

Historical Theology of Eschatology THEO6304 Lecture Notes

1. Various Meanings of the Word “Eschatology” (Caird: 1980, 243)

1.1. Definitions of *Eschatology*:

- 1.1.1. “The study of, or the corpus of beliefs held about, the destiny of man and of the world.”
- 1.1.2. Oxford: “The department of theological science concerned with the four last things, death, judgment, heaven, and hell.”

1.2. **History of the Term *Eschatology***: Term coined in Germany in the early 19th century, imported to English by 1845.

1.3. **Various Approaches to Eschatology**:

1.3.1. **Eschatology^P**: Personal Eschatology—the destiny of the individual.

- 1.3.1.1. *The Intermediate State*: The Bible says relatively little.
 - 1.3.1.1.1. Soul sleep?
 - 1.3.1.1.2. The location of the departed? Difference in NT from OT?
 - 1.3.1.1.3. The nature of human existence? How is memory retained?
- 1.3.1.2. *The Resurrection*:
 - 1.3.1.2.1. General or staggered?
 - 1.3.1.2.2. Purpose of the Resurrection?
 - 1.3.1.2.3. The Means of the Resurrection (is it our old body, or out of our old body?)
 - 1.3.1.2.4. Nature of the Resurrected Body? In what ways are the bodies of the unregenerate immortal?
- 1.3.1.3. *The Judgment*:
 - 1.3.1.3.1. General or staggered?
 - 1.3.1.3.2. Immediate?
 - 1.3.1.3.3. Purpose? For saved (an evangelical purgatory)? For lost (to condemn man, or justify God)?
 - 1.3.1.3.4. Timing?
- 1.3.1.4. *The Eternal State*:
 - 1.3.1.4.1. Heaven: static or dynamic?
 - 1.3.1.4.2. Hell: everlasting duration or everlasting effects?

1.3.2. **Eschatology^H**: the ultimate goal and purpose of history. The destiny of nations. This is sometimes called “cosmic eschatology.”

1.3.3. **Eschatology^C**: Consistent Eschatology (*Konsequente Eschatologie*)

1.3.3.1. *Definition*: “First century Jews expected the literal end of the world to occur at any moment, and Jesus and the early Christians shared this belief.”

1.3.3.2. *Proponents*: Johannes Weiss (*The Kingdom of God in the Preaching of Jesus*) and Albert Schweitzer (1875-1965) (*The Quest for the Historical Jesus*). A reaction against the Liberal interpretations of Albrecht Ritschl and Von Harnack (BOMFOG).

“The Christ that Harnack sees, looking back through nineteen centuries of Catholic darkness, is only the reflection of a liberal Protestant face, seen at the bottom of a deep well.”—George Tyrrell (Erickson: 1977, 22)

1.3.3.3. *Schweitzer’s assessment of Jesus*: According to Schweitzer, Jesus was a tragic figure who mistakenly believed that He could bring in the Kingdom of God in a catastrophic fashion.

“There is silence all around. The Baptist appears, and cries: ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ Soon after that comes Jesus, and in the knowledge that He is the coming Son of Man, lays hold of the wheel of the world to set it moving on that last revolution which is to bring all ordinary history to a close. It refuses to turn, and He throws Himself upon it. Then it does turn; and crushes Him. Instead of bringing in the eschatological conditions, He has destroyed them. The wheel rolls onward, and the mangled body of the One immeasurably great man, Who was strong enough to think of Himself as the spiritual ruler of mankind and to bend history to His purpose, is hanging upon it still. That is His victory and His reign.”—Albert Schweitzer: 1905, 368-69

1.3.3.4. *Schweitzer’s contribution*: Schweitzer advocated an almost mystical relationship to the Kingdom. He suggests that Jesus comes to us as He did to the disciples long ago. His conclusion does not follow from his arguments and he does not defend it. Schweitzer successfully dismantles the Liberal vision of the Kingdom of God but provides no alternative.

1.3.4. **Eschatology^R**: Realized eschatology

1.3.4.1. *Proponents*: C. H. Dodd (1884-1973).

1.3.4.2. *Definition*: Sometimes called “preterist eschatology,” Dodd challenged the idea of any future fulfillment of the teachings of Jesus and the New Testament. Dodd believed that the dominant note in the New Testament is not expectancy but the celebration of life, death and resurrection of Jesus as the completed work of God.

1.3.4.2.1. The Kingdom is fulfilled. Jesus proclaimed that the prophecies of the Old Testament were being fulfilled, that the day of God had come, that the kingdom of God had arrived and was open for all who prepared to enter it.

1.3.4.2.2. The Supernatural has entered history. Dodd argued that the parables of crisis, which in the Gospels have for their referent to the future coming of the Son of Man, were referring to the crisis in Jesus' own ministry.

1.3.4.2.3. God's power is openly manifest in the overthrow of the powers of evil.

1.3.4.2.4. The world has been judged.

1.3.4.2.5. Eternal life, the life of the age to come, is now realized in experience. In Christ the *eschaton*, the expected end, had fully entered history. Dodd at first taught that the presence of the *eschaton* in Jesus was so complete that there was no room for a future coming of the Son of Man. Later he held to the position “The time is coming and now is.”

1.3.4.3. *Relation to Consistent Eschatology*: Both saw the eschatological motif as permeating Scripture and the teachings of Jesus. However, in some ways, realized eschatology is a reaction to Schweitzer. Also, Dodd made room for the supernatural in a way that classic liberalism did not.

1.3.5. **Eschatology^E**: Existential eschatology.

1.3.5.1. *Proponents*: Rudolf Bultmann (1884-1976), G.B. Caird. Distinguished between *Historie* (mere history “Did it happen?”) and *Geschichte* (subjective impact of these events “What does it mean?”). Separate the Christ of Faith from the Jesus of History.

1.3.5.2. *Definition*: When Jesus used “eschatological language,” he was using it to denote, not the literal end of the world, but the challenge to each individual to an encounter with God.

“The biblical writers regularly used end-of-the-world language metaphorically to refer to that which they well knew was not the end of the world.” (Caird:xxi-xxii)

Bultmann understood much of the New Testament to be mythological in nature. By *myth* he meant the description of otherworldly realities in imagery drawn from this world.

1.3.5.3. Bultmann’s Existential Process of Demythologization:

1.3.5.3.1. Three Approaches to Myth in the NT:

1.3.5.3.1.1. *Fundamentalist*: Accept myth literally. Bultmann rejected this because:

1.3.5.3.1.1.1. The Copernican Revolution rendered Biblical cosmology obsolete.

1.3.5.3.1.1.2. Medical advances reveal that bacteria rather than demons cause disease.

1.3.5.3.1.1.3. The *parousia* of Christ predicted in the NT never took place.

1.3.5.3.1.2. *Liberal*: Reject the mythical elements. Liberals try to retain the NT message while jettisoning its mythical elements. This is doomed to failure because the two are so intricately intertwined.

1.3.5.3.1.3. *Existential*: Reinterpret myth to capture its true significance. This process he called “demythologization,” by which he means that, rather than being eliminated, myth should be allowed to remain, but with a different character.

1.3.5.3.1.3.1. The Gospels present the *kerygma* in existential form.

1.3.5.3.1.3.2. Must make a distinction between *Historie* and *Geschichte*. Using form criticism, Bultmann believed that the *Historie* of Jesus is lost. The Gospel accounts are *Geschichte*, the tremendous existential impact that these events had on the apostles. The NT is their mythical explanation of the events they experienced. (Remember: “myth” is an expression of man’s self-understanding).

