John uses the word to describe not an individual person, but a movement (1 John 2:18) opposed to Christ (1 John 2:22; 4:3). We also discover that this movement exists in John’s own lifetime (1 Jn. 4:3; 2 Jn 1:7), rather than in the distant future.

Apocalypse. The technical name of the Book of Revelation, which is based on the first Greek word appearing in that book. The Greek *apokalypsis* is a compound of *apo* (“from”) and *kalypsis* (“hidden”), meaning “uncover, reveal, open up.”

Day of the Lord. This phrase speaks of a period of special divine judgment in history. Though it always appears in the singular, it refers to any period of prophetically-announced divine wrath against God’s enemies, including Old Testament judgments against Babylon (Isa. 13:1, 6) and Idumea (Isa. 34:5, 8), and against Jerusalem in the Old Testament (Joel 2:1) and in the first century (Acts 2:16, 20). Each “day of the Lord” is a prophetic prototype of the final, consummate Day of the Lord associated with the Second Coming of Christ to end history (2 Pet. 3:10).

Dispensationalism. A whole theological system that emphasizes particularly its eschatological distinctives. Dispensationalism arose in the early 1800s, either through the work of John Nelson Darby or perhaps earlier in the prophetic utterances of one Margaret MacDonald. It has been upgraded and refined over the years and is the most popular version of prophetic commit-

ment in American evangelicalism. It is the most ornate and complex evangelical eschatological system.

Eschatology. This term derives from compounding two Greek terms: *eschatos* (“last”) and *logia* (“word, discourse”). Etymologically, eschatology is “the study of the last things.” The term is drawn from certain Scriptural passages that speak of “the last days” (2 Tim. 3:1; Heb. 1:2), “the last time” (1 Pet. 1:20; Jude 18), “the last hour” (1 Jn. 2:18), and other comparable statements.

First resurrection. In John’s symbolic vision of the Millennium in Revelation, the first resurrection signifies the salvation of sinners, who upon conversion come under the salvific rule of Christ and enter the kingdom of God. Salvation involves an arising from a state of spiritual death to spiritual life (Eph. 2:1-6) and is pictured in Scripture not only as a resurrection (John 5:24; Eph. 2:4-6; 1 John 3:14), but also by an equally remarkable image: a “new creation” (2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15; cp. Eph. 2:10).

Great Tribulation. The phrase “Great Tribulation” appears in Matthew 24:15 and Revelation 2:22; 7:14. In both of these contexts this tribulation period is tied to the first century, because it is in “this generation” (Mt. 24:34) or “must shortly come to pass” (Rev. 1:1; 22:6) because “the time is near” (Rev. 1:3; 22:10). The great tribulation speaks of the devastation overwhelming first century Israel and resulting in the destruction of her Temple during the Jewish War with Rome. It is a divine judgment upon the first century Jews for rejecting the Messiah (Mt. 23:37-24:3).

In dispensationalism the Great Tribulation is extracted from its contextual time constraints and placed in

the distant future after the Rapture of the church and just before the Second Coming of Christ. It becomes a seven-year period of trial for the Jews that will witness the rebuilding of the Temple, the arising of Antichrist, the destruction of two-thirds of the world's Jewish population, but finally witness the conversion of the Jewish remnant who will welcome the Second Coming of Christ to deliver them.

Kingdom of God / of Heaven.

When Jesus began His ministry, He preached that "the kingdom of God" was at hand (Mark 1:14-15). Though Matthew is the only gospel to record the phrase "kingdom of Heaven," the term is interchangeable with the "kingdom of God" (cp. Mt. 13:31; Mk. 4:30). The kingdom He preached was not a political entity, but involved the coming of the final phase of redemption and is closely tied to the gospel message (Mk. 1:14-15). In fact, His message of salvation is often called "the gospel of the kingdom" (e.g., Mt. 4:23; 9:35; 24:14). His kingdom was not an external political kingdom coming with visible glory (Lk. 17:20-21); nor would it involve armies to defend and promote it (Jn. 18:36). It was a kingdom of truth (Jn. 18:37) and righteousness (Rom. 14:17) that would grow gradually over time (Mt. 13:30-33).

Last Days. In the Biblical scheme, the Lord Jesus Christ is the focal point of history. His coming divides history into two parts. The Old Testament era served as the "former days" (Mal. 3:4) that gave way to the "last days," the times initiated by Christ's coming: "God, who at various times and in different ways spoke in *time past* to the fathers by the prophets has in these *last days* spoken to us by His Son" (Heb. 1:1-2). The last days are initiated by the appearance of the Son (Heb. 1:2; 1 Pet. 1:20) to effect redemption (Heb. 9:26) and by His pouring out of the Spirit

(Acts 2:16, 17, 24; cf. Isa. 32:15; Zech. 12:10). The "ends of the ages" comes during the apostolic era (1 Cor. 10:11). These will run until "the last day," when the Resurrection and Final Judgment occur to end history (John 6:39; 11:24; 12:48). Because the last days have been with us since the first century coming of Christ, no days are to follow them except for "the last day." Consequently, no Millennium will introduce another grand redemptive era in man's history.

Millennium. This term is derived from Revelation 20:1-6. The term is based on the combination of two Latin words *mille* (1000) and *annus* (year). Not only does the millennium (or 1000 years of Christ's reign) appear in the most figurative book of Scripture, but it is found *only* in this highly symbolic book. Nowhere else is Christ's reign associated with 1000 years. The figure serves as an image of the great expanse of Christ's redemptive reign which began in the first century (Mk. 1:14-15; Mt. 12:29-30) and continues until Christ returns at "the end" of history (1 Cor. 15:24-26).

Parousia. The Greek term *parousia* was a common term that meant "presence." It eventually came to apply particularly to the coming and/or presence of some noted dignitary. As with most Biblical and theological terms it was taken into Christian parlance from common use and developed a technical meaning. However, even in Scripture we must sort out its various usages. The coming of Stephanus (1 Cor. 16:17), of Titus (2 Cor. 7:6), of Paul (Phil. 2:12), and of the "Man of Sin" (2 Thes. 2:9) are each called a *parousia*. The term can be used metaphorically of Christ's historical judgment on Israel (Mt. 24:3, 27), for according to the Arndt-Gingrich-Danker *Lexicon* the term was used "as a sacred expression for the coming of a hidden divinity, who makes his presence felt by a revelation of his power" (cp. Isa. 19:1). It can also be employed

literally of His incarnational first coming (2 Pet. 1:16) and His consummate Second Coming at the end of history to judge the world (1 Cor. 15:23; 1 Thes. 4:15). The context of each use must determine the type of *parousia* in mind.

Postmillennialism. The prophetic school which teaches that the kingdom prophesied in the Old Testament came in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ at His first coming (Mk. 1:14-15). It expects the proclaiming of the Spirit-blessed gospel of Jesus Christ to win the vast majority of men to salvation in the present age (Mt. 12:18-20; Jn. 3:17; 12:31-32). Increasing gospel success will gradually produce a time in history prior to Christ's return in which faith, righteousness, peace, and prosperity will prevail in the affairs of men and of nations (Mt. 13:31-33; Mk. 4:26-32). After an extensive era of such conditions the Lord will return visibly, bodily, and in great glory, ending history with the general resurrection and the great judgment of all men (1 Cor. 15:20-27). It is *post* (after) *millennial* in that Christ returns *after* the glorious "millennial" conditions finally prevail in earth history.

Postmillennialism may be summarized: (1) The Church Age is the kingdom era prophesied by the Old Testament prophets. The people of God are expanded from Israel of the Old Testament to the universal church of the New Testament, becoming the Israel of God. (2) Satan is bound during Christ's earthly ministry at His first coming. His binding prevents him from totally hindering the proclamation of the gospel. (3) Christ now rules spiritually in the hearts of believers, who will gradually exercise a growing influence in human affairs. (4) History will gradually improve as the growth of Christian influence unfolds into the future. (5) Christ will return to end history, resurrect and judge all men, and establish the eternal order, the New Creation.

Pre-tribulationism. The dispensational view which teaches that Christ will return secretly and take His church out of the world just *before* (hence, “pre”) the outbreak of the Great Tribulation. Dispensationalists believe that the Rapture must be pre-tribulation because the events of the Great Tribulation are not a part of the program for the church but for Israel.

Premillennialism. Premillennialism teaches that the kingdom prophesied in the Old Testament will be a literal, political kingdom effected by Christ at His Second Coming. The view is *pre-millennial* in that Christ returns *before* and in order to establish the Millennium. Premillennialism is today largely associated with Dispensationalism rather than the older, more simple form of Historic Premillennialism.

Preterism. The term “preterism” is based on the Latin *praeteritus*, which means “passed by.” Preterism is that hermeneutic approach to Scripture which teaches that certain prophecies have already been fulfilled in history. Those passages are often (not *always*) identified by statements of temporal nearness, such as “at hand” (Mk. 1: 14-15; Rev. 1:3), “shortly” (Rev. 1:1), “this generation” (Mt. 24:34), and other such time delimiters. This view holds that many New Testament prophecies focus on the catastrophic destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 (see especially the Olivet Discourse, Mt. 24:1-3). That event is important in that God changes the course of redemptive history from an ethnic, land-based, temple-oriented system to a pan-ethnic, global, spiritual system of worship (cp. Mt. 10:6; 15:24 with Mt. 28:19; see also Heb. 8:13).

Rapture. A theological term based on the Latin word *rapió* which means “caught up.” It is not found in Scripture but the theological idea is strongly rooted in 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17, which speaks of the Lord’s Second Advent

wherein deceased and living saints are “caught up” to be with the Lord forevermore. Dispensationalism proposes a “secret Rapture” which removes the church from the earth which must endure a seven year Great Tribulation. This key passage, however, emphasizes its *public* character: “For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a *shout*, with the *voice* of the archangel, and with the *trumpet* of God” (1 Thes. 4:16).

Resurrection. The Greek word translated “resurrection” is *anistimi*, which means “to stand” (*istemi*) “again” (*ana*). It literally speaks of the reanimation of a corpse. Though the Bible records several bodily resurrections of the dead before Christ’s resurrection, (e.g., 1 Kin. 17:20-24; 2 Kin. 4:32-37; Mk. 5:41-43; Jn. 11:43-44), His is the first resurrection of the *eschatological order* (1 Cor. 15:20-56). All miraculous resurrections occurring prior to His Second Advent at the end of history bring deceased persons back to life. But since those resurrected do not receive their final, perfect, eternal bodies, they must suffer death once again. Christ’s resurrection serves as the unique, historical “first fruits” (1 Cor. 15:23) of the final, consummate, eschatological order which transforms the body of the redeemed from a state of weakness to power, from dishonor to glory, from perishability to imperishability (1 Cor. 15:42-43). At the resurrection our renewed bodies will be animated and restructured by the Holy Spirit rather than by simple biological power: we will no longer have *psuchichos* (“soulish, natural”) bodies, but *pneumatikos* (“spirit” driven) bodies (1 Cor. 15:44; Rom. 8:18-25). The Resurrection will be at the end of history (John 6:39-40, 44, 54; 11:24) and will involve *all* men simultaneously (Jn. 5:28-29; Acts 24:15), contrary to the popular teaching of Dispensationalism. ■



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The Case for Historical Optimism

Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., Th.D.



We live in a world suffering great trials and tribulations, natural and human, legal and moral. The Indian Ocean earthquake-generated tsunami on December 26, 2004, resulted in nearly 300,000 people dead or missing. The horrible atrocities by Islamists on September 11, 2001, and in numerous places since then burden our hearts almost daily.

In our own once-Christian nation we are witnessing growing efforts to legitimize homosexual marriages. During this past Christmas season we weathered a relentless storm of complaints against public officials who dared bid someone “Merry Christmas” (instead of “Happy Holidays”) and municipalities that allowed displays of manger scenes and other displays of Christian origin.

