

The Millennial Kingdom | Postmillennialism | Dr. Randy White

September 15, 2016 | Based on *The Millennial Kingdom* by John F. Walvoord

Postmillennialism | Some Background

- This is the newest form of millennialism.
- It was the dominant millennial view in the 19th century.
 - Adopted by all but catholic and dispensational theologians.
 - Reflected in much of the hymnody of the 19th century.
- Lost most of its adherents in the 20th century, with two world-wars.
 - “Postmillennialism is not a current issue in millenarianism” (pg. 18) –since Walvoord wrote in 1959, this has changed.
- Why study postmillennialism?
 - Because you sing about it.
 - Because “the principles that brought it into being and resulted in its downfall are highly significant” (pg. 18)
 - Because it is experiencing a revival (though by another name).

The Rise of Postmillennialism

- Roots extend to early church history, but never before 300 AD.
 - Prior to 300 AD, the church was always premillennial.
- The roots of postmillennialism:
 - Origin (185-253) and the rise of figurative interpretation. (Origin was premillennial, but developed the allegorical / figurative method of interpretation.
 - Augustine (354-430) held that the time between the first and second coming was the millennium.
 - Since Augustine did not believe in a literal millennium, he cannot be considered postmillennial.
 - Augustine held to a fairly literal millennium but not an earthly kingdom.
 - After 1,000 AD, with no Second Coming, amillennialism began to look for something to justify the failure of the Augustinian system.
 - Joachim of Floris – the “first genuine postmillennialist” – (ca 1135-1202)
 - Taught three dispensations:
 - Adam to John the Baptist
 - John the Baptist to St. Benedict, founder of the monastic age
 - St. Benedict to the Kingdom (which Joachim predicted to come about 1260)
 - It is reported that Barak Obama called Joachim, “a master of contemporary civilization who had sought to create a better world,” but this may be urban legend.
- Modern Postmillennialism (Pre 1980s)
 - Daniel Whitby (1638-1726)
 - Things you might have liked about Whitby:

- He defended the *Textus Receptus* against revisions by scholars
- In 1710 he wrote *Discourse on the Five Points*, which was a strong refutation against Calvinism
- Rejected the authority of the Catholic church in interpretation of Scripture
- He took a literal interpretation of Revelation 20 and the future period of peace.
- Clarence Larkin's comment on Whitby
 - "His 'New Hypothesis' was that by the preaching of the Gospel Mohammedanism would be overthrown, the Jews converted, the Papal Church with the Pope (Antichrist) would be destroyed, and there would follow a 1000 years of righteousness and peace known as the Millennium; at the close of which there would be a short period of Apostasy, ending in the return of Christ."
- What was new?
 - That the period of peace was literal and future.
 - That the church would build this period of peace by Gospel advance.
- While Whitby was more literal than Augustine & Origen, he later became a unitarian.
- Why did Whitby's "New Hypothesis" catch on?
 - Conservatives could embrace it: The prophets were right after all!
 - Liberals could embrace it: Mankind collectively can build a better future!

Postmillennialism as a Theological System

- Conviction about Scripture
 - Since there are liberal and conservative postmillennialists, this area ranges from a rejection of the Bible as truth to those (like Charles Hodge) who were ardent defenders of the authority of the Bible.
- Nature of the Kingdom of God
 - The Kingdom is the "rule of God in the hearts of believers in Christ" (pg 26)
 - "The kingdom is not materialistic, political, or of the earth, but it is rather spiritual and within the heart" (pg. 27).
 - The church is "a means of expression of the Kingdom and not the Kingdom itself" (pg. 27). This is a difference from amillennialism.
- Consummation of the Kingdom of God
 - This is greatest flash-point between post and pre-millennialism.
 - Postmillennialism believes the Kingdom begins with a long, slow, and steady proclamation of the Gospel and "growth of the Kingdom."
- Humanity's progress
 - Postmillennialism holds an optimistic view of the future.
 - Postmillennialism holds an optimistic view of humanity.
 - Postmillennialism holds an optimistic view of the church.
 - The parables of Matthew 13 teach of a slow but steady progress toward the full fruition of the Kingdom.
- The Second Coming:
 - Can be either literal or spiritual among postmillennialists.

- *Is always remotely distant.*
- *Is the initiation of the Eternal Age*

Contemporary Postmillennialism – 1980 – present

- *Among Charismatics: NAR – New Apostolic Reformation / Dominionism*
- *Among Social Conservatives: Restorationism*
- *Among Evangelicals: Kingdom Growth*
- *Character traits of all modern postmillennialism:*
 - *Unlike earlier Postmillennialism, Modern Postmillennialism is not concerned about the occurrence of catastrophic events, but views these events as precipitive causes to a spiritual awakening.*
 - *Focused on humanitarianism as missions.*
 - *Focused on moralism as missions.*
 - *Allergic to prophetic teaching.*
- *An example of the rise of Postmillennialism: <http://waterstoswim.blogspot.com/2008/04/postmillennial-baptists.html>*

Postmillennialism in Hymnody

- *Lead on, O King Eternal*
- *We've a Story to Tell to the Nations*
- *Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus*