MILLENNIALISM AND SOCIAL THEORY

MILLENNIALISM
AND SOCIAL THEORY

Gary North

Institute for Christian Economics
Tyler, Texas

Copyright, Gary North, 1990

Library of Congress **Cataloguing-in-Publication** Data

North, Gary.
Millennialism and Social Theory/ Gary North
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 0-930464-49-4:$14.95
1. **Millennialism.** 2. Sociology, Christian. 3. **Eschatology.**
4. Dominion theology. L Title.
BT891.N67 1990
236'.9-dc2O 90-47609
CIP

Institute for Christian Economics
P. O. **Box** 8000
Tyler, Texas '7571 **1**

This book is dedicated to the five billion people alive today who will perish for all eternity, one by one, over the next 80 years, unless: (1) the Holy Spirit makes an historically unprecedented positive move; and (2) the Church of Jesus Christ at long last begins to get its act together. The exponential curve of souls has now appeared. Either heaven starts to fill up in earnest or hell does.

HERMAN

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

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface ix

Introduction 1

l. Eschatology and the Millennium 13

2. What Is Social Theory? 30

3. Covenantal Progress 52

4. Pessimillennialism 71

5. The Society of the Future. 96

6. Time Enough 127

7. Denying God's Predictable Sanctions in History 155

8. Historical Sanctions: An Inescapable Concept 185

9. The Sociology of Suffering 210

10. Pietistic Postmillennialism 238

11. Will God Disinherit Christ's Church? 249

12. Our Blessed Earthly Hope in History 279

13. What Is to Be Done? 301

Conclusion 327

Appendix: The Lawyer and the Trust 341

For Further Reading 358

Scripture Index 369

Index 374

About the Author 394

Q. 191. ***What do we pray for in the second petition?***

A. In the second petition, (which is, ***Thy kingdom come,)*** acknowledging ourselves and all mankind to be by nature under the dominion of sin and Satan, we pray, that the kingdom of sin and Satan may be destroyed, the gospel propagated throughout the world, the Jews called, the fulness of the Gentiles brought in; the church furnished with all gospel-officers and ordinances, purged from corruption, countenanced and maintained by the civil magistrate: that the ordinances of Christ may be purely dispensed, and made effectual to the converting of those that are yet in their sins, and the confirming, comforting, and building up of those that are already converted: that Christ would rule in our hearts here, and hasten the time of his second coming, and our reigning with him for ever: and that he would be pleased so to exercise the kingdom of his power in all the world, as may best conduce to these ends.

Larger Catechism
Westminster Confession of Faith (1646)

We who are reckoned as "conservatives" in theology are seriously misrepresented if we are regarded as men who are holding desperately to something that is old merely because it is old and are inhospitable to new truths. On the contrary, we welcome new discoveries with all our heart; and we are looking, in the Church, not merely for a continuation of conditions that now exist but for a burst of new power.

J. Gresham Machen (1932)"

---

*Machen, "Christianity in Conflict," in Vergilius Ferm (cd.), *Contemporary American Theology (New* York: Round Table Press, 1932), I, pp. 269-70.

PREFACE

What is the biggest problem facing the world today? Is it the weather? Are we facing a new ice age? (Oops. Sorry. Scratch that. That was 1973's looming apocalypse. I meant global warming!) Is it that burning fossil fuels creates the greenhouse effect? Or is it rather the high price of fossil fuels, which is pressuring us to consume less of them? Is it atomic power (today, the only economically feasible technological alternative to fossil fuels)? Is it the hole in the ozone layer? Is it acid rain? Is it the proliferation of nuclear weapons? Is it chemical and biological warfare? Is it international terrorism? Is it AIDS? Is it abortion?

Or might it be none of the above?

I have a traditional answer to this question. Why traditional? Because the question is itself traditional. The answer to this question has been the same from the day that Cain killed Abel. ***The biggest problem facing the world is that the vast majority of the people in this world are headed straight to hell.*** If "the world" means the people who live on planet earth, then this is the number-one problem on earth. It can be solved in only one way: a huge, rapid, historically unprecedented wave of conversions to saving faith in Jesus Christ.

Christians say that anything that happens to an individual on earth is insignificant, compared to his eternity. But is this really true? It is *not* true, but this is how Christian evangelists have traditionally described the problem. The problem is not stated correctly. One event that happens to a person on earth is vastly more important than anything that happens to him in eternity: his acceptance or rejection of Jesus Christ as his personal Lord and Savior. This event can take place only *on earth and in history*. "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the

judgment" (Heb. 9:27). This covenantal (judicial) decision will ***determine*** where the person spends eternity, so it has to be far more important than eternity itself. After all, something that Adam and Eve did on earth and in history got humanity into this frightful legal position in the first place.

Jesus was quite clear about what is most important in life and death, and why:

> Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, bath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life (John 5:24).

"Is passed from death unto ***life"***: this is the heart of the matter.

When we say to someone, "You're history," we mean it is all over for him in our eyes. When, at the moment of a person's death, God says, "You're history," He really means "You're eternity." It is all over for him in God's eyes. These are the only eyes that really count. So, the greatest problem facing the world today is the same old problem: most people have not accepted Jesus Christ's atoning work on the cross as their only legitimate, acceptable payment to a God of wrath. (How about you?)

Today, the numbers of people on earth are staggering. Between five billion and six billion people are now alive. These numbers are expected to grow, short of some unforeseen calamity like a plague or world war. But if the gospel continues to be rejected by at least 90% of these people, as is the case today, then most people are facing a gigantic calamity that only Christians accurately foresee. They are headed for eternal wrath.

Here is the question of questions: "Are the vast majority of these people inevitably doomed to hell?" Put another way: "Are the vast majority of these people ***predestined by God*** to hell?" We cannot lawfully answer this question; only God knows. "The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law" (Deut. 29:29). But there is nothing in the Bible that tells us that we should assume that the vast majority of them are inevitably doomed. We must work and pray on the assumption that something can be done

and ***will*** be done by God to overcome this seemingly unsolvable problem: getting the gospel to these people in time. And by the words "in time," I mean ***in history***. I mean in my generation.

A Question of Time

It is common in evangelical circles to say that "this world is running out of time." This another way of saying, "The lost are running out of time." Yes, time is indeed running out, just as fossil fuels are running out, but when? In ten years? A thousand years? Ten thousand years? It makes a big difference. The question that we need to get answered is this: "Is time running out for the people alive today?" And the answer is categorically ***yes***. The average life span for people living in industrial nations is about 75 years. If a child gets by his first five years, this figure goes above 80 years. In underdeveloped nations, the life span is less, especially for newborn children. So, I can confidently say that time is running out for these people, and my answer does not depend on any theory regarding the timing of Jesus' Second Coming.

The Church of Jesus Christ now faces a major problem. It is the same old problem that it has always faced, but today the stakes are far higher because the number of souls on the line is so much larger. These people are spiritually dead. If they do not respond favorably in history to the gospel of Jesus Christ, they will remain spiritually dead for all eternity. They will not die spiritually; they are ***already*** dead spiritually. They enter history with God's declaration of "Guilty as charged!" against them. This is their legacy from Adam, their spiritual birthwrong.

I contend in this book that the concern of most evangelical Christians is misplaced today. For over a century, their primary theological concern has been the dating of the Second Coming of Christ. Speculation regarding this event, and Christians' appropriate response to it, has governed both the worldview and actual strategies of the majority of those denominations (mostly headquartered in the United States) that call themselves evangelical. In short, various theories of the Second Coming of Christ, especially its dating (supposedly imminent), have overshadowed the uncontestable ***fact*** of world population growth and

its implications for world evangelism.

When the highly debatable timing of a future event becomes more important to a person than his response to a visible, measurable, threatening event in the present, we call that person out of touch with reality, if not mentally deranged. But when millions of Christians regard the dating of the pre-tribulation Rapture as more important than the Church's efforts at evangelism, or worse, when they tie these evangelism efforts primarily to the dating of this future eschatological event, we have called this "understanding the times." When missions fund-raisers come into churches and tell their members to give more to missions because "when that last person is converted to Christ who is scheduled for salvation, Jesus will come again to Rapture His Church," the missions board has missed the point. (I actually heard such an appeal for funds in a Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod – a very peculiar use of the doctrine of predestination.) The idea behind the conversion to saving faith in Jesus Christ is to transform the way men live and die, not to end history. Jesus said, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10: 10h). We are to be overcomes in life, not "overleavers."

Evangelism Explosion (Thermonuclear)

It is my hope and prayer that the spread of the gospel of salvation will take a "quantum leap" in my generation, or at least in the generation immediately behind me. It is my hope and prayer that presently lost people's positive response to the gospel will reach unprecedentedly high percentages in my generation. This means that I am praying for an unprecedented *historical discontinuity*: a worldwide reversal of the growth of Satan's earthly kingdom in my generation. I do not mean a reversal of merely his external kingdom; I mean his spiritual kingdom. Satan's kingdom has both aspects: spiritual and institutional. It is both supernatural and historical.

What this book argues is this: ***so is God's kingdom.*** This is a simple thesis on the surface, yet complex beneath. While most Christians will nod their heads in agreement to the question, "Does God's kingdom have an institutional aspect to it?", since

they are members of His Church, when asked about the specifics of God's institutional kingdom outside the Church and family, they grow vague. This is a serious problem. While I do not believe it is the biggest problem there is, it is an aspect of that larger problem of world evangelism.

It is an aspect of the question, "How should we then live?" This question is basic to personal salvation. "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15). "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love" (John 15:10). "And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him" (1 John 1:3-5). It could not be any clearer. We must keep His commandments.

But what are these commandments? Do they lose all of their authority outside the door of the local church and Christian home? Or are there commandments that are supposed to govern all of our thoughts and actions in every sphere of life? If the answer to this last question is *yes*, then the next question is obvious: "What *are* these commandments?" Also the following question: "Where do we find these commandments?"

If the answer is, "No, God's commandments do not govern all of our thoughts and actions," then this question should be obvious: "Then why does God judge us for whatever we think, say, and do?" Jesus warned: "But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment" (Matt. 12:36). Paul warned: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he bath done, whether it be good or bad" (II Cor. 5:10). Also, Paul said, "Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (11 Cor. 10:5). Are these thoughts only those that pertain to personal salvation, the Church, and the Christian family?

If God threatens to brings sanctions against us, then He must have

ethical standards governing His sanctions. After all, He is not a capricious God. But where do we find God's standards (laws)? In the Bible, right? But some Christians answer *no,* or at least, "not only the Bible." Then I ask: "Does the Bible have answers for *all* our fundamental moral questions?" I also ask: "Does the Bible supply us with the presuppositions necessary to conduct all of our scientific and intellectual investigations?" If the answer to both questions again is no, then the Bible is turned into (1) a supplementary handbook to man's autonomous moral insights, based on universal natural law, or else (2) a handbook on personal mysticism. Possibly it becomes both. In fact, it is neither.

This book is written to promote belief in the sovereignty of God's law, not man's law. It is written to promote evangelism, not mysticism.[1]

Beyond Mysticism

Here is what this book is all about: a discussion of the Bible as the sole authority that should govern our opinions about everything. I contend that the Bible is authoritative in every field.[2] But Christian scholars from the very early days of the Church have insisted on placing Greek philosophy (the original secular humanism) above the Bible, or at least side by side the Bible. But the Bible says concerning itself that nothing is equal to it. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (I Tim. 3:16). The Bible corrects all other books, thoughts, and actions. So, to place anything side by side the Bible is to place it *above the* Bible. Yet this is what Christian philosophers have been doing for almost two thousand years,[3]

We have already concluded that the Bible does speak to every area of life. (Haven't we? Of course we have. So, let us go for-

---

1. It is a companion volume to Kenneth L. Gentry's book, *The Greatness of& Great Commission: The Christian Enterprise* in a *Fallen World* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1990).

2. Gary North (cd.), *Biblical Blueprints Series,* 10 vole. (Ft. Worth, Texas: Dominion Press, 19S6-87).

3. Cornelius Van Til, *A Christian Theory of Knowledge* (Nutley, New Jersey Presbyterian & Reformed, 1969).

ward.) ***The Bible therefore "lays down the law" for every field: family life, sociology, health, economics, education, politics, biology, geology, and even mathematics.***[4] The experts in each of these fields, as well as all the others, are required by God to go to the Bible in search of their particular field's operational first principles, as well as for some of the actual content (facts) of their fields. They do not lay down the law to the Bible. Their particular fields of study do not dictate to the Bible the theory and content of truth.

This means that the Bible is relevant for social theory. So, where are the books that explain what the biblical view of social theory is? There have been hybrids in history, of course, such as Scholasticism's attempted fusion of Stoic natural law theory and the Bible. More recently, there has been liberation theology's attempted fusion of Marxism and biblical rhetoric. But there is only one self-conscious body of literature that relies solely on the Bible in order to establish its first principles of social theory: theonomy or Christian Reconstruction. This book is my attempt to show you why this is the case.

A Brief Word of Encouragement to Secular Academics

Because of the title of this book, there may be a few secular academics who decide to read it. These days, millennialism has become a "hot topic" in academic circles. Already, this Preface has lost some of these readers. They have closed the book in disgust. "Why, this book is written by a Bible-believing Christian! Furthermore, I was expecting a detailed study that would include references to at least 73 recent articles in German theological journals."

Look, I am on my way to heaven. I am not about to read 73 (or even ten) scholarly articles by liberal German theologians.[5] In the realm of academics, such a task is about as close to hell on earth as anyone can come. Besides, the reason why some

4. Vern S. Poythress, "A Biblical View of Mathematics," in Gary North, (cd.), *Foundations of Christian Scholarship: Essays in the Van Til Perspective* (Vallecito, California: Ross House Books, 1976).

5. There is one exception: Henning Graf Reventlow, author of The *Authority of the Bible and the Rise of the Modern World* (London: SCM Press, [1980] 1984), which I regard as one of the half dozen most important history books written since World War II.

English-speaking scholar wants a book summarizing the latest findings of German theological scholarship (which will be completely refuted by other German theologians within five years) is so that *he* does not have to wade through the stuff, even if he reads German fluently, which he probably doesn't.

The secular scholar may also ask himself: "Why should I read a polemical book by one Christian against other Christians?" Well, for one thing, *to gain* new insights. After all, prominent historians today read the polemical books of previous Christians (for example, the output of the English Puntans' pamphlet wars of 1640-60) in order to find out what was going on. Why not read today's polemical pieces a couple of hundred years before they, too, become "hot topics" for future historians? Why not find out early what is going on?

A word of encouragement: I did not just recently fall off an academic turnip truck. There is meat here. I am applying some fundamental biblical themes to the modern academic world of social theory. This project may scare away the average Christian, who will regard it as far too worldly, but it should not scare away a serious academic. For instance, can you define social theory? I provide a unique operational definition in Chapter 2. It will help anyone to make sense out of the present debates over social theory and social systems. (Look, do you ***really*** want to read Talcott Parsons?)[6]

So, stay with it. You will learn about some of the most fundamental issues in the Bible, and why the vast majority of Bible-believing Christians today pay no attention to them.

6. One of the signs that I was "in too deep" in researching my doctoral dissertation was that Talcott Parsons started making sense to me. I knew it was time to wrap it np.

INTRODUCTION

And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world (I John 4:14).

It has been almost two thousand years since the birth of Jesus Christ, Savior of the world. This world is not yet saved. The question is: Why not?

There are several possible Christian answers, all of which have been offered by Christians in the past:

1. It is not God's time yet.
2. The Church is not ready yet.
3. Saving this world must wait for the millennium.
4. This world will never be saved, because:
   a, the millennium is exclusively spiritual;
   b. the promised victory is exclusively spiritual; and
   c. most people will not experience it.

What is also remarkable – or not so remarkable, as this book will demonstrate — is that two millennia after the Incarnation of God's Son in history, His followers have no idea what a saved world ought to look like. They have no blueprint for a uniquely biblical social order. There is no comprehensive body of materials that would point to a solution to this question: "How would a Bible-based society differ from previous societies and present ones?" Hardly anyone is even asking the question.

Hardly anyone ever has.

A few people are asking it: liberation theologians (Marxist-socialists) and Christian Reconstructionists (social neo-Puritans). Both schools of thought are far outside the mainstream of the

Christian Church. (Anyway, the Reconstructionists are.)

There are several reasons for this lack of interest in social theory. I explore some of them in this book. A basic reason is that the Church has yet to come to any agreement on many of the fundamental issues of the faith. There is agreement on the doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation, which were put into their basic formulation by the Church councils of Nicea (325), Constantinople (382), Ephesus (431), and Chalcedon (45 1). The Athanasian and Nicene creeds, are products of this early agreement. The Church international believes that the Second Person of the Trinity, equal with the Father and the Holy Spirit, became flesh in the form of perfect humanity, in union but without intermixture. There is also agreement on the final judgment. At the resurrection of all men, Christ will separate the sheep from the goats, with the goats sent into eternal fire. There will be no second chance for the goats.

The areas of disagreement are quite extensive. Christians have come to no agreement regarding such basic biblical themes as these: the proper structuring of Church authority (hierarchy); the nature of the moral law and its relation (if any) to Old Testament law; the nature of the sanctions that God brings in history; and the nature and timing of the millennium.

Another reason for the lack of interest in social theory is that Christians still do not agree on the fundamental message of the Bible. This may sound fantastic, but it is actually the case. If you were to ask ten Christians what the message of the Bible is, cover to cover, you would probably get ten different answers. They would be related to Jesus Christ in some way, or to His salvation, but they would not be the same answer. I am not speaking of phrasing: I mean different answers.

Try this experiment. Write down in one sentence what you believe is the most fundamental theme in the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, including even the Book of Esther, which does not mention the name of God. Then compare your answer to the one I offer on the next page. Remember: keep your answer to a single sentence. (Minimize the semicolons, please.)

Here is the correct answer, in six words:

"The transition from wrath to grace."

It sounds so simple. It *is* simple. Children can understand it. It is also frighteningly comprehensive and complex. It includes everything. Theologians can barely understand it. (Few do, as I hope to show in this book.) It is *the* theme of the Bible. There is no more fundamental theme that is pursued explicitly from beginning to end: not the glory of God, not the sovereignty of God, not even the mode of baptism. The one theme that unites all passages in the Bible is God's grace to mankind in providing the means of deliverance from God's wrath to God's blessing.

The New Testament's emphasis is *personal* deliverance from ***eternal*** wrath to eternal blessing. The Old Testament's emphasis is ***corporate*** deliverance from ***temporal*** wrath to temporal blessing. These dual emphases do not cancel out each other. The theme of eternal personal deliverance is not entirely absent from the Old Testament, and the theme of corporate historical deliverance is not entirely absent from the New Testament. But each Testament has a particular emphasis. *Neither* ***emphasis*** *denies the* ***other.*** (The Church, rest assured, has not agreed on this.)

Deliverance in History

God made promises to the Israelites, just before they covenanted with Him, and just before He gave them His law:

> And Moses went up unto God, and the LORD called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel; Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation (Ex. 19:3-6).

The Egyptians had come under God's wrath. The Israelites had been delivered from Egyptian slavery. It could not have been any clearer. Here was a God who could and would fulfill His promises to His people ***in history.***

He asked them to tie themselves to Him in a covenant: *a*

perpetual legal-personal bond. They did. They came under the terms of this covenant. It was ratified again by their children just before they entered the Promised Land. They had to obey.

> Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse; A blessing, if ye obey the commandments of the LORD your God, which I command you this day: And a curse, if ye will not obey the commandments of the LORD your God, but turn aside out of the way which I command you this day, to go after other gods, which ye have not known. And it shall come to pass, when the LORD thy God bath brought thee in unto the land whither thou goest to possess it, that thou shalt put the blessing upon mount Gerizim, and the curse upon mount **Ebal** (Deut. 11:26-29).

National obedience would bring national blessings. These blessings are summarized in Leviticus 26:3-12 and again in Deuteronomy 28:1-14. National transgression would bring national cursings (Lev. 26:14-39; **Deut.** 28:15-68).

The nation would inevitably disobey, God told Moses.

> And the LORD said unto Moses, Behold, thou shalt sleep with thy fathers; and this people will rise up, and go a whoring after the gods of the strangers of the land, whither they go to be among them, and will forsake me, and break my covenant which I have made with them. Then my anger shall be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them, and I will hide my face from them, and they shall be devoured, and many evils and troubles shall befall them; so that they will say in that day, Are not these evils come upon us, because our God is not among us? **(Deut. 31:16-17).**

Nevertheless, there was always this hope before the people, the hope of guaranteed deliverance through national repentance.

> If they shall confess their iniquity, and the iniquity of their fathers, with their trespass which they trespassed against me, and that also they have walked contrary unto me; And that I also have walked contrary unto them, and have brought them into the land of their enemies; if then their uncircumcised hearts be humbled, and they then accept of the punishment of their iniquity: ***Then will*** Z remember ***my*** covenant ***with Jacob,*** and also my covenant with Isaac, and also my covenant with Abraham will I remember; and ***I will***

> ***remember the land.*** The land also shall be left of them, and shall enjoy her sabbaths, while she lieth desolate without them: and they shall accept of the punishment of their iniquity: because, even because they despised my judgments, and because their soul abhorred my statutes. And yet for all that, when they be in the land of their enemies, ***I will not cast them away,*** neither will I abhor them, to destroy them utterly, and to break my covenant with them: for I am the LORD their God (Lev. 26:40-44). (emphasis added)

We see in the Old Testament a series of devastating national cursings, yet also restorations. God's people obey and are then blessed. Then they forget who God is and what He has done for them. He brings them under His wrath. Here is ***continuity:*** the enjoyment of blessings, which in turn leads to forgetfulness and sin. Here is also ***discontinuity:*** the destruction of their daily routines of sin and rebellion by God's direct intervention into history. God's positive sanctions of blessing (continuity), if used to further sin, will call forth His negative sanctions of cursing (discontinuity). ***The progressive expansion of God's blessings in history will not be allowed by God to subsidize a continual expansion of sin.***

> Beware that thou forget not the LORD thy God, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes, which I command thee this day: Lest when thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt therein; And when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied; ***Then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the LORD thy God,*** which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage; Who led thee through that great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought, where there was no water; who brought thee forth water out of the rock of flint; Who fed thee in the wilderness with manna, which thy fathers knew not, that he might humble thee, and that he might prove thee, to do thee good at thy latter end; ***And thou say in thine heart, My power and the might of mine hand bath gotten me this wealth.*** But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as it is this day. And it shall be, if thou do at all forget the LORD thy God, and walk after other gods, and serve them, and worship them, I testify against you this day that ye ***shall surely perish.*** *As the* nations which the LORD destroyeth before your face, so shall ye perish; because ye

would not be obedient unto the voice of the LORD your God (Deut. 8:1 1-20). (emphasis added)

New Heaven and New Earth

There was also a promise of covenantal fulfillment *in history*: *the* beginning of God's New Heaven and New Earth. The pattern of continuity and discontinuity will cease. The following prophetic passage refers to a future, still unfulfilled period of earthly blessings.

> For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying. ***There shall be no mare thence an infant of days, nor an old man that bath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner being an*** hundred years ***old shall be accursed.*** And they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they are the seed of the blessed of the LORD, and their offspring with them. And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear (Isa. 65:17-24). (emphasis added)

This prophecy has to refer to history, for it says that there will be sinners practicing evil and "children" dying at age one hundred. In the midst of evil, righteous people shall flourish. History, not heaven alone or the post-resurrection world alone, is the realm of the New Heaven and New Earth. ***The transition to this externally blessed realm is historical.***

Will God remember sin? Not judicially. (Obviously, God does not develop a case of total amnesia.) His grace in history is sufficient.

> The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide: neither will he keep his anger

> for ever. He bath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his merey toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far bath he removed our transgressions from us. Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him (Psa. 103:8-13).

A day is coming when men's ***cultural deliverance*** will be so widespread, because of men's widespread ***repentance,*** that God will bring unprecedented blessings in history.

What, then, of eternity?

Deliverance in Eternity

Jesus came to placate God's wrath. He lived a perfect life, died at the hands of sinners, and rose again. He ascended into heaven. Sinful men's debt to God has been paid. They can appropriate this payment as their own. On this legal basis, and only on this legal basis, men can find deliverance from God's eternal wrath to come. This deliverance begins in history. This is the New Testament's version of the fundamental biblical theme of the transition from cursing to blessing.

It is clear that in the Old Testament, the discontinuities of this transition – captivity and deliverance – were historical. What about the discontinuities in the New Testament?

It is also clear that the ultimate discontinuity in this life is the transition from God's wrath to His grace. ***This is a far greater discontinuity than mere physical death.*** It takes place in history.

> The Father loveth the Son, and bath given all things into his hand. He that believeth on the Son bath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him (John 3:35-36).

God's free gift of eternal life is offered in history (and only in history), and it is accepted in history (and only in history).

> And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time with-

out sin unto salvation (Heb. 9:27-28).

What this means is simple to state: ***eternal deliverance takes place in history***. The problem is, Christian theologians have not taken this principle seriously outside of the doctrine of soteriology (salvation), narrowly defined as soul-saving alone.

The Ultimate Discontinuities Are Historical

There are three great discontinuities in history: (1) Adam's fall, which was the judicial basis of mankind's transition from grace to wrath; (2) the Incarnation of the Second Person of the Trinity in human flesh; and (3) Jesus Christ's separation from God the Father on the cross. Compared to these three events, all other historical ***and cosmic*** discontinuities are minor. While most Christians would agree with this in principle, they are still almost hypnotized by those passages that describe the discontinuity between this world and the final judgment. They regard the coming fiery transformation of the skies as the really big event — in their own thinking, dwarfing the death of Christ.

The order of magnitude separating the death of Christ from the final judgment is much greater than the order of magnitude between this world and the post-resurrection world. How can I be so sure? Because I recognize that the order of magnitude separating (1) Adam's ***legal status*** before God immediately prior to his fall from (2) his legal status immediately after was far greater than the order of magnitude separating (a) the pre-fall physical world from (b) the post-fall physical world. ***Transgressing God's one law in Eden was a monumental discontinuity***. God's curse on the world was merely God's negative physical sanction. God's common grace to Adam and the creation, made possible because of Christ's payment to God on the cross, allowed God to reduce His negative physical sanctions on both Adam and the environment. God's negative physical sanctions were minimal compared to Adam's transgression. Therefore, ***compared with the death of Christ***, the future positive physical sanctions of final judgment and the post-judgment world will also be minimal.

Let me put this a different way. The order of magnitude of the separation of Jesus Christ from God the Father at the cross

was analogous to the separation of heaven from hell or the post-judgment perfection of the New Heaven and New Earth from the perfection of the lake of fire (Rev. 20:14-15). This is the *judicial* difference between "saved" and "lost." Compared to this, the physical circumstances of Christ's bodily return to earth are minimal. Therefore, the magnitude of the ***judicial transition*** from wrath to grace in history far overshadows the ***physical transition*** from this world to the next.

Adam's physical death was a covenantal result (sanctions) of his transgression in history. Jesus' physical resurrection was a covenantal result of His perfect atonement in history of God's wrath. It is not physical death that stands as life's greatest discontinuity y. ***The greatest discontinuity in life is the judicial transition from wrath to grace.*** Jesus made this plain when He told men what to fear most:

> And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell (Matt.10:28).

Each person's discontinuity from grace to wrath is judicial and automatic. Everyone is born under the judicial curse against Adam. This is the doctrine of original sin. Thus, there is no major transition from covenant-breaking in history to hell. There is no judicial transition. Eternity in the lake of fire is merely an extension of life lived apart from God's redeeming grace in history. In short, ***deliverance in eternity begins in history.***

The Church has always said that it believes this. Nevertheless, the Church has only rarely applied this most fundamental of all biblical themes to its overall theological system. Specifically, ***churches have refused to apply this principle to eschatology.*** One thing that churches agree on today is that man's covenantal-judicial deliverance in history must be understood as strictly spiritual-personal and in no sense social. The judicial transition from wrath to grace supposedly applies only to the individual soul, not to the physical body or the body politic.

What, then, of the Old Testament? Is it simply "God's Word, emeritus"? For the major theme of the Old Testament is God's

social and institutional deliverance of His people in history. Does the New Testament abandon this perspective? Or does it simply not emphasize it, *taking for granted our acceptance of the Old Testament's message of comprehensive deliverance in history?*

The answers to these questions have divided the Church for almost nineteen hundred years. We need to get agreement.

Conclusion

This book is a reassessment of three covenantal themes: biblical law, God's sanctions in history, and the millennium, though primarily the latter two. I begin with this obvious New Testament teaching: the fundamental transition from *personal* wrath to grace is historical, not post-final judgment. What I try to show is that the Bible teaches that *this fundamental historical transition from wrath to grace is also social and cultural.* The post-judgment New Heaven and New Earth will be an extension of the historical New Heaven and New Earth, as surely as each redeemed person's resurrected body will be an extension of his historical body. *There is therefore a very significant continuity between this world and the world to come.* This is true of both aspects of both worlds: saved vs. lost. The implications of this statement are monumental, as I hope to show in this book.

There is a coming discontinuity called the final judgment, but compared to the discontinuity in history from God's wrath to God's grace (Christ's atonement and His saints' personal regeneration), it will be a comparatively minor affair. Lots of trumpets and noise, plus a few million (or a few billion) people flying upward all at once, but hardly anything on the order of magnitude of the *judicial discontinuity* of personal regeneration in history: "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature [creation]: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (11 Cor. 5:17).

If I am wrong about this, then the crucifixion was a gigantic error, a case of overkill. It was an historical event, and it has cosmic implications. But if the post-historical cosmic *results* of the crucifixion are more important – more of a discontinuity – than God's negative sanctions against Jesus Christ on the cross, then what was the purpose of the Incarnation? Why didn't the

entire legal transaction between Father and Son take place in heaven? Why did Jesus Christ have to utter the most terrifying words in history? "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt. 27:46b).

Any attempt to elevate the coming transition, from this world to the next, above the historical discontinuities of Adam's fall, the Incarnation, and Christ's crucifixion, is deeply misguided theologically. Such a view of the past relegates history to a secondary consideration. If history is secondary, then the Incarnation and crucifixion are also secondary. No Christian would admit this openly, of course, yet virtually all of them psychologically accept it as an operational fact of life. Most Christians, no matter what they say about the centrality of the crucifixion and its soul-transforming results, do not really believe it. They regard Jesus' Second Coming at the final judgment (or to begin the millennial age) as by far the most spectacular discontinuity.

The error in such thinking is to regard the *cosmic* results of judicial (covenantal) transactions as more important than the judicial transactions themselves. This places far too great an emphasis on the material aspects of salvation and not enough on the judicial. (Notice, I did not say *spiritual*. I am not here contrasting the spiritual aspects of life with the material; I am contrasting the *judicial-covenantal* aspects with the material.) God the Father took His Son to the cross *in history* primarily to settle a *judicial debt* that had been contracted in history. The goal of the cross was only secondarily to restore a fallen cosmos, either in history or eternity. Adam's transition from grace to wrath (Gen. 3:6-7) preceded God's curse on Adam and the cosmos (Gen. 3:17-19), which was secondary to it; similarly, Jesus' crucifixion preceded His bodily resurrection and the beginning of the restoration of the cosmos. In short, keeping God the Father happy with man was of far greater importance than restoring the creation. But this does not negate the reality of that restoration, both in history and eternity. That restoration is as real as the original cursing of it by God in the garden.

I do not want to leave the impression that I regard the coming restoration of all things at the final judgment as merely equal in magnitude to God's original curse of the earth. It is far

greater. But consider what this means. It is greater because *God's blessings are we fundamental than God's cusings*. His wrath is terrible; His grace is far greater. We must not argue for the equal ultimacy of grace and wrath, if by this we mean equal effect. They are equal in duration, not equal in effect. While most Christians say they believe this (presumably all Christians do believe it), they do not believe it *with respect to history*. They are inconsistent. This book is my attempt to restore consistency in their thinking.

The fundamental discontinuities in God's providential decree (including the post-resurrection world) are judicial-covenantal, not physical-cosmic. The modern evangelical Church does not really believe this, even though officially, most of its theologians would agree, if pressured to respond. But no one pressures them to respond. The issue never occurs to anyone. This is because the modern Church believes far more in the future *cosmic* discontinuity of the Second Coming of Christ than in the combined *historic* and *trans-historic* discontinuities of personal and then social transformation. The modern Church optimistically looks up far more often than it optimistically looks forward.

With this perspective in mind, consider the theme of this book: the relationship between God's historical sanctions and the biblical doctrine of the millennium.

1

ESCHATOLOGY AND THE MILLENNIUM

[W]hat is the future of the idea of progress? Any logical answer *must be that the idea has no future whatever if we assume the indefinite, prolonged continuation of the kind of culture that has become almost universal in the West in the late twentieth century. If the roots are dying, as they would appear to be at the present time, how can there be shrub and foliage? But is this contemporary Western culture likely to continue for long? The answer,* it seems *to me, must be in the negative – if we take* any *stock in the lessons of the human past. . . . [N]ever in history have periods of culture such* as our own *lasted for very long. They are destroyed by all the forces which constitute their essence.*

Robert Nisbet (1980)[1]

Nisbet's words serve as both a warning and a prophecy, although he has never been a big fan of secular prophets, He has too much faith in the unforseen and unforeseeable events of history to take seriously the doctrine of historical inevitability.[2] But he believes that the West is today facing a major crisis, and at the heart of this crisis is modern secular man's loss of faith in historical progress. The idea of progress has been at the heart of Western civilization, he believes: from the Greeks (a controversial assertion) to the present. Now this ancient faith is waning. The question is: Will it continue to wane? Where there is an ***if,*** there can be no inevitability. ***If*** this loss of faith continues, it will have terrible consequences for Western civilization. He

1. Robert Nisbet, *History of the Idea of Progress (New* York: Basic Books, 1980), pp. 355-56.

2. Nisbet, "The Year 2000 and All That," *Commentary (June 1969).*

does not believe that this loss of faith will continue, assuming that Western Civilization survives. But if it does persist, Western civilization as we know it today will not survive.

I think he is incorrect about the Greeks' commitment to the idea of historical progress, as I have explained elsewhere.[3] He is eminently correct with respect to the post-Reformation West. The fundamental ideas undergirding a doctrine of historical progress are these: (1) a sovereign predestinating agent who (or impersonal force that) guarantees the linearity of history (anti-cyclicalism); (2) cultural and social authority based on a representative's publicly acknowledged legitimacy, which in turn is derived from his (or their) access to (3) the wisdom revealed by the sovereign agent or force, meaning detailed knowledge of permanent standards of evaluation ("Progress compared to what?"); (4) culture-wide cause-and-effect relationships (challenge and successful response); and (5) compound growth over long periods of time (technical knowledge, tools, and the division of labor). If any one of these five premises is abandoned, the entire system collapses theoretically, and will therefore eventually collapse historically.[4] Today, all except linear history are being called into question. In short, point one — historical linearity – does not necessarily imply historical progress. There can be linearity downward into the void. Modern physical science, for example, points directly to such a decline.[5]

---

3. Gary North, *Moses and Pharaoh: Dominion Religion vs. Power Religion* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1985), ch. 17. In many of his works, the Benedictine historian of science Stanley Jaki [YAHkee] has made the case far more persuasively than I have. Jaki has focused on the importance of the idea of linear history for the development of science, though not the idea of progress as such. See especially Jaki, *Science and Creation: From eternal cycles to* an oscillating universe (London: Scottish Academic Press, 1974).

