

PROTESTANT REFORMED
THEOLOGICAL JOURNAL

THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL OF THE PROTESTANT REFORMED CHURCHES
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EDITORIAL NOTES

-- Prof. H. Hanko --

We are interrupting the current series being carried in the Journal with articles on a different subject -- the subject of postmillennialism. The ministers of the denomination and many elders met in an all day conference on the last day of February to discuss this subject. It is our belief that postmillennialism is of sufficient interest to our readers to include in an issue of the Journal the papers which were delivered there.

The first paper, discussed in the morning session, was prepared by Rev. Dale Kuiper, pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church in Lynden, Washington. His paper is an analysis of thought, method and influence of the postmillennialism promoted by Chalcedon. The second paper, delivered and discussed in the afternoon session, is an exegetical study of the Biblical proof for postmillennialism. Prof. Hoeksema has prepared a brief summary of the main points of discussion during the conference.

It is not our intention in these articles to deal exhaustively with the entire subject of postmillennialism. The implications of this view are too broad to treat in two papers and in one day of conference. But they are intended to be the basis for any further discussion on this question as the issues are joined. We hope that our readers will profit from what was prepared and discussed.

* * * *

In order not to lose the continuity in the series on infant baptism, a brief article is included on this subject. The article is by way of interlude: it does not carry further the argument which was begun in the last issue, but rather presents a brief analysis of an exchange between David Kingdon and John Richard De Witt which appeared in The Reformed Review and Westminster Theological Journal, but deals with Kingdon's book. The Lord willing, the series proper will be continued in the Fall issue of the Journal.

THE REFORMED DOCTRINE OF INFANT BAPTISM

(2)

-- Prof. H. Hanko --

In the last issue of the Journal we began a discussion of David Kingdon's important book, "Children of Abraham" in which the author defends the position of believers' baptism over against the historically Reformed position of infant baptism. We noticed in particular that, although Kingdon expressly repudiates all forms of Dispensationalism, nevertheless he commits himself to a position which amounts to Dispensationalism after all. And we began a discussion of the wrongness of this position and stressed that throughout the Old and New Testaments there is one covenant of grace, one promise of the covenant, one basis for the covenant, one way of entering the covenant and one essential idea of what the covenant actually is. The only difference between the Old and New Dispensations is a difference of administration; and this difference of administration is due to the fact that the Old Dispensation is the period which points ahead to Christ, while the New Dispensation is the period of fulfillment.

Since our last article was published, a review of Kingdon's book was published in the Westminster Theological Journal. This review was written by Dr. John Richard De Witt, professor in Reformed Theological Seminary in Jackson, Mississippi. In this review Dr. De Witt was sharply critical of Kingdon's book and provided a defense of the Scriptural doctrine of infant baptism over against the arguments which Kingdon mustered in support of his position. To this review, Kingdon responded in a rather lengthy article in the magazine, Reformation Today under the title, "A Review Reviewed".

It is not our purpose to enter into the debate between Kingdon and De Witt. This is a personal matter between them, and it is to be hoped that their first exchange of ideas will be followed by further discussion. There were in these two articles various other matters discussed which are only very distantly related either to Kingdon's book or to the controversy between defenders of infant baptism and defenders of believers' baptism. And these other matters are of no interest to us.

What is of interest to us is the fact that the exchange served to highlight the differences which do exist between Kingdon's position and the position of paedo-baptists. And for this reason it is helpful to call brief attention to a couple of matters which Kingdon discusses in his article in Reformation Today. We shall therefore, backtrack just a bit and bring the differences which emerge in this discussion before us so that the issues may be as clearly drawn as it is possible to draw them.

Kingdon in his book claims that the differences are especially of two kinds. The first of these involves the relationship between circumcision and baptism as signs of the covenant. We called attention to this point already in our last article, for this is indeed a crucial point in the whole debate. You will recall that Kingdon had taken the position that in certain respects circumcision and baptism were identical in meaning. More particularly, the two are close in meaning as far as their symbolic significance is concerned. Both point to the circumcision of the heart and the righteousness which is by faith in Jesus Christ. But Kingdon also insisted in his book that while there was this analogy between circumcision and baptism, nevertheless, there is by no means complete identity. And the difference is that "circumcision had, as baptism does not, a physical and national reference."¹ Dr. De Witt claimed in his review that this was taking away with one hand what was granted with the other. Kingdon demurs on this point and insists that the differences are crucial. He argues that, just because circumcision had a physical and national significance, therefore it was to be a rite administered to all the children who were born of Israelite parents. But because baptism has no such significance, therefore baptism is to be administered only on the grounds of faith and conversion. Therefore children must not be baptized, for the mere fact that they are born of believing parents does not automatically guarantee that they are children of the covenant. He writes:

The interpretation that the Apostle Paul gives to the concept of 'the seed of Abraham' establishes the principle that the ordinance of baptism should now be applied only to those who show credible evidence of

¹Reformation Today, September-October, 1977, p. 18.

being in union with Christ, for only those in union with him are Abraham's seed (Galatians 3:29). It follows therefore that it would be out of harmony with the character of the new dispensation to retain a natural connection, of a typical character, as a prerequisite for now bestowing the sign and seal of baptism. Such a connection was appropriate to the old dispensation, but it is inappropriate to the new. What is now required is a prerequisite which more clearly and directly represents the spiritual character of the covenant, to which the typical relationship for so long pointed. The New Testament leaves us in no doubt that such is nothing other than a credible profession of faith in Christ.²

It is clear then that we have here one of the crucial issues in the debate. There can be no proper understanding of the issues without an understanding of this point. And, in the final analysis, the argument hinges on the answer to this question.

The second issue brought out in the exchange between Kingdon and De Witt is the issue of whether or not God establishes his covenant along the lines of continued generations. This issue is, of course, closely connected with the first one. But it nevertheless must be separately considered.

Kingdon defines the difference as follows:

De Witt's second major criticism now remains to be evaluated. Since I maintain that children as such no longer have covenantal significance it follows, according to de Witt, that I deny that God works along the lines of generations, and that therefore I am guilty, in the end, of maintaining a purely individualistic doctrine of conversion.³

To this objection Kingdon responds:

I happen to believe that God continues to work,

²Idem., p. 20

³Idem., p. 20

though not exclusively so, along the lines of generations (descent) but I fail to see that because I reject the baptism of infants that I am obliged to deny that God works in families.⁴

In support of this position Kingdon raises several points. In the first place, he points out that, if De Witt is correct, then it necessarily follows that children should also be admitted to the table of the Lord in the sacrament of communion. His argument is that if the truth that God saves in the line of generations does not imply that children can be admitted to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, it does not imply either that children are to receive the sacrament of baptism.

Secondly, he deals with the so-called "household passages". De Witt faulted him for not dealing with these passages in his book. Kingdon responds by saying that there has been a great deal of controversy over these passages and that "most of us may be forgiven if we react by saying that whoever is most right has clearly had to prove a very difficult case from highly debatable evidence."⁵

Finally, Kingdon faults De Witt for taking the position that we may be confident of the salvation of all the children of believing parents. I am reasonably certain that Kingdon misinterprets De Witt at this point, for De Witt, most probably, does not hold that all the children of believers are saved. Kingdon points out that this has not been the position of many Reformed theologians, and he quotes Herman Hoeksema in his book, "Believers and their Seed" as an illustration. Kingdon writes:

But if there are two seeds from Abraham, the prototype believing parent, how can there be such certainty (that all the children of believing parents are saved)? Can de Witt show that there is now but one elect seed issuing from Christian parents? Has God now abrogated the principle that from the fathers of believers there is a twofold issue, children of the flesh and children of the promise? If so, where in the New Testament do we find it abrogated? And if it is not abrogated, then on the basis of

⁴ Idem.

⁵ Idem., p. 21, This is a quote made by Kingdon from another writer.

de Witt's argument from silence it must still be reckoned to continue in force, with the consequence that his certainty is misplaced.⁶

So this is the second main issue which divides Kingdon from those who maintain paedobaptism.

With respect to the first issue, the relation between circumcision and baptism, we have, in our last article, pointed out that Kingdon's position arises out of a misunderstanding of the significance of the Old Testament. We will not repeat here what we wrote last time. We will only point out a couple of elements that must be considered in this connection.

In the first place, Kingdon has made an important concession when he admits that the symbolic significance of circumcision and baptism are the same. We intend to discuss this issue further in a future article because it is a crucial point in the whole debate; but we need not belabor the point here because Kingdon grants the validity of the point. His whole argument is therefore based on the fact that since circumcision also had a physical and national significance (in addition to its symbolic or spiritual significance) therefore we may not argue that children of believers ought to be baptized as children of believers were circumcised in the Old Testament. If therefore, it can be explained why circumcision was limited to Israelites in the Old Testament, then the one difference falls away as any kind of significant difference, and the symbolic identity of the two rites is proof that infants are to be baptized just as they were circumcised in the Old Testament.

In the second place, Kingdon's failure to see that the national significance of circumcision is unimportant for the argument arises out of his failure to understand the significance of the Old Testament. We discussed this at some length in our last article, and we refer the interested reader to what we said in that issue of the Journal. The whole point is that the Old Dispensation was a dispensation of types and shadows which pointed ahead to the fulfillment of the promise of Christ; and Israel as a nation was itself typical of the Church of all ages.

In the third place, circumcision was limited to national Israel in the Old Testament because of the fact that, in keeping with the dispensation of types, God limited salvation itself to national Israel. That is,

⁶Idem., p. 21.

because Israel as a nation was a type of the Church of all ages, salvation was limited to that nation and that nation alone. We must understand what this means. The meaning is not that there were none outside of Israel who were saved. Thousands of people from outside the Jewish nation were in fact saved. We have only to point to the mixed multitude of Egyptians who went with Israel out of Egypt, the incorporation of the Gibeonites into the nation at the time of the conquest of Canaan, the salvation of the Canaanite wives of the sons of Jacob, the salvation of such people as Rahab the harlot, Ruth the Moabitess and others, the presence in Israel of such people as Uriah the Hittite. But the point is that for one to be saved in the Old Testament it was necessary for one to become a Jew and to be incorporated into the nation of Israel. There were only a few exceptions to this: the widow of Zarephath with whom Elijah stayed in the days of famine, Naaman the leper who returned to his own land, and the Ninevites who were converted under the preaching of Jonah. But in every case there is a reference in the New Testament to the fact that these exceptions were granted by God as prophetic of another day coming when salvation would be granted to people from every nation and tribe and tongue. (See Luke 4:16-30, Matthew 12:41) But the point which we wish to stress is that salvation was in this sense limited to the nation of Israel because of the peculiar nature of the typical character of Israel as a picture of the Church of all ages.

It is therefore a misconception for Kingdon to argue that because salvation was limited to the Jews, therefore baptism did not come in the place of circumcision in the sense that the rite is to be performed in connection with all the children of believers. Many thousands of Gentiles were also circumcised in the Old Dispensation; but they were incorporated into the nation of Israel by this rite because of this typical character of the nation. Therefore, the symbolic identity between circumcision and baptism, which Kingdon concedes, is the crucial point.

It ought further to be observed however, that no matter how much weight is given to the national significance of circumcision, it is still difficult to understand how the disappearance of this significance of circumcision also abrogates the principle that salvation is in the lines of generations of believers. This is especially true if it is remembered that Israel was typical of the Church.

The second point of difference -- whether God still saves His people in the line of continued generations -- is another crucial point, though it is related to the whole matter of the connection between circumcision and baptism.

This is such a crucial issue that it requires a great deal of discussion, and we intend to reserve this discussion for future issues of the Journal. There are therefore, only a few points which need to be said at the present time.

In the first place, it is difficult to understand how Kingdon can on the one hand, confess to believe the idea that God does save in the line of generations of believers, and yet, on the other hand, insist that this does not imply that children are saved. Nor does he explain this seeming contradiction in his writings so far as I know. The only way I can make any sense out of this is to understand Kingdon as saying that, while God indeed saves in the line of generations, he does not save the children of believers until they are somewhat older than infancy; and therefore, baptism ought to await the time when they are actually saved and are capable of making some profession of their faith. But if this is all that Kingdon means, why the big argument? Then the question is not: does God establish His covenant in the line of the generations of believers? Kingdon grants that He does. The question is only: when are these children of believers saved? That is, are they saved when they are infants? or are they saved when they become a little older?

But if this is the only question, then a couple of other questions arise. One is: if Kingdon believes the doctrines of sovereign grace, why does he take the position that God is unable (or unwilling) to save infants? Another is: what proof is there from Scripture that God saves only older children and not younger? Surely in the Old Testament He saved infants if circumcision was, as Kingdon grants, a symbol of the same things of which baptism is symbolic.

But I cannot believe that Kingdon simply reduces the question to the time when the children of believers are saved.

In the second place, Kingdon cannot so easily dispose of the so-called "household passages". One would almost think that he dismisses them so lightly because they are of no little difficulty to him. It is true, of course, that there has been controversy over these passages.

But it must be remembered that the controversy over these passages has exactly been between those who profess believers' baptism and those who maintain infant baptism. And the reason is that those who profess believers' baptism do not want to face the clear teaching of the text.

While we intend to discuss these passages in some detail at a later date, one instance of this will make the point clear. It is a well-known fact that Baptists have always repudiated the force of these texts by insisting that there is no proof of the fact that there were infants in these households. And, of course, Scripture does not say whether there were, or whether there were not. But this is not the real point. One of these household passages is Acts 16:31: "And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." Now it must be remembered that Paul and Silas were still in the prison in Philippi. The earthquake had come and released the chains of the prisoners and had sprung loose the prison doors. The jailer was about to kill himself when Paul stopped him. At that point, coming into the prison, the jailer put this question to Paul and Silas: "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Vs. 31 is an answer to that question.

