

The Kingdom Through Progress or Crisis? Doing the Millennial Dance: Part Two

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IV. HISTORICAL EXAMPLES OF CATASTROPHIC AND PROGRESSIVE MILLENNIALISM

We have explored some of the fundamental elements of both catastrophic and progressive millennialism in conceptual and theological ways. To use our millennial dance metaphor, we've learned some of the basic steps to the dance, but to get a better feel for what it looks like, we need to see some examples of the dance. We now turn to three distinct historical periods and see how the community of faith lived out these millennial views.

Sixteenth Century

Catastrophic Millennialism — From the first century to the reformation, culminating in the radical anabaptist Thomas Muntzer/the city of Munster

The first Christians were catastrophic millennialists. From the apostles who asked the question “Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?” to the time of Augustine and the fall of Rome, catastrophic millennialism was predominant in the Church. From the time of Constantine until the Protestant Reformation a thousand years later, the doctrine of the Church as the Kingdom was the official position of the Church — and yet, this did not prohibit the common folk in Christendom from embracing catastrophic millennialism.

Abanes chronicles a number of occasions when apocalyptic fervor held sway:

c. 950 the monk Adso writes *Letter on the Antichrist* . . . the letter was copied and circulated throughout Europe. Adso declared that the Antichrist would rise when the rule of the Frankish kings ended.

c. 950-980: A letter about the Hungarians from the Bishop of Auxerre to the Bishop of Verdun “speaks of widespread apocalyptic reactions among the population.”

968: Soldiers in Otto’s army panic at an eclipse, which they see as a sign of the end.

994/996: Abbo of Fleury, an influential French abbot, in his apologetic works relates: “When I was a young man I heard a sermon about the end of the world preached before people in the cathedral of Paris. According to this, as soon as the number of a thousand years was completed, the Antichrist would come and the Last Judgment would follow in a brief time. I opposed this sermon with what force I could from passages in the Gospels, the Apocalypse and the Book of Daniel.”¹

Erdoes has devoted an entire book to the cataclysmic millennial expectations that occurred around the first millennial shift at the year 1000:

Some were certain that the Second Coming of Christ would fall on the last day of the year 999, at the very stroke of midnight. Others were equally convinced that Armageddon would happen a little earlier, on the eve of the nativity when “the Children of Light would join in battle with Gog’s army of hellish fiends.” Some fixed the date on the day of the summer or winter solstice in the thousandth year after our Lord’s passion.²

Mackey writes:

An epidemic terror of the end of the world has several times spread over the nations. The most remarkable was that which seized Christendom about the middle of the tenth century . . . the delusion

¹ R. Abanes, *End-Time Visions, The Road to Armageddon?* Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1998, 172.

² R. Erdoes, *AD 1000, Living on the Brink of Apocalypse*, New York: Barnes and Noble Books, 1988, 2.

appears to have been discouraged by the Church, but it nevertheless spread rapidly among the people. The scene of the last judgment was expected to be at Jerusalem. In the year 999, the number of pilgrims proceeding eastward, to await the coming of the Lord in that city, was so great that they were compared to a desolating army. Most of them sold their goods and possessions before they quitted Europe, and lived upon the proceeds in the Holy Land.³

Apocalyptic terrors in catastrophic millennialism were not limited to the continent. According to Russell, in 1656 a Quaker named James Naylor was believed by some to be an earthly incarnation of Christ. Certain members of the Quaker community in England began to worship Naylor. On October 24 Naylor and his community entered the city of Bristol “imitating the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem.” Naylor was promptly arrested, convicted and given a nasty sentence which included having his tongue bored through with a hot iron and the letter “B” emblazoned on his forehead, along with public flogging and other forms of humiliation.⁴

However, all of these examples of catastrophic millennialism pale in comparison to Thomas Muntzer. The story of Muntzer is well documented.⁵

Muntzer was a parish priest near Wittenburg when Luther tacked his 95 theses to the church door. Muntzer came to Wittenburg and pursued his degree in theology. He disagreed with Luther’s “sola scriptura,” believing that divine revelation did not end with the apostles. He believed in ongoing revelation. Muntzer taught a doctrine of social revolution. He took an active role in introducing the end time: he thought of himself as God’s scythe for His harvest. Muntzer promoted a communist view of community and is still honored today by the communist world. Muntzer came to Mulhausen in the midst of the German peasants’ revolt. He seized upon the civil unrest among the poor and dispossessed who were ready and willing to invest him with prophetic religious authority. They removed the city council and formed their own “eternal council.” Muntzer designed banners for the peasants, consisting of a white flag with a sword and a great white banner with a rainbow, symbolic of the new covenant. Some of the German

³ R. Abanes, *End-Time Visions, The Road to Armageddon?* 170.