4. This assertion of the unity of theory and practice is itself a fundamental aspect of Western social theory.

5. If scientists announce the discovery of physical evidence of a coming "big collapse" of the cosmos that will someday complement the "big bang" of creation, producing yet another "big bang," cyclicalism wilt receive a scientific shot in the arm. At present, few scientists believe that there is sufficient matter in the universe to produce a "big contraction." *The* linearity of history is therefore still presumed scientifically the heat death of the universe (entropy's effect). This does not produce optimism; on the contrary, it affirms an ultimate cosmic pessimism. Gary North, Is the *World Running Down? Crisis in the Christian Worldview* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1988), ch. 2.

It is not a controversial observation to say that the origin of the idea of progress in history was uniquely biblical.[6] This Christian concept was stolen and then secularized by Enlightenment thinkers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[7] They proclaimed another transcendental sovereign (or sovereigns) besides the biblical God to guarantee the linearity of mankind's history. They identified new enlightened representatives to replace the officers of existing churches and states. They found new law-orders and new sanctions in history. But most of them retained deep faith in historical continuity: the compound growth of mankind's knowledge and his tools of dominions What must be clearly understood is that the Enlightenment's idea of progress, like the Christian doctrine, involves far more than faith in the linearity of history.

Basic to the Christian idea of progress is not simply the idea of linear history (Augustinianism) — point one — but also the idea of a coming earthly millennium that is the product of actions in history: ***human actions coupled with God's sanctions in history.*** Without a very specific form of millennialism, namely, ***covenantal postmillennialism,*** there can be no ***consistent*** Christian idea of historical progress. What I hope to demonstrate in this book is that there are conflicting views of Christianity's millennial faith, and they produce rival views regarding progress. They also produce rival approaches to the question of social theory. The generally preferred approach is no approach at all.

General Eschatology

This book is an introductory study of the relationships among three ideas: millennialism, God's sanctions in history, and social theory. Everyone knows what sanctions are: rewards and punishments. But prior to about 1950, comparatively few secular scholars would have known what millennialism is, let alone how central it has been to the thinking of various late-medieval sects and Protestant Christianity since the end of the

6. It is this that Nisbet denies by attempting to trace the idea back to the Greeks,
7. Nisbet, "The Year 2000 and All That," *op. cit.*
8. An eighteenth-eentury exception was the skeptic, David Hume.

sixteenth century,[9] especially American Protestant evangelical in the twentieth century. (One group that immediately acknowledged and praised this early European connection was the Communist movement.)[10] Slowly but surely, humanist scholars have begun to understand millennialism's importance. They have begun to document the fact that there have been significant relationships in Western history between millennial speculation and social change.[11] They are far more aware of these historical events than most Christians are.

Millennialism is a subset of eschatology. Eschatology is defined as "the doctrine of last things." It generally refers to the individual's death and final judgment: heaven and hell. It also deals with corporate final judgment at the end of time.

> When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world (Matt. 25:31-34).

The warning is clear: there are no second chances ahead.

---

9. Igor Shafarevich, *The Socialist Phenomenon* (New York: Harper & Row, [1975] 1980), ch. 2.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 214.

11. Ray C. Petry, *Christian Eschatology and Social Thought: A Historical Essay on the Social Implications of Some Selected Aspects in Christian Eschatology to A.D. 1500* (New York: Abingdon, 1956); Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium: Revolutionary messianism in medieval and Reformation Europe and its bearing on modern totalitarian movements* (2nd cd.; New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1961); Sylvia L. Thrupp (cd.), *Millennial Dreams in Action: Studies in Revolutionary Religious Movements* (New York: Schocken, 1970); Ernest Lee Tuveson, Millennium and *Utopia: A Study in the Background of the Idea of Progress* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1964); Bernard Capp, "The Political dimension of apocalyptic thought," in C. A Patrides and Joseph Wittreich (eds.), *The Apocalypse in English Renaissance thought and literature* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1984); Ernest Lee Tuveson, *Redeemer* Nation: *The Idea of America's Millennial Role* (University of Chicago Press, 1968). On late nineteenth-century America, see Jean B. Quant, "Religion and Social Thought The Secularization of Postmillennialism," *American Quarterly* (Oct. 1973); James H. Moorhead, "The Erosion of Postmillennialism in American Religious Thought, 1865-1925," *Church History* (March 1984).

There is no system of reincarnation or karma. "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Heb. 9:27). There is also no nothing ahead – no "soul sleep" or annihilation. Christianity preaches the fire next time.

> And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:11-15).

The eschatological questions of death, final judgment, and eternity have been generally agreed upon throughout Church history. The familiar creeds, East and West, mention some version of these phrases: ". . . from whence He will come to judge the quick [living] and the dead," and ". . . the resurrection of the dead and the life everlasting." In this sense, general eschatology does not serve as a major differentiating factor in Church history. Millennialism does.

Millennialism Defined

It is this narrower eschatological topic that has received increased interest by historians. It has also become the focus of interest for modern evangelical. Eschatology proper — death, final judgment, and eternity – is of less interest to secular scholars than millennialism is. It is also of little interest to evangelicals today, since they assume that their personal eternity is secured. The "hot topic" today is millennialism, not the far hotter and more permanent topic of the lake of fire.

There are three basic views of a millennial era of blessings: premillennialism, amillennialism, and postmillennialism. (The premillennial dispensational view is sometimes considered a

fourth view.)[12] They are three completely irreconcilable viewpoints. Nevertheless, they overlap in curious ways.

Premillennialism

The premillennial view teaches that Jesus Christ will return to earth in history to set up a visible kingdom that will last one thousand years. Then will come the final judgment. This is a literal interpretation of the prophecy in Revelation 20:

> And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season (Rev. 20:1-3).

Premillennialism has had a checkered history. It has been called *chiliasm*, from the plural of the Greek work for thousand: *chilia*. Many people in the early Church held this position, but Augustine rejected it. So did the major Protestant reformers. Most evangelical today are premillennialists.

A variant of premillennialism, called dispensationalism, is dominant in modern fundamentalism, and has been since the late nineteenth century. This viewpoint was first developed sometime around 1830.13 It focuses its attention today on a coming Great Tribulation for the state of Israel which will begin seven years before Christ returns to set up His earthly millennial kingdom. [14] Most dispensationalists are pre-tribulational. This pre-tribulational eschatology teaches that Christians will be

---

12. Robert G. Clouse (cd.), *The Meaning of the Millennium: Four Views* (Downers Grove, Illinois InterVarsity Press, 1977); Millard J. Erickson, *Contemporary Options in Eschatology: A Study of the Millennium* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker, 1977).

13. Clarence B. Bass, *Backgrounds to Dispensationalism: Its Historical Genesis and Ecclesiastical Implications* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1960); C. Norman Kraus, *Dispensationalism in America: Its Rise and Development* (Richmond, Virginia: John Knox Press, 1958); Dave MacPherson, The *Great Rapture Hoax* (Fletcher, North Carolina: New Puritan Library, 1983).

14. Hal *Lindsey, The Late Great Planet Earth (New* York Bantam, [1970]).

"Raptured" secretly (!) out of the world to heaven seven years before Jesus returns to establish His visible kingdom on earth. As soon as the Church is gone, the seven years of the Great Tribulation for Israel will begin. There are also mid-tribulational and post-tribulational dispensationalists, but their numbers have always been few.[15]

The main eschatological hope of most dispensationalists has been the coming Rapture ("caught up"), when Christians will be removed bodily from the growing crises of history. They believe that Christians will be spared the miseries of Armageddon. Christians who live until the Rapture will get out of life alive.

Amillennialism

Amillennialism is commonly believed to have been the dominant millennial viewpoint in Western Christendom since the beginning of the Middle Ages." It interprets the prophesied one thousand years of Revelation 20 as symbolic of the whole Christian era. The millennial kingdom of God is spiritual, yet not entirely spiritual, for it includes Christian families and orthodox churches. It will never attain dominance in cultural or political matters, however. The city of man and the city of God are always distinct. There will be no meaningful progress in history, except for ecclesiastical progress. This limited form of progress will not be accompanied by a widespread acceptance of the gospel. There will, if anything, be an increasing rejection of the gospel over time. There will at best be improvement in Christian creeds, Church order, and family government. This view is held by Roman Catholics, Lutherans, and modern Continental (Dutch) Calvinists on both sides of the Atlantic.

Both Augustine and Calvin have reputations as having been amillennialists. That Augustine was basically postmillennial in his perspective was not clear to those who followed him, nor to modern historians. The influence of his less millennially focused

---

15. Richard Reiter, *et al., The Rapture: Pre-, Mid-, or Post-Tribulational?* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Academie, 1984).

16. whether Charlemagne and Pope Gregory VII believed it is a question worth investigating.

City *of God* has been so overwhelming that his earlier writings, especially his six volumes of commentaries on the Psalms, have been neglected. It is in his exposition of Psalm 110 that we see his vision of world dominion by Christians. His less precise, more symbolic references to time and eschatology in City *of God* prevailed in Western Christianity throughout the medieval period. Calvin's writings suffer from a similar ambiguity. There are both postmillennial and amillennial passages in his writings, but the influence of the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, which is comprehensive but less detailed on matters of eschatology, has led even the Calvinists to neglect his Bible commentaries and other theological works in which his historic optimism is readily apparent. [17]

Postmillennialism

Postmillennialism has features of both premillennialism and amillennialism. It shares with amillennialism a commitment to historical continuity. Both views insist that Jesus will not return to earth physically to establish a millennial kingdom. It shares with premillennialism a commitment to the earthly fulfillment of many of the Old Testament's kingdom prophecies. Postmillennialism's hermeneutic (principles of biblical interpretation) is neither exclusively literalistic nor exclusively symbolic. (For that matter, this is also true of dispensationalism's hermeneutic; it only appears to be literalistic.)[18]

Postmillennialism had its greatest historical impact from the early Puritan era through the North American religious revival known as the First Great Awakening (1'735-55).[19] It dominated conservative American Presbyterian theology, North and South,

17. Gary North, "The Economic Thought of Luther and Calvin, " *Journal of Christian Reconstruction,* II (Summer 1975), pp. 104-6. *Greg* L. Bahnsen has cataloged many of Calvin's postmillennial statements: Bahnsen, "The *Prima Facie* Acceptability of Postmillennialism," *ibid.,* III (Winter 1976-77), pp. 69-76.

18. Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., "Consistent Liberalism Tested," *Dispensationalism in Transition,* III (Sept. 1990), published by the Institute for Christian Economics.

19. Symposium on Puritanism and Progress, *Journal of Christian Reconstruction,* VI (Summer 1978); Iain Murray, *The Puritan Hope: Revival and the Interpretation of Prophecy* (London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1971).

during the nineteenth century.20 It faded in popularity during the First World War. It has begun to revive within Calvinist circles since the early 1970's as a result of the U.S.-based Christian Reconstruction movement (social neo-Puritanism) and the British-based Banner of Truth publishing organization (pietistic neo-Puritanism). It is presently gaining a toehold in American charismatic circles, primarily as a result of David Chilton's *Paradise Restored*.[21]

Like amillennialists, postmillennialist interpret symbolically the one thousand years of Satan's bondage, with "millennial" referring to the entire era between the ascension of the resurrected Christ to heaven and the final judgment. Yet, like the premillennialist, some (though not all) postmillennialists also take the one thousand years literally: a unique era of spiritual and cultural blessings within the overall millennial era, blessings which God will grant because of massive, worldwide conversions to faith in Christ as Savior and Lord. The basic postmillennial point is this: ***there will be a long era of earthly millennial blessings in the future***. Jesus will return bodily to judge the world postmillennially: after the era of millennial blessings is over.

A key passage for postmillennialism is Paul's citation of Psalm 110. Psalm 110 reads: "The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. The LORD shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies" (Psa. 110:1-2). Paul writes:

> For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to Cod, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he bath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death (I Cor. 15:22-26).

---

20. Princeton Theological Seminary, the bastion of conservative Presbytenanism, was overwhelmingly postmillennial: J. A Alexander, Charles Hedge, his son A A Hedge, and B. B. Warfield. See also James B. Jordan, "A Survey of Southern Presbyterian Millennial Views Before 1930," *Journal of Christian Reconstruction,* III (Winter 1976-77).

21. David Chilton, Paradise *Restored: A Biblical Theology of Dominion* (Ft. Worth, Texas: Dominion Press, 1985).

Postmillennialism is divided into two camps: pietistic postmillennialists and covenantal postmillennialists. The former view is the postmillennialism of Augustine, Jonathan Edwards, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century revivalism, and late nineteenth-century American Presbyterianism. It is not tied to a specific view of law and society.[22] Covenantal postmillennialism is the postmillennialism of the New England Puritans and the modern Christian Reconstruction movement. It defends the continuing authority of biblical law and its cultural and civil sanctions. It sees the expansion of God's kingdom in history as an outworking of widespread conversions to saving faith in Jesus Christ, coupled with an extension of the Old Testament civil case laws.[23] It proclaims a kingdom established by God in history, but judicially and *representatively:* through saving faith.

The Millennium: Discontinuity

Millennialism for contemporary evangelical Christians is a topic of great personal interest but of little social interest. In fact, the more seriously the two ecclesiastically dominant forms of millennialism are taken, the less seriously both social theory and social activism are taken. This is the thesis of this book.

Premillennialism

The dispensational, premillennial Christian, living (as Timothy Weber has put it) in the shadow of the Second Coming,[24] is able to persuade himself that he is not necessarily going to die; he could soon be "Raptured" to heaven, and surely will be Raptured before Armageddon occurs, according to Scripture. Thus, the closer Armageddon appears to draw near, the more certain is the imminence of the Christian's "blessed hope": the Rapture. The worse the newspaper headlines, the brighter the outlook of the dispensationalist. Bad news means that "Jesus

22. See Chapter 10: "Pietistic Postmillennialism."

23. Gary North, *Tools of Dominion: The Case Laws of Exodus* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1990).

24. Timothy P. Weber, *Living in the Shadow of the Second Coming: American Premillennialism, 1875-1925* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979).

must be coming soon." The escape hatch from history looms!

The dispensationalist is convinced that escalating social problems are signs of the approaching conflagration, so they will soon no longer be his problems. The more complex and seemingly unsolvable the problems are, the less interest the dispensational, premillennial Christian has in solving them. A world of unsolvable problems is a world that is clearly speeding to the day of release for Christians: the "secret" Rapture into the world beyond the clouds.

The blessed hope for premillennial Christians is their personal ability to escape the cynical reality of the old slogan, "Nobody gets out of life alive." They also want to overcome that other dilemma: "Everybody wants to go to heaven, but nobody wants to die." Premillennial, pre-tribulational dispensationalism's doctrine of the "any moment" Rapture — the Church's literal lifting up to heaven, an event which has no intervening Bible prophecies remaining to be fulfilled – and historic premillennialism's doctrine of the Second Coming of Christ to set up His earthly kingdom immediately (without a subsequent seven-year Great Tribulation on earth) are both manifestations of a psychological quest to escape the universal negative sanction of physical death. But more than this: ***they are both manifestations of a desire to escape personal and corporate responsibility in an increasingly complex*** and ***threatening world.***

Amillennialism

Amillennial Christians share this same motivation. They, too, teach a version of the doctrine of the "any moment" Second Coming of Christ. No prophecy remains to be fulfilled between this moment and the Church's cosmic deliverance. Unlike the premillennialist, amillennialists believe that there will be no millennial era of earthly blessings; Christ will come at the final judgment. But there is no fundamental difference between them with respect to ***the cosmic, discontinuous nature of their hoped-for deliverance.*** Amillennial Christians hope and pray that history will end soon, and in the meantime, they, like their dispensational brethren, remain inside what are effectively psychological

and institutional ghettos.[25]

As residents of psychological and institutional ghettos, few American evangelical Christians have any self-conscious interest in social theory, although they almost intuitively adopt certain traditional views about society. They have adopted what is sometimes called the American civil religion.[26] It is based on concepts of natural law and political pluralism. This civil religion is self-consciously neutral with respect to specific religious confessions. No one is asked to believe in God in order to participate in politics, or even to swear in a court of law.

This traditional social outlook is strongly reinforced by the prevailing views of the millennium. American Christians' very lack of interest in social theory, like the views of society which they almost intuitively hold, is a direct result of the exegetically opposed yet socially similar eschatologies that they hold dear: premillennialism and amillennialism. Both views lead to a denial of the possibility, or at least the relevance, of social theory.

The Millennium: Continuity

The acceptance of the general Christian eschatological view regarding death and resurrection has consequences for one's view of time: linear rather than cyclical. This has been evident throughout Western history. But eschatology is more than personal death and resurrection. It also raises the question of progress. This is especially true of the doctrine of the earthly millennium. This has become a major dividing issue among

---

25. Christian Reformed Church theologian and Westminster Theological Seminary president R. B. Kuiper warned his fellow Dutch-Americans: "By thii time it has become trite to say that we must come out of our isolation. . . . Far too often, let it be said again, we hide our light under a bushel instead of placing it high on a candlestick. We seem not to realize fully that as the salt of the earth we can perform our functions of seasoning and preserving only through contact." R. B. Kuiper, *To Be or Not to Be Reformed: Whither the Christian Reformed Church?* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, Zondervan, 1959), p. 186.

26. Russell E. Richey and Donald G. Jones (eds.), *American Civil Religion* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974). See also Sidney E. Mead, *The Lively Experiment: The Shaping of Christianity in America* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963); Robert N. Bellah, *The Broken Covenant* American *Civil Religion in Time of Trial* (New York: Seabury Crossroad, 1975). For a warning, see Herbert Schlossberg, *Idols for Destruction: Christian Faith and Its Confrontation with American Society* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Gateway [1983] 1990), pp. 250-59.

Christians. It literally defines some Christian groups; their members see their life's work in terms of a millennial theory.

Amillennialism

In the West, speculation regarding the earthly millennium was for centuries considered controversial and unproductive. Ever since Augustine switched from premillennialism to a non-apocalyptic view of the future,[27] the Church, both East and West, has tended to downplay millennial speculation. Such speculation has long been seen by the Roman Church as leading to mischievous consequences, especially the phenomenon that is usually derided as "enthusiasm," meaning emotionalism, the creation of new independent sects, and even social revolution.[28] This opinion has been shared by Lutherans, Anglicans, and other churches.

Because of this official ecclesiastical and academic hostility to millennial speculation, people in the pews have historically been more concerned about the personal and eternal side of eschatology and less interested in the various ***institutional and judicial continuities*** that relate today's events and historical processes to a future millennium and then to the end of time. Heaven rather than history has been the focus of concern. Personal ethics rather than social ethics has been regarded as primary. Liturgy has been regarded as vastly more important than social action. How one prays in public has been regarded as more important than how or where one works.

Postmillennialism

The postmillennialist sees the history of the Church as a progressive, continuous application of the Great Commission and its cultural implications. It views evangelism as more than the mere sharing of the message of personal salvation. It sees history as the progressive ***discipline*** of humanity. It teaches that

---

27. ". . . I myself, too, once held this opinion." Augustine, *City of* God, XX:7 (Modern Library edition), p. 719.

28. Ronald Knox, *Enthusiasm: A Chapter in the History of Religion (New* York: Oxford University Press., 1950).

Jesus Christ gave His Church a corporate assignment in history: **the Great Commission.**

> And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, 10, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen (Matt. 28:18-20).

If this international discipline of the nations must be completed prior to the Second Coming of Christ – a denial of the "any moment" Second Coming – then this raises an inevitable question: ***"What is the specific nature of the work that has been assigned to the saints by God?"*** Second, is this task exclusively one of soul-saving or is it also to become culture-transforming? If the answer to the second question is "the latter," as this book argues that it is,[29] this raises a number of specific problems for philosophers, strategists, and leaders in the Church, such as: "What kind of social order is explicitly Christian?" "What personal and institutional efforts are legitimate in achieving these ends?" "How comprehensive is the lawful authority of the institutional Church in pursuing its goals?"

Theologians have seldom devoted much time or energy to answering these questions. From time to time, however, Western society has been swept by great waves of new eschatological speculation about the necessary earthly preparations for the coming millennium, and these periods have been noted by the uprooting of existing conventions and institutions.

The Idea of Progress

The question of continuity between the present and a future earthly millennium inevitably raises the question of historical progress. Is there meaningful progress in history? No one living in the modern world denies some kind of progress, unless he

29. See also Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., *The* Greatness *of the Great Commission: The Christian Enterprise in a Fallen World* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1990).

has adopted some version of Hinduism's doctrine of *maya*: the illusion of material reality. Very few of us want to return to a pre-industrial world without the basic amenities of civilization: anesthetics, electricity, telecommunications, air conditioning, and rapid transportation.

But is technological-economic progress really meaningful? Do scientific inventions change the nature of man? Does per capita economic growth change the fundamental questions of death, judgment, and eternity? Christians know the answer: no. So, when pressed regarding the reality of historical progress, most Christians return to the broader issue of eschatology and away from the millennium. They will explain their denial of historical progress by an appeal to the unchanging issues of general eschatology. But this shift from narrow millennialism to general eschatology is deceptive. In reality, they still cling to a particular view of the Second Coming of Christ. Most Christians presume the absence of spiritual (and therefore meaningful) progress in history because most Christians have a discontinuous view of the Second Coming of Christ. This victorious, visible coming from on high supposedly will not be influenced by the prior success of Christians in applying God's law to historical circumstances. Premillennialists and amillennialists deny that there will be this kind of cultural success prior to Christ's Second Coming: either at the beginning of the millennium (premillennialism) or at the end of history (amillennialism).

They will admit to ecclesiastical progress. Ask Christians if there has been progress in revising the creeds, and they will say yes, unless they are either Greek Orthodox, who deny the legitimacy of post-medieval creeds, or members of some Anabaptist sect that denies the legitimacy of creeds altogether. But most Christians assume that creedal improvement affects only the institutional Church, not society at large. Creedal progress is not seen even as an aspect of social progress, let alone a contributing cause. This presumes a fundamental relationship in history: ***the social irrelevance of the historic Christian creeds.*** It presumes that there is no continuity between the Church's creeds and civilization. Yet it is this which must be proven first, not presumed. It is Christian Reconstruction's contention that *there*

can be no civilization without a creed.[30] Creeds are therefore inescapable concepts. It is never a question of "creed vs. no creed." It is always this question: "Which creed?"

Creeds have consequences. Christian creeds include certain presuppositions about law, judicial cause and effect, and time. These views may be more implicit than explicit, but they exist.

Conclusion

The idea of eschatology is fundamental to Christianity and therefore to Western history. So is millennialism. Modern secular historians understand this far better than Christians do. But eschatology in the broadest sense is not a significant differentiating doctrine within Christianity. It is the far narrower idea of millennialism that is differentiating — in fact, highly divisive.

In most eras in Western history, millennialism has not been emphasized. This was especially true in the early medieval era, A.D. 500-1000.[31] But emphasized or not, a particular view of the millennium will become dominant within any particular Christian denomination or culture. In principle, there cannot be eschatological neutrality, meaning millennial neutrality, any more than there can be neutrality in any other area of life. There can be personal indifference or ignorance, but there cannot be neutrality. Everything is under the decree of God, and God is not neutral. When we identify an inescapable concept, any assertion of neutrality is deceptive: either deliberate deception or self-deception. Millennialism is an inescapable concept. It therefore has consequences. These consequences include the formation of attitudes toward the development of social theory.

The main dividing issues are these: historical continuity vs. discontinuity; the role of biblical law in extending God's earthly kingdom; the role of God's sanctions in history; the role of the Holy Spirit in history; and the limits of the Great Commission.

---

30. R. J. Rushdoony, *Foundations of Social Order: Studies in the Creeds and Councils of the Early Church* (Fairfax, Virginia: Thoburn Press, [1968] 1978).

31. In a book of over 400 pages, Petry devotes fewer than ten pages to early medieval eschatology, AD. 500 to 1000. The individuals he cites are for the most part minor figures in Church history. Petry, Christian *Eschatology and Social Thought,* pp. 114-20.

Secondarily, there is the issue of time remaining before Jesus returns bodily to earth. While neither premillennialism nor amillennialism teaches a specific timetable regarding the return of Christ to earth, their adherents generally believe that time remaining is very short.[32] Their cultural battle cry is this: "Come quickly, Lord Jesus." The postmillennialists' cry is this: "Come quickly, but only after your Church has achieved its role in fulfilling the Great Commission." The differences between the two battle cries are enormous. The first is either a call to retreat from most of the battlefields of life, or else a call to launch a kamikaze-type attack against the prevailing humanist culture. The second is a call to historical victory. The first tends to dissuade its adherents from producing detailed social theories. The second may or may not, depending on the adherents' view of law and historical sanctions.

32. The doctrine of the "any-moment coming" of Christ officially precludes our identification of any contemporary event as a fulfillment of prophecy. Nonetheless, dispensationalists througout the twentieth century have identified contemporary events as fufilled prophecies. See Dwight Wilson, *Armageddon Now! The Premillennarian Response to Russia and Israel Since 1917* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker, 1977).

2

WHAT IS SOCIAL THEORY?

Christianity has often been accused of being too "otherworldly" in that it has failed to offer viable political, economic, judicial, and social programs for the world order. The teaching of Jesus that his kingdom "is not of this world" has been interpreted to mean that earthly life must merely be endured, and that Christians cannot expect to accomplish lasting reform before the return of Christ. But does the New Testament really offer no guidance for shaping political or economic policy? Does it contain *no judicial or social precepts that may be applied in today's societies? True, neither Jesus nor Paul spoke in detail of political or economic ideologies. But since both spoke out of a Jewish background and context, direct allusions may have been unnecessary. Christians must understand that their faith is rooted in Old Testament Judaism and that the Mosaic Covenant and Law (which contain highly specific political, economic, and social precepts) can give guidance even today.*

Larry Postan (1990)[1]

Mr. Postan is not a well-known author, but his assessment of the theological problem is correct. His topic is the growth of Islam and the reasons for it. He is a professor of missions at Nyack College. He is concerned about the weakness of gospel efforts in the face of worldwide successes in direct evangelism by Islam. He sees a major flaw in contemporary Christian evangelism that is leaving it vulnerable to the counter-claims of Islam. The average age of each convert to Islam is 31; in contrast, the average age of Christian converts is 16. This is significant. As he says, "for every year the non-Christian grows older than 25, the odds increase exponentially against his or her ever becoming a

1. Larry Postan, "The Adult Gospel," *Christianity Today (April 20, 1990),* p. 25.

Christian."[2] What we need, he says, is an adult gospel.

He lists five reasons why Westerners choose Islam over Christianity. The fourth is important for this chapter.

> Fourth, Islam is practical. It is considered a this-worldly religion in contrast to Christianity, which is perceived as abstract to the extreme. Muhammed left his followers a political, social, moral, and economic program founded on religious precepts. Jesus, however, is said to have advocated no such program; it is claimed that the New Testament is so preoccupied with his imminent return that it is impractical for modern lifes

I wrote in the Preface that my concern is evangelism. The typical fundamentalist response is this: "If your concern is with evangelism, why are you wasting your time writing about social theory? What has economics got to do with evangelism?" That depends. If you are evangelizing children, not very much, at least not directly. But what if you are evangelizing adults? Then such things matter a great deal. If they do not matter on the front end of the gospel presentation, they matter on the back end, when the person asks: "Now what am I required by God to do?" If the evangelist's answer is, "Pass out gospel tracts," it is far too limited an answer. God requires a great deal more.

Only for those adult Christians who want to continue to live as children does the message of contemporary pietism have a strong appeal. Sadly, their name is legion. They have defined Christian evangelism too narrowly. They have defined it in terms of their immediate emotional needs, not in terms of the biblical doctrine of God's comprehensive redemption. They have not understood true biblical evangelism: personal regeneration *leading to social transformation.* To begin to understand biblical evangelism, we should begin with Moses' words to the generation that was about to conquer the land of Canaan.

> Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the LORD my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the land

2. *Ibid.*, p. *24.*
3. *Idem.*

> whither ye go to possess it. Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people. For what nation is there so great, who bath God so nigh unto them, as the LORD our God is in all things that we call upon him for? And what nation is there so great, that bath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day? Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: but teach them thy sons, and thy sons' sons; Specially the day that thou stoodest before the LORD thy God in Horeb, when the LORD said unto me, Gather me the people together, and I will make them hear my words, that they may learn to fear me all the days that they shall live upon the earth, and that they may teach their children (Deut. 4:5-10).

Evangelism is comprehensive. It must produce positive fruits. These fruits are not merely personal. Like the Queen of Sheba who journeyed to Israel because of Solomon's legendary abilities as a civil judge, so are other non-believers expected to see and praise God's social laws because of their visible results.

This view of evangelism is hated by the vast majority of those who call themselves Christians. It is ridiculed as if it were some sort of rejection of the Bible. Writes Peter Masters, heir of Spurgeon's pulpit at the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London: "Reconstructionists teach that the great commission of Christ to His disciples goes beyond the work of evangelism. In their view it includes this quest for the social-political dominion of the world; the persuading of all nations to submit to the rule of Israel's ancient laws."[4] At least he was kind enough and precise enough to use the word, "persuading," rather that "forcing," etc.

Notice his phrase, "beyond the work of evangelism." Into this brief phrase is packed an entire worldview, the worldview of Christian pietism. Evangelism is narrow, he presumes. To discuss men's requirements to obey the laws set forth in the Old Testament is necessarily to discuss social transformation. These laws deal with all aspects of society.[5] In Masters' view, all such

4. Masters, "World Dominion: The High Ambition of Reconstructionism," *Sword & Trowel* (May 24, 1990), p. 13.

5. R. J. Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law* (Nutley, New Jersey Craig Press,

discussions are peripheral to evangelism. If pursued in detail, they become obstructions to evangelism, he and all pietists believe. But social theory is only possible if men are willing to pursue such questions in great detail. This is why pietism, with its narrow definition of evangelism, is hostile to social theory.

Defining Social Theory

Social theory is more difficult to define than is eschatology. Social theory is the view that men adopt to explain how society operates, or better yet, how it holds together. It is the question of the nature of *the social bond*.[6] Every social theory must offer answers to at least five fundamental questions: (1) What provides legitimacy to any given institution or complex system of institutions? (2) What system of authority binds people and institutions together in their cooperative ventures? (What do we mean by "institution"?) (3) What are the rules and regulations of the social bond, and how are they discovered and applied to specific cases in history? (4) What are the sanctions that individuals and institutions legitimately bring against deviants and outsiders? (5) What is the view of time (continuity) that binds men and institutions to both the past and the future?

Point five is the issue of eschatology. Man's past, present, and future are covenantally intertwined. Christianity has always affirmed the linearity of history: creation, fall, redemption, and the final judgment. Western Christianity, especially Puritanism, has at times also affirmed the possibility of progress within this linear temporal process: history can be "linear upward." The widespread public acceptance in the West of the twin concepts of scientific progress and economic growth was closely related to the spread of Puritan postmillennial eschatology.

It was a secularized version of this Puritan vision of progress that was adopted by Enlightenment humanism: progress without God's sovereignty, authority, law, historical sanctions, or final judgment. The past was seen as being pregnant with the future.

1973).

6. *The Social Bond was* Nisbet's choice for the title of his textbook on sociology (New York: Knopf, 1970).

This humanist vision is now fading. Nisbet is probably correct regarding the cause of the late twentieth century's loss of faith in progress: "There is by now no single influence greater in negative impact upon the idea of progress than our far-flung and relentless jettisoning of the past."[7] The humanists also failed to understand why disrespect for the past would lead to loss of faith in the present: we are ***all becoming part of the past.*** We, too, will be jettisoned by future generations. Our works and dreams will be cast out of future men's thinking. We will be consigned, as Communist Leon Trotsky put it, to the ash can of history. So, what kind of commitment to such future ingrates can modern man be expected to reveal? Very little. Millions of people today are increasingly ready to abort the future, as well abort the yet unborn who would otherwise become the future.[8] Western society has become increasingly present-oriented, with fateful consequences for Western culture. Present-orientation is a denial of the very foundations of Western culture: respect for the past and faith in the future.

The Three Views of Society

There are three, and only three, fundamental views of the underlying nature of the social bond. Each of them reflects a particular view of the cosmos, which in turn undergird the particular view of society. These views are organicism, contractualism, and covenantalism. The first two have been dominant in Western philosophy and social thought. The third, being uniquely biblical, has been ignored.

Organicism. This is by far the most widespread view in man's history, though not in the modern West. Society is viewed as an

7. Robert Nisbet, *History of the Idea of Progress (New York:* Basic Books, 19S0), p. 323.

8. I realize that there is a counter-tendency in the ecology movement: to preserve the environment for future generations. The implicit motto of many in this diffuse movement is this: "Save baby seals, not unborn humans!" First, this attitude is anti-human. It is a commitment to an animist Mother Nature rather than to God's environment, including people made in His image. Second, it is a call to stop economic growth, which raises many questions and emotional commitments besides a mere commitment to future generations. There can be present-oriented hidden agendas wrapped securely in the call to save the earth for future generations.

organism, just as the cosmos is: a growing thing that has the characteristic features of life. The model institution of the organic society is the family, which is closely associated with physical birth, cultural and physical nurturing, and death. This organic view of society is often associated with the concept of a hierarchical chain of being that links God, man, and the cosmos.[9] It is also associated with magic and with magic's fundamental principle: "As above, so below." Man supposedly can manipulate any aspect of the cosmos (macrocosm) by manipulating representative features (microcosm). The crudest manifestation of this philosophy is the voodoo doll. Philosophically, this view of society is associated with *realism*: an underlying metaphysical unity transcendent to mere individuals. Organicism is divided into two major historical streams: familism (medieval) and statism (Greco-Roman).[10]

Contractualism. This is the dominant view of the modern world, although its philosophical roots go back to the Middle Ages (e.g., William of Occam). Society is based either on a hypothetical original contract among men in pre-historic times or on a constitution of some kind. The primary model is the State, not the family, although in some modern social philosophies, the free market is the model. The familiar phrase associated with this outlook is "the social contract." Men in the distant past voluntarily transferred their individually held political sovereignty to the State, which now maintains social order. Each social institution is governed by the terms of an original contract, whether mythical or historical. The social bond is based exclusively on voluntary legal contracts, hypothetical or historical, among individuals. Philosophically, this view of society is associated with *nominalism*: the denial of any underlying metaphysical reality or transcendent social unity apart from the thoughts and decisions of individual men. Contractualism is

9. Arthur O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being: A Study of the History of an Idea* (Cambridge, Massachusetts Harvard University Press, [1936]).