With these and many other contemporary concerns, how can the Christian hold an optimistic outlook on the future? Can a world-wise Christian really expect an accelerated progress of the gospel’s effects among men? How can the postmillennial hope be seriously considered among Christian students of the world scene? These are legitimate real-world questions which often serve as rhetorical challenges to any eschatological optimism.

As Christians we must view the world and life from a Bible-based, Christian-oriented perspective, from within a Christian worldview. As the title of our magazine expresses it, we believe in *Faith for All of Life*, not just for the inter-personal, private part of it.

One’s personal worldview weighs, categorizes, organizes, interprets, and judges each fact or piece of data presented to the mind, determining its possibility, meaning, value, and significance for life. Our worldview is an interpretive grid for understanding and responding to life’s experiences and developing its expectations.

The Christian worldview is securely founded on two immovable presuppositions (foundational principles): God and Scripture. Our infinite, eternal God who is the almighty Creator of the Universe, the loving Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the merciful Redeemer of God’s elect assuredly exists. And this glorious God has graciously revealed Himself infallibly, objectively, and propositionally in His holy word, the Bible. These two principles must be clearly accepted as the focal lenses to any Christian effort to interpret the world and history.

The Christian worldview arising from these two presuppositions necessarily entails a two-level reality: the eternal God and the created order (which involves all else, including angels, men, animals, and the universe). And of this two-level reality we hold to the Creator-creature distinction: God is not a part of creation; creation never becomes a part of God. God and creation are fundamentally and eternally distinct.

From this sort of worldview, the Christian must recognize the priority of God and His will in all things. A Christian must build his hopes and expectations on the sure revelation of the Almighty Creator. Had we the time

we could set forth numerous principles from Scripture which serve as keystones of hope, and I will mention three that we must bear in mind. I would note up front that these do not *in themselves* establish our optimistic outlook. But they do make it possible and counter the general objections of pessimists who cannot accept any future hope in the unfolding of history before the Lord’s return. Other articles in this issue will provide specific Biblical texts formally establishing the postmillennial hope.¹

God’s Creational Purpose

In Genesis 1 we find the record of God’s creation of the universe in the space of six days (Gen. 1:1-31; Ex. 20:9-11). As a result of God’s purposeful creative power, all is originally “very good” (Gen. 1:31). Of course, we expect this because God creates the world for His own glory: “For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen” (Rom. 11:36). “All things were created by him and for him” (Col. 1:16b).

Frequently, Scripture reaffirms God’s love of His created order and His ownership claim over all things: “The earth is the LORD’s, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it” (Ps. 24:1).² The postmillennialist holds that God’s love for His creation prompts His concern to bring it back to its original purpose of bringing positive glory to Him. Thus, the postmillennialist’s optimistic expectation is rooted in creational reality. This world did not magically explode into existence and randomly evolve to its present state. It was created by the rational God of Scripture for His

own moral purpose and end.

God's Sovereign Power

Our evangelistic task in God's world should be emboldened by the certainty that God "works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will" (Eph. 1:11). We confidently believe that God controls history by means of His decree, whereby He determines "the end from the beginning" (Is. 46:10). Consequently, postmillennialists assert that God's Word, as He says, "shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it" (Is. 55:11), irrespective of the opposition of men or of demons, despite natural phenomena or historical circumstances. Neither the worst tsunami nor the most vile terrorist group can overthrow God's decree for the outcome of history.

The Christian, then, ought not use past short-term historical incidents or present cultural circumstances to pre-judge the prospects for future gospel success. Rather, he should evaluate its possibilities solely on the basis of the revelation of God in Scripture — for the success of the gospel is "not by might, not by power, but by my Spirit" (Zech. 4:6). The postmillennialist's ultimate confidence is in the sovereign God. Our optimism flows out of our worldview.

God's Blessed Provision

In addition, the Lord of lords amply equips His church for the task of world evangelistic success. This is where our worldview must prevail: the church is not simply a collection of fallen sinners wandering about; it is the kingdom of Christ on earth. Christ easily shifts between the "church" and the "kingdom" when He speaks to Peter: "And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build *My church*; and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it. I will give you the keys of *the kingdom*

of heaven; and whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Mt. 16:18-19, my emphasis).

Among the abundant divine provisions for the church are the following:

First, we have the very presence of the risen Christ with us.³ He is the One who commands us to "go and make disciples of all nations," while promising to be with us to the end (Mt. 28:19-20). "Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus" (Phil. 1:6).

Second, we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit from on high.⁴ We believe that "the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world" (1 Jn. 4:4b). Among His many ministries He causes the new birth, empowers believers for righteous living, and blesses their gospel proclamation in bringing sinners to salvation.⁵

Third, the Father delights in saving sinners.⁶ In fact, the Father "did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him" (Jn. 3:17).

Fourth, we have the gospel that is the very "power of God unto salvation."⁷ We also wield the powerful Word of God as our spiritual weapon: "The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ" (2 Cor. 10:4-5).⁸

Fifth, to undergird and empower us to gospel victory, we have full access to God in prayer⁹ through Jesus' name.¹⁰ Christ even directs us to pray to the Father: "Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Mt. 6:10).

Sixth, though we have supernatural opposition in Satan, he is a defeated foe as a result of the first advent of Christ. "Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death — that is, the devil" (Heb. 2:14).¹¹ Consequently, we can so resist him that he will flee from us (Jas. 4:7; 1 Pet. 5:9); we can crush him under our feet (Rom. 16:20). Indeed, our God-given mission is to turn men "from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God" (Acts 26:18). Thus, the church's ample equipment is given by a gracious Savior.

Conclusion

Since God creates the world for His glory, governs it by His almighty power, and equips His people to overcome the Enemy, the postmillennialist asks: "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Rom. 8:31).

Our confidence is in the service of the Lord Jesus Christ, "the ruler of the kings of the earth" (Rev. 1:5). He sits at God's "right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church" (Eph. 1:20-22). We have confidence that the resurrection of Christ is more powerful than the fall of Adam.

Of course, all of this alone does not prove God wills to win the world through gospel victory. But it should dispel any premature, casual dismissals of postmillennialism as a viable evangelical option, thereby paving the way for re-considering the case for our evangelistic hope. The question now becomes: Is the postmillennial hope rooted in God's inspired and inerrant Word?

continued on page 28

Dispensationalism in the Light of Scripture

by Greg Uttinger



Classic dispensationalism was born in England in the 1830s and popularized in America by William E. Blackstone's book, *Jesus Is Coming Again* (1878), and by the footnotes of the *Scofield Reference Bible* (1909). Though dispensationalism is best known for its take on the Rapture and the Tribulation, we will look at some of its more basic foundations. Classic dispensationalism is built on at least three pillars:

- 1) All prophecy should be interpreted literally.¹
- 2) Scripture makes a rigid distinction between Israel and the New Testament church.
- 3) The church is a parenthesis in prophetic time, an interval of grace interrupting a dispensation of law.

These ideas flow easily together. The prophets often described the world to come in terms of Israel, the Promised Land, the priesthood, and the temple. They wrote of the Messianic future in terms of the present that Israel knew. If their words contain no imagery, type, or metaphor, then they describe a future that has little to do with the gospel or the New Covenant age.

Should we conclude, then, that the Old and New Covenants describe two different peoples with two different destinies? If so, the church *is* an intrusion into God's original prophetic plan, and her removal from history is necessary if He is to complete it.² So is the restora-

tion of the Jewish economy — temple, blood sacrifice, and all — so that God can pick up where He left off. This is exactly what classic dispensationalism teaches. But is it Biblical?

What Does the Bible Say?

The final measure of what is Biblical is the Bible itself. In other words, to find out how we *should* read the Bible, we must actually *read* the Bible and let it shape our way of thinking.

The Bible begins in Genesis, and so should we. From there we should read through to Revelation, keeping each verse, each passage, each book, in its proper context. As we read, we should see how the Bible develops doctrines, themes, and imagery. What, for instance, does the Bible say about justification or sacrifice or gardens? For that matter, what *does* the Bible talk about? How does each book build on the last? What does each writer add to our understanding of this concept or that image?

Very quickly we find that the Bible is literature, the greatest literature imaginable. It appeals not only to man's reason and volition, but also to his imagination and emotion. It contains both historical narrative and poetic hyperbole, both the unadorned genealogies of 1 Chronicles and the Song of Songs, which is Solomon's. God has eyes and hands. Heaven has windows; the morning has wings. We must eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood (Jn. 6:53). We must be born again (Jn.

3:7). A simplistic literalism fails us quite early. Like all great literature, the Bible is not a simple book; reading it properly will often require close attention and a great deal of thought.

As we read we also find that Scripture interprets Scripture. The Bible gives us parallel discussions, synoptic accounts of the same event, and New Testament commentary on Old Testament passages. This last is particularly significant for our purposes, for the New Testament writers show us how to interpret Old Testament prophecy. And their interpretations are authoritative: we must accept both their conclusions and their methods.

Matthew on Prophecy

As an example, let's consider Matthew's approach to prophecy, particularly in chapter 2 of his gospel. There, he interprets four Old Testament prophecies. The first, taken from Micah 5, tells us literally enough that Messiah will be born in Bethlehem. But Micah goes on to involve Messiah in a military campaign against Assyria, a thing that didn't happen and now can't happen, for Assyria is long extinct. Those who look for some sort of revived Assyria are cheating: such a nation would not *literally* be Assyria.³ God, then, must have had something other than a literal fulfillment in mind for this part of Micah's prophecy.

Then there's Matthew's interpretation of Hosea 11:1: "Out of Egypt have I called my son." But Hosea was talking

about Israel. Only by analogy and type can the words apply to Jesus. Matthew's interpretation of Jeremiah 31:15 is even harder to follow. Jeremiah was talking about children carried captive to Babylon. Matthew had to draw together a number of facts and themes to tie those children to the innocents who died in Bethlehem.⁴ Yet he did so without apology. Finally, Matthew gives us, "He shall be called a Nazarene." No prophet ever said that — at least, not literally.

The Spirit of Prophecy

There are, of course, other prophecies that were fulfilled literally. Jesus was born of a virgin. He ministered in Galilee. His hands and feet were pierced. But even predictions like these are often nestled side by side with others that found a different sort of fulfillment.

So how do we know what the prophets really meant? By what standard does the New Testament interpret the prophecies of the Old? As we read the New Testament and let the apostles speak for themselves, we find that their guiding principle is not "literalism everywhere" but "Jesus everywhere." As far as the New Testament writers are concerned, the Old Testament is about Jesus Christ and Him crucified.⁵ "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" (Rev. 19:10d).

For the apostles, the gospel of Jesus Christ provides the continuity that overshadows and explains all the covenantal discontinuities.⁶ Covenant by covenant, type by type, Old Testament history is preparation for Christ, and the New Testament is the fulfillment and completion of the Old. Christ is now the Mediator of a new and everlasting covenant. Christ is our Priest, our Temple, and our Inheritance. He is the reality behind all the carnal types (Col. 2:10-17; Heb. 9-10). There can be no return to the Mosaic economy. All things have been made new.

