

REDEEMING THE TIME

"Redeeming the time, because the days are evil" (Ephesians 5:16).

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America and the Bible

BY MARK W. EVANS

In the early 1900s, German theological philosophers attacked the infallibility, inerrancy and authority of the sacred Scriptures as well as the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith. Sadly, many American theologians and ministers embraced these false teachings. This theological plague spread to virtually every major denomination and seminary. The liberal agenda could not have succeeded without the cooperation of compromising Evangelicals who provided enough votes for a majority. Today we reap the grim results. Our downgrade began with the undermining of the authority of the Word of God.

It might help to remember how our country began. On December 26, 1620, a small remnant of Bible believing Pilgrims anchored in Plymouth Harbor. They were so grateful for the privilege of worshipping God according to the Scriptures that they refused to return to England after losing one half of their number during the first winter. When in England, these "Separatists" had repented of their sins, believed in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and desired to obey the Bible. However, the Church of England viewed their independence as a serious threat. These humble believers searched the Scriptures and learned that numerous practices and teachings of the state church had no warrant from the

"The Lord has providentially brought us to this time when the 'enemy [has] come in like a flood.' We have comfort in our Lord's promise, 'the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him' (Isaiah 59:19)."

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"Show me thy ways, O LORD; teach me thy paths." PSALM 25:4

As we witness the continuing breakdown of our society, those who seek to live their lives according to Biblical principles find that they are confronted with increasing hostility. We are told that religious liberty and freedom of conscience must give way to whatever evil the world tells us we must accept. Apostate churches often join the world in attacking Bible believers — hurling such epithets as "bigot" and "hater" against them. Compromising evangelicals once again rush to blur the lines of Biblical truth.

The Bible leaves no doubt as to how we are to believe and act in such circumstances. In Psalm 25, David cried out unto God for protection against his enemies, but prayed (in verse 4) as we should pray: "Show me thy ways, O LORD; teach me thy paths."

One of the "ways" of God is to show great love for the sinner. May we always be a loving witness to those who are in bondage to sin!

But, David also says, "Lead me in thy truth, and teach me: for thou art the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day" (Psalm 25:5). Increasingly we are being called on not only to tolerate sin, but to "celebrate" it. This the child of God can never do! We cannot budge an inch in believing to be sin that which God declares to be so.

Despite what persecution may come, may we be steadfast in "loving the sinner, but hating the sin." We cannot compromise on either of these commands of God. May our light so "shine before men"! •

THE DIVISION OF 1937

Between the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and the Bible Presbyterian Church

PART 8

Premillennialism

BY BRAD K. GSELL

It is important to have read Parts 1 through 7 of this series, which have been published in successive issues since the winter 2014 issue of Redeeming the Time. They serve as the general background for understanding this segment and those to come. These may be found on our website (www.rttpublications.org), or we would be glad to mail copies to you. Within a few years of its founding, the Presbyterian Church of America changed its name to the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Therefore, you will see these names used interchangeably in these articles.

Closely connected with the controversy concerning “Modern Dispensationalism” was the subject of the Second Coming of Christ. The early leaders of the Bible Presbyterian Church disavowed any allegiance to a dispensationalism which would violate the unity of the Covenant of Grace, yet their Premillennialism created controversy. This has resulted in a wide array of historical inaccuracy being recorded, particularly as the years have passed.

This article will of necessity include some discussion of various doctrinal points, but the prime focus will be to set the historical facts in context and to dispel some prominent myths.

Is Eschatological Study Important?

The venerable theologian Charles Hodge, in his preliminary remarks on Christ’s Second Advent in his three-volume *Systematic Theology* states: “This is a very comprehensive and very difficult subject.... It has excited so much interest in all ages of the Church, that the books written upon it would of themselves make a

“My Christian brethren, let us work while it is day. Let us enter into the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ, bearing many precious sheaves. We know not the day nor the hour of His appearing. May we be found ready.”

Allan A. MacRae

library. The subject cannot be adequately discussed without taking a survey of all the prophetic teachings of the Scriptures.... The author [Hodge], knowing that he has no such qualifications for the work, purposes to confine himself in a great measure to a historical survey of the different schemes of interpreting the Scriptural prophecies relating to this subject.”¹

Bible Presbyterian scholar Allan A. MacRae wrote about eschatology: “When there is such diversity of opinion as to what the future holds, the average person might well throw up his hands and confess he is unable even to make a reasonable guess as to what is ahead. In fact, so great is the number of possibilities, and so many are the factors that enter into them, that no human being can forecast the future with any certainty. Attempts to do so in the past have nearly always failed.... No human being can pierce the veil that hides the future. The only one who can tell what lies ahead is the One who has created all things and who holds the future in His hand.”²

MacRae by no means was indicating that one should not study what the Bible teaches concerning eschatology. In fact, MacRae himself, known for his Old Testament scholarship, studied these matters in great detail and wrote much concerning them.

The study of eschatology is indeed very important. The Westminster Shorter Catechism Question 3 asks: “What do the Scriptures principally teach? The Scriptures principally teach, what man is to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of man.” EVERY part of God’s Word requires our diligent study. However, there are some matters, although extremely important,

concerning which godly men have disagreed.

1 Corinthians 13:12 states: “For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.” Matthew Henry says concerning this verse: “Now we can only discern things at a great distance, as through a telescope, and that involved in clouds and obscurity; but hereafter the things to be known will be near and obvious, open to our eyes; and our knowledge will be free from all obscurity and error.”³ As both Hodge and MacRae indicate, the study of this subject calls for a great measure of godly humility.

It also should be remembered that, although God has revealed certain things very clearly in His Word, He has not chosen to reveal EVERY fine detail. In fact we are told this throughout Scripture concerning various aspects of Christ’s Second Coming. Matthew 24:36 tells us: “But of that day and hour *knoweth no man*, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.” Paul, in discussing these things, prefaces it by stating: “Behold, I shew you a *mystery*” (1 Corinthians 15:51-52) (emphases in these verses are mine). Men get into trouble when they speculate and seek to force Bible teaching into some manmade system — as helpful as some of those systems may be.

Carl McIntire strikes a good balance when commenting on the many speculative writings produced on the subject in the last half of the 20th century. McIntire wrote: “But let us not do that. Let us go only as far as we can clearly go, and when we cannot go any further, we will wait and the Lord will give us more light. But there are some things about these end days that we have plenty of light on....”⁴

A Brief Overview of Eschatological Views Since the Time of Christ

Throughout the past millennia, there have been various views on this

subject, with countless variants within each view. Early belief in Premillennialism has been detected in the Epistle of Barnabas, written in the decades following the death of Christ (100 AD or earlier), although some dispute that this view is taught. The views of the early church fathers were quite varied, but there were many who would clearly fall in the

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Carl McIntire

category of being Millennialists or Premillennialists. Some claim this to have been the predominant view.

It is interesting that in his *Dialogue With Trypho*, Justin Martyr (c. 100-165 AD) indicated that he respected and accepted those with different views. In what in modern translations is numbered and titled as “Chapter LXXX: The opinion of Justin with regard to the reign of a thousand years,” Justin states: “I admitted to you formerly that I and many others are of this opinion [of Christ ruling in a literal Millennium], and [believe] that such will take place, as you assuredly are aware; but, on the other hand, I signified to you that many who belong to the pure and pious faith, and are true Christians, think otherwise.”⁵

Even though the writings of some early church fathers are no longer extant, though many are only preserved in fragments, though discussions on these matters are relatively few, and though some language is vague, it can be demonstrated that Millennialism/Premillennialism was

very much present in the early days of the church. In fact noted church historian Philip Schaff states: “The most striking point in the eschatology of the ante-Nicene [100-325 AD] age is the prominent chiliasm, or millennarianism, that is the belief of a visible reign of Christ in glory on earth with the risen saints for a thousand years, before the general resurrection and judgment.”⁶

The Rise of Amillennialism

Although some detect what today would be called Amillennial views very early in the church, it seems that this interpretation of Scripture gained significant ground starting just prior to the beginning of the third century AD. As the centuries rolled past, Amillennialism (perhaps with some influence by tenets of Postmillennialism) became the most widely accepted view, particularly after its espousal by the great Augustine in the fourth century AD. After that time, it became the predominant view of most of Western Christianity and was held by many of the Protestant Reformers.