Now the point here is that Paul tells the Philippian jailer that faith is the only way to salvation. The jailer must believe; then he will be saved. But in answering that question of the jailer, Paul also speaks of the salvation of the jailer's house. Paul does not say: You, jailer, believe and you will be saved; and presently, if your house also believes, they too will be saved. Quite the contrary is true. Paul clearly states that if the jailer believes, not only he will be saved, but also his household. In other words, the salvation of the jailer will be also the salvation of his household. On what basis does Paul have a right to say this? Is he merely expressing a pious wish that this household will also be saved? Obviously not. Paul emphatically and with total certainty speaks of the salvation of the household while he and the jailer were still in prison, and while he was talking to the jailer alone. Is the case then that Paul is here gifted with some prophetic insight so that he can confidently predict that the family of the jailer also will believe? There is nothing at all in the text to indicate this; and this

would be something which had never before happened to the apostle. The only intelligible answer to this problem is that Paul so confidently speaks of the salvation of the whole household because the salvation of the jailer involves the salvation of the whole household. And that is true because God saves His people in the line of the generations of believers.

In the third place, I do not know of a single Reformed theologian of note who maintains that all the children of believers are saved. Kingdon errs, I am sure, when he accuses De Witt of maintaining this position. But this is not the point. The point is that indeed believers bring forth a twofold seed, just as Abraham did. No one questions this.⁷ But those children who are elect, for whom Christ died, and who are saved by God's sovereign grace are children of believers. And this is because God saves His Church and establishes His covenant in the line of continued generations.

If Kingdon asks the question then: why then are all children of believers baptized? the answer to that question is: for the same reason that all children of believers in Israel were circumcised. This, of course, involves other questions. And it is our purpose to answer these questions also in future articles. But for the moment that is sufficient. If the covenant is established in the line of generations, then the generations of believers must also bear the sign of that covenant.

And so we have the issues very clearly before us.

The Lord willing, we shall continue this discussion in a future issue of the Journal.

⁷There have been from time to time those who have maintained that all children of believers are saved. Thus, e.g., Joseph C. Holbrook writes in the Fall, 1977 issue of Reformed Review: "We used our imaginations when we thought of our own personal standing before the final judgment seat. Let's do it again, this time as parents. As we stand there and point to him who in life and in death was our faithful Saviour, who fully paid for all our sins with his precious blood and set us free from the tyranny of the devil, who watched over us in such a way that not a hair fell from our heads without the Father's will, who assured us of eternal life and made us wholeheartedly willing and ready to live for him and then -- we look around us for our children and the Judge of all the earth says, 'You honored my Son

even as you honored me, but I'm sorry. I've decided to change the rules. I decided to work my regeneration in two of your children, but the third one I let go to make his own free decision to reject my Son. Sorry about that. Farewell!!! Incredible! Impossible! Just as incredible and impossible as God not making good on his covenant promise not to desert the parents to their foes. 'God is not so unjust.' If he really is the one who saves, and if he does it in fulfillment of his freely given covenant promise, then such an imaginary scene is impossible. 'It is impossible that God should prove false' so that 'we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to seize the hope set before us' (Hebrews 6:18). 'I will be God to your descendants says the Lord...because you have obeyed my voice' (Genesis 17:7, 22:16-18). This is God's promise, sworn to by His oath, and signified and sealed for Isaac in circumcision -- for us and our children in baptism. It is the most 'exceeding great and precious promise' that I know of, and I have claimed it for nearly twenty-five years." This kind of argument does more harm for the paedobaptist position than a good argument against it.

AN EXEGETICAL REFUTATION OF POSTMILLENNIALISM

-- Prof. H. Hanko --

A postmillennial view of the second coming of Christ is undergoing something of a revival in our day. We have been asked to supply an exegetical refutation of this conception, along with an exegetical defense of the amillennial position. In order to do this, it is probably best to define, as clearly as possible, what is meant by postmillennialism.

Lorraine Boettner, in his book, "The Millennium", defines postmillennialism as that view "of the 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."¹ On page 61 of the same book, Boettner writes: "The earth during the present dispensation never can, of course, become paradise regained. But a Christianized world can afford a foretaste of heaven, an earnest of the good things that God has in store for those who love him."

In writing concerning the views of the Puritans, Ian Murray describes their conception as follows:

We are now in a position to see how this somewhat prolonged discussion of Puritan thought on prophecy relates to the subject of revival. If the calling of the Jews and a wider conversion work in the world is to occur without such cataclysmic acts as the personal descent of Christ and the resurrection of saints, by what means will these blessings be brought to pass? The answer of the main Puritan school became a most important part of the heritage which they left to posterity. It was that the kingdom of Christ would spread and triumph through the powerful operations of the Holy Spirit poured out upon the Church in revivals. Such periods would come at the command of Christ, for new Pentecosts would show him still to be 'both Lord and Christ'. Their whole Calvinistic theology of the gospel, with its emphasis on the power given to Christ as Mediator for the sure ingathering of the vast number of his elect, and on the person of the Holy Spirit as the One by whom the dead are quickened, dovetails in here. They rejected altogether a naturalistic view of inevitable progress in history -- so common in the nineteenth century -- but asserted that the sovereign purpose of God in the gospel, as indicated by the promises of Scripture yet

1.
page 4.

unfulfilled, points to the sure hope of great outpourings of the Spirit in the future.²

There are a number of elements involved in the views of postmillennialism which we ought briefly to mention in order to understand this position.

In the first place, many postmillennialists claim that this view is not of recent origin, but has a long and illustrious history dating all the way back to Augustine, the bishop of Hippo.³ The supporters of this contention claim that Calvin can be quoted also as favoring a postmillennial view. Murray, e.g., cites a number of passages from Calvin which, in his judgment, prove this point.⁴ Nevertheless, a careful examination of these passages shows that Calvin was speaking of the fact that the gospel will be proclaimed to all nations and that the Church of Christ will be gathered from all nations. Often in reference to the rule of Christ, Calvin is speaking of the kingdom of Christ which will be established when Christ returns again, something which Murray himself admits. Further, the Westminster Confession is said to be influenced by postmillennial thinking, although it must be admitted that the passages referred to can have another interpretation.⁵

We ought to take a closer look at this contention for a large part of the argument of those holding to postmillennial views consists in pointing out that large numbers of people, in almost every theological and ecclesiastical tradition, from the time of Calvin on have held to some form of postmillennialism. In his article on "A Survey of Southern Presbyterian Millennial Views before 1930," James B. Jordan suggests that postmillennialism was held by large numbers of people. (The Journal of Christian Reconstruction, Vol. III, No. 2, pp. 107,108.) This is apparently an impressive argument and undoubtedly carries a great deal of weight with many people. The striking part of it is however, that an examination of the evidence points in quite a different direction. Anyone who takes the time to examine

². "The Puritan Hope," p. 51

³. We have been unable to find any proof for the assertion that Augustine taught a form of postmillennialism, and therefore do not comment on this point here.

⁴. Op. cit., pp. 88ff.

⁵. "God's Plan of Victory", Rousas Rushdoony, pp. 13,14.

carefully all this evidence can come to only one conclusion: much of it is pulled out of the air. While it is not our purpose to examine all this evidence in detail, something ought to be said about this.

1) In Bahnsen's article, (p. 101) Charles Hodge is quoted in support of postmillennialism. While it is true that this quotation shows that Hodge accepted a postmillennial view of the coming of Christ, it is nevertheless striking that the very brief quotation offered is all that Hodge ever said on the question in his entire Systematic Theology. The very fact therefore that he devoted about two sentences to this subject certainly shows that, at the very least, he did not think it very important. ?

2) Repeatedly one finds in the writings of postmillennialists the claim that the Westminster Confessions are postmillennial. Jordan (op. cit.) quotes De Jong as saying: "In the context of the views current then, Westminster's formulation must be seen as a deliberate choice of mild, unsystematized, postmillennial expectations." The pertinent articles are quoted and referred to in Rushdoony's "God's Plan For Victory." Concerning these articles, the following remarks ought to be made: WCF

a) It must be admitted that anyone who has no knowledge of postmillennialism would never find such a view expressed in these articles. It just isn't there.

b) Those who favor postmillennialism recognize this and therefore argue that these articles must be interpreted as mild references to postmillennialism because there were Puritan postmillennial divines at the Westminster Assembly. But it is precisely this argument which fails; and indeed, which can be used to prove exactly the opposite. Granting that there were postmillennial Puritan divines at the Westminster Assembly, it can be argued with great force that these articles specifically prove that the Assembly did not want postmillennialism because, in spite of some who favored this on the Assembly, the Assembly refused to incorporate into the Confession any specific and explicit statement concerning this position.

Many of the quotations which are cited in Bahnsen's article as proof that various theologians adopted a postmillennial position do not prove this at all. What many theologians wrote as quoted by Bahnsen can very well be interpreted as having already happened in the history of the New Dispensational Church. We give but one example. On p. 86 John Howe is quoted

John
Howe
as saying: "That there shall be a permanent state of tranquility and prosperity unto the church of Christ on earth." Whether John Howe was or was not a postmillennialist we do not know. But the fact is that this statement can indeed be applied to the Church of Christ throughout the entire New Dispensation -- if one does not take the word "permanently" too literally. But this latter not even the most ardent postmillennialist would want to do, for all hold to an end of the earthly millennial kingdom at the day of Christ's coming. What needs to be said is this. A simple multiplying of quotations is not sufficient to prove a point. One can go on and on doing this and force the reader to examine an endless list of citations. But the quotes, as often as not, prove nothing.

Calvin
3) More important to our discussion however, is the question of whether or not John Calvin adopted a postmillennial position. Bahnsen in his article is at great pains to prove that this is true. He cites a large number of references to prove his point. This bears also closer scrutiny. And closer scrutiny will show that Bahnsen is utterly wrong in his contention. We will take a brief look at some of these quotes to illustrate this. But before we do this, there are a few remarks which ought to be made.

a) In the first place, and most importantly, Bahnsen is guilty of the serious error of anachronism when he quotes Calvin in support of his postmillennialism. The fact of the matter is that Calvin never faced the question at all. The Reformers, as everyone knows, were not deeply involved in questions of eschatology in general and in the millennial question in particular. These things were simply not issues in the days when the Reformers wrote. It must be remembered that Calvin can be quoted as proving all sorts of things which he himself had never heard of. It is like quoting Ptolemy in support of Einstein's theory of relativity and quoting Origin in support of Darwinian evolutionism. If Calvin had faced the questions concerning the millennium which the church today faces, he undoubtedly would have written differently. Bahnsen ought to know this.

b) In the second place, many of the quotations from Calvin simply prove that the victory of the gospel is complete in the salvation of the whole elect Church from all the nations of the earth -- without any reference whatsoever to any kind of postmillennial kingdom, and a view to which every Biblical Calvinist would agree without any reservation. It is in this connection too, that Bahnsen seems sometimes to suggest that when Calvin uses

the word "world" in connection with the victory of the gospel, he is promoting some kind of postmillennialism. Nothing could be further from the truth. Calvin uses this word very often simply to mean that the gospel in the New Dispensation, in distinction from the Old Dispensation, saves a Church gathered from all nations and tribes and tongues. No one would ever dispute this, and Bahnsen may not quote such passages as proof that Calvin was a postmillennialist.

c) In the third place, Calvin is often quoted as being very optimistic about the victory of the kingdom of Christ. The implication is, as Rushdoony also states, that any one who is not a postmillennialist is necessarily pessimistic. We repudiate this charge altogether. Our optimism is however, the genuine optimism of Scripture. That is, in the first place, we believe that Christ rules universally so that all the wicked opposition to His kingdom serves the good of His Church. We are more than conquerors after all. And, in the second place, the final victory is the victory of the kingdom of heaven which shall come at the return of Christ. It is this optimism which also permeates the writings of Calvin.

But let us take a closer look at Calvin's writings themselves to see whether Bahnsen is correct in his allegations.

On pp. 69 & 70 appears a quote and a reference to Calvin's commentary on Psalm 21:8, 17. The quote is especially intended to prove that Christ's kingdom will have a visible form in the world. But Calvin writes;

Hitherto the internal happiness of the kingdom has been described. Now there follows, as it was necessary there should, the celebration of its invincible strength against its enemies. What is said in this verse is of the same import as if the king had been pronounced victorious over all his enemies. I have just now remarked, that such a statement is not superfluous; for it would not have been enough for the kingdom to have flourished internally, and to have been replenished with peace, riches, and abundance of all good things, had it not also been well fortified against the attacks of foreign enemies. This particularly applies to the kingdom of Christ, which is never without enemies in this world. True, it is not always assailed by open war, and there is sometimes granted to it a period of respite; but the ministers of Satan never lay aside their malice and desire to do mischief, and therefore they never cease to plot and to endeavor to accomplish the overthrow of Christ's kingdom. It is well for us that our king who lifts up his hand as a shield before us to defend us, is stronger than all.

Psa 21

Correct reference?

After a discussion of a point of Hebrew grammar Calvin goes on to say,

Some expositors, because of this diversity, explain the verse as it is had been said, thy hand shall be able for thy enemies, thy right hand shall find out those that hate thee. Thus the sentence will ascend by degrees, -- thy hand shall be able to withstand, thy right hand shall lay hold upon thy enemies, so that they shall not escape destruction.

It is evident from a reading of this that Calvin says nothing in this entire quote which even faintly resembles any kind of postmillennialism but rather simply refers to the fact that the kingdom of Christ includes also the destruction of all the enemies of that kingdom, a point with which we all agree.

As far as the reference to vs. 17 is concerned, Psalm 21 has only thirteen verses and it is not clear to what Bahnsen refers.