1.3.5.3.1.3.3. NT eschatology must be understood as an expression of man’s understanding of his existence as he experiences it at the time. Bultmann claimed that the NT writers had begun the process of “detemporalizing” eschatology. John, he claimed, saw the resurrection, Pentecost, and the *parousia* as one event. (*Did he never read 1 John?*) Eschatology should be read as a parable.

“We have in Bultmann’s writing a rather radical reconstruction of the nature of eschatology. In particular we see the effect upon doctrine of adopting existential philosophy and molding one’s theology upon it.”—Erickson: 1977, 42

1.3.6. **Eschatology^V**: Verification of the Kingdom.

1.3.6.1.1.1. *Definition*: Eschatology is not the most important point of theology; it is theology. Associated with the “Theology of Hope.” (Erickson: 1977, 44-51)

1.3.6.1.1.2. *Proponents*: Moltmann and Wolfhart Pannenberg.

1.3.7. **Eschatology^I**: Inaugurated Eschatology

1.3.7.1. *Proponents*: George Eldon Ladd, Craig Blaising and Darrell Bock, Anthony Hoekema and Vern Poythress.

1.3.7.2. *Definition*: “Now and not yet.” The Kingdom is a present reality working toward a future consummation. Inaugurated Eschatology views the doctrine of last things in the broader context of the Kingdom of God.

“If, however, the Kingdom is the reign of God, not merely in the human heart but dynamically active in the person of Jesus and in human history, then it becomes possible to understand how the Kingdom of God can be present and future, inward and outward, spiritual and apocalyptic.”—Ladd: 1974, 42.

Inaugurated Eschatology is an alternative both to the completely-futurist interpretation of Classic Dispensationalism and to the completely-spiritualist interpretation of Covenantal Amillennialism.

1.3.7.3. *Components*: Eschatology^I argue for a Christocentric understanding of the Kingdom of God.

1.3.7.3.1. *The Kingdom as present reality*:

1.3.7.3.1.1. *Christ’s suffering*: Jesus’ atoning death fulfills 2 Sam 7:14—“I will be his father, and he will be my son. When he does wrong, I will punish him with the rod of men, with floggings inflicted by men.” Not for his wrong, but for the sins of Israel the Messiah is punished.

1.3.7.3.1.2. *Christ’s resurrection*: Jesus’ resurrection is the already consummated aspect of the resurrection of the dead.

Christ is the “first fruits” of the resurrection. His rising from the dead declares that the end of the world has begun.

1.3.7.3.1.3. *Christ’s reign:* On the Day of Pentecost, Peter cites Joel 2:28-32 to declare the beginning of the last days (Acts 2:14-21). He then uses 2 Sam 7, Ps 16, and Ps 110 to assert that Jesus is presently seated on David’s throne by being seated at the Father’s right hand (Acts 2:22-36).

1.3.7.3.2. *The Kingdom as future:*

1.3.7.3.2.1. A literal consummation of Christ’s Kingdom will occur when he returns in the future.

1.3.7.3.2.2. Eschatology¹ corrects:

1.3.7.3.2.2.1. The tendency within Dispensationalism to speculate about the prophetic calendar, events, characters is rejected, because the doctrine of imminency is undercut (Blaising and Bock: 1993, 19-20).

1.3.7.3.2.2.2. The tendency within Covenantalism to interpret eschatology in static, ethereal, Neo-platonic terms is rejected. “The ‘new earth’ envisioned by Hoekema and other modified covenantalists ‘changes the scene entirely’ because it is ‘very much like the millennial earth as envisioned by premillennialists.’”—Moore: 2004, 51-52.

1.3.7.4. *Inaugurated Eschatology and Soteriology:* salvation is Christocentric and manifests the “now/not yet” tension:

1.3.7.4.1. *The Christocentric nature of salvation:* union with Christ

1.3.7.4.1.1. *The importance of the concept “in Christ.”*

1.3.7.4.1.1.1. To Paul: Paul uses “in Christ” (38 times), “in Christ Jesus” (51 times), “in him” (21 times), “in the Lord” (44 times), and other similar expressions no less than 216 times.

1.3.7.4.1.1.2. To John: John utilizes the expression “in him” no less than 26 times (1 John 2:5–6, 27–28). Over 60 times employs the concept of “abiding” in Christ (John 15:1–7)

1.3.7.4.1.2. *The comprehensiveness of the concept “in Christ.”*

The four moments of salvation:

1.3.7.4.1.2.1. **Eternally**, we are elected in Christ.

God “*chose us in him before the foundation of the world*” (Eph 1:4).

God called us “*according to his own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began*” (2 Tim 1:9).

How could God call us before we ever existed? We were elected in Christ Jesus. God elected his own Son, who is our representative, and we find our election in him.

1.3.7.4.1.2.2. **Historically**, we are represented in Christ. God declares that whatever our representative, the Lord Jesus Christ, has accomplished, those who trust in him have also achieved. Believers are considered by God:

1.3.7.4.1.2.2.1. To have died with Jesus (Col 3:3–4).

1.3.7.4.1.2.2.2. To be buried with him (Rom 6:2–4).

1.3.7.4.1.2.2.3. To have risen with him (Rom 6:5–8). From a historical perspective, our salvation is a finished feat, accomplished by Jesus of Nazareth nearly two thousand years ago.

1.3.7.4.1.2.3. **Presently**, we are redeemed in Christ. We are:

1.3.7.4.1.2.3.1. Regenerated in Christ

“If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation,” 2 Cor 5:17; Eph 2:5, 10.

1.3.7.4.1.2.3.2. Justified in Christ

“There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus,” Rom 8:1; Eph 1:7

1.3.7.4.1.2.3.3. Sanctified in Christ

“To those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus” 1 Cor 1:2

1.3.7.4.1.2.3.4. Adopted in Christ

“He predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ” Eph 1:5

1.3.7.4.1.2.4. **Eschatologically**, we are glorified in Christ.

1.3.7.4.1.2.4.1. Believers “die in the Lord” (Rev 14:13) and “sleep in Jesus” (1 Thess 4:14).

1.3.7.4.1.2.4.2. When the Lord returns “the dead in Christ will rise first” (1 Thess 4:16).

1.3.7.4.1.2.4.3. Believers will be resurrected in Christ (1 Cor 15:22.)

1.3.7.4.1.2.4.4. Believers will be glorified in Christ (Rom 8:17; 1 John 2:28, 3:2).

1.3.7.4.2. *The tension between “now” and “not yet”*: positional vs. experiential

1.3.7.4.2.1. The first two moments—eternal and historical—are objective and completed.

1.3.7.4.2.2. The second two moments—present and eschatological—are subjective and yet to be completed.

“God calls us to become what he declares we already are.”—Dan Holcomb.

1.4. Views of the Kingdom: *“To a great extent, millennialism since the sixteenth century has been a search for certainty in the flow of history.”* (Doyle: 1999, 254).

1.4.1. Amillennialism

1.4.1.1. *Definition:* There will be no earthly, thousand-year reign of Christ. Because amillennialism is generally defined negatively, its positive features often are not clearly delineated. “Amillennialism believes that Christ returns after the millennium. The millennium is symbolic of this whole present age in which the gospel is preached. The kingdom of God is now present as the victorious Christ rules his church through Word and Spirit. Revelation 20:1-6 is a description of the souls of dead believers reigning with Christ in heaven, and another metaphor for the day of the Lord and its threefold significance.” (Doyle:1999, 252)

1.4.1.2. *Adherents:* Origen, Augustine, Luther, Calvin, Melancthon, O.T. Allis, Stanley Grenz,, Robert Strimple, and Robert Doyle. Though premillennialism is the predominant view today, the pre-eminent position over the majority of Christian history is amillennialism.