Within the centuries following the Reformation, Premillennialism began to see a resurgence. Many developments occurred in the 19th and early 20th centuries in eschatological studies. Prior to the 20th century, most theologians separated the millennial positions into just two main divisions: Premillennialism (often called Chiliasm⁷) and the belief that Christ’s coming would take place at the end of the age, when one general resurrection would immediately occur with no intervening millennial period. The present distinctions between Postmillennialism and Amillennialism were usually discussed as variants of this one main view.

Without knowledge of this fact, the student of history may become bewildered to find well-known min-

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isters and theologians listed as Amillennial on one writer's list and Postmillennial on another. Even today, the eschatological positions of various prominent theologians and ministers are often confused. Premillennialists are likewise frequently to be found labeled as "Dispensational Premillennial" or "Historic Premillennial" on different lists. Part of this problem is the attempt to force a man's views into one pre-established framework or another. Just because a man may hold to some minor point does not always warrant wider assumptions to be made about his overall views. Rather than just discussing each person's actual beliefs, there is the tendency to force everyone into one system or another. Thus, a man may be listed under a category where he would never place himself.

Postmillennialism in the 19th and Early 20th Centuries

During the 19th century in America, many Christians, including Presbyterians, were Postmillennial. It was the predominant view at Princeton Theological Seminary. The immense missionary enterprise saw thousands going to the ends of the earth, like at no time in human history. The churches became very prosperous, with huge structures in the finest of architecture being built. Leaders in the churches were also influential in the great institutions of society: government, academia, culture, etc. Most of what are now ivy league colleges were established by churches and Christians, and heavily influenced by them.

Frenchman Alexis de Tocqueville visited America in 1831. Upon his return, he wrote: "... there is no country in the whole world in which the Christian religion retains a greater influence over the souls of men

than in America; and there can be no greater proof of its utility, and of its conformity to human nature, than that its influence is most powerfully felt over the most enlightened and free nation of the earth."⁸ All these things, and others, fit in well with the Postmillennial belief that things would get better and better, the world would be Christianized, and a long period of peace and righteousness would usher in the second advent of Christ.

The Modernists of the late 19th century and early 20th century adopted their own Postmillennial view, conforming with their belief that the social gospel and the advances in industry, health, travel, etc., would make the world a better place — largely through increased human knowledge and reason. A number of Bible-believing Postmillennialists remained into the 20th century. They held the view of Hodge and others that the preaching of the Gospel and the work of the Holy Spirit would bring about this time of increasing peace and righteousness before Christ would come back. J. Gresham Machen and other noted defenders of the Faith are listed in their number.

Premillennialism in the 19th and Early 20th Centuries

The 19th century also saw a great renewed interest and belief in the historic Premillennial position. In addition, a modified form of Premillennialism was adopted and popularized by those who would later be called Dispensationalists. Nearly all of these Dispensational Premillennialists were fierce opponents of Modernism and, virtually without exception, believed that the Bible was the inerrant Word of God. With the rise of Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism in the 20th century, with the aid of the widely popular Scofield Bible and the growing Bible College movement, Premillennialism

gradually became the most prominent view among those holding to the inerrancy of Scripture. Even with disagreement over Dispensationalism, these Bible-believers were considered great friends by Machen and others who were fighting against Modernism.

The 20th century was not so kind to the Postmillennial view. World War I saw the utter devastation of large areas of the West, with millions dying. No war had ever been fought on such a far-reaching and brutal scale, and it certainly could not be seen as moving things in the direction of universal peace and righteousness.

In the 1920s, Biblical orthodoxy began to crumble in the great mainline denominations, with sound men of God being forced out of their churches and other places of influence. By the end of the 1930s, Bible believers found themselves largely "without the camp." Instead of being at the pinnacles of influence and power in society, they now found themselves almost as a subculture.

The Great Depression sent many into despair in the 1930s and then World War II arrived with even more devastation, carnage and brutal inhumanity. World War I paled in comparison. These events fit much better with the Premillennial view that the world would get worse and worse, until the great coming of Christ before a literal Millennium. Only at that time would Satan be bound and Christ would rule on earth with His saints for a thousand years of peace and righteousness.

The 20th century also fit with the Amillennial view. The Amillennialists agreed with the Postmillennialists that Christ's coming to receive His saints would be a single event at the very end of the age, with no intervening Millennial Kingdom. However, they were much more in agreement with Premillennialists that the time before Christ's return would see the work of Satan very much intact.

Eschatology at Westminster Seminary

It is clear that J. Gresham Machen did not share the Premillennial views of many of his friends, but he gladly worked with them. He often emphasized that he had not made a special study of eschatology. In his 1923 book *Christianity and Liberalism*, Machen wrote: “The recrudescence of ‘Chiliasm’ or ‘premillennialism’ in the modern Church causes us serious concern; it is coupled, we think, with a false method of interpreting Scripture which in the long run will be productive of harm. Yet how great is our agreement with those who hold the premillennial view! ... Christian fellowship, with loyalty not only to the Bible but to the great creeds of the Church, can still unite us with them.”⁹

The Premillennialists just as strongly believed that to hold the Amillennial view required principles of interpretation which allowed for an

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J. Gresham Machen

(who held to the Postmillennial view)

unwarranted amount of spiritualizing, allegorizing and interpreting as figurative things which they believed should be taken literally. Yet, they agreed with Machen that their areas of agreement were very great and that they could enthusiastically unite with Postmillennialists and Amillennialists in loyalty to the Scriptures and the great creeds of the church in serving hand in hand.

THE MAIN MILLENNIAL VIEWS:

Following are basic definitions of the three main Millennial views. Hopefully this will serve as an aid as you encounter these terms throughout this article. These definitions are taken from *The Millennium*, a full-length book on the subject by Loraine Boettner.

- **Amillennialism:** That view of last things which holds that the Bible does not predict a “Millennium” or period of worldwide peace and righteousness on this earth before the end of the world. Amillennialism teaches that there will be a parallel and contemporaneous development of good and evil — God’s kingdom and Satan’s kingdom — in this world, which will continue until the second coming of Christ. At the second coming of Christ the resurrection and judgment will take place, followed by the eternal order of things — the absolute, perfect Kingdom of God, in which there will be no sin, suffering nor death.
- **Premillennialism:** That view of last things which holds that the second coming of Christ will be followed by a period of worldwide peace and righteousness, before the end of the world, called “the Millennium” or “the Kingdom of God,” during which Christ will reign as King in person on this earth [with His saints].... They all agree in holding that there will be a millennium on earth *after* the second coming of Christ but *before* the end of the world.
- **Postmillennialism:** That view of last things which holds that the Kingdom of God is now being extended in the world through the preaching of the Gospel and the saving work of the Holy Spirit, that the world eventually will be Christianized, and that the return of Christ will occur at the close of a long period of righteousness and peace commonly called “the Millennium.”

Machen himself acknowledged that he could “see that from chapter 37 to 39 of Ezekiel it might appear that there is to be a period of blessedness under the immediate reign of Christ, followed by a rebellion of Gog and Magog, such as is thought to be referred to in Revelation 20:7-10. But I believe these Scriptures are capable of another interpretation.”¹⁰

Likewise, Premillennialist J. Oliver Buswell stated that “[Charles] Hodge is, in my opinion, the greatest of theologians, and the greatest writer of systematic theology the church has had. His position is Postmillennial. Although his arguments against the Premillennial view are all answerable with cogent evidence and arguments, I have long urged my students that they should not feel satisfied in their Premillennial position until they have thoroughly read and, in their own minds, answered Hodge’s arguments.”¹¹

Historically, proponents of various eschatological positions were ordained within the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. Each openly taught his position, pointing out strengths and weaknesses he saw in other views,

yet all worked closely together within the same denomination. Princeton Seminary likewise had professors of great esteem who held — and taught — various positions representing all three of the major views.