⁴ D.S. Russell, *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic*, Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1964, 67-69.

⁵ N. Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium, Revolutionary Millenarians and Mystical Anarchists of the Middle Ages*, New York: Oxford University Press, rev. 1970, 234-251; G. H. Williams, *The Radical Reformation*, Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962, 75-84.

princes began to attack Muntzer and his people. The people were encouraged into battle by Muntzer, who repeatedly promised to catch the cannonballs in his sleeves and hurl them back. A rainbow appeared in the sky, which the peasants took to be a good omen, but it was not: the peasants were slaughtered; Muntzer was captured and beheaded.

In summarizing the story of Muntzer, Cohn writes: “Muntzer was a prophet obsessed by eschatological phantasies which he attempted to translate into reality by exploiting social discontent.”⁶

Muntzer used catastrophic millennialism to lead the poor and marginalized into warfare against the dominant culture. In 1534 leaders in the city of Munster would attempt to establish the apocalyptic Kingdom of God on the earth. They would become the New Jerusalem and their leader John of Leyden, a tailor, set himself up as the “king of the world.” The entire population of Munster assembled to worship their “messiah.” According to Meissner, “While the population starved to death, he and his entourage lived richly and enjoyed lavish feasts and entertainments.”⁷ Eventually, a siege was brought against the city, many starved to death, and Leyden was captured and tortured to death.

These examples should not be seen as in any way normative behavior, but they do illustrate rather vividly the effects of catastrophic millennial beliefs gone out of control. There is the potential for great violence as the oppressed and marginalized target their frustration at the dominant culture under the prophetic leadership of militant catastrophic millennialists.

Progressive Millennialism — Calvinism in Geneva

Was John Calvin a progressive millennialist? According to Erickson, John Calvin’s eschatological teachings aren’t always easy to pin down. Both amillennialists (realized millennialists) and post-millennialists (progressive millennialists) have attempted to claim Calvin as one of their own. However, I believe Calvin’s actions and theology clearly fit the definition of progressive millennialism. And so, just as Thomas Muntzer provides an excellent example of cataclysmic millennialism run rampant, John Calvin shows where progressive millennialism in its extreme form can lead.

Calvin’s life and theology have been well documented and his relationship and interactions with the radical reformers are chronicled superbly by

⁶ *The Pursuit of the Millennium, Revolutionary Millenarians and Mystical Anarchists of the Middle Ages*, 251.

⁷ *Thy Kingdom Come, Psychoanalytic Perspectives on the Messiah and the Millennium*, Kansas City: Sheed and Ward, 1995, 215.

Williams.⁸ Calvin published his *Institutes of Christian Religion* at about the same time that the radical catastrophic militant community at Munster was collapsing. Calvin dedicated his *Institutes* to Francis I of France, and warned the monarch not to confuse the kind of restitution movement that happened in Munster with his own vision of reformed Christianity, which he considered to be far more politically responsible. This serves to illustrate a key point: in Munster, radical catastrophic millennialists confronted the political powers and took over; in Geneva, Calvin and the reformed leaders sought to bring the rule of God into the life and leadership of the community. Shelley observes, “The consequence of faith to Calvin . . . is strenuous effort to introduce the kingdom of God on earth.”⁹

Tillich writes:

Calvin was a humanist and, therefore, gave to the state many . . . functions . . . Calvin used the humanistic ideas of good government, of helping the people, etc. But Calvin never went so far as to say, with the sectarian movements, that the state could be the kingdom of God itself. He called this a Jewish folly. What he said . . . is that a theocracy has to be established, the rule of God through the application of evangelical laws in the political situation. Calvin worked hard for this. He demanded that the magistrates of Geneva care not only for legal problems, the problems of order in the general sense, but also for the most important content of daily life, namely, for the church. Not that they shall teach in the church or render decisions as to what shall be taught, but they shall supervise the church and punish those who are blasphemers and heretics. So Calvin, with the help of the magistrates of Geneva created the kind of community in which the law of God would govern the entire life. Priests and ministers are not necessarily involved in it. Theocratic rulers are usually not priests, otherwise theocracy becomes hierocracy; rather, they are usually laymen. Calvin said that the state must punish the impious. They are criminals because they are against the law of God.¹⁰

⁸ G.H. Williams, *The Radical Reformation*, 580-614.