Israel and the Church: Continuity and Succession

Then what of Israel? Paul argues that there has always been a believing remnant, and he holds out hope for the future conversion of the Jewish people (Rom. 11). But he also insists that "they are not all Israel, which are of Israel" (Rom. 9:6); that is, Israel is not defined by genetic descent, but by faith in Jesus Christ. The whole New Testament rings with this message, and it often calls the Old as a witness.⁷ Those who trust in Jesus Christ are the circumcision, the seed of Abraham, and the true Israel of God (Phil. 3:3; Gal. 3:29, 6:16). The church is the covenantal successor to Old Testament Israel and the heir of the kingdom and the promises — the promise of the Spirit, the promise of Messiah, and in Him the promise of all things.⁸

The church is no intrusion. Though the nature of the New Testament church was a mystery largely hidden in earlier ages, the church itself was neither unplanned nor unprophesied. In fact, throughout the book of Acts the apostles appeal to the prophets to explain the events surrounding the birth and growth of the church.⁹

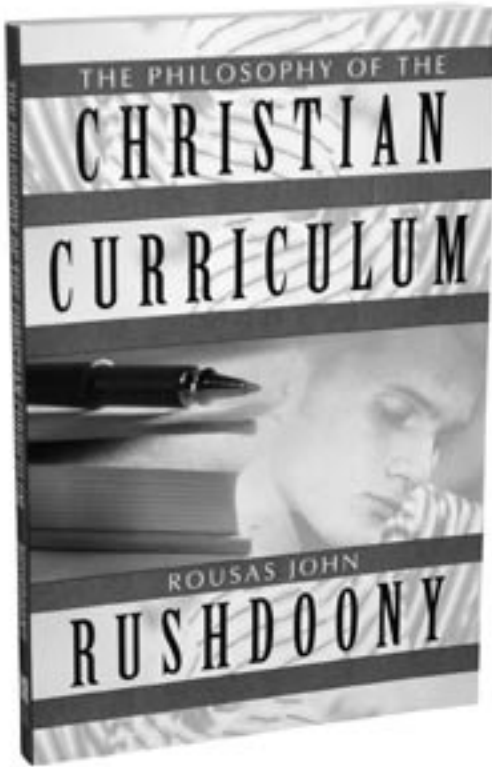
Redemptive history is not erratic. It develops and unfolds progressively, covenant renewal by covenant renewal; but it moves toward a consistent goal. There are no parentheses, no last-minute rewrites. God's plan is coherent. As we pass from the Old Covenant to the New, shadows give way to substance, types and images to reality. From Eden to Calvary there is an underlying continuity that blossoms into the Spirit-filled New Testament church and the spread of the gospel to all nations.

Is classic dispensationalism Biblical? No. Its first principles are at odds with Scripture, and the system suffers from that foundational weakness. As today's dispensational theologians rework that

system, we can hope and pray that they will give careful attention to what the New Testament actually says about the Old, about Israel, and about the covenants. The fruit of their labors could be a tremendous blessing to the church. ■

Greg Uttinger teaches theology, history, and literature at Cornerstone Christian School in Roseville, California. He lives nearby in Sacramento County with his wife, Kate, and their three children.

1. Pop dispensationalism also demands literalism — and then turns falling stars into missiles and locusts into Cobra helicopters.
2. This is the basic dispensational argument for the pre-tribulation Rapture, a removal of the church from history seven years before the Second Coming. Aside from a few appeals to types, dispensationalism seriously lacks exegetical arguments for this popular doctrine. Where *does* the Bible teach it?
3. Dispensationalists regularly try this tactic with Rome: the European Union is the Roman Empire about to be reborn.
4. See Genesis 35:16-20; 1 Samuel 10:2; Joshua 18:25. Rachel's loss at Rama points to her loss at Bethlehem, and the Restoration points to redemption and resurrection.
5. Luke 24:26-27, 44-48; John 5:39; Acts 3:22-25; Romans 16:25-27.
6. Those struggling with this idea should read the book of Hebrews carefully and thoroughly.
7. Matthew 3:9; Romans 9:6-8; Galatians 3:7-9, 16, 26-29; 4:28-31; Ephesians 2:11-13, 19-20; Philippians 3:3; Hebrews 12:22-24; 1 Peter 2:9-10; etc.
8. Matthew 21:42-44; Acts 2:39; Galatians 3:7-14, 26-29; 4:21-31; Ephesians 2:11-22; 1 Peter 2:9-10; Revelation 21-22.
9. Acts 2:16-21; 3:24; 13:38-41, 46-48; 15:13-19; 24:14; 26:6, 22-23, 27-28.



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Practical Implications of the Postmillennial Hope

By William O. Einwechter



Postmillennialism is a doctrine that instills hope for the future. Other eschatological views will, no doubt, say that they also give a vision of hope for the future. But the future hope for premillennialism and amillennialism does not concern this present age. It looks to a future age that will be ushered in by Christ's return. Neither view holds out hope for the triumph of Christ, His gospel, or His people in the present age. Each sees a decline for Christianity and the increase of evil and false religion as the future history of the world leading up to Christ's return.

Postmillennialism not only looks forward in hope to the final victory of God's people at the end of history, it also anticipates the victory of Christ and His people prior to the Second Coming. This postmillennial hope exercises a profound influence on those who hold to it and impacts the way they view life and ministry. It causes its adherents to be future-oriented — to live today in view of the future triumph for the Kingdom of God in the world.

Specific Implications of the Postmillennial Hope

1. Personal. Your eschatological view will determine how you view the world and your role as a servant of Christ. If, in this dispensation, the world and its future belong to the devil and his followers, you will view your role in the world accordingly. But if you believe that Christ has come for the specific purpose of overthrowing the works of

the devil and of establishing the rule of His messianic Kingdom to the four corners of the earth (*i.e.*, the postmillennial hope), your perspective will be radically different.

You will see every part of the world and every aspect of life as belonging to Christ by sovereign grant from the Father. You will believe that it all will one day be brought into submission to Christ. Regardless of current conditions (*e.g.*, persecution, suffering, or lack of progress), you know your labor is not in vain in the Lord. Because His kingdom will triumph, you know that all your righteous labors contribute to the ultimate ascendancy of righteousness.

2. Family. Dispensational premillennialists and many amillennialists believe that we are the “terminal generation” (or close to it). With this dreary view, there are no future generations for which a family should plan. But postmillennialism provides the basis for a vision of multi-generational faithfulness in a family because of its view that history still has a long way to go and its belief that the Kingdom of God will grow to encompass the world. The long-term, victorious perspective of postmillennialism encourages the goal of raising up many sons and daughters and training them for the work of God's Kingdom. The Christian family is an essential component of the Kingdom of God. It will not only share in the future victory of Christ's Kingdom, but it will, through fruitfulness and faithfulness, contribute significantly to that victory.

3. Church. The covenant body of believers in Jesus Christ that constitutes

the church must interpret the design of the Great Commission if it is faithfully to serve its risen Lord. Eschatology plays an important part in that interpretation. Postmillennialism teaches that the Great Commission calls Christians to subdue every area of life to Christ the King. Through evangelism, baptism, and teaching the whole counsel of God, the church prepares God's people to carry out their mandate to overthrow the strongholds of the wicked and to bring every work and every thought captive to the obedience of Jesus Christ. Defective eschatologies encourage a narrow view of the Great Commission, with the focus on individual salvation and sanctification to the neglect of the wider cultural mandate.

4. Politics. Postmillennialism proclaims Christ's mediatorial reign over all people and all institutions. It delights to inform the nations that Jesus Christ, by virtue of His exaltation to the right hand of God (Ac. 2:32-36), is “the prince of the kings of the earth” (Rev. 1:5), “King of kings and Lord of lords” (1 Tim. 6:15), and “the governor among the nations” (Ps. 22:28).

Because postmillennialists believe in the mediatorial reign of Christ, their politics are centered in the person of Christ and Biblical law. In addition, theonomic postmillennialists understand that advance in the political sphere is not based on the compromise of Biblical law, but only in the steadfast advocacy of it. They resist the temptation to sacrifice principle for the promise of some immediate gratification from a so-called “political victory” that does not promote

the crown rights of their King.

Postmillennialists believe that obedience to Christ is the only appointed means for the advance of His Kingdom — even in the political sphere. Because they know that their ultimate victory is certain, they are patient and continue to advocate an explicitly Christian approach to politics even in the face of seemingly insurmountable odds. Eschatological perspectives that deny Christ's current reign over the nations and their rulers tend to political views and practices that are pluralistic and centered in man — his reason, his rights, and his power.

General Implications of the Postmillennial Hope

Hope is energizing. Without hope, we reconcile ourselves either to the *status quo* and live in grim submission to it, or plunge into despair and are overcome by it. If Christians' eschatological hope is only in a resurrection life beyond this world, they abandon the dominion mandate and despair of any triumph of the gospel or of righteousness in the world. With no hope of a cultural transformation where the salvation of Christ reaches "far as the curse is found," Christians become deserters from the army of Christ that has been commissioned to follow Him in the subduing of all His foes (Ps. 110). Since their hope is exclusively in a heavenly rest, they devote all their energies to prepare their own souls and the souls of others for eternity.

The postmillennial hope makes for a different Christian. Yes, the postmillennialist hopes for the resurrection and the final victory at the end of history; but he is also filled with hope for this world. Because a postmillennialist envisions a world where the knowledge of the Lord covers the earth as the waters cover the sea (Is. 11:9), he is energized to labor not only for the salvation of

souls but also for the transformation of all nations and all of life.

The postmillennial hope rescues eschatology from the realm of historical irrelevance. Jürgen Moltmann explains the impact of eschatological hope:

Eschatology was long called the "doctrine of last things" or the "doctrine of the end." By these last things were meant events which will one day break upon man, history and the world at the end of time. They included the return of Christ in universal glory, the judgment of the world and the consummation of the kingdom, the general resurrection of the dead and the new creation of all things. These end events were to break into this world from somewhere beyond history, and to put an end to the history in which all things here live and move.... In actual fact, however, eschatology means the doctrine of the Christian hope, which embraces both the object hoped for and also the hope inspired by it. From first to last, and not merely in epilogue, Christianity is eschatology, is hope, forward looking and forward moving, and therefore revolutionizing and transforming the present....¹

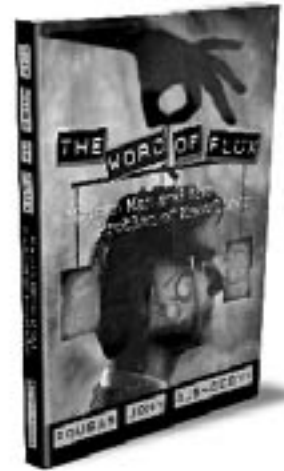
Postmillennialism restores the Christian hope of triumph in history. It causes the Christian, whether in his personal life, or in the sphere of family, church, or state, to be "forward looking and forward moving, and therefore revolutionizing and transforming the present."² ■

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1. Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1965), 15-16.

2. *Ibid.*

If you or someone you know has ever struggled with understanding the philosophy of Cornelius Van Til, this book is for you.



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The Last Disciple by Hank Hanegraaff and Sigmund Brouwer

Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., © 2004, 350 pages hardback.

Reviewed by Byron Snapp

The Great Tribulation occurred in the first century during Roman emperor Nero's reign. Writing within this framework, authors Hank Hanegraaff and Sigmund Brouwer have penned a fast-paced novel (the first in a series) that credibly weaves Biblical teaching into a fictional format.

Much of the action centers on Vitas, a war hero, who walks a tightrope as a member of Nero's inner circle while maintaining connections in the Roman Senate. In the book's opening pages, Vitas has become sick of the executions Nero continually orders. Nero's contempt is directed toward Christians. Some are crucified or cremated alive. Captive believers are released in the arena to be torn to pieces by hungry lions. Their deaths are but entertainment to the morally numb Coliseum crowd viewing the brutality.

Vitas is almost as tired of living in Rome as he is of seeing death on the battlefield. He sees no meaning to life but cannot understand how condemned Christians can face their demise so peacefully.

Those faithful to Nero have learned of a letter written in code by the last living disciple, John, that describes Nero as a beast whose reign will end. That letter and its author must be found and destroyed on the grounds of treason. Because their ease and livelihood depend on Nero's favor, these insiders will employ deceit and betray and risk danger and death to find John's letter.