Dr. H. McAllister Griffiths stated the position which was clearly also held by Machen: “By common consent historic Presbyterianism has agreed that the question of whether the return of our Lord is to be pre-, post- or amillennial is something not included in the Calvinistic or ‘Reformed’ system of doctrine.”¹²

So, it was quite natural that, from its beginning, Westminster Theological Seminary had professors and members of the Board who held differing eschatological viewpoints. Although most of the Westminster professors were Amillennial, Paul Woolley and Allan A. MacRae — both who were well-known Premillennialists — were actively recruited to teach at the new school. MacRae claims that before his departure to lead Faith Theological Seminary in 1937, he was not aware of anyone who saw a

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big difference between his views on the matter and those of Paul Woolley.

However, ever since MacRae's departure from Westminster, those in the OPC have often criticized MacRae as being a "Dispensational Premillennialist," while holding that Woolley was a "Historic Premillennialist." MacRae is often criticized in modern historical accounts as if he departed from what are acceptable "Reformed views." Yet, it should be remembered that he presented his strong Premillennial views from the time he was a student at Princeton Seminary. In 1925, he gave a message on Premillennialism. In it he stated: "I have no apology to make for presenting tonight the subject of the second coming of our Lord.... If we find that we come within the category known as Premillennialists, let us accept the title."¹³ He states that he could see no warrant for the Amillennial position in Scripture and uses the phrase "unwarranted optimist" in reference to Postmillennialism.¹⁴ Even the matter of the Pre- and Post-Tribulation positions was mentioned. He also preached a sermon at Princeton Seminary in 1927 on "The Second Coming of Christ,"¹⁵ which touched on some of these same themes.

Within a year or so after he was so enthusiastically compelled by Machen to join the Westminster faculty, MacRae wrote: "It is very strange that the idea should have arisen that the premillennial interpretation of Revelation 20 is not in accord with the best scholarship. As a matter of fact, not only have many of the most outstanding scholars of the New Testament been convinced that this is the correct interpretation of the passage, but some have even gone so far as to say that no other interpretation is possible."¹⁶ He concludes by saying: "... to regard the premillennial

interpretation of it [Revelation 20] as unscholarly is utterly impossible."¹⁷ He also prepared notes throughout his time at Westminster on the subject. Be assured that Dr. Machen and most others knew exactly the position that MacRae took on Premillennialism and his views on the timing of events surrounding the Second Coming of Christ — both before and after he was asked to join the Westminster faculty.

The Influence of the Christian Reformed Church

When the Orthodox Presbyterian Church was founded in June 1936, it brought together those with various views, with eschatological differences not being the least of these. Men who held solidly to the Scriptures and the Westminster Confession of Faith enthusiastically joined together against the great menace of Modernism. Several professors at Westminster Seminary, of Dutch Reformed background, exerted a major influence as the new church began to set its course. These included Professors Ned B. Stonehouse, R.B. Kuiper and Cornelius Van Til. They were strongly Reformed in their theology, but their backgrounds were different in some important respects from the practices and beliefs of the Presbyterian Church as it had developed in the United States.

Only three months after the formation of this denomination, Westminster Professor R.B. Kuiper, still a minister in the Christian Reformed Church, wrote an article in his denomination's magazine, *The Banner*, extolling the virtues of the new Presbyterian Church of America (OPC). This article was soon largely reproduced in the *The Presbyterian Guardian*.¹⁸

Immediately under the title, the author was identified as "The Rev. Professor R.B. Kuiper of Westminster Theological Seminary." A preface by the editors read: "In this important article, which is reproduced

slightly abridged from *The Banner*, organ of the Christian Reformed Church, Professor Kuiper justifies the formation of The Presbyterian Church of America [OPC] and indicates certain conditions which he thinks must be fulfilled if the church is to have a future as a truly Reformed body."¹⁹

Kuiper wrote: "The General Assembly [of the OPC] had the privilege of examining several graduates of Westminster Seminary for licensure and ordination. It would have warmed the cockles of the heart of any Christian Reformed minister to hear how closely they were questioned about the two errors which are so extremely prevalent among American fundamentalists, Arminianism and the Dispensationalism of the Scofield Bible. The Assembly wanted to make sure that these prospective ministers were not tainted with such anti-reformed heresies.

"All of which goes to show that synod [of the Christian Reformed Church] used no vain words when it spoke of 'the tie that binds us in the propagation and defense of our common Reformed faith.'"²⁰

As we've mentioned in previous installments, a number of men affiliated with the OPC took exception to Professor Kuiper's article, and it created turmoil in the new church. Carl McIntire, particularly, has been severely criticized over the decades for his response in an October 1, 1936, editorial in the *Christian Beacon*, simply entitled "Premillennialism." McIntire found in Kuiper's article an attack on Premillennialism, when Kuiper nowhere mentioned the term. The *Guardian* defended Kuiper and publicly criticized McIntire, saying that the article was not an attack on Premillennialism.

However, the concerns of McIntire and others may not have been so unfounded after all. Much of the historical context, very pertinent to these events, goes unreported in virtually all of the countless discussions

of these two articles. The very publication where Kuiper's article first appeared, *The Banner*, was well known for using the terms "Dispensational" and "Premillennial" almost as synonyms. The present common distinction between "Historic Premillennial," and "Dispensational Premillennial" was seldom if ever delineated.

Christian Reformed leader Herman Hoeksema had written some years before in this same magazine, *The Banner*: "Accept the doctrine of the covenant, and Premillennialism becomes an impossibility."²¹ Later, in the same article, he wrote: "Premillennialists have an entirely different view of history than the Reformed people."²² Hoeksema and others criticized common Dispensational errors, but often attributed them to Premillennialism without distinction. Patrick Baskwell, writing in *Herman Hoeksema: A Theological Biography*, maintains that "Hoeksema's own view was that Premillennialism was false doctrine."²³ Hoeksema was deposed from the Christian Reformed Church a few years after writing these things, over an unrelated issue, but it appears that the views he expressed held wide currency in that denomination.

The Premillennialists who were to become Bible Presbyterians were quite familiar with a well publicized case in the Christian Reformed Church, beginning in 1918. Rev. Harry Bultema had been deposed by his classis (similar to the presbytery in the Presbyterian Church). Although Bultema held to some views of the church which would be similar to those held by some Dispensationalists, The Christian Reformed Church describes his "error" as trying to "graft premillennialism into Reformed theology."²⁴ Upon Bultema's deposition there were legal battles over church property and eventually a number of ministers and churches gathered to form the Berean Reformed Church.

H. McAllister Griffiths, after commending the Christian Reformed Church for a number of things, stated concerning that denomination that "eschatalogically its background is sharply distinct from that of American Presbyterianism. It is frigid, if not hostile, to premillennialism. It is that background which these brilliant men [professors at Westminster Seminary] have brought with them, and which they have sincerely and successfully commended to their students in the Seminary."²⁵

Even today, the Christian Reformed Church describes itself as "generally amillennialist in its eschatology and especially in its interpretation of the book of Revelation."²⁶ Just 16 years before the founding of the OPC, the Christian Reformed Church had officially adopted a brief statement which its website describes as "reject[ing]" "dispensationalism and some facets of Premillennialism."²⁷ It is noteworthy that it does NOT say "dispensational premillennialism," but instead sees its rejection of BOTH "dispensationalism" AND "some facets of premillennialism."

Understanding these facts, and others, is crucial to understanding why the Premillennialists in the OPC had such great concerns.