10. In English political thought, the archetype organic treatise is Robert Filmer's defense of patriarchal-monarchical absolutism, *Patriarch* (1 680). It was important primarily because it called forth John Locke's response, *First Treatise of Civil Government* (1690): contractualism.

divided into two major historical streams: individualism (right-wing Enlightenment)[11] and collectivism (left-wing Enlightenment).[12] The former is evolutionary in its view of society; the later is more revolutionary.

Covenantalism. This is not a fusion of organicism and contractualism; it is a separate system. It views society as a complex system of legal bonds, with God as the ultimate Enforcer of these covenants and contracts. There are only four covenants: personal (God and the individual); ecclesiastical (sacramental), familial, and civil. These final three are monopoly institutions founded directly under God's explicit sovereignty. Covenants alone are lawful] y established by a ***self-maledictory oath*** under God. The oath-taker calls down God's wrath upon himself if he ever violates the stipulations (laws) of the covenant document. All other relationships are either personal (e.g., friendship) or contractual (e.g., a legal business arrangement). God is the final Judge because He is the Creator, and He brings His judgments, in time and eternity, in terms of His permanent ethical standards (i.e., biblical law).

Covenantalism has developed no separate philosophical tradition in Western history, for Christian philosophers, including those interested in society, prior to Cornelius Van Til (1885-1988) virtually always adopted in the name of Christ some version of either realism or nominalism. [13] The biblical covenant model is based on ***creationism,*** not realism or nominalism. This philosophy asserts an absolute separation of being between God and any aspect of the creation: ***the Creator-creature distinction.*** This concept, so fundamental to Van Til's philosophy, categorically denies the existence of a chain of being linking God to the cosmos (realism). Creationism leads to providentialism, which affirms the absolute authority of God and His sovereign control over all things in history (i.e., His decree), thereby denying the

11. For example, John Locke, Adam Smith, Edmund Burke.

12. For example, Jean Jacques Rousseau, Karl Marx, V. I. Lenin.

13. There is really only one major figure in the history of modem political theory who affirmed the covenantal position: Johannes Althusius. See *The Politics of Johannes Althusius*, translated and edited by Frederick S. Carney (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, [1603] 1964). John of Salisbury (12th century) was to some extent a covenantalist.

autonomous power of man to name any aspect of the cosmos authoritatively (nominalism). Covenantalism is a separate philosophical system.

Historical Sanctions and Millennial Eschatology

As I hope to show in this book, there is more to social theory than eschatology. There are all five aspects of the social bond. A comprehensive study of social theory would have to include all five. I have decided, however, to limit my discussion primarily to millennial eschatology and sanctions, meaning the idea of sanctions *in history* – sanctions imposed by God and governed by specific moral and legal standards. I could also have discussed sovereignty, hierarchy (authority), and law, but the great dividing lines within Christianity today are associated with sanctions and the historical result of these sanctions: millennialism. Here is where the great debate occurs. Christians generally agree with each other on the idea of the sovereignty of God, although the Calvinists are the "hard-liners" on this subject: the absolute sovereignty of God and the non-autonomy of man. Christians also agree that there must be hierarchies in life, although they tend to adopt the family as their model rather than the Church, since there is more agreement today regarding the proper structure of the family. (This structure of the Christian family has changed many times in the past, but each era seems to think that the present structure is *the* biblical model.) The churches do verbally agree that Christians must obey God's moral law, a concept left judiciously and judicially undefined.

But why single out ("double out"?) historical sanctions and millennialism? Because the debate over law would be too complex. Which laws? Natural laws? Old Testament laws? Which natural or Old Testament laws? How interpreted? How applied today? Few Christians have seriously thought about law and society in our era, and the seventeenth-century debates over law (casuistry) have faded from most Christians' consciousness.[14]

14. On the history of casuistry in general, see Kenneth E. Kirk, Conscience and *Its Problems: An Introduction to Casuistry* (rev. cd.; London: Longmans, Green, 1948). See also Thomas Wood, *English Casuistical Divinity in the Seventeenth Century* (London: S.P.C.K.,

They have no strong opinions regarding the proper legal (i.e., covenantal) foundation of society. They do have very strong opinions on God's historical sanctions and the millennium, and this has deeply affected their intuitively held views of society. Before exploring the question of sanctions and eschatology, however, we must first consider very briefly the question of law.

A Question of Law

Prior to the Newtonian intellectual revolution, all but a handful of Christians had adopted some version of medieval natural law theory, what we can call ***organic natural law theory*** (realism).[15] This version of natural law was based on the medieval Roman Catholic concept of a chain of being linking God and man. This medieval theory's roots were in Stoic natural law theory, in turn derived from Greek speculative thought.[16] The mind of man was seen as autonomous to some degree from God, the Bible, and the Church. Baptism, the celebration of the mass, and Church law were needed to make fallen man whole again, but man's intellectual autonomy in rational affairs (e.g., geometry) was asserted. The laws of nature were seen as autonomous and open to accurate investigation by all mankind. Natural law in society was seen as essentially metaphysical, i.e., underlying all human relationships. The key philosophical assumption was the idea of ***shared being,*** meaning a real, metaphysical link in a living, organic cosmos.

The mathematical-mechanical rationality of Cartesianism and Newtonianism destroyed this organic worldview in the Protestant West. After Newton, Christians and non-Christians alike adopted a new version of natural law theory, what we can call ***mechanical natural law theory*** (nominalism). It rested on the hypothesis of a distant creator God so far removed from the creation that He intervenes only occasionally, in order solely to

---

1952). On the history of Roman Catholic casuistry, see Albert J. Jensen and Stephen Toulmin, *The Abuse of Casuistry: A History of Moral Reasoning* (Berkeley University of California Press, 1988).

15. The exceptions historically were nominalists. The Franciscans, following Franciscan William of Occam, linked the Spiritualist tradition with philosophical nominalism.

16. On this point, see the writings of Herman Dooyeweerd and Cornelius Van Til.

keep the mechanical "clock" of creation operating smoothly. The mind of man was seen as autonomous from both biblical law and Church law. What is crucial to man's scientific understanding is his knowledge of the mathematical structure of the universe. Steadily, social philosophers sought analogously rigorous relationships in human society. [17] Natural law in society was seen as exclusively contractual; hence, the conclusion: "no social contract, no legitimacy." The underlying assumptions of this worldview did not survive Darwinism (a new, impersonal organicism) in the late nineteenth century and quantum physics (a new, impersonal irrationalism) in the early twentieth.[18]

Natural law theory in both forms prevented the development of a uniquely biblical social theory. The doctrine of the biblical covenant was missing, since one or more of its five points were denied: (1) the absolute personal sovereignty of God over both nature and human history; (2) the hierarchical authority of all human institutions under God's limited, delegated sovereignty; (3) biblical law as authoritative in all civilizations; (4) God's historical sanctions (blessing and cursing), imposed in terms of His Bible-revealed law; and (5) the development of history in response to the imposition of God's sanctions, though mitigated temporarily by His mercy.[19] Point one is called Calvinism; point two is called representative government; points three and four are called theonomy; and point five is called postmillennialism. They are a package deal. Without all five, it is impossible to construct an exclusively and covenantally faithful biblical social theory.

What I argue in this book is that law, historical sanctions, and eschatology are uniquely linked together in ways denied by virtually the whole of the modern Church. God's stipulations (laws), God's historical sanctions, and God's kingdom triumph in

17. Louis I. Bredvold, *The Brave New World of the Enlightenment* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1961).

18. Gary North, *The Dominion Covenant:* Genesis (2nd ed; Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1987), Appendix A: "From Cosmic Purposelessness to Humanistic Sovereignty."

19. Ray R. Sutton, *That You May Prosper: Dominion By Covenant!* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1987).

history are a unit. This is not to deny that God's absolute predestinating sovereignty is what guarantees His kingdom's historical triumph, or that Christians, as members of God's Church, are not God's kingdom representatives in history. But the great debate has come over the inextricable relationship between biblical law, God's historical sanctions, and cultural progress over time. Yet most modern covenant theologians expressly deny this connection.[20] They also refuse to define ***covenant.*** This has been going on for four centuries.

A Question of Sanctions

"The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles." This is the opening paragraph of Part I of the ***Communist Manifesto (1848).***[21] The fact that Marx never did define "class" (i.e., hierarchy) in terms of his theoretical system did not in the least hinder the growth of the Communist movement.[22] He clearly had a unified concept of sanctions and eschatology, and it was this belief, above all, that motivated his disciples: "Centralisation of the means of production and socialisation of labour at last reach a point where they become incompatible with their capitalist integument [covering]. This integument is burst asunder. The knell of capitalist private property sounds. The expropriators are expropriated."[23]

Marx was wrong. In 1989, the death knell of Marxist Communism sounded, except in Red China, and even in this case, it was only the application of military sanctions against unarmed students that gave Chinese Communism a stay of execution. This was viewed by the whole non-Communist world on satellite television, and Red China lost any claim to moral legitimacy. Lost legitimacy is very difficult to regain. Non-Chinese Communism lost its moral legitimacy in a much less spectacular way.

---

20. See Chapter 7, below.

21. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, "Manifesto of the Communist Party," in Marx and Engels, *Collected Works* (New York: International Publishers, 1976), VI, p. 482.

22. He began to define "class" in the last few paragraphs of his posthumously published third volume of *Capital*. The manuscript then breaks off. He lived for another fifteen years after he ceased working on it.

23. Karl Marx, *Capital* (New York: Modern Library, [1867]), p. 837.

Communist producers of goods and services, held legally unaccountable to enslaved consumers for over seventy years, finally failed to deliver the goods. Communist economies all went bankrupt economically, but far more significantly, went theoretically bankrupt. They lost their legitimacy because it had been based on a promise of a better economic world to come. So utterly hopeless is Communism as an economic system, ***The Economist*** commented with characteristic English wit, that not even Germans could make it work.24 While the implements of Russian nuclear sanctions are still growing in number, those sanctions, if ever applied, will not be Marxist, merely Russian. Marxism is dead. Its few remaining defenders are Western college professors: tenured upholders of lost causes. Any social philosophy that is dependent on college professors to keep it alive is already suffering from rigor mortis.

This is not to say that Leninism is dead. Leninism is a theory of power, not a theory of economics.[25] Its strategy, in Lenin's own words, is two steps forward and one step back.[26] Mikhail Gorbachev is a Leninist, and a declared one at that. What he is throwing out is Marxian socialism, just as Lenin did with his New Economic Policy in 1921. For the sake of the Leninist cause, Gorbachev is abandoning Marxism. But he is not abandoning Leninism's power religion. What he now appears to be doing is substituting the strategy of the founder of the Italian Communist Party, Antonio Gramsci, who was Lenin's contemporary. Gramsci rejected the Marxist-Leninist ideal of a workers' revolution as a strategy for conquering the West. He designed a propaganda campaign promoting atheism and relativism as a means of subverting the then-marginally Christian West.[27]

The question is: Can Leninism as an ideology exist apart from socialism ? Can it exist apart from Marx's goal of destroying the

24. "D-mark day dawns," *The Economist* (June 30, 1990), p. 3.

25. John P. Roche, *The History and Impact of Marxist-Leninist Organizational Theory* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis, 1984).

26. V. I. Lenin, *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back (The Crisis of Our Party)* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, [1904] 1978).

27. Malachi Martin, *The Keys of This Blood (New* York: Simon & Schuster, 1990), ch. 13.

bourgeoisie? My answer: ***no.*** Marxism is a theory of final sanctions in history, of class revenge, of envy. It is a deeply religious worldview that proclaims both personal and corporate salvation through revolution followed by the application of ruthless centralized power. It cannot co-exist with a free market capitalist order. Thus, Gorbachev's *tactic* of abandoning Marx's socialism is in fact a *strategy* leading to the self-destruction of Communism. Marxism is officially dead. Gorbachev has publicly buried it. Leninism, though well-armed militarily, is now dying.

Power is not enough. Marxism-Leninism is far more than a philosophy of power. It is, in the words of Peter Drucker, "the promise of an everlasting society that achieves both social perfection and individual perfection, a society that establishes the earthly paradise. It was this belief in salvation by society that gave Marxism its tremendous appeal."[28] Marxism is a ***power religion,*** but religion is supposed to heal man's wounds. Marxism has failed as a religion, and now it will be replaced as a worldwide ideological movement. It no longer fulfills its original role. The most successful secular religion in history has failed.

Gramsci's Marxism is really not Marxism. It is merely socialist humanism, and socialist humanism is now out of favor, East and West. Fascism is alive and well – the "government-business partnership" – but Marxian socialism is dead. Gramsci left Soviet Russia, preferring a jail sentence in Fascist Italy to a death sentence from Stalin.*[8] In this sense, Gorbachev is a true disciple of Gramsci: he prefers Fascism to Stalinism. But unlike Gramsci, Gorbachev thinks he will run the prison, which is now under construction. This prison is the translational New World Order.

Covenantal Struggles

Marx and Engels were close to the truth – close enough to create the most powerful secular religion in man's history. Society is indeed a history of struggles. Paraphrasing Marx and Engels, we can say: "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of covenantal struggles." This conflict began with

28. Peter F. Drucker, The *New Realities (New* York: Harper & Row, 1989), p. 10.
29. Martin, *Keys,* p. 246.

the serpent's tempting of Eve in the garden. It continues in our day. It will continue until the final judgment. ***There is a gigantic struggle in history between covenant-keepers and covenant-breakers.*** We know where this struggle is headed: toward the total defeat of covenant-breakers at the end of time.

Covenant-breakers want one thing above all: ***to escape the negative sanctions of the final judgment.*** Modern humanism has denied the existence of such a final judgment. It has sought to transfer the very concept of final judgment into history. Social theories that are built on the second law of thermodynamics (entropy) are examples of this outlook.[30] There are only historical sanctions, we are told, and these sanctions are imposed by either man or nature. Eschatology becomes immanentized: dragged out of heaven and into history exclusively. It is stripped of every trace of the transcendent.

Covenant-keepers, in contrast, assert the existence of sanctions beyond history, both personal (after death) and cosmic (end of time). But Christian thinking for the most part over many centuries has concentrated only on these final sanctions. God's sanctions in history, both positive and negative, have been explained in terms of God's inscrutable will. They have been seen as essentially random from man's perspective. Amillennial theologian Meredith Kline writes: "And meanwhile it [the common grace order] must run its course within the uncertainties of the mutually conditioning principles of common grace and common curse, prosperity and adversity being experienced in a manner largely unpredictable because of the inscrutable sovereignty of the divine will that dispenses them in mysterious ways."[31]

This view of God's historical sanctions (random) has produced ***an operational alliance between covenant-breakers and covenant-keepers.*** Covenant-breakers have sought to make all the meaningful sanctions exclusively historical and exclusively natural. This is an aspect of worshipping what Herbert Schlossberg calls the

30. Gary North, ***Is the World Running Down? Crisis in the Christian Worldview*** (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1988).

31. Meredith G. Kline, "Comments on an Old-New Error," ***Westminster Theological Journal,*** XLI (Fall 1978), p. 184.

twin idols of mankind: idols of history and idols of nature.[32] Covenant-keepers have not accepted this worldview in theory, but most have accepted it in practice. *Random historical sanctions* become the operational equivalent of no historical *sanctions. This* leaves humanism's sanctions as an effective monopoly in history. Furthermore, throughout most of man's history, these sanctions have been closely associated with the exercise of State power. Those who have affirmed meaningful sanctions only in history have sought and gained political power. Modern Christians, in contrast, have denied that God's predictable, covenantal sanctions apply to history, and have also denied their legitimate enforcement by the covenant-keeping representatives of God. They have sought, first, to shun all political power and, second, to escape its effects. This leaves covenant-breakers in control of society by default. This covert alliance between humanists and pietists has led to the visible triumph of the power religion over the escape religion.

The power religion and the escape religion are united in their determined opposition to the idea of God's covenant sanctions in history.[33] Understandably, the defenders of humanist theocracy – the religion of autonomous man – are outraged by the message of biblical theocracy. Man, they insist, must rule in history whenever nature departs from her throne (or is pushed off by man). Less recognized is the fact that the defenders of God's random historical sanctions have by default accepted the moral legitimacy of this humanist theocracy, at least in the form known as political pluralism – what I have called right-wing Enlightenment political theory."

There is no neutral cultural and social vacuum. Either covenant-keepers will make and enforce the laws of society, or else covenant-breakers will. There is no third alternative, long-term.

---

32. Herbert Schlossberg, *Idols of Destruction: Christian Faith and Its Confrontation with American Society* (Washington, D. C.: Regnery Gateway [1983] 1990), p. 11.

33. Gary North, *Moses and Pharaoh:* Dominion *Religion vs. Power Religion (Tyler,* Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1985), pp. 2-5.

34. Gary North, *Political Polytheism: The Myth of Pluralism* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1989), pp. 398, 540.

Modern political pluralism is merely a temporary cease-fire.[35] One side or the other must eventually gain control. This will be the humanist side if covenant-keepers retain their faith in the randomness of God's sanctions in history, for humanism is a consistent theology of man's sovereignty. ***Consistency wins, for it can mobilize the*** hearts and ***minds of men. The*** inconsistency and philosophy of despair of the classical civilization of antiquity could not withstand the consistency and eschatological vision of Christianity.[36] For the past three centuries, however, the consistency and vision of humanism has overcome the inconsistency and lack of historical vision of Christianity. Today, with humanism in disarray and Christianity in seemingly equal disarray, it is not clear from the available evidence which side will win. But one or the other will, unless a third contender appears.[37]

Christianity's problem is this: ***you cannot beat something with nothing.*** If we seek to persuade people to embrace our religion, we need to offer good reasons why. Guaranteed historical defeat is not one of them. A positive eschatology is important.

A Question of Eschatology

Communism has served as the ultimate model of all humanistic social theories: consistent, comprehensive, life-changing, and life-absorbing. In its early days, it demanded the whole of men's lives.[38] Communism has been able to demand this degree of sacrifice because it is a religion.[39] Like all religions, it possesses an explicit eschatology. This millennial eschatology is optimistic,

---

35. Ibid., pp. XiX, 2, 4, 227-28, 250, 265, 294, 630-31.

36. Charles Norris Cochrane, *Christianity and Classical Culture: A Study of Thought and Action from Augustus to Augustine (New* York Oxford University Press, [1 944] 1957).

37. One contender today is Islam.

38. Benjamin Gitlow, The *Whole of Their Lives (New* York: Scribner's, 1948). Gitlow became the head of the American Communist Party in 1929. Gitfow's autobiography is one of many by former Communists who gave everything to the Party and then grew disillusioned and defected. The most eloquent of these is *Witness* by Whittaker Chambers (New York: Random House, 1952). See also Freda Utley, *Lost Illusion* (Philadelphia: Fireside Press, 1948); Bells V. Dodd, *School of Darkness (New* York: Devin-Adair, 1954); Louis Francis Budenz, This 1s *My Story* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1947); and Maurice L. Malkin, *Return to My Father's House (New* Rochelle, New York: Arlington House, 1972).

.39. Gary North, *Marx's Religion of Revolution: Regeneration* Through Chaos (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, [1968] 1989).

world-embracing, world-transforming, and exclusively this-worldly. It is a vision of victory.[40] The Soviet Union remains militarily the best-armed nation on earth, but the nation's theoretical fundamentals are no longer seriously believed by its people or its intellectuals, as Solzhenitsyn has been telling the West ever since his deportation from the Soviet Union in 19'74. Now this moral bankruptcy is visible to all. But Communism's rulers have held unprecedented power. Communism is the incarnation of the power religion.

Few scholars would deny the close relationship between Communist eschatology and Communist social theory. Few would deny the importance of Communist eschatology in the rapid rise and then the geographical triumph of Communism after 191'7 — a victory that only came to a halt, at least for the moment, in late 1989. Communist eschatology helped not only Communism; it helped socialism in general. As Ludwig von Mises wrote in 1922, "Nothing has helped the spread of socialist ideas more than this belief that Socialism is inevitable. Even the opponents of socialism are for the most part bewitched by it: it takes the heart out of their resistance."[41] What should also be recognized is the close connection between Communist eschatology and the Communist theory of historical sanctions. Again, citing Mises: "From the theory of the class-war, Marxians argue that the socialist order of society is the inevitable future of the human race."4[2] *Eschatology and historical sanctions:* the diabolical genius of Marx and Engels linked them together self-consciously. The religion of Marxism, in this sense (as in others), is a perverse imitation of biblical covenantalism.

Christianity

The three major Christian eschatological systems – premillennialism, amillennialism, and postmillennialism[43] — have ines-

40. Francis Nigel Lee, *Communist Eschatology* (Nutley, New Jersey: Craig Press, 1974).

41. Ludwig von Mises, *Socialism:* An *Economic and Sociological Analysis (New* Haven, Connecticut Yale University Press, [1922] 1951), p. 282. Reprinted by Liberty Classics, Indianapolis, Indiana.

42. Ibid., p. 344.

43. Pre-, a-, and post- refer to tbe timing of the bodily return ofJesus Christ: before

able implications for the development of social theory. This fact was ignored for centuries by Christian theologians generally and by the tiny handful of Christians who over the centuries have dealt at least peripherally with the question of social theory.[44] The relationship between millennialism and social theory was not even discussed, let alone studied in depth. The topic in recent years has been considered sporadically and peripherally by a few Christian theologians only because of the appearance of the Christian Reconstruction movement, which is self-consciously postmillennial and which has specialized in the study of social theory.[45]

Ironically, secular historians have in recent decades begun to understand that such relationships have existed in Western history.[46] Why have Christian scholars paid little or no attention to this growing body of scholarly literature? First, they seldom keep up with academic literature outside their own narrow theological specialties. Second, the existence of such a relationship between eschatology and social theory raises many difficult personal questions regarding church membership, continued employment by Christian organizations, and relationships within Christian organizations. If a particular eschatology is true, and if it seems to lead to a particular theory about how society is required by God to be governed, then what should the local church do when its members or officers affirm the particu-

---

the millennial kingdom on earth, in the absence of a millennial kingdom on earth, or after a millennial kingdom *on earth.*

44. This concern was usually a subordinate part of the discipline of *casuistry: the* application of (hopefully) Christian ethical principles to historical circumstances.

45. The critics of Christian Reconstruction have mislabeled the Reconstructionists' intellectual specialization with a supped downplaying of traditional theology. First, it is the repeated and almost universal error of the critics to imagine that Christian Reconstructionists believe that society is transformed first and foremost through politics. This view of social change is the myth of humanism, not Christian Reconstruction. Second, society is far wider than politics, so the Christian Reconstructionists are concerned with far more than mere political transformation. Third, the Reconstructionists are convinced that the regeneration of a majority of people by the irresistible grace of the Holy Spirit is the sole basis of long-term social reconstruction using a biblical model. See Gary North and Gary DeMar, *Christian Reconstruction: What It* Is, *What It Isn't* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1991). See also Gary North, Dominic-n and *Common* Grace: *The Biblical Basis of Progress* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1987), ch. 6.

46. See Chapter 1, footnote #11.

lar eschatology but then deny its social implications? Even more painfully, what if the denomination specifically insists on eschatological neutrality in the ordination of its officers? Third, it raises psychological questions: "I believe in *this* eschatology. Must I also believe in *that* social theory if I am to remain theologically consistent? Can I even develop a Bible-based social theory that is consistent with my eschatology?"[47] These questions disturb amillennialists and premillennialist alike, for both groups systematically shun social theory. Above all, these questions disturb that handful of dispensational premillennialists who are also social activists: the problem of consistency.[48]

Christian responses have been mixed to Christian Reconstructionism's claims in favor of an explicitly biblical social theory. Some of these critics insist that the traditional categories of Stoic and medieval natural law theory are universally valid, and therefore constitute the only legitimate foundation of social theory in a post-Resurrection world — a pluralist, humanist-dominated world. Others take the seemingly less controversial approach, professing ignorance, but implicitly proclaiming ignorance as universally binding. They proclaim a kind of spiritual agnosticism. They thereby deny the possibility of Christian social theory, let alone its necessity. For example, English Calvinist Baptist Errol Hulse writes: "Who among us is adequately equipped to know which political philosophy most accords with biblical principles?"[49] (Implication: certainly not the theonom-

---

47. For a discussion of these sorts of problems, see D. Clair Davis, "A Challenge to Theonomy," in William S. Barker and W. Robert Godfrey (eds.), *Theonomy: A Reformed Critique* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Academie, 1990), ch. 16.

48. A classic example is Professor H. Wayne House, wbo in 1990 left Dallas Theological Seminary for Western Baptist College *in* Oregon. He is both a social activist and a dispensationalist. See Richard.4 Fowler and H. Wayne House, *The Christian Confronts His Culture* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1983). His failure to respond in print to Bahnsen and Gentry's detailed recitation of House and Ice's *Dominion Theology: Blessing or Curse?* (Portland, Oregon: Multnomah *Press, 1988), is* indicative of his problem. His silence gives the appearance of the short-circuiting of his worldview, especially since he has now resigned from seminary teaching. See Greg L. Bahnsen and Kenneth L. Gentry, *House Divide-d: The Break-Up of Dispensational Theology* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1989). For a truly pathetic attempt by a dispensational theologian to respond to *House Divided, see* John Walvoord's review in *Bibliotheca Sacra* (July-Sept. 1990). For my response, see "First, the Brain Goes Soft," *Dispensationalism in* Transition, III (August 1990).

49. Errol Hulse, "Reconstructionism, Restorationism or Puritanism," *Reformation*

ists!) That this same agnosticism can easily be applied to the doctrines of the Trinity, baptism, and Church government never seems to occur to these "agnostic" critics. There is an implicit syllogism lurking here: "Ignorance is bliss. Knowledge is power. Power is responsibility. Responsibility is terrifying. Let's stick with ignorance." This is the worldview of pietistic Anabaptism, but it is no longer restricted to Anabaptists. It is nearly universal in Christian circles, except when offset or heavily qualified by "neutral" natural law theory. It has produced an attitude hostile to all systematic discussions of a uniquely biblical social theory.

Conclusion

The three views of social theory – organicism, contractualism, and covenantalism — establish the limits of social theory. There is no fourth alternative. Christians must adopt one of these three approaches, either unconsciously or self-consciously. But there are many Christians who prefer not to make this decision. Let me remind them: "no decision" is still a decision. There is no neutrality.

The possibility of devising a uniquely biblical social theory is denied by those who reject the continuing validity of the Old Testament case laws in New Testament times. At best, by adopting a Stoic-medieval view of natural law theory, the Christian can make some contributions, based on his knowledge of the Bible. But the resulting hybrid social theory will not be uniquely Christian. Natural law theory is judicially and morally unstable, even without Christianity's appended contributions. Instability has been the fate of natural law theory from the days of the Stoics. The mind of autonomous man is in rebellion against God, the truth, and morality. It cannot be trusted to formulate first principles or to remain logically consistent to them. It is not that natural law is in need of revision by Christian principles. It is that Christian principles are reliable, whereas natural law

---

Today, No. 116 (July-Aug. 1990), p. 25. By Puritanism, he means the pietistic wing of seventeenth-eentury English Puritanism, not Cromwell's New Model Army or the New England Puritans. He means the Puritanism of the cloister, best represented by William Gurnall's Christian *in Complete* Armour, 2 vols. (London: Banner of Troth, [1655-62] 1964).

theory is a myth of Hellenistic Greek scholars who were seeking to invent universal moral principles in the midst of a collapsing social and political order in late Greek antiquity. It was a system of elitist logic designed for men willing to abandon politics altogether in order to submit to a universal empire.[50] Natural law theory was a makeshift affair from the beginning: a substitute for the defunct moral order of the defeated Greek *polis*. It is just one more example of secular humanism in action.

Its only major victory was achieved when late-medieval Christian philosophers breathed new life into it by arguing that it was consistent with Christianity. It suffered a major defeat by Kant in the late eighteenth century. Darwin then proclaimed autonomous nature's randomly changing responses to randomly changing environmental forces as the sole necessary explanation for nature's apparent orderliness. No designing God was necessary to explain this order. Society and personal morality evolve: no fixed species means no fixed morality. Natural law theory therefore could no longer be taken seriously by the vast majority of humanists.

A few Christians – Roman Catholic neo-scholastics and fundamentalist Norman Geisler (trained in a Jesuit university) – still try to defend a hybrid version of Christianity and natural law theory, always carefully undefined as "right reason." No one in the academic world pays much attention. Natural law theory, a hybrid intellectual mule from the beginning, is now regarded as sterile. Only a few Christians vainly hope that it will eventually produce offspring. It is an ancient hope, one yet to be rewarded.

Even among those who accept the validity of biblical law as a moral and legal standard – and there are few who do — the incentive to construct a biblical social theory fades if the view of biblical law does not include the historical sanctions that God has said are attached to cosmic His law-order. If these sanctions are denied, then eschatology is cut off from biblical ethics. Conversely, if an eschatology is adopted that denies the reality of an expanding Christian civilization over time, then the predictable

50. Sheldon S. Wolin, *Politics and Vii: Continuity and Innovation in Western Political Thought* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1960), pp. 80-82.

historical sanctions of God's law-order are implicitly or explicitly being denied. God's law, His predictable historical sanctions, and millennialism are intertwined in God's three institutional covenants: Church, family, and State. Deny these covenantal connections, and you thereby deny the possibility of constructing a uniquely biblical social theory.

There is no neutrality in life. He who denies the possibility of a uniquely biblical social theory must adopt a non-Christian social theory. He may do so either consciously or unconsciously, but he will choose something. There are no theoretical vacuums. There are no social vacuums. Jesus taught: "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Matt. 6:24). "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad" (Matt. 12:30). This applies to social theory, too.

3

COVENANTAL PROGRESS

Therefore thou shalt keep the commandments of the LORD *thy God, to walk in his ways, and to fear him. For the* LORD *thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills; A land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and jig trees, and pomegranate; a land of oil olive, and honey; A land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness,* thou *shalt not lack* any *thing in it; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass. When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the* LORD *thy God for the good land whuh he bath given thee. Beware that thou forget not the* LORD *thy God, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes, which I command thee this day: Lest when thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses,* and *dwelt therein; And when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied; Then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the* LORD *thy God. . . . And thou say in thine heart, My power and the might of* mine *hand hath gotten me this wealth. But thou shalt remember the* LORD *thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as it is this day. And it shall be, if thou do at all forget the* LORD *thy God,* and *walk after other gods, and serve them, and worship them, I testify against you this day that ye shall surely perish (Deut. 8:6-14a, 17-19).* (emphasis added)

This passage in Deuteronomy presents the biblical basis of progress in history. Without this vision of God's covenantal judgments in history, there can be no legitimate Christian basis for belief in God-honoring cultural advancement over long periods of time. It establishes the concept of God's sanctions in history, both positive and negative. The passage teaches that in

history, there will be both "positive feedback" and "negative feedback." ***Any attempt to renounce this passage as no longer judicially binding in the New Covenant era is inescapably a denial of any biblical basis for God-honoring cultural progress in history.***

The passage begins with an imperative: "Therefore thou shalt keep the commandments of the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to fear him." It immediately offers a reason: "For the LORD thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills." God was about to give to this people an unmerited gift in the midst of history: control over the Promised Land. Here is a fundamental principle of both theology and history: ***God's grace precedes man's response.*** The proper response is obedience to God's revealed law.

The Paradox of Deuteronomy 8

It is God who "giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as it is this day." It could not be any clearer: the economic success that God was promising to His covenant people in the future was based on the original promise given to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. There is no autonomous power in man's possession that enables him to become productive. As James put it, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (James 1:17). The power to get wealth was God's *re-confirmation* of the Sinai covenant with Israel, which was in turn a ***renewal*** of His original covenant with the Patriarchs.

Another sign of the covenantal nature of these promises was God's promise of future negative sanctions. "And it shall be, if thou do at all forget the LORD thy God, and walk after other gods, and serve them, and worship them, I testify against you this day that ye shall surely perish." This is the sanction of ***covenantal death and corporate disinheritance.***

The biblical covenant establishes the possibility of long-term economic growth, a promise that was unique in the ancient world. It established the possibility of ***compounding.*** If His covenant people remain faithful, He promised them, they would

greatly expand their possessions. The capital and resources needed to extend God's kingdom across the face of the earth are assured, all in good, covenant-keeping time. But if men misinterpret the source of their wealth and attribute it humanistically to the work of their own hands, they become guilty of idolatry. God will come to judge them in the midst of history.

This is the paradox of Deuteronomy 8: ***wealth is both a positive and negative sanction.*** The Israelites began their fulfillment of the dominion covenant with wealth that they did not produce. They were given the law of God, the ultimate tool of dominion. [1] They were told to obey it. The reason given is intensely practical: because God is going to deliver a rich land into their hands. This in turn will call for continued thankfulness: "When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the LORD thy God for the good land which he bath given thee." This thankfulness will be a sign to God of their continued covenantal faithfulness.

The wealth of the land could become a snare to them. Here is the paradox of wealth. "Beware that thou forget not the LORD thy God, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes, which I command thee this day." God then lists the many economic blessings that can serve as a snare: ". . . thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt therein; And when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied." The language points back to the original covenant with Adam: "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. 1:28). The two tables of the law become covenant-keeping man's multiplication tables.

So, the external blessings can become the means of man's public display of his covenantal rebellion, which is followed by God's covenantal wrath. The positive feedback of obedience, thankfulness, and further blessings can become the negative

1. Gary North, *Tools of Dominion: The Case Laws of Exodus* (Tyler, Texas Institute for Christian Economics, 1990).

feedback of disobedience, humanism, and destruction. ***All of this is historical.*** This is because God's covenant is historical. History has eternal consequences.

Some critic might conclude that because wealth and visible success can be snares as well as blessings, the sanction of success is neutral. It does not allow us to distinguish between good and evil men. If wealth were both compounding and unbounded in time, this criticism would carry considerable weight. It would then be true that in history the sanction would ***appear*** to be neutral. But the sanction would not be neutral; it would be perverse. *It would subsidize evil.* The covenant-breaker would have no external reason to repent. But the point is that all the positive sanctions for a covenant-breaking society are limited by time. Like the trap that eventually gets sprung, so is God's negative sanction of wealth to covenant-breakers.

The covenant-keeper has more than the external sanction of wealth itself to inform him regarding the positive or negative impact of the sanction. He has God's revelation of Himself in the Bible. The covenant-keeper is capable of making accurate moral judgments apart from mere visible sanctions: He knows what God did to Israel in the wilderness when they complained against Him, demanding more blessings. "And he gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul" (Psa. 106:15). Men recognize the truth of this. A lyric by Steve Gillette and David MacKechnie has summarized quite well this condition of emptiness in the midst of wealth: "We've got all of the nice things we wanted, but we lost the good thing we had." The covenantal question is not simply this: "How much success does covenant-breaking society enjoy?" It is this: "How much longer will God continue to lure His enemies into His trap?"