1.4.1.3. *Tenets:* (Akin: 1996, 635)

1.4.1.3.1. The kingdom reign of Christ and His saints is in existence for the period of time between Christ’s two advents (i.e. right now).

1.4.1.3.2. The kingdom is either the church on earth (Augustinian/Roman Catholic view) and/or the saints in heaven (Warfield). Thus there will be no future reign of Christ on the earth, and the word “thousand” is a symbolic number indicating a long period of time.

- 1.4.1.3.3. The promises to Israel about a land, seed, and throne are thus completely fulfilled now in a spiritual sense in the church.
 - 1.4.1.3.4. God's promises to Israel were conditional and have been transferred to the church because the nation did not meet the condition of obedience.
 - 1.4.1.3.5. Christ is ruling now in heaven where He is seated on the throne of David, and Satan is presently bound between Christ's two advents.
- 1.4.1.4. *Scriptural arguments:* The Old Testament promises about the temple being rebuilt, the sacrifices being restored, or a return to the promised land should be interpreted "spiritually," or non-literally, because this is the way the New Testament approaches the Old Testament. (Strimple:1999, 84-100)
- 1.4.1.4.1. The New Testament presents Christ as the true Israel (*Matt. 2:15*). Therefore, all those who are in Christ (i.e. the Church) are the true Israel (*Gal. 3:7-29*).
 - 1.4.1.4.2. The New Testament interprets prophecies concerning the land of promise in the light of the new heavens and the new earth (*Heb. 11:10-16; 2 Pet. 3:13*).
 - 1.4.1.4.3. The New Testament sees the Kingdom of David, not as an earthly kingdom yet to come, but as an eternal kingdom presently in force (*Acts. 2:30-31*).
 - 1.4.1.4.4. Rev. 20 presents us with two different types of resurrections. The first resurrection occurs the believer departs this life and is immediately ushered into the presence of Christ to reign with him. The second resurrection will be bodily at Christ's second coming. The binding of Satan occurred at the Cross (*Col. 2:15*).
- 1.4.1.5. *Critique:*
- 1.4.1.5.1. The New Testament does not spiritualize messianic prophecies. Passages such as Ps. 22, Micah 5:2, and Isa. 53 are understood to be fulfilled literally.
 - 1.4.1.5.2. Equating true Israel with the Church is difficult to reconcile with Rom. 9-11. Paul seems to clearly teach that God still has future plans for ethnic Israel (as did the apostles-Acts. 1:6).
 - 1.4.1.5.3. Contending that Rev. 20 teaches two different types of resurrections is difficult to justify exegetically. If it means "bodily resurrection" in verse 5, it must mean the same in verse 4b or "we have lost control of exegesis." (Ladd:1960,169)

1.4.2. Postmillennialism

- 1.4.2.1. *Definition:* "Postmillennialism expects the proclaiming of the Spirit-blessed gospel of Jesus Christ to win the vast majority of human

beings to salvation in the present age. Increasing gospel success will gradually produce a time in history prior to Christ's return in which faith, righteousness, peace, and prosperity prevail in the affairs of people and of nations. After an extensive era of such conditions the Lord will return visibly, bodily, and in great glory, ending history with the general resurrection and the great judgment of all humankind." (Gentry:1999,14)

1.4.2.2. *Adherents*: Daniel Whitby (1638-1726), Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758), William Carey (1761-1834), B. H. Carroll (1843-1914), George W. Truett (1867-1944), Iain Murray, and Kenneth Gentry.

Postmillennialism "was the dominant position among American evangelicals in the late eighteenth century and throughout most of the nineteenth century." (Grenz:1992, 66) A secularized version of postmillennialism lied behind certain types of 19th and 20th century progressivism. Also, American Protestant liberalism incorporates many themes from Postmillennialism. Conservative postmillennialists, however, have taken pains to distance themselves from both.

1.4.2.3. *Tenets*: (Erickson: 1987, 55)

1.4.2.3.1. The Kingdom of God is primarily a present reality; it is here in earthly fashion.

1.4.2.3.2. The conversion of all the nations prior to Christ's return is expected.

1.4.2.3.3. A long period of earthly peace is expected. Though termed the millennium, it is not necessarily 1000 years in length.

1.4.2.3.4. The King of God will grow gradually through the continuing spread of the Gospel. The difference between the millennial age and other ages in the life of the church is not qualitative but quantitative.

1.4.2.3.5. At the end of the millennium there will be a time of apostasy and a flare-up of evil occurring in connection with the coming of Antichrist.

1.4.2.3.6. The millennium will end with the personal, bodily return of Christ.

1.4.2.3.7. The Lord's return will be accompanied by a general resurrection and a subsequent general resurrection.

1.4.2.4. *Scriptural arguments*: (Gentry:1999, 32-55)

1.4.2.4.1. The messianic psalms present a historical optimism.

"That Your way may be known on earth, your salvation among all nations...God shall bless us, and all the ends of the earth shall fear Him." (Ps 67:2, 7 NKJ)

- 1.4.2.4.2. The Old Testament Prophets promise a universal time of peace and righteousness (*Isa. 2:1-4; 45:22-25*).
- 1.4.2.4.3. In the Gospel accounts, Jesus presents the Kingdom as a present reality that will inevitably advance and be victorious (*Matt. 13; John 12:31-32; Matt. 28:18-20*).
- 1.4.2.5. *Critique:*
 - 1.4.2.5.1. The assertion that the world is getting better morally and spiritually is questionable, at best.
 - 1.4.2.5.2. The Scriptures promise that the world will be evangelized by the end of the age, but not converted (*Mark 13:10*).
 - 1.4.2.5.3. Postmillennialists seem to neglect the Scriptures that speak of the spiritual and moral condition of the world worsening in the end times (*Matt. 24:9-14*). “It appears that postmillennialism has based its doctrine on very carefully selected Scripture passages.” (Erickson:1987, 72)
 - 1.4.2.5.4. “Postmillennialism fails because the New Testament links the restoration of the world, the removal of creation’s futility, to ‘the revealing of the children of God,’ that is, ‘the redemption of our bodies’ at the resurrection (*Rom. 8:18-25*).” (Doyle:1999, 251).
 - 1.4.2.5.5. The optimism expressed in the Scriptures about the world experiencing Kingdom blessings and righteousness seems to be contingent on the physical presence of the King.

1.4.3. Premillennialism

- 1.4.3.1. *Definition:* “This is the belief that after Jesus comes, he will establish and rule over a kingdom on this earth for a millennium, that is, for a thousand years.” (Blaising:1999,157) There are a variety of premillennial positions: historical, dispensational, and more recently progressive dispensational.
- 1.4.3.2. *Adherents:* Premillennialism was the dominant view of the early church and was held by Clement, Polycarp, Papias, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, and Tertullian, to name a few. Today, it is advocated by Charles Ryrie, Craig Blaising, Millard Erickson, and Wayne Grudem. In the 20th century, premillennialism has been the predominant view among evangelicals in general and Southern Baptists in particular.
- 1.4.3.3. *Tenets:*
 - 1.4.3.3.1. The end of the present age will be characterized by a great apostasy and will culminate in a time of judgment called the Tribulation.
 - 1.4.3.3.2. The two resurrections mentioned in Rev. 20:4-6 are both bodily in nature.

1.4.3.3.3. The promises made to ethnic Israel concerning the return to the promised land, the rebuilt temple, and an eventual spiritual conversion will all be fulfilled literally in the future.

1.4.3.3.4. The millennium is the fulfillment of the Old Testament promises to Israel about a glorious kingdom.

1.4.3.4. *Arguments:*

1.4.3.4.1. The covenants that God made with Israel include the promise of an earthly kingdom (Abrahamic—Gen. 15:18-21; Davidic—2 Sam. 7:4-16; and New Covenant—Jer. 31:31-34).