Premillennialism and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church

Shortly after the founding of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, the *Presbyterian Guardian* stated on its front page that "the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms teach not the Premillennial view but a view that is opposed to the Premillennial view..."²⁸ However, the editors further stated that they believed Premillennialists could be accepted into the OPC, and that a man who held such a view could still "honestly say that he holds the system of doctrine that the Standards contain."²⁹ They further commented that they believed that the fears of Premillen-

"[Charles] Hodge is, in my opinion, the greatest of theologians, and the greatest writer of systematic theology the church has had. His position is Postmillennial. Although his arguments against the Premillennial view are all answerable with cogent evidence and arguments, I have long urged my students that they should not feel satisfied in their Premillennial position until they have thoroughly read and, in their own minds, answered Hodge's arguments."

J. Oliver Buswell

nialists were unfounded in thinking that "their view may suddenly be regarded by anyone in the Church as a heresy unfitting them for ordination...."³⁰ Despite this, many Premillennialists felt the actions of certain men contradicted or at least threatened what was publicly being stated. Carl McIntire wrote: "This attack has proceeded in various ways — most frequently in indirect ways...."³¹

The situation was a matter of concern at the OPC Second General Assembly in November 1936, so much so that the *Philadelphia Inquirer* carried an article about it. It stated in part: "A charge that the assembly had 'side-stepped' the issue of pre-millennialism was made by Rev. J.U. Selwyn Toms, of Wenonah, N.J., yesterday afternoon after resolutions expressing the denomination's attitude on the doctrine had

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been tabled in the morning. Dr. Toms declared the ‘covering up of the question will be a source of danger.’

“Protest against the church’s refusal to guarantee tolerance of the doctrine was recorded in the minutes by Rev. Milo Jamison, of Los Angeles, Calif. ‘Nothing short of some such constitutional safeguard,’ he declared, ‘could set at rest rumors that pre-millennialists are not welcome in the Presbyterian Church of America.’”³²

The Premillennialists in the OPC felt that their beliefs were Biblical, and quite acceptable within the Reformed system of doctrine, since examples of Premillennialism are found in the early church and throughout American and European Presbyterianism. Robert Baille, one of the Westminster Divines, in a letter to Mr. William Spang, September 5, 1645, stated that “most of the chief divines here [at the Westminster Assembly], not only Independents, but others such as Twisse, Marshall, Palmer, and many more, are express Chiliasts.”³³ It is of note that William Twisse, who Baillie identifies as an “express Chiliast,” was the prolocutor (the presiding officer) of the Westminster Assembly. A number of reputable accounts declare him to be a Premillennialist, but there is no doubt that he at least believed in a literal Millennium.

There are many other notable Premillennialists in Reformed history. Horatio and Andrew Bonar, and Robert Murray McCheyne are a few 19th century examples, although their Church — the Free Church of Scotland — was not Premillennial.

Even the faculty of Princeton Seminary included Professor Charles R. Erdman, while Machen taught there. He was a noted Premillennialist, and had written the article on “The Coming of Christ” in *The Fundamentals: A Testimony to Christ*. In

it, Erdman discusses 2 Peter 3, Isaiah 65 and 66, and Zechariah 14. He concludes this discussion by stating: “There are other positive statements of Scripture which intimate that the millennium *follows* the coming of Christ” (emphasis ours).³⁴

Erdman, however, urged harmony among those with different views, showing that even in the *Fundamentals*, namesake of the Fundamentalist movement, room was given for Postmillennialism and Amillennialism! He stated: “However great the divergence of views among students of prophecy may seem to be, and in spite of the many varieties of opinion among the representatives of the two schools which have been mentioned in passing, the *points of agreement* are far *more important*. The main difference is as to the order, rather than as to the reality of the events.... This is therefore a time, not for unkindly criticism of fellow Christians, but for friendly conference; not for disputing over divergent views, but for united action; not for dogmatic assertion of prophetic programs, but for humble acknowledgement that ‘we know in part’; not for idle dreaming, but for the immediate task of evangelizing a lost world.”³⁵

Unfortunately, Erdman did not stand when the Modernist-Fundamentalist controversy arose. He opposed Dr. Machen, who insisted that there could be no leniency in requiring that the Bible and the system of doctrine found in the Westminster Standards be adhered to by all those ordained in the Presbyterian Church. Apparently “troubling Israel” was more to be opposed than apostasy from the Word of God!

A Change Following Dr. Machen’s Death

After Dr. Machen’s death, the Amillennialists on the faculty of Westminster became much more zealous in their promotion of Amillennialism and denunciation of Pre-

millennialism. In the last few months of his life, Dr. Machen had promoted the nomination of Premillennialist J. Oliver Buswell to be the Moderator of the Second General Assembly of the OPC (November 1936), and had very cordially communicated with him about an article Buswell wrote for the *Presbyterian Guardian*, entitled “A Premillennialist’s View.”³⁶ In that article, Buswell even declared his agreement with John Murray against some of the views of Lewis Sperry Chafer of Dallas Seminary.

Only seven issues of the *Guardian* later, immediately after Machen’s untimely death, Professor John Murray wrote a blistering attack in an article entitled “Dr. Buswell’s Premillennialism.”³⁷ It should be remembered that Buswell had just been elected Moderator of the Second General Assembly of the OPC, and would be playing a major hand in the plans for the upcoming Third Assembly in June 1937. Murray was not to join the OPC until three months after the appearance of his article — just days before the opening of the Third Assembly.

Murray’s article was not just an honest discussion of differences, but was a personal assault, accusing Buswell of willful misrepresentation, gross unfairness, inconsequential scholarship, carelessness and so forth. Surely Murray had every right to question and discuss some of the arguments Buswell put forth in his writings, but no credible historian can possibly think that Murray’s article would ever have seen the light of day in the *Guardian* — at least not without major revision — had Machen still been alive. The editors of the *Guardian* did allow Buswell to make a reply in a later issue — but not until they had taken their pens to the manuscript and edited out things which they found to be objectionable. Dr. Murray was given the last word, which included further ridicule.

A Premillennialist's View

By the REV. J. OLIVER BUSWELL, Jr., D.D.
President of Wheaton College

[EDITOR'S NOTE: We are happy to publish this article from the pen of Dr. Buswell. While some of the opinions which are expressed in it

temporal consummation of His redemptive program. Very able scholars have argued to the contrary. I have no

that there are any in The Presbyterian Church of America or in our true con-

Dr. Buswell's Premillennialism

A Review by JOHN MURRAY

UNFULFILLED PROPHECIES by J. Oliver Buswell, Jr., D.D., President, Wheaton College, Wheaton, Ill., Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan. 95 pages.

much more careful and less dogmatic than many others who believe in the millennial reign. For example, in his interpretation of the parable of the

what we should naturally expect. Nowhere is it said of Jesus that He contributed towards His own resurrection." And then in answer to Dr. Vos,

With Professors Kuiper and Murray joining the OPC very shortly before its Third General Assembly, the Premillennialists saw no other outcome than that the move at Westminster Seminary would now become even more of a problem in the church.