Exponential Growth

Nothing physical grows forever. At some point, the growing thing, whether individual or social, confronts inescapable environmental limits. This is as true of material goods as it is of populations. Anything that grows eventually runs out of space and material resources to sustain its growth. Anything that could grow indefinitely, no matter how slowly, would in time

approach infinity as a limit. As time went on, the upward growth curve would become exponential. But there are limits to growth. The creation is not infinite.[2] This includes time: the only irreplaceable resource.

This finitude is not simply an aspect of the curse of the ground in Genesis 3:17-18. The material realm had curse-free limits even in the pre-fall era. The earth was only so big; so was the universe. So, the command to be fruitful and multiply contained an unstated assumption: ***there are limits on mankind's time for dominion-testing***. At some point, the species known as man would have become a host, like the angels: no more multiplication. Mankind would eventually have reached its numerical limits. This would have been the case even in a sin-free world.

The very possibility of sustained growth points to the ultimate limit: *time*. Either growth must cease or time runs out. This is why modern man, while dedicated to the pursuit of economic growth, knows that this quest is ultimately doomed. His universe is finite. Growth points to his finitude, and more important, to the end of time. This thought is repugnant to covenant-breaking man, for it points to God's final judgment. Modern man then invents alternatives to God's final judgment and the end of time, the main one being nature's impersonal final judgment, the heat death of the universe.[3] In the meantime, a few economists and a lot of political activists (the "greens") have become defenders of State-imposed limits to growth, for the sake of the environment and mankind's "quality of life." (Who will define and police this high quality?)

Man's problem is not economic growth. His problem is sin. But he does not want to face this covenantal fact, so he seeks alternative explanations for his condition, as well as alternative solutions to it.

---

2. Gary North, "The Theology of the Exponential Curve," *The Freeman* (May 1970); reprinted *in North, In/reduction to* Christian *Economics* (Nutfey, New Jersey Craig Press, 1973), ch. 8.

3. Gary North, *Is the World Running Down? Crisis in the Christian Worldview* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1988), ch. 2.

4. Most notably, E. J. Mishan.

Solutions and Trade-Offs

This view of the limits of growth has consequences for social theory. Biologist Garrett Hardin, an articulate spokesman for the humanist worldview (and a dedicated pro-abortionist), has put it this way: "If a system that includes positive feedback is to possess stability, it must also include 'negative feedback.' " He uses the thermostat as his model: when a room gets too hot, the thermostat cuts off the heat. When it gets too cold, it turns the heat back on. This stability cannot be perfect: a thermostat needs a fixed range of temperature in which to function. But the goal is stability.[5] If applied to society, this outlook becomes the justification of a steady-state theory, *if time is seen as essentially unbounded*.[6] The Bible, however, teaches that time is bounded.

There are two approaches to the "thermostat society." First is the approach of the free market: automatic social controls are built into the economic system by mankind's evolving social institutions. They keep society stable. The second approach is that of the French Revolution, socialism, and Communism: a scientifically planned and technocratically administered controls system. In order to maintain stability, society needs central planning. Neither approach acknowledges God's covenants.

There are many names for these rival approaches to social theory. Thomas Sowell's choice is as good as any: the ***constrained*** vision and the ***unconstrained*** vision. The first sees mankind as under naturally and historically imposed constraints or limits, which include constraints on our knowledge.[7] The second sees the existing constraints as primarily the result of faulty human institutions that are based on ignorance and superstitions Better knowledge is the goal of both approaches. The first sees

---

5. Garrett Hardin, "The Cybernetics of Competition: A Biologist's View of Society" in Helmut Schoeck and James W. Wiggins (eds.), Central *Planning and Neo-Mercantilism* (Princeton, New Jersey: Van Nostrand, 1964), p. 66.

6. This is the position of Jeremy Rifkin in his book, *Entropy: A Nero World View (1980).* For a critique of Rifkin, see North, Is *the World Running Dorms?*

7. F. A. Hayek, "The Use of Knowledge in Society" (1945); reprinted in Hayek, *Individualism and Economic* Order (University of Chicago Press, 1948), ch. 4.

8. F. A. Hayek, *The Counter-Revolution of Science: Studies on the Abuse of Reason* (2nd. ed.; Indianapolis, Indiana: Liberty Press, [1952] 1979).

knowledge as social and traditional, growing slowly over time, being tested in the real world. The second sees knowledge as the product of an elite corps of neutral, objective philosophers and scientists. Social progress is the goal of both. The first sees it as the result of slow social evolution, including free market competition. The second sees it as the product of central planning and political power. The first viewpoint is essentially evolutionary and politically decentralist; the second is essentially revolutionary and politically centralist.[9]

Each of these social visions, however, presumes *the autonomy of man and man's institution-s.* Both views deny the existence of a God who intervenes directly into history, bringing His sanctions in terms of His permanent ethical standards. Each vision is thoroughly humanistic. Both are the product of Enlightenment speculation. Economists in both camps begin with the presupposition of agnosticism regarding the supernatural.

Sowell describes the constraints school as holding to a world of scarcity and inescapable *trade-offs* in life. We must give up *this* in order to gain *that.* The second school is far more perfectionist. It searches for *solutions,* irrespective of trade-offs. It tends not to count the costs of action, especially costs of human suffering. Sowell quotes Thomas Jefferson on the bloodbath of the French Revolution: "My own affections have been deeply wounded by some of the martyrs to this cause, but rather than it should have failed, I would have seen half the earth desolated."[10]

Sowell uses another pair of adjectives to describe the conflict of visions: *prudent* vs. *perfectionist.* The "constraints visionary" wants change, but prudent change. The "unconstraints visionary" believes in the perfectibility of man. The first thinks that human nature is fixed; the second believes that human nature is plastic or flexible.[11]

It is clear that the conservative social tradition and the free market economic tradition are both constraints-oriented in their

---

9. Thomas Sowell, *A Conflict of Visions: Ideological Origins of Political Struggles* (New York: William Morrow, 1987), ch. 2.

10. *Ibid.,* p. 34. Jefferson, letter of Jan. 3, 1793. *The Portable Thomas Jefferson,* edited by Merrill D. Peterson (New York: Penguin, 1975), p. 465.

11. *Ibid.,* pp. 25-26.

view of how society operates, even when the specific intellectual defenses of free market economic policies are made in terms of rigorous logic and a deep faith in logic.[12] It is equally clear that the socialist tradition until very recently has been grounded on the denial of permanent environmental limits on man. The socialist always blamed man's poverty on defective social institutions based on private property. Apart from these corrupt institutions, nature would bestow her bounty on all men. Consider the estimate made by Marxist economist Howard J. Sherman (my former professor), probably the most widely published academic American Marxist economist. In 1972, he estimated that the United States had achieved such productivity that over a period of years, given proper central planning, price tags could be removed from 80% of the available goods. The remaining *20%0* would be luxury goods.[13]

For almost two centuries, each school of thought claimed that its system could "deliver the goods," but socialists after 1980 were forced to admit that socialism does not deliver so many goods and services as capitalism does. They hid until 1989 behind the "quality of life" argument: socialist countries supposedly had a better quality of life, despite their lower per capita wealth. Then Red China and Eastern Europe exploded (and Red China then contracted back into tyranny). In the aftermath, the West learned what only specialists had argued before the Chernobyl accident in 1986: the Communist world had been far more polluted than societies in the free world.[14] Tyranny, central planning, and poverty turn out to be bad for the quality of life. This was a shock to the socialists from which they will have difficulty recovering.

Shifting Arguments

Today, the unconstraints argument has shifted again: the

12. I have in mind the a *priorism* of Ludwig von Mises and Murray Rothbard.

13. Cited in "The Unorthodox Ideas Of Radical Economists Win a Wider Hearing," *Wall Street Journal* (Feb. 11, 1972), p. 1.

14. Marshall Goldman, *The Spoils of Progress* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1972).

great evil of capitalism is seen in its commitment to material economic growth. The world *is* limited, socialists now insist. What is needed now, they say, is a system of international, centrally imposed restraints on all polluting production, yet which also allows freedom to consumers and decentralized "networking." They do not show how this fusion of central planning and local initiative is possible. In short, they have no economic theory, a point Mises made in 1920.[15]

Some defenders of the free market also shifted their focus: from material output to information. Previously, they had seen the economy as materially unlimited (open-ended) in the longer run, even though constrained by scarcity in the short run. After 1980, they began to talk about man's own mind as the primary source of wealth. As a progressing society shifts from manufacturing to services and information, it progressively escapes the fetters of material limits. There has been a near apotheosis of autonomous man, the entrepreneur. [16] The power of man's mind is viewed as bordering on alchemy: *from the self-transcendence of man's mind to a transcended environment.*[17]

The Christian View of Progress: Personal and Social

The biblical view, being covenantal, is radically different from both the constraints and unconstraints view, for it begins with a different view of God, man, and history. But because social theory has been ignored by Christians for centuries, and because they have tended to absorb the reigning opinions from the intellectual world around them, Christians have not articu-

---

15. Ludwig von Mises, *Economic Calculation in the Socialist Commonwealth* (Auburn, Alabama: Mises Institute, [1920] 1990).

16. Warren T. Brookes, *The Economy* in *Mind* (New York: Universe Books, 1982). Universe Books became briefly famous a decade earlier for publishing The *Limits* to *Growth,* the doomsday book on the rapid depletion of material resources. Brookes is a Christian Scientist, and his book reflects the view of man as not being under the constraints of sin or God's curse. Julian Simon, the *Ultimate Resource* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1981); Herman Kahn, The Coming *Boom: Economic, Political, Social (New* York: Simon & Schuster, 1982); George Gilder, The *Spirit of Enterprise (New York* Simon & Schuster, 1984).

17. George Gilder, *Microcosm: Introduction to the Quantum Era of Economics and Technology (Nw* York: Simon & Schuster, 1989).

lated this alternative. It is time to begin.

The fundamental objection that Christianity has with the *constraints view is* that the constraints view has no doctrine of regeneration. It does not acknowledge that Jesus Christ, as perfect humanity, entered history to become a model for the world. It also does not acknowledge that in the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus in history, a new world order was inaugurated. This new order begins with the interior life of the individual: "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (II Cor. 5:17). Man's nature is not fixed. It can be changed in an instant through conversion: the doctrine of regeneration. This personal transformation extends to man's social institutions, beginning with the Church. It will ultimately affect man's physical existence: "There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that bath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed" (Isa. 65:20).

Christianity's fundamental objection to the *unconstraints view* is that this transformation of human nature, although it takes place in history, does not originate in this world. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2:8-9). This change is not a product of social engineering. Man's earthly environment has nothing to do with the change, except as the arena in which the change takes place. "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rem. 10: 1'7). Hearing the gospel is a necessary but not sufficient cause of the transformation of human nature. "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (I Cor. 2:14).

Deflection: Past, Present, and Future

Christianity has what the constraints view needs but cannot attain: a concept of perfection in history. Jesus Christ was perfect. He lived in perfect conformity to God the Father's perfect standards of righteousness. "And the Holy Ghost descended in

a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased" (Luke 3:22). "For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (11 Pet. 1:17). "For he bath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (II Cor. 5:21).

At the time of a person's salvation, the legal status of Jesus is *imputed* to him. This means that God's judicial declaration to Jesus, "Not guilty!", is judicially transferred to the sinner in question. This is the doctrine of *justification*. Paul wrote of Abraham's faith in God's promise to him:

> (As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were. Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb: He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. *And therefore it* was *imputed to him for righteousness. Now* it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification (Rem. 4:17-25). (emphasis added)

Jesus Christ's legal status ("not guilty") is transferred to the redeemed (bought-back) person for a purpose: to enable the person to begin a life-long walk with God. Paul moved from Abraham's example to our tribulations in this life:

> Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experi-

> ence; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him (Rem. 5:1-9).

But there is more to salvation than justification. There is also ***sanctification.*** The moral perfection of Jesus is transferred to the redeemed person. This transfer is ***definitive:*** a once-only lifetime event. It is also *progressive*: working out its implications in the life of every saint (set-apart person).[18] He is to fight the good fight of faith:

> But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses (I Tim. 6:6-12)

He is to run the good race:

> Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by

18. Gary North, *Unconditional Surrender: God's Program for Victory* (3rd cd.; Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 19SS), pp. 66-72.

any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway (I Cor. 9:24-27).

So, the biblical view of man has a ***concrete universal:*** Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Son of God. He came in history specifically to meet God's standards. This is a categorical denial of the theology of the "inevitable trade-offs" view of life. Jesus did not sacrifice the good for the best. He did not choose the lesser of two evils. He did exactly what God wanted Him to do. ***Jesus Christ is history's solution.*** He did not compromise with evil. He is therefore not a trade-off in the usual sense of the word, unless redeemed men worry about losing hell as the price of gaining heaven. This significantly qualifies the constraints view of man.

We are to walk in life by imitating Christ. "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ" (I Cor. 11:1). "Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children" (Eph. 5: 1). "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2:5). The requirement is rigorous: "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matt. 5:48). This sounds very much like the unconstrained view of man. It seems like a denial of the constrained view's trade-offs of life. Yet if man is a sinner, he is constrained. How can this paradox be resolved?

Trade-Offs vs. Perfection

The requirement of pursuing perfect moral standards is not to say that we, in our sin (primary) and ignorance (secondary), do not make trade-offs in life. Jesus was clear: there are always costs and benefits in life, and we must count them carefully:

> For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply [it happen], after he bath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace. So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh

not all that he bath, he cannot be my disciple (Luke 14:28-33).

The point is, as we mature in the faith, these trade-offs between sin and righteousness become less burdensome, i.e., less costly. When we walk on God's path, the "alternative income" potentially derived from walking on Satan's path becomes progressively lower. "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matt. 16:26). Let us consider a concrete example. I could murder my wife and collect the insurance money. I might even get away with the crime in this life. She could do the same to me. The point is, the "forfeited income" of the face value of each of our insurance policies is of zero value to us with respect to the act of murder. The trade-off — "not murdering my spouse vs. the forfeited income" — does not enter our calculations. It is therefore not a cost to either of us, economically speaking, for the only valid cost (at least some economists assure us) is individual psychic cost. [19] Furthermore, if this "non-calculation" were not nearly universal among married people (common grace), insurance companies could not afford to write life insurance policies, and certainly not large ones. So, the paradox is resolved by progressive sanctification.

The possibility of personal moral progress is always before each person. But the Bible is specific: widespread ***moral progress will produce widespread economic growth.*** The biblical covenant links obedience to God's law with God's blessings, which include prosperity (Deut. 28:1-14).

Christianity asserts that there has been perfection in history. It also teaches that, by the power of God's regeneration of individuals and their progressive sanctification, people can approach perfection as a limit. We cannot achieve perfection in history. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (I John 1:8). Nevertheless, we are required by God to work toward perfection. This is why we

19. See James Buchanan, Costs and Choice: *An Inquiry on Economic Theory* (University of Chicago Press, 1969). See my discussion of value theory *in* North, *The Dominion Covenant:* Genesis (2nd ed; Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1987), ch. 4; North, *Tools of Dominion,* pp. 1087-1100.

were granted salvation: to walk on God's righteous path.

> For by grace are ye saved through **faith;** and that not of yourselves: it is the **gift** of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God bath before ordained that we should walk in them **(Eph. 2:8-10).**

The Covenantal Neeessity of a Personal Revolution

The Christian view of man is that man is born in sin and corruption. He is not born free, contrary to Rousseau.*" If man is in cultural and political chains, then this is because of his sin. His sin is not merely institutional; it is innately personal. In this sense, Christianity agrees with the older conservatism's view of man (though not the newer, "economy in mind" doctrine of humanity): man is inherently limited. Yet Christianity also teaches that a definitive transformation of the individual can take place in history. An individual can be judicially and morally transformed in a moment. This is the ultimate revolution in life. It cannot be imposed by other men; it is an act of coercion by God: irresistible grace.

> Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost (Titus **3:5).**
>
> For as the Father **raiseth** up the dead, and **quickeneth** them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will (John **5:21).**
>
> That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints **(Eph. 1:17-18).**
>
> And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life

---

20. "Man is horn free; and everywhere he is in chains." Jean Jacques Rousseau, *The* Social *Contract* (1762); *The Social Contract* and Discourses (New York **Dutton,** 1913), p. **3.**

believed (Acts **13:48).**

John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven (John **3:27).**

For he **saith** to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that **willeth,** nor of him that runneth, but of God that **sheweth** mercy (Rem. **9:15-16).**

For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it? (I Cor. **4:7).**

Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures (James 1:18).

Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God **calleth** Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost (I Cor. **12:3).**

And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshiped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul (Acts 16: 14).

This instant transformation needs time and self-government to work itself out in history. The ***discontinuous event of salvation*** subsequently requires the ***continuous battle with sin*** in history. There is a spiritual war going on in each man's inward parts.

For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I **not;** but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that **dwelleth** in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) **dwelleth** no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that **dwelleth** in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the

> law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin (Rem. 7:14-25).

Civil Government

Civil law plays a role in this war: the public suppression of evil. The State imposes negative sanctions against evil public acts. The civil magistrate is in fact a minister of God.

> Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: ***For he is the minister of God to thee for good.*** But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: ***for he is the minister of God,*** a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. For this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour (Rem. 13:1-7). (emphasis added)

But the State is not an agency of salvation. It does not save man by making him positively good. It merely suppresses certain evil public acts of men. Thus, the Christian view of civil government is far closer to the constrained view of man. It is totally opposed to the messianic State of the unconstrained view. Christianity teaches that the reform of society must begin with the reform of the individual. To sustain a positive reform of society, God must initiate His transforming grace among many people.[21] He is the agent of positive transformation, not the State. All that the State can lawfully do is to suppress public

---

21. Gary North, Dominion and Common Grace: The ***Biblical Basis of Progress*** (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1987), ch. 6.

evil. It imposes negative sanctions, rarely positive ones (e.g., roads). This is clearly an anti-socialist view of civil authority.

Perfect Standards, Imperfect Applications

Moral-social standards are fixed. On this point, Christianity opposes both the social evolution of the constrained view[22] and the social revolution of the unconstrained view. God's revealed law is permanent. It cannot be improved on.

There is no doubt, however, that the application of these perfect standards to historical cases – the art of ***casuistry*** – is a trial-and-error process. It takes generations of experimentation and evaluation for a society to work out the implications of God's laws in history. History is always moving forward. Thus, the task of Christian reconstruction never ends. Even in the world beyond the final judgment, there will be trial and error and progress. Man cannot ***comprehend*** God. Man can never surround God's being or His mind. Man is a creature. Thus, life in this world is at best a never-ceasing striving toward perfection. In this sense, Christian social theory is closer to the constrained view than the unconstrained. Redemptive history is a continuous process. Step by step, we are required by God to learn from our mistakes and improve ourselves. Basic to this learning process in history is a system of sanctions: positive and negative. We call God's negative sanctions against His people ***chastening.***

> Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which cloth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin. And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, ***My***

22. I have in mind here the moral vision of those conservatives and economists who reject natural law theory and natural rights theory, meaning the vast majority of them since Darwin.

son, *despise not* thou the *chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou* art *rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.* If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness (Heb. 12:1-10). (emphasis added)

Conclusion

Basic to biblical social theory is the idea of cultural progress. God brings His positive and negative sanctions in history in terms of His fixed moral standards, which are revealed clearly *only* in the Bible. There is a concrete universal in history who has met these moral and judicial standards: Jesus Christ. Perfection has been attained once (and only once) in history. This perfection is imputed to redeemed people at the point of their salvation (definitive sanctification). Nevertheless, perfection is not reached in history. It is a lifelong process (progressive sanctification).

What is true of the individual is also true of covenantal and non-covenantal corporate units. Their members are required to strive all through history to reach perfection as a corporate limit, by means of self-government, Church government, family government, and civil government. Each form of government involves the application of appropriate sanctions. When their representatives refuse to apply them, God will apply His appropriate negative corporate sanctions in history.

This only states what the social ideal is. The question then arises: *Can social progress be realized in history?* Is it like individual sanctification: attainable progressively in history? On the answer to this question, the Church has long been divided. Generally, the answer has been that there is no covenantally meaningful social progress. This has had crucial implications for Christian social theory, or the absence thereof.

4

PESSIMILLENNIALISM

In history and *time on earth, God is preparing a people to whom He can make known, and who will be able to appreciate, the boundless riches of the glory of His grace, and from* whom *He will receive an appropriate measure of response. Such a response can come only from those who, having ceased to consider their own personal salvation as the chief end of life, pass their time here on earth as the willing bond-servants of Christ, with their eyes fixed upon the stupendous consummation towards which all history moves, and in the achievement of which they must play their own humble but* necessary part. *This* part can *be effectively performed only by those who have attained some intellectual maturity and have made earnest efforts to understand the* revealed *will* and purposes *of God, much of which is couched in the form of predictive prophecy.*

Roderick Campbell (1954)[1]

Christian Reconstructionists, as both postmillennial and theonomic,[2] have from the beginning challenged the two rival dominant eschatological theories, premillennialism and amillennialism ("pessimillennialism" as Nigel Lee has identified them), both of which deny that Christianity will be dominant culturally or any other way when Jesus Christ returns physically to bring His judgment. The Church supposedly will not succeed in fulfilling Christ's Great Commission during Church history: baptizing and discipline the nations (Matt. 28:18 -20).3 Both of these

1. Roderick Campbell, *Israel and the New Covenant* (Tyler, Texas: Geneva Divinity School Press, [1954] 1981), p. 182.

2. Greg L. Bahnsen, *Theonomy in Christian Ethics* (Phillipsburg, NewJersey Presbyterian and Reformed, [1977] 1984).

3. Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., *The Greatness of the Great Commission: The Christian Enterprise*

millennial views are also intensely antinomian in their modern formulations, and, as I argue in this book, also antinomian in principle. I mean by "antinomian" that the defenders of each pessimillennial system deny the continuing authority of the Old Testament case laws in the New Testament era.[4]

The fundamentalist tradition has been dominant culturally in American evangelical circles.[5] The Calvinist-Reformed tradition has until recently dominated the realm of scholarship in evangelical circles, with Lutheranism contributing some material in Bible exegesis. Lutheranism has always been amillennialist, while twentieth-century Calvinism, heavily influenced by the Dutch, has also been amillennialist. In recent years, neo-evangelicalism has combined Arminianism, mild theological liberalism, mild theological conservatism, pluralism, and a narrowly ecclesiastical Calvinism into a curious but unstable mixture of social concern coupled with an explicit denial of the possibility or desirability of biblical law-based solutions.

Because Christian Reconstructionism is a philosophy of social activism,[6] it has had to confront the fundamentalists, whose dominance in twentieth-century American evangelicalism has crippled most attempts at Christian social reform.[7] The only major exception to this rule was the post-World War I passage of the Eighteenth Amendment to the Constitution, which outlawed the manufacture or sale of alcoholic beverages, and which

---

in a *Fallen World* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1990),

4. Gary North, Tools *of Dominion: The Case Laws of Exodus* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1990), ch. 2. It is conceivable that a few dispensational theologians might admit privately that the Old Testament's case laws will be used by Jesus to judge the nations during the future millennial age. They do not admit this possibility in public, however, In any case, they would regard this as judicially and culturally irrelevant for the "Church Age."

5. Symposium on the Failure of the American Baptist Culture, *Christianity and* Civilisation, I (1983).

6. Gary North, *Is the World* Running *Doron ? Crisis in the Christian Worldview* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1988), Appendix C: "Comprehensive Redemption: A Theology for Social Action"; reprinted from *The Journal of Christian Reconstruction,* VIII (1981); North, *Backward Christian Soldiers?* An *Action Manual for Christian Reconstruction* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1984); Gentry *Greatness of the Great* Commission.

7. George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism* and *American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism,* 1870-1925 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980).

was repealed in 1933. Prohibition is almost universally acknowledged to have been a social and political disasters This was the last politically successful crusade by American fundamentalists. They had considerable support from humanistic Progressives and statist power-seekers; they did not achieve this alone. It is the premier twentieth-century American example of the alliance between the escape religionists and the power religionists.[9]

Simultaneously, because Christian Reconstructionism is also an intellectual movement, it has had to challenge the amillennialists and the neo-evangelicals. In short, Christian Reconstructionists have had to fight a "two-front" war. This theological war is not merely a two-front war eschatologically (against two rival millennial views); it is also a two-front war judicially (against two rival views of God's law and His historical sanctions).[10] Theonomy and postmillennial eschatology cannot be separated theologically. Covenant theology necessarily involves a specific theory of God's law and God's sanctions in history.[11] The biblical covenant model is an unbreakable, self-consistent unit. But to accept this statement as fact is to adopt a uniquely biblical view of history, society, and progress, a step that few Bible-affirming theologians are willing to take. When even Greg Bahnsen denies this unity,[12] it is not surprising that the histori-

---

8. John Kobler, *Ardent Spit-its: The Rise and Fall of Prohibitionism (New* York: Putnam's, 1 973).

9. James H. Timberlake, *Prohibition and the Progressive Movement, 1900-1920 (New* York: Atheneum, 1970); Murray N. Rothbard, "World War I as Fulfillment: Power and the Intellectuals," *Journal of Libertarian Studies,* IX (Winter 1989), pp. 83-87. It is worth noting that conservative Presbyterian spokesman J. Gresham Machen opposed the Presbyterian Church's support of the Volstead Act, for which he was publicly attacked by the general Christian public. Ned B. Stonehouse, *J. Gresham Mach-en: A Biography* (2nd cd.; Philadelphia: Westminster Theological Seminary, [1955] 1978), pp. 387-88.

10. On the one side, a hybrid of natural law theory and the Bible. On the other, a vague moral law position that is never defined or applied to specific cases.

11. Ray R. Sutton, *That You May Prosper: Dominion By Covenant* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1987), ch. 4.

12. Greg L. Bahnsen, *By This Standard: The Authority of God's Law Today* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1985), p. 8. It is my opinion that Rev. Bahnsen's denial that theonomy inherently implies postmillennialism – the question of God's covenantal sanctions in history – is motivated in part by his attempt to adopt a strategy of fighting two separate theological wars rather than an interlinked two-front war. He faces an institutional dilemma. He insists that theonomy is alone biblical and therefore is consis-

cal sanctions section of the biblical civil covenant (point four) is rarely discussed and never affirmed as continuing in New Testament times by the vast majority of those who call themselves covenant theologians.

Premillennialism

Historic premillennialist, meaning non-dispensationalists, are few in number. A comparative handful of these few premillennial scholars have sought to produce works demonstrating their social concern ever since the publication of Carl F. H. Henry's book, *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism (1947),* which can be said to have launched the neo-evangelical movement.[13] Yet not one published book outlining a comprehensive and explicitly biblical social theory has come from any historic premillennialist in the post-World War II era. (As far as I can determine, none has come from any premillennialist,

---

tent with the Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter XIX. He is also an ordained minister in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, which, fike all modern Bible-believing Presbyterian churches except the tiny Bible Presbyterian Church, is officially neutral eschatologically and is dominated by amillennialists. To argue that theonomy necessarily implies postmillennialism is necessarily to affirm the institutional strategy – extremely long term, paralleling the coming of the promised millennial blessings – of tightening up the Church's confessional standards on both eschatology and law, and then screening out all premillennial and amillennial church officers, which is what both Rushdoony and I recommend. Bahnsen is publicly content with the existing 1789 American revision of the original 1646 Westminster Standards, a revision imposed in order to make them conform with tbe political pluralism of the anti-Trinitarian U.S. Constitution. See Gary North, *Political Polytheism: The Myth of Pluralism* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1989), pp. 543-50. Nevertheless, I have not gone so far as Rushdoony has, i.e., to assert that amillennialism and premillennialism are literally blasphemy. "Amillenniafiim and premillennialism are in retreat from the world and blasphemously surrender it to the devil. . . . To turn the world-conquering word of the sovereign, omnipotent, and triune God *into* a symbol of impotence is not a mark of faith. It is blasphemy." R. J. Rushdoony, "Postmillennialism vs. Impotent Religion," *Journal of Christian Reconstruction,* III (Winter 1976-77), pp. 125-26.

13. The bankruptcy of the neo-evangelical movement today can be seen in *Evangelical Affirmations,* edited by Kenneth S. Kantzer and Carl F. H. Henry (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Academie, 1990). See especially Chapter 7: "Social Ethics." These essays were presented at a 1989 conference of the National Association of Evangelicals. The S65 theologians in attendance could not agree that the Bible teaches the doctrine of eternal punishment as against the Seventh-Day Adventist doctrine of annihilationism. The vote to affirm the existence of hell was split., but the chairman announced that the vote had failed to gain a majority. See *World* (June 3, 1989), p. 9.

ever.) Rev. Francis Schaeffer is the best example. His works are intellectual in tone, but he never attempted to offer a positive alternative to the prevailing humanist culture that he so eloquently dissected." He wrote intellectual history, literary and art criticism, and apologetics, but not social theory.

Rev. Schaeffer was politically conservative, although this was seldom made clear in his books, and he never defended this conservatism biblically. In this sense, he was like amillennialist philosopher-apologist Cornelius Van Til, who taught Schaeffer apologetics at Westminster Theological Seminary, 1935-37. Unlike Schaeffer, most of the other contemporary premillennial authors who have been concerned with social action have been political liberals of the Wheaton College-*Christianity* Today-Inter-Varsity perspective: "trendier than thou" Christianity. They have not been willing to admit publicly what dispensational premillennialist Tommy Ice freely admitted in a debate with Gary DeMar and me: "Premillennialist have always been involved in the present world. And basically, they have picked up on the ethical position of their contemporaries."[15] This is what R. J. Rushdoony and I had been saying about premillennialist for a quarter century before that debate took place.

Dispensational premillennialist have tended to be politically conservative. They usually agree with the social, political, and economic views of the Christian Reconstructionists. They object only to our Bible-based, Old Testament law-based methodology. They prefer not to discuss why they agree with our conclusions, for then they would have to show how they arrived at their conclusions, which they cannot support without appealing to either to secular humanist conservative thinkers or Roman Catholic conservative thinkers. The neo-evangelical premillennialists (mostly liberals) have generally regarded as their ideological colleagues not the "red neck fundamentalists" and political conservatives, but rather the politically liberal professors who taught them in state universities and other humanist insti-

14. North, *Political Polytheism,* ch. 4.

15. Gary DeMar, *The Debate Over Christian Reconstruction* (Ft. Worth, Texas: Dominion Press, 1988), p. 185.

tutions of higher academic certification. [16] Neither group has shown that the Bible supports its position.

Is Christian social theory relevant? Second, is it possible? The premillennialists make social theory *irrelevant* by asserting the progressive impotence and external defeat of the Church and Christian institutions prior to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ to set up an earthly millennial kingdom. But far more important for the development of Christian social theory, this perspective, being antinomian with respect to God's covenant law, denies the existence of God's culture-wide sanctions in history, at least prior to Jesus' millennial kingdom on earth. As I argue in this book, this anti-sanctions perspective makes *impossible* the development of a specifically biblical social theory.

Because the modern premillennial, dispensational tradition has not been interested in scholarship in general, its spokesmen have not been expected by the movement's own members to provide a biblical social theory. All they have had to do is voice their approval of the U.S. Constitution, free enterprise, the nuclear family, and the American civil religion. But the amillennial tradition is different. For one thing, it has been more oriented toward European thought and culture, in which it has its historical roots. For another, it has been far more interested in scholarship. This has been especially true of the Dutch Calvinist wing, which sometimes imitates German scholarship in its rigor and prolixity (e.g., Herman Ridderbos). The question arises: What about amillennial social theory? Does such a thing exist?

Amillennialism

The amillennialists share two key viewpoints with the premillennialists: *antinomianism* with respect to the authority of the Old Testament case laws and *historical pessimism* regarding the cultural efforts of Christians in history. Historically, the Lutherans have admitted as much. They are amillennial.[17] Luther was an

16. In this sense, Carl F. H. Henry is an anomaly; he, too, is generally conservative politically but he does not write much about politics. Henry was educated before the post-War expansion of higher education in America, i.e., before liberalism took over.

17. *The "End Tins-a": A Study on Eschatology and the Millennium,* Report of the Commis-

amillennialist and self-consciously an ethical dualist, asserting a radical dichotomy between Christians and pagans with respect to their need for civil law.[18] Christians do not need civil law, Luther insisted, let alone Old Testament civil law; only pagans need civil law. "Now observe," he wrote of Christians, "these people need no temporal law or sword. If all the world were composed of real Christians, that is, true believers, there would be no need for or benefits from prince, king, sword, or law. They would serve no purpose, since Christians have in their heart the Holy Spirit, who both teaches and makes them to do injustice to no one, to love everyone, and to suffer injustice and even death willingly and cheerfully at the hands of everyone."[19] Given such a view of civil law,[20] it is understandable why there has never been any attempt by Lutheran scholars to develop a uniquely biblical social theory. From Luther's colleague Philip Melanchthon[21] until today, Bible-believing Lutheran social commentators have relied on some variant of Stoic and Roman Catholic natural law theory in all discussions social and political. The Calvinists have adopted other approaches.

Grammar, Structure, Symbol

A contemporary example of this systematic denial of God's historic sanctions, especially in the realm of civil government, is a book by a professor at Reformed Theological Seminary, Richard L. Pratt, Jr., ***He Gave Us Stories: The Bible Student's Guide to Interpreting the Old Testament*** Narratives.** Professor Pratt does not even mention the word "covenant" until page ***285*** of this

---

sion on Theology and Church Relations of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod (Sept. 1989).

18. Charles Trinkans, "The Religious Foundations of Luther's Social Views," in John H. Mundy, et at, *Essays in Medieval Life* (Cheshire, Connecticut Biblo & Tannen, 1955), pp. 71-87. See also Gary North, "The Economic Thought of Luther and Calvin," *Journal of Christian Reconstruction*, H (Summer 1975), pp. 76-89.

19. Martin Luther, "Temporal *Authority* To What Extent It Should Be Obeyed" (1523), *Luther's Works* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1962), XLV, p. 89.

20. See also the Augsburg Confession, XVI:3.

21. Clyde Leonard Manschreck, *Melanchthon: The Quiet Reformer (New* York: Abingdon, 1958), ch. 22.

22. Brentwood, Tennessee: Wolgemuth & Hyatt, 1990.

nearly 500-page book on the Old Covenant. He outlines the five-point covenant structure on page 286, but does nothing with it. He does not offer a single example of how this model was used in any Old Covenant narrative, nor does he mention the prophets' use of it. He suggests no application of the covenant model in society, either in the Old Testament or the New Testament. His only other reference to the covenant – but not its five points — is a brief mention of "major covenant events in the days of Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and David."[23] He does not say what these events were. He then implicitly abandons covenant theology for what he calls the "organic model"[24] and "organic developments."[25] But when stripped of its judicial (i.e., covenantal) foundations, as Pratt clearly insists that it should be,[26] social organicism becomes the worldview of Roman Catholicism, philosophical realism, and traditional secular conservatism. Organicism is an alternative to covenant theology, not an application of it.27 Yet all of this is presented to the reader as an exercise in biblical hermeneutics by a Calvinist covenant theologian. Calvinistic, yes; covenantal, no.