⁹ B. Shelley, *Church History in Plain Language*, Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1982, 279.

¹⁰ P. Tillich, *A History of Christian Thought, From Its Judaic and Hellenistic Origins to Existentialism*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1967, 273-274.

It was under this Calvinist progressive millennial system that the magistrates of Geneva, with the approval of Calvin, convicted Michael Servetus of heresy for his anti-trinitarian views and had him executed.

The legacy of Calvinism goes far beyond the Reformed tradition in the Church. Calvin's view of the relationship between the Church and the State and the Kingdom of God, of the ability of lower magistrates to revolt under certain circumstances, made it possible for our modern forms of democracy to exist. Were it not for Calvin's progressive millennial views, the United States may never have had an opportunity to come into existence.

In contrasting catastrophic and progressive millennialism in the 16th century one thing is clear: catastrophic millennialists who oppose the culture or try to create an apocalyptic Kingdom of God tend to get killed by the state, while progressive millennialists tend to achieve positions of power and influence and lead to the creation of new governments on earth.

Nineteenth Century

Progressive Millennialism — The dominant view of American Protestantism

By the 19th century, the progressive millennialism of Calvin had spread to the new world, making it possible for the experiment in Democracy that became America to thrive. In an age of enlightenment the advancement of knowledge and the vast resources of a new continent led to an age of unprecedented progress. In this setting, progressive millennialism found a place to work.

Moorhead has written an excellent summary of progressive millennialism in this period:

During the first three quarters of the nineteenth century, this view [progressive millennialism] was what one clergyman called in 1859 "the commonly received doctrine" among American Protestants . . . Friends of modern progress, adherents of the theory gloried . . . in the advances of their age and expected far greater triumphs to come. They often asserted that the tokens of that happy future would not be (at least not until the far distant end of the world) graves supernaturally opened and Jesus returning on the clouds. History would spiral upward by the orderly continuation of

the same forces that had promoted revivals, made America the model republic, and increased material prosperity.¹¹

It was a time of revivalism, a “Great Awakening” to the things of God. This contributed to the spirit of religious optimism:

Widespread revivals, in short, were the matrix from which emerged the conviction that a wondrous new age was dawning that the systematic labors of the saints would help bring to pass. Postmillennialism was an expression of the revivalistic ethos. Jonathan Edwards, who played an important role in disseminating postmillennialism, was among many who saw tantalizing signs of the approaching millennium in the Great Awakening As Protestants began aspiring to the conquest of the world through revivals, missions and voluntary societies, postmillennialism provided a rationale and motivation to sustain the imperial vision. Dilating on the glories of the millennial era, writers held out the carrot of success as an inducement to action. Triumph was certain, the labors of the saints would lead inevitably to the millennial glory And yet the underside to those visions of glory was always a reminder that triumph was conditional on vigorous human exertion. Since the Kingdom of God would not arrive by a supernatural destruction of the world, only the labors of believers could bring it about, and if they proved laggard in their task, the Kingdom of God would be retarded The kingdom of God thus combined in delicate balance hope and anxiety to induce maximum evangelical exertion.¹²

The obvious outgrowth of all this was the strong association on the part of many between the Kingdom of God and the “Christian nation” of America. For many, the United States had become the “new Jerusalem”: “the notes of Gabriel’s trumpet resonated with national values in such a way that millennial symbols could shift, almost effortlessly, from a religious to a political context as the needs of the moment dictated.”¹³ Increasingly, millennialists

¹¹ J. Moorhead, “Between Progress and Apocalypse: A Reassessment of Millennialism in American Religious Thought, 1800-1880,” *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 71, No. 3, December 1984, 525.