H. McAllister Griffiths, writes: "I can testify to sufficient effort expended upon me (unsuccessfully) by amillennial faculty members to know that they regarded premillennialism as being a deadly error little short of heretical, and as involving principles of Biblical interpretation which were, as *they* believed, 'unreformed.' ... [It became] perfectly apparent that if premillennialists only would remain quietly in the Presbyterian Church of America [OPC], they would shortly be — let us state it frankly — a despised minority in an aggressively amillennialist church. In this respect Westminster Seminary is plainly not carrying on the spirit of the old Princeton. Nor, by the same token, is the Presbyterian Church of America [OPC] carrying on the long tradition of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A."³⁸

A few years later, Carl McIntire described that time in a speech at Faith Seminary: "... after the death of Dr. Machen, to the bewilderment of others there came to the fore an intolerance of those who believed in the premillennial return of Jesus Christ.... Then there was a harsh intolerance for various opinions.... The Seminary was going to present the 'Biblical view,' which they held to be amillennialism...."³⁹

Dr. Allan A. MacRae, resigned from the faculty of Westminster just a few months after Machen's death. In his letter of resignation, he was quite forthright with his reasons. He stated: "... within the Seminary, teachers in various departments assailed the truth of the Premillennial return of Christ so that strong pressure is brought to bear upon the students to give up this doctrine. No place whatever is offered in the courses required for graduation for an adequate defense of this doctrine by one who holds it. Every instructor in any department which could properly give any great amount of time to examining the important New Testament evidence regarding Premillenni-

alism is hostile to the doctrine. There is no opportunity for giving any comprehensive defense at all comparable to the measure in which it is assailed. Yet publicity, both in religious publications and in letters of administrative officials, gives the utterly false impression that no special attack is made upon this view. Although the department of Systematic Theology devotes many lectures to assailing Premillennialism, persons officially connected with the Seminary publicly represent the matter as of comparatively small importance. Under these circumstances there remains no choice to one who accepts the Biblical teaching. I cannot allow my own presence as a Premillennialist who is also a professor in the Seminary to act any longer as a smoke screen to hide the real situation...."⁴⁰

Although many at the time declared the Premillennialists' concerns to be baseless, more recent writings by OPC historians John R. Muether and D.G. Hart seem to give credence to at least some of the assertions made by these Premillennialists. In

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the OPC's official journal, *New Horizons*, Muether and Hart write: "There was a sense in which the fundamentalists were right. After all, premillennialism had been part of the American Presbyterian heritage, and had been represented at Princeton Seminary at least since 1905, when Charles Erdman joined the faculty. Van Til especially struggled to understand how premillennialism could command a following in a self-consciously Reformed church. 'This is not the historical attitude of the Reformed churches,' he wrote to his friend John DeWaard. 'In the Dutch tradition at least those holding the premillennial view were merely *geduld* [tolerated].'"⁴¹ Interestingly enough, the *Presbyterian Guardian* of March 13, 1937, condemned the *Sunday School Times* for claiming that Westminster Seminary's attitude towards Premillennialism was one of "mere tolerance" — the very phrase used by Professor Van Til in the letter just quoted, and confirmed in recent years by OPC historians Hart and Muether!

Hart and Muether add further confirmation to what the Premillennialists of the time had stated. They write: "The leaders of the OPC fully embraced the teaching of amillennialism as the view on Christ's return most consistent with Scripture. Unlike premillennialists, who looked to Christ's second coming as the beginning of his thousand-year reign, and postmillennialists, who believed Christ would return at the end of a thousand-year period of prosperity for the church, amillennialists, as John Murray explained, held that Christ's second coming would mark the end of this age and the beginning of 'the eternal age, when the kingdom of God will have been consummated.' That age would not be a literal millennium nor would it be the reign of God on earth. Instead, Christ's sec-

ond coming, or the 'day of the Lord,' would be eternal and would bring the dissolution of the present heavens and earth, thus inaugurating the new heavens and new earth prophesied in II Peter 3:14 [*sic*]." ⁴²

The Bible Presbyterian Church and Premillennialism

While still a member of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and the head of the Department of Old Testament at Westminster Seminary, Dr. Allan MacRae preached a message on "The Millennial Kingdom of Christ." It was delivered at the Calvary Presbyterian Church of Germantown (OPC; near Philadelphia) on March 7, 1937, and published in the *Christian Beacon*.⁴³

With the attacks being made on Premillennialism within the OPC, MacRae laid out his defense of Premillennialism. He did not pull any punches. He quoted noted Bible scholar Henry Alford and others who insisted that Revelation 20 must be understood as teaching Premillennialism. MacRae continued: "If one comes to the Bible to see what it teaches, instead of trying to force a preconceived interpretation upon it, I do not believe that any other interpretation is possible."⁴⁴ One thing was clear. Whether others agreed with MacRae's conclusions or not, he was seeking to get his theology from his study of the Scriptures, not by simply accepting some grand Dispensational scheme, as many of his detractors have wrongly claimed.

MacRae believed that there was indeed much figurative language used in Scripture concerning the Second Coming of Christ, but saw in Amillennialism a danger of "mak[ing] a clear break with the plain meaning of words, and us[ing] principles which can make anything mean anything."⁴⁵ Of course, the Amillennialists denied this and likewise laid out reasons for their views.

When the First General Synod of the Bible Presbyterian Church met in September 1938, the delegates made changes to several sections of the Westminster Confession of Faith and Larger Catechism to teach the Premillennial return of Christ. They did not seek to tie things down in great detail, allowing for liberty on many points. The timing of the "Rapture" (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17) in relation to the "Great Tribulation" (Matthew 24:21) and was not mentioned.

The new body was immediately criticized by some in the OPC for the fact that it had made changes to the Confession. Others specifically condemned the changes as they related to eschatology. Edwin Rian pronounced: "Thus, in a few months the three hundred-year-old Westminster Confession of Faith, which had been in harmony with the whole Presbyterian and Reformed tradition concerning the second coming of Jesus Christ, was hastily changed to conform exclusively to Premillennialism."⁴⁶

Certainly, great pause should be taken before changing such a time-honored Confession. But what Rian fails to mention is that the Westminster Confession was changed in several significant respects by the Presbyterian Church in the USA in the 1700s, and the OPC itself had accepted two deletions from the Confession made by the PCUSA in 1903, and also deleted a phrase from Larger Catechism question 109. This, of course, bears no relevance as to the appropriateness of the Bible Presbyterian Church action, but it does show that the OPC itself adopted many changes to the original Confession, and appeals to the sanctity of the "three hundred-year-old Confession of Faith" are not borne out by its own example!

Sadly, Rian returned to the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. in the late 1940s, and apparently had no problem remaining when that body adopted the radical Confession of 1967, and relegated the Westminster

RESOLUTION ADOPTED BY THE FIRST GENERAL SYNOD OF THE BIBLE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Photographically reproduced from the Minutes — Wednesday, September 7, 1938

On motion the following resolution was adopted:

"WHEREAS this General Synod has adopted changes in the Confession of Faith and the Larger Catechism which bring our doctrinal standards into harmony with the pre-millennial view of that blessed hope, the second coming of our Lord; and

"WHEREAS although we hold this view to be taught in God's Word, we yet recognize that there are sincere Christians who hold to other views of the events which shall accompany our Lord's return but who nevertheless are one with us in receiving the system of doctrine taught in the Bible and stated in our doctrinal standards;

"THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this General Synod declares that subscription to our doctrinal standards upon the part of all office-bearers shall be understood as leaving them and our churches and members free to hold any eschatological view which includes the visible and personal return of our Lord to earth, and which is not otherwise inconsistent with the system of doctrine of the Bible and the Confession of Faith and Catechisms of this Church."

Confession almost to relic status. Rian's defection was of course a sad turn of events to ALL those who had stood with Dr. Machen.

Liberty in the Bible Presbyterian Church Concerning Eschatological Views

Although the Bible Presbyterian Church was now on record as being a Premillennial church, it is important to note that at the First General Synod a resolution was adopted unequivocally welcoming those who held other views. The concluding paragraphs state: "Whereas, although we hold this [Premillennial] view to be taught in God's Word, we yet recognize that there are sincere Christians who hold to other views of the events which shall accompany our Lord's return, but who nevertheless are one with us in receiving the system of doctrine taught in the Bible and stated in our doctrinal standards; Therefore Be It Resolved that this General Synod declares that subscription to our doctrinal standards upon the

part of all office bearers shall be understood as leaving them and our churches and members free to hold any eschatological view which includes the visible and personal return of our Lord to earth, and which is not otherwise inconsistent with the system of doctrine of the Bible and Confession of Faith and Catechisms of this Church."⁴⁷

Resolutions do not hold force beyond being the position of a particular Synod, yet it certainly must be recognized that words coming from the inaugural session of any group should be given great weight and should not easily be dismissed. Since this resolution was made at the same time the Premillennial changes were adopted, it clearly reflects the position of those adopting the Constitution of the Church.