Yes, God did give us many stories. The questions are: What kind of stories? With what moral? With what structure? Leading to what action, both personal and corporate? Pratt does not say. He is subtly attempting to substitute a symbolic-literary interpretation of the Bible for the traditional grammatical-historical approach. The problem is, neither of these approaches alone tells us what the theology of the Bible is. The war between the two camps goes on, when it could be resolved by settling the neglected issue: the ***theological structure*** governing the narratives. What is this structure? The biblical covenant model.[28]

The medieval trivium reflected the tripartite division of

---

23. Ibid., p. *337.*

24. Ibid., p. *341.*

25. Ibid., p. 344.

26. *Ibid.*, pp. 343-44.

27. On the misuse of the organic model, see Gary North, *Mows and Pharaoh: Dominion Religion vs. Power Religion* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economies, 1985), ch. 17: "The Metaphor of Growth: Ethics."

28. Sutton, *That You May Prosper.*

Scriptural interpretation. The trivium was grammar, logic, and rhetoric. There is good evidence that the very development of the child's mind as he becomes an adult is tied closely to this structure.[29] The Bible expositor must carefully deal with the grammar of each text, but not to the exlusion of the underlying theological structure or its symbolism (literary framework). Similarly, the examination of the subtle symbols and allegories of the Scripture — the rhetorical component of the texts — must not be attempted apart from both grammar and theology. To ignore both grammar and theological structure leads directly to the allegorical methodology of the Roman Catholic Church that the Reformation challenged. What both the grammatical-historical school and the "wild blue yonder" symbolic interpretation school reject is the idea that the Pentateuch and the Book of Deuteronomy provide us with God's master plan, a five-point theological structure. They resent the "procrustean bed" of the covenant model, preferring instead other text-stretching beds, such as the six loci of seventeenth-century Protestant Scholasticism[30] or the five points of Calvinism.gl While these can be derived theologically from the whole of Scripture, they are not found in the actual structure of any biblical text. The five-point covenant model is.

Common *Grace*

Cornelius Van Til, the Dutch-American Calvinist philosopher, was a defender of what I have called common grace amillennialism. There are two general schools of thought within this movement: Van Til's and Meredith G. Kline's, Van Til's colleague at Westminster Theological Seminary. Van Til's view is self-consciously pessimistic. Kline's is officially neutral with respect to progress in history. I categorize these rival views as (1) Bad News for Future Christian Man and (2) Random News

29. Dorothy L. Sayers, "The Lost Tools of Learnning" (1947); reprinted in *Journal of Christian Reconstruction,* IV (Summer 1977).

30. Theology proper (God), hamartiology (sin), Christology, soteriology (redemption), ecclesiology (Church), and eschatology (last things).

31. Total depravity of man, God's unconditional election, limited (specific) atonement, irresistible grace, and the perseverance of the saints.

for Future Christian Man. The Bad News school tends to be more politically conservative ("Hold the fort, boys!"), though generally non-committal in public; the Random News school tends to be politically liberal ("Let's shoot over the attackers' heads!"), and more likely to be outspoken. First, the bad news:

> But when all the reprobate are epistemologically self-conscious, the crack of doom has come. The fully self-conscious reprobate will do all he can in every dimension to destroy the people of God. So while we seek with all our power to hasten the process of differentiation in every dimension we are yet thankful, on the other hand, for "the day of grace," the day of undeveloped differentiation. Such tolerance as we receive on the part of the world is due to this fact that we live in the earlier, rather than in the later, stage of history. And such influence on the public situation as we can effect, whether in society or in state, presupposes this undifferentiated stage of development.[32]

Van Til's position is clear: as history develops, the persecution of Christians by the reprobates increases. The good get better, while the bad get worse; the good get less influential, while the bad get increasingly dominant. Everyone becomes more self-conscious, and spiritual darkness spreads. Christians should therefore be thankful that they live today rather than later. We are tolerated today, he says; later, we shall be persecuted. This is the traditional amillennial view of the future.

The amillennialists of the Dutch Calvinist common grace school of thought are different from the Lutherans. Unlike the Lutherans, who are ethical dualists, the Dutch common grace amillennialists have repeatedly asserted both the moral necessity and the intellectual possibility of developing explicitly Christian alternatives to humanist thought in every area of life.[33] This is the "world and life" Calvinism of Abraham Kuyper.[34] Their

---

32. Cornelius Van Til, Common Grace (1 947), reprinted in *Common* Grace and *the Gospel* (Nutley, New Jersey: Presbyterian& Reformed, 1972), p. 85.

33. Henry R. Van Til, The *Calvinistic Concept of Culture* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1959). Henry Van Til was Cornelius' nephew.

34. Abraham Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, [1898] 1931). Kuyper was the Prime Minister of the Netherlands at the turn of the century. He also founded the Free University of Amsterdam. Frank Vanden Berg,

problem is this: they have yet to describe in detail just what this uniquely Christian social theory is. Also, they have not identified those biblical passages from which such a comprehensive social theory might be developed. Theirs has been a strictly negative intellectual and social apologetic.[35] They have tried to beat something – modern humanism – with nothing specific.

This movement is subdivided between political conservatives and political liberals, with the liberals dominant, especially in print. The political conservatives, like premillennialist Francis Schaeffer, have contented themselves with writing books on the evils and threats to freedom from modern humanism (e.g., H. Evan Runner, H. Van Riessen).[36] The liberals, like the politically liberal neo-evangelical premillennialists, have recommended the bankrupt solutions – bankrupt economically, intellectually, and politically – of modern Keynesian economics?' as well as modern political pluralism (e.g., the Toronto-based Institute for Christian Studies and Wedge Publishing).

Neither side has been able to show precisely what the Bible

Abraham Kuyper: A Biography (St- Catherines, Ontario: Paideia Press, [1960] 1978).

35. See especially the works of Herman Dooyeweerd, most notably *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*, 4 vols. (Philadelphia: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1954).

36. On Van Riessen, see Chapter 5, below. Runner and Van Riessen wrote for an annual publication in the early 1960's, *Christian Perspectives.*

37. Sometimes this is disguised in the language of medieval guild sociatiim. Sometimes, however, they have adopted the language of Marxism. Hendrik Hart wrote in 1972: "Today we still have to learn to listen to the words of Marx." Hart, "Alienation," in John H. Redekop (cd.), *Labor* problems *in Christian Prospective* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1972), p. 293. He also referred to Marx's "just and courageous protest" (pp. 293-94). Furthermore, speaking of modern revolutionary movements, "If the Church is not strong enough to listen to these movements and learn from them, it does not have the strength to live anymore" (p. 294). This was the standard fare of the "we, too, are academically relevant" neo-Dooyeweerdian radicals in the 1970's. Thankfully, they faded away in the 1980's. The visible collapse of the European Marxist regimes — though not the Soviet Union's military might – in late 1989 should permanently bury the yellowing pages of such 1970's propaganda.

38. An example of such writing is "principled pluralist" James Skillen's early effort, "The Governor and the Chef," *Vanguard* (May/June 1971).*Vanguard* was pubtiihed by the Institute for Christian Studies. These men appeal endlessly to unspecified "creation principles," yet they atso deny that the Bible provides explicit blueprints (or "cookbook recipes," to use Skillen's analogy) for specific political or economic action. The heart and soul of their social theory is this: "The creation, you see, is open-ended." Skillen, p. 20. Cf. North, *Political Polytheism*, pp. 15-17, 121-25.

specifically requires of society, since this would require an appeal to the Old Testament case laws, which both sides reject as no longer judicially binding in the New Testament era. Therefore, they have no plan of action or social reform. A representative statement of the social theory of common grace amillennialism is Bob Goudzwaard's: "A program of action drawn up to carry out a blueprint evokes the impression of a short-term realization of objectives. . . . What follows, therefore, presents no program of action."[39] This statement appears on page 188 of a book with only 249 pages of text, and follows a lengthy attack on both capitalism and Western civilization's idea of progress. This is typical of the Dooyeweerdian movement: all dynamite and no cement.[40] It disappeared from the Christian intellectual scene in the early 1980's. It had never enjoyed very much influence outside of Christian Reformed circles.[41]

The Problem of Two Leavens

These common grace Dutch scholars and their North American academic disciples have all been amillennialists. As amillennialists, they believe that Satan's earthly kingdom and influence will expand over time until Jesus Christ comes with His angels in final judgment. This assertion of the cumulative, visible triumph of Satan's kingdom in history is inherent in all amillennialism. This view of New Testament era history *defines* amillennialism. Amillennialism, as with premillennialism's view of everything that takes place prior to the millennium, is essentially a reversed form of postmillennialism: ***postmillennialism for Satan's kingdom.***[42] The idea that there can be an "optimistic amillennialism" is difficult to take seriously. Even the barest

---

39. Bob Goudzwaard, Capitalism and *Progress: A Diagnosis of Western Society* (co-published by Wedge and Eerdmans, 1979), p. 13S. He nevertheless calls for a no-growth, steady-state economy for Western Europe and North America p. 194. Behind every denial of a blueprint there lurks a hidden agenda and a secret blueprint-

40. North, *Political Pluralism,* ch. 3. See also North, The *Sinai Strategy: Economics and the Ten Commandments* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1986), Appendix C: "Social Antinomianism."

41. I include here Westminster Theological Seminary.

42. North, *Political Polytheism,* p. 139.

outline of such a theology has never been offered. Any amillennial scheme must proclaim one of two positions: either linear history downward into public evil (Van Til's view) or ethically random historical change in a world presently controlled by covenant-breakers (Kline's view) .45 Perhaps some energetic and creative amillennialist will make the exegetical attempt someday, but so far, optimistic amillennialism is simply soft-core postmillennialism for amillennialists still in transition.[44]

Despite the structural cultural pessimism built into all amillennialism, common grace amillennialists often insist that God's kingdom also develops and even expands in history. But how can both kingdoms expand simultaneously? It is covenantally inconsistent to argue, as these amillennialists do argue, either implicitly or explicitly, that Satan's ***visible*** kingdom expands in history, while only God's ***invisible*** kingdom expands. The biblical concept of these rival kingdoms is this: rival ***civilizations.*** Each is both natural and supernatural. Each is a covenantal unit. If Satan's kingdom has both a spiritual and an institutional side, then so must God's. How can one kingdom (civilization) expand if it does not progressively push the other out of history's cultural loaf? Yet common grace amillennialists insist that each kingdom expands. Evil "leaven" wins, despite Matthew 13:33.

They can defend this two-leavens perspective only by playing games with language. They belatedly admit in the back pages of their books that Satan's earthly covenantal representatives will progressively impose their negative sanctions against Christians as history advances. This admission makes ludicrous the idea of God's kingdom in history. Amillennialism proclaims ***a kingdom whose designated representatives cannot bring the King's sanctions in history,*** which is a denial of any judicial connection between God's kingdom-civilization and history. Yet it is precisely this that amillennialists proclaim: a kingdom whose only predictable, institutional, covenantal sanctions in history are ecclesiastical and familial, never civil. This makes God the Lord of a declining percentage of churches and families, but not of history. As

43. See Chapter 7, below.

44. I have never heard of anyone who claims to be an optimistic premillennial

Bahnsen says, "what they object to in postmillennial writers is the inclusion of external, visible, this-earthly aspects within the scope of the kingdom of God in this age."[45]

Calvinistic amillennialists cannot easily avoid the covenantal language of continuity, victory, and lordship. Such language is basic to the heritage of Calvinism, since Calvinism in the formative sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was generally postmillennial.[46] Amillennial Calvinists still use this optimistic language, yet they deny the kingdom's progressive visible manifestation in history. They make their position clear: "There is no room for optimism: towards the end, in the camps of the satanic and the anti-Christ, culture will sicken, and the Church will yearn to be delivered from its distress.'" They proclaim God's victory in one passage, yet they deny almost all cultural traces of it in another. They sound a battle cry for historical defeat. This is schizophrenic.

"Things Are Not What They Seem"

Consider Revelation 5. This passage pictures the resurrected Christ in heaven:

> And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints. And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth (Rev. 5:8-10).

---

45. Greg L Bahnsen, "This World and the Kingdom of God," in Gary DeMar and Peter J. Leithart, *The Reduction of Christianity: A Biblical Response to Dave Hunt* (Ft. Worth, Texas: Dominion Press, 198S), p. 352.

46. Iain Murray, *The Puritan Hope: A Study in Revival and the Interpretation of prophecy* (London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1971); J. A. De Jong, As the *Waters Cover the Sea: Millennial Expectations in the Rise of Anglo-American Missions, 1640-1810* (Kampen, Netherlands: Kok, 1970); Greg L. Bahnsen, "The *Prima Facie* Acceptability of Postmillennialism," *Journal of Christian Reconstruction,* HI (Winter 1976-77), pp. 76-8S.

47. H. de Jongste and J. M. van Krimpen, *The Bible and the Life of the Christian* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian& Reformed, 1968), p. 85.

The text is specific: ***the elders in heaven will reign upon the earth.*** Because they were in a disembodied spiritual state at the time of John's revelation, they can be said to reign on earth in the future in one of four ways: (1) physically (during pop-dispensationalism's future millennium);[48] (2) representatively (during postmillennialism's progressive judicial millennium); (3) post-historically (after the final judgment), thereby making the whole passage irrelevant for history; or (4) symbolically.

This passage presents a major dilemma for the amillennialist expositor. He cannot appeal to either of the first two exegetical options and still remain amillennial, yet he does not want to adopt the third, since this section of the Book of Revelation is generally believed by commentators to apply to history, not to the post-resurrection state. His only other choice is to interpret the Revelation 5:10 symbolically. Such an appeal to symbolism also destroys the passage's relevance for history.

William Hendriksen, one of the premier amillennial expositors in the twentieth century, cannot gracefully avoid this problem in his commentary on the Book of Revelation. He barely tries to escape. He begins with this presupposition: "The theme of this book is: ***the Victory of Christ and of his Church over the Dragon (satan) and his Helpers***. The Apocalypse intends to show you, dear believer, that things are not what they ***seem!***"[49] Things must be very different from what they seem to Mr. Hendriksen,

---

48. The possibility of mixing resurrected saints and fallen humanity during the coming millennium has not been taken seriously by professionally trained dispensational theologians (e.g., John Walvoord, J. Dwight Pentecost), but popularizers of the dispensational position (e.g., Dave Hunt) have asserted that this will take place. See John Walvoord, *The Rapture Question* (rev. cd.; Grand Rapids, Michigan Zondervan, 1979), p. 86; J. Dwight Pentecost, "The Relation between Living and Resurrected Saints in The Millennium," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, vol. 117 (Ott- 1960), pp. 337,341. Hunt offers his contrary opinion: "After the Antichrist's kingdom has ended in doom, Jesus will reign over this earth at last. Which of these kingdoms we will be in depends upon the choice we make now – for God's truth or for the Lie." Dave Hunt, *Peace Prosperity and the Coming Holocaust* (Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House, 1983), p. 263; see also below, p. 266. In 1988, during his debate with me and Gary DeMar in Dallas, he re-stated his view that resurrected saints wilt rule on earth during the millennium. A set of audiotapes or a videotape of that debate can be ordered from the Institute for Christian Economics.

49. W. Hendriksen, *More Than Conquerors: An Interpretation of the Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker, [1939] 1965), p. 12.

since he is an amillennialist, and therefore he sees the history of the Church as a progressive defeat for the gospel's social and cultural influence. He recognizes that Revelation 5:10 really refers to Christians on earth, and not simply to the 24 elders and the four angelic beings in heaven. Obviously, Christians and angels in heaven cannot be defeated, yet Christians on earth do appear to be defeated. He asks: "Do they seem to be defeated? In reality they *reign!* Yes, they reign upon *the earth, 5:10;* in *heaven with Christ a thousand years,* 20:4; *in the new heaven and can% for ever and ever,* 22:5."[50]

This is theological mumbo-jumbo. Departed Christians can be said to reign literally in heaven; fine. They will reign literally after the final resurrection; also fine. But how in the name of grammar and consistent usage can they be said in the same verse to reign on the earth *in history — "we* shall reign on the earth? Surely not literally; Hendriksen is an amillennialist, not a dispensationalist.

The answer is found in point two of the biblical covenant model: ***representation. This*** can be of two kinds: symbolic (non-historical) and judicial.[51] The postmillennialist says that the earthly Church Militant represents in *history the* rule of the heavenly Church Triumphant. The Church Triumphant prays for the historic success of the Church Militant: "How Long, O Lord?" (Rev. 6: 10a). The Church Militant progressively becomes victorious in history, so the saints in heaven can be said to rule on earth. But the amillennialist cannot admit this. He adopts instead the language of symbolic ***representation*** (non-historical). He identifies those spoken of in the passage as appearing to be defeated, which is not in the actual text. Christians in heaven surely are not defeated. Because the elders in heaven reign, the Christians on earth are said to reign, too. Heaven's victory cannot serve as a meaningful guide to history. The victory is merely symbolic; history is institutionally irrelevant. The Book

50. Ibid., pp. 13-14.

51. **Unless premillennialists** adopt Dave Hunt's **pop-dispensationalism,** with its doctrine of resurrected saints and mortals living side by side during the millennium, they too are forced to adopt the language of representation.

of Revelation becomes an enigma: "The Apocalypse intends to show you, dear believer, that things are not what they *seem!*" If this seems confusing, it is because amillennialism is confusing.

Either Christians will reign on earth and in history (i.e., pre-Second Coming) or they will not. If neither we nor our covenantal successors will ever be able in history to apply the Bible-specified sanctions of the heavenly King whom we represent on earth, then Christians cannot be said ever to reign in history. The language of "reigning" would then be both misleading and inappropriate. The issue here is simple: *Christians'* possession ***of the judicial authority to impose negative civil sanctions or the private economic power to impose both positive and negative cultural sanctions.*** Amillennialists categorically deny that Christians will ever exercise such widespread authority or influence. Thus, amillennialists have yet to explain this eschatologically crucial biblical text from Revelation. It speaks of Christians who reign on earth.

utopianism Without Earthly Hope

It does even less good to encourage the optimism of your readers by proclaiming, as Raymond Zorn does, that "to the extent that the world is Christianized by the Church's efforts, it exhibits to that degree at least, the all-inclusive power of Christ by which His victory since Calvary is brought to actualization,"[52] if you do not really believe that the Church ever can achieve the Christianization of the world in history. Yet this is standard theological fare among amillennialists. A few pages after the ingeniously qualified phrase "to the extent that" was added by the author to a sentence displaying considerable verbal optimism, he added: '. . . Jesus came to found a kingdom that was not of this world."[53] (The implicit move toward an inner, "higher," "victorious" mysticism here should be obvious, although it has never been obvious to Calvinistic amillennialists, unlike medieval Catholic amillennialists.) Zorn then tells us

---

52. Raymond O. Zorn, *Church and Kingdom* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1962), p. 146.

53. *Ibid.*, p. 180.

that a tyrannical one-world State appears to be imminent.[54] This State will be overcome by Christ only at His return in final judgment. 55 That is, only with the end of history (a cosmic discontinuity) can Christians expect deliverance from political tyranny. Some victory!

Then what is the Christian's task in history? Zorn is straightforward: to submit to the powers of political evil, since they have won the political battle and possesses lawful authority. The Church "must loyally give to the State whatever is necessary for its existence."[56] The Church is simply a watchman, testifying to the evils of the day.[57] Its grim historical task is to bear witness to a kingdom which will contract throughout history, but which will then triumph in the discontinuity of final judgment. Zorn therefore calls Christians to the utopian task of calling other men to participate in building a universal kingdom that will not in fact become established in history, i.e., ***kingdom-building in a world of continual, external, visible defeat.*** He calls this task, "Bearing witness to and directing toward the true utopian goal."5[8] (And the critics call postmillennialist "utopian"!) The Church's continuity of progressive visible defeat in history is called victorious only because of a final, divinely imposed discontinuity that ends history. The kingdom triumphs no place (utopia) on earth.

Such a view of history is not congenial to the development of social theory. But is it utopian? Utopian causes have always attracted followers by promising the possibility of achieving the seemingly impossible sometime in the future. A utopian movement has at least implicitly promised a future cultural transition to a better world, despite the seeming discontinuity involved in getting from "here" to "there." Utopian movements present a description, however theoretical and however historically remote, of a better world to come ***in history***. They are utopian in the sense that there is no clear-cut systematic program to get

54. ***Ibid.,*** p. ***182.***
55. Ibid., p. ***184.***
56. Ibid., pp. 185-86.
57. Ibid., p. 187
58. Ibid., p. 214. Why Rushdoony ***wrote the*** Foreword to this amillennial book escapes me.

from this world to the promised world. There is no program of continuity, i.e., cultural or political reform. Utopian causes tend to become *apocalyptic:* waiting for a history-transforming, society-transforming, discontinuous event.

Compare this with the amillennialists' attempt to recruit and motivate dedicated followers on their uniquely *anti-historical* premise that the Bible's promised better world can be achieved only at the end of history, after the great discontinuity of final judgment and the abolition of history. They make no attempt to describe the daily operations of this future, post-resurrection world. This is reasonable; the Bible doesn't. What can we say about a sin-free, curse-free future society? Not much. Until the post-resurrection world comes, they teach, this world will get worse for Christians. Nevertheless, Christians are told to be salt and light to the doomed world, laboring mightily to bring in the kingdom of God on earth, even though God supposedly has not given judicial guidelines to His people in the New Testament era. This is utopianism without historic fulfillment, apocalypticism without earthly hope. Only a future apocalyptic event can bring the new world order its visible incarnation. Such a view destroys any legitimate confidence in the earthly fruits of covenant-keeping man's labor.

Common grace amillennialists affirm the expansion of Satan's kingdom in history. They also affirm the simultaneous expansion of Christ's kingdom in history. To make way for the leavening process of both kingdoms, they define Satan's kingdom as relating to civilization and Christ's kingdom as relating to the human heart, the Church, and the family. The leavening process of Satan steadily displaces the traces of Christian culture until, at the very end, the Christians are facing complete destruction. Then Jesus will return to judge the world and put an end to Church-engulfing (or Church-stalemating) history.

The Ambiguity of Amillennial History

Calvin Seminary professor Anthony Hoekema, in his chapter, "The Meaning of History," favorably cites Hendrikus Berkhof's 1966 book, ***Christ the Meaning of History***. Berkhof writes: "There is no equilibrium between cross and resurrection. The shadows

created by Christ's reign are completely a part of this dispensation, while the light of his reign will remain dim to the end."[59] Christ, the shadow in history! Then what does this make Satan? Berkhof and Hoekema are far too astute to raise this thorny but obvious question. Hoekema then goes on to defend a fundamental assertion of amillennialism: the ambiguity of history.

> Here again we see the ambiguity of history. History does not reveal a simple triumph of good over evil, nor a total victory of evil over good. Evil and good continue to exist side by side. Conflict between the two continues during the present age, but since Christ has won the victory, the ultimate outcome of the conflict is never in doubt. The enemy is fighting a losing battle.[60]

Notice the ambiguity of his phrasing of the issue. The good does not "simply" triumph over evil. Why ***simply?*** Evil does not "totally" triumph over good. Why ***totally***? This is not clear. There is some kind of hidden eschatological agenda underlying such peculiar phrasing. What is very clear, however, is that his final sentence is misleading. The enemy, given the amillennial outlook, is indeed fighting a ***lost cause***, but he is surely ***not*** fighting a ***losing battle.*** He is fighting at the very least a long-term historical stalemate, and probably an overall cultural victory. Under the most favorable possible interpretation, Hoekema is promoting a version of the stalemate religion.[61] This is the religion of cultural cease-fires rather than Christian victory.

Hoekema understands what this means for history: the absence of meaningful progress. "Can we say that history reveals genuine progress? Again we face the problem of the ambiguity of history. For every advance, it would seem, there is a corresponding retreat. The invention of the automobile has brought with it air pollution and a frightful increase in highway acci-

---

59. Anthony A Hoekema, ***The Bible and the Future*** (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1979), p. 35.

60. ***Idem.***

61. Gary North, ***Backward, Christian Soldiers? An Action Manual for Christian Reconstruction*** (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1984), ch. 11: "The Stalemate Mentality."

dents. . . . Progression is paired with **retrogression.**"[62]

Let us not mince words. This view of history is ***Manichean***. While the Manicheans profess faith in an endless struggle between good and evil, the amillennialists modify this view only slightly with respect to history. This view leads either to an acceptance of ethical dualism or permanent frustration: (1) the acceptance of common ground, "natural" ethics for the world, with a different personal ethics for Christians (dualism); or else ***(2)*** the assertion of a unified Christian ethical system that will never gain widespread public acceptance in history (frustration).

What is nothing short of astounding is that Hoekema, after having presented Manicheanism in the name of Christianity, then declares: ***"The Christian understanding of history is basically optimistic."***[63] How can he defend such a statement? Simple: by adopting deliberately misleading terminology. "The Christian believes that God is in control of history and that Christ has won the victory over the powers of evil. This means that the ultimate outcome of things is bound to be not bad but good, that God's redemptive purpose with the universe will eventually be realized, and that 'though the wrong seems oft so strong, God is the ruler yet.' " The key word here is ***ultimate.*** This is a crucial **amillennial** weasel word. It means ***not in history.*** Previous example: ". . . the ultimate outcome of the conflict is never in doubt." But he began his introductory statement by defending Christian optimism regarding history. All his defense proves is that Christians do have legitimate optimism regarding the final judgment. This is hardly the basis of a successful challenge to modern humanism. It surrenders history to covenant-breakers.

I will say this as plainly as I can: if anything like this were done by a profit-seeking business in the United States, it would be illegal. Under federal law, there is a ***truth in*** advertising rule. Specifically, this prohibited tactic is known as ***bait and switch.*** A firm advertises a product at a low price, but it does not actually have this advertised product. Once the customer is lured into the showroom, he is pressured to buy a different product at a

62. Hoekema, ***The Bible and the Future,*** pp. 35-36,
63. ***Ibid.,*** p. 38.

higher price. ***Bait and switch has been the mast commonly used tactic in selling common grace amillennialism to Christians in the twentieth century.*** This practice is unconscionable, but it is so familiar to its academic defenders that it is not given a second thought.

Common grace amillennialists call Christians to a cultural battle, yet they also assure these potential recruits that there is no hope in history. The efforts of Christians to make the world a better, covenant-honoring place are inescapably going to be thwarted as time goes on. This, Zorn says, is "bearing witness to and directing toward the true utopian goal." But this utopianism is a utopianism without any possibility of fulfillment. It is therefore not truly utopian; it is at bottom apocalyptic. It waits on God to end history, not for Christians to transform history through their covenantal obedience. It calls for activism and encourages passivity. It is at bottom schizophrenic.

Shared Perspective: Historical Discontinuity

Norman Geisler, a dispensationalist and a defender of Thomistic natural law theory, has pointed to the shared perspective of premillennialism and amillennialism with respect to time. The issue, he says, is their common assertion of a fundamental discontinuity between the present order and the coming kingdom of God. He correctly observes that "most amillenarians look to the future return of Christ and to His eternal Reign as discontinuous with the present. Hence they do not view their present social involvement as directly related to the emergence of the future kingdom of God. In this respect amillenarians are more like premillenarians and have thereby often escaped some of the extremes of postmillennialism. "[64] The central shared doctrine, then, is the doctrine of& ***Church's historical discontinuity with the world beyond Christ's Second Coming.*** On this point, Geisler is correct. Pessimillennialism denies any meaningful continuity.

There is no question that Geisler is reacting to Christian Reconstruction in raising this issue. He clearly recognizes the

---

64. Norman L. Geisler, "A Premillennial View of Law and Government" in *The Best in Theology*, edited by J. I. Packer (Carol Stream, Illinois: Christianity Today, Inc., 1987), I, p. 256.

inescapable connections linking biblical law, God's historical sanctions, millennialism, and social theory. Having affirmed premillennial dispensationalism, and therefore having denied the New Testament continuity of Old Testament law, he sought a means of affirming even the possibility of social theory. He adopted natural law theory. This is consistent. Having denied the only means of developing Christian social theory (biblical law and God's historical sanctions in enforcing this law), he adopted an officially intellectually and ethically neutral social theory. Here is his theoretical problem: *there is* no ***neutrality.***

Very few Christian social commentators or theologians have been willing to follow Geisler's lead. Those who are professionally trained philosophers know that nothing remains of natural law theory in a post-Kantian world. Most Christians have not been trained in philosophy, but they have at least picked up from popularizers like Francis Schaeffer the idea that there can be no neutrality. The problem they face is the same one that both Schaeffer and Van Til faced: once we scrap natural law theory, what is left?[65] Kantianism? But this leads to Barthianism and neo-orthodoxy. Existentialism? This is clearly a dead end. There is only one consistent worldview that is based solely and self-consciously on the Bible: theonomy. They would rather die than accept this answer. So, they wind up promoting some rejected humanist fad that is based on modernism (what else?) but which does not initially appear to be. The few dispensationalists who read such things may prefer ***National Review*** or possibly ***The American Spectator,*** while the neo-evangelicals may read New ***Republic,*** but it makes no fundamental difference. All sides indirectly adopt humanism as the basis of their social philosophy. They cannot defend their social and political preferences by an appeal to the Bible. So, they cease making systematic appeals to the texts of the Bible. It is just too embarrassing.

The result is painfully obvious even to them: nobody takes them very seriously. Quite frankly, nobody should. They have neither the political clout to scare anyone holding office nor the philosophical clout to propose an consistent, viable, *biblical*

65. North, ***Political Polytheism,*** chapters 3, 4.

alternative. It is not that they are short on brains. They are, however, woefully short on biblical presuppositions. They do not command much respect, even within their own circles, when they announce: "Thus sayeth *The Wall Street Journal,"* or "Thus sayeth *The New York Times."*

Conclusion

When Christians do not view their present social involvement as possessing a fundamental continuity with the emergence (i.e., development or extension) of the kingdom of God in history, they have little incentive to develop a specifically Christian social theory. If they also deny the fundamental continuity of Old Testament law and God's sanctions throughout history,[66] they will be sorely tempted to revert to the supposedly universal and common logical categories of Stoic and Scholastic natural law theory, as Geisler has done. Lacking both the temporal incentive for dominion (God's positive sanctions in history) and the judicial tools of dominion (biblical law),[67] they deny the legitimacy of Christians' dominion in history by means of the biblical covenant, through the empowering of the Holy Spirit.

Both premillennialism and amillennialism deny that there will ever be a Christian civilization prior to Christ's Second Coming. In saying this, both viewpoints promote an antinomian outlook. Their defenders usually deny the continuing validity of the Old Testament case laws, but even when the case laws are not denied, these theologians deny the continuing presence of God's historical sanctions – sanctions that they freely admit were attached to His law-order in the Old Covenant era, at least in the case of national Israel. But God's covenant law without God's predictable, historic, corporate sanctions is like a nail without a hammer. It is useless for constructing anything.

A few premillennialist and amillennialists have offered very cogent criticisms of modern humanist culture, but these critics have never offered a uniquely Christian alternative to the humanism they reject. This exclusive negativism has the effect of

66. Pratt, *He Gave Us Stories,* pp. 343-44.
67. North, *Tools of Dominion, op. cit.*

discouraging their followers. This lack of a legitimate cultural alternative has persuaded most Christians to shorten their time horizons. They lose hope in the future: *present-orientation*.

If there is no cultural alternative to humanism available in history, then the only reasonable Christian response is to pray for either the Rapture (dispensationalism) or the end of history (amillennialism). (Historic premillennialists and post-tribulational dispensationalists believe that the millennium will come only after Christians have gone through Armageddon and the Great Tribulation. I have no idea what they pray for.)

Premillennialist and amillennialists share a commitment to a coming *cosmic* discontinuity as the Church's great hope in *history*: deliverance from on high (and in the case of premillennial dispensationalism, deliverance *to* on high). Again, citing Norman Geisler: "Hence they do not view their present social involvement as directly related to the emergence of the future kingdom of God. In this respect amillenarians are more like premillenarians and have thereby often escaped some of the extremes of postmillennialism." This affirmation of a coming cosmic discontinuity cuts the ground from under the Christian who would seek to discover a uniquely biblical social theory. It also undercuts the incentive for social action. Social action becomes a holding action at best and a kamikaze action at worst.

The Church is believed to be incapable of changing history's downward move into cultural evil. Social action is therefore adopted on an *ad hoc* basis: solving this or that immediate local problem. Effective Christian social action supposedly can accomplish little; therefore, it requires neither a long-term strategy nor a systematic concept of ethical cause and effect. Political power, not ethics, is viewed as historically determinative. Power is seen as a necessary evil today. Christians are supposedly never to exercise political power in the "Church Age." Either they cannot or should not exercise it (possibly both).

The result is predictable: the absence of Christian social theory.

5

THE SOCIETY OF THE FUTURE

For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and *the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem* a *rejoicing,* and her *people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in* my people: and *the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying. There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed. And they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build, and* another *inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of* a *tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they are the seed of the blessed of the LoRD, and their offspring with them (Isa. 65:17-23).* (emphasis added)

Isaiah introduces this prophecy by saying that it refers to the New Heaven and the New Earth. The key question is this: Is this coming era historical or post-resurrection? The language of Isaiah is straightforward: an era is coming, *in history,* when the person who dies at age one hundred will be considered as a child, an indication of a major extension of men's lifespans. Also, sinners will be accounted accursed. This appears to be an application of Isaiah's prophecy of the millennial era's improved moral self-consciousness, when vile people will not be called liberal,' and churls will not be called bountiful (Isa. 32:5). In

1. Consider the United States' federally financed "art," with its religious and moral perversion. Arsy attempt to de-fund it by removing tax money until the National Endow-

short, there will be a coming age in which covenantal wisdom is paralleled by long life. But it will still be an age of death and sin. This is the reason why the exercise of covenantal wisdom will be possible. It will still be possible to distinguish good from evil, long life from short life, cursings from blessings.

No verse in the Bible makes it plainer that amillennial eschatology cannot possibly be true. Even if we take these words symbolically (i.e., as rhetoric), they still have to apply to history, for sinners will not be present in the post-resurrection world. They will not participate in the post-resurrection New Heaven and New Earth. Isaiah made it perfectly clear: ***he was talking about history. These*** words cannot possibly apply to the post-resurrection world. There will be a coming era of blessing in history. God's positive ***historical*** sanctions on covenant-keepers will bring victory to His earthly kingdom. It is quite understandable why Archibald Hughes, an amillennial theologian, mentioned this passage in only two brief sentences in his book, *A* New ***Heaven and a New Earth.***[2] This passage refutes his eschatology. (So much the worse for Isaiah, apparently!) Herman Ridderbos is wiser still: he never even mentioned the verse in a book on the kingdom of God that is over 500 pages long.[3] (He compensates for this omission by citing hundreds of German liberal theologians, most of whom outlived their theories.)[4] One man, however, has accepted the challenge. We therefore need to examine his exegesis in detail to see whether the amillennial interpretation of Isaiah 65:20 can be sustained.

---

ment of the Arts draws up artistic guidelines is attacked as illiberal.

2. Archibald Hughes, ***A New Heaven and a New Earth*** (Philadelphia Presbyterian & Reformed, 1958). The book's subtitle defines away the problem: An *Introductory* Study *of the Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Eternal Inheritance.* But what of the Church's historical inheritance? For amillennialists, there is none except, possibly, escalating persecution.

3. Herman Ridderbos, *The Coming of the Kingdom* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1963).

4. It is one of the tragic wastes of sharp theological minds that they feel compelled to shadow box with dead German theologians all of their lives. It makes them nearly as incoherent as their opponents, and nearly as impotent. Ridderbos fottowed The *Coming of the Kingdom with* a somewhat less turgid book, ***Paul: An Outline of His Theology (1975),*** a 562-page outline in small print. He smote dead Germans, hip and thigh, throughout his career. No one noticed. No one ever does, especially tiving German theologians.

Dr. Hoekema's Heroic Failure

Calvin Theological Seminary professor Anthony A. Hoekema (now deceased) was honest about this passage's importance. Referring to Isaiah 65:20, he announced: "We must admit that this is a difficult text to interpret." Not impossible; merely difficult. Then he attempts to escape the dilemma by denying that the text is to be taken literally.

> Is Isaiah telling us here that there will be death on the new earth? In my judgment this cannot be his meaning, in the light of what he has just said in verse 19: "No more shall be heard in it [the Jerusalem being described – AA-H.] the sound of weeping and the cry of distress." Can one imagine a death not accompanied by weeping?[5]

Well, quite frankly, yes, I can imagine it. There is a biblical text relating to this very problem, Leviticus 21:10-13. The high priest was forbidden to mourn publicly after the death of a close relative. As a kingdom of priests, we should begin to strive to match this self-restraint. I think this could well become biblical etiquette in an era of millennial blessings, for three reasons. First, the sting of death will be progressively reduced. People will not fear death so greatly as they do now. The transition from physical life to physical death will not be so familiar a threat during an era in which people live very long lives. Second, the cry of distress (v. 19) refers to personal spiritual pain (11 Sam. 22:7; Psa. 18:6). This degree of pain need not be prevalent in an era of millennial blessings. Third, the covenantal passage from death to life in history will be made by a majority of those dwelling in "Jerusalem," meaning God's Church. The close relatives of those deceased who have made the transition into eternity will not be so devastated as they are today.

This is already true today to some extent, Paul says, indicating that Christians have begun the transition in history to that coming millennial era of blessings, and then on to the post-resurrection world beyond: "But I would not have you to be ignorant,

---

5. Anthony Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1979), p. 202.

brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope" (I Thess. 4:13). Paul also writes: "But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; And they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; And they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away" (I Cor. 7:29-31). As we move in history toward a tears-free eternity, our behavior should reflect both our faith and our historical experience as victors. There will be a progressive drying up of tears as covenant history unfolds.

Hoekema raises a legitimate question: ***What about weeping?*** He notes its absence (v. 19). But because he is defending a particular eschatology, he wipes away the tears exegetically by ***wiping away history***. This is strictly a tactical ploy; his view of a tears-free future beyond the grave does not come from the text or from normal principles of Old Testament interpretation. It comes from his amillennial interpretive scheme. He argues in effect that history and tears are ontologically inseparable. Any absence of tears absolutely has to mean the absence of history, with no exceptions. This is strict amillennial exegesis.

The Prophets' Use of Language

The question I raise in response is this: Would those who heard Isaiah's message have grasped this hypothetical ontological relationship: tears and history? Would they have had even the slightest inkling that Isaiah was talking exclusively about a death-free eternal state rather than history? Not if they had heard his previous reference to a world without tears. The context was historical and earthly:

> For thou hast made of a city an heap; of a defenced city a ruin: a palace of strangers to be no city; it shall never be built. Therefore shall the strong people glorify thee, ***the city of the terrible nations shall fear thee.*** For thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall.

> Thou shalt bring down the noise of strangers, as the heat in a dry place; even the heat with the shadow of a cloud: the branch of the terrible ones shall be brought low. And in this mountain shall the LORD of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees [aged wine], of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined. And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations. ***He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take*** away ***from off all the earth:*** for the LORD bath spoken it. And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the LORD; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation. For in this mountain shall the hand of the LORD rest, and Moab shall be trodden down under him, even as straw is trodden down for the dunghill (Isa. 25:2-10). (emphasis added)

That this message is filled with symbolic language ought to be admitted by all expositors. Marrow, wines, and fat sound like the ultimate nightmare of modern dietitians. Modern, sedentary, urban man, who consumes far too many of these gastronomic delights, would no doubt be wise to eat more skinless chicken and leafy green vegetables.[6] Our positive blessings have become a potential curse to us, if we lack will-power. Ours is a prosperous era in which it is far more affordable for gluttons and drunkards to indulge their sins. But Isaiah's vision was magnificent to a people who did not eat meat very often because of its great expense and the absence of refrigeration. Yes, the prophets did use symbolic language. They even mixed in the language of post-judgment victory with their historical visions.

But so does the New Testament. Jesus announced this to His followers: "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink" (John 7:37). This language is symbolic, yet it is a fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah 49:8 -13.7 Revelation 7:16- 1'7 is a passage dealing with Church history, and it uses

---

6. Perhaps in the millennial era to come, scientists witl find ways to overcome these fatty negatives, and it will be back to welt-marbled steaks and pork roasts!

7. David Chilton, The *Days of Vengeance: An Exposition of the Book of Revelation* (Ft. Worth, Texas: Dominion Press, 1987), p. 22.3.

language similar to Jesus' announcement at the feast, but then adds hope regarding tears. "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Iamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." Total fulfillment will come, of course, only after final judgment, but partial fulfillment comes in history. (Or are we to deny the positive cultural blessings of Jesus' living water in history?) Revelation 21:4 seems to refer exclusively to the post-resurrection world: "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." Yet even here, these is some degree of fulfillment in history.[8] What amillennialist expositors refuse to acknowledge is this: the transition from today's world to the post-resurrection world does not take place overnight. It takes place historically. So they remove all traces of history from prophetic messages of comprehensive victory and visible blessings.

Expositors recognize that ***the Old Covenant's message was geared primarily to history, not to a world beyond the grave.*** When a prophet spoke of wiping away tears, his audience would not have imagined that he was talking exclusively about the post-resurrection world, where the problem of tears obviously will not be an issue. Isaiah's message was one of ***judgment in history*** (Babylon invaded Judah about 175 years later), but the prophet also promised Israel's post-judgment restoration. Who in Isaiah's day would have imagined that this restoration would be exclusively post-*final* judgment? Who, for that matter, in Nehemiah's day of restoration would have imagined it?

The amillennial interpretation of the prophets is to assert that the texts dealing with negative sanctions refer to ***historical*** judgments on the nation of Israel (e.g., the Babylonian captivity), but the texts dealing with God's miraculous positive sanctions deal only with the ***discontinuous post-find judgment era.*** There is no continuity in history linking (1) the restoration of Israel, (2) the

8. Ibid., p. 547.

Church, and (3) the coming era of millennial blessings. In short, God's corporate **cursings** are continuous in history, but ***His world-transforming blessings will be cosmic and discontinuous***: beyond history. Those who heard the prophets' bad news were to fear God, but when they heard the message of miraculous social transformation, they were to pay no attention, except in a symbolic sense: a world beyond history. Nebuchadnezzar was real; tears were real; but the possibility of future cultural transformation is merely symbolic. If this is true, then this theological conclusion is inescapable: ***biblical social theory is also symbolic.***

Here is my point: ***amillennialism cannot deal exegetically with God's positive corporate sanctions in New Covenant history.*** This is one of my major contentions in this book. God's positive corporate sanctions are said to relate ***primarily*** to "sacred history," meaning the biblical narratives in the Old Covenant.[9] They are past events, aorist tense: completed. (This could be called "preterism for **eschatological** pessimists": the good news for society is past.) But what about the possibility of a secondary application in New Covenant history of the good news of future corporate cultural transformation? For the **amillennialist,** there is no "secondarily"; there is only "primarily." This presents a major problem for the development of **amillennial** social theory: explicitly biblical, no humanism, and no "neutral" natural law. It makes it impossible.

"Why 'Death' Simply *Cannot Mean Death"*

Hoekema does not stop with his assertion that the tears of Isaiah 65:19 will be wiped away only in the post-resurrection world. He goes on. (There is an old slogan, "When you're in a hole, stop digging.") "In the light of the foregoing I conclude that Isaiah in verse 20 of chapter 65 is picturing in figurative terms the fact that the inhabitants of the new earth will live incalculably long lives." Notice what he is doing. First, he denies that ***death*** actually refers to death. Second, he speaks of incalculably long lives in the New Heaven and New Earth, an odd prophetic way of saying "eternal, death-free living." Professor

9. On sacred **history,** see Hoekema, Future, pp. 25-26.

Hoekema is about to make a very slick interpretive move: out of history and into eternity.

His major problem is to get rid of the word ***sinner.*** There will not be any sinners dwelling in the eternal New Heaven and New Earth. If the New Heaven and New Earth refer exclusively to the post-judgment age, then sinners must be eliminated from the text. Dr. Hoekema rises to the occasion. Unfortunately, his common sense does not rise with him.

> Since the word translated *sinner* in the last clause means someone who has missed the mark, I would again prefer the NIV rendering, "he who fails to reach a hundred will be considered accursed." It is not implied that there will be anyone on the new earth who will fail to attain a hundred years.[10]

How, pray tell, does someone ***not*** reach age one hundred? I would have thought there could only be one way: ***he dies first.*** But, Hoekema assures us, this text in no way implies that anyone will fail to reach age one hundred. So, there will be no weeping in Jerusalem, because sinners, who are not in fact sinners, but merely people who miss the mark, will not be dying before age one hundred, because the text in no way implies that anyone will die. "For the child shall die" means that no one will die. If this sounds suspiciously like a Christian Science lay reader's explanation of John 11:14, "Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead," this is because the goal is the same: ***escaping the plain (and also figurative) meaning of the text.***

If death in this passage does not actually refer to death, then what was Isaiah's point? What message was he trying to convey? Why did he bring up the possibility of the death of people "who miss the mark," if there will be neither death nor sin in that exclusively future, exclusively post-historical era? What has the language of death got to do with a sin-free "missing of the mark? What has the verse got to do with anything, if sin, death, and history are all spirited away?

---

10. *Ibid.,* p. 203.

Denying a Future Covenantal Discontinuity

None of his exegetical dancing does Dr. Hoekema any good. He can of course interpret the text figuratively, but he cannot remove it from history. Isaiah's prophesied judgments against the nation of Israel took place in history. ***The amillennialist's exegetical problem with Isaiah 65 is history,*** not the prophet's possibly figurative use of language. "*I* create," God said. The New Heaven and New Earth are begun in history. Yes, this text can conceivably be translated ***will create,*** since Hebrew does not distinguish between the present and future tenses, and the NIV translators, with an eye on the amillennial book buying public, did so. No other major Bible translation does. When your eschatology rests heavily on a peculiar translation found only in the NIV, you are skating on thin ice. In any case, even if we accept the future tense, this could (and does) mean "create in history": at the nation's return from Babylon, at the ascension of Jesus Christ, at the sending of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, and at the fall of Jerusalem. (I should add: in the millennium of blessings.) It is a multi-stage process that culminates at the final judgment. But amillennialists insist that the New Heaven and New Earth begin only at the final judgment.

Hoekema makes it clear in his discussion of the New Earth – which is exclusively post-resurrection — that the key issue is the denial of history, not the denial of hermeneutical liberalism. "Prophecies of this nature should be understood as descriptions — in figurative language, to be sure — of the new earth which God will bring into existence after Christ comes again – a new earth which will last, not just for a thousand years, but forever."[11] The issue is ***post-historical fulfillment,*** not liberalism: "There will be a future fulfillment of these prophecies, not in the millennium, but on the new earth. Whether they are all to be *literally* fulfilled is an open question; . . ."[12] What is a closed question is the question of historical fulfillment. There will be none.

The issue under discussion is the possibility of a future historical discontinuity, worldwide, in which the Holy Spirit con-

11. *Ibid.,* p. *276.*
12. IdEm.

verts large numbers of people to saving faith. The issue is not extended lifespans as such. If modern science were to find a chemical or biological way to change the supposed internal time clock that governs the aging process in humans, and thereby extend the life expectancy of mankind, Dr. Hoekema would not regard this as the advent of the New Earth. Neither would I. The issue is God's *historical sanctions:* the differentiation made by the general public between the moral quality of long lives lived by covenant-keepers and covenant-breakers. What he is rejecting is what postmillennialism affirms: a coming ***spiritual discontinuity*** in history that accompanies a ***cultural*** *and even* ***biological*** ***discontinuity***. He predicts spiritual, covenantal continuity in history — churls will continue to be called bountiful — no matter what covenant-breaking science may invent. I predict a spiritual, covenantal discontinuity in history — increasingly bad times for churls — no matter what covenant-breaking science invents. The two views cannot be reconciled. They cannot both be correct.

Anthony Hoekema has written the most comprehensive presentation of the Calvinist amillennial case. His book is the only full-scale, English-language presentation of the amillennial position, certainly from the Dutch tradition, but probably in the history of the position. He grapples with Isaiah 65:20. A difficult passage to interpret from an amillennial viewpoint? Not just difficult; ***impossible,*** unless you intend to embarrass yourself in public. No better proof exists of the impossibility of this task than Dr. Hoekema's valiant attempt. It was a theologically necessary but thankless task that his amillennial predecessors had preferred to skate around rather than across. Dr. Hoekema, a courageous man, skated as fast as he could, but fell through the ice anyway. He gets an A for effort, but a D- for performance,

I have done my best to expose Dr. Hoekema's exegesis of Isaiah 65:20 as little short of preposterous. If I have done my work well, his interpretation appears foolish. This is because it really *is* foolish. But Dr. Hoekema was no fool. Early in his career, he wrote the most tightly argued, theologically rigorous, fully documented study of the theologies of the four major cults

that we have available.[13] So, his problem was not that he was an incompetent theologian; his problem was that his millennial view cannot be defended without the manufacture of silly interpretations of those passages that predict Christian victory in history. The reader needs to understand: his book is virtually the only recent common grace amillennial study that devotes even one chapter to the question of the meaning of history in relation to amillennial eschatology. The others steadfastly ignore it, with only one exception: H. van Riessen's Society *of the Future*. But van Riessen was neither an historian nor a theologian.

Van Riessen's Vision

This coming era of blessings will be marked by economic freedom. Men will keep the fruits of their labor. They will leave an inheritance to their children. "And they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they are the seed of the blessed of the LORD, and their offspring with them" (Isa. 65:21-23). There is a blessed earthly inheritance ahead *in history* for God's covenant people. All this is denied by amillennial theologians, especially in the twentieth-century Dutch tradition. We can see this message of disinheritance *in history* in the writings of H. Van Riessen.

Van Riessen was a professor of philosophy at the University of Technology at Delft in the Netherlands. His book, *The Society of the Future (* 195'7), serves as a coherent introduction to amillennial social criticism. He was critical of the bureaucratic, planned society of socialism. He understood the depersonalization of modern industrial life. He saw the breakdown of modern humanist ethics, philosophy, and confidence about the future. He saw that ethical neutrality leads to nihilism. But like premillennialist Francis Schaeffer, who also offered cogent criticisms

13. Anthony A Hoekema, *The Four Major Cults* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, [1963] 1986).

without biblical alternatives,[14] Van Riessen saw no hope. Why no hope? "For Babylon will be the city of the end."[15]

How should we then live? On the one hand, aggressively. "We should not try to escape from the world, but to work in it as a Christian should."[16] But to do this, we theonomists hasten to add, Christians need more data on the *should* aspect of Christian living. We need specifics. He offers none. Biblical law is not even mentioned in his book. What he offers is a counsel of Stoic despair: "The normal situation for the community ofJesus is not to be influential and prosperous but poor and oppressed."[17] When he says "normal," he means *normative* throughout *history*. In constructing this view of history, amillennialists see the sufferings of Job as normative, not the restoration and multiplication of Job's blessings after his time of suffering. "So the LORD blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning" (Job. 42: 12a). His post-suffering blessings were apparently random, having nothing fundamental to do with the overall spiritual message of the Book of Job. In short, amillennialists imply, the story of Job is not essentially covenantal: *the* blessings *and cursings of history are not related to one's ethical behavior in history.* At best, they were not very closely related in Job's day, and in the New Testament, they are not related in history in any predictable fashion. [18] This view of Job is a denial of the biblical covenant's continuing authority in the New Testament era. [19] Nevertheless, it has long been presented in the name of covenant theology.

---

14. Gary North, *Political Polytheism: The Myth of Pluralism* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1989), ch. 4.

15. H. van Riessen, The Society *of the Future* (Philadelphia Presbyterian & Reformed, 1957), p. 233.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 234.

17. *Idem.*

18. Van Til explicitly says this. Regarding the New Testament application of the story of Job, he writes: "Between the time of paradise lost and paradise regained the balance will not always be maintained. More than that, it may even be said that it seems as though it is often true that those who are righteous are not as prosperous as those who are not righteous. At any rate, there is great unevenness throughout the course of history." Cornelius Van Til, *Christian Theistic Ethics,* vol. III of *Irs Defense of Biblical Christianity* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey Presbyterian& Reformed, [1958] 1980), p. 104.

19. Ray R. Sutton, That *You May Prosper:* Dominion *By Covenant* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1987), p. 68.

Today's Prosperity

The second half of the twentieth century has been a time of great prosperity for the West. This raises the old question of God's historical sanctions. How is it that spiritual rebellion seems to bring economic prosperity? Van Riessen's answer is much the same as best-selling dispensational author Dave Hunt in his ***Peace Prosperity and the Coming Holocaust (1983):*** modern prosperity is all a gigantic spiritual deception. Hunt says that this deception is being engineered by Satan through the New Age movement.'"

(I argue in Chapter '7 that unless Christians accept biblical covenantal standards of wealth and progress, there is a very real possibility that they could be deceived in this way. This is why it is so important for Christians to understand and accept the biblical covenant model. But Hunt, as a dispensationalist and an extreme pietist theologically, rejects biblical law. Thus, he also rejects the legitimacy of wealth, at least for those who do not live on paperback book royalties. The rejection of the legitimacy of wealth is an odd theological position for a man whose only formal training is accounting, which is perhaps the most crucial technical pillar of modern capitalism. Perhaps he had originally planned to specialize only in Christians' bankruptcy cases.)

Van Riessen, a more scholarly analyst than Mr. Hunt, says that this deception is a product of secularization. He warns: "While living in an oasis, we must guard against looking upon the oasis as a general condition, forgetting the desert. . . . The danger lurking in a long period of prosperity for Christians is that they are apt to get secularized gradually without being aware of it, and even that they are carried away by the spirit of the age. We are perhaps not oppressed because we no longer take offense."[21] There is darkness coming: "We should know

---

20. Everything defined as evil in Hunt's worldview seems to have been engineered or captured by the New Age movement, which he calls sorcery. (This apparently includes commas in book titles, not to mention indexes, which he carefully avoids.) Cf. Dave Hunt and T. A. McMahon, *The Seduction of Christianity: Spiritual Discernment in the Last Days* (Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House, 1985). For a critique of this whole approach, see Bob and Gretchen Passantino, *Witch Hunt* (Nashville, Tennessee: Nelson, 1990).

21. Van Riessen, Society *of the Future*, p. 234.

that the time will come when our position will be entirely lost, but Christ shall nevertheless rule the world."[22] The process is irreversible, he insists: "The history of Western culture is in the main a history of a Christian culture followed by a secularization, increasing in extent and intensity. It is moving to a final catastrophe."[23]

Prosperity is said to be a spiritual oasis. It surely can be. This is the paradox of Deuteronomy 8: wealth is both a positive and a negative sanction in history. But for van Riessen, ***wealth is exclusively a negative corporate sanction.*** It is a spiritual desert. The Christian, in whose hands wealth can be a positive sanction, must regard the wealth around him as a sign of God's cultural disinheritance of the Church's healing work in history.

Then what of this Proverb? "The wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just" (Prov. 13 :22b). "It applies only to individuals, not to societies," says the amillennialist. But God delivered the land of Canaan into the hands of the Israelites, disinheriting the Canaanites, but providing an inheritance to His people. "Old Testament, Old Testament!" shouts the amillennialist. This is supposed to end the argument. It is the major offense of Christian Reconstructionism that its view of Old Testament law and God's historical sanctions keeps the argument alive. This offers hope to society: the hope of God's inheritance to His people in history. The amillennialist deeply resents this offer of hope.

A Society Without Legitimate Hope

Van Riessen offered no alternative, no plan of action, and no hope. He ended with this call to . . . to . . . a stiff upper lip: "Defeatism or passive resignation to our situation with all the risks attached to the latter only mean the neglect of our vocation. On the other hand superficial optimism based on some favorable phenomena or on a distorted global picture of our situation would be dangerous. In this difficult time it is essential for us to have a correct insight into our condition, an ardent faith in our calling irrespective of the results of our work, quiet

22. *Ibid.*, p. 235.
23. *Idem.*

determination on the right course towards the future and critical reflection on anything presenting itself to us in this course."[24]

Having presented his chilling forecast of bad things to come, van Riessen came back in 1960 to assure his Dutch-American readers that "Christians are going to change the world. They have to urge mankind to follow God's will. But knowledge changes nothing. It is the believing heart that alters the world."[25] Unfortunately for the Church, there will never be many of these believing hearts in history, according to what amillennialism teaches. So, precisely *how* will Christians change the world? Van Til said this Christian influence will only make non-Christians more aware of their own intellectual inconsistency, thereby bringing increasingly severe persecution against the Church. Van Riessen did not say how Christianity will change the world. He did not need to. *The Society of the Future* had said enough.

When I was a teenager in a public high school, the boys' athletic dressing room had this motto painted on the wall: "When the going gets tough, the tough get going." Van Riessen adopted something like this schoolboy's motto as a substitute for Christian social philosophy. This, quite frankly, has been amillennialism's tactic for at least half a millennium.

Question: Wouldn't the wise person adopt a different version of the motto? "When the going gets tough, the tough may get going, but the weak get out of the way." This has been the operational motto of Christians for well over a century. They have read and fully understood four generations of premillennial and amillennial dissertations and tracts, and they have acted accordingly. Whenever possible, they have bought themselves a hoped-for oasis, usually with a lot of debt, and they have then prayed to God to keep the desert sands outside its boundaries until they die. Nothing has shortened Christianity's time perspective more effectively than eschatological pessimism. Christian laymen are not fools. They have read the pessimillennialists'

24. Ibid., p. 308.

25. Hendrik van Riessen, "The Christian Approach to Science," *Christian Perspectives (1960),* p. 3.

version of David and Goliath – Goliath defeats David – and they have concluded: "Don't get into an unnecessary confrontation with Goliath." They are not naive. The pessimillennial theologians are naive, however. In their tenured academic security,[26] they call Christian laymen to get into the battle. "Let's you and Goliath fight," they call out to the potential Davids of the world. But all the Davids are at home, tending sheep; only Sauls are in the battlefield. So the Sauls of the world put down the theologian's book, turn on the T. V., and put a bag of popcorn into the microwave. They are a lot wiser than their spiritual counselors are. They are not interested in kamikaze tactics. The personal price is too high, and the cultural payoff is too low.

Trans-Historical Victory

Chapter 42 of R. B. Kuiper's *The Glorious Body of Christ*, "Conqueror of the World," is filled with the language of victory. He writes: "Amazing as it may seem, the insignificant church is out to conquer the world. Not only is it striving to do this; it is succeeding. And surpassing strange to say, not only is victory in sight for the church; it is a present reality."[27] Surpassing strange, indeed! The word "succeeding" indicates progress, but the words "present reality" give away the game. Only in the post-historical world will we see in retrospect the nature of this victory: a victory in disguise.

He includes a subsection, "The Duty of Conquest." He calls Christians to an earthly battle that his millennial view denies they can win, but he refuses to state this explicitly. He fools them with misleading language. He also includes another subsection, "The Reality of Victory." He writes: "That the church will in the end overcome the world is a foregone conclusion, for it will share in the ultimate and complete triumph of Christ, its Head."[28] (Notice the presence of the familiar amillennial weasel word: *ultimate*, meaning *not in history.)* This is a devious way of

---

26. "When the going gets tough, the professors seek tenure."

27. R. B. Kuiper, *The Glorious* Body *of Christ* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1958), p. 274.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 277.

admitting that the Church in history will *not* overcome the world, and that any victory it will enjoy will be post-history, when the direct intervention of God interrupts history at the final judgment.

The Church in the amillennial framework has about as much to do with this final victory of Christ over the world of sin and corruption as a little old lady has in arresting a large gang of muggers, while she is being beaten to a pulp, at the moment when the police finally arrive. According to amillennialism, the Church's role in Christ's victory is that of a helpless, impotent victim, whose only earthly hope is that a Deliverer might arrive in the nick of time, meaning at the end of time. Her only hope is to be unexpectedly delivered overnight from the burdens of history, not delivered by means of a gospel-transformed history.

The Deliberate Misuse of Language

Kuiper's next sentence is even more telling: "But Scripture also teaches that the Church's victory over the world is a present reality." Victory? Should we call amillennialism's vision of the Church's future a vision of victory? Only if our task is to misuse language and confuse our readers.

Kuiper, like all amillennialists, refused to offer a biblical theory of ***historical continuity:*** an explanation of how the Church gets from its visible impotence in the present to the glorious victory of the future. The Church's "victory" is non-historical in the present, and it will be post-historical in the future.

Kuiper warned against the theology of Karl Barth,[29] but his own view of Church history — especially its future history — was essentially Barthian. Barth proclaimed two forms of history, a history of real-world events, which he called *Historie*, and Christ's world of "hidden history" (*Geschichte*, pronounced "gu-SHIKtuh") – a trans-historical, non-rational encounter – that cannot be revealed by, *or judged by, the* factual records and documents of history.[30] For Barthians, the non-Christian reality of

29. R. B. Kuiper, *To Be or Not to Be Reformed: Whither the Christian Reformed Church?* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1959), pp. 39, 157.

30. Van Til, *Christianity and Barthianism* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian & Reformed,

history does not call into question the meaning of man's "encounter" with "Christ." Van Til recognized that Barth's view of history was the product of his Kantian, apostate presuppositions. He recognized that Barth used the language of the Bible and Christian orthodoxy to confuse his Christian readers.[31]

Yet Kuiper did something analogous. He used the language of victory when discussing history. Like Barth, he did not mean "history" in the normal sense: cause and effect in temporal succession. Like Barth, he adopted a dialectical view of history. He differentiated between: (1) the real historical world, where, as time goes by, you will get your Christian head kicked in by the reprobates; and (2) a trans-historical world of your "realized victory," which cannot be revealed by, *or judged by*, the factual historical reality of the Church's increasingly visible defeat. Kuiper hid the spiritual victory of the Church safely outside of the grim reality of reprobate-dominated history, just as Barth hid each man's non-rational encounter with his Kantian "Christ" outside of fact-based and fact-judged history. Kuiper proclaimed a symbolic world of non-historical *Victoriegeshichte* as a substitute for Barth's equally non-historical *Geschichte*.

Understandably, this misuse of the language of victory is annoying to those of us who are really serious about developing a theory of Christian victory in history. Better Van Til's forthrightness: a theory of history that openly admits that Christians, like that little old lady, are going to get mugged, and mugged ever more frequently and ever more viciously.[32] He did not sugar-coat his eschatological poison pill.

False Packaging

What I resent is that these Calvinistic amillennial theologians use the language of victory to describe the agony of defeat. This is misleading; I contend that it is also deliberate. They should

---

1962), ch. 1.

31. "It is at this point that the question of 'traditional phraseology' has its significance. The 'simple believer' is all too often given new wine in old bottles. It is our solemn duty to point this out to *him." Ibid.,* p. *2.*

32. Cf. North, *Political Polytheism,* ch. *3.*

openly proclaim in Chapter 1 of their books the ***inevitable, God-predestined defeat of Christianity in history.*** They should hasten to remind their readers that the gospel of Christ will fail to redeem this visible world of temporal cause and effect, or significantly restrain its evil, or protect Christians and especially their heirs from an inevitably triumphant tyranny. They should tell their readers well in advance: "I am calling you to a life of frustration, of shattered hopes and visible defeat; and your children will have it even worse." Most important of all, they should then present the exegetical case for amillennialism.

They categorically refuse to do this. Instead, they adopt the optimistic language of victory that only postmillennialists can legitimately use, and then they shave all historical meaning away from it. Amillennialists know that eschatological pessimism can be sold successfully in the Protestant West (as distinguished from the mystical Eastern Orthodox tradition of submission to defeat and suffering in history) only when it can be tied to a death-free escape hatch out of history, i.e., the pre-tribulation Rapture of the saints, which they reject.[33] So they announce victory in the large print and then incrementally substitute historical defeat in the fine print.

This is why Calvinistic amillennialism is fraudulent. No softer word will do. It is fraudulent, not because this eschatology is incorrect, which would simply be a matter of intellectual error, but because its *packaging is stolen.* Amillennialists too often wrap their psychological poison' pill of historical and cultural pessimism in the bright colors of postmillennial optimism. They use bright wrapping paper for their culturally empty boxes. If they were to adopt a similar tactic on Christmas morning with their children, they would destroy their children's trust in them and their bright promises about the future. Yet they feel no compunction against doing this to trusting laymen, who do not

33. Dave Hunt, the best-selling pop-dispensationalist author, announces at the end of his book, under tbe section "A Positive Note," this exclusively pre-tribulational, premillennial hope: "Yes, Jesus left His disciples with a positive note. He promises to return. The fulfillment of that promise is *going to* take those people who have believed it and are looking for Him out of this world before the holocaust." Hunt, ***Peace Prosperity and the Holocaust,*** p. 262.

recognize the rhetorical impulse of this deception. This practice is a great disservice to faithful, trusting Christian laymen.

Reaping What You Sow

Fortunately, this strategy of deception is self-defeating. The readers eventually learn to ignore the language of victory. Proclaiming historical defeat in the fine print, amillennialists reap the inevitable institutional fruits. They struggle all their lives to keep their shrinking, ghetto churches afloat, silently sending their children off to their Christian day schools (maybe) and then to their little denominational colleges, which are increasingly liberal, both theologically and politically. After all, the laymen know that such grim developments are inevitable. Why waste resources fighting the eschatologically inevitable? ***Hunker down!*** Laymen are permitted by the churches' authorities only to watch silently from the institutional sidelines while their own children reject everything they themselves hold dear. And if their children do return to the church, it is all too often because they know that the next generation of pastors — their collegiate peers – will soon begin to impose the familiar campus liberalism in the denomination's pulpits; and if not liberalism, then at least the worldview of Christianity's cultural irrelevance.

There is continuity in history. It will either be a continuity of victory or a continuity of defeat. It will end either with the return of Jesus to set up an earthly kingdom (premillennialism) or at the end of time (amillennialism and postmillennialism). Until the coming cosmic discontinuity, both the premillennialist and the amillennialists insist, Christians can expect progressively bad news, progressively tyrannical conditions, and progressively less influence. Premillennialist at least allow a thousand years of earthly kingdom relief; amillennialists do not. Amillennialists are, as Rushdoony once remarked, premillennialist without earthly hope. As I wrote in ***Political Polytheism:*** "Let us understand the nature of amillennialism. Insofar as eschatology refers to human history, ***amillennialism is postmillennialism for covenant-in-eaka-s.*** Covenant-breakers take dominion progressively in history. (Dispensational premillennialism is also postmillennialism for covenant-breakers, insofar as eschatology refers to

the Christians who live and labor prior to Jesus' physical Second Coming, the so-called Church Age. All their good works will be swallowed up during the great tribulation period, either immediately before Jesus returns – the post-tribulation position – or in the seven-year period which follows the so-called 'secret Rapture': pre-tribulationism.) ***Postmillennialism is an inescapable concept.*** It is never a question of cultural triumph vs. no cultural triumph prior to Jesus' Second Coming; it is a question of ***which kingdom's*** cultural triumph.[34] The amillennialist has identified the victorious kingdom in history: Satan's. What, then, is the rational response of the Christian, if this amillennial vision is correct ? What is to be done?

Defeatism: Active or Passive?

The optimistic vision of covenantal victory that is found in the Book of Isaiah is not taken seriously by common grace amillennialists. They see a continuous expansion of Satan's kingdom (i.e., civilization) in history. Arnillennialism's view of history is clear: "Things are going to get a lot worse before they get worse." Van Riessen is consistent in this respect: he offers Christians no earthly hope for positive cultural transformation.

On the one hand, Dutch common grace amillennialists insist that there are uniquely Christian ways to explain the world and even to suggest to the lost as biblical alternatives. On the other hand, because they deny the continuing validity of Old Testament law, they never get around to describing precisely what these specific reforms are, or how these reforms are uniquely biblical, i.e., how the Bible compels us morally to accept them.

The implications of this outlook for the construction of a Christian social theory are devastating. The common grace amillennialists deny God's covenant-guaranteed sanctions in history. Worse; they offer a perverse view of these sanctions: God rewards covenant-breakers and penalizes covenant-keepers. There is no neutrality in history. Historical sanctions are an inescapable concept. The question is: Who imposes them, Christ

34. North, *Political Polytheism,* p. 139.

or Satan? But the common grace amillennialists steadfastly refuse to admit plainly what they are teaching. Instead, they frequently camouflage their discussion of God's kingdom with the language of postmillennial optimism. This is false packaging, and it has gone on throughout the twentieth century.

Despite this false packaging, the basic message of amillennial theology has penetrated the thinking of the laymen: they have retreated into their ecclesiastical and cultural ghettos. Again, I need to cite Christian Reformed Church minister (and president of Westminster Seminary) R. B. Kuiper, who warned his fellow Dutch-Americans: "By this time it has become trite to say that we must come out of our isolation. . . . Far too often, let it be said again, we hide our light under a bushel instead of placing it high on a candlestick. We seem not to realize fully that as the salt of the earth we can perform our functions of seasoning and preserving only through contact."[35] But nothing has changed, except that the leadership of the denomination has grown far more liberal than it was in Kuiper's day. The Christian Reformed Church still speaks with a Dutch accent. So does the Protestant Reformed Church. Despite their surface differences and old antagonisms over the common grace issue, they share a historically defeatist millennial outlook. Neither side has produced a distinctly, self-consciously Christian social theory. The Protestant Reformed Church never was interested in the project, while the Christian Reformed Church is now too liberal to care.