¹² *Ibid.*, 527.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 533.

enumerated more sophisticated technology, greater prosperity, and the flourishing of the arts and sciences as signs of the millennium.

An interesting example of progressive millennialism in this period is Alexander Campbell. Campbell, along with Barton Stone, helped create a primitive restoration movement — which became the Churches of Christ and the Disciples of Christ. It is interesting to note the differences in Stone's and Campbell's millennial views. Stone was pessimistic about culture and was a catastrophic millennialist, while Campbell was a strong believer in progress. Historian Richard Hughes gives us Campbell's own words:

It was but yesterday that the mariner's compass was discovered, that printing was shown to be practicable, that steam power was laughed at as an absurdity, and the electric telegraph ridiculed as the hobby of the vagarian's brain . . . we have too much faith in progress to subscribe to the doctrines of these theological gentlemen who hint that the last days are at hand.¹⁴

Although Campbell believed in primitivism, in so far as the operation of the Church was concerned, he was certainly a great believer in progress and a staunch opponent of the catastrophic millennialism that was emerging in the mid-nineteenth century among the followers of William Miller.

Catastrophic Millennialism — William Miller and the burned-over district

While progressive millenarians were lauding progress and working hard to create the Kingdom of God on the earth, thus helping create the golden age of American civilization, in New York state thousands began following a Vermont Baptist farmer named William Miller, who was not only warning of the imminent Parousia, but had actually calculated the date of Christ's arrival. Cross (1950) and Numbers/Butler (1987)¹⁵ provide comprehensive treatments of the Millerite movement.

Following his conversion at the age of 34, Miller immersed himself in the study of the Bible. He was particularly drawn to the apocalyptic books of

¹⁴ R. Hughes, *Reviving the Ancient Faith, The Stories of the Churches of Christ in America*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996, 30.

¹⁵ W. Cross, *The Burned-Over District, The Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion in Western New York, 1800-1850*. London: Cornell University Press; R. Numbers and J. Butler (eds.) *The Disappointed, Millerism and Millenarianism in the Nineteenth Century*; Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

Daniel and Revelation. Miller became convinced that, by careful study of the predictions in these books, it would be possible to accurately predict the timing of Christ's coming. After much calculation, Miller became convinced that the end of the world would come some time during the year between March 1843 and March 1844.

Miller began to publicize his findings in 1831, which was during the height of American optimism and the dominance of progressive millennialism. And yet his preaching found an audience among Protestants from every denomination. Millerism was a non-denominational movement. It spread throughout the Northeast and Midwest so that, by 1843, there were in excess of 100,000 people expecting the end of the world to come at any time, and many more who were somewhat fearful that Miller might be right.

March 1844 came and went with no parousia of Christ, so it was acknowledged by Miller that he had miscalculated, and a new, specific date was set: October 22, 1844. Such trust was placed in this specific date that many of Miller's followers didn't bother to harvest crops that autumn because they thought they wouldn't need them anyway. Many of the faithful closed their shops, sold property, canceled debts and then waited for the Lord to return. In what has become known as the "Great Disappointment," October 22 came and went with no rapture. While some turned away from catastrophic millennialism following the Great Disappointment of 1844, most continued to trust. Many found that they could no longer remain in the churches, surrounded by scoffing progressive millennialists, and so they formed their own "Adventist" churches. It was out of this milieu that many of our modern-day catastrophic millennial groups came into being, including Seventh Day Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses, Christadelphians, and the Church of God General Conference.

Twentieth Century

Catastrophic Millennialism — Fundamentalism brings it to popular culture

As the nineteenth century gave way to the twentieth, catastrophic millennialism continued to grow in its influence on American culture. Men such as D. L. Moody, a Congregationalist Sunday school teacher from Chicago, came into contact with John Darby, a Plymouth Brother who had begun espousing a new form of catastrophic millennialism known as dispensationalism. Dispensationalism taught that the history of God's dealing with men could be divided into a number of specific periods or dispensations. Our current dispensation is the dispensation of grace, or the

dispensation of the Church. When God is finished building His Church through the preaching of the Gospel to the Gentiles, then the Church will be removed from the earth in a rapture. At that time the dead in Christ will be resurrected and the rest of the Church will be transformed. They will reign with Christ in heaven for a period of seven years. During that same seven years on earth there will be a period of intense tribulation, as God punishes but then ultimately saves the nation of Israel. At the end, Christ will come back to the earth, with his Church, to establish the 1000-year Kingdom of God on the earth.