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Bahnsen next refers to Calvin's commentary on II Thessalonians 2:8. The quote which he offers is found on page 70. Even the quote itself however, speaks of nothing else but the victory of the gospel of Jesus Christ by means of which all the opposition of Satan is defeated. One looks in vain for a reference to a postmillennial kingdom. If one reads the entire section however, one comes to the conclusion that, in the first place, Calvin is referring to the fact that the gospel will be preached in the entire world. "I seem at least to hear Paul discoursing as to the universal call of the Gentiles -- that the grace of God must be offered to all -- that Christ must enlighten the whole world by His gospel, in order that the impiety of men might be the more fully attested and demonstrated." Notice that Calvin specifically states here that the gospel must be brought into the whole world with the purpose that the impiety of men might become fully revealed. (This is in connection with Calvin's discussion of vs. 6 of this chapter.) In the second place, Calvin repeatedly insists that this entire section is in order to assure the church that the forces of darkness can never overcome her. He writes in connection with vs. 8, "...that believers, being furnished with spiritual armour, may, nevertheless, fight vigorously under Christ, and not allow themselves to be overwhelmed, although the deluge of impiety should thus overspread." In the third place immediately preceding the quote which Bahnsen makes we find Calvin writing this: "Hence we must understand it in this sense -- that Antichrist would

be wholly and in every respect destroyed, when that final day of the restoration of all things shall arrive." It is evident from these quotations that Bahnsen's appeal to Calvin's exposition of II Thessalonians 2:8 is an appeal without foundation.

Bahnsen next refers to Calvin's Commentary on Daniel 7:27 and quotes Calvin as saying, "The saints began to reign under heaven when Christ ushered His kingdom by the promulgation of His gospel." Calvin's discussion of this passage however, leaves no doubt at all that Calvin has something entirely different in mind from anything which Bahnsen claims. A few quotes from Calvin will prove this.

For any discussion of the four monarchies would have been cold and useless, unless there had been added God's peculiar care of his own church and his conducting the affairs of the world for the safety of His people. As we have said in other places, God's elect people are of more consequence than all the kingdoms which are conspicuous in the world.

When therefore, all things seem carried away by the blind impulse of chance, we ought always to contemplate God as watching for His church, and tempering all thorns and all commotions to the service and safety of the pious, who rest upon his providence.

Thus Daniel or the angel does not predict here occurrences connected with the advent of Christ as judge of the world, but with the first preaching and promulgation of the gospel, and the celebration of the name of Christ. But this does not prevent him from drawing a magnificent picture of Christ's reign, and embracing its final completion. It is sufficient for us to perceive how God begins to give the kingdom to His elect people, when, by the power of His Spirit, the doctrine of the holy gospel was everywhere received in the world.

Still commenting on this passage in Daniel 7, Calvin engages in an argument with one Rabbi Abarbinel. This Rabbi, according to Calvin, rejected Calvin's idea of the spiritual reign of Christ and spoke instead of an earthly reign. Of his view Calvin says,

"His (i.e., Rabbi Abarbinel's conception of the kingdom) kingdom, then, will consist in opulence, and military power and parade, and the common luxuries of life, so that God will become unlike Himself. We perceive the puerile trifling of those Rabbis who pretend to glory in their ingenuity, to the total destruction of the whole teaching of piety. They intend nothing else than to adulterate the purity of Scripture by their foul and senseless comments. But we know the reign of God and of Christ, although existing in the world, not to be of it, (John 18:36); the meaning of the two expressions is exactly the opposite. God, therefore, still exercises His heavenly

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reign in the world, because He dwells in the hearts of His people by His Spirit.

"As to the phrase, 'the saints of the high ones,' I have already explained why the Prophet applies this phrase to the faithful, and why the angel also does the same; namely, because God separated them from the world, and they were always looking upwards and drawing all their hopes from above.

"As, however, it is certain that many have perseveringly rebelled against God and the teaching of His gospel, it may seem absurd for the angel to pronounce all the powers of the world obedient and submissive. But it is worthwhile to study the customary methods of Scriptural expression. For instance, by the phrase 'all people,' the Spirit does not mean every single person, but simply some out of every nation who should submit to Christ's yoke, acknowledge Him to be king, and obediently obey His church. How often do these sentiments occur in the prophets? All nations shall come -- all kings shall serve.... So, also, in this place 'all powers,' says he, 'shall serve and obey him;' that is, no power shall so boast in its loftiness, as not willingly to become subject to the church, although at present also fully despise it; nay, while they rage with all their might against the most wretched church, and while they tread it most ignominiously underfoot, even then they shall be subject to it. This we know to have been amply fulfilled."

It is evident from this that Calvin speaks only of the universal proclamation of the gospel and of the universal rule of Christ in the sense that Christ makes all nations serve the purpose of the welfare of His church. In fact, these quotations specifically refute the position which Bahnsen takes and prove conclusively that Calvin had in mind something entirely different from the postmillennial kingdom of which Bahnsen speaks.

Calvin's Commentary on Isaiah 65:17 is also quoted. Important parts of what Calvin writes however, are omitted from the quotation which Bahnsen offers. We offer here the entire quote with the sections which Bahnsen omits placed in parenthesis for purposes of comparison.

By these metaphors he promises a remarkable change of affairs; (as if God had said that He has both the inclination and the power not only to restore His church but to restore it in such a manner that it shall appear to gain new life and to dwell in the world. These are exaggerated modes of expression;) but the greatness of such a blessing, which was to be manifested at the coming of Christ, could not be described in any other way. Nor does he mean only the first coming, but the whole reign, which must be extended as far as to the last coming, (as we have already said in expounding

other passages.)

Thus the world is, so to speak, renewed by Christ; (and hence also the apostle - Hebrews 2:5 - calls it "a new age," and undoubtedly alludes to this statement of the prophet. Yet the prophet speaks of the restoration of the church after the return from Babylon. This is undoubtedly true; but that restoration is imperfect, if it be not extended as far as to Christ;) and even now we are in the progress and accomplishment of it, (and those things will not be fulfilled till the last resurrection, which has been prescribed to be our limit.)

("The former things shall not be remembered." Some refer these words to heaven and earth; as if he had said that henceforth they shall have no celebrity and no name. But I choose rather to refer them to the former times; for he means that the joy at being restored shall be so great that they shall no longer remember their miseries. Or perhaps it will be thought preferable to view them as relating to benefits which, though they were worthy of being recorded, lost their name when God's amazing grace shown forth. In this sense the prophet said elsewhere, "Remember ye not the former things." - Isaiah 43:18. Not that God wished the first deliverance to be set aside or blotted out of the hearts of believers; but because by comparison the one brought a kind of forgetfulness over the other, just as the sun when he rises deprives the stars of their brightness.

Let us remember that these things take place in us so far as we are renewed. (The underscoring is mine, H.H.) But we are only in part renewed, and therefore we do not see a new heaven and a new earth. We need not wonder, therefore, that we continue to mourn and weep, since we have not entirely laid aside the old man, and many remains are still left. It is with us also that the renovation ought to begin; because we hold the first rank, and it is through our sin that "the creatures groan, and are subject to vanity," as Paul shows. -Romans 8:20- But when we shall be perfectly renewed, heaven and earth shall also be fully renewed, and shall regain their former state. And hence it ought to be inferred, as we have frequently remarked, that the prophet has in his eye the whole reign of Christ, down to its final close, which is also called "the day of renovation and restoration." (Acts 3:21)

If the remarks which are omitted from the quotation are inserted it immediately becomes apparent that Calvin had something other entirely in mind than the postmillennialism which has been ascribed to him.

And so we could go on. In connection with Calvin's exposition of Psalm 22:27 Bahnsen remarks "Calvin again speaks of the whole world giving the willing obedience of true godliness to the promised Messiah." But in his comments on that same verse Calvin writes: "If it is objected, that the whole world has never yet been converted, the solution is easy. The comparison is here made between that remarkable period in which God suddenly became known everywhere, by the preaching of the gospel, and the ancient

dispensation, when he kept the knowledge of himself shut up within the limits of Judea. Christ, we know, penetrated with amazing speed, from the east to the west, like the lightning's flash, in order to bring into the church the Gentiles from all parts of the world." Once again it is abundantly clear that Calvin's reference is to the difference between the gospel limited to the nation of Israel in the Old Dispensation and the gospel gathering a church from every nation in the New Dispensation. The same thing can be said of many other quotes which Bahnsen makes both from Calvin's Commentaries and from Calvin's Institutes.

Two concluding prayers of Calvin's lectures on the book of Daniel are also referred to. We quote these prayers here in full to indicate how far they are from teaching what Bahnsen claims they teach.

Grant, Almighty God, since we so travel through this world that our attention is easily arrested, and our judgment darkened, when we behold the power of the impious refulgent and terrible to ourselves and others: grant, I say, that we may raise our eyes upward, and consider how much power thou hast conferred upon thine only-begotten son. Grant, also, that he may rule and govern us by the might of his spirit, protect us by his faithfulness and guardianship, and compel the whole world to promote our salvation; thus may we rest calmly under his protection, and fight with that boldness and patience which he both commands and commends, until at length we enjoy the fruit of the victory which thou hast promised, and which thou wilt provide for us in thy heavenly kingdom. Amen.

Grant, Almighty God; as we have to engage in battle through the whole course of our lives, and our strength so liable to fail in various ways, that we may be supported by thy power and thus persevere unto the end. May we never grow weary, but learn to overcome the whole world, and to look forward to that happy eternity to which thy Son fights for us, in whose hand and power our victory is placed, and may he ever admit us into the alliance with himself in that conquest which he has procured for us, until at length he shall gather us at the last day into the enjoyment of that triumph in which he has gone before us. Amen.

This ought to be sufficient for our purposes. There are, of course, many other passages quoted from Calvin's writings, but it would serve no purpose to examine them all. The simple fact is that Bahnsen does not treat the writings of Calvin with integrity, and a careful examination of the whole passage proves beyond doubt that any claim that Calvin held to a postmillennial position is a false claim. Let the matter then be laid to rest: Calvin was no postmillennialist.

There is abundant evidence however, that the Puritans did hold to a

certain form of postmillennialism. This is the burden of Murray's entire book, "The Puritan Hope." However, their view of postmillennialism was closely connected to their interpretation of Romans 11 (particularly vs. 26) and their contention that there would be a mass turning of the Jews to Christ before the world ends. Although we shall return to this subject somewhat later in the paper, it is interesting to note in this connection that there are differences of opinion also on the question of the time of this turning to the Lord. There are some who maintain that this shall take place immediately before the coming of Christ, while others hold to the position that this mass conversion of Israel will take place during the so-called golden age of the Church's existence in the world.⁶

Thus postmillennialists claim that their view has historical backing, although this claim is somewhat exaggerated. Nevertheless, under the influence of Puritan thinking, postmillennialism has been held by a large number of Presbyterians in England and in this country. Notably, this was true of some of the great Princeton theologians who taught at Princeton during the last part of the last century and the early part of this century.

In the second place, it is important that we distinguish clearly between a liberal, social-gospel oriented postmillennialism and the type of postmillennialism held by many conservative scholars today. The former hold to the idea that through evolutionary processes, this world gradually develops into a kind of Paradise. Not only through biological evolution, but also through an evolution of society's institutions, man surmounts his limitations and problems and brings about a heaven here on earth. This type of postmillennialism denies, of course, all the truths of Scripture when it appears in its radical forms, although some such similar view is more and more maintained within Reformed Church circles where the gospel of Jesus Christ is being replaced by a social gospel. With this type of postmillennialism we are not concerned in this paper, except in an incidental way. Historic postmillennialism maintains all the truths of Scripture, but insists that Scripture itself teaches a time of world-wide revival when the kingdom of Christ will be partially realized here upon earth. Nevertheless, it is not always easy to distinguish between the two views. The A.A.C.S., e.g., is doctrinally rather conservative, but the form of postmillennialism

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In a speech delivered at the Seminary by a minister of the Free Reformed Church, the speaker also interpreted Romans 11:26 in this fashion, and, during the discussion admitted to a postmillennial viewpoint.

which it espouses differs on some points from the postmillennialism promoted by Chalcedon, and is never an explicit doctrinal position in their writings.

3)

In the third place, we must distinguish between religious and spiritual revivals in the history of the Church and postmillennialism as a view of Christ's coming. This distinction is not always clearly made -- not even in Murray's book. Sometimes past revivals are referred to as proof of a coming millennial age; sometimes the future millennial age is defined mainly in terms of world-wide revivals. Nevertheless, without passing judgment on the genuine spiritual quality of these revivals, we do not disagree that God has often brought revival to His Church. But this is quite different from postmillennialism. The latter maintains that, through the victory of the gospel, not only will a majority of the world's inhabitants turn to Christianity, but that, at least in a limited form, the kingdom of Christ will be realized here upon earth. That means that all the institutions of society will themselves become Christian. Christians will rule the world in the name of Christ and all will come under the sovereign control of Christ.

Here, too, there are points of difference. There are some (Boettner, e.g.,) who maintain that Christianity, in general, will continue to advance world-wide, and, by a gradual process, will bring about this earthly manifestation of the kingdom of Christ. The kingdoms of this world will gradually become the kingdom of Christ. Others, (Rushdoony, e.g.,) hold to the position that this world will become worse and worse, sunk more deeply into sin until such a time when all the institutions of society will disintegrate and the world recognizes the fact that it is totally incapable of solving its problems. All its efforts end in chaos and anarchy. It will be at such a time that the world, in desperation, turns to the Church to solve her problems and Christianity will then be given the opportunity to show that it alone has the solutions to life's problems.

4)

In the fourth place, it must be observed that postmillennialism shares certain views in common with premillennialists. This is not to say that postmillennialists deliberately adopt premillennial ideas. Quite the contrary is true. Postmillennialists strongly repudiate any form of premillennialism and reserve some of their sharpest language to disavow any kind of premillennialism. Nevertheless, there are similarities. For one thing, there is the question of the interpretation of prophecy. We shall have to examine this question more closely a bit later, but for the moment we ought to notice

the similarity. Generally speaking, premillennialism interprets prophecy literally. While this view cannot maintain a consistent position on this hermeneutical matter, nevertheless, it prides itself in taking the Bible for what it says. Postmillennialism, on the other hand, admits that prophecy must be interpreted symbolically. In this instance, postmillennialism and amillennialism agree. However, all postmillennialism cites as its main proof various Old Testament prophecies which are not yet fulfilled. And, when one examines why the contention is maintained that these prophecies have not yet been fulfilled, one discovers that a literal interpretation is after all given to them. This will become clearer when we examine this entire question. For another thing, some postmillennialists who tie their views with the interpretation of Romans 11 that there will be a mass conversion of the Jews before Christ returns maintain also that the Jews will be saved as Jews. It is true that premillennialism maintains that the old economy of the Jewish nation will be restored in Palestine so that there will once again be an earthly nation of Israel with the old sacrifices in the old temple, etc. It is also true that postmillennialism denies this. But the fact remains that both maintain the all-important point that the Jew will be saved as Jew.