Flickering Lights Under a Bushel

Van Riessen writes: "Defeatism or passive resignation to our situation with all the risks attached to the latter only mean the neglect of our vocation."[36] He is correct. People who do not believe that Christian civilization will ever become a city on a hill, a light to the nations, and who recognize that there are extreme risks in trying to build such a city, are unlikely to accept those risks. Why bother? It is safer to keep your light under a bushel.

This is why pessimillennialism has inevitable consequences for

---

35. Kuiper, *To Be or Not to Be Reformed*, p. 186.
36. Van Riessen, Society, p. 308.

the development of Christian social theory. It lowers the perceived benefits of developing a distinctly Bible-based approach to social theory by denying that such a theory can ever be applied in culture. It preaches a system of historical continuity that proclaims the expansion of Satan's kingdom and the cultural defeat of Christ's. Understand: a ***failure to expand is a defeat;*** there is no neutrality. Satan's kingdom automatically triumphs in history if Christ's does not expand, since Satan is holding all of the yet-unconquered territory by Adam's default. **Pessimillennialism** argues implicitly that God brings positive sanctions to covenant-breakers and negative sanctions to covenant-keepers. And then, to ice the cake, it denies or ignores the case laws of the Old Testament. It rejects Christianity's tools of dominions[37]

The best thing you can say about an outlook like this is that eventually it self-destructs. Attrition erodes the membership of any church that calls for commitment to developing a Christian worldview, yet also denies the very possibility of accomplishing this difficult task. Premillennialism at least baptizes its open philosophy of cultural retreat, and it ignores the whole question of social theory. Common grace **amillennialism** produces either guilt (no biblical answers) or liberalism (false answers).

Why has this come about? Because **amillennialists** do not understand biblical prophecy. They do not understand the ethically conditional character of biblical prophecy and the Holy Spirit's role in history. They have not seen that the Holy Spirit empowers God's covenant people progressively to meet the demands of God's law, and therefore enables them to gain the positive blessings of God in history.

The Ethically Conditional Character of Biblical Prophecy

Jonah was told by God to announce this prophetic message to the city of Nineveh: "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown" **(Jonah 3:4b).** The people believed him, and the result was Nineveh's national repentance:

---

37. **Gary North,** ***Tools of Dominion: The Case Laws of Exodus*** (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1990)

> So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them. For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing: let them not feed, nor drink water: But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands. Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not? And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not (_Jonah 3:5-10).

The king of Nineveh understood biblical prophecy better than most modern Christians do. He recognized that God might be willing to reverse His judgment and not impose negative sanctions in history, even though He had said that He would. The king recognized that God's intent was ethical: to stop the sinning. God could do this either by bringing negative sanctions or by enabling the recipients of the message to reform their lives. Nineveh chose the latter approach. The city was spared.

Like pre-tribulational dispensationalists who are ready (if not willing) to see two-thirds of the Jews of Israel exterminated — see it safely from heaven, of course, after the Rapture — and who rejoice at front-page headlines filled with bad news, because this tells us that "Jesus is coming soon," Jonah was depressed when the prophesied bad news turned into good news. "But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry" (Jonah 4: 1). He had expected God to smash His enemies in forty days. But God *had* smashed them, in an ethically relevant sense. He had made them into something better: if not covenant-keepers, then at least covenant-observers .[39]

---

38. John F. Walvoord, *Israel* in *Prophecy* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Academie, [1962] 1988), p. 108.

39. A covenant-keeper is a regenerate person who obeys God's laws because of the ethical transformation within him. As a recipient of Gods special, soul-saving grace, he is heir to God's covenant promises, including promises to his children. The biblical covenant offers continuity with the future (point five). Since Assyria subsequent y became a ruthless

The "If" Clause

When God prophesies destruction against a person or nation, there is always an "if" clause in the prophecy. ***If you do not repent,*** God promises, negative sanctions in history will be brought against you. But always present is a way of escape: if you cease from your sins, you will avoid these negative sanctions. "There bath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (I Cor. 10:13).

It is this conditional nature of all prophecy that makes the outcome contingent on the ethical decisions of men. The offer of the gospel is always well-intentioned. God may choose not to enable men to accept it, and without this positive sanction, they will not accept it. "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (I Cor. 2:14). But the offer is always legitimate. It is not a trick.[40]

Because neither the prophet nor the recipient of the threat knows in advance what the response of the recipient will be, neither knows for sure what God's response will be. The threat of negative sanctions is not the unconditional prediction of negative sanctions. Thus, whenever God prophesies external negative sanctions against a person or a corporate group, the interpreter of prophecy should have the "if" clause in the back of his mind. ***The intent of the threat is to induce repentance.*** God's prophecies are always ethical in intent.[41]

Because of this ethical character of biblical prophecy, there is no "sure thing" in prophetic matters when they relate to nega-

---

conqueror of Israel, showing no signs of saving faith, this element of continuity was absent. Thus, there was *no* full-scale repentance in Nineveh under Jonah's preaching. There was outward conformity to God's taw: common-grace tsansformation. This was sufficient to delay the wrath of God for two *centuries,* until Assyria fell to Babylon.

40. Cornelius Van Til, Common Grace and Witness-Bearing (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Lewis Grotenhuis, [1955]).

41. Sidney Greidanus, The *Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text: Interpreting and Preaching Biblical Literature* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1988), pp. 232-34. He cites Jeremiah 18:7-8; 26:13-19; Isaiah 38:1-6; Joel 2:13-14.

tive sanctions in history. The presence of ethical conditionality removes from such prophecies the category of inevitability. The threatened sanctions are inevitable ***if the*** target of the threat persists in sin, but the target may repent. This is what God in principle always prefers. "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (II Pet. 3:9). In short, ***biblical prophecy does not assume an inevitable continuation of existing ethical trends.*** It only assumes a certain outcome ***if these*** existing trends continue.

Trend-Tending: The Illusion of Inevitability

Van Riessen's vision of the future is a grim one. It partakes of the same gloom as do modern humanism's pessimistic utopian novels, which he identifies as signs of the end of civilization .42 He looks around him, and he does not like what he sees. He then extrapolates from 195'7 into the future – a vision of the future governed by his unstated amillennial presuppositions. The question is: Are these trends inevitable (i.e., predestined)?

Robert Nisbet is a conservative sociologist and historian – more historian, by gift and choice, than sociologist. (How else could I have survived his graduate seminars?)[43] He has seen what has happened to many prophecies in history. He has also seen the character of modern social science prophecies today. There is not much difference, he concludes. They seldom come true. When they do, it is because the prophet has had a kind of brilliant insight into the present, not the future. The successes are based on imagination, not computer print-outs.

Commenting on a slew of "Year 2000" books published in the mid- 1960's – a tradition going back to a communist pornogra-

---

42. Van Riessen, *Society,* ch. 2.

43. In case anyone is interested, I wrote two papers for him in 1967 and 196S, both of which are in print: "Max Weber: Rationalism, h-rationalism, and the Bureaucratic Cage," in Gary North (cd.), ***Foundations of Christian Scholarship: Essays in the Van Til Perspective*** (Vallecito, California Ross House Books, 1976); and "The Cosmology of Chaos," Chapter 2 of ***Marx's Religion of Revolution: Regeneration Through Chaos*** (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, [1968] 1989). Never throw away an old term paper, I always say.

pher, Restif de la Bretonne, just prior to the French Revolution – he observed that these books were not really about changes in the future. They were about the writers' observations in the present. "But change is not, alas, what these books are predicting they are only extrapolating present rates, many of which remind one of a mad psychologist predicting giants at age twenty on the basis of growth rates at age ten."[44]

> Only the unwary will be deluded into thinking that any of this is in fact the future. There have been statistician-soothsayers, I am certain, in all ages. In ancient Egypt there must have been such individuals to compute the number of pyramids there would be on earth two thousand years later; before that someone to compute the number of pterodactyls; after that, to compute the number of knights on horseback, wayfarer chapels, not to mention witches. It is a great game for the statistically-minded (like predictions year by year in the Pentagon of that infinitesimally small chunk of time represented by our engagement in Vietnam), and, as I say, I do not for the moment disparage it. It tells us about the present.[45]

Whenever we see such "prophecies" of the future, which are in fact observations about the present, we should beware. His warning should always be in the back of our minds: "Let us be clear on two points. (1) Events do not marry and have little events that grow into big events which in turn marry and have little events, etc.; (2) small social changes do not accumulate directionally and continuously to become big social changes."* Society must contend with such future factors as "the Random Event, the Maniac, the Prophet, and the Genius."

> We have absolutely no way of escaping them. The future-predictors don't suggest that we can avoid or escape them - or ever be able to predict or forecast them. What the future-predictors, the change-analysts, and trend-tenders say in effect is that with the aid of institute resources, computers, linear programming, etc. they will deal with the kinds of change that are *not* the consequence of the Random Event,

---

44. Robert.% Nisbet, "The Year 2000 and AU That," *Commentary* (June 1968), p. 63.
45. *Idem.*
46. *Ibid.*, p. 66.

the Genius, the Maniac, and the Prophet. To which I can only say: there really aren't any; not any worth looking at anyhow."

With respect to trend-tending, Van Riessen's ***Society of the Future*** bears a striking resemblance to Jacques Ellul's ***The Technological Society,*** which was published in France about five years after ***The Society of the Future*** appeared in the Netherlands. Ellul's book is more prolix, more eloquent, but essentially the same in terms of both message and content: we are heading toward the bureaucratic cage. This had been Max Weber's message a half century earlier. Ellul stressed the dark side of the technological imperative: "If it can be done, it will be done." Van Riessen emphasized the dark side of man's character. Neither of them offered a way out of mankind's supposed dilemma. The trends are irreversibly fixed.

But what of the discontinuous event? What of a Luther, a Calvin, a Wesley, or even an Abraham Kuyper? More important, what of a culture-transforming move by the Holy Spirit in the future? What of God's positive and negative sanctions in history? When His mercy runs out for covenant-breakers, what then? Will this somehow thwart the Church's Great Commission?

Amillennialism denies that such a culture-transforming positive work of the Holy Spirit will happen. This assertion is basic to amillennial eschatology. Similarly, the common grace amillennialist denies that God will bring comprehensive negative sanctions against the present humanist world order, even though He may from time to time smash a particular evil-doer, Hitler being the number-one example (especially for Dutchmen). Amillennialism is an ***eschatology of downward*** continuity, and the continuity it affirms is based on a denial of the significance of any meaningful historical discontinuity that might reverse the downward drift of civilization into the cultural void. (This is also true the Random News school, since there is no "kingdom neutrality" in history.) It denies a postmillennial *spiritual* discontinuity from outside of history that would reverse this present downward drift, as well as a premillennial ***physical*** discontinuity from out-

47. *Idem.*

side of history: the bodily return of Christ to set up a millennial kingdom. Amillennialism is inherently Bad News.

Conclusion

Amillennialism partakes of the "Jonah fallacy": a systematic ignoring of (1) the conditional, ethical character of all biblical prophecy and (2) the cultural work of the Holy Spirit. It therefore takes a particular approach to the "if" clause in all biblical prophecy. Whenever amillennial expositors see prophesies of Christianity's cultural victory (e.g., Psalm 2; 110; Isaiah 32; Jeremiah 32), they say to themselves, "These happy prophecies are ethically conditional. Men *will* fall into sin. The continuity of salvation cannot be maintained across generations. So, cultural victory cannot be maintained. Christians cannot hold conquered territory." Whenever they see prophecies of the afflictions of the Church in history, they think: "These are not conditional prophecies; the cultural triumph of Satan is sure."

The real question is this: Will the work of the Holy Spirit enable covenant-keepers to fulfill the bulk of the dominion covenant in history? In other words, ***will He enable His covenant people progressively to meet the bulk of the covenant's ethical conditions?*** The amillennialist categorically denies that He will, while the postmillennialist categorically insists that He will. There is no way to reconcile these rival views of covenantal history. One of these positions is wrong. This is why any assertion of an ideal of eschatological neutrality for the Church's creeds and standards is as naive as any other form of doctrinal neutrality. Over time, the Church will come to more rigorous standards. The postmillennialist is confident that these will be progressively accurate standards. In contrast, the amillennialist thinks that history is inherently ambiguous,[48] and therefore eschatology should be, too. If history is progressive, eschatology must reflect this. If it is ambiguous, then eschatology must reflect this. So, the amillennialist wants eschatological neutrality, which is another way of saying that he wants amillennialism dominant in the Church:

48. Hoekema, *The* Bible and *the Future,* pp. 35-36.

eschatological ambiguity. Eschatological ambiguity means, institutionally, the triumph of amillennialism. Eschatological liberty is ***eschatological pluralism.*** But there is no neutrality. Any assertion of neutrality is a cover for a hidden agenda (perhaps hidden even to those who promote neutrality).

The debate is over the Holy Spirit and what God has said that He will achieve in history. The amillennialist says that the Holy Spirit has been sent by the Father and the Son to achieve very little culturally in history through His people – the doctrine of ***judicial representation:*** point two of the biblical covenant model.[49] The postmillennialist says that God has a very broad definition of what constitutes salvation and restoration, and that His Spirit will achieve a great deal in history through His people. As an incentive for the development of biblical social theory, postmillennialism's vision of the comprehensive work of the Holy Spirit in history cannot be matched within Christian circles.

This assertion will be denied by pessimillennialists. A verbal denial is easy. Proving its accuracy will be more difficult. But the most important form of any such denial is to be able to point to an existing body of social theory that has been developed self-consciously in terms of one's eschatology. If this is missing, the public denials will be far less impressive. Denials are cheap; writing comprehensive social theory isn't.

Second, amillennialists indulge in the trend-tending fallacy of the humanist social scientists whom they challenge theologically. They see Satan's kingdom dominating today's world, and they extrapolate from the present. Any extrapolation from the present — whether ***downward*** or random — spells defeat for Christ's visible, institutional kingdom in history. ("Defeat" = ***not victorious;*** there is no neutrality.) Amillennial social commentators are spiritually blinded by the effects of their trend-tending. Their view of linear history is ***linear downward toward the cultural void.*** Therefore, they believe that the only thing that can save God's Church in history is either (1) an immediate and permanent cease-fire agreement with the enemy (cultural and political

49. Ray R. Sutton, *That You May Prosper: Dominion By Covenant* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economies, 1987), ch. 2.

pluralism)'" or else (2) Christ's Second Coming.

Amillennial theologians would do well to follow the example of the king of Nineveh. He believed in the ethical conditionality of God's prophecies, and responded accordingly. It can happen again in history. God is sovereign, not covenant-breaking man.

50. North, *Political Polytheism.*

6

TIME ENOUGH

They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all (Luke 17:2 7).

What is the nature of historical change? It is a combination of institutional continuity and discontinuity. [1] Long periods of normality are interspersed with revolutionary events that transform institutions and manners (Deut. 28:53-57). In the days of Noah, Jesus said, people married and were given in marriage. These familiar events went on for centuries. People assumed that these events were normal and normative. Then, in a period of forty days, everything ended. No one had suspected this except Noah and his family. This was historical discontinuity.

A Bible-based definition of ***historical discontinuity is*** this:

> An unprecedented period of God's culture-wide sanctions, in which the institutions of a covenant-breaking society are displaced through war, famine, or plague (negative), and/or voluntary reform (positive).

In the midst of such a major discontinuity, we always find the ***continuity of God's covenant promises*** to His people, embodied in all of those covenant-keepers who survive and then build society anew. They displace covenant-breakers and their ways.

Noah is the premier example of this covenantal process in

1. Gary North, *Moses and Pharaoh: Dominion Religion vs. Power Religion* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1985), ch. 12: "Continuity and Revolution."

man's history. The Flood's comprehensive ***discontinuity*** was the potential basis of ***comprehensive reconstruction*** by covenant-keepers and their heirs. The Flood was a means of spiritual and cultural liberation for covenant-keepers. The Noachic Flood is the archetype of physical discontinuities in history, an event not to be matched again until the final judgment. It serves as the model for lesser physical and social events, as Jesus' statement reveals.

Babylon Is Fallen!

Another example from Scripture is the judgment against Babylon. On that last night, the king and his high officials had a feast. They brought out the gold and silver implements of the temple, stolen a generation earlier by Nebuchadnezzar. Then they ate from these holy implements in what was a satanic communion meal. That finished Babylon. God's negative corporate sanctions were imposed that night.

The discontinuity for Judah had been her captivity, and the sign of God's providential administration of that discontinuity was the sacking of His temple. But the time of involuntary captivity for Israel was about to end. The restoration of Israel was imminent. Babylon's total discontinuity was at hand, to be administered by Medo-Persia. The handwriting was on the wall for Babylon, literally.

In that final night's festivities, King Belshazzar had sought an explanation of the miracle of the hand's writing. He, like Nebuchadnezzar before him, called in Daniel to interpret. Daniel did, telling him it was the end of the road for Babylon in history. Rather than rejecting this negative news and punishing Daniel, the king initiated a covenantal transfer of civil authority to Daniel. Perhaps he did this hoping to gain the favor of God, but it was too late for halfway political measures. Something far more fundamental than politics was at stake.

> Then commanded Belshazzar, and they clothed Daniel with scarlet, and put a chain of gold about his neck, and made a proclamation concerning him, that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom. In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain (Dan. 5:29, 6:1).

Daniel became the covenantal link between the Chaldean empire and the Medo-Persian empire. Once again, he became the counselor of the king. Daniel, because he was God's man, provided the covenantal continuity between the two empires.

Under Darius and later under Cyrus, the Israelites were allowed to return to their land. The discontinuity of Babylon's fall became the historical foundation of restored geographical continuity for Israel. ***It was a permanent discontinuity for Babylon, but a means of restoration for Israel.*** The discontinuity of Babylon's fall was for the sake of covenant-keeping Israel. It furthered the continuity of God's earthly kingdom. This is true of every discontinuity in history.

This is how we are supposed to interpret the God-imposed discontinuities of history. ***These di.continuities are not permanent in the expansion of God's earthly kingdom; instead, they are permanent in God's thwarting of each of the rival earthly kingdoms. God does not impose sanctions for the purpose of shortening the time-perspective of Christians; He imposes them to shorten the time-perspective of non-Christians. God's*** historical sanctions are to remind covenant-keepers and covenant-breakers of Satan's short time frame: "Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabiters of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he bath but a short time" (Rev. 12:12).

This is the biblical view of historical discontinuities. But what of the promised future discontinuity of the bodily return of Jesus Christ? Here is where the debate begins.

The Sign of His Coming

> Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, ***This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.*** Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away. But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the

> ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be (Matt. 24:32-39). (emphasis added)

The premillennialist looks to the future for a literal fulfillment of this prophecy. He connects Jesus' words with the premillennial advent of Christ to set up His kingdom on earth. The postmillennial or amillennial[2] "preterist" ("past tense") interpretation looks backward to the fall of Jerusalem.[3] After all, Jesus' words were clear: "This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled" (v. 34). He was therefore using symbolic, apocalyptic language in order to describe the greatest *covenantally significant* physical discontinuity intervening between His ascension to heaven and the final judgment: the destruction of the old order, the Israelite kingdom. This, too, was a fulfillment of prophecy: "Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof' (Matt. 21:43).

Clearly, Jesus was drawing an analogy between the Flood and Israel's coming discontinuity. Before the Flood, things went on as always. Then the monumental change took place. There were similar discontinuities in biblical history. Pharaoh, for example, paid no attention to the shepherd from Midian and his resident alien brother. Then came nine plagues. These disturbed him briefly, but not permanently. Then came the tenth plague,

---

2. Most amillennialists see the dark prophecies of the Book of Revelation as still in the future. They share thii belief with premillennialiits. There are a few amillennialists who are preterists, notably C. Vanderwal (d. 1980), who noted the similarities between Hal Lindsey's view of the future Antichrist and Dutch Reformed commentators' view Prof. S. Greijdanus (1908), Abraham Kuyper, Klaas Schilder, and Valentine Hepp. C. Vanderwal, *Hal Lindsey and Biblical Prophecy* (SL Catherine, Ontario: Paideia Press, 1978), pp. 90-96. Both Luther and Calvin saw the popes as antichrists in their day, not exclusively in the future (p. 94).

3. David Chilton, *The Days of Vengeance: An Exposition of the Book of Revelation* (Ft. Worth, Texas: Dominion Press, 1987); Chilton, *The Great Tribulation* (FL Worth, Texas: Dominion Press, 1987); Kenneth L Gentry, Jr., *The Bead of Revelation* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1989); Gentry, *Before Jerusalem FeU: Dating the Book of Revelation* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1989).

followed by the exodus and the destruction of Pharaoh and his army in the Red Sea. But Israel was delivered. The Red Sea was not an agency of discontinuity for Israel.

There is continuity, and there are also discontinuities. People usually expect the world around them to continue as before. This is especially true of those in rebellion against God. "Come ye, say they, I will fetch wine, and we will fill ourselves with strong drink; and to morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant" (Isa. 56: 12). Man's dream of perpetual moral rebellion coupled with ever expanding personal prosperity is not exclusively a modern vision. It was this same confidence in the future that kept Noah's generation from taking appropriate defensive moral measures.

Positive Sanctions

I have concentrated on God's negative sanctions in history. So does the Bible. It does not record any instances of God's positive corporate sanctions apart from parallel negative sanctions. (The case of Nineveh is unique: the mere threat of near-term sanctions produced a righteous public response.) The deliverance of Israel from Egypt cannot be understood apart from a discussion of God's judgments against Egypt. Similarly, the blessings given to Joshua's generation cannot be understood without reference to the Israelites' displacement of Canaan's cultures.

As I said in the Introduction, the Old Testament emphasizes institutional transformation in the presentation of the Bible's basic theme: the transition ***from wrath to g-race.*** While there are a few Old Covenant instances of God's willingness to delay His negative sanctions because of the conversion of a king and his people's willingness to allow him to make some public institutional changes (Josiah is an example: H Kgs. 22-23), the hearts of the people never changed apart from God's imposition of culture-wide negative sanctions. The occasional, top-down, formal changes in Israel's institutional arrangements did not last long. Under Elijah, the representatives of the people slew the false priests, but their hearts had not changed, Jezebel still reigned, and Elijah had to flee to the wilderness again (H Kgs. 18). ***The permanent cultural displacement of covenant-breakers under the Old***

Covenant was always violent.

In the New Testament, God's establishment of the Church changed the lives of those who were converted, but it did not change the social institutions of Israel. This did not happen until the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. '70, a generation later. The same can be said for the centuries-long conquest of Rome's culture by Christians. This did not take place until after a series of disasters had fallen on Rome: wars, confiscatory taxes, inflation, and Constantine's victory, followed by tribal invasions in the West that continued for centuries.

The New Testament's emphasis is on personal regeneration, not institutional. The emphasis is on *progressive sanctification over time*, not revolutionary displacement. The progressive sanctification of individuals is to produce the progressive sanctification of institutions. Christians are to be salt to the world. Still, this does not deny the life-and-death nature of the struggle. Jesus warned: "Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men" (Matt. 5:1 3). It is either "them or us." Salt is used on God's fiery altar as a permanent sign of destruction: "For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt" (Mark 9:49). Salt was used in ancient world to pollute a newly defeated city's land, so that it would no longer grow crops. "And Abimelech fought against the city all that day; and he took the city, and slew the people that was therein, and beat down the city, and sowed it with salt" (Jud. 9:45). Salt is more than savor; salt is a means of destruction.

Christians are to destroy the enemy's city (civilization), though normally through voluntary conversions and progressive, long-term cultural displacement. Continuity, not discontinuity, is the institutional task of New Covenant social reform. On the one hand, it is not the task of the reformers to impose discontinuous corporate negative sanctions, except in the case of war or legitimate resistance by lower magistrates to domestic national tyranny: the Calvinist doctrine of interposition.[4] On the other hand,

4. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, IV:20. *See* also "Junius Brutus,"

apart from God's widespread negative corporate sanctions, there have been few (if any) known cases of permanent Christian social transformation.

Christianity's positive sanctions in New Covenant history tend to be continuous rather than discontinuous. Even in the rare cases of mass revival – discontinuous positive moves by the Holy Spirit – these events have virtually never been followed by widespread cultural transformation (i.e., cultural continuity). God's enemies have inherited.[5] The reasons why: mass revivals have not been accompanied by (1) God's comprehensive negative sanctions or by (2) a comprehensive reform of civil law. (Note: I am speaking here of history, not prophesying.)

The Protestant Reformation is an example of institutional transformation, but one reason why it succeeded was that the Turks were almost at the gates of Vienna; the Pope and the Emperor had other pressing concerns besides Luther and Calvin. Also, it led to the Thirty Years War (1618-48), and the resolution of that war was the establishment of Erastianism: the king's religion became the religion of the people. This was hardly a long-term cultural solution. The humanists inherited.

Covenantal Displacement

The process of covenantal displacement is a war over cultural and judicial standards. It is a war over law. It is therefore a war to determine the god of the culture, for the source of law in any culture is its god.[6] The enemies of God very seldom surrender peacefully. They correctly perceive that they are fighting to the death covenantally, both personally and institutionally. This is what the Bible teaches: either the old Adam dies spiritually through the new birth in history or else God will publicly execute him eternally on judgment day. Covenant-breakers clearly perceive the life-and-death nature of the struggle for civilization; covenant-keepers seldom do. Christians prefer religious and

---

Vindiciae Contra Tyrannos (1579), the *Defense of Liberty Against Tyrants*.

5. See Chapter 11.

6. R. J. Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law* (Nutley, *New* Jersey Craig Press, 1973), p. 5.

political pluralism to covenantal Christian reconstruction. They almost always have.

Because Christians do not fully understand the covenantal implications of the faith, and also because churches drift into apostasy, Christianity steadily gives up ground to the enemy. It spreads westward, but as it moves forward, it surrenders its rear flanks. The history of Christianity can be seen on a globe of the world. It would appear on the globe as a shadow about 2,000 miles wide. As it moves north or west, it surrenders in the south and east. Arab Muslims took North Africa and Spain on Europe's southern flank while Irish missionaries were spreading the gospel in Northern Europe (632-732). Turkish Muslims took Byzantium (1453) just before Western Christianity crossed the Atlantic. Enlightenment paganism took Europe while Protestant Christianity was spreading westward in North America. The only major exceptions in history have been Catholicism's reconquest of Spain (732-1492) and the Greek revolt (1821-22).

We do not see God's positive historical discontinuities apart from His negative discontinuities against those being displaced. Nevertheless, the program of the Church is ***peaceful positive displacement, soul by soul.*** God wins, Satan loses: soul by soul. Who brings the necessary negative corporate sanctions? God does, not through the Church but through such means as pestilence, plague, and war. The Church is supposed to pray for God's negative discontinuities in history against entrenched corporate evil. This is why God gave us His imprecatory psalms to sing and pray publicly in the Church (e.g., Psalm 83).

Here is the biblical program for cultural transformation. *First,* the Church is to bring continuous positive sanctions into a covenant-breaking culture: preaching, the sacraments, charity, and the disciplining of its members (a negative sanction by the Church, but positive for society: it keeps other Christians more honest). *Second,* the Holy Spirit must also bring positive discontinuities into individual lives: conversion. This is at His discretion, not ours. *Third,* a sovereign God in heaven must bring His discontinuous, corporate, negative sanctions against covenant-breakers in history. Notice, above all, that it is God who brings negative corporate sanctions in society, not the Church. *The*

Church is an exclusively positive agent in society. I stress this because of the continuing misrepresentation of our position on social change by critics, both Christian and pagan. While these misrepresentations will continue, the reader has now been provided with an immunization shot.

This interpretive framework for biblical social transformation, if correct, ***militates against ecclesiocracy***: the fusion of Church and State. If the Church is to bring exclusively positive sanctions in society rather than negative, and if the State is supposed to bring primarily negative sanctions,[7] then ***Church and State are inherently separate institutions.*** They have two separate functions covenantally, and therefore two separate systems of sanctions. (Again, the critics have systematically misrepresented our position on this point. I want to make our position clear.)

Another implication is ***the denial of salvation by law.*** Men cannot work their way into heaven. There can be no valid program of personal salvation that is based on the continuity of fallen man's labors. The Holy Spirit's discontinuous intervention into history alone can save men's souls. We are saved exclusively by grace. This means that ***personal regeneration is initiated from outside of history*** into ***history.*** This perspective is a denial of the messianic State and the social gospel movement. It is also a denial of liberation theology.[8] There can be no positive, continuity-based, institutional program that guarantees God's grant of salvation to fallen men. Special grace is discontinuous. Common grace, while continuous, is strictly a temporary grant of external healing to men and institutions. It is the equivalent of medical care in a hospice filled with terminal patients. It is a kindness unto death.

We have yet to see in history a case of the cultural displacement of covenant-breakers apart from the widespread imposition of God's corporate negative sanctions. Christians refuse to recognize this. They seek continuity: the temporary cease-fire of pluralism. Covenant-breakers then use their civil authority to

---

7. Gary North, *Tools of Dominion: The Case Laws of Exodus* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1990), pp. 713, 856.

8. Gary North, *Liberating Planet Earth: An Introduction to Biblical Blueprints* (Ft. Worth, Texas: Dominion Press, 1987).

increase the persecution of Christians, who then conclude that Jesus is coming soon. The alliance continues: the power religion and the escape religion.

What is the nature of this alliance? The power religionists want to keep Christians gazing hopefully up at heaven, looking for their *physical* deliverance from beyond history, which the humanists regard as mythical but extremely useful for purposes of social control. The promotion of a similar "skyward" strategy of non-historical deliverance worked so well for the old South's slave owners in their control of their Christian slaves that the humanists have mimicked it. So have their targeted slaves. The leaders of modern Protestantism's pietistic escape religion, like the black "trustees" of the old South's plantation system, want to keep their subordinates firmly in place under their authority, not getting involved in areas of life unfamiliar to, or beyond the abilities of, those presently occupying the pulpits. They can use every invasion of liberty by the power religionists as proof of the imminent return of Christ. "Look up!" In the same way that sadists need masochists, and vice versa, so do humanists and pessimillennialists need and use each other.

While premillennialist are the primary offenders in this regard, we must not ignore Dutch amillennialists' contributions. Dr. W. H. Velema of Holland has certainly done his part to keep Christians looking skyward. He is reported by the Christian press of the Netherlands to have said: "The idea of the cultural mandate as a comprehensive system, is today, in view of the environmental crisis, no longer tenable." Because of the well-orchestrated, media-fanned, and barely scientifically defendable ecological crisis,[9] Dr. Velema is willing to scrap all plans for exercising a cultural mandate in history. His eschatological pessimism has overwhelmed his theology of culture. "With our cultural mandate we remain aliens in this world. That we must more often pray: 'Come, Lord Jesus, come.' "[10]

Christians were told to look skyward prior to the fall of Jerusalem (a covenantal, not a cosmic, discontinuity). "And when

9. Peter Sawyer, *Greenhoax Effect* (Wodonga, Victoria; Australia: Groupacumen, 1990).
10. John de Vos, "Gleanings," *Reformed Perspective* (May 1990), p. 16.

these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh" (Luke 21:28). But their deliverance came in history. Luke 21 is the chapter that predicts the surrounding of Jerusalem by the Roman army in A.D. '70: "And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto" (w. 20-21). That one-time deliverance of the early Church is today long behind us. It is surely time for Christians to begin looking forward, in time and on earth, for their deliverance, not upward.

Why Continuity?

Men must look to the future and build for the future. They need to work out their vision of life over time (Phil. 2:12). If the world were a series of unpredictable eventa, we could not plan for the future. Without historical continuity, we would perish. So, God gives mankind (and even the devil and his angels) the common grace (i.e., an unearned, undeserved gift) of time.[11] For the covenant-keeper, time is one of his God-given means for building up his eternal treasure. God's common grace to him in history becomes a means of special grace in eternity.

> For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building. According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire (I Cor. 3:9-15).

11. Gary North, ***Dominion and Common Grace: The Biblical Basis of Progress*** (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1987), ch. 1.

For the covenant-breaker, in contrast, time is one of his God-given means for building up his eternal torment. God's common grace to him in history becomes a special curse in eternity.

> But and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming, and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken; The lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers. And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more. I am come to send fire on the earth; and what will I, if it be already kindled? (Luke 12:45-49).

Notice a very important fact, one that will become central in the next chapter: ***there is continuity between this life and the afterlife***. Covenant-keepers and covenant-breakers will all receive their appropriate eternal rewards and punishments. This *covenantal* fact affirms the importance of history. God's guarantee of future permanent sanctions is supposed to change the way we believe and live on earth. We do not live apart from institutions. God in His grace grants increasing cultural authority to us as we progressively conform ourselves to His word (positive sanctions in history). As this extension of authority takes place, we must steadily reform our institutions. From those to whom much is given, much is required (Luke 12:47-48). This is the reason why pessimillennialists, especially fundamentalists, strongly resist the very suggestion of such an extension of authority in history. They do not want this added responsibility.

Biblical Rhetoric

Sometimes, in order to get an idea across (and to make it stick in people's minds), a writer has to make the same point by saying it several different ways. Sometimes he puts his statement in italics. He does whatever he can to make his point, because

he knows that memories are weak and hostile prejudices are strong. This is the art of rhetoric.

Rhetoric is biblical. While he did not use italics, Paul adopted a similar technique. Then he even told his readers that he had adopted it! "See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand" (Gal. 6:11, NASB). Following Paul's lead, I will say it again, in a different way, and even tell you what I am doing: ***the ethical continuities of history, both personal*** and ***cultural, are confirmed by the judicial and cosmic discontinuity that ends history***. God's judgments are coming, both temporal and final. This is not a denial of historical continuity; this is an ***absolute affirmation*** of historical continuity. God announced this affirmation in the second of His Ten Commandments.

> Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments (EX. 20:5-6).

Mercy unto thousands: not thousands of people (there have been more of us than that), but ***thousands of generations*** (a symbolic reference, I presume, given a minimum figure of 2,000 generations – plural – times at least 30 years in a generation, which equals 60,000 years). Bible commentators, both Jewish and Christian, have interpreted this reference as thousands of generations, meaning ***wholeness,*** not literal generations. They cite Deuteronomy 7 as proof:

> The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: But because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, bath the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments *to* a thousand generations; And repayeth them that hate him to their face, to destroy them: he will not be slack to him that hateth him, he will repay him to his face. Thou shalt therefore keep

> the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgments, which I command thee this day, to do them (Deut. 7:7-11). (emphasis added)

At this point, dispensational commentators will affirm their *occasional* commitment to symbolism in biblical interpretation: waiting another 56,600 years for the Rapture (60,000 minus 3,400 = 56,600) is a bit too much for them to handle.