1.4.3.4.2. These covenants are unconditional.

1.4.3.4.3. A glorious, intermediate kingdom is anticipated throughout the Bible:

1.4.3.4.3.1. In the Old Testament (Ps. 2, 21, 45, 72, 96, 110; Isa. 65:17-20; Zech. 14:17; Amos 9; and Micah 7:14-20, to name a few).

1.4.3.4.3.2. In the New Testament: (Matt. 19:28; 1 Cor. 15:22-28; Rev. 20:4-6).

1.4.3.5. *Critique:*

1.4.3.5.1. The Bible rarely refers to the millennium. Rev. 20 is the only passage in the Scriptures that explicitly mentions a thousand year reign. Jesus and Paul had much to say about last things, yet they never spoke explicitly about a thousand year reign.

1.4.3.5.2. Some fulfilled prophecies were not fulfilled very literally. The prediction that the Messiah would be preceded by Elijah was fulfilled by John the Baptist, not the actual, literal, Old Testament character.

1.4.3.5.3. An earthly millennium appears to be theologically superfluous. At the return of Christ, why not move directly into the ultimate state of the new heavens and the new earth?

1.4.3.5.4. Are dispensationalists making the same hermeneutical errors that misled 1st century Judaism? This question implies that premillennialism has a flavor that is too Jewish.

2. A Historical Overview of Millennial Views and Their Influences (Gundry: JETS, 1977; Kyle:1998,27-40; Kelly:1978,464-49)

2.1. The Patristic Era (1st-5th centuries): (*Predominantly Premillennial*)

“It is now almost universally recognized that the eschatology of the 2nd and 3rd century Church was in fact generally, though not exclusively, premillennial.”—Gundry: 1977, 46

2.1.1. Patristic premillennial expectations:

- 2.1.1.1. *Adherents: Papias, Polycarp, Irenaeus, The Epistle of Barnabas, The Shepherd of Hermas, Justin Martyr, Tertullian*

“I and every other completely orthodox Christian feel certain that there will be a resurrection of the flesh, followed by a thousand years in the rebuilt, embellished, and enlarged city of Jerusalem, as was announced by the prophets Ezekiel, Isaiah, and the others.”(emphasis added)—Justin Martyr (d.165): Dialogue with Trypho, 7-8.

- 2.1.1.2. *Beliefs: They held to—*

2.1.1.2.1. **A time of tribulation in which the Antichrist will rule.**

“When this Antichrist shall have devastated all things in this world, he will reign for three years and six months, and sit in the temple at Jerusalem; and then the Lord will come from heaven in the clouds, in the glory of the Father, sending this man and those who are following him into the lake of fire; but bringing in for the righteous the times of the kingdom, that the, the rest, the hallowed seventh day.”—Irenaeus: Adversus haereses, 5.28.3.

2.1.1.2.2. **A literal interpretation of Revelation 20:1-10 which distinguishes between the first and second resurrection.**

Irenaeus argues for a literal first resurrection and considers the intervening period of the Kingdom to be a time for “training for incorruption.”

“For as it is God truly who raises up man, so also does man truly rise from the dead, and not allegorically, as I have shown repeatedly. And as he rises actually, so also shall he be actually trained beforehand for incorruption, and shall go forwards and flourish in the times of the kingdom, in order that he may be capable of receiving the glory of the Father. Then, when all things are made new, he shall truly dwell in the city of God.”—Irenaeus: Adversus haereses, 5.35.2

2.1.1.2.3. **An intervening millennial kingdom inaugurated and ruled over by Christ.** Great emphasis on the material blessings of earthly Kingdom.

“The days will come in which vines shall grow, having each ten thousand branches, and in each branch ten thousand twigs, and in each true twig ten thousand shoots, and in every one of the shoots ten thousand clusters, and on every one of the clusters ten thousand grapes, and every grape when pressed will give twenty-five gallons of wine.....a grain of wheat would produce ten

thousand ears, and that every ear would have ten thousand grains, and every grain would yield ten pounds of clear, pure, fine flour; and that apples, and seeds, and grass would produce in similar proportions; and that all animals, feeding then only on the productions of the earth, would become peaceable and harmonious, and be in perfect subjection to man."—Papias (80-165): *Fragments of Papias*, 4 ANF.

"From heaven will descend the city in the first resurrection; this is what we may tell of such a celestial fabric. We shall arise again to Him, who have been devoted to Him. And they shall be incorruptible, even already living without death. And neither will there be any grief nor any groaning in that city. They shall come also who overcame cruel martyrdom under Antichrist, and they themselves live for the whole time, and receive blessings because they have suffered evil things; and they themselves marrying, beget for a thousand years. There are prepared all the revenues of the earth, because the earth renewed without end pours forth abundantly. Therein are no rains; no cold comes into the golden camp. No sieges as now, nor pillaging, nor does that city crave the light of a lamp. It shines from its Founder."—Commodianus (mid-3rd cent.): *Instructions*, 1.46. ANF

"Then they who shall be alive in their bodies shall not die, but during those thousand years shall produce an infinite multitude, and their offspring shall be holy and beloved by God; but they who shall be raised from the dead shall preside over the living as judges. But the nations shall not be entirely extinguished, but some shall be left as a victory for God, that they may be the occasion of triumph to the righteous, and may be subjected to perpetual slavery.

...the rocky mountains shall drop with honey; streams of wine shall run down, and rivers flow with milk: in short, the world itself shall rejoice, and all nature exult, being rescued and set free from the dominion of evil and impiety, and guilt and error. Throughout this time beasts shall not be nourished by blood, nor birds by prey; but all things shall be peaceful and tranquil. Lions and calves shall stand together at the manger, the wolf shall not carry off the sheep, the hound shall not hunt for prey; hawks and eagles shall not injure; the infant shall play with serpents."—Lactantius: *Divine Institutes*, 7.24 ANF

2.1.1.2.4. **A day-age theory that projected a soon return of Christ.**

Using 2 Peter 3:8 and believing that Christ had been born in the 6th millennium, some such as Justin Martyr argued that Christ should return before 500 AD.

- 2.1.1.3. *Motivations*: apocalyptic millennialism within the early Church is motivated by two factors—
- 2.1.1.3.1. **Pagan persecution from without.** For many, the sporadic assaults of the official Roman government are evidence that the end is near. Later, Ambrosiaster interprets the collapse of the Roman Empire as a sign of the Lord's soon return. (Kelly: 1978, 479)
- 2.1.1.3.2. **Gnostic heresy from within.** Irenaeus writes specifically to refute the Valentinians. The Gnostics taught that the flesh, made of matter, is intrinsically evil and cannot participate in salvation. The resurrection must be entirely spiritual. Tertullian argues against the Gnostics by pointing out that:
- 2.1.1.3.2.1. The body is God's handiwork
- 2.1.1.3.2.2. The Scriptures extol the body
- 2.1.1.3.2.3. God cannot abandon what the Son has assumed to himself.
- 2.1.1.4. *Eventual decline of millennialism*: (Kyle: 1998, 37-38)
- 2.1.1.4.1. **Unfulfilled expectations**: the anticipated events did not transpire. The Antichrist did not appear; Christ did not return.
- 2.1.1.4.2. **Discredited by the excesses of the Montanists**:
- 2.1.1.4.2.1. Acetic sect founded by a prophet, Montanus (later 2nd cent.) along with two prophetesses, Prisca and Maximilla. Strong emphasis on charismatic practices, such as speaking in tongues and prophesying.
- 2.1.1.4.2.2. Makes a litany of predictions that do not come true. Prophecies that Christ will return by the end of the 2nd century to set up the New Jerusalem in what is now modern-day Turkey.
- 2.1.1.4.3. **Political changes**: by the 4th century, Christianity changes from a persecuted sect to privileged religion. At the Council of Nicea, bishops who were once tortured by soldiers were now protected by them. Some wondered aloud if they living in the millennium.
- 2.1.1.4.4. **Establishment of a hierarchical ecclesiology.** The institutional church has little need for an apocalyptic vision of society.
- 2.1.1.4.5. **Shift to an allegorical approach to interpreting Scripture.** Premillennialism is based on a literal interpretation of Rev. 20. The ascendancy of an allegorical hermeneutic means the demise of millennial expectation.
- 2.1.2. **Patristic understanding of the intermediate state**: Irenaeus criticizes the Gnostic idea that upon death the soul goes immediately to God.