Moody became a powerful spokesman for this dispensational teaching. Because of the dispensational hermeneutic of the literal interpretation of Scripture, it quickly became the official eschatology of fundamentalist Christians, who became embroiled in a heated battle with modernists over the issue of the inerrancy of Scripture. Moody established his Institute in Chicago, which began to teach fundamentalist doctrine to future ministers. These ministers, in turn, spread this dispensational teaching throughout the fundamentalist churches of America. They were aided in their teaching of dispensationalism by C. I. Scofield's study Bible, which included dispensational/catastrophic millennialism in the margins and notes. Eventually, those who studied Scripture using Scofield's Bible gave the dispensationalism it contained as much credence as Holy Scripture.

Dispensationalism has continued to exert a prominent influence in the fundamentalist/evangelical community up to the present, being particularly bolstered by the rebirth of the nation of Israel in 1948. Some of its more prominent spokesmen have been John Walvoord of Dallas Theological Seminary, and Hal Lindsay, whose book *The Late Great Planet Earth* caused quite a stir in 1970. He concluded his dispensational/catastrophic millennial treatise with the following words:

As we see the world becoming more chaotic [Note: Lindsay wrote during the Vietnam war, when the nation was embroiled in anti-war rallies and the hippy-drug culture was spreading through the land] we can be "steadfast" and "immovable," because we know where it's going and where we are going. We know that Christ will protect us until His purpose is finished and then He will take us to be with Himself . . . So let us seek to reach our family, our friends, and our

acquaintances with the Gospel with all the strength that He gives us. The time is short.¹⁶

In 1970 Lindsay predicted “the time is short.” Indeed, the back cover of the 1978 paperback edition (it was already in its 62nd printing, with nearly ten million copies in print) declares: “You know all about 1984. Don’t make plans for 1985 until you read . . . *The Late Great Planet Earth*.” 1985 came and went without a rapture. 1988 also came and went despite the 88 reasons Edgar Whisenant gave that the rapture would be in 1988.¹⁷

As stated earlier, catastrophic millennialists are often maligned as having little interest in social ministry. However, there have been some in this tradition who have taken certain types of social ministry very seriously. Weber writes:

Revivalists Sam P. Jones, J. Wilbur Chapman, “Gypsy” Smith, William E. Biederwolf, and Billy Sunday were all premillennialists who acquired reputations as “reformers”; they denounced liquor, prostitution, and other forms of vice, and they frequently portrayed themselves as champions of “social service.” That type of reform was ideally suited to the premillennialist worldview. It dealt with individual needs, could be related directly to evangelism, and did not require any long-term commitment to social reconstruction. How, then, should one evaluate the premillennialist attitude toward social reform? Its opponents were at least partially correct when they labeled it pessimistic and fatalistic. Premillennialists were pessimistic about the possibility of transforming the social order for the better before the second coming. Yet they constantly insisted that they were the world’s greatest optimists. C.I. Scofield spoke for his fellow dispensationalists when he declared that “I am no pessimist; I am the most inveterate optimist because I believe the Bible.”¹⁸

In order to understand why the catastrophic millennialists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were considered so pessimistic and

¹⁶ H. Lindsay, *The Late, Great Planet Earth*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970, 176-177.

¹⁷ P. Boyer, *When Time Shall Be No More, Prophecy Belief in Modern American Life*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992, 130.

¹⁸ T. Weber, *Living in the Shadow of the Second Coming, American Premillennialism 1875-1982*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983, 100-101.

fatalistic one must see them in contrast to the progressive millennialism that manifested itself in the modernist “social gospel movement.”

Progressive Millennialism – Social Gospel, liberal theology marries Darwin and Jesus

Albrecht Ritschl is considered by many to be a hero because he is the father of theological liberalism in Germany, which has had a tremendous impact on American theology. For the same reason, he is considered a great villain by fundamentalists. It was the theology of Ritschl that gave rise to the Social Gospel of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Social Gospel was an expression of progressive millennialism to which we now turn our attention.