But all postmillennialists hold together that we may expect that, before the return of Christ upon the clouds of heaven, there will be a world-wide turning to the truth of Scripture, a world-wide conversion of sinners. This will be so complete that, while there will always be unconverted people in the world and always sin, nevertheless, Christianity will be in control. All the institutions of life will be under the rule and in the control of Christian people. The result will be a manifestation of the kingdom of Christ here upon earth. Just exactly what will be the relation between that kingdom and the coming of Christ is a matter of dispute. Some maintain that the world will so completely develop into the kingdom of Christ that when Christ returns He will be able to take his realized kingdom into glory. Others maintain that even this earthly manifestation of the kingdom of Christ will be followed by a very dark period, in which sin once again gains the ascendancy. This will then be the period of the great tribulation in which Antichrist rules and it will only be ended when Christ comes to destroy all wickedness and establish the everlasting kingdom of heaven. Nevertheless, the Christian must be optimistic. He must look forward to and labor for a

day when his cause, as the cause of Christ will be victorious and when Christianity will rule supreme in government, labor, schools, homes, and all the relationships among men.

Thus Boettner writes:

Thus Postmillennialism holds that Christianity is to become the controlling and transforming influence not only in the moral and spiritual life of some individuals, but also in the entire social, economic and cultural life of the nations. There is no reason why this change should not take place over the entire earth, with pagan religions and false philosophies giving place to the true, and the earth being restored in considerable measure to that high purpose of righteousness and holiness for which it was created.⁷

We turn now to the Scriptural proof which is offered for this view.

The Scriptural proof for this view can be roughly divided into different categories. We shall refer to each group of texts and comment upon each group separately.

1) A large part of the proof is to be found in the Old Testament Scriptures, especially the prophetic sections. But even these passages can be somewhat classified. Boettner speaks of proof to be found, first of all, in certain passages which teach a universal salvation. Although a rather large number of such passages are mentioned, the following are the most important: Isaiah 40:5, Psalms 86:9, Psalms 22:27, Psalms 2:8, Isaiah 2:2,3 in connection with Hebrews 2:22, Jeremiah 31:34, Malachi 1:11, Amos 9:11,12 in connection with the quotation of this passage by James at the Jerusalem council found in Acts 15:17. Concerning the passage in Isaiah 2:2,3 Boettner writes:

In the book of Hebrews "Mount Zion," as God's holy mountain, is spiritualized to mean the Church (12:22). Hence in this prophecy it must mean that the Church, having attained a position so that it stands out like a mountain on a plain, will be prominent and regulative in all world affairs.⁸

While we cannot treat all these passages individually, a few remarks ought to be made about them.

The passage in Isaiah 2:2,3 reads: "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the

⁷. Op. cit., p. 53.

⁸. Ibid., p. 25.

top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." Now it is true that Mount Zion has a symbolic and typical meaning in Scripture. It is also true that the reference is often to the Church of Jesus Christ -- as Boettner remarks in connection with Hebrews 12:22. But one wonders at the tremendous jump which is made from the idea of Mount Zion as symbolic of the Church to the idea that "the Church, having attained a position so that it stands out like a mountain on a plain, will be prominent and regulative in all world affairs." There is not so much as a hint of this idea in the text. The conclusion is wholly unwarranted.

The same is true of such texts which speak of the fact that salvation will be universal. Psalm 86:9, quoted by Boettner, is a case in point. This passage reads: "All nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee, O Lord; and shall glorify thy name." There are many such passages in the Old Testament Scriptures, but all refer to the fact that in the Dispensation of the coming of Christ the Church will no longer be limited to the narrow confines of the nation of Israel, but will be a Church gathered from every nation and tribe and tongue. So great is this wonder that Paul calls it the mystery of Christ (Ephesians 3:1-10). There is here however, nothing that has to do with a world-wide kingdom under the influence of Christianity.

It is also in this connection that Boettner refers to Jeremiah 31:34: "And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." Now it is interesting, in the first place, that this passage appears in a context which speaks of a new covenant which God establishes with the house of Israel. It is not the covenant which God made when Israel was delivered from the land of Egypt, which covenant Israel broke. This was the covenant of the law which came to Israel from Mount Sinai. But it is a covenant according to which God puts his law in the hearts of His people; a covenant in which He is their God and they His people (vss. 31-33). Thus the reference is quite obviously

to the fact that God fulfills the law on Sinai in Christ in such a way that the law is no longer the condition to life and favor, but is rather the work of grace in the hearts of all God's elect. In the second place, this passage is quoted in Hebrews 8:8-11 and 10:16 where it is specifically referred to the truth that God forgives all the sins of His people. It is difficult to see how this can be applied to a postmillennial kingdom.

Closely related to these passages are passages which are quoted from the New Testament where the word "world" appears. Boettner refers especially to such passages as I John 2:2, 4:14, John 1:29, 3:16,17,4:42,8:12, II Corinthians 5:19. While he does not want an Arminian interpretation of these passages, he refers the term "world" to the fact that a large majority of the world's population shall be turned to Christ when the postmillennial kingdom dawns. We need not dwell long on the correct interpretation of these passages. It is general knowledge that the term "world" has many different meanings in the New Testament. Among these meanings, especially in those passages to which Boettner refers, is the idea that the object of God's election, love and salvation is the organic unity of God's people. It must be remembered in this connection that God saves the human race. And, not only does He save the human race, but He saves His entire creation. But this human race which He saves is the true human race of His eternal counsel. The human race as it develops from Adam is the organism of the wheat plant. Part of this organism is the reprobate world which must serve the purpose of the people of God. But part is the elect kernel. This is the true human race of God's eternal purpose, the object of election and sovereign love. But organically connected to this elect kernel is the whole of God's world -- the world of the entire universe which shall be saved when Christ unites all things perfectly to Himself and creates a new heavens and a new earth. There is no reference here to a postmillennial kingdom.

Another group of Old Testament prophetic texts consists of those passages which refer to the universal rule of Christ. Among these especially are quoted such passages as Psalm 2:8, 47:2-8, 97:5, 110:1, Daniel 2:44, 7:22. In connection with Psalm 110:1 Boettner remarks:

We call special attention to the fact that this latter verse from the 110th Psalm means that Christ is to conquer all. The righthand position is the position of power and influence. This conquest is now in process of accomplishment as He advances against His enemies. His mediatorial

reign from the right hand of God is to continue until all of His enemies have been subdued. In the New Testament Christ Himself quoted this verse to prove His Deity. (Luke 20:42,43). Peter too quoted this verse (Acts 2:34,35) to prove that what had happened at Pentecost was the fulfillment of Psalm 110:1. He thus saw its fulfillment, not as a cataclysmic act coming at the day of judgment, but in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the Church during the present age. This process is to continue until all of Christ's enemies have been placed under His feet, so that He reigns over all the earth.⁹

With this quotation we can, in substance agree. But that there is here a reference to a kingdom of the type envisaged by postmillennialists is a reading into the text of something which is not there. There are many passages both in the Old and New Testaments which speak of Christ's universal rule. All of these passages very clearly speak of the fact that Christ, at the time of His ascension, was exalted at the right hand of God. The reference is undoubtedly to the fact that Christ is given supreme authority over all the work of God. His position is so exalted that all God's decree of providence is exercised through Christ. All the affairs of the universe, of men and nations, of heaven and hell, are now in the hands of the exalted Lord. Nothing is outside His sovereign control. But we must remember that, historically, Reformed theologians have always distinguished between what has been called the rule of Christ's power and the rule of His grace. The idea is that Christ rules indeed over all. But He rules in an antithetical way. He rules over the wicked both on this earth and in hell in such a way that they, in spite of their rebellion against Him and God, nevertheless serve His purpose. But He rules over His people in such a way that by the wonder of grace His people are transformed into loyal and obedient citizens of His kingdom. They bow before Him and worship Him as Lord above all. This is the very clear teaching of Psalm 2. "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us." These statements express the utter foolishness of the wicked. All their ragings amount to nothing. In fact, "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure."

⁹ Ibid., p. 24.

Why is this? The answer is simply: "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee." If we remember that Paul quoted this latter passage in his speech to the audience at Antioch of Pisidia, (Acts 13:33), as proof of the resurrection of Christ, then we will also understand that God laughs at the raging of the heathen because, even in their raging, they serve God's purpose under Christ's sovereign control. This is why the Psalm goes on to say: "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." That this does not refer to a postmillennial kingdom is evident from the very next verse: "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." The obvious reference is to the fact that this sovereign rule of Christ over the wicked is for the purpose of the salvation of the Church; and when Christ's purpose with them is accomplished, they are smashed to pieces in God's righteous judgment.

3. There is another group of prophecies which is quoted in support of postmillennialism. This group has to do with those passages which speak of a universal kingdom of peace and prosperity. But before we turn our attention to them, there are a couple of other points which ought to be made.

a. In the first place, reference is made to the so-called cultural mandate in connection with the calling of the Christian to labor to bring all institutions of society under the dominion of Christ. Rushdoony writes, e.g., "(The Christian) has been regenerated by God through Christ to reassume the task abandoned by Adam, namely, to exercise dominion and to subdue the earth under God and His law-word."¹⁰

We shall return to a discussion of this a bit more in detail in another connection. It is sufficient for our purposes to notice at the moment that this description is inaccurate. Adam did not abandon the cultural mandate; sin and the curse made it impossible for Adam to continue it. This is not a mere quibbling over words; this strikes at the very heart of the question. Forgotten is the fact that sin and the curse made it forever impossible for the cultural mandate to be fulfilled in this present world.

b. In the second place, reference is often made to the parables of the

¹⁰. Op cit., p. 30.

mustard seed and the leaven recorded in Matthew 13:31-33.¹¹ Regardless of how these parables are interpreted however, it is clear that to interpret them in terms of a universal postmillennial kingdom is to stretch the passage beyond what it will bear. To give to the mustard herb the meaning of a great and glorious kingdom in which Christianity will prevail throughout the world and to explain the leaven in terms of an earthly kingdom of peace and prosperity is to read far more into the passage than is there. After all the mustard herb, though the greatest of all herbs, is not a very big plant. How much better, if the Lord had in mind a universal kingdom, to compare the kingdom to a mighty oak rather than to a rather lowly and insignificant mustard herb.

But to return to those passages in the Old Testament which speak of a kingdom of peace and prosperity: the passages which are referred to are found in various places. Some of them are: Zechariah 9:10: "And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off: and he shall speak peace unto the heathen: and his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth." Numbers 14:21: "But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord." Isaiah 35:1: "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose." Psalm 72. While this entire Psalm is usually referred to, the main passages read: "He shall judge thy people with righteousness, and thy poor with judgment. The mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills, by righteousness. He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor. They shall fear thee as long as the sun and moon endure, throughout all generations. He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass: as showers that water the earth. In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him; and his enemies shall lick the dust. The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents; the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. Yea, all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him."

¹¹. For a detailed explanation of these parables, I refer you to "Mysteries of the Kingdom."

Concerning these passages in general and Isaiah 11:9 in particular, Boettner writes:

(These passages) clearly foretell a time when righteousness shall be triumphant over all the earth. This fits perfectly into the postmillennial system. It does not fit into the amillennial system. Amillennialists take it to be a description of the final heavenly kingdom, and so place it after the resurrection and judgment. But there is no sufficient reason for assigning it to the heavenly kingdom except that it does not fit into their scheme of things for this world.¹²

Passages such as these are undoubtedly the strongest proof for the postmillennial position. But is it true that, as some assert, if postmillennialism is not correct then many prophecies remain unfulfilled? Our answer is No. The following considerations enter our interpretation of these passages.

In the first place, it is more than passing strange that suddenly those who adopt a postmillennial position want to take these passages literally. This is clear, e.g., from what Boettner writes in the same context.

Verse 10 (of Isaiah 11) is another Messianic prediction, declaring that the Messiah shall be "an ensign of the peoples," and that "unto him shall the nations seek." That clearly speaks of this world, not of the next. (But why? Revelation tells us that in the redeemed creation all nations and tribes and tongues shall appear before the throne. Revelation 7:9-17, H.H.) Isaiah 11:9 loses its force when taken in any other than a postmillennial sense. Similarly, swords and plowshares, and spears and pruning hooks, spoken of in Isaiah 2:4, cannot be thought of as having any place in heaven. (This is, of course, true only if these are taken literally. H.H.)

Boettner admits that this is figurative, but yet maintains a certain literal meaning.

This is, of course, figurative language. It foretells an age of peace, contentment and safety right here on this earth.¹³

That he gives a literal interpretation to these prophecies is also evident from what he writes on page 123:

These are very great and precious promises, and certainly they point forward to conditions that have not yet been enjoyed on this earth. They are in fact so far-reaching and expansive that they stagger the imagination. Some amillennialists, finding no place

12. Op. cit., p. 121.

13. Ibid., p. 121.

in their system for these conditions, attempt to carry them over into the eternal state. But references to the "nations" (Isaiah 2:2,4); judging the people with righteousness (Isaiah 11:4); people dying at the age of one hundred years (Isaiah 65:20); etc., point unmistakably to this world. Of necessity much Old Testament prophecy, designed for fulfillment in an age that had not yet dawned, had to be given in figurative language. Had our present day terminology been used it would have been unintelligible to the people of that day. The "shoot out of the stock of Jesse," and "the root of Jesse that standeth for an ensign of the peoples" (Isaiah 11:1-10), quite clearly refer to the coming Messiah. "The mountain of Jehovah's house", "exalted above the hills," or Mount Zion, from which "shall go forth the law, and the Word of Jehovah" to the nations (Isaiah 2:2-4), is the New Testament Church which, divinely established and as the custodian of the Gospel, is the true successor to Old Testament Israel. Today it is carrying the Gospel to all the world, and is exerting a marvelously great influence for good wherever it goes.... The wolf dwelling with the lamb, the leopard lying down with the kid, the young child putting its hand unhurt into the adder's den (Isaiah 11:6,8), evidently means that peoples and forces now hostile and antagonistic and at enmity with each other shall be converted and so changed by Christianity that they shall live and work together harmoniously in Messiah's kingdom.