*“The souls [of Christians] go to an invisible place designated for them by God, and sojourn there until the resurrection.”—Irenaeus: *Adversus haereses*, 4.33.9*

Irenaeus, Hippolytus and Tertullian teach that only martyrs go directly to God at the time of death. Hill argues for a direct correlation between the patristic views of the intermediate state and the millennium.

2.1.3. **The theological innovations of Origen** (185-254): born in Alexandria; student of Clement.

2.1.3.1. *Origen’s motivations*: operates from a Neo-platonic philosophical framework.

2.1.3.1.1. **Presupposition of the inferiority of the material world.**

The earthy nature of the Bible, especially the OT and the apocalyptic literature, was embarrassing to Origen.

2.1.3.1.2. **Presupposition of the pre-existence of souls.** The Fall occurred prior to time and involved all moral creatures; the world was created as a place of punishment as a result of the Fall.

2.1.3.2. *Origen’s hermeneutic*: embraces the allegorical method of interpretation. Three levels of interpretation which correspond to body, soul and spirit:

2.1.3.2.1. **Literal** or fleshly interpretation, available to even the most crass and reprobate.

2.1.3.2.2. **Moral**: application of the ethical principles of the text.

2.1.3.2.3. **Spiritual**: allegorical method available only to the enlightened mind. This is the most important level.

2.1.3.3. *Origen’s innovations*:

2.1.3.3.1. **Rejection of millennialism.** This world was created to be a place of punishment, so why would the heavenly Kingdom reside here? Origen dismisses chiliasts as too lazy and too stupid to realize that Rev. 20 is symbolic.

2.1.3.3.2. **Rejection of a physical resurrection.** Interprets 1 Cor. 15:50 “flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God” to mean that the resurrection is entirely a spiritual event.

2.1.3.3.3. **Rejection of eternal punishment.** Teaches the “apokatastasis” of all things. The purpose of the hell is remedial. Even the devil will be eventually converted.

“When it is said ‘the last enemy shall be destroyed’ it is not to be understood as meaning that his substance, which is God’s creation, is perishes, but that his purpose and hostile will perishes; for this does not come from God but from himself. Therefore his destruction means not his ceasing to exist but

ceasing to be an enemy and ceasing to be death. Nothing is impossible to omnipotence, there is nothing that cannot be healed by its Maker....”—Origen: *de Principiis*, 3.4.5

“Origen is above all else a good liberal.”—Colin Gunton

2.1.3.3.4. **Advocates the eventual deification of the believer:**

“The intelligence which is purified and rise above all material things to have a precise vision of God is deified in its vision.”—Origen: *In John*, 32.27.338 (Kelly, 470)

Since true knowledge presupposes the union of knower and object, the divine gnosis of the saints culminates in their union with God. Origen’s doctrine of the deification of the believer will have a far-reaching impact with the Eastern Orthodox Church.

2.2. **The Medieval Era** (6th-14th centuries): (*Predominantly Amillennial*)

Three striking characteristics of Medieval eschatology: (1) the whole worldview seems static or fixed, (2) there is a lack of urgency, and (3) there is a willingness to speculate about specifics. (Hebblethwaite: 1984, 73)

2.2.1. **The Influence of Augustine** (354-430):

2.2.1.1. *The City of God: Augustine’s magnum opus.*

2.2.1.1.1. Presents an overarching philosophy of history.

2.2.1.1.2. Apologetic for the Church during the fall of the Roman Empire.

2.2.1.1.3. Acts as a blueprint for the prevailing worldview by establishing Neo-Platonism as the philosophical underpinning for the early Medieval period.

2.2.1.1.4. Establishes amillennialism as more or less the orthodox eschatological position.

2.2.1.2. *Rejection of premillennialism:*

2.2.1.2.1. **Augustine concedes he once held to premillennial views.**

“Now some have supposed, on the strength of this passage, that the first resurrection is to be a future and bodily one...Indeed, I myself once held this opinion.” (20.7)

2.2.1.2.2. **Augustine borrows heavily from Tyconius** (d. 390?) despite that Tyconius is an African Donatist who predicts Christ will return in 380 AD. (Erickson: 1977, 58-60)

2.2.1.2.3. **Augustine is put off by the emphasis of many chiliasts on the material blessings of the millennium.**

“This opinion would be tolerable enough if it involved the belief that the joys of the saints in that Sabbath are to be spiritual ones, arising from the presence of the Lord...But there are some who assert that those who are to rise again then will spend their rest at immoderate carnal feasts. These feasts are to be provided with quantities of food and drink which not only do not remain within the limits of moderation, but which also surpass belief itself. But such beliefs can only be held by carnal people.” (20.7)

2.2.1.3. *The reinterpretation of Revelation 20:*

2.2.1.3.1. **The binding of Satan (vs. 1-3):**

2.2.1.3.1.1. Satan is presently bound (vs. 1-2a) (based on Mark 3:27, *“But no one can enter the strong man's house and plunder his property unless he first binds the strong man”*)

2.2.1.3.1.2. The thousand years refers to the indefinite totality of the church age (vs. 2b).

“Now the thousand years, as it seems to me, can be understood in two ways. First, it may mean that these things are coming to pass now, in the final thousand years: that is, in the sixth millennium, which is, as it were, the sixth day...

Alternatively, he may have intended the thousand years to represent the whole number of years during which this world has been in existence, signifying the fullness of time by a perfect number. For the number one thousand is the cube of ten: ten times ten is a hundred, that is, a square but plane figure; but to give this figure height and make it a solid, the hundred is again multiplied by ten, which is one thousand. Moreover, one hundred is sometimes used to stand for totality, as when the Lord promised anyone who left all his goods and followed Him that he would ‘receive in the world a hundredfold.’ ...If this is so, then, does not a thousand, which is the square of ten made into a solid figure, represent totality still more completely?” (20.7)

2.2.1.3.1.3. The hearts of evil men are the bottomless pit (vs. 3a).

“Here, the bottomless pit signifies the innumerable multitude of the ungodly, in whose hearts there is a bottomless malignity directed against the Church of God. Not that the devil was not in them before; but he is said to be cast in thither because, when he is excluded from doing harm to believers, he begins to take possession of the ungodly all the more completely.” (20.7)

2.2.1.3.1.4. The setting of the seal refers to God's secret decree of election (vs. 3b).

“‘Shut him up’ means that the angel prevented the devil from going out and transgressing God’s commandments. And the addition of the words ‘and set a seal on him’ seems to me to indicate that God wished it to be kept a secret who belongs to the devil’s faction and who does not. In this world, this is indeed kept a secret; for it is uncertain whether he who now seems to stand firm shall fall, and whether he who now seems to lie fallen will rise.” (20.7)

2.2.1.3.2. **The reign of the saints (vs. 4-6):**

2.2.1.3.2.1. The saints reign now with Christ (v. 4).

“Therefore, the Church even now is the kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of heaven. Thus, even now the saints of Christ reign with Him, though not in the same way as they will reign hereafter.” (20.9)

2.2.1.3.2.2. The first resurrection occurs at baptism (v. 5)

“This first resurrection, however, is not the resurrection of the body, but of the soul...The one is according to faith, which ‘now is’ through baptism, and the other according to the flesh, which will come when the body is made incorruptible and immortal at the great and last judgment.” (20.6)

2.2.1.4. *This view is generally known as Amillennialism.* For hundreds of years following Augustine, all forms of millenarianism are regarded as radical aberrations. The Catholic Church suppresses Premillennialism. Attempts were made to revise the writings of Irenaeus and other Patristics.