Vitas' outlook begins to change significantly when he meets a slave girl who is a Christian. He obtains her freedom and passage to Jerusalem. Later he travels to Jerusalem to find her and at the same time renews old friendships,

finds new personal dangers, and faces the opportunity to bring to light dark secrets of the local ruler, Flores, who is on a murderous rampage among the Jewish population. One wrong move and his own life will end. Meanwhile his new-found desire for truth, justice, and the protection of life has earned him powerful enemies in Rome. He has no place where he is safe. A wrong act in either city could lead to a swift sentence of death.

But Vitas desires truth more than his own safety, while the enemy scrambles to understand a mysterious letter. Both sides must get to know Christians for the accomplishment of their different goals.

Skillfully, the writers take us into the world of first-century Christians. The debauchery and deceit does not devour their faith. Yet they face internal struggles. Will they remain faithful when soldiers come for them? Once captured, will they remain faithful unto death? Are they sufficiently strong to withstand the pleas of non-Christian family members to bow to Nero? When should they flee persecution? How can they prevent their own circles from being infiltrated?

The novel ends with the coded book still missing and with key characters sailing away from Rome to an unknown destination. They carry with them many unanswered questions and leave behind those who can provide the answers they earnestly desire. Future books in this series will unfold the contents of the coded letter and how the characters learn and react.

The authors bring a refreshing view of hermeneutics into their writing. An explanation of Matthew 24, Revelation

13, and references in Daniel show not only the unity of the testaments but also the importance of interpreting New Testament passages in light of the Old Testament. Clearly the generation of Jesus' day will not pass away until the Great Tribulation comes and the temple is destroyed. This interpretation is not only Biblical but also the only interpretation to provide comfort to suffering Christians in the first century.

In the Afterword the authors point out that they are more concerned with correct Biblical interpretation than with teaching a specific eschatological view. They then explain why the literal interpretation of Revelation 13 cannot hold up when viewed in light of the entire Scriptures.

The authors have written a riveting account of the Roman world under Nero's rule. A number of story lines are developed and interwoven throughout the volume. Excruciating suffering is described but not dwelt upon in detail. Such suffering of body, mind, and soul is historically accurate and underlines the Biblical teaching that the Great Tribulation occurred in the first century.

This page-turner can be read for enjoyment as well as for understanding the time of the Great Tribulation. It can be confidently recommended to those who are caught up with a misinterpretation of Scripture.

The story leaves readers anxious to read the next book. ■

Byron Snapp is Associate Pastor of Calvary Reformed Presbyterian Church in Hampton, Va. He is a graduate of King College (B.A.) and Reformed Theological Seminary (M.Div.). He and his wife, Janey, have three children. He can be contacted at crpc@visi.net.

Left Behind Novels Exemplify Literal Reading of End-Times Prophecies

What do you get when you take a woodenly literal interpretation of the Book of Revelation and try to apply it to real life?

You get someone looking at a demon — an entity consisting of spirit, not matter — under a magnifying glass.

According to *Apollyon*, the demons, from Rev. 9:3-11, “looked like miniature horses five or six inches long, with tails like those of scorpions.” Under the lens, journalist Buck Williams can see the pint-sized furies’ human faces, long hair, and the golden crowns or helmets on their tiny heads. Buck has captured one by smacking it with a tennis racket. Because they’re demons, not insects, they can’t be killed. But evidently a good smack with a tennis racket is enough to stun one.

Apollyon is the 1999 entry in the *Left Behind* series by Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins. The first, *Left Behind*, appeared in 1995 and was soon adapted into a movie. The twelfth, *Glorious Appearing*, came out last year. The series has attained bestseller status, with more than 10 million copies sold worldwide.

Throughout the series, the special effects just keep coming. In *Assassins* (1999), Rev. 9:18-21 comes to life as 200 million demonic horsemen, led by four fallen angels, attack the world and kill off a third of the human race. The riders “had to be ten feet tall and weigh 500 pounds,” with fierce faces, rippling muscles, flashy armor, and very nasty weapons — rather like gigantic action figures from *Masters of the Universe*.

The focus of evil in *Left Behind* is the Antichrist, Romanian diplomat Nicolae Carpathia. Nicolae, even before he becomes fully indwelt by Satan, has miraculous powers. He first displays them by murdering two of his associates (the Antichrist’s retirement package is not recommended) in front of a roomful of people, and then commanding the witnesses to remember it as a double suicide — which they do. But this astonishing feat of mass hypnosis is small potatoes compared to what Nicolae can do once he gets warmed up.

What harm does it do to treat Biblical prophecies so carelessly? A comment from C.S. Lewis’ *The Last Battle* (*The Chronicles of Narnia*) springs to mind:

“Tirian had never dreamed that one of the results of an Ape’s setting up a false Aslan [Lewis’ symbol for Christ] would be to stop people from believing in the real one.”

Commenting on the success of the books, and answering his critics, author LaHaye said, “...these books have helped countless believers and unbelievers alike to understand the wonderful plan God has for their future....” The novels are based on the concept of the pre-tribulation rapture [physical removal from Earth] of Christ’s church, which, said LaHaye, “we believe is clearly taught in the Bible.” Thousands of people have received Christ after reading these novels, he said. “Consequently, they will NOT be left behind when Jesus comes to rapture His church!”

However, nobody has calculated how many readers may have been put off Christianity after reading the series. Some, surely, have gone on from *Left Behind* to embrace a more orthodox faith; but we have no way of knowing how many have left behind *Left Behind*. ■

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The Impotence of Dispensationalism

By Joe Morecraft, III



Dispensationalism could not have given birth to America.

As a hermeneutic and worldview it is culturally impotent. It

does not allow for unity and continuity between the Old Testament and the New Testament, nor does it allow for unity in history. It chops up the Bible and history into dispensations, or periods of testing, in which God deals with people in different and changing ways. The dispensation in which one lives determines what parts of the Bible are ethically authoritative for him. Since Christians of the New Testament and afterward do not live in the Old Testament, the laws, promises, and threats of the Old Testament are not for them, but for the Jews of ancient Israel, who are God's earthly people, as the church is God's spiritual people.

This approach to the Bible creates a series of dichotomies in one's approach to life. It tears the fabric of life. It produces an antinomian worldview, *i.e.*, a disregard for Biblical laws, particularly those in the Old Testament. It is pessimistic and defeatist toward culture and the future, believing that, as things get worse and worse, the Christian's only hope is to be silently raptured out of this life before the Antichrist creates a hell on earth and Jesus later burns everything up. Such defeatism paralyzes, which unfortunately encourages peaceful co-existence with evil in a society. Any effort to build a civilization on dispensationalism, therefore, is like building a house on sand.¹

Covenantalism

Covenantalism, on the other hand, did give birth to America. As a hermeneutic and worldview it provides a firm foundation for a civilization of liberty and justice for all. Both testaments of the Bible are unified by a common covenantal promise and framework — the covenant of grace.² This bond of eternal friendship between God and His people in Christ includes communion with God and a sovereignly-dictated order of life for God's people.

Furthermore, this covenant is the framework within which we as God's people in Christ live to this very day. If we see in the Bible the unifying message and structure of God's covenant with His people, we will see a unity and continuity in the Christian life and our mission to the world, *i.e.*, the Dominion Mandate in Genesis 1:28 and the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20. It is a logical progression from "replenish the earth, and subdue it" to "teach all nations, baptizing them...."

The covenantal worldview recognizes that all the relationships of life between God and the world, God and man, and among human beings are based on covenants. All of human life takes place with reference to the covenant of God with human beings in Christ. That covenant is "the divine framework for human life — both religious and civil — from the beginning of the world until the last judgment."³ This idea of the covenant is not an innovation, rather it is "the very fabric from which the history of salvation was woven through the centuries from Adam [to today]."⁴

Not a New Idea

Covenant theology spread rapidly during the 16th and 17th centuries. It was brought to America by early settlers in the British colonies — the Anglicans in Virginia and the southeastern seaboard, the Puritans in New England, and especially the Presbyterians in the Middle and Southern colonies. It gathered momentum during the colonial period and acquired traits that identify a distinctively American covenantal (federal) tradition. It was taught in all the colleges and it influenced the foundation of all the colonial charters and later state constitutions.

The covenantal worldview, growing out of the Bible and the 16th century Protestant Reformation, was the moral, social, and political foundation of American society. "Federalism (covenantalism) was the social and political air breathed by the leaders of the American Revolution and by Madison and his colleagues of the Constitutional Convention. From them federalism formed the basis of the Articles of Confederation and the Constitution of the United States of America."⁵ This shaping influence of a covenantal worldview can be seen in the influence of two bestsellers in 18th century America, both of which were written by men committed to the covenant theology of the Reformation: *A Defense of Liberty Against Tyrants*, written in 1579 by a French Huguenot named Philippe Duplessis-Mornay; and *Lex Rex*, written in the mid-17th century by the Scottish Presbyterian Samuel Rutherford.⁶

The Covenantal Worldview

Covenantalism permeated the social life of early America — family, church, state, education, and commerce. It gave shape to the society that later became the United States of America. The basic elements of that worldview include the following:

1. All human beings are created in covenant with God and are subject to His divine moral order, as either covenant keepers or covenant breakers.
2. The individual, home, church, and state are all to enforce God's moral order in the Bible, being in covenant with Him.
3. In human communities particular persons become representative of an entire social group — fathers represent their children, elders their churches, elected officials their citizens, etc.
4. Because human beings are prone to covenant breaking, the civil government must have checks and balances and separation of powers.
5. The union of people in a society is more than a social contract. It is a covenant relation from God Himself woven into the very fabric of creation and history. A society is not merely a collection of individuals; it is a covenanted society of interdependent, interactive agreements based on the Word of God.

Society develops from private to public associations, as smaller societies unite by covenant into larger social entities — [city, county, state and nation]. The smaller groups are represented in the larger groups by persons who represent collectively the members of the groups from which they come, and it is the groups they represent rather than they themselves who are the members of the larger group. If human beings are gathered together without a covenant — there is only a crowd, a mob.⁷

Mob rule, *i.e.*, democracy, has no place in a covenanted society. Our

continued on page 29

Christian Zionists: Eschatology in Action

“Sometime in the future, there will be a seven-year period climaxed by the visible return of Jesus Christ. *Most prophecies which have not yet been fulfilled concern events which will develop shortly before the beginning of and during this seven-year countdown. The general time of this seven-year period couldn't begin until the Jewish people re-established their nation in their ancient homeland of Palestine.*” (Hal Lindsey, *The Late Great Planet Earth*)

Among the many complications on the way to peace in the Middle East is a growing American Christian Zionist movement — those who believe in a dispensational, premillennial eschatology and a literal interpretation of Bible prophecies, and who act on their beliefs with respect to the Jewish nation.

According to a recent article in the *Washington Times*, at an “Inter-faith Zionist Leadership Summit” in Washington, D. C. in 2003, speakers criticized American peace proposals as “a Satanic road map,” urged President George W. Bush not to waver in his support for Israel against the Palestinians, and predicted that Jews would someday build a third Temple on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem — where Islam's Dome of the Rock now stands. It is difficult to imagine that development leading to peace.

Religion professor Donald Wagner has noted that Christian Zionists have established permanent headquarters in Jerusalem — the International Christian Embassy-Jerusalem, and

the offices of Bridges for Peace. In a *Daily Star* article, Wagner reports that Christian Zionists “work closely with the Israeli government, religious and secular Zionist organizations, and are particularly empowered when the more conservative Likud Party is in control of the Knesset [Israel's parliament].” They raise money for Israel and support Israel in their churches and in the American media.