Shortly after the First Synod, Carl McIntire published an article by H. McAllister Griffiths which discussed this resolution. Griffiths wrote: "... while the Bible Presbyterian Church is thus distinctly a pre-millennial Church, it has not made

the ghastly mistake of withholding fellowship or communion from those Christian brethren who have not yet come to see the doctrine, or who may never come to see it — *on earth*. It welcomes into its fellowship and into its ministry those who may hold other views, so long as those views are not contrary to the system of doctrine of the Bible as it is set forth in the Confession.... In the Bible Presbyterian Church the standards are premillennial, but non-premillennialists have liberty."⁴⁸

Through the decades to follow, different presbyteries within the Bible Presbyterian Church saw some levels of fluctuation as to how strict they were on the matter of receiving those with non-Premillennial views. However, for most of the denomination's existence there have been those who were Amillennial and there has been at least one Postmillennialist.

One possible reason for fluctuations, even within the same presbytery, was the belief that liberty would

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be given to other views, but vocal opposition to Premillennialism in the courts of the Church would not be acceptable. If a man was not Premillennial, but could live at peace with those who were Premillennial, it was one thing. There would be no limits placed on his belief and respectful teaching of his views. But, he should not enter the church believing Premillennialism to be a heresy and seek to change it.

Some of this thinking can be seen in a statement Dr. MacRae made concerning his view on ordaining those who did not hold to Premillennialism. He stated first his belief that Premillennialism 1. promoted evangelistic zeal and 2. best followed the rule of accepting the words of the Scriptures literally, unless it is clearly indicated to be figurative or allegorical. He also indicated that he had 3. problems with those whom he said he had seen who had “bitter hatred” against Premillennialism. MacRae continued: “I feel that these three areas should be carefully investigated. If a man is satisfactory on other points of doctrine, and if no serious objection is found in any of the three areas I have mentioned, then I would not be against ordaining him.”⁴⁹

In this writer’s own experience, the moderator of the old South Atlantic Presbytery of the Bible Presbyterian Church for 29 years(!) was an Amillennialist. Other Amillennialists have held and continue to hold key leadership roles in the church. Premillennialists and Amillennialists have worked hand in hand with every measure of mutual love, respect and cooperation.

Are Bible Presbyterians “Historic” or “Dispensational” Premillennialists?

Very frequently, Bible Presbyterians have been labeled as “Dispensational Premillennialists” by even well

“... while the Bible Presbyterian Church is thus distinctly a premillennial Church, it has not made the ghastly mistake of withholding fellowship or communion from those Christian brethren who have not yet come to see the doctrine, or who may never come to see it — on earth. It welcomes into its fellowship and into its ministry those who may hold other views, so long as those views are not contrary to the system of Doctrine of the Bible as it is set forth in the Confession.... In the Bible Presbyterian Church the standards are premillennial, but non-premillennialists have liberty.”

H. McAllister Griffiths

meaning writers. Much of this is due to the fact that many Bible Presbyterians have believed that there would be a “first resurrection” at the time of the events of 1 Thessalonians 4:17,18, in what Matthew Henry (not a Premillennialist) calls “this rapture into the clouds.”⁵⁰ Since this view is held by virtually all Dispensationalists, detractors have been quick to make the leap of lumping Bible Presbyterians into this category. Further, Bible Presbyterians, much like Dr. Machen, have continued to consider Dispensationalists to be Christian brothers in the battle against apostasy, and thus have fellowshiped and worked with them.

When seeking the truth on such a matter, the first place one should go is to a group’s doctrinal stand-

ards. The Bible Presbyterian Church did amend the Confession of Faith and Larger Catechism to make Premillennialism the official position of the church. However, one will find no reference to the place where Christ’s coming would fall in relation to the “Great Tribulation.” Among some of the founders, Drs. MacRae and McIntire taught the pretribulation rapture view, Dr. Buswell the midtribulation position and Dr. Laird held to a posttribulation rapture.

Thus, from the beginning there were those with all three of the main viewpoints. As with any denomination, some may be found with ideas on one matter or another which some may question, but the official doctrinal position of the Church and its main leaders did not hold a view of last things which would involve the main objectionable tenets held by many Dispensationalists.

MacRae and others largely gave weight to a Pretribulation rapture because they saw in it the best explanation of the many Bible verses which teach the imminence of the Lord’s return — that it could take place at any moment and at a time when it would be least expected.

But, MacRae was quick to state: “You know you can spend time trying to figure: Is the rapture going to be in the middle of the week; is it going to be the beginning of the week? Is it going to be the end of the week? Look at this obscure verse or that obscure verse. Try to compare them and figure. People spend hours and days working on such things. But a dozen times we have it stated, ‘In such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.’ And that ought to settle the matter. There is no known recognizable event that must precede the coming of the Lord for His own.”⁵¹

MacRae and others believed that the teaching that Christ would come when He was least expected would be hard to understand if the rapture were to take place in the middle of the Tribulation, at its end, or at the

end of the Millennium, because men could quite well be able to determine when His coming would take place. “Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.” (Matthew 24:42-44). He will come as “a thief in the night” (1 Thessalonians 5:2).

Carl McIntire wrote concerning such verses that they “kept the church in keen conscious anticipation of the reality that He might come at any moment. The full impact of ‘watch’ and ‘be ye ... ready’ keeps the Church expectant, hopeful, and triumphant. The Apostle Paul explained: ‘What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?’” (1 Thessalonians 2:19).⁵²

Dr. MacRae did not consider the matter of the timing of the Rapture to really be part of the Premillennial position. He wrote: “People may take various views about other questions, such as the time of the rapture, but most of these views ... are not a part of the essential question. The same is true of the question whether God still has a place for Israel in His plan. While I have strong views on some of these other matters, I do not consider them to be part of the discussion of premillennialism.”⁵³

When this writer was a student at Faith Theological Seminary, I sometimes had the privilege of talking privately with Dr. Lynn Gray Gordon, president of The Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions. On one such occasion, he stated that his view was nearly identical to the one stated by MacRae in the previous paragraph.

As to the relationship of Israel to the church, MacRae writes: “... there

are people today who say ‘isn’t it terrible if somebody equates Israel and the church?’ and other people who say ‘isn’t it terrible if somebody makes a distinction between Israel and the church?’ and both are wrong. The Scripture teaches that the Christian church is the continuation of the Israel of God. The Scripture teaches also that the nation of Israel, the physical nation of Israel, continues to have a place in God’s plan, and will eventually all be brought back into the olive tree of His testimonies. So they are both wrong. ‘Israel’ is used in two senses.”⁵⁴ This view is consistent with that of many Reformed men throughout history.

“The full impact of ‘watch’ and ‘be ye ... ready’ keeps the Church expectant, hopeful, and triumphant. The Apostle Paul explained: ‘What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?’ (1 Thessalonians 2:19).”

Carl McIntire

Although highly regarded as a scholar, MacRae often wrote with great humility concerning the matter of the timing of the Rapture and fully believed that there is much that we do not know or properly understand. He was sharply critical of how some feel they must force everyone into a specific system. He argued that systems may be valuable in helping one to avoid contradictions and to be consistent, but that one should approach the subject by careful exegesis of what the Bible actually says, not by approaching Bible study from the prism of one system or another.