2.2.2. **Development of the doctrine of Purgatory and the nature of the intermediate state.**

2.2.2.1. *The Catholic Church accepts the doctrine of Purgatory as official dogma at the Council of Florence (1439).*

“Also, if truly penitent people die in the love of God before they have made satisfaction for acts and omissions by worthy fruits of repentance, their souls are cleansed after death by cleansing pains; and the suffrages of the living faithful avail them in giving relief from such pains, that is, sacrifices of masses, prayers,

almsgiving, and other acts of devotion which have been customarily performed by some of the faithful for others of the faithful in accordance with the church's ordinances."

- 2.2.2.1.1. Based on Augustine's doctrine of infused justification.
- 2.2.2.1.2. Based on Thomas Aquinas' distinction between venial sin and mortal sin. Aquinas feels free to speculate on a number of issues (Hebblethwaite: 1984, 64-65):
 - 2.2.2.1.2.1. Proposes the doctrine of limbo for unbaptized infants.
 - 2.2.2.1.2.2. Suggests that the Final Judgment will be held in the Valley of Jehoshaphat.
 - 2.2.2.1.2.3. Works out the details concerning the resurrection of those eaten by cannibals.
 - 2.2.2.1.2.4. Understands the "beatific vision" to be a state of eternal wonder in the presence of God. It will never be tedious because the sense of awe always increases. *Summa Contra Gentiles*, 3.62.
- 2.2.2.1.3. The exception to belief in Purgatory is Pope John XXII, who teaches soul sleep in 1331 AD. His position is reversed by the next pope, Benedict XII in an official papal bull in 1336 AD.

2.2.3. **The speculations of Dante's Divine Comedy.** Dante Alighieri (1265-1321), Italian poet and philosopher. The Divine Comedy presents a vivid vision of the Medieval understanding of life after death. Set at Easter in the year 1300, Dante is guided by the pagan Roman poet Virgil into the bowels of the earth through Purgatory and Hell.

- 2.2.3.1. *Hell:* Hell has nine circles down to the center of the earth, where Satan dwells. Each level reflects the deepening degrees of evil. The entrance states, "*Abandon hope, all ye that enter here.*"
 - 2.2.3.1.1. **1st circle:** Limbo—where the unbaptized and virtuous pagans abide. Visited by Christ during his three days in the tomb when He freed the OT Saints. No torment, but there is grief.
 - 2.2.3.1.2. **2nd circle:** Domain of the Lustful. Many famous lovers there such as Cleopatra and Helen of Troy. All are constantly buffeted with a howling wind.
 - 2.2.3.1.3. **3rd circle:** Gluttonous wallowing in the mire.
 - 2.2.3.1.4. **4th circle:** Misers and spend thrifts roll rocks against each other.
 - 2.2.3.1.5. **5th circle:** Wrathful tearing at each other, while others lie sullen in the mud. This is the last realm of the upper hell. Next is the entry into the Nether Hell, across the river Styx, beyond the red-hot walls of the city of Dis. At this point, fire is encountered.
 - 2.2.3.1.6. **6th circle:** Heretics lie in burning tombs.

- 2.2.3.1.7. **7th circle:** Contains three rings for the violent- against others, themselves, and God.
- 2.2.3.1.8. **8th circle:** The ten trenches of the fraudulent; several popes are found there.
- 2.2.3.1.9. **9th circle:** Traitors are at the bottom of a deep abyss, plunged in ice, perpetually guarded by giants. At the center Judas, Brutus, and Cassius are eternally devoured by Satan.
- 2.2.3.2. *Purgatory:* Dante and Virgil emerge from the opposite side of the earth at Jerusalem and climb the mount of Purgatory.
- 2.2.3.2.1. **At the gate is St. Peter.** Outside the gate are the excommunicates and the late repentant.
- 2.2.3.2.2. **The seven terraces are for the removal of the seven deadly sins,** from pride to lust. At each level an angel commends the opposite virtue, from meekness to chastity.
- 2.2.3.2.3. **At the top of the Mountain is the Sacred Forrest, when Virgil can go no further.** His guide is now Beatrice, his childhood love who died in her youth.
- 2.2.3.3. *Heaven:* Dante and Beatrice ascend the nine concentric spheres of heaven, based on the Ptolemaic/Aristotelian understanding of the Cosmos.
- 2.2.3.3.1. **From the moon at 1st sphere to the prime mobile beyond the stars of the 9th Sphere,** Dante converses with blessed.
- 2.2.3.3.2. **At the 4th heaven of the Sun,** Dante converses with Aquinas about the mysteries of creation.
- 2.2.3.3.3. **At the 5th heaven of Mars,** he meets Charlemagne and Roland and is given a vision of Christ and the Cross.
- 2.2.3.3.4. **At the 6th heaven,** he encounters the just.
- 2.2.3.3.5. **At the 7th heaven,** he meets the contemplates.
- 2.2.3.3.6. **At the 8th heaven** he sees the Church Triumphant, the Virgin Mary, and the saints.
- 2.2.3.3.7. **At the 9th heaven,** the prime mobile. Dante is given a vision of the nature of time and creation.
- 2.2.3.3.8. **Beatrice then enters the Empyrean,** the highest heaven which encompasses all other, where she is transfigured. Dante then gazes upon the mystery of the Trinity.
- 2.2.4. **Resurgence of millenarianism** (Kyle: 1998, 45-54; Hebblethwaite: 1984, 66-70). The late Medieval era (12th-15th centuries) see two forms of apocalypticism—political and spiritual. However, unlike the patristic era, Medieval millenarianism expects dramatic changes before rather than after the return of Christ. This marks the beginning of Postmillennial thinking.
- 2.2.4.1. *Political millennialism:*

2.2.4.1.1. **Great interest in the tracts of the Tiburtine Sibyl (4th Century) and Pseudo-Methodius (7th Century)** which predict a last great Roman Emperor who defeats the enemies of Christ and establish a glorious reign of peace. Several Holy Roman Emperors claim to be the predicted leader.

2.2.4.1.2. **Fueled the Crusades of the 12th Century.** In 1228, when he conquers Jerusalem, Frederick II proclaims he is the fulfillment of these prophecies.

2.2.4.2. *Spiritual millennialism:* two significant examples—

2.2.4.2.1. **Joachim of Fiore (1132-1202):** Monk and visionary who rejects Augustine's understanding of the Church as the fulfillment of Rev. 20. Teaches a Trinitarian interpretation of history

2.2.4.2.1.1. Three dispensations. Age of the father- OT dispensation; Age of the Son- NT dispensation and Church Age; and Age of the Holy Spirit- Reformation of the church, conversion of the World, and universal peace.

2.2.4.2.1.2. Each age is 42 generations; therefore the Age of the Spirit is to occur about 1260.

2.2.4.2.1.3. Declares to Richard the Lionheart, "The Antichrist is already born in the city of Rome, and will be elevated to the apostolic see." Appears to be the first time the pope is identified as the Antichrist.