Ritschl had much to say about the Kingdom of God as reported by McCulloh:

Jesus appears with the quality of an Israelite prophet, not only because he himself proclaims the fulfilled kingdom of God at hand while his followers do the same (Mark 1:15, Matthew 10:7), but even more because he announces that the actual, final purpose of the divine covenant will be realized, and gives the impression that his speech belongs to the immediately imminent experience and that it has the character of action done on the expressed order of God (Mark 1:22). The proclamation that the kingdom of God is at hand and that his highest good will finally occur in the life of Israel has in the mouth of Jesus the sense that the time is fulfilled in which the kingdom of God will be effective over the covenant people called to him. It does not have the sense that the kingdom is somewhere in the future and may be expected eventually to occur.¹⁹

For Ritschl, the Kingdom of God was a present-day reality, not a future hope. Ritschl understood the Kingdom of God as manifesting itself within the community:

The ideas of Jesus then come to the following. He proclaims the present coming of the kingdom of God in the covenant people while he represents it as the bearer or lets it be known. He understands the

¹⁹G. McCulloh, “A Historical Bible, A Reasonable Faith, A Conscientious Action, The Theological Legacy of Albrecht Ritschl,” in *Ritschl in Retrospect*, D. Jodock, ed. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995, 38.

realization of the kingdom of God in terms of a community of disciples who recognize him as the bearer of the kingdom of God. He proves the correctness of this identification as he, through assurance of the forgiveness of sins and the call to repentance, separates those who join themselves with him in faith from the rest of the unworthy and redeems them from being lost in sin.²⁰

Ritschl's definition of Christianity is as follows:

the monotheistic, completely spiritual, and ethical religion, which, based on the life of its Author as Redeemer and as Founder of the Kingdom of God, consists in the freedom of the children of God, involves the impulse to conduct from the motive of love, aims at the moral organization of mankind, and grounds blessedness on the relation of sonship to God as well as on the Kingdom of God.²¹

For Ritschl, the Kingdom of God was the moral organization of humanity. His influence has had an impact on many notable scholars of the late nineteenth and the twentieth centuries including: Wilhelm Herrmann, Adolf von Harnack, Julius Wellhausen, William Roberston Smith, Friedrich Loofs, and Ernst Troeltsch. His influence can also be detected in the writings of Paul Tillich, Rudolf Bultmann and H. Richard Niebuhr.²²

With regard to progressive millennialism, perhaps Ritschl's greatest influence can be seen in the ministry of German-American pastor Walter Rauschenbusch. After graduating from seminary, Rauschenbusch spent 11 years as pastor of a German Baptist Church in New York, which was on the edge of the immigrant slum known as "Hell's Kitchen." There he was moved by the poverty and injustice around him and became a passionate advocate for social change. Rauschenbusch built on the theology of Ritschl and went further by recognizing that the Kingdom of God was the central aspect of Jesus' teaching.²³

In his *A Theology for the Social Gospel*, Rauschenbusch writes:

A religious view of history involves a profound sense of the importance of moral issues in social life. Sin ruins; righteousness

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 38.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 45.

²² *Ibid.*, 46.

²³ P. Minus, *Walter Rauschenbusch, American Reformer*, New York: Macmillan, 1988.

establishes, and love consolidates. In the last resort the issues of future history lie in the moral qualities and religious faith of nations. This is the substance of all Hebrew and Christian theology.

We need a restoration of the millennial hope, which the Catholic Church dropped out of eschatology. It was crude in its form but wholly right in its substance. The duration of a thousand years is a guess and immaterial. All efforts to fix "times and seasons" are futile. But the ideal of a social life in which the law of Christ shall prevail, and in which its prevalence shall result in peace, justice and a glorious blossoming of human life, is a Christian ideal. An outlook toward the future in which the "spiritual life" is saved and the economic life is left unsaved is both unchristian and stupid. If men in the past have given a "carnal" colouring of richness to the millennial hope, let us renounce that part, and leave the ideals of luxury and excess to men of the present capitalistic order. Our chief interest in any millennium is the desire for a social order in which the worth and freedom of every least human being will be honoured and protected; in which the brotherhood of man will be expressed in the common possession of the economic resources of society; and in which the spiritual good of humanity will be set high above the private profit interests of all materialistic groups. We hope for such an order for humanity as we hope for heaven for ourselves.²⁴

Rauschenbusch's vision was for an age of social and economic equality. This was his definition of the Kingdom of God.