At another place, MacRae writes: “... it must be admitted that many parts of the section between [Revela-

tion] chapter 7 and the middle of chapter 19 are difficult to interpret precisely, since this portion deals with events that will take place between the Rapture and the coming of Christ to earth with His saints. Conditions at this period may be different in many ways from anything that any of us have experienced; therefore it is necessary to use many symbols in presenting them. It is interesting to try to understand exactly what all this material means, but part of its significance may well remain obscure until the time of its fulfillment is at hand.”⁵⁵

MacRae held special criticism for those he thought were trying to prove too much. In an article entitled “When Is the Rapture?” MacRae writes: “I was rather irritated the other day when I was presented with a book called *The Rapture: Pre-, Mid- or Posttribulational?* There is a book of over 200 pages written by four men discussing, trying to prove whether the rapture is pretribulational, midtribulational or posttribulational.”⁵⁶ He continued: “Suppose that in 10 B.C. some men said: ... ‘Let us construct the order of [Christ’s] life.’ I am sure they would have found where He would be born. They would have found about the wonderful supernatural nature of His birth. But when they got into trying to figure out the details of His life, I do not believe that anyone would have made a plan of details that would have fit very closely with the actual events that occurred.”⁵⁷ In more recent years, an increasing number of Bible Presbyterians have taken the Posttribulational view.

Another reason some are quick to equate Premillennialism with Dispensationalism is because some Dispensationalists believe there will be a return to animal sacrifices during the Millennium, as a literal reading of Ezekiel 43-46 might suggest. Many find this idea to be quite problematic.

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MacRae writes concerning this: “Occasionally one hears an interpreter who declares that there cannot be a millennial kingdom because, he says, if one is to take the prophecies about the Millennium literally he will have to believe that the Book of Ezekiel predicts a reestablishment of animal sacrifices such as were made in Jerusalem before 70 A.D. This objection is really rather absurd. If it should be God’s will to reestablish sacrifices as a means of looking back to the sacrifice of Christ on the cross, just as in the days before Jesus’ first coming they looked forward to His sacrifice, the fact that some human being might not like this is no reason for rejecting the clear Biblical teaching about Christ’s Millennial kingdom. It should be pointed out, however, that this part of Ezekiel is one of the more difficult passages of Scripture. We cannot be one hundred percent sure what it means. It may very well mean something quite different than that sacrifices will be reestablished in the Millennium. In any case, to give it as an objection to belief in the Millennial kingdom is as foolish as if one were to say that he did not like Washington, D.C., and therefore would not believe that the United States existed.

“It is a good rule in interpreting Scripture, as in making progress in any line of study, to see what is clear, and then to explain what is obscure by what is clear, rather than to attempt to explain away what is clear by what is obscure.”⁵⁸

Of course MANY other things have been involved with these discussions, which simply cannot be included in the peruse of this article.

A Belief in the Future Unity of the Covenant of Grace

As was discussed at length in Part 7 of this series, the main objec-

tion involved with the system commonly referred to as Dispensationalism is that many teach divisions in how God works in various periods which do violence to the unity of the covenant of grace. MacRae, Buswell, McIntire, Griffiths and others rejected any notion that their Premillennialism was “Dispensational.”

Dr. MacRae puts any doubt to rest as to his position. He clearly extends the unity of the covenant of grace through the Millennium. He states: “... The Scripture definitely teaches that anyone who is ever saved, be it in the time of Adam and Eve, be it among the Israelites, be it during the present age, be it during the Millennium, anyone who is ever saved is saved by the gospel of grace.”⁵⁹

“... The Scripture definitely teaches that anyone who is ever saved, be it in the time of Adam and Eve, be it among the Israelites, be it during the present age, be it during the Millennium, anyone who is ever saved is saved by the gospel of grace.”

Allan A. MacRae

Dr. Buswell, in his *Systematic Theology*, likewise states very clearly: “God’s plan of salvation by grace alone through faith is the only plan, the necessary plan whereby salvation can come to members of Adam’s race. For these reasons I feel that the final rebellion at the end of the millennial kingdom of Christ, so far from being a problem, is indeed the climax and final vindication of the hopeless impossibility of any other plan.”⁶⁰

Interestingly enough, Postmillennialist Gary North (of Christian Reconstruction fame), wrote: “There are very few historic (as opposed to

dispensational) premillennialists writing or preaching today. The two most famous ones in this century [the 20th century] have been Carl McIntire, who in his nineties is still writing as I write this, and his one-time disciple and subsequent defector, Francis A. Schaeffer, who died in 1985.”⁶¹

Wayne Sparkman, Director of the Historical Center of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) once responded clearly to an inquirer: “Most BP men were historic premill.”⁶² The Historical Center is preserving the majority of the files of both Drs. MacRae and Buswell, which discuss many of these issues.

Why Most of the Founders of the Bible Presbyterian Church Believed the Doctrine of Premillennialism Was Important

These men saw the doctrine of the Premillennial Second Coming of Christ as a great comfort, hope and challenge to be busy about their Master’s work. They particularly saw Christ’s reign on this earth, during a thousand year period, as being the teaching of the Scriptures, and they could see no reason not to understand it literally.

Dr. MacRae concluded his message on the Second Coming of Christ, in Germantown so many years ago, by challenging the congregation: “My Christian brethren, let us work while it is day. Let us enter into the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ, bearing many precious sheaves. We know not the day nor the hour of His appearing. May we be found ready.”⁶³ That in a nutshell — no matter which eschatological position one might hold — should be our focus as we study the events of the last days in the Scriptures. May we not study just to satisfy our curiosity, but may we seek to be faithful servants, to be ready for His coming, as we look for that “blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13). •

¹Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. III, Part IV, Chapter III (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1981), p. 790.

²Allan A. MacRae, "What Is Ahead for the World?" (Interdisciplinary Biblical Research Institute, 1970), p. I-2.

³Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, Vol. VI (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company, nd), p. 576.

⁴Carl McIntire, "The Battle of Armageddon" (Collingswood, NJ: Christian Beacon Press, 1967), p. 3.

⁵Justin Martyr, *Dialogue With Trypho*, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: The Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325*, Vol I, Chapter 80 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1867-1873).

⁶Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, Vol. II (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1910), p. 614.

⁷That term has sometimes been used to include Postmillennialism.

⁸Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, ed. Bruce Frohnen, "Causes Which Maintain Democracy," (Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, Inc., 2002), pp. 241-242.

⁹J. Gresham Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism*, Page 48. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1946), p. 48.

¹⁰J. Oliver Buswell, *A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion* (Singapore: Christian Life Publishers, 1994), p. 498 of Book 2.

¹¹*Ibid.* p. 496.

¹²H. McAllister Griffiths, "Since the Syracuse General Assembly, Part V," *Christian Beacon*, September 2, 1937, p. 2.

¹³Allan A. MacRae, "Premillennialism" (Interdisciplinary Biblical Research Institute, December 10, 1925), p. 2.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, p. 8.

¹⁵Allan A. MacRae, "The Return of Christ" (Interdisciplinary Biblical Research Institute, 1927).

¹⁶Allan A. MacRae, "Appendix Note on Revelation 20," (Interdisciplinary Biblical Research Institute, c. 1930), p. 1.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, p. 4.

¹⁸R.B. Kuiper, "Why Separation Was Necessary." *The Presbyterian Guardian*. September 12, 1936, pp. 225-227.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, p. 225.

²⁰*Ibid.*, p. 227.

²¹Herman Hoeksema, *The Banner*, Christian Reformed Church, 1918:844.

²²*Ibid.*

²³Patrick Baskwell, *Herman Hoeksema: A Theological Biography* (Manassas, VA: Full Bible Publications, 2009), p. 121.

²⁴Christian Reformed Church website (crcna.org), Eschatology, History.

²⁵H. McAllister Griffiths, "Since the Syracuse General Assembly, Part V," *Christian Beacon*, September 2, 1937, p.7.

²⁶Christian Reformed Church website (crcna.org), Eschatology, History.

²⁷*Ibid.*

²⁸"Premillennialism," *The Presbyterian Guardian*, October 24, 1936, p. 1

²⁹*Ibid.*

³⁰*Ibid.*

³¹Carl McIntire, "Premillennialism," *Christian Beacon*, October 1, 1936, p. 4.