2.2.4.2.2. **The Spiritual Franciscans:** view their order as the fulfillment of Joachim's prophecies.

2.2.4.2.2.1. Identifies the Whore of Babylon with Rome and the Pope as the Antichrist. Their teaching will have a tremendous impact on the Reformation.

2.2.4.2.2.2. "The Spirituals" will be suppressed by John XXII in 1318.

2.3. Reformation Era.

2.3.1.1. Calvin and Luther denied the possibility of a future, literal one thousand year reign of Christ.

2.3.1.2. Radical Reformers such as Thomas Muntzer brought discredit to Premillennialism.

2.4. Post-Reformation Era: (*Predominantly Postmillennial*)

2.4.1. The Postmillennialism developed in 17th century by English Puritans.

2.4.1.1. *The Augustinian equation of the Kingdom and the church was dropped.* It would not be inaugurated by Christ's return, but rather consummated by His return.

2.4.1.2. *The optimistic view called “The latter day glory.”* The last period of world history would be marked by the coming of the Kingdom of God by the power of the spirit of God.

2.4.1.3. *All people would confess that Jesus is Lord.* Accompanying the outpouring of the Spirit would be the conversion of the Jews.

“In the mid-1600s, some even argued it that Jews ought to be readmitted to England, so that they would meet some of the godliest people on Earth (Puritans), be converted, and thus hasten the beginning of the latter day glory or millennium.”—Gundry: 1977, 48

2.4.1.4. *The influence of Satan in politics and religion would be broken.* The goal of nations was the preparation for and the bringing in of the latter day glory.

2.4.2. **American Postmillennialism:**

2.4.2.1. *The Puritans bring this doctrine to New England.* Jonathan Edwards and Charles Finney gave special place and development to postmillennialism. Both thought that the revivals seen in their day might be the beginning of the “latter day glory.”

“And, if these things be so, it gives us more abundant reason to hope that what is now seen in America, and especially in New England, may prove the dawn of that glorious day...”—Jonathan Edwards: 1742, 383

“If the Church will do all her duty, the millennium may come in this country in three years...If the Church would do all her duty, she would soon complete the triumph of religion in the world...If the whole church as a body had gone to work ten years ago, and continued it, as a few individuals, whom I could name, have done, there would not now be an impenitent sinner in the land.”—Charles Finney: 1835 (Murray: 1998, 37)

2.4.2.2. *Adherents:* Charles Hodge, Augustus Strong, many early Southern Baptists.

2.5. **Modern era: (Resurgent Premillennialism)**

2.5.1. **By the last quarter of the 19th century Postmillennialism was in decline.** (Pre-modern Premillennial adherents: John Milton, Thomas Goodwin, and Isaac Newton.)

2.5.2. **The Plymouth brethren were teaching dispensational Premillennialism by mid-nineteenth century.**

2.5.3. **By the early 20th century, Premillennialism was the leading eschatology among American evangelicals.**

2.6. **Various Influences That Affected Change:**

2.6.1. **From Premillennialism to Amillennialism:**

2.6.1.1. *The rise of the allegorical method of the Alexandrian school.*

2.6.1.2. *The extravagances of some of the Premillennialists.*

2.6.1.3. *The personal influence of Augustine on the history of theology, especially of The City of God.*

2.6.2. **Resurgence of Premillennialism:** The return to the grammatical historical method of interpretation.

2.6.2.1. *The influence of the Zeitgeist:*

“Time and again there seems to be a connection between eschatology and the church's perception of itself and its historical situation. Eschatology is a reflection of the current mood or zeitgeist or response to historical conditions. This suggests that factors other than purely exegetical and theological considerations have been more influential in the history of eschatology that we would care to admit.” (Gundry, 50-51)

2.6.2.1.1. **Persecution and Premillennialism:** The Early Church was periodically threatened with destruction by persecution.

2.6.2.1.2. **The Constantine Synthesis and Amillennialism:**

“Constantine had fulfilled the promise of Isaiah that henceforth swords should be beaten into plow shares, and the nations should learn war no more.” Some of the participants at the Council of Nicea who had survived great persecution just a few years earlier, wondered whether the kingdom of God had come or whether he was dreaming. They found it unbelievable to be filing through the ranks of Roman soldiers to sit down next to the emperor. “The dispossessed and the downtrodden are no longer dispossessed and downtrodden. God rules now.” (ibid.)

2.6.2.1.3. **The “Age of Reason” and Postmillennialism:**

"I would also like to tentatively suggest that it parallels and perhaps is a theological reflection of the optimistic views of mankind to potential and opportunities with an expanding geographical horizon and an ever-growing confidence in the powers of man's reason." (Gundry, 51)

19th century America understood itself as a secularized version of postmillennialism. The so-called "Manifest destiny" doctrine of 19th century America.

2.6.2.1.4. **The shock of war and the resurgence of Premillennialism:**

2.6.2.1.4.1. *19th Century:*

2.6.2.1.4.1.1. The Civil War brought disillusionment to many.

2.6.2.1.4.1.2. The influx of immigrants from Europe who were Catholic or worse shattered the dreams of a Christianized America.

2.6.2.1.4.1.3. The evils and inequities of industrialization and urbanization.

2.6.2.1.4.1.4. The "Life Boat Metaphor:"

"I looked on this world as a wrecked vessel. God has given me a life boat, and said to me, 'Moody, saved all you can.' God will come in judgment and burn up this world, but the children of God don't belong to this world; they are in it but not of it, like a ship in the water. This world is getting darker, and its ruin is coming nearer and nearer. If you have any friends of this wreck unsaved, you had better lose no time in getting them off."—Dwight L. Moody: 1877 (Gundry: 1977,52)

2.6.2.1.4.2. *The 20th Century:*

2.6.2.1.4.2.1. Two world wars and the Holocaust.

2.6.2.1.4.2.2. Economic depression and uncertainty.

2.6.2.1.4.2.3. The triumph of theological liberalism in the mainline denominations.

2.6.2.1.4.2.4. Ecological concerns.

2.6.2.1.4.2.5. Energy crisis in the 1970s. In the 1970s, most popular book was *The Late Great Planet Earth*.

2.6.2.1.5. **Conclusion:** social and political conditions to not determine our eschatology. But they do influence us greatly and make a susceptible to embracing certain hermeneutical presuppositions.

3. Significant Issues (Bock: 1999, 277-310)**3.1. Hermeneutical Integration Issues:**

- 3.1.1. **Issues of pre-understanding:** the theological ideas that we take as a given, whether we have examined them carefully or not. Preunderstandings are not necessarily wrong, but they have the tendency to make other options seem odd to us and inherently wrong.
- 3.1.1.1. *Simplicity:* Occam's Razor is sometimes applied to eschatology by Amillennialists. At the same time, Premillennialists claim the simplicity of a literal hermeneutic.
- 3.1.1.2. *God's Sovereignty:* Postmillennialists often argue that God's sovereignty over creation guarantees His victory in history. Premillennialists and Amillennialists understand Christ's victory to be primarily in the next age.
- 3.1.1.3. *Apocalyptic Genre:* How one understands this genre goes a long way to determining what position one takes concerning the millennium. Four ways to interpret Apocalyptic literature, (particularly the Book of Revelation) (Erickson: 1977, 30)
- 3.1.1.3.1. **Idealist** (or symbolic): the symbols or events it describes will not come to pass in any particular time in history. Rather, they represent timeless truths that are true throughout the church age.
- 3.1.1.3.2. **Futurist:** the events described shall occur at the end of the age.
- 3.1.1.3.3. **Historicist:** the events described occur over the entire age of the church.
- 3.1.1.3.4. **Preterist:** the events described are occurring at the time of writing and the prophecies have already been fulfilled.
- 3.1.1.4. *Time Terminology:* Many non-premillennialists contend that the events prophesied in the NT must have occurred in Jesus' generation (Matt. 24:34). Therefore they conclude that the destruction of the Temple in AD 70 was the "coming of Jesus." However, texts like 2 Peter 3:8-9 convey a strong sense of delay.
- 3.1.1.5. *The Nature of Eternity:* Does the NT update the earthly visions of the OT concerning the consummation of all things? If so, then the a-/post- position follows. If not, and if the consummation of all things comes in stages, then the Biblical picture seems to portray some type of premillennialism.