The movement, Wagner said, “grew out of a particular theological system called ‘premillennial dispensationalism’ which emphasized the literal and future fulfillment of such Biblical [sic] teachings as ‘the rapture,’ the rise of the Antichrist, the battle of Armageddon, and the central role that a revived nation-state of Israel would play during the latter days.” They have “a pessimistic view of history and wait in eager anticipation for...a series of wars and tragedies pointing to the return of Jesus.... Leading Christian Zionist authorities in Bible prophecy seek to interpret political developments according to the prophetic schedule of events that should unfold according to their view of scripture.”

Hal Lindsey's 1970 bestseller, *The Late Great Planet Earth*, is credited by some with popularizing this brand of premillennialism in America. Professor Wagner listed prominent evangelical leaders such as Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson, and Franklin Graham as leading lights in the Christian Zionist movement. ■

Practical Postmillennialism.

Another great work on eschatology edited by Dr. Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr.

Thine is the Kingdom: A Study of the Postmillennial Hope

Edited by Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr. Israel's misunderstanding of Eschatology eventually destroyed her by leading her to reject the Messiah and the coming of the Kingdom of Heaven. Likewise, false eschatological speculation is destroying the church today, by leading her to neglect her Christian calling and to set forth false expectations. In this volume, edited by Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., the reader is presented with a blend of Biblical exegesis of key Scripture passages, theological reflection on important doctrinal issues, and practical application for faithful Christian living.

Thine is the Kingdom lays the scriptural foundation for a Biblically-based, hope-filled postmillennial eschatology, while showing what it means to be postmillennial in the real world. The book is both an introduction to and defense of the eschatology of victory. Chapters include contemporary writers Keith A. Mathison, William O. Einwechter, Jeffrey Ventrella, and Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., as well as chapters by giants of the faith Benjamin B. Warfield and J.A. Alexander. This work should prove immensely helpful for understanding and defending the postmillennial hope. It should also enliven our prayer to God as we faithfully pray: "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. . . thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen."



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“Arise! Shine, for Thy Light Is Come”

By Chris Hoops

“Then God said, ‘Let there be light and there was Light’” (Gen. 1:3), and Mary conceived and bare a son and “called his name Jesus” (Mt. 1:25). Jesus, the light of the world, came into a darkened world, filled with sin, corruption, and misery. “And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness [does] not comprehend it” (Jn. 1:5).



The aged Simeon, living in Jerusalem in the days of Roman occupation, waited for the “Consolation of Israel.” When he saw Joseph and Mary bring the infant Christ child to the temple, he “took Him up in his arms and blessed God and said ‘... [M]y eyes have seen Your salvation which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, a *light* to bring revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel’” (Lk. 2:25–32, emphasis added). Jesus is that light, but the world and all its peoples sit in great darkness. Have we forgotten this?

“Arise,” heralded the prophet Isaiah, “shine; For your light has come! And the glory of the LORD is risen upon you. For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth and deep darkness the people; but the LORD will arise over you, and His glory will be seen upon you. The Gentiles shall come to your light and kings to the brightness of your rising. Lift up your eyes all around, and see” (Is. 60:1–4).

Jesus said, “I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness” (Jn. 12:46). R. J. Rushdoony wrote:

Jesus Christ, as the Word incarnate, reveals what men are to be in Him. He is the light of the world; apart from Him we walk in darkness. Evil men, however, hate the light and love darkness. Light and life are as closely connected as death and darkness. John...says that the world of darkness, fallen men, could neither understand nor seize and take possession of Him. By His resurrection, Christ destroyed the power of sin and

death: they could not take possession of Him. He who created all things came to restore and reconstruct all things; the power of darkness sought to prevent this and failed. The world of darkness hates the light and seeks vainly to put it out, but the light is now shining because it cannot be put out.¹

This culture of darkness and death in which we find ourselves hates Christendom and her Savior and loves death. Fallen men, who refuse to come to the light and be saved, will do all in their power to put an end to the gospel and all who live by it. They hate God (Ps. 14).

People of the Light

But what about those of us who love God, who are of the light? What are we to do?

Our task, indeed our calling (Mt. 28:19–20), is not to seek a place at the table where dead men discuss the affairs of death and darkness. Ours is to preach the power of God, the gospel of Jesus Christ, which is the bold proclamation of the death, burial, and resurrection of the Savior. Ours is to shine the light on the culture of death and dying and to offer to those sitting in darkness light and life and to bring reformation to our land. Those who love darkness will not come to the light “because their deeds [are] evil” (Jn. 3:19). But “he that follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life,” proclaimed the incarnate Son of God to His disciples (Jn. 8:12).

When we speak of culture, civilization, or social order, we must believe, as the saints of old did, that God’s Holy Word addresses every area of life and living (2 Pet. 1:3). It is not a place

at their table of death we must seek, but we must bring to our table — to Christ’s Table, to the Supper of the Lamb — those who wish to live. He has prepared a feast, and often we settle for moldy crumbs. He has bid us “Come, for all things are now ready” (Lk. 14:15–24). God will have His people. “Gentiles shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising” (Is. 60:3). Do not waste time wrestling in the darkness; work in the light as He is in the light.

The Light of Life

So what is the light? The sun shines on the just and unjust equally. We are not talking of the sunlight, but the light of God’s Holy Word. St. Augustine said, “*Crede, ut intelligas*”: “Believe in order that you may understand.” Understanding to the Bishop of Hippo meant believing God and taking Him at His Word.

God’s Word alone is the light of life. When one believes, his darkened mind is regenerated and enlightened. The more one reads and studies the Scriptures, “rightly dividing the word of truth,” the more he understands the world and creation around him. More importantly, we must settle in our own hearts and minds that God’s Word, and not our own thoughts and opinions or those of others, is the truth. Truth and falsehood, right and wrong, good and evil, justice and mercy, are not what we say; they are what God’s Word declares them to be. They are divine constructs, and therefore understanding comes from believing His Word and adhering to it.

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Death of the Church Victorious

by Ovid Need¹

Sovereign Grace Publishers, 434 pages.

Reviewed by Joseph M. Canfield

Death of the Church Victorious is a frightening book, one that shows how far the church went off the track during the 19th and 20th centuries. If carefully studied, it also shows us how the church can get back on track and become the instrument that the Lord intended for the redemption of men.

From Need's work we see that no premillennial idea had any standing in the church of the 18th century. Strange people, using strange methods, forced the idea onto the church. A Jesuit priest, Manuel Lacunza, who posed as a converted Jew, took some prophetic Scriptures and promoted the idea that the church would fail in its mission. Later, an eccentric and rather conceited young Scot, Edward Irving, caught on to the idea. As a well-known and respected preacher, he promoted Lacunza's vision of doom among a British elite that was scared by the French Revolution and saw in it only the end of the Age.

The scion of a wealthy Irish family, J. N. Darby, avidly promoted the idea of church failure. Need found statements in Darby's writings that are far from Biblically correct. Darby's 1869 letter written from Germany is almost blasphemous in downgrading the Great Commission, words of our Lord Himself. Throughout Darby's writings we find him stating that his interpretations should be preferred to teachings that had prevailed in the church for centuries. His message was of doom and failure with huge loss of souls implicit. The inconsistency of preaching doom

while living in posh country mansions and luxurious resorts should help us evaluate the Darby-premil movement.

Need also shows how zealously the new vision of failure and doom spread around the world. It received speedy acceptance in an America whose ideals had been shattered by the War Between the States. American Christians had lost hope, so they assumed the end-time was near. At first, mainline churches resisted. But as men of little theological training, like D. L. Moody and C. I. Scofield, began to spread the Brethren idea of failure, it became accepted. Dispensationalism was offered as a defense against the likes of evolution and humanism that sprouted in the 19th century.

The victory of premillennialism was pretty well complete by 1900. With it came pietistic retreat from reality and social concern, leaving an ineffective, self-centered religion. The 20th century was mostly a mopping-up operation for unbelief. Those who opposed the poison of Dispensational-Premillennialism were vilified or ignored; and this occurs to an extent even today.

Thanks to Darby and his successors, the 21st century has opened with a defeated church in fast retreat before humanism, pagan religions, and infidelity. Yet with careful study of God's Word, it is evident that the Great Commission and the Abrahamic Covenant call for a total triumph for the church in this Age. Proper reaction to Need's book will lead a careful student back to the Word to see that the risen Christ plans and pro-

claims total victory. The believer should take a stand for that and work toward bringing in the Kingdom of Christ. The turnaround will come when men really listen to Jesus Christ, accept His Word, and give themselves to carrying out His purpose.

Need's book is a must read! A must read for every pastor, to say nothing of the informed and concerned people in the pews. ■

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1. Ovid Need has edited and published *The Biblical Examiner* (biblicalexaminer.org) for 20 years. His articles have appeared in the *Chalcedon Report* and the *Journal of Christian Reconstruction*. He was a pastor from 1983 to 2002, when he began writing *Death of the Church Victorious*. The book can be ordered from Amazon.com or through biblicalexaminer.org.

The Meaning of the “Millennium”

Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., Th.D.



One of the more familiar topics in Christian prophecy discussions is the millennial reign of Christ mentioned by John in Revelation 20:1-6. The word “millennium” is based on the Latin translation of the phrase “thousand years” which is found six times in these six verses. In fact, this brief passage provides us the descriptive phraseology differentiating the three basic evangelical schools of Biblical prophecy: premillennialism, amillennialism, and postmillennialism.¹

The immensely popular dispensational brand of premillennialism is solidly rooted in Revelation 20. Indeed, dispensationalists consider the literal understanding of this passage as proof positive of their premillennialism, whereas both the amillennial and post-millennial positions teach that the 1,000 years is a symbolic period of time, rather than a literal 365,000 days.

But is the dispensational approach to Revelation 20 appropriate? And if not, how shall we interpret this important passage?

Literalism Difficulties

Despite the widespread dispensational conviction that we must take Revelation 20 in a strictly literal sense, this approach is fundamentally flawed.

First, Revelation is a book of symbols. In Revelation 1:1 John opens by

declaring that the book was “sent and signified.” Even dispensationalist John Walvoord admits that this speaks of “revelation through symbols, as in this book.”² Elsewhere he writes: “Apocalyptic literature is in a place all by itself because all agree that this is not, strictly speaking, literal in its revelation. Outstanding examples, of course, are the Books of Daniel, Ezekiel, and Revelation.”³ Consequently, the 1,000-year reign of Christ might well be a symbolic time frame.

Second, John provides clues demonstrating the symbolic nature of his prophecies. The seven “stars” are not stars but angels (Rev. 1:20). The seven “lampstands” portray churches (1:20). The seven “eyes” on the Lamb are really “seven spirits” (5:6). The bowls of “incense” stand for prayers (5:8). The “dragon” is Satan (12:9). The seven “heads” of the beast are seven mountains and kings (17:9-10). The ten “horns” of the beast symbolize kings (17:12). And the “waters” signify peoples (17:15). He provides us only a few samples of his symbolic method, but these open up the clear prospect of further symbolic features — including the possibility of Revelation 20 being symbolic.

Third, many elements of the book absolutely resist literal interpretation. In fact, if approached literalistically these would end up as embarrassing absurdities. Do we not see strange creatures

filled with eyes (Rev. 4:6)? A slain but living lamb with seven eyes (5:6)? Four lone horsemen wreaking cultural havoc (6:1-8)? Men talking to mountains (6:16)? People washing robes in blood to make them white (7:14)? Locusts with faces of men, teeth of lions, crowns of gold, and tails like scorpions (9:6)? Lion-headed, scorpion-tailed horses belching fire and smoke (9:17)?

Do we not encounter fire-breathing prophets (11:5)? A seven-headed red dragon with ten horns and seven crowns who pulls stars down from heaven (12:3-4)? A woman with eagles’ wings standing on the moon (12:14)? A serpent vomiting a river of water from his mouth (12:15)? The many crowned, seven-headed beast who is a compound of four carnivores (13:2)? A two-horned beast forcing men to idolatrous worship (13:11)? An angel with a sickle reaping the earth (14:15)? Frogs coming out of the mouth of a dragon (16:13)? A prostitute riding the seven-headed beast while she is drunk on blood (17:6)? Christ returning from heaven with a sword in his mouth and on horseback (19:15)? A city the size of a 1,500-mile high cube floating down out of heaven (21:10, 16)? A tree bearing twelve different fruits (22:2)?