³²"Fundamentalists Stick Close to Law of Pre-Split Body," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, November 15, 1936.

³³Robert Baillie, *Letters and Journals, Written by the Deceased Mr. Robert Baillie, Principal of the University of Glasgow*, Vol. II (Edinburgh: for W. Gray and J. Buckland, 1775), p. 156.

³⁴Charles Erdman, "The Coming of Christ," *The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth*, Vol. II, (Chapter 22 of original volume IV) (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2003), p. 311.

³⁵*Ibid.*, p. 312.

³⁶J. Oliver Buswell, "A Premillennialist's View," *Presbyterian Guardian*, November 14, 1936, p. 46.

³⁷John Murray, "Dr. Buswell's Premillennialism," *The Presbyterian Guardian*, February 27, 1937, p. 206.

³⁸Griffiths, *Christian Beacon*, September 2, 1937, p. 2.

³⁹McIntire, *Christian Beacon*, October 2, 1941.

⁴⁰"Professor MacRae Leaves Westminster Seminary," *The Presbyterian Guardian*, May 15, 1937, p. 50.

⁴¹D.G. Hart and John R. Muether, "Turning Points in American Presbyterian History Part 10: 1936: A Continuing Presbyterian Church," *New Horizons*, November 2005.

⁴²D.G. Hart and John R. Muether, *Fighting the Good Fight: A Brief History of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church* (Philadelphia: Committee on Christian Education and Committee for the Historian, Orthodox Presbyterian Church, 1995), p. 45. (The authors apparently intended to refer to 2 Peter 3:10-12, instead of verse 14).

⁴³Allan A. MacRae, "The Millennial Kingdom of Christ," *Christian Beacon*, March 18, 1937, pp. 3,4,7.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*

⁴⁵*Ibid.*

⁴⁶Edwin H. Rian, *The Presbyterian Conflict* (Willow Grove, PA: Committee of the Historian of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, reprinted in 2013 [originally published in 1940]), pp. 168,169.

⁴⁷*Minutes of the First General Synod of the Bible Presbyterian Church*, Collingswood, NJ, September 1938, p. 10.

⁴⁸H. McAllister Griffiths, "Impressions of the First General Synod," *Christian Beacon*, September 15, 1938, p. 3.

⁴⁹Allan A. MacRae, *Biblical Christianity: The Letters from Professor Allan A. MacRae, PhD* (Singapore: Christian Life Publishers, 1994), p. 194.

⁵⁰Henry, p. 786.

⁵¹Allan A. MacRae, "The Rapture," Prophetic Conference at the Christian Admiral Bible Conference, Cape May, NJ, August 19-26, 1967.

⁵²Carl McIntire, "The Second Coming of Christ," (20th Century Reformation Hour, 1973), p. 4.

⁵³*Ibid.*, p. 189.

⁵⁴Allan A. MacRae, "Lecture 14 on Isaiah 7-12" at Biblical Theological Seminary (copy in author's files), pp. 6-7.

⁵⁵Allan A. MacRae, "What Is Ahead for the World?" p. 35 (A2).

⁵⁶Allan A. MacRae, "When Is the Rapture?" (Interdisciplinary Biblical Research Institute, c. 1975), p.1.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*

⁵⁸MacRae, "What Is Ahead for the World?" pp. 38-39 (A5-A6).

⁵⁹Allan A. MacRae, Lecture on "The Rapture" (Interdisciplinary Biblical Research Institute, April 18, 1949), p. 24.

⁶⁰Buswell, *A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion*, p. 507 of Book 2.

⁶¹Gary North, "Millennialism and the Progressive Movement," *Journal of Libertarian Studies*, Spring 1996, p. 124.

⁶²PuritanBoard.com Post, February 21, 2011, 12:38 p.m.

⁶³Allan A. MacRae, "The Millennial Kingdom of Christ," *Christian Beacon*, March 18, 1937, pp. 3,4,7.



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AMERICA AND THE BIBLE

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Word of God. They decided “to obey God, rather than men.” Unlike the Puritans who remained within the Church, they separated and entered into a covenant with the Lord.

William Bradford, their future governor, detailed their sacred resolve: “So many, therefore, of these professors, as saw the evil of these things in these parts, and whose hearts the Lord had touched with heavenly zeal for His truth, they shook off this yoke of antichristian bondage, and as the Lord’s free people joined themselves (by a covenant of the Lord) into a church estate, in the fellowship of the gospel, to walk in all His ways made known, or to be made known unto them, according to their best endeavors, whatsoever it should cost them.”¹

Persecution followed the little flock until they found refuge in the New World. They crowded into the Mayflower, braved the storms and deprivations of a dangerous sea voyage, and settled in an unknown wilderness for the privilege of worshipping and serving God according to the Bible.

In God’s providence, Protestants from England, France, Scotland, Ireland, Germany and the Netherlands, flooded into the colonies with their Bibles and sometimes with their preachers. Out of a population of 3,000,000 at the time of the War for Independence, about two-thirds were “trained in the school of Calvin.”² They endured hardships, defended their homes against savage Indians, labored incessantly, all to possess religious and civil liberty. American Protestant preachers and laymen eventually broke the oppression of the colonial Church of England — although they sometimes had to pay fines, appear before court, or even serve time in jail.

When the War for Independence came, English politicians knew that the Protestant preachers would lead their congregations in the fierce

struggle. For example, Rev. James Caldwell, descendent of the French Huguenots and a pastor in Elizabethtown, NJ, taught his congregation the biblical principles of liberty and the duty to resist tyranny. When the war came, Caldwell, along with many other ministers, stayed in the forefront. In the Battle of Springfield, the fire of the patriots began to wane due to lack of wadding for their muskets. The intrepid pastor ran to a nearby Presbyterian Church, gathered an arm full of hymnbooks, and passed them out to the patriots. As they tore out the pages, the preacher noticed that some of the hymns were by Isaac Watts, and he yelled, “Put Watts into them, boys.” The patriots laughed and poured in the shot.

When the mountain men gathered at Sycamore Shoals, Tennessee, to march to the Battle of Kings Mountain, South Carolina, they were sent with a prayer and admonition from the Rev. Samuel Doak. Closing his prayer, he said, “Let that be your battle cry: ‘The sword of the Lord and of Gideon.’” One writer said, “Like slow thunder, came the reply: ‘The sword of the Lord and of Gideon.’” The British were utterly defeated and soon General Cornwallis was on his way to Yorktown, Virginia, where he was defeated by General Washington’s ragged army and the French fleet that had providentially arrived.

For over one hundred years, the leaven of false doctrine has corrupted the pure Word of God. It has turned our land into a swamp of immorality, rebellion and misery. Preachers and politicians have led the way. Inscribed on the tomb of the Pilgrim’s governor, William Bradford, are important Latin words. Translated into English, they read: “What our fathers with so much difficulty attained, let us not basely relinquish.”³ The Lord has providentially brought us to this time when the “enemy [has] come in like a flood.” We have comfort in our Lord’s promise, “the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard

“What our fathers with so much difficulty attained, let us not basely relinquish.”

Translation from the Latin of a phrase on Pilgrim leader William Bradford’s tomb.

against him” (Isaiah 59:19). John Calvin said, “We have found what a serpent Satan is. But though a hundred monsters spring from one, and though a thousand heads be in the place of one, still we know ourselves to be invincible, if we do but war under the standard of our Christ and fight with His weapons.”⁴

¹William Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation* (New York: The Modern Library, 1981), p. 8.

²Egbert Watson Smith, *The Creed of Presbyterians* (New York: The Baker and Taylor Company, 1901), p. 120.

³Quoted by The Huffman Family’s excellent booklet, “A Shorter Account Of Plymouth Plantation” (cbcbelleville@gmail.com), p. 23.

⁴Henry Stebbeling, *The Life and Times of John Calvin*, Vol. I (New York: Robert Carter and Brothers, 1853), p. 337.



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