Now it is evident from these quotations that Boettner would like to have it both ways. He does not want a literal interpretation of these prophecies in the sense of the premillennialists, in fact, rails against such an interpretation. He gives to these prophecies some sort of figurative meaning when he insists that the language is suited to the times in which these prophecies were written. But when he rejects the idea that these prophecies refer to the kingdom of Christ established upon our Lord's return upon the clouds of heaven, he does so because swords and plowshares, a life-span of one hundred years and wolves dwelling with lambs must be taken literally and cannot apply to heaven.

There is a serious inconsistency here. And the point is by no means of peripheral importance. Either these prophecies are to be taken symbolically or literally. One cannot have it both ways. If the former is true, there is no reason to refrain from referring them to Christ's heavenly kingdom. If the latter is true, what is to distinguish this form of interpretation from that of premillennialism? And how are we to tell what must be taken literally and what symbolically? To these questions there are no

answers. And yet these passages constitute the main proof for the postmillennial position.

In the second place, there is an important mistake made here in connection with the interpretation of prophecy. The prophets spoke of the day of the Lord when they spoke of the future. According to their perspective, this day of the Lord constituted one event: the day of the coming of Christ. They did not distinguish in their prophecies between what we call the first coming of Christ when He was born into our flesh, and the second coming of Christ when He returns again upon the clouds of heaven. To describe the prophetic perspective the figure has been used of a man approaching a range of mountains. When he is yet far from the mountains he sees all the mountains as one solid range. It is only when he gets closer that he discovers that there are several ranges, one following another, and that these ranges are separated by wide valleys. This is correct. However, we must not take the position that the prophets were wrong in their perspective. It was not that, from their Old Testament viewpoint, they made a rather natural mistake. Their description of the day of the Lord as one event was essentially correct. And it was correct because the day of the Lord must not be reckoned in mere temporal terms. After all, a day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as a day. They looked at the day of the Lord from the viewpoint of its essential idea. And this essential idea is the revelation of God in all its fulness in Jesus Christ when God comes in Christ to redeem and save all His elect and all this creation. That coming of the Lord to save and redeem His people began when Christ was born of the Virgin Mary in our flesh and in the state of humiliation. That coming of the Lord includes His death and resurrection, His ascension and exaltation in heaven. That coming of the day of the Lord is finally realized when Christ comes upon the clouds of heaven to take His Church unto Himself, to punish all the workers of iniquity, to make a new heavens and a new earth, and to establish His kingdom forever. It is all essentially one event, one mighty work of God, one glorious establishment of the kingdom. To that whole day of the Lord the prophets looked forward. And that day they described in all their prophecies.

Quite naturally, these prophecies would be clothed in symbolic language. This was both because they were speaking to the people of their day in language which these people would be able to understand, and because they were

speaking in the dispensation of types and shadows when so much of the revelation of God was by means of dreams and visions and clothed in symbolic terms.

In the third place, it must not be forgotten that many of these prophecies had an historical fulfillment within the nation of Israel itself. Psalm 72, e.g., was written in connection with the coronation of Solomon and speaks historically of the kingdom which Solomon would establish under the blessing of God and as an historical fulfillment of God's promises to David. The same is true of Psalm 2 which has its historical fulfillment in the throne of David established on Mount Zion. But it must never be forgotten that both David and Solomon were types of Christ, that their kingdom pre-figured the kingdom of Christ, and that the perfect fulfillment of these types and shadows awaits the great day of the Lord.

There are many texts which have been quoted as being in opposition to the postmillennial position. Quite understandably, postmillennialists have their answers to these passages. It might be worth our while, however briefly, to take a look at what postmillennialism has to say in this connection.

In the first place, there are several passages in the Scriptures which refer to the fact that the number of the saved, though a great multitude which cannot be numbered, is nevertheless, relatively speaking, small. Texts such as Matthew 7:14 and 22:14 are referred to in this connection. Reference is also made to the parable of the wheat and the tares as found in Matthew 13:34 ff. Wherever such passages are found, it is the contention of postmillennial thinkers that these refer to the moment at which they were spoken. Boettner writes, e.g.:

We believe that these verses are meant to be understood in a temporal sense, as describing the conditions which Jesus and the disciples saw existing in Palestine in their day....the words were spoken from the standpoint of the moment rather than from the standpoint of the distant Judgment Day. In these words we have presented to us a picture that was true to life as they saw it about them, and which in general has been true even up to the present time. But we may ask, in view of the future prosperity promised to the Church, are we not entitled to believe that as the years and the centuries and ages flow on the proportion following "the two ways" shall be reversed?¹⁴

It is however, inadequate to explain all these passages away with the mere assertion that they must "be understood in a temporal sense, as

¹⁴. Ibid., p. 36.

describing the conditions which Jesus and the disciples saw existing in Palestine in their day." Scripture constantly speaks of the true people of God, the spiritual seed of Abraham, as a remnant according to the election of grace. Cf. e.g., Isaiah 1:8,9 and Romans 9:27. But of more importance is the error of limiting the words of Jesus to the immediate historical occasion. Surely what Jesus has to say applies to all time, for the passage in Matthew 7:14 refers specifically to the principles of the kingdom of heaven. This, Jesus is saying, is what the kingdom of heaven is like throughout the entire New Dispensation. It is like a narrow way, and there are only a few who enter this way.

In close connection with this, is the objection which has been raised on the basis of Luke 18:8: "Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" that there will scarcely be any people of God left on earth when the Lord returns. Boettner writes:

They infer that the answer (to the question of the text) must be "No." But in order to give a negative answer to this question it is necessary to ignore the many statements in Scripture which describe the latter glory of the Church. Surely an answer which at first might seem to be implied but which is not given in Scripture should not be allowed to outweigh the many references which speak of the triumph of righteousness in the earth. We submit that a question such as that in Luke 18:8 does not necessarily require a negative answer.¹⁵

What is forgotten however, is the fact that this appears at the end of a parable in which Jesus is instructing His people always to pray and not to faint. And the reason for this instruction is that God's elect are harassed by the ungodly while in the world. They are to be compared with a poor and defenseless widow woman. And Jesus therefore assures His people: "Shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily." (vss. 7,8). In that connection, Jesus asks the question: "Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" It is evident, in this context, that Jesus means to suggest the possibility that the elect are so few in number, and that those who persevere to the end are so scarce that they can hardly be found.

Thirdly, there are a certain number of texts which refer to the fact that the world becomes increasingly evil as time goes on. Murray writes of

¹⁵. Ibid., p. 47.

this objection, and answers it in the following words:

Probably the next most frequently referred to passage in support of the view that the world will progressively darken is II Timothy, chapter 3, which commences, 'This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come'. The popular citation of this text without a consideration of its precise import and context is an unhappy illustration of how debate on prophetic issues is too often conducted....

Paul was thinking primarily of his own time....¹⁶

We shall return again to this subject also; but for the moment it ought to be evident that the many passages which speak of an increase in wickedness cannot be simply passed over with the statement that they refer only to the time at which they were written. Scripture always has abiding significance to the Church, and the statement "last times" surely refers to all the days which precede the coming of Christ.

We cannot refrain from making a few remarks about the exegesis of Exodus 23:26 because Gary North writes of this passage: "If there is any passage in Scripture that absolutely refutes the amillennial position, it is this one." That is quite a statement to make. The question is: Does it really do this? The passage reads: "There shall nothing cast their young, nor be barren, in thy land: the number of thy days I will fulfill."

There are several remarks which ought to be made concerning this verse.

1) In the first place, it is evident that the passage, as well as the whole context, refers to God's promises to Israel if they continue to be obedient to God in the land which God will give them. Thus the reference is to the blessings which Israel would receive in the earthly land of Canaan if they remained obedient to God. These blessings are closely tied therefore, to the typical land of Canaan in which Israel would receive prosperity and riches in the way of obedience to God's law. Now, if North wants to take this blessing as literally applying to the New Dispensation (the time of the millennium) then he has fallen into the error of the premillennialists, something abhorrent to him. But he cannot have it both ways. He cannot take a passage such as this (referring to Israel's earthly prosperity in Canaan) and apply it to the New Dispensation without doing the same thing to all the blessings which God promised Israel. But then he

¹⁶ Murray, op. cit., p. 80.

must also adopt the premillennial position.

2) While North insists on taking this passage literally, he would, no doubt, demur when asked to take the immediately preceding verse literally. That verse reads: "And ye shall serve the Lord your God, and he shall bless thy bread, and thy water; and I will take sickness away from the midst of thee." Not even the most ardent postmillennialist claims that there will be no sickness in the millennial kingdom.

3) The fact of the matter is that, although God indeed tied material blessings to the keeping of His law in the Old Testament, Israel never kept the law of God perfectly, nor could she. The whole economy, along with the relation between the keeping of the law and material blessings in typical Canaan, was intended by God to point to the keeping of the law by Christ and the inheritance for all the elect of the spiritual blessings of the heavenly kingdom. Postmillennialists do not seem to understand this important point.

The conclusion of the matter is that the Scriptural proof for post-millennialism simply does not exist.

There remain three important questions which we must still discuss. One question is the relation between postmillennial thinking and the future mass conversion of the Jews. The second is the whole question of the relationship between the postmillennial kingdom and the law of the Old Dispensation. And the third is the question of the organic development of sin. To each of these we now turn.

It is not our intention to enter into a long and detailed examination of the so-called "Jewish problem". This would carry us far afield, even though it is an important question as far as understanding the Puritan position is concerned. There are two remarks which we wish to make in this connection. The first is that we agree with the interpretation of H. Hoeksema when he writes that the "all Israel" in Romans 11:26 (which passage is the one crucial passage in the discussion) refers to the elect number of Jews which is gathered into the Church throughout the entire New Dispensation along with the Gentiles.¹⁷

There is, however, a point here which is worth emphasizing. The criticism has been made of this position that those who teach a mass conversion of the Jews neglect the New Testament truth that Jews who are saved lose their national identity. Murray¹⁸ also considers this objection and

¹⁷ See Reformed Dogmatics, pp. 787-795 and God's Eternal Good Pleasure, pp. 455-475.

¹⁸ Op. cit., p. 77.

repudiates it. Nevertheless, there is truth to this assertion. It is a striking fact of history that the Jew always remains a Jew throughout the entire New Dispensation. No matter what country he lives in and no matter what culture he becomes a part of, he always remains a Jew. This is according to God's purpose also, for the Jew can always, according to Romans 11, be grafted into his own olive tree. The only time he ceases to be a Jew is when he is converted and turned to Christ. Then he becomes a part of the Church of Christ which is gathered in every country and nation. Then he becomes one with the elect from all tribes and peoples. And then he loses his Jewish identity and ceases to be a Jew. There are literally thousands and thousands of Jews throughout the New Dispensation who have been brought into the Church, but any trace of their Jewishness has been lost. And this exactly is according to the Scriptures. See Ephesians 2: 11-22, 3:2-11, Galatians 3:28 and like passages. The postmillennialists who tie their views to a future mass conversion of the Jews do not do justice to this idea.

The second remark we wish to make is that, even if the correct interpretation of Romans 11:26 is that there is coming a time when God will save the Jews en masse, this does not yet prove the position of postmillennialism. There could conceivably be a time in the future when a large number of Jews will be brought to faith in Christ by the sovereign power of God. But even if this should happen, it could happen without the establishment of a millennial kingdom such as postmillennialists envisage. There are those who maintain that this mass conversion of the Jews will take place in connection with the establishment of the Jewish homeland in Palestine -- even though they want nothing of the premillennial position. But here too the danger becomes evident that those who hold to this position forget that a Jew ceases to be a Jew when he becomes a part of the one Catholic Church of Christ.

The second question which we must face is the question of the place of the law in the realization of the postmillennial kingdom. The supporters of postmillennialism who have their base in the Chalcedon Foundation have made a great deal of this. A number of books have been written by them on this subject, and it has become an important part of postmillennial thought. The general idea which lies behind this view is that the entire law of God given to Israel (political, social, ceremonial, civil) is a law which, though

fulfilled in Christ still has validity in the New Dispensation as far as the principles involved are concerned. And, only in so far as the principles underlying these laws are observed do men live according to the will of God. And the kingdom which will be realized here upon earth is a kingdom in which all the principles of these laws will once again be in force and govern the lives of mankind. Rushdoony, e.g., brands all other views of the millennium as essentially antinomian¹⁹ and writes:

HOW is Christ's Kingdom to COME? Scripture is again very definite and explicit.. The glorious peace and prosperity of Christ's reign will be brought about ONLY as people obey the covenant law. In Lev. 26, Deut. 28, and all of Scripture, this is plainly stated. There will be peace and prosperity in the land, the enemy will be destroyed, and men will be free of evils only "If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them" (Lev. 26:3). The obedience of faith to the law of God produces IRRESISTIBLE BLESSINGS: "And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God" (Deut. 28:2). On the other hand, disobedience leads to IRRESISTIBLE CURSES....