What reputable exegete would interpret these literalistically? Again, perhaps the 1,000 years is another symbolic feature of Revelation.

Revelation 20 Difficulties

Numerous other matters complicate the premillennial analysis of Revelation 20 itself, only a few of which I have space to mention.

First, why is such an important concept as the 1,000-year reign of Christ found in only one book in all of Scripture? And in only one chapter of that book? In fact, in only the first six verses of that chapter? After all, the “millennium” controls the three basic evangelical views. Yet this time frame appears only in Revelation 20.

Why do we not read of the “thousand years” in Paul’s important passages on Christ’s return and reign: 1 Corinthians 15:20-58; Romans 11:1-26; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18? Or in Jesus’ own teaching on the Kingdom, as in the Kingdom Parables of Matthew 13 and in the latter part of the Olivet Discourse in Matthew 25:31-46? Or anywhere else in Scripture? Why does it only appear in the most symbolic book in all of the Bible?

Second, why should we expect that the perfectly rounded numerical quantity (1,000) must be understood literalistically? Especially since it is only mentioned in this highly symbolic book? Are we ready to believe that God owns the cattle on only 1,000 hills (Ps. 50:10)? That the Lord promises that Israel will be only 1,000 times more numerous (Dt. 1:11)? Or that God’s love is limited only to 1,000 generations (Dt. 7:9)? Or that only 1,000 years in God’s courts are preferred by the saints (Ps. 84:10)? Or that God experiences 1,000 years as a day, therefore 4,000 years must be experienced as four days, and so on (Ps. 90:4; 2 Pet. 3:8)?

Third, is the fallen angel Satan to be bound with a literal chain and placed in a literal abyss (Rev. 20:1-3)? Of what is this chain made?

Fourth, how are we to deal with the contradictions of dispensationalism

in the passage? Where is premillennial, pre-tribulational “rapture” mentioned? What of the two resurrections? The “first resurrection” is out of sequence in that dispensationalism expects it to occur seven years prior to millennium, whereas Revelation 20:4 ties it to the beginning of the millennium. In the dispensational system, when are we to expect the resurrection of the saints converted *during* the tribulation (e.g., 7:14)? After all, the “first resurrection” is for believers only and the second resurrection for non-believers. But this leaves the tribulation-era saints with no resurrection.

Fifth, are we willing to accept a second humiliation of Christ based on a literal reading of this passage? Do we really expect the exalted Christ (Eph. 1:19-23; Phil. 2:9-11; Heb. 1:13; 1 Pet. 3:22) to return to earth for a 1,000-year rule only to have His personally administered Kingdom revolt against Him and surround Him in Jerusalem (Rev. 20:7-9)?

Postmillennial Observations

What, then, does the postmillennialist make of Revelation 20? The 1,000 years seem to function as a symbolic value, not strictly limited to a literal thousand-year period. One thousand is the cube of ten (10x10x10); ten is the number of quantitative perfection (apparently because it is the full complement of digits on a man’s hands or feet). The “thousand years,” then, serve as John’s symbolic portrayal of the long-lasting glory of the Kingdom Christ establishes at His first coming.

In Revelation 20:1-3 John portrays the negative implications of Christ’s triumph over Satan, when “the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan” (v. 2) is spiritually bound [Gk.: *deo*]. This binding restricts him from successfully accomplishing his evil design in history. The angel from heaven

who binds him evidently is Christ Himself, in that: (1) The struggle of the ages is ultimately between Satan and Christ (Gen. 3:15; Mt. 4:1-11; Jn. 12:31-32; Ac. 26:15-18), making it most appropriate for Christ to bind Satan; (2) Christ appears under angelic imagery elsewhere in Revelation (cp. Rev. 10:1 with 1:13-15).

Furthermore, Matthew 12:28-29 informs us of Satan’s binding by Christ during His earthly ministry: “If I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. Or again, how can anyone enter a strong man’s house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up [Gk.: *deo*, same term as in Rev. 20:2] the strong man? Then he can rob his house” (Mt. 12:28-29). This parallels the thought of Revelation 20:1-6.

Christ accomplishes Satan’s binding *judicially* in the first century. This binding does not result in the *total inactivity* of Satan; rather it restrains his power by Christ’s superior might. The context specifically qualifies the purpose of the binding: it is “in order that” (Gk.: *hina*) Satan not “deceive the nations.” Before the coming of Christ all nations beyond the borders of Israel were under the dominion of Satan (2 Kin. 17:29; Lk. 4:6; Ac. 26:17-18). Israel alone of all the peoples of the earth was an oasis in a sin-parched world; only they knew the true God and salvation (Ps. 147:19-20; Amos 3:2). But with the coming of Christ and the spread of “the gospel of the kingdom” (Mt. 24:14; cp. Mt. 4:17, 23; Mk. 10:25, 29; Lk. 9:2, 6) beyond the borders of Israel (Mt. 28:19; Acts 1:8; 13:47; 26:20), Satan begins to lose his dominion over the Gentiles.

In Revelation 20:4-6 we see the positive implications of Christ’s Kingdom. While Satan is bound, Christ rules and His redeemed people participate with Him in that rule (Rev. 20:4). These participants include both the quick and

the dead: the martyred saints in heaven (“those who had been beheaded because of the testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God”) and the persevering saints on earth (“and those who [Gk: *oitines*] had not worshiped the beast”) (NASB). Christ’s kingdom rule involves all those who suffer for Him and enter heaven above, as well as those who live for Him during their earthly sojourn.

The “first resurrection” refers to the spiritual resurrection of those born again by God’s grace: “We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death” (1 Jn. 3:14). “But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions — it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus” (Eph. 2:4-6; cp. Col. 2:13).

In fact, in his gospel the author of Revelation parallels the *spiritual* resurrection of salvation with the *physical* resurrection of prophecy as he does in Revelation 20: “I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has *crossed over from death to life*. I tell you the truth, *a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live*. For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself. And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man. Do not be amazed at this, for *a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out* — those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned” (Jn. 5:24-29, emphasis added).

continued on page 30

Proclaiming ‘The Millenium’ Can Be Deadly

In 1851, a failed civil servant in southern China proclaimed himself the “younger brother of Jesus Christ,” and launched a millennial movement that claimed 30 million lives before it was crushed in 1864. (By comparison, World War II, covering the entire world and using modern weapons, including two atomic bombs, killed 45 million.)

Under highly distorted Christian pretenses, the Taiping Rebellion sought to overthrow the Manchu Dynasty and usher in a new age of universal peace, justice, and prosperity. Because its deranged leader had once studied under American Southern Baptist missionaries, and claimed to be a Christian crusader against social injustice, the rest of the world was slow to appreciate the true nature of the Taiping movement. This only became clear as the Taipings sacked cities, massacred civilians, and destroyed farmlands.

Finally the Chinese government army, with help from the European powers, put down the Taipings. Thousands of them followed their leader’s example and committed suicide.

Does this pattern seem familiar?

History is full of false messiahs.

But because Jesus Christ Himself spoke of His return (Mt. 24-25, Mk. 13), and Christians believe in a Second Coming of Christ, there have always been millennial movements in Christ’s name that turned out to be ultimately false and immediately destructive.

If we tend to associate end-of-the-world panics with the Middle Ages or the 19th century, we can soon discover that the late 20th century, our own time, was rife with false millennial expectations. And some of them proved deadly.

Most Americans who were alive at the time remember the mass suicide of People’s Temple cultists at Jonestown in Guyana, South America. The cult leader, Jim Jones, was an ordained minister in the Christian Church/Disciples

of Christ. He began his “social gospel,” inner-city ministry in the 1950s, later founding the People’s Temple. By 1970 he was preaching that the end of the world was at hand, to be accomplished by nuclear war.

Under pressure from legal authorities probing alleged irregularities in his church’s financial practices, Jones and his followers fled to South America. In 1978, a U. S. Congressman, accompanied by reporters, visited Jonestown to investigate rumors that Jones had turned his jungle community into a concentration camp, holding members against their will. The visit culminated in a gunfight in which the congressman was killed — and the mass suicide of Jones and more than 900 of his followers, including 276 children.

Much less well known is a similar event in Uganda in 2000, in which at least 780 members of the Restoration of the Ten Commandments of God (RTCG) cult committed suicide or were murdered by cult leaders. This cult, a Roman Catholic offshoot founded in 1988, taught that “hurricanes of fire would rain forth from heaven” at the end of the year 2000, ending the world and bringing on the Second Coming and the Last Judgment.

Similar messages continue to be preached throughout the world, and here in America. An Internet search will turn up dozens of them. For example: the teachings of Romanian “dreamer” and “prophet” Dumitru Duduman, who preaches that the end of the world will begin soon with the “burning” of the United States by Russian spies who explode America’s “nuclear warehouses,” followed by a global rush to Armageddon.

It would require a whole book to list all these movements, but there is one thing they all have in common. None of them is Biblical. ■

Rushdoony, Meaning... cont. from page 3

marrying or giving in marriage in eternity, there is obviously much in eschatology which concerns itself with them. Add to this God's statement, "It is not good that the man should be alone" (Gen. 2: 18), and we must recognize man's unity in marriage in God's calling is an essential part of eschatology. William Buckley has a facetious love of words, and for a time liked to use the phrase, "immanentize the eschaton." We can apply the term to God's purpose, to immanentize the eschaton, to work in terms of a calling and to find fellowship therein, to procreate towards creating the citizen-workers of God's Kingdom, and to unite with others in the Lord to exercise godly dominion. Not only is marriage basic to God's temporal eschatology, but it provides, in the typology of the Bride of Christ, a type of the historical and eternal eschatology.

Third, God pronounces a blessing upon realized eschatology, upon faithfulness to God's calling and end-point. We do not labor for the Lord in a vacuum but under God and in His total universe of law and government. No more than we can step outside of this world at will can we step out of the realm of God's blessings and curses (Dt. 28:1, 15). We live in an eschatological universe, God's creation, and there is no escaping that fact.

Fourth, a fact we have already cited, God's curses are a part of eschatology. Death is pronounced by God as the sentence for sin. The contrast between the realms of blessing and cursing is very pronounced. As sinners, we tend to see the whole world as full of "thou shalt nots," because for us the world of reality is the world of sin, of rebellion, anger, and questioning. Hence, the forbidden looms very large for us, and the permitted and blessed is small and uninteresting. The contrast is between "every tree

of the garden" that may be freely eaten and the one tree which man must not touch. As God presents the two ways in Eden, the choice given to man for blessedness is clearly the *broad* and easy way. Our Lord, however, tells a fallen world that the way to the Lord, *i.e.*, the Lord's way of faithfulness, of obedience, is "the straight gate" (Mt. 7:13-14). The word translated as *straight* is in the Greek *stenos*, from a root meaning to groan. We have the word in English as "stenographer," literally, narrow writing, with a narrow time limit, and hence, figuratively, with groaning. What for Adam was a broad way has become in a fallen world a groaning way, and God drags us sometimes kicking and screaming into the way of righteousness. The fact that we depreciate both blessings and curses is an eschatological fact.

Fifth, we are told, "the LORD God commanded the man." Because God is the Lord and creator, He commands men. God's law is thus another eschatological fact. It sets the terms for our eschatological functioning. We cannot separate God's law from eschatology without doing violence to Scripture. All the prophetic declarations concerning the Day of the Lord are in terms of God's law. We cannot limit the scope of eschatology without limiting God. ■

1. Hans-Georg Link, "Eschatos," in Colin Brown, ed., *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1976), 55.
2. *Ibid.*, 56.

Rushdoony, Psychology... cont. from page 5

Postmillennialism holds that Scripture is a consistent whole which presents one way of salvation and one eternal law-word of God. It sees the Christian message going beyond soteriology, the doctrine of salvation (which is the beginning of the Christian life, not its end-point), to every area of life and

thought. Postmillennialism emphasizes dominion in terms of the creation mandate and the Lordship of Christ, who now rules as our head and Lord of Lords, to whom every knee shall bow and every tongue confess.

Postmillennialism sees salvation as a personal victory that foreshadows the cosmic, historical victory that shall be universally acknowledged at the Second Coming and Final Judgment. It sees man's role as one of faithfulness to God and His law, and the Christian life that of a soldier-servant in the Kingdom of God. Its theme is not that men will bring in the Kingdom, but that men must be found faithful in the service of the King and His Kingdom that shall know no end.

What we believe about eschatology is what we believe about all of history and the meaning and context of our lives as the people of God. Confusion about eschatology is understandable, apathy is not. What you believe about eschatology matters. ■

1. Rousas John Rushdoony, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 2 (Vallecito, CA: Ross House Books, 1994), 789.
2. C. I. Scofield has a strong claim as the most influential churchman of the 20th century. He marginalized both his notes and most of the Word of God as of historical value only.

Gentry, Optimism... cont. from page 12

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1. For more information on this topic, see my contribution in Darrell L. Bock, ed., *Three Views on the Millennium and Beyond*

(Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999).

2. Cp. Exodus 9:29; 19:5; Leviticus 25:23; Deuteronomy 10:14; 1 Samuel 2:8; 1 Chronicles 29:11, 14; Job 41:11; Psalm 50:12; 89:11; 115:16; 1 Corinthians 10:26, 28.
3. John 6:56; 14:16-20, 23; 15:4-5; 17:23, 26; Romans 8:10; Galatians 2:20; 4:19; Ephesians 3:17; Colossians 1:27; 1 John 4:4.
4. John 7:39; 14:16-18; Romans 8:9; 1 Corinthians 3:16; 2 Corinthians 6:16.
5. John 3:3-8; 1 Corinthians 6:11; Titus 3:5; 1 Peter 1:11-12, 22.
6. Ezekiel 18:23; 33:11; Luke 15:10; 2 Corinthians 5:19; 1 Timothy 1:15; 2:5.
7. Romans 1:16; 15:19; 16:25; 1 Corinthians 1:18, 24; 1 Thessalonians 1:5.
8. 2 Corinthians 6:7; Ephesians 6:17; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; Hebrews 4:12.
9. Matthew 7:7-11; 21:22; Ephesians 2:18; Philippians 4:6; Hebrews 4:16; 10:19-22; 1 John 3:22; 5:14-15.
10. John 14:13, 14; 15:7, 16; 16:23, 24, 26; 1 John 3:22; 5:14, 15.
11. Matthew 12:28-29; Luke 10:18; John 12:31; 16:11; 17:15; Acts 26:18; Romans 16:20; Colossians 2:15; 1 John 3:8; 4:3-4; 5:18.

Morecraft, Impotence... cont. from page 21

founding fathers in the 16th through the 18th centuries preferred a confederated republic to either a democracy or a consolidated nation. The War Between the States was fought to change the covenantal nature of American society and politics, to change a covenanted society into “one nation indivisible,” with allegiance going to the central civil government in Washington, DC.

...the faithful activity of God in covenant does not cease with the creation of the world but continues in human community and history until the consummation of all things. Humans living in symbiotic interdependence with one another and God are constantly acting not only in response to the immediate context of other humans in the various covenants of society but also in response to the continuing activity of God the faithful One. The hope for societal

justice as well as for salvation rests...ultimately upon the will and action of God.⁸

Three modern wars have been fought to preserve a covenantal approach to society: the English Civil War in the 1640s, the “Glorious Revolution” in England in 1688, and the American War of Independence in 1776. The French Revolution of 1789, the War Between the States in the 1860s, and most modern wars have been fought to destroy a covenantal approach to society.

In its purposeful disconnect from the covenantal nature of Christian civilization, dispensationalism is simply on the wrong side of history. In fact, it is disconnected from history altogether. ■

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1. Two helpful refutations of dispensationalism are *House Divided: the Break-up of Dispensational Theology* by Greg L. Bahnsen and Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr. and *Dispensationalism Today, Yesterday and Tomorrow* by Curtis I. Crenshaw and Grover E. Gunn, III.

2. For an excellent example of the covenantal interpretation of the Bible, see *The Christ of the Covenants* by O. Palmer Robertson; and for an excellent example of the application of a covenantal interpretation of the Bible to society see *Fountainhead of Federalism: Heinrich Bullinger and the Covenantal Tradition* by Charles S. McCoy and J. Wayne Baker.

3. Charles S. McCoy, J. Wayne Baker, et al., *Fountainhead of Federalism* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1991), 20.

4. *Ibid.*, 15.

5. *Ibid.*, 28.

6. For an excellent exposition of the covenantal politics of Samuel Rutherford, see *Politics, Religion and the British Revolutions: The Mind of Samuel Rutherford* by John Coffey.

7. McCoy, 57.

8. *Ibid.*, 53.

Hoops, Arise!... cont. from page 23

When we believe Christ alone is the ruler of the nations, then we have understanding. Knowing that His Word to mankind is absolute and His reign as King of Kings and Lord of Lords is our law and standard is understanding. Obedience to God’s commandments, judgments, and statutes is understanding. Being doers of the Word is understanding. Feeding the poor and helping the homeless is understanding. Replacing our humanistic grasp on law and justice with that taught in God’s “law of liberty” is understanding. Ridding the Lord’s free peoples from unjust taxation, unsound economic policies, and unlawful regulations, which choke civil and religious liberty and freedom, is understanding. Adhering to the Biblical “rule of law” is understanding.

Understanding is not what we think, nor is it our personal opinion. To truly understand is to believe God and take Him at His Word, for “knowledge of the Holy is understanding.”

“Arise, shine; For your light has come!” (Is. 60:1). For “the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining” (1 Jn. 2:8, emphasis added). Now *that* is understanding! ■

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1. Rousas John Rushdoony, *The Gospel of John*, (Vallecito, CA: Ross House Books, 2000), 6.

Gentry, *Millennium...* cont. from page 27

Having been spiritually resurrected, the saints (whether in heaven or on earth) are spiritually enthroned. Revelation 20:4-6 speaks of the saints living and reigning with Christ, which elsewhere refers to a spiritual reality in the present experience of God's people: "God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:6; cp. 1 Cor. 3:21-22; Col. 3:1-2).

This is a redemptive reign in that John informs his original audience early in Revelation that Christ *already* "has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father" (Rev. 1:6). Peter tells the first century Christians (and us): "[Y]ou are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light" (1 Pet. 2:9). These observations parallel Revelation 20:6.

Thus, the saints' reigning "with Christ" on thrones while Satan is bound beautifully pictures Christ's redemptive kingdom already established: Christ brings His kingdom into the world to battle with Satan during His earthly ministry (Mt. 4:1-11; 12:28-29); God formally bestows kingly authority upon Him at His resurrection/ascension (Mt. 28:18; Rom. 1:4); and Christ promises continuing growth in history until the end (Mt. 13:31-33; 1 Cor. 15:25). The King of kings, possessing all authority, commissions His servants to bring men into His kingdom, promising all the while to be with them and to bless them in their labor (Mt. 28:18-20; Phil. 4:13). Christians are "overcomers" (cp. 1 Jn. 2:13-14; 4:4; 5:4-5) and are seated with Christ who presently rules: "To

him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne" (Rev. 3:21). The "millennial" era has already lasted almost 2,000 years; it may continue another 1,000 or 10,000 more for all we know.

The "rest of the [spiritually] dead" do not participate in this spiritual resurrection. In fact, they "do not live again until the thousand years" is finished (Rev. 20:5). At that time they are physically resurrected (implied) in order to be subjected by "the second death" (eternal torment), which is brought about at Judgment Day (Rev. 20:11-15). At that time, of course, God will resurrect all men physically (Job 19:23-27; Is. 26:19; Jn. 5:28-29; Acts 24:15; Rom. 8:11, 23; Phil. 3:20; 1 Thes. 4:16).

Premillennialists' foundational passage fails to support their theological structure. Their approach to Revelation 20 has been weighed in the balance and found wanting. ■

Kenneth Gentry is Chancellor of Christ College in Lynchburg, Virginia, and a full time pastor. He is the author of fourteen books and contributor to several others from Zondervan, Baker, Kregel, P&R and other publishers. He operates the Christian educational website www.kennethgentry.com where he offers a correspondence course in Christian research, writing, and publication.

1. I would note that premillennialism is divided into two sub-positions: dispensational premillennialism and historic premillennialism. The dispensational view is the most popular eschatological option in the evangelical church in America, even though it is the most recent position, having arisen in the early 1800s.
2. John F. Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* (Chicago: Moody, 1966), 35.
3. John F. Walvoord, *Prophecy Knowledge Handbook* (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor, 1990), 15.

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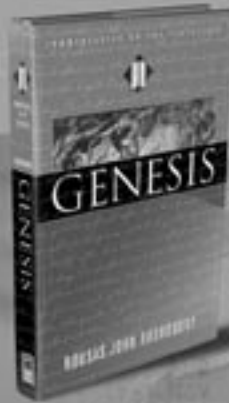
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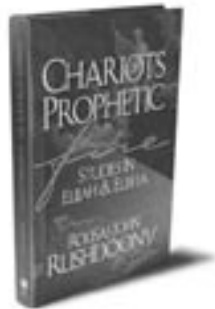


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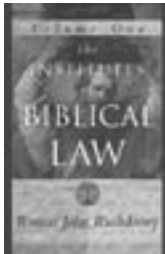


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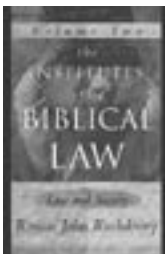
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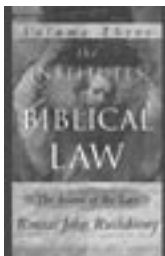
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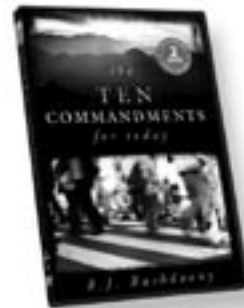
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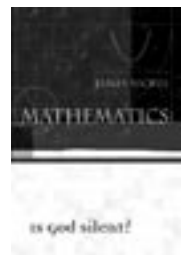
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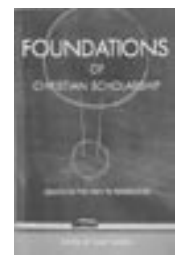
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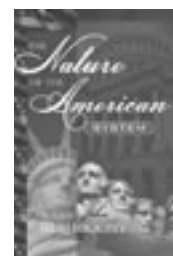
By R.J. Rushdoony. Originally published in 1965, these essays were a continuation of the author's previous work, *This Independent Republic*, and examine the interpretations and concepts which have attempted to remake and rewrite America's past and present. "The writing of history then, because man is neither autonomous, objective nor ultimately creative, is always in terms of a framework, a philosophical and ultimately religious framework in the mind of the historian... To the orthodox Christian, the shabby incarnations of the reigning historiographies are both absurd and offensive. They are idols, and he is forbidden to bow down to them and must indeed wage war against them."