3.1.2. The Relationship of the Old Testament to the New Testament Texts:

- 3.1.2.1. *Post-/a-: The NT serves as an explanatory and determinative commentator on the OT.* Therefore:
- 3.1.2.1.1. Israel has been fully incorporated into the church. In the light of further revelation, this must impact how the OT is now read.
- 3.1.2.1.2. What was said about Israel now applies to the church. This means that a literal hermeneutic is impossible.

“This is perhaps the strongest argument for these [postmillennial and amillennial] schools, for it is an internal scriptural argument. The case has not been taken seriously enough by premillennialists until the middle of this century.”—Bock: 1999, 290

- 3.1.2.2. *Pre-: The NT serves as a complementary expansion of the OT.*
Premillennialists take two approaches:
- 3.1.2.2.1. Classic and Revised Dispensationalism: Israel always means ethnic Israel. The NT texts that apply OT texts to the church do so only by analogy based on future fulfillment in Israel or by indirect application with ultimate fulfillment in Israel.
- 3.1.2.2.2. Historic Pre- and Progressive Disp.: There are degrees of direct, initial OT fulfillment in the church, but because this fulfillment is “already/not yet,” the present fulfillment supplies only a piece of what is ultimately alluded to in the OT. Though historical premillennialists are less clear than the others, all premillennials agree [arguing from texts such as Romans 9] that God has plans for ethnic Israel in the future. Most will argue that ethnic Israel will have an administrative role in the Kingdom.

3.1.3. **Typology:** crucial component in understanding how the OT is fulfilled in the NT.

- 3.1.3.1. *Level of fulfillment:*
- 3.1.3.1.1. **Post-/a-: The OT is completely fulfilled in the church.**
Example: Heb.8-10 show that the typology of OT worship are “shadows” of realities that now have come and never to be resumed. Therefore, texts such as Ezek. 40-48 are elaborate metaphors for genuine worship in the church. There will be no future earthly temple.
- 3.1.3.1.2. **Pre: It is better to take texts on a case-by-case basis, assessing how typology works in one text or instance at a time.**
- 3.1.3.2. *Types as patterns:* How does typology permit present and future events to be addressed simultaneously in the “pattern” that the typology represents. The essence of typology is that it creates a “representative”

description of reality that may appear in a fresh form at a later date (Example: The Abomination of Desolation). Other examples:

- 3.1.3.2.1. Olivet Discourse: both A- and pre- agree that there are elements of typology that point to future events.
 - 3.1.3.2.2. Day of the Lord: A primary example acknowledged by all. It can refer to events in Joel's time while also picturing how the Final Judgment will come.
 - 3.1.3.2.3. Image of the Beast: 1st century Rome at one level and yet related to the world power at the end.
- 3.1.3.3. *Discussion of two events at once as one event:* One event "mirrors" another event in sharing the same pattern (Isa. 7:14, or the destruction of the temple).
- 3.1.4. **The Role of Israel:** The fundamental question is whether Israel has been reconstituted in the Church. If the Church is reconstituted Israel, then is there a future for ethnic Israel is God's plan?
- 3.1.4.1. *Premillennialists argue that the Bible teaches that Christ will rule the nations from Jerusalem* (arguing from Rom. 11 and that the OT promises to Israel are yet future).
 - 3.1.4.1.1. Historical pre-: The millennial kingdom is a continuation of the Church.
 - 3.1.4.1.2. Dispensational pre-: The millennial kingdom is the nation of Israel reestablished.
 - 3.1.4.2. *Some A- and Post- have begun to consider the possibility of a massive Jewish conversion in the end times* (based on Rom. 11)
- 3.1.5. **The Role of the Book of Revelation:**
- 3.1.5.1. *A-/Post-:* Revelation merely develops symbolically what Scripture has already established about the future.
 - 3.1.5.2. *Pre-:* Revelation is the key book for futuristic eschatology because it is devoted to the topic.
- 3.1.6. **The Issue of Metaphysical Dualism:**
- 3.1.6.1. *Is an earthly, physical kingdom inherently inferior to a heavenly, "spiritual" kingdom?* How much has Platonic thought affected the thinking of the Church in this area?
 - 3.1.6.2. *If eventually there will be a New Heavens and a New Earth, why should Heaven be seen as superior?*

- 3.1.7. **The Fact and Nature of the Millennium:** Does the Scripture teach that there will be an intermediate, earthly Kingdom that we call the Millennium?

“In many ways, this is the basic ultimate question.” (Bock: 1999, 299)

3.2. Textual Hermeneutical Issues:

- 3.2.1. **The nature of apocalyptic literature:** It is important to understand that apocalyptic literature was an ancient genre that the audience of that day would have been familiar with and would have understood it for what it was. There was a number of apocalyptic works in the New Testament era (1 Enoch and 4 Ezra, for example)
- 3.2.2. **The role of numbers in apocalyptic literature:** All agree that certain numbers in Revelation has a symbolic significance (4, 3, 12, and multiples of these, but especially 7). Should the number 1000 in Rev. 20 be seen as in a similar way? A-/Post- argue that their meanings are entirely symbolic, while Pre- argues that the numbers refer to literal entities that have symbolic significance (For example: the Israel in the Wilderness for 40 years and Jesus in the Desert for 40 days).

3.3. Basic Structural Implications:

- 3.3.1. *Basic worldview and the impact on one's practice:*
- 3.3.1.1. *Postmillennialism:* Most optimistic and has the most ambitious agenda growing out of its view. The church is seen as being called to declare and establish God's sovereignty over all social-political-religious structures on earth. Post- see the Church as having a full-blown cultural mandate. Theonomic Post- is the clearest expression of this today.
- 3.3.1.2. *Amillennialism:* Shares the Post- view of God's sovereignty but combines that with a view of human depravity in the world that results in a less triumphant view of the Church than the Post- view. However, many A- denominations have tended to function within the context of a state church.
- 3.3.1.3. *Premillennialism:* The world is driving towards ever-increasing depravity. Tends to split into two types with both agreeing that there is a special role for national Israel in God's future plans.
- 3.3.1.3.1. **Separatist Pre-:** Christians should focus on the “spiritual” dimensions of the church's call. Engagement with the world should be limited to expressions of personal humanitarian outreach with an explicit evangelistic goal.
- 3.3.1.3.2. **Engaged Pre-:** Similar outlook with A-. The church will not achieve overall victory, but still should reflect the wholeness

of salvation in every part of life. However, the Pre- still see a separateness between church and state that most Post- and A- do not. Pre- view a state church with skepticism and as a compromise of the prophetic role of the church in a fallen world.

3.4. The fundamental corporate eschatological question—Is there an intermediate earthly kingdom? Is the end:

3.4.1. A gradual improvement where the church ushers in a gradual improvement (Postmillennialism)?

3.4.2. An apocalyptic act of Christ that moves us directly into eternity (Amillennialism)?

3.4.3. A catastrophic judgment followed by an earthly rule of Christ (Premillennialism)?