According to these and other declarations of Scripture, the determination of all things within time is in terms of obedience and disobedience to God's law. This is plainly spelled out for the various areas of life. FIRST, national, rural, and urban prosperity and success are conditional upon obedience to God's law. SECOND, human fertility is similarly an area where God's curse and blessing are operative, and we are either cursed or blessed in the fruit of our bodies. THIRD, agricultural fertility and prosperity are also tied to the law. FOURTH, the weather is likewise related to the law, so that God judges and blesses by means of rain, hail, snow, dew, and sun. FIFTH, our relationship to our enemies is again conditional upon obedience. SIXTH, our personal lives and activities are blessed or cursed in terms of our obedience to God's law.²⁰

But all this is based upon an erroneous conception of the law. After all, the law of God has at its very center the moral law of the ten commandments. Around this law of the ten commandments was grouped the entire ceremonial law of Israel governing her relation to God. And around this were all the laws which ruled in Israel's civil and social life. But all these laws grouped about the moral law of God were subordinate to that

¹⁹. Op. cit., p. 11. See also such works as "Theonomy in Christian Ethics", by Greg Bahnsen; "The Institutes of Biblical Law" by R.J. Rushdoony.

²⁰. Ibid., pp. 54,55.

law. In the Old Dispensation, God gave Israel His law in order to show how Israel had to live in relation to God. But the point was that the law could not disannul the promises of God. (Galations 3:17) God gave Israel all these detailed laws in order that Israel might learn that salvation could never come through the works of the law. The law was, so to speak, a tyrant which followed the Israelite wherever he went. The law told the Israelite how he had to eat his food and what he might eat. The law followed him into his field and told him how to plant his crops and how to plow his land. The law peered over his shoullder wherever he turned and said: "Just a minute; I have something to say to you about how you must do this." And besides, always the law shouted its curses and rained the blows of its curses upon the head of the transgressor. Never could Israel keep that law even for a moment. And it was because of this that the law was a school-master to lead Israel to Christ (Galatians 3:24). In despair at keeping the law, the true Israelite fled to Christ for refuge, for there was no refuge from the curse of the law apart from Christ.

From this follow several propositions. In the first place, the law has been fulfilled in the sense that Christ bore all the curses of the law upon Himself. The law is now so fully realized that it is written in the hearts of the people of God. They are freed from the curses of the law, because Christ was made a curse for them.

In the second place, all the ceremonial laws have also been fulfilled in Christ. They pointed ahead to Christ and the perfect work of salvation which Christ performed for all His elect. They have served their purpose and are in effect no longer. The epistle to the Hebrews is at great pains to show how all these ceremonial laws had their counterpart in the work of Christ and the realities of salvation.

In the third place, all the laws governing Israel's civil and social and political life have also been fulfilled. It is here where we come to the crux of the matter. All these laws have no more validity for the Church of the New Dispensation. They were intended to demonstrate the impossibility of Israel's keeping of the law, and they served their purpose when Israel was brought to Christ. It is true that taken together they still show strong principles of the kingdom of heaven. But: 1) they are not in force any longer as such. Israel's dietary laws have passed away because God told Peter: "What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common." (Acts 10:15)

Those grievously err when once again they call common what God cleansed. It is true that the point was that Gentiles were to be brought into the Church; but it is also true that when God commanded Peter to kill and eat unclean animals, God meant exactly what he said. 2) There are many laws which not even the postmillennialists would insist are still in force. Certainly it would be saying too much to enjoin upon men the carrying of a paddle to bury excrement. Nor would even the most ardent observer of the law insist that it is still wrong to sow two kinds of seed in one field. 3) The postmillennialists may not bring us back to the bondage of law upon law and precept upon precept, here a little and there a little. We stand in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free. (Galatians 5:1) The people of God must refuse to be dragged back into the bondage of the law. Their liberty is a very precious gift of grace and no one may take it from them. 4) The postmillennialists forget that the principles of the law are principles which mean that the antithesis cuts through the whole of the life of the child of God as this law is fulfilled in Christ. This is clear from the reference to the Old Testament law in II Corinthians 6:14-18. The principles of the kingdom of heaven apply to all our life. There is no part of it exempt from the demands of the kingdom. In every aspect of life we are called to live lives which are principally and fundamentally different from those of the world. But how each child of God lives his life in his own station and calling and how he applies the abiding principles of the kingdom of heaven to his own place in that kingdom is a matter of Christian liberty. The principles are all in the Scriptures. The application of them is in the sanctified consciousness of the child of God. And if he lacks wisdom to do this, let him ask of God Who giveth to all liberally and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him. James 1:5.

Once again the chief error is a failure to understand that the Old Testament economy is typical. It pointed ahead to another day coming in which all the typical elements would pass away because they are fulfilled in Christ. No longer will there be such a typical kingdom. The kingdom is now eternal. It is spiritual and implanted in the hearts of the people of God.

The whole question of the place which the law occupies in postmillennial thinking must have further study. There is, it is true, some disagreement on this question among those who hold to postmillennial views; and it is not always easy to know what precisely is meant by such concepts as

"natural law", "the fulfillment of the law", etc. In his book, "Theonomy in Christian Ethics", Greg Bahnsen speaks of the fact that the entire ceremonial law is still emphatically in force; although he interprets this to mean that every part of the ceremonial law has been fulfilled in Christ.

There is however, a point here which needs emphasis. It is certainly true that even an outward observance of the law of God brings with it material prosperity. Even the natural man has "the works of the law written in his heart." Among other things this means that it does not take grace to see that outward observance of God's law alone makes society life possible. If the law of God were not observed, chaos would be the result and life in society would be impossible. But this is still something quite different from what postmillennialists teach. The fact is that unregenerated men construct legislation governing society which reflects the outward precepts of the law of God out of purely selfish reasons -- their own self-preservation in society. At bottom they hate God and His law; they do not keep the inward demands of the law; and they abandon even the outward demands of the law just as soon as they convince themselves that they have advanced sufficiently in medicine and technology to escape the dread consequences of breaking God's law. An example of this is clearly evident in the increasing amount of legislation which circumvents the seventh commandment. Because there are medicines to control venereal disease, birth control techniques to avoid conception, abortion on demand, the laws governing fornication are gradually being dismantled. In the final analysis this is true of every one of God's commandments.

Finally, we must say something about the question of the development of sin. There are several elements in this question to which attention must be called. In the first place, we must have a correct idea of the cultural mandate. In the second place, we must understand the organic conception of sin's development in the history of the world. And finally, and in this connection, we must see that, because of this, we must indeed expect an age when the powers of darkness shall rule in the earth. It is also in connection with this that we must briefly refer to the interpretation of Revelation 20 -- the passage from which all the trouble concerning the millennium arises.

The whole question of the organic development of sin is closely connected with that of the cultural mandate. This cultural mandate, so-called, is found in Genesis 1:26-30 where the command is given to Adam as image bearer to have dominion over all the creation. In a certain sense of the word, this is a key passage in the whole structure of postmillennialism because so it is argued,

this command has never been withdrawn, and the fulfillment of the mandate is the means used to usher in the millennium.

It is not our purpose to enter into this question in detail. This whole matter of the cultural mandate has been treated rather extensively by Rev. H. Hoeksema in his pamphlet, "The Christian and Culture". There are however, several points which ought to be made in connection with our present discussion.

In the first place, it is important to notice that this command to subdue the earth was given to man in connection with his creation in the image of God. This is important because the Scriptures teach, and Reformed theology has always maintained, that the fall brought about a complete loss of the image.

While this truth is increasingly denied in our day, it is nevertheless important to maintain what is taught, e.g., in Canons III and IV, Article 1: "Man was originally formed after the image of God. His understanding was adorned with a true and saving knowledge of his Creator, and of spiritual things; his heart and will were upright; all his affections were pure; and the whole man was holy; but revolting from God by the instigation of the devil, and abusing the freedom of his own will, he forfeited these excellent gifts; and on the contrary entailed on himself blindness of mind, horrible darkness, vanity and perverseness of judgment, became wicked, rebellious, and obdurate in heart and will, and impure in his affections." —

But see also "remnants" remain...

In other words, it was possible for man as image bearer to subdue the earth and have dominion over all the creation. But when, through the fall, the image of God was changed in him to the image of Satan, he was no longer able to subdue the earth according to the original command of God. He remained man. But the knowledge of that image was changed into the lie; the righteousness of that image was changed into unrighteousness; his holiness into the defilement of sin. Because he remained man, all his energies could yet be expended in the subjection of the creation; and as a result man is still capable of harnessing the powers of the creation to serve his purpose. But now he uses it all to sin. He can and will do nothing else, for he bears the image of the prince of darkness. And so, in the midst of God's world, he does nothing but sin.

2. In the second place, the curse came upon the creation. We read in Genesis 3:17-19: "Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt

not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."

It is apparent from the fact that God connects this curse upon the creation with death that the main idea is that all labor in this sin-cursed creation is fundamentally futile and without purpose. Man cannot accomplish anything in this world, and though he labors for a time, it all ends in death. There is nothing optimistic here or filled with hope for the future.

3. In the third place, this does not mean that there was nothing at all of hope in this world after the fall. But the hope that came into the world was the hope of the promise of God which He made that He would send Christ as the Seed of the woman. This promise, with all that it implies as revealed in Sripture, is of the realization of a greater and higher purpose of God in the establishment of a new creation when heaven and earth shall be one. It must be emphasized that this is the purpose of God and was His purpose from all eternity. The fall is not a mishap which spoiled God's plan. God was realizing His purpose in all His sovereign work. The old creation has to be moved aside to make way for the new as the first Adam has to be moved aside to make room for the Second.

It is this idea which has such important implications for the whole question of the relation of the believer to this present world. Again and again, postmillennialists accuse those who hold to an amillennial position that they are really guilty of world flight.²¹ But this is surely not the case. Those who make this charge fail to understand the true idea of the Christian's calling. Because the final purpose of God is the establishment of the kingdom of heaven in the day of Christ's second coming, so God's people who are made citizens of that heavenly kingdom and who acknowledge the sovereign rule of Christ over all walk as pilgrims and strangers in the earth. Scripture repeatedly talks of this. See e.g., such texts as Psalm 39:12, Psalm 119:54, Hebrews 11:13-16, the whole of I and II Peter, etc. Postmillennialism has no place in its conception for pilgrims and strangers. God's people are, according to this view, conquerors who find in this world

²¹See e.g., Rushdoony, op. cit., pp. 10-12.

a home as the world becomes the kingdom of Christ. They are not just passing through; they are going on from victory to victory. They are not wanderers in a strange land; they are conquering warriors. It is impossible to be a pilgrim and stranger where the kingdom of Christ is earthly. And the practical danger is indeed that, if one becomes addicted to the postmillennial position, one forgets this calling to be a pilgrim and a stranger and begins to look for his home here in the world. He forgets that he lives in a tent, and he begins to build a mansion. And this is justified by the fact that his mansion is a part of the kingdom of Christ. And through it all, he no longer is mindful of his calling to watch unto the end. Boettner simply shoves aside these texts which call us to watch with the comment that the Church has always expected the imminent return of Christ, but has time and again been mistaken. But this will not do. The believer must live, in obedience to his Lord, in constant longing and expectation of the end of all things.

Does this mean that the child of God flees the world? It does not and cannot mean that. All the history of this world is the means which God uses to realize His kingdom. All the things in this present creation are instrumental for the realization of that purpose. This world is God's house and all in it belongs to Him. The pilgrim and stranger must walk in this house. He must therefore, use all that God gives him in the world to hasten on in his pilgrim's journey. He must, further, use all that is given him to promote and advance the cause of God's kingdom as all his life concentrates in that kingdom. All must be made subservient to the cause of Christ as Christ is working all things to bring about the great day of the Lord. Never may things be ends in themselves. Never may they be used for the realization of an earthly kingdom. Never may we seek that kingdom here in the world. If, for a time, even government should come under the control of Christians (as in Calvin's Geneva), this too must be used to promote the cause of Christ's heavenly kingdom. Nor may the Christian ignore the sin in society about him. He has the solemn calling to protest evil wherever it appears. He has the obligation to point out what the Scriptures require of men whenever and under whatever circumstances that opportunity is given to him. But transcending every calling is the calling to seek first the kingdom of heaven and God's righteousness. All is subservient to that.

It is in this respect too that the A.A.C.S. errs. Without going into any kind of detail concerning their misconception of the concept "Word of God", and without any attempt to analyze their mistaken conceptions concerning societal spheres, it is beyond dispute that the movement is postmillennial. Dr. McIntire writes: "Our association works for nothing less than the reformation of learning, and, in truth, of North American culture. As the Lord grants, ARSS (the former name of AACCS) advanced education will send throughout all of North America the world-shakers and history-makers in every facet of life. Christian men and women who will turn the world upside down for the Lord God."²² No one can be a pilgrim and stranger and pursue the goals of the AACCS.

In this present world, there is an organic development of sin. This is precisely the antithesis. From the fall on, the world develops the sin of our first parents. This development continues throughout all history. It develops as indeed sinful man still labors to subdue the earth. For as he uncovers the powers of the creation and makes them subservient to the evil intents of his own depraved heart, he labors towards the establishment of the kingdom of darkness. More and more that kingdom of darkness comes to manifestation as time progresses. At the very center of time therefore, stands the development of the Antichristian world power. Really, postmillennialism has no room for Antichrist in its thinking. Boettner e.g., speaks of the advance of civilization as proof for the advance of Christianity.²³ But he fails to see that, although it is true that civilization is indeed the product of Christianity in many instances, nevertheless, gradually, this very Christianity becomes Antichristianity. Anyone who sees the modern results of civilization in our day cannot help but admit this.

And so, also Antichrist cannot be taken seriously. Rushdoony writes:²⁴

In Scripture, the only valid definition of "antichrist" is anyone and everyone who denies that Christ has come in the flesh (I John 4:3), i.e., all who deny the reality of the incarnation. The Bible does NOT give us a one person of antichrist who shall rule the world: this is a myth, and it is a myth which exalts the powers of man as against God.

But the Scriptures speak an entirely different language. While it is true that indeed every spirit which confesses not that Jesus Christ is come into the flesh is of Antichrist, nevertheless, this does not exclude the

²²"The Forgotten Art Of World Shaking".

²³Op. cit., p. 50 and following pages.