What is my point? Simple: the Bible sometimes uses symbolic language as a rhetorical means of driving home an important theological point. So can we. But we must do this fairly and honestly. This ethical requirement is not always honored.

Reconstructionist Rhetoric

I come now to a consideration of a recent debate over biblical interpretation. That the Bible does use symbolic language in order to emphasize important truths was a point made by David Chilton – and made rhetorically – when he spoke of the supposed 36,600-year millennial era: not a literal 36,600 years but rather the Bible's use of symbolic language to describe God's long-suffering patience with rebellious mankind and His blessings to covenant-keepers. Chilton was quite clear: "Similarly, the thousand years of Revelation 20 represent a vast, undefined period of time. . . ." He cited Milton Terry, the respected commentator and master of biblical hermeneutics: "It may require a million years."[12] This means simply that the designation of one thousand years must not be taken exclusively in a literal sense. In Paradise ***Restored,*** citing Deuteronomy 7:9, Chilton writes of a long era of millennial blessings:

> The God of the Covenant told His people that he would bless them to the thousandth generation of their descendants. That promise was made (in round figures) about 3,400 years ago. If we figure the Biblical generation at about 40 years, a thousand generations is *forty thousand years*. We've got 36,600 years to go before this promise is fulfilled![13]

---

12. Chilton, *Days of Vengeance,* p. *507.*

13. David Chilton, *Paradise Restored: A Biblical Theology of Dominion* (Ft. Worth, Texas: Dominion Press, 1985), p. 221.

Then, to make his point, Chilton's next paragraph spelled out his position on the use of the number one thousand:

> When God said that He owns the cattle on a thousand hills, He means a vast number of cattle on a vast number of hills – but there are ***more*** than 1,000 hills. The Bible promises that God's people will be kings and priests for a thousand years, meaning a vast number of years – but Christians have been kings and priests for ***more*** than 1,000 years (almost 2,000 years now). My point is this: the term thousand is often used symbolically in Scripture, to express vastness; but that vastness is, in reality, much ***more*** than the literal thousand.

Chilton's book is a model of rhetoric. He goes straight to the heart of his opponents' arguments in a few memorable words. You will not soon forget this highly rhetorical delivery. (The saying, "Never answer a question with a question!" is a favorite of those who lose all their arguments. Jesus answered a loaded question with an even more loaded question, and so devastated were his questioners that they never again asked Him another question: Matt. 22:41-46.) Chilton says that Psalm 50 speaks of God's ownership of the cattle on a thousand hills. Is this a literal number, limiting God? No. "God owns *all* the cattle on *all* the hills."[14] He asks a classic rhetorical question: "Does Hill No. 1,001 belong to someone else?" The self-professed hermeneutical literalist should now begin to feel the noose tightening around his neck. Then Chilton pulls the lever on the trap door:

> In the same way – particularly with regard to a highly symbolic book - we should see that the "1,000 years" of Revelation 20 represent a vast, undefined period of time. It has already lasted almost 2,000 years, and will probably go on for many more. "Exactly how many years?" someone asked me. "I'll be happy to tell you," I cheerfully replied, "as soon as you tell me exactly how many hills are in Psalm 50.'"5

Snap! There went dispensationalism's forced liberalism of Revelation 20. The lifeless body is twisting slowly, slowly in the wind.

---

14. Ibid., p. 199.
15. ***Idem.***

He ended his discussion with this forthright statement: "I am not interested in setting dates. I am not going to try to figure out the date of the Second Coming. The Bible does not reveal it, and it is none of our business. What the Bible does reveal is our responsibility to work for God's Kingdom, our duty to bring ourselves, our families, and all our spheres of influence under the dominion of Jesus Christ."[16] ***David Chilton is not a date-setter.*** He made this inescapably clear – too clear for some.

Chilton's rhetoric is so clear that his dispensational critics have felt morally compelled to self-consciously distort his words and then attack their deliberate distortion. When doing Jesus' work, one apparently is under grace, not law, especially this law: "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour" (Ex. 20:16).

Pop-Dispensationalist Rhetoric

Chilton's discussion has been deliberately misquoted and then ridiculed in print by such best-selling dispensational authors as Dave Hunt and Hal Lindsey. Dave Hunt sneers: "It seems the height of folly to be looking for Christ when we know, according to Reconstructionist writer David Chilton, for example, that He cannot come for at least 36,000 years. . . ."[17] ***Cannot*** come? Where did Chilton say this? He didn't, but for Hunt to admit this would reduce the impact of his rhetoric.

Hunt has a moral problem: Christians' rhetoric is supposed to emphasize the truth for the benefit of the listener or reader, ***not to convey deliberate falsehoods.*** Hunt did not honor this fundamental biblical principle of rhetoric in dealing with Chilton's careful, cogent, and fully explained interpretation of the duration of the millennial era. He prefers rhetoric to the truth. An appropriate biblical response to Mr. Hunt is Nehemiah's reply to Sanbalat: ". . . There are no such things done as thou sayest, but thou feignest them out of thine own heart" (Neh. 6:8b). It is also appropriate for Hal Lindsey's similar discussion.

---

16. *Ibid.*, p. 222.

17. Dave Hunt, ***Whatever Happened to Heaven?*** (Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House, 1988), p. 53.

Lindsey quotes Chilton's statement of 40,000 years and Terry's million years, but skips the explanation of the symbolic usage of "one thousand" in the Bible. He also fails to mention (or respond to) Chilton's devastating use of "the cattle on a thousand hills."[18] He then says that this kind of teaching makes the Reconstructionists "So earthly minded that they are no heavenly good." He insists that Reconstructionists "often seem to be more interested in political takeover than evangelizing and discipline people for a spiritual kingdom." This, despite Chilton's explicit statement in the chapter in *Days of Vengeance* that Lindsey relies on to attack him.[19] Chilton states as clearly and emphatically as possible that politics is not primary.

> It must be stressed, however, that the road to dominion does not lie primarily through political action. While the political sphere, like every other aspect of life, is a valid and necessary area of Christian activity and eventual dominance, we must shun the perennial temptation to grasp for political power. Dominion in civil government cannot be obtained before we have attained maturity and wisdom - the result of generations of Christian *self*-government.[20]

According to Chilton, how long will it take for Christians conceivably to be ready to exercise widespread political leadership as a self-conscious, organized group? ***Generations.*** Christian ***self-government*** first, he insists; then politics. He could not have made it any plainer. This has always been the view of the Christian Reconstructionists. But neither Hal Lindsey nor the myriads of other dispensational critics who attack Reconstructionism are willing to take our words seriously, no matter how many times we repeat ourselves. Our words simply do not register with them. (They are beyond the Bible; I suppose it should not surprise me that they are beyond our rhetoric.)

They see the word "dominion," and just like the political humanists, they automatically think "politics." Like the Jews of Jesus' day, these men are judicially *blinded*: ". . . seeing [they] see

18. Hal Lindsey, *The* Raad to *Holocaust (New* York: Bantam, 1989), p. 232.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 292, footnote 15.
20. Chilton, *Days of Vengeance,* p. *511.*

not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand" (Matt. 13: 13b). They apparently incapable of comprehending what they read (I am here assuming they actually do read our books, which is probably naive), so they announce this grotesque misrepresentation to their followers: ". . . Dominionists believe that the Church must politically conquer the world. . . ."[21]

Do they have a moment's twinge of conscience? Not that I can detect. Lindsey allowed ***The Road to Holocaust*** to reprinted in paperback without bothering to correct even the incorrect names (e.g., his "John Rousas Rushdoon y" instead of Rousas John Rushdoony) and other misstatements of fact. It was as if we had not published ***The Legacy of Hatred Continues*** just ***30*** days after ***The Road to Holocaust*** appeared. Anything for the cause (and their book royalties). Theirs is the "Sanballat Strategy."

And they wonder why they are losing the battle to half a dozen men with word processors!

Reconstructionists Deny Political Salvation

What do we teach? We teach that the gospel of Jesus Christ, ***whenever empowered by the Holy Spirit,***[22] will progressive y conquer the hearts ***and minds*** of men, and as a result, will conquer the cultural world, which includes politics. This is a very different perspective from the wholly perverse idea that the Church of Jesus Christ must use political power in order to conquer the world. But the critics, pessimillennialists and humanists alike, cannot imagine that the gospel possesses this degree of authority and power, even when the Holy Spirit imparts His irresistible saving grace to men.

The Calvinists tell us (implicitly) that God has foreordained the historic failure of His gospel. In contrast, the Arminians tell us (explicitly) that the mass of autonomous mankind will never convert to saving faith. (How they know this in a supposedly non-predestined world is a mystery.) The humanists tell us that

---

21. David Allen Lewis, *Prophecy* 2000 (Green Forest, Arkansas: New Leaf Press, 1990), p. 282.

22. Greg L. Bahnsen, *By This Standard: The Authority of God's Law Today* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1985), pp. 185-86.

Christianity is false, and therefore it should have no influence in politics or culture generally. But they are all agreed: ***God will never bring the world to the foot of the cross on this side of the Second Coming of Christ.*** Reconstructionists say that He will, that His kingdom's earthly triumph in history is foreordained. This is why Christian Reconstruction is a stumbling stone to everyone.

Here is what the debate is really all about: the ***God-predestined victory of Christ in history,*** as manifested by a wide acceptance of His covenant law, but not achieved through His bodily presence on a physical throne in Jerusalem. Reconstructionists argue that because God will accomplish this through His irresistible grace, politics is not very important. Our critics deny that God has foreordained His visible kingdom's victory in history, and so they imagine that *only* politics can serve as a tool sufficient to achieve a theonomic millennium. Denying the sovereignty of God in bringing His kingdom on earth to visible victory, they focus on politics, which they all agree is the ultimate power in history, given the assumption (which they all make) of the cultural impotence of the kingdom of God in history. It makes them ready to surrender to humanism in advance of defeat.

Pre-Emptive

infinite, 69
irresistible, 66-67
Judge, 36
kingdom, 149, 153
laws, xiv
mercy of, 7, 39, 121, 139-40
mystery of, x, 155-56
no respecter of persons, 174-75, 176-78
promises, 3, 121, 127
sanctions, 118, 134, 156
scales of justice, 174
secret things of, 155-56
stories, 78
trap, 55
word of (emeritus), 9
"you're history" x
Golitsyn, A., 338
Gorbachev, M., 41-42
gospel
adult, 31
covenant lawsuit, 214
crisis and, 299
empire vs., 333
failure, 150
failure?, 144-45
Great Tribulation, 193
narrow view, 239n
offer of, 120
outcome, 177
pace of, 310
shadow, 134
world-changing, 203-4
see also Great Commission
Goudzewaard, Bob, 82
grace
common, 135, 137, 183-84
discontinuity, 135
irresistible, 60-67, 257, 292
law and, 207
obedience &, 53
precedes man's response, 53
social reform, 68
see also wrath to grace
Grace Seminary, 194-95
Graham, Billy, 194-95
grammar, 77-79
Gramsci, A., 41-42
Great Awakening, 20,242, 313-15
Great Commission
comprehensive, 259
corporate 25-26
deflection strategy, 250
denial of, 146, 278
rival, 233-34
Great Escape, 257
Great Tribulation
dispensationalism's focus, 18
end of persecution by Israel, 216, 218
escaping, 257
Gaffin on, 228, 230
Greek Orthodoxy, 222, 232
Greeks, xiv, 14
"greens," 56
growth
compound, 53-54, 284, 288
ethical, 284
evil, 284
exponential, 55-56
knowledge, 58
limits of, 55-56
guerillas, 290-91
guilt, 338
Gurnall, William, 240
gutter, 200

Halsell, Grace, 271n
Hardin, Garrett, 57
hare, 149
Hart, Hendrik, 81n
harvest, 296-97
Hayek, F. A., 174-76, 188n
heaven, 84-86
hell, ix, 9

Hendriksen, William, 85-87
Henry, Carl, 74
hermeneutics, 212, 232-36, 281
Hindson, Ed, 271n
history
ambiguous (millennial), 90, 124
amillennial, 90, 111-13, 124
apocalypticism vs., 268
blessings in, 7
change, 127
continuity, 115
deliverance begins, 7-8, 10
discontinuity, 8-10, 129
eschatology and, 124
eternity and, ix-x
final judgment and, 138, 235
guarantees, 166
humanist version, 278
idiot's tale, 167
Isaiah 65, 104
Jesus' enthronement, 151, 280-81
linear, 15, 33, 69, 172
meaning, 154
New Heaven, 96-97, 104-5
non-lessons, 167-69
open-ended, 171
pietist version, 278
primary, 11
progress, 27, 90
providential, 166,335
Rapture ends, 253
redemptive, 69
reigning in, 85-87
sanctions, 154
secondary?, 11
social theory and, 187-88, 335
tears and, 99-100
threat, 154
see also time
Hodge, Charles, 180
Hoekema, Anthony
affirms continuity 170
Christ, the shadow, 89-90
humiliation of, 214
on Isaiah 65:20, 98-106
holy commonwealth, 315
Holy Spirit
amillennial view, 123
coercion, 319
comforter, 282
continuity and discontinuity, 285,289
continuity in history, 282
culture and, 125
discontinuities, 135
discontinuity, 273, 309-12
empowering by, 118, 144
move of, 310
positive move, 293
postmillennial view, 238
premillennialism, 257, 270
revivals, 309-11
work of, 281-82
honesty, 186-87
Hughes, Archibald, 97
Hulse, Errol, 259
humanism, 50, 149, 179, 327
(see also alliance)
Hunt, Dave
accountant, 108
anti-future, 255
Chilton and, 142
comic book theology, 255-56
disinheritance, 252-53, 255
dominion not possible, 198
hope: Rapture, 114n
millennium and kingdom, 308
prosperity, 108
rhetoric, 142
spokesman, 253

Ice, Thomas, 152, 239n

idols, 43-44
ignorance, 48-49
imprecatory psalms, 134
imputation, 62
indeterminacy, 171
India, 292
individualism, 9
inheritance
  covenant people, 154
  Church, 251-53
  historical, 297
  interposition, 132
  Old Covenant, 298
  promise of, 294-98
Iraq, 236, 249, 329
Islam, 31, 134
Israel, 4-5, 18-19, 119 (see also Great Tribulation)
Israel (state of), 271-73

Jacob, 333
Jaki, Stanley, 14n
jars, 224
Jefferson, Thomas, 58
Jenkin Fleeming, 286
Jerusalem, 97,216,218,257, 282,328
Jesus
  atonement, x, 7
  commandments, xiii
  concrete universal, 64, 70
  cross and, 8-9
  death's discontinuity, 8
  dowry, 265
  enthronement, 151, 280-82
  fifth kingdom, 329
  heaven, 84
  Holy Spirit &, 281-82
  legal states, 62
  New World Order, 61, 328
  no time for, 306
  perception of, 31
  perfect, 61-62
  perfect humanity, 218
  power religion, 270-71
  resurrection, 9, 179, 300
  right hand of God, 280-82
  Savior, 1
  shadow of history, 90
  solution, 64
  terrifying words, 11
  whip, 152, 255-56
Jews (slaughter et), 271-73
Job, 107
Jonah, 211-12
Jonah fallacy, 124
Josiah, 131
judgment
  exercising, 214-18
  Isaiah on, 101
  law and, xiii
judicial blindness, 143-44
justice, 173-78, 323
justification, 62, 63

Kantzer, Kenneth, 199, 201
karma, 17
Keynes, John Maynard, 81, 147
kingdom
  Augustine, 160-61
  building, 150
  church and, 274-77
  civilization, 83, 276, 302
  conquest, 267
  contraction, 88
  covenant rivalry, 284
  definitions, 275-76
  development, 236
  empire vs., 331
  fifth, 329
  fills earth, 149
  historical, xii, 150
  imitation, 161
  institutional, xii-xiii, 83
  internal only, 153
  Gaffin on, 220

God's vs. Satan's, 154, 284
leavens, 82-83, 89, 339
nations and, 334
neutrality denied, 275
non-historical, 154
power, 151
premillennial, 18
sanctions, 83-84, 160-61
Satan's, 116, 118, 154 (see leavens)
transfer, 130
triumph in history, 116, 118, 265
Kline, Meredith G.
Bad News, 166
common grace, 43, 79-80, 83, 155
mystery of God, 155
silence of, 172
knowledge, 58
Knudsen, Robert, 189, 190
Kuiper, R. B., 111-13, 117
Kuyper, Abraham, 80

Lalonde, Peter, 199
law of God
Calvin on, 162
civil, 68-69
conversion, 246
debate over, 37
denial of, 188
disagreement over, 37
equality before, 175-76
grace and, 207
Jesus' commandments, xiii
multiplication tables, 54
mystery and, 155
natural law &, 190, 243
transgression, 8
Lazarus, 163
learning process, 69
leaven, 82-84, 89, 183, 230, 274, 339
Lee, Nigel, *71*
legal status, 8, 62
legitimacy (lost), 40-41, 195-96
Leithart, Peter, 242
Lenin, V. I., 303, 332
Leninism, 41
leverage, 149
Lewis, C. S., 188-89, 208, 277, 331
Lewis, David Allen, 144, 145-48, 150, 240n
life insurance, 65
lifeboat evangelism, 312
lifespans, 6, 105
limits to growth, 55-56
Lindsey, Hal, 143-44, 191, 196, 273
linear history, 15
lip, 264
Lisbon earthquake, 234
localism, 263-64, 325
loci (6), 79
Lollards, 289
looking up, 12, 136-37, 257
Lord's Supper, 210-11, 214-15, 228, 266
Los Angeles, 304, 326
Lot, 212
loyalty, 304-5
Luther, Martin, 77, 289
Lutheranism, 72, 76-77

MacKechnie, David, 55
Machen, J. Gresham, 73n, 237, 300
magic, 35, 289
man
creature, 69
limited, 66
nature of, 61
marriage, 127
Marx, Karl, 40
Marxism, 40-42, 45-46

masochism, 229
Masters, Peter, 32, 232n, 239n, 275, 278,309-10
McClain, Alva, 192-94
McIntire, Carl, 202
meat, 100
mechanism, 38-39
meek, 227
megachurch, 321-22
Mendel, Gregor, 287
mercy, 6-7, 39, 121, 139-40
millennial era, 85n, 106
millennialism
defined, **17-22**
divisive issue, 17, 28
fringe, 261
historians and, 15-17
hot topic, xv, 17
types of, 17-22
millennium
blessings, 21
continuity, 24-26
discontinuity, 22-24
progress and, 15
mind, 60
minister of God, 68
Mises, Ludwig, 46, 60
missionary, 319
money, 63
Moral Majority, 247
Muether, John R.
Christianity's irrelevance, 169
Church's exile, 165-67
cultural defeat, 166-67
debt to, 170
discontinuity, 167
equality, 176
exile vs. randomness, 171
exiled church, 177
history's non lessons, 168
hit and run, 179
hope **of,** 178
limited pessimism, 168
missing exegesis, 178-79
pluralism, 169
providence, 177
prudence, **169n,** 173, 178
random sanctions, 165
representative, 164-65
Second Commandment, 177
self-deceived, 185
social concerns, 191
suffering, 173
sword, 181
utopianism, 168
utopians, 173, 181
Münster, 269
murder, 65
Myers, Ellen, 332n
mystery, 155
mysticism, xiv, 87, 155-56, 332

nations
covenant **&,** 339
discipline, 26, 275, 278
final judgment, 262-64
limited power of, 334
natural law
anti-covenantal, 39
Bible &, xiv
Christians and, 190
dispensational, 93
evolution, 50
Geisler, 207
humanism, 50
hybrid, 50
Newtonian, 39
origins, 50
pluralism and, 48
Trojan horse, 243
social theory &, 39
unstable, 49-50
natural rights, 69n
Nehemiah, 142
neo-evangelicalism, 72, 75-76

neutrality
culture, 44
escape religion, 278
eschatological, 48, 124-25
eschatology, 28, 125, 172
kingdom, 276
kingdom growth, 118
laws, 44
millennial, 172
myth, 93
randomness vs, 174, 183
sanctions, 154, 157
success, 55
New Earth (see New Heaven)
New England, 242, 258
New Heaven
extension of history, 10
final judgment?, 104
historical?, 96-97
Isaiah's prophecy, 6,96-106
post-final judgment, 9, 281
New Testament (emphasis of), 3, 7, 10
New World Order, 42, 61, 326, 339
Newtonianism, 38
Nineveh, 118-19, 131, 211-12, 231,285
Nisbet, Robert A.
futurology, 121-23
guilt of middle class, 338
idea of progress, 13, 34, 337
progress and past, 34
prophecy, 13, 122-23
trend-tending, 122-23
Noah, 127, 129
North Africa, 134

oath, 36, 325-26
obedience (national), 4
Old Covenant (historical vision), 101
Old Heaven, 282
Old Testament, 3, 9
oppression, 107
organicism, 34-35, 38, 78
original sin, 9, 186
overcomes, xii

packaging, 84, 114-15, 117
paradox, Deut. 8, 53-55
pawns, 277
peace, 285, 335
Pentecost, 282
Pentecost, J. Dwight, 181, 271n
Pentecostalism, 156
perfectionism
Jesus', 65
social theory, 58-59
standards of, 69
striving to, 65-66, 69
persecution, 145, 216, 222-23, 232-36,261
pessimillennialism
amillennialism, 81-82
defeat of church, 176
dispensationalism, 199-205, 253
historical discontinuity, 95
message, 297-98
objections to, 310-11
perverse justice, 177
perverse sanctions, 186
sanctions, 118
social theory, 117-18
limits on, 168
see also defeat
Pharaoh, 130-31
pie in sky, 340
pietism
escaping responsibility, 267
Gaffin, 229
humanism &, 43-44, 73, 135-36, 277 (see also alliance)
pessimism of, 221-22

Puritan wing, 240
relevance (quest for), 205-6
sacrificing Christians, 276
see also alliance
plague, 289, 291, 293, 298, 322
platitudes, 259,327
plowing deep, 153
pluralism
Athanasian, 284
cease-fire, 45, 125-26
Christians' preference, 134
contractualism &, 283
equal time, 305-6
natural law, 48
tie game, 218
politics
amillennialism and, 168
assumptions about, 145
dominion and, 143-45
fourth, 168
humanistic?, 145
importance of, 145
pollution, 59
population, x, 55-56, 307-8, 310
population bomb, ix-x, 307-10
Postan, Larry, 30-31
postmillennialism
antinomian, 247
compound growth, 148
continuity and victory, 283
covenantal, 15
discontinuity, 273, 288-89
divided, 238
doctrine, 20-22
history, 239
inescapable concept, 116
Loraine Boettner, 243-47
nineteenth century, 242-43
perverse, 182
sanctions, 241
summary **of,** 20-22
utopian?, 273-74
potter, 224
poverty, 186
power, 44, 95, 150-51, 270-71, 284
power religion
civilization and, 332
Marxism, 42
mysticism, 156
premillennialism, 150-51
Pratt, Richard, 77-78
predestination, x, 145, 274
Premillennialism
activism, 48
amillennialism &, 92-94
apocalyptic, 270-73
discontinuity, 22-23, 150, 312
ethical osmosis, 75
Great Tribulation, 193
Holy Spirit, 257
power religion, 150-51
new bodies, 152
sanctions, 152
social theory, 74-76
system, 18-19
time perspective, 147-48
trend-tending, 194
victory beyond history, 150
wheat and tares, 296-98
present-orientation, 34
preterism, 102, 130
pride, 285, 334
printing press, 289
problems (escaping), 23
progress
acceptance **of,** 26-28
ambiguity, 90-91
assumptions **of,** 14
biblical basis, 52-53
biblical idea **of,** 15
covenantal structure, 14
creedal, 27-28, 220-21
denial of, 278
economic growth, 65

Enlightenment, 15
entropy vs., 14n
God-honoring, 53
idea of, 14, 26-28, 267-68
linear history, 14-15
loss of faith, 13-14
meaningful?, 27
medieval, 172, 278
millennium and, 15
moral, 65
Nisbet on, 13-14, 34
past and, 34
postmillennialism &, 15
Puritanism and, 33
Rapture vs., 252
roots of, 13
science vs., 14
social theory, 70
Prohibition, 72-73, 315-16
Promised Land, 261
proof text, 224
prophecy, 119-21, 121, 124, 279
prophesies, 104, 121-22, 249
prophets, 211
prosperity, 108-9, 285
population, ix-x, 55-56, 307-08, 310
public schools, 290-92
punishment, 188
Puritanism
idea of progress, 33
sanctions, 182
pamphlet wars, xvi
postmillennial, 240
two traditions, 240

quadrants, 320-321
quality of life, 56, 59
questions, 141

race, 63-64
radio, 291
randomness, 171, 174
Random News, 123, 211, 299
Rapture
blessed hope, 23
disinheritance, 252
end of history, 253
escape hatch, 114
escaping death, 23
ethics and, 250-51
evangelism and, xii
fever, 256
final judgement, 297
planning for, 306
revival vs., 311-312
timing, 19
waning faith, 254
wheat & tares, 296
56,600 years, 140
realism, 35
Reformation, 133
regeneration, 61
reincarnation, 17
relevance, 191, 205-8
Renaissance, 289
representation, 86, 216-17
rescue mission, 199-201, 300
responsibility
Church, 307
escaping, 194, 277-78
fleeing from, 23
four corners, 318
ignorance vs., 49
mystery vs., 155
New Testament, 189
open-ended, 189
progressive, 138, 267
Restif de la Bretonne, 122
restoration, 11, 226-27, 259, 262, 294
resurrection, 85n, 228, 233, 234
revival
antinomian, 316
Church unprepared, 327
controversial, 300

discontinuity, xii, 133,289
eschatology, 251
failure of, 133
Great Awakenings, 20, 241-42, 313-16
imminent, 306-7, 309
lowest common denominator, 315
Machen's view, 300
planning for, 327
population bomb, 307-8
Rapture vs., 311-312
solution, 340
terror &, 292
revolution, 58
revolution (moral), 66-69
rhetoric
biblical, 138-40
Gaffin's, 228-29, 235-36
messianic, 329
Reconstructionist, 140-42
Tower of Babel, 329
revolution, 268
rich, 267
Ridderbos, Herman, 97
risks, 293
Roberts, Oral, 205
rod, 21
rod of iron, 223-24
Roe vs. Wade, 196
Rome, 160
Rosenthal, Marvin, 250-51
Rousseau, J. J., 66
rulership, 215
Runner, Evan, 80
Rushdoony, Rousas John, 74n, 75, 115, 197, 304n
Russia, 290, 332

sabbath millennium, 313
salt, 132
salvation
comprehensive, 125
covenantal, 11
discontinuous, 135
faith, 340
individual, 9
institutional, 262
law and, 135
today, 272
souls only?, 26
State and, 68-69
see also conversion
Samaritan Strategy, 291-94
San Francisco, 212
Sanbalat, 142
sanctification
Church, 219
corporate, 70
cultured, 222, 332
discontinuity vs., 169-70
perfection, 70
progressive, 61-64, 69, 132, 218-22
sanction (wealth), 54-55
sanctions
amillennial, 177
blessing, 54-55
Calvin on, 163-64
Christians and, 87
civil, 87
cultural, 87
defined, 15
denied, 116, 155-84, 186, 190
discontinuity, 127
eschatology, 50-51
final, 158, 160
historical only, 43, 44
history's meaning, 154
inescapable, 157, 211
inscrutable, 158-61, 176-77
kingdom, 83-84
Kline, 155-56
law and, 188
Marxism, 42

negative, 120, 289, 291-95
negative corporate, 284-86
perverse, 177, 186
pessimillennialism, 118
positive, 131-37
positive and negative, 134
predictable, 188-89
random, 44, 45, 154, 157, 171, 174, 176, 182, 188
redemptive history, 69
repentance and, 120
rigged, 176-77
Samaritan Strategy, 291-94
Satan's, 182
secret things, 156
social theory, 157, 185-87
society and, 156
standards and, xiii-xiv
State, 69
time and, 129
sanctuaries, 301
Satan
bureaucracy, 324-25, 331
centralization, 324, 331
default, 307-8
discontinuity, 336
equal time, 305-6
frustration, 228
kingdom, 116, 118 (see leavens)
postmillennialism of, 182
power religion, 324
predestination by, 274
sanctions **of,** 182
time is short, 129
Saul, 111
scales of justice, 174
Schaeffer, Francis, 75, 303
Schilder, Klaas, 225
schizophrenia
amillennial, 84, 92
neutral Christian politics, 147
Gaffin, 230-31
Schlossberg, Herbert, 232-35
Second Coming
Church's concern, xi-xii
date, xi-xii, 142
pessimillennialism, 27
shadow **of,** 22
self-confidence, 335
self-government, 143, 324-25
seminary, 316-17
service, 333 (see also Samaritan Strategy)
Shafarevich, Igor, 16n
sheep, 262
Sherman, Howard, 59
silence, 258-60
sin
battle with, 67-68
chains, 66
God forgets, 6-7
man's problem, 56
New Heaven, 103
original, 9
subsidizing, 5, 55, 186
sinking ship, 199
sinners, 96, 103
Skillen, James, 81n
social action, 95
social bond, 33, 37
social **change (apocalypticism &),** 267-74
social control, 136
social criticism, 231-35
social engineering, 58-61
social reform, 95, 132
social theology, 179
social theory
amillennial, 169
amillennialism vs., 102
Bible and, xv
blueprints, 260-61
Christian, 69, 70, 110
Christian Reconstruction,

47, 69
Christianity and, 258-60
Church and, 302
constraints view, 58-62
continuity, 94
contractual view, 35-36, 38-39
covenantal structure, 33, 37
covenantal view, 36-37
defined, 33-34
eschatology, 47-49, 125, 153
evangelism and, 31
evolutionary, 58
ghettos, 24
history and, 187-88
hybrid, 49-50
ignorance, 48-49
ignored, 47, 60-61
lack of interest, 2
literature of, 125
myth of neutrality, 51
natural law, 39
organic view, 34-35, 38
pessimillennialism and, 117-118
pietism vs., 33
pietist, 93
possible?, 76
premillennial, 152-53
premillennialism, 74-76
progress, 70
relevance, 76
requirements, 208
revolutionary, 58
sanctions, 76, 157, 185-87
sanctions and, 37
social bond, 33, 37
Sowell on, 57-58
symbolic?, 102
unconstrained, 58-62
utopias and, 88
vacuums, 51
verification, 187
views of (3), 34-37, 49
socialism
arguments, 59-60
Gramsci, A., 42
inevitability argument, 46
unconstrained, 58-59
society (three views of), 34-37
Sodom, 212
Solzhenitsyn, A., 195
sovereignty, 324 (see also authority)
Soviet Union, 46, 59
Sowell, Thomas, 57-58, 151
Spain, 134
Spurgeon Effect, 323
stalemate, 89-90, 176
Stalin, Joseph, 332
standards, 57, 69
State, 67-68, 283
stone, 149
strategies, 290-94
Strauss, Lehman, 203-4
suffering
fundamental?, 223
moral progress, 222-26
Muether, John, 166-67
resurrection and, 225
surrender, 145-47
survival, 217
Sutton, Ray, 244-47
Swaggart, Jimmy, 277
symbol (biblical), 77-79, 97, 100, 102 (see also rhetoric)
syphilis, 289
systematic theology, 180-81

Talbot Theological Seminary, 195
tears, 99, 101, 253
technology, 317
terror, 292
Terry, Milton, 140
thankfulness, 54

theocracy, 44
theonomy defined, 39
thermostat, 57
thousand, 140-41, 143
time
  church's 153
  covenant-keeper, 137
  enough?, 288, 290
  limited, 56-57
  limits, 56
  remaining, 29
  rope for sinners, 159-60
  running out, xi
  sanctions and, 129
  self-confidence and, 335
  short, 149-50
  victory and, 337
  view of, 24
  wasting, 199
  see also history
tongues, 263
Toronto, 81
tortoise, 149
tough get going, 110
Tower of Babel, 263, 326, 329
tracts, 31
trade-offs, 58, 64-66
trap (God's), 55
trends, 121-23, 125
trial and error, 69
tribulation, 216
triumphalism, 165, 228
trivium, 78-79
Trotsky, Leon, 34
tyranny, 88, 188

university, 316
utopia, 88-89
utopian, 92
utopians, 168, 181-82

Vanderwal, C., 130n
Van Riessen, Hendrik
  activism, 107
  conservative, 81
  hopelessness, 107
  no plan of action, 109
  pessimism, 121
  social criticism, 106
  trend-tending, 123
  West's prosperity, 107-8
Van Til, Cornelius
  Bad News, 80, 113, 166
  Barth and, 113
  Book of Job, 107n
  common grace, 79-80
  conservative, 75
Velema, W. H., 136
vessels, 223-24
victory
  amillennial language, 84, 111, 114-15, 117
  Church so far, 220
  disguised, 111, 233
  GafFin's view, 220, 227
  persecution &, 216
  predestined, 145
  suffering &, 227
  time and, 88, 337
  Zorn's view, 88
violence, 132
Voltaire, 278
voodoo, 35
vows, 221 (see also oath)

Walvoord, John, 199-201
war, 289
wealth, 52-55, 108-9, 267, 285
Weber, Max, 121n, 123, 330
weeping, 98, 99-102
West
  crisis of, 13-14
  lost faith, 337-38
  progress, 13, 278
  prosperity, 108-9
  time perspective, 34

Westminster Theological Seminary, 219
Whitby, Daniel, 239
William of Occam, 35
Williams, Gary, 207
wine, 100, 131
Wolfe, Tom, 196
work, 26
world, ix, 1
wrath to grace, 3, 7, 9, 10, 131, 160
Wycliffe, John, 289

yoke, 225

Zorn, Raymond, 87-88, 92

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Gary North received his Ph.D. in history from the University of California, Riverside, in 1972. He specialized in colonial U.S. history. He wrote his doctoral dissertation on New England Puritanism's economic history and the history of economic thought. A simplified version of this dissertation has been published as ***Puritan Economic Experiments*** (Institute for Christian Economics, [1974] 1988).

He is the author of approximately 30 books in the fields of economics, history, and theology. Since 1973, he has been writing a multi-volume economic commentary on the Bible, which now covers Genesis (one volume) and Exodus (three volumes). He is the general editor of the multi-volume set, the Biblical Blueprints Series, presently at ten volumes.

He edited the first fifteen issues of *The* Journal ***of Christian Reconstruction,*** 1974-81. He edited two issues of ***Christianity and Civilization*** in 1983: ***The Theology of Christian Resistance*** and ***Tactics of Christian Resistance.*** He edited a *festschrift* for Cornelius Van Til, ***Foundations of Christian Scholarship (1976).***

He is the editor of the fortnightly economic newsletter, ***Remnant Review.*** He writes two hi-monthly Christian newsletters, ***Biblical Economics Today*** and ***Christian Reconstruction,*** published by the Institute for Christian Economics.

He lives in Tyler, Texas, with his wife and four children. He is a member of Good Shepherd Reformed Episcopal Church, Tyler, Texas.