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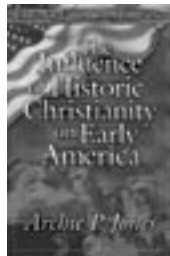
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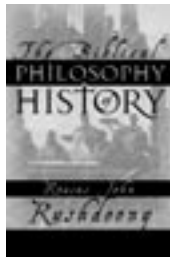


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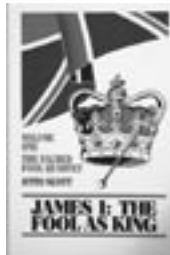
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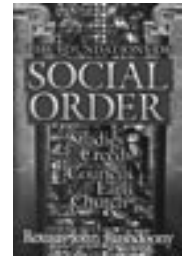
By Rousas John Rushdoony. Early Christians were called "heretics" and "atheists" when they denied the gods of Rome, in particular the divinity of the emperor and the statism he embodied in his personality cult. These Christians knew that Jesus Christ, not the state, was their Lord and that this faith required a different kind of relationship to the state than the state demanded. Because Jesus Christ was their acknowledged Sovereign, they consciously denied such esteem to all other claimants. Today the church must take a similar stand before the modern state.



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philosophy

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By Rousas John Rushdoony. For centuries on end, humanistic philosophers have produced endless books and treatises which attempt to explain reality without God or the mediatory work of His Son, Jesus Christ. Modern philosophy has sought to explain man and his thought process without acknowledging God, His Revelation, or man's sin. God holds all such efforts in derision and subjects their authors and adherents to futility. Philosophers who rebel against God are compelled to *abandon meaning itself*, for they possess neither the tools nor the place to anchor it. The works of darkness championed by philosophers past and present need to be exposed and removed.



In this volume, Dr. Rushdoony clearly enunciates each major philosopher's position and its implications, identifies the intellectual and moral consequences of each school of thought, and traces the dead-end to which each naturally leads. There is only one foundation. Without Christ, meaning and morality are anchored to shifting sand, and a counsel of despair prevails. This penetrating yet brief volume provides clear guidance, even for laymen unfamiliar with philosophy.

Paperback, 180 pages, index, \$18.00

By What Standard?

By R.J. Rushdoony. An introduction into the problems of Christian philosophy. It focuses on the philosophical system of Dr. Cornelius Van Til, which in turn is founded upon the presuppositions of an infallible revelation in the Bible and the necessity of Christian theology for all philosophy. This is Rushdoony's foundational work on philosophy.

Hardback, 212 pages, index, \$14.00



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The One and the Many

By R.J. Rushdoony. Subtitled *Studies in the Philosophy of Order and Ultimacy*, this work discusses the problem of understanding unity vs. particularity, oneness vs. individuality. "Whether recognized or not, every argument and every theological, philosophical, political, or any other exposition is based on a presupposition about man, God, and society—about reality. This presupposition rules and determines the conclusion; the effect is the result of a cause. And one such basic presupposition is with reference to the one and the many." The author finds the answer in the Biblical doctrine of the Trinity.

Paperback, 375 pages, index, \$15.00



Epistemology: How Do We Know?

A tape series by R.J. Rushdoony. Eleven lessons on the discipline largely ignored by the modern thinker. Learn how philosophers such as Descartes and Camus changed modern thought. See how circular reasoning is an unavoidable fact of man's creaturehood. Understand how modern man is increasingly irrational, as witness the "death of god" movement. This is a good companion set to the author's book, *The Word of Flux*.

4 cassette tapes, RR101ST-4, \$12.00



A History of Modern Philosophy

A tape series by R.J. Rushdoony. Nine lessons trace modern thought. Hear a Christian critique of Descartes, Berkeley, Kant, Hegel, Marx, Sade, and Genet. Learn how modern philosophy has been used to deny a Christian world-view and propose a new order, a new morality, and a new man.

8 cassette tapes, RR261ST-8, \$21.00



The Flight from Humanity

By R.J. Rushdoony. Subtitled *A Study of the Effect of Neoplatonism on Christianity*.

Neoplatonism is a Greek philosophical assumption about the world. It views that which is form or spirit (such as mind) as good and that which is physical (flesh) as evil. But Scripture says all of man fell into sin, not just his flesh. The first sin was the desire to be as god, determining good and evil apart from God (Gen. 3:5). Neoplatonism presents man's dilemma as a metaphysical one, whereas Scripture presents it as a moral problem. Basing Christianity on this false Neoplatonic idea will always shift the faith from the Biblical perspective. The ascetic quest sought to take refuge from sins of the flesh but failed to address the reality of sins of the heart and mind. In the name of humility, the ascetics manifested arrogance and pride. This pagan idea of spirituality entered the church and is the basis of some chronic problems in Western civilization.

Paperback, 66 pages, \$5.00

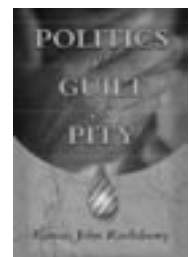


psychology

Politics of Guilt and Pity

By R.J. Rushdoony. From the foreword by Steve Schlissel: "Rushdoony sounds the clarion call of liberty for all who remain oppressed by Christian leaders who wrongfully lord it over the souls of God's righteous ones.... I pray that the entire book will not only instruct you in the method and content of a Biblical worldview, but actually bring you further into the glorious freedom of the children of God. Those who walk in wisdom's ways become immune to the politics of guilt and pity."

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Revolt Against Maturity

By R.J. Rushdoony. This is a study of the Biblical doctrine of psychology. The Biblical view sees psychology as a branch of theology dealing with man as a fallen creature marked by a revolt against maturity.

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Creation According to the Scriptures

Edited by P. Andrew Sandlin. Subtitled: *A Presuppositional Defense of Literal Six-Day Creation*, this symposium by thirteen authors is a direct frontal assault on all waffling views of Biblical creation. It explodes the "Framework Hypothesis," so dear to the hearts of many respectability-hungry Calvinists, and it throws down the gauntlet to all who believe they can maintain a consistent view of Biblical infallibility while abandoning literal, six-day creation. It is a must reading for all who are observing closely the gradual defection of many allegedly conservative churches and denominations, or who simply want a greater grasp of an orthodox, God-honoring view of the Bible.

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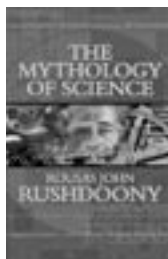


science

The Mythology of Science

By R.J. Rushdoony. This book points out the fraud of the empirical claims of much modern science since Charles Darwin. This book is about the religious nature of evolutionary thought, how these religious presuppositions underlie our modern intellectual paradigm, and how they are deferred to as sacrosanct by institutions and disciplines far removed from the empirical sciences. The "mythology" of modern science is its religious devotion to the myth of evolution. Evolution "so expresses or coincides with the contemporary spirit that its often radical contradictions and absurdities are never apparent, in that they express the basic presuppositions, however untenable, of everyday life and thought." In evolution, man is the highest expression of intelligence and reason, and such thinking will not yield itself to submission to a God it views as a human cultural creation, useful, if at all, only in a cultural context. The basis of science and all other thought will ultimately be found in a higher ethical and philosophical context; whether or not this is seen as religious does not change the nature of that context. "Part of the mythology of modern evolutionary science is its failure to admit that it is a faith-based paradigm."

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economics

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By Ian Hodge. The author puts the creation and use of wealth in their Biblical context. Debt has put the economies of nations and individuals in dangerous straits. This book discusses why a business is the best investment, as well as the issues of debt avoidance and insurance. Wealth is a tool for dominion men to use as faithful stewards.

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Christianity and Capitalism

By R.J. Rushdoony. In a simple, straightforward style, the Christian case for capitalism is presented. Capital, in the form of individual and family property, is protected in Scripture and is necessary for liberty.

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By Dr. Magnus Verbrugge, M.D. This study is of major importance as a critique of scientific theory, evolution, and contemporary nihilism in scientific thought. Dr. Verbrugge, son-in-law of the late Dr. H. Dooyeweerd and head of the Dooyeweerd Foundation, applies the insights of Dooyeweerd's thinking to the realm of science. Animism and humanism in scientific theory are brilliantly discussed.

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A Christian View of Vocation: The Glory of the Mundane

By Terry Applegate. To many Christians, business is a "dirty" occupation fit only for greedy, manipulative unbelievers. The author, a successful Christian businessman, explodes this myth in this hard-hitting title.

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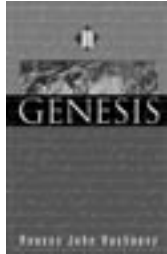


biblical studies

Genesis, Volume I of Commentaries on the Pentateuch

By Rousas John Rushdoony. *Genesis* begins the Bible, and is foundational to it. In recent years, it has become commonplace for both humanists and churchmen to sneer at anyone who takes Genesis 1-11 as historical. Yet to believe in the myth of evolution is to accept trillions of miracles to account for our cosmos. Spontaneous generation, the development of something out of nothing, and the blind belief in the miraculous powers of chance, require tremendous faith. Darwinism is irrationality and insanity compounded. Theology without literal six-day creationism becomes alien to the God of Scripture because it turns from the God Who acts and Whose Word is the creative word and the word of power, to a belief in process as god. The god of the non-creationists is the creation of man and a figment of their imagination. They must play games with the Bible to vindicate their position. Evolution is both naive and irrational. Its adherents violate the scientific canons they profess by their fanatical and intolerant belief. The entire book of Genesis is basic to Biblical theology. The church needs to re-study it to recognize its centrality.

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The Gospel of John

By R.J. Rushdoony. In this commentary the author maps out the glorious gospel of John, starting from the obvious parallel to Genesis 1 ("In the beginning was the Word") and through to the glorious conclusion of Christ's death and resurrection. Nothing more clearly reveals the gospel than Christ's atoning death and His resurrection. They tell us that Jesus Christ has destroyed the power of sin and death. John therefore deliberately limits the number of miracles he reports in order to point to and concentrate on our Lord's death and resurrection. The Jesus of history is He who made atonement for us, died, and was resurrected. His life cannot be understood apart from this, nor can we know His history in any other light. This is why John's "testimony is true," and, while books filling the earth could not contain all that could be said, the testimony given by John is "faithful."

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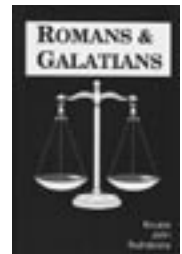
Romans and Galatians

By R.J. Rushdoony. From the author's introduction: "I do not disagree with the liberating power of the Reformation interpretation, but I believe that it provides simply the beginning of our understanding of Romans, not its conclusion....

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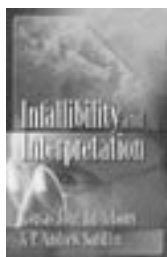
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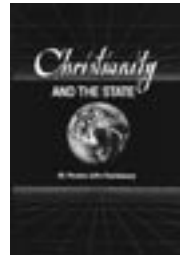
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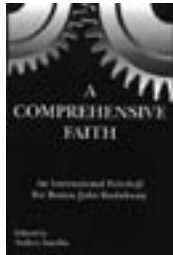
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Edited by Andrew Sandlin. This is the surprise *Festschrift* presented to R.J. Rushdoony at his 80th birthday celebration in April, 1996. These essays are in gratitude to Rush's influence and elucidate the importance of his theological and philosophical contributions in numerous fields. Contributors include Theodore Letis, Brian Abshire, Steve Schlissel, Joe Morecraft III, Jean-Marc Berthoud, Byron Snapp, Samuel Blumenfeld, Christine and Thomas Schirrmacher, Herbert W. Titus, Owen Fourie, Ellsworth McIntyre, Howard Phillips, Joseph McAuliffe, Andrea Schwartz, David Estrada-Herrero, Stephen Perks, Ian Hodge, and Colonel V. Doner. Also included is a forward by John Frame and a brief biographical sketch of R. J. Rushdoony's life by Mark Rushdoony. This book was produced as a "top-secret" project by Friends of Chalcedon and donated to Ross House Books. It is sure to be a collector's item one day.



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eschatology

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