²⁴Op.cit., p. 45.

teaching of Scripture that Antichrist shall be realized as one man who rules over an everlasting kingdom of darkness. He is the culmination of all sin which preceded him. He is the fullest principle of the development of sin through the ages.

This kingdom is spoken of already in the prophecy of Daniel in the image of the dream of Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 2). Boettner²⁵ compares the millennial kingdom with a mountain depicting the "triumph of the now existing Church as it becomes prominent and influential in all phases of human life." But the rock hewn without hands out of the mountain in the vision of Daniel becomes a mountain which smashes to pieces the image of Nebuchadnezzar's dream. It is that mountain which fills the whole earth. But it does not fill the earth by changing the image of Nebuchadnezzar into an image of Christ. It fills the earth by grinding the image to powder.

Scripture speaks in many places of this Antichristian kingdom. We have only to refer to such passages as Matthew 24:15 (in connection with Daniel 9: 23-27 and 12:11), II Thessalonians 2:3-12, Revelation 13, and like passages to prove this. It is impossible to get around these strong testimonies of Scripture concerning the coming of the Antichristian kingdom with its accompanying apostasy and with the dreadful persecution which shall come in that day.

Matthew 24 itself is strong proof of all this. It is true that the postmillennialists prefer to make Matthew 24 refer to the days of the destruction of Jerusalem, and it is also true that the whole chapter contains elements in it which refer to the destruction of Jerusalem. But the fact remains that Jesus is speaking in this chapter of the end of the world and the coming of Christ. This is evident, in the first place, from the fact that the disciples ask specifically concerning "when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" There is nothing in the text to indicate that Jesus refused to answer this specific question. Whatever may have been in the minds of the disciples when they asked it, and whatever misconception they may have had concerning the kingdom, this is the question which Jesus is answering. In the second place, the Lord Himself makes clear that He is speaking of the end when He specifically calls attention to the fact that the days of Noah are to be compared with "the coming of the Son of Man." (See also vss. 29,39). In the

²⁵Op Cit., p. 55

third place, the whole point of the passage (reinforced by the parable of the ten virgins in Matthew 25:1-13) is contained in the words: "Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come."

It has been said that the development of sin is at least temporarily stymied by the binding of Satan as this is recorded for us in Revelation 20. In the final analysis, it is this chapter about which the whole controversy concerning the millennium revolves. And this is not surprising because this is the one place in Scripture where a millennium is mentioned.

We need not enter here into a discussion of the meaning of this passage. The one important point which concerns us is the meaning of the binding of Satan. Boettner²⁶ regards this binding of Satan as indicating a curbing of the power of sin which makes the realization of a millennial kingdom possible. We call attention to the fact however, that the binding of Satan is specifically limited in the text to the fact "that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years would be fulfilled." And with the interpretation offered by Rev. H. Hoeksema in his book, "Behold, He Cometh" we agree in the main lines. The millennium therefore must be interpreted to refer to the entire New Dispensational period. In this connection it is striking to notice that Rome was the last manifestation of the Antichristian world power, and that the demise of Rome's power is roughly marked by the beginning of the Christian era. Throughout the entire New Dispensation therefore, there is no manifestation of the Antichristian kingdom as there was in the Old until the very end. And this is because of the fact that this is the dispensation of the gathering of the Church from every nation and tribe and tongue -- something impossible if Antichrist should rear his ugly head prematurely.

Yet the realization of Antichrist is important for the realization of God's purpose. When Christ comes again and the great day of judgment dawns, God must be vindicated in all that He does. He must be vindicated also in His everlasting punishment of the wicked in hell. And he is completely justified also in this because of the fact that sin has manifested itself fully as sin. Every possible sin which man is capable of performing has been committed. All the powers of creation have been uncovered and made subservient to sin. All evil has come out of the heart of man and come to open expression. The devil has done his best to realize a kingdom in opposition to God and Christ. Satan has done all he can, with the world as

²⁶Op. cit., pp. 59 ff.

his ally, to banish from God's house the cause of God, for the saints are persecuted and cast out and killed all the day long. Evil is now fully exposed as worthy of eternal judgment in hell. But it will then also be shown that the kingdom of Christ is victorious. Christ ruled indeed over all. The devil is not, and never has been, triumphant. He that sitteth in the heavens laughs, for He has set His King upon the holy hill of Sion. All was subservient to the cause of Christ. He used even the ragings of the heathen to accomplish His purpose.

And so we must not look wrongly for a kingdom of Christ in this world. In the world ye shall have tribulation, but fear not, I have overcome the world. These are the frightening, yet, comfort-filled words of our Savior. Do not expect a kingdom here below, for "the kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you." (Luke 17:20,21). Let us not make the kingdom of this world lest we deny the very words of Christ: "My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence." (John 18:36).

The danger is very real, that enamoured with the idea of an earthly kingdom, we fall into the mistake, and lead God's people to fall into the error, of identifying the kingdom of Christ with the kingdom of Antichrist. We look for a city which hath foundations whose builder and maker is God. Then all the prophecies of Scripture will be fulfilled and then we shall inherit the kingdom.

WHAT CONSTITUTES VICTORY?

An Analysis of the Postmillennialism Espoused by Chalcedon,
Especially in Rushdoony's God's Plan for Victory.

-- Rev. Dale H. Kuiper --

Introduction:

The committee for office bearers' conferences informs us of three reasons for their choosing "Postmillennialism" as the subject for this conference.

1) Postmillennialism is being set forth of late as the historic-Reformed position on the return of Jesus Christ. 2) Some of the books of earlier postmillennialists are being reprinted (Boettner's The Millennium, Kik's An Eschatology of Victory and Commentaries on Matthew 24 and Revelation 20, writings on Dabney and Thornwell, Iain Murray's The Puritan Hope, John Murray's Commentary on Romans, and Rushdoony's Thy Kingdom Come). 3) In the A.A.C.S. there is a strong leaning towards postmillennialism. In addition, Chalcedon, an organization committed to the development and promotion of postmillennial views, of which Rev. R. J. Rushdoony is president, has considerable influence in this country among Calvinists, especially young Calvinists. Through books, pamphlets, lectures, and a tape ministry, the men of Chalcedon are rather widely known and attract a considerable audience. These reasons strike us as being more than sufficient to have a conference on postmillennialism. But then this conference is not a defensive huddle of amillennialists who wonder where they have gone wrong, nor is this conference called to examine whether our historic position is indeed correct. Rather we gather to study, to learn, to become convinced of the truth of Scripture. And in the hope that the results of our conference may be useful to others who have questions in their souls as to what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ did signify.

This paper will serve as an introduction to our subject. We will present the position of Chalcedon, using the words of its leaders; we will analyze their method or approach, how they arrive at their conclusions and peddle their influence; and we will present what we consider to be the outstanding errors of this movement. We understand the afternoon paper will present an exegetical defense of amillennialism as well as an exegetical criticism of postmillennialism; here we shall be descriptive.

The sources for postmillennial thought which we have used are: 1) God's Plan for Victory by R.J. Rushdoony, 2) "The Journal of Christian Reconstruction", Vol III, No. 2, 3) The Millennium by Loraine Boettner, and 4) Three cassettes

from the Chalcedon Tape Ministry entitled, "Law and Life - 145," "Law and Life - 146," and "Implications of Postmillennialism." (When reference is made to these materials it will be done by use of the above numbers.)

A couple of definitions of postmillennialism are in order, and we do well to let the adherents of this view do the defining. Boettner writes:

Postmillennialism is that view of the 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.

This view is, of course, to be distinguished from that optimistic but false view of human betterment and progress held by Modernists and Liberals which teaches that the Kingdom of God on earth will be achieved through a natural process by which mankind will be improved and social institutions will be reformed and brought to a higher level of culture and efficiency. This latter view presents a spurious or pseudo Postmillennialism, and regards the Kingdom of God as the product of natural laws in an evolutionary process, whereas orthodox Postmillennialism regards the Kingdom of God as the product of the supernatural working of the Holy Spirit in connection with the preaching of the Gospel. (3, p. 4)

After Rushdoony describes the typical premillennialist and amillennialist, he gives what amounts to his definition:

Turning now to postmillennialism, we must say that very definitely, because it sees salvation as victory and health in time and eternity, it sees therefore a responsibility of the man of God for the whole of life. Postmillennialism holds that the prophecies of Isaiah and all of Scripture shall be fulfilled. Scripture is not divided, it is not made irrelevant to history. There shall be, as Genesis 3:15, Romans 16:20, and Revelation 12:9,11 declare, victory over Satan, and, as Genesis 13, Genesis 28:14, Romans 4:13 and the whole of Scripture proclaims, all the families of the earth shall be blessed. People out of every tongue, tribe, and nation shall be converted, and the word of God shall prevail and rule in every part of the earth. There is therefore a necessity for action, and an assurance of victory. (1, p. 12) The postmillennial view, while seeing rises and falls in history, sees it moving to the triumph of the people of Christ, the church triumphant from pole to pole, the government of the whole world by the law of God, and then, after a long and glorious reign of peace, the Second Coming and the end of the world. (1, p. 14)

I. We turn now to the main tenets of Chalcedon's postmillennialism. No

one has to wonder what these men stand for. The men of Chalcedon speak and write with clarity and emphasis; they have even developed a vocabulary of postmillennial phrases. The heart of their view is that "they are preparing to conquer the world and to assert the 'Crown Rights of King Jesus'." (1, p. 2) And they are given to the use of the terms reconstruction and victory. They find impetus for Christian action in the promise of Isaiah concerning a world relatively free of crime, at peace, and with men enjoying a long life expectancy, they recognize a calling to "proclaim the saving power of Jesus to all men" according to Matthew 28:18-20, and to prepare our "hearts, lives, and communities for His reign in and through us." (1, p. 3) They hold that any other view of eschatology produces a "blocked future," pessimism and depression, decline and paralysis in the churches, and a future orientation that is stagnant, lacking the vitality to correct and rebuild. (1, p. 19)

Rather than retreat from the world into convent-type churches, or finding refuge in a state that solves man's problems, the orthodox Christian is to exercise dominion and subdue the earth under God and His law-word. Rushdoony cites the areas which the Christian must bring under Christ's dominion. 1) The family with strong religious and economic ties. 2) The church where deacons and widows are busy ministering to all the needs of the family of God, materially and spiritually. 3) Educational institutions. Rushdoony counts it apostasy that God's children receive a godless education. 4) Christian political action must be exerted so that once again the state is a Christian state, with its actions conformable to the law of God. 5) Christian professionals must form professional agencies to further a Christian perspective in areas of medicine, law, etc. 6) Every calling must proceed from a Biblical perspective of faith and law. 7) The sciences must be entered by the Christian and brought under the dominion of God. 8) Tithing is basic to activities in all these areas. Tithes are to be paid to whatever agency is doing the Lord's work in bringing every area of thought and life into captivity to Christ. 9) Prayer is the calling of the Christian, especially the petition, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth, as it is in heaven." (i, pp. 30,31)

The men of Chalcedon take a low view of premillennialism and amillennialism, holding that they are pessimistic and see no triumph of Christ and His kingdom in history. Postmillennialism alone recognizes Christ the King, and postmillennialism alone works to bring all things into dominion under Christ. They are fiercely opposed to speaking of a parallel development of good and evil, of

God's kingdom and Satan's kingdom, of the world becoming progressively worse and falling away, of the church's tribulation increasing and the end of the world finding the church lonely and sorely beset. (1, p. 8) All this denies Christ's victory and amounts to blasphemy. Nor may anyone speak of the coming of the kingdom of Antichrist; this denies the sovereignty and predestinating purpose of God. "In Scripture, the only valid definition of 'antichrist' is anyone and everyone who denies that Christ has come in the flesh (I John 4:3), i.e., all who deny the reality of the incarnation. The Bible does NOT give us a one person of antichrist who shall rule the world: this is a myth, and it is a myth which exalts the powers of man against God." (1, p. 45)

7, Rather postmillennialism sees the world becoming better, the majority of mankind saved, the Christianizing of every area of life, and the universal kingdom of Christ clearly manifest, in righteousness peace and glory, in this world. Basically, this comes about through the power of the Spirit and the Gospel. In fact, mission work finds its impetus where there is a postmillennial conception of the future; without that it suffers. (2, p. 98) But the salvation of souls is only a part of Christ's kingship. This becomes clear in a taped speech of Rushdoony: "Premillennialism and amillennialism are readily popular because they give you an easy religion. Moreover, it is a neo-platonic kind of religion as I point out in 'Flight from Humanity.' It concerns itself only with spiritual things.... If you are a premillennialist or an amillennialist, you have only spiritual presuppositions. Then you withdraw from the world and turn the church into a convent or monastery.... Let us not get involved in the world. Whenever you have premillennialism or amillennialism take over in a church you have retreat from the world. They are popular because they don't ask much of you. They give you an easy believism type of religion. They say, only believe. That is all you need for salvation, it is true. But faith without works is dead. That means no faith.... We have an obligation to exercise dominion. In Christ we are dominion-men." (4, tape #3) (We have to say here that the use of the phrase "Faith without works is dead" is a perversion of James 2. Very clearly James refers to personal justification in this passage, for he asks in 14, "Can (such) faith save him?")

Thus the saved humanity labors to bring the kingdom of Christ to visible expression in this present life in the consciousness that under Christ they shall succeed and their labor is not in vain in the Lord. The Law of God holds an important position in the bringing about of the kingdom. The men of Chalcedon

never tire of speaking of law and never tire of quoting Deuteronomy 28.

(1, p. 54, 2,12 ff) During a question and answer session following one of Rushdoony's speeches (4, tape #3) a questioner states that premillennialism and amillennialism are antinomian, they deny God's law...not personally but for all other areas of life. Rushdoony agrees. Postmillennialism alone honors the Law of God and seeks to establish it in personal life, church, industry and government.

Economics is vital to the coming of Christ's kingdom on this earth. Not only is tithing basic to furthering the Lord's work, but a Christian society must have a theological and economic orientation (1, p. 31). So important is economics to eschatology that an interest in it marks a sound eschatology, while disinterest means an element of neo-platonist or Manichean thinking. (1, p. 46) "The Journal of Christian Reconstruction" Vol. II, No. 1, is devoted to Christian economics.

Postmillennialism recognizes that what they view the Bible to teach has not happened yet. Wars have not ceased; crime has not been virtually stamped out; governments are not Christian; the great majority of mankind is not saved in Christ. Men do not generally live to be an hundred years old and more, nor has disease been conquered. (There is a strong emphasis in Postmillennialism on salvation as health.) Deserts do not yet blossom, nor are poverty and famine eliminated. All postmillennial sources agree as to why these things have not been attained. Boettner writes: "That the progress of the Church through the years (he believes we live in a pre-christian age. DHK) has been slow is due to the fact that Christians in general have not taken seriously Christ's command to evangelize the world." (3, p. 45) G.L. Bahnsen gives this answer: "...whatever historical decline is seen in the missionary enterprise of the church and its task of edifying or sanctifying the nations in the word of truth must be attributed, not to anything inherent in the present course of human history, but to the unfaithfulness of the church." (2, p. 68) When Rushdoony comments on Psalm 47, he states, "God shall subdue the whole world under our feet, we who love God. God is King of all the earth. But remember Scripture tells us, judgment begins at the house of God. Whom will God judge first? The church ... So why is Christ's church not ruling the world? Because God is cursing it because it is unbelieving and disobedient." (4, tape #3)

Chalcedon is undaunted by world wars, hydrogen bombs in the hands of atheists, rebellion and lawlessness. Bahnsen warns against "newspaper exegesis" and

misinterpretations brought against postmillennialism, and confidently asserts that the Bible presents us with a postmillennial eschatology and therefore it will be. (2, p. 53 ff)

Although there are other distinctives of postmillennialism set forth by Chalcedon we have presented the main thrust, and we believe we have done so fairly.

II. From reading of these sources, several points stand out as far as the method or approach that the men of Chalcedon employ is concerned. In the first place, we do not find a careful exegesis of Scripture which takes into account the nature of prophecy and vision. We do not find a careful distinction between that which will happen on earth in principle and in heaven perfectly. We do not find exegesis of passages which would seem to oppose postmillennialism. In fairness, Boettner attempts this, but exegetical skill in demolishing premillennialism is sadly lacking when he sets forth postmillennialism. Although the other paper to be delivered at the conference will deal with exegetical questions, we would characterize postmillennialism exegesis as beginning with the more difficult prophetic and visionary passages, giving them a forced meaning, and then explaining the simple, clear passages in light of the former. This strikes us as the opposite way from which one ought to proceed. Further, we cannot admire their statements regarding exegesis of Scripture. Although we will have to admit that Rushdoony does not tell us exactly what his method or presuppositions in this regard are, he does tell us there is "no neutrality on my part as I make this analysis. The ideal of neutrality is a myth. All men speak and write from a given perspective: we see things, and organize knowledge, in terms of a fundamental perspective, commitment, faith. Our perspective is always conditioned by our religious presuppositions." (1, p. 1) We wish he had said more. In the Editor's Introduction, Gary North writes, "The bulk of the basic exegetical work has already been accomplished; it is the task of this issue of the Journal to remind contemporary Protestants, especially Calvinistic Protestants, of the heritage which they have lost. If we are successful in this task, then the exegetical work will follow." (2, p. 5) This reminds us of the A.A.C.S., which when asked difficult questions, responds: Don't bother us with questions, we have work to do. Bahnsen writes, "The present essay has not attempted to prove the truth of postmillennialism; only responsible Scriptural exegesis can do, or fail to do that. However the way

has been cleared for an honest consideration and possible demonstration of the position's veracity." (2, p. 104) In a speech Rushdoony shows how the above attitude comes across when actually dealing with Scripture. He comments on the parable of the unjust judge (Luke 18:1-8). He says that the coming of the Son of man does not refer to the end of the world, but to various comings throughout history, in a person's life. He says, "That's a postmillennial parable! If you pray to God for justice regarding the things of this life, He will avenge and bring justice speedily; not in the sweet by and by, but now in your life." Commenting on Psalm 37, Rushdoony says, "Evil has no future.... Waiting upon the Lord means we believe and trust Him to bring His justice to light. We shall inherit the earth. If Christians are not inheriting the earth it is because they are not believing. Not obeying.... Again, inheriting the land, the cutting off of the wicked, doesn't refer to heaven and hell, but to history." Commenting on Psalm 2, Rushdoony says, "Christ is King. The nations are going to be smashed. Does that look as if the ungodly are going to triumph before the Second Coming? Hardly!" And finally he offers these comments on Psalm 149: "Salvation means health, victory. He declared the whole earth will be brought under His people.... Those who die at 100 shall be accounted to die young, all this before the second coming." (4, tape #3)

2. In the second place, the method of Chalcedon is to put premillennialism and amillennialism in the same category, and then effectively destroy premillennialism. By implication this also destroys amillennialism, but this is not really accomplished. Much is said versus the pessimism of premillennialism, the soul-saving manual of the premillennialist, etc., but little is said as regards amillennialism. The technique of placing premillennialism and amillennialism in the same camp breaks down badly. (1, p. 9 ff., 2, p. 65)

3. The third approach or method is to claim that postmillennialism is historically and confessionally Reformed. Rushdoony quotes the Westminster Confession, VIII, 8 as proof, as well as Q and A 54, 191 of the Larger Catechism. (1, p 13) The reading of this material, however, does not send one in a postmillennial direction in the least. It takes a postmillennialist to get postmillennialism out of it. Nor do the Reformed Confessions breathe as much as a single postmillennial breath. Bahnsen in "The Prima Facie Acceptability of Postmillennialism." (2, pp. 48-105) goes to great length to show the Reformed heritage of postmillennialism. "...The postmillennial hope has been the persistent viewpoint

of most Reformed scholars from the sixteenth century into the early twentieth century." Calvin is seen as the first great postmillennialist. Bahnsen concludes, "This quick survey of leading Christian thinkers in the nineteenth century has established, therefore, that the postmillennialism which characterized John Calvin, the second generation reformers, the early English Puritans, the Westminster Assembly, Presbyterians and Independents in England, American and Scottish Calvinists, German and Dutch scholars, the great missions movements and awakenings, early American Presbyterians 'whether Old Light or New Light, social and intellectual movements -- this same postmillennialism continued with driving force among missionary leaders, ecclesiastical leaders, Christian writers in England, Scotland, Germany, and America, leading Presbyterians in the Northern, Southern, and Reformed Presbyterian Churches, as well as the great Princeton theologians.' One cannot draw back from concluding that postmillennial eschatology is central in the heritage of Reformed theology; optimism for the church's endeavors on earth is deeply engrained in historic, international Calvinism". One wonders if there are any amillennial theologians anywhere, any churches that are historically, confessionally, and thoroughly amillennial! And one must wonder what happened to this universal, Calvinistic system of eschatology! Boettner also gives a list of postmillennial theologians, beginning with Augustine! (3, p. 10) He does allow that considerable able men, nearly all in recent years, have been amillennial. (3, p. 12) In considering this claim of Chalcedon, we come to the conclusion that of the three types of millennialists, the postmillennialist and the amillennialists are closer together generally, while premillennialism is the odd man out, way out. The difference between the postmillennialist and the amillennialist is not that one is pessimistic and sees no victory of Christ the King, while the other does, but the difference centers about the nature of that victory and the manifestation of that victory in this present time. Actually the amillennial view holds to victory more assuredly than does the postmillennial, for the amillennialist says Christ has the victory and is Lord perfectly and fully ever since His ascension, while the postmillennialist must work to establish the crown rights of King Jesus. The postmillennialist even calls the present time a pre-christian era! When we look at the works of Calvin, for example, we find that he speaks of perfect victory under Christ and the destruction of evil! But we do not find this in the postmillennial sense of victory. Just as when one goes to the confessions, so with an approach to the giants in church history, you can find what you look for.

But Calvin is not ambiguous; for example, he speaks of the church being, and always being, a very small remnant: "But we ought to be satisfied with knowing that, though the number of the godly be small, still God acknowledges them as his chosen people; and we ought also to call to remembrance that consolatory saying, Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. (Luke 12:32)" (Calvin's Commentary on Isaiah 1:8,9)

4. Fourthly, the method of Chalcedon is to be sharply, almost viciously, critical of other views, and to speak as if postmillennialism alone sees or does anything properly. North is almost unconcerned about this division in the church in the area of eschatology. He writes rather breezily that he has in his article "Common Grace, Eschatology, and Biblical Law" alienated every known Christian group. After listing the many that he knows do not agree with him, he asks, "Have I missed anyone?" (2, p. 48) We do not admire this elite exclusivism. But we said the language used was sharp and critical. Rushdoony uses the word blasphemy to describe a denial of postmillennial interpretations of Biblical passages. (4, tape #3) Anything short of what he advocates is not the Gospel. (1, p. 15) Premillennialism and amillennialism are antinomian, without qualification. (4, tape #3, 2, P. 38) Amillennialism produces "a retreating and crabbed outlook, a church in which men have no thought of victory but only of endless nit-picking about trifles. It produces a phariseeism of men who believe they are the elect in a world headed for hell, a select elite who must withdraw from the futility of the world around them." (1, p. 9) Modern amillennialism "is indifferent to the world at large, content to hold the line, to repeat the old theological formulations instead of developing them in terms of the problems of the day, and more interested in stamping out heresy than in advancing the faith. The various Reformed and orthodox Presbyterian churches are excellent examples of this, with minor exceptions here and there." (1, p. 26) We would not find this language attractive even if postmillennialism were a correct eschatology.

III. In addition to exegetical errors which will be pointed out in the next paper, we find the error of Chalcedon to stand connected to their conception of victory. They cannot conceive of victory in terms of God's own decrees. For them, the salvation of the elect church, and in them the redemption of the world, is not enough, is not victory! They want more than God reveals He wills!

begging the
question
Gen 12, 15, 17
etc
Kings, nations
world etc.
PSA S.

Does the assertion that the postmillennial kingdom is not yet here because of the unfaithfulness of the church, mean that in the recent past a large part of humanity died going lost that might otherwise have been saved? This would seem to follow! And to us this is not nit-picking; this is important! Has Christ been gathering, defending, and preserving His church perfectly, or is that a future thing? What constitutes victory?

An Interesting Conference On Postmillennialism

-- Prof. H.C. Hoeksema --

On Tuesday, February 28, we participated in an all-day conference on the subject of Postmillennialism at our Protestant Reformed Church in South Holland, Illinois. Actually this was an officebearers' conference of the brethren of Classis West; but the brethren of Classis East had been invited, and so our seminary (faculty and student body), as well as some of the other brethren from the east, were present.

Specifically, the subject under discussion was not really Postmillennialism in general, but that specific brand of Postmillennialism promoted by Rousas John Rushdoony in his little booklet, God's Plan For Victory. Two papers were presented. The first was by Rev. Dale Kuiper, of Lynden, Washington, entitled, "What Constitutes Victory?" This paper was an analysis of the Postmillennialism promoted by the Chalcedon movement with which Rushdoony is connected. The second was "An Exegetical Refutation Of Postmillennialism" by Prof. Hanko. These two papers furnished us with more than enough material for discussion in our morning and afternoon sessions.

It would be impossible for me to reproduce the entire discussion in this report. Suffice it to say that while the discussion certainly did not always confine itself strictly to the material of the two papers, but was at times rather wide-ranging and even distant from the papers, nevertheless it was a discussion which was stimulated by the papers, for the most part confined itself to subjects and questions directly related to the broad subject of postmillennialism, and was rather interesting and, I think, in a rather practical kind of way fruitful. For the most part, the questions had to do not with the narrower subject of postmillennialism as such, that is, as one of the views concerning the thousand years of Revelation 20 and the relationship between it and the coming of Christ; but they had to do with the implications of a postmillennial conception for one's whole outlook on life, on the world, and on the calling of the Christian and the church in the midst of the world.

Following Rev. Kuiper's paper in the morning session, the questions and discussion centered largely on matters pertaining to the so-called "cultural mandate" of Genesis 1:28. This drew us into many related questions. There were questions concerning the A.A.C.S., or Toronto Movement, and concerning the claim that this movement is postmillennialistic in its view of the kingdom of Christ in relation to the world. There were questions relating to Dr. A. Kuyper, Sr.'s

view of the cultural mandate, the creation ordinance, common grace, sphere sovereignty, the antithesis, etc. And in connection with many of these questions, there were questions raised as to the similarities and dissimilarities between the views of the Dr. Kuyper and those of Rushdoony and those of the Toronto Movement. There was a question raised as to whether Rushdoony's conception of Biblical law results in a new form of legalism. There was also a question raised as to whether even mild, or moderate, postmillennialism does not after all, in fact, with its view of a kingdom of Christ being realized in this present world, end up by laboring for the realization of the kingdom of Anti-Christ and develop into radical and liberal postmillennialism and social gospelism.

Strange to say, following the paper of Prof. Hanks in the afternoon session, some of these same questions cropped up, sometimes with a slightly different emphasis. The afternoon discussion also led to a rather interesting discussion concerning our calling with respect to Christian education.

All in all, the discussion was very fruitful and betrayed a rather large degree of interest on the part of the conferees.

If I had any negative criticism concerning the conference, it would be about the fact that there was very little direct discussion concerning the matters raised in Prof. Hanks's paper. There were some very important and interesting exegetical points made by Prof. Hanks which could profitably have received more attention in the discussion. I refer not only to his specific exegesis of certain key passages related to the question of the millennium, but also and especially to his references to fundamental exegetical method. One very important matter is that of the so-called prophetic perspective. Further discussion of this subject would also prove profitable for the pastor who wants to preach on Old Testament prophecy, something from which too many shy away. But perhaps a later conference could come back to some of these subjects.

Let me end on a positive note. One of the appurtenances of a conference in South Holland is a good feed! And the ladies of South Holland lived up to their reputation, both at dinner and supper, both as respects quantity and quality.