Rauschenbusch then explains how this vision is to come about:

As to the way in which the Christian ideal of society is to come, we must shift from catastrophe to development. Since the first century the divine Logos has taught us the universality of the Law, and we must apply it to the development of the Kingdom of God. It is the untaught and pagan mind which sees God's presence only in miraculous and thundering action; the more Christian our intellect becomes, the more we see God in growth. By insisting on organic development we shall follow the lead of Jesus when, in his parables of the sower and of the seed growing secretly, he tried to educate his disciples away from catastrophes to an understanding of organic growth. We shall also be following the lead of the fourth gospel,

²⁴ W. Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel*, New York/Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1917, 224.

which translated the terms of eschatology into the operation of present spiritual forces. We shall be following the lead of the Church in bringing the future hope down from the clouds and identifying it with the Church; except that we do not confine it to the single institution of the Church, but see the coming of the Kingdom of God in all ethical and spiritual progress of mankind. To convert the catastrophic terminology of the old eschatology into developmental terms is another way of expressing faith in the immanence of God and in the presence of Christ. It is more religious to believe in a present than in an absent and future Christ. Jesus saw the Kingdom as present and future. This change from catastrophe to development is the most essential step to enable modern men to appreciate the Christian hope.²⁵

Rauschenbusch leaves no doubt about his opinion of catastrophic millennialism. He writes:

We should learn to distinguish clearly between prophecy and apocalypticism. There is as much difference between them as between Paul and Pope Gregory I. From apocalypticism we get the little diagrams that map out the history of the human race on deterministic methods, as if God consulted the clock . . . Those who fill their minds with it tie themselves to all backward things. Apocalyptic believers necessarily insist on the verbal inerrancy of Scripture and oppose historical methods, for their work consists in piecing mosaics of texts. Historically, we can appreciate the religious value of apocalypticism in later Judaism, just as we can appreciate the religious value of the belief in transubstantiation or of scholastic theology. But as a present-day influence in religion it is dangerous. It has probably done more to discredit eschatology than any other single influence.²⁶

What was Rauschenbusch's legacy? Recent biographer Paul Minus writes:

More than any other person, Rauschenbusch was responsible for moving the churches to a new sense of social mission . . . Key problems he addressed many years ago continue to plague us today and that much of what he proposed then remains compelling and

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 225.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 216.

instructive. There is something more to be learned from his insistence that God's redemptive purpose for the human family reaches to individuals and institutions alike, that adoration of God and obedience to Christ must issue in sacrificial service for disadvantaged neighbors everywhere, that the person concerned with saving souls must be concerned also with changing the economic and social conditions that blight souls, and that both Church and nation must be reformed to make them properly responsive to the divine will.²⁷

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. credits Rauschenbusch with leaving "an indelible imprint on my thinking . . . Rauschenbusch gave to American Protestantism a sense of social responsibility that it should never lose."²⁸

Millard Fuller, founder of Habitat for Humanity, a worldwide housing ministry whose mission is to provide the working poor with "a simple, decent place to live," derives his "theology of the hammer" in part from Rauschenbusch's Social Gospel theory.

He writes:

In his classic book, *A Theology for the Social Gospel*, Walter Rauschenbusch wrote, "When the progress of humanity creates new tasks . . . or new problems . . . theology must connect these with the old fundamentals of our faith and make them Christian tasks and problems." I believe our human progress has, indeed, created the new task of eliminating poverty housing and homelessness. And, this task can be accomplished [optimism] if, and only if, we develop a theology that connects the task with the old fundamentals of faith and makes it our Christian task to solve.²⁹

Rauschenbusch, then, was one of the most influential advocates of progressive millennialism in the twentieth century. While some fundamentalist progressive millennialists, such as the dominionist David Chilton, would label him as an "evolutionary humanist and socialist . . . openly hostile

²⁷ Walter Rauschenbusch, *American Reformer*, x.

²⁸ Walter Rauschenbusch, *American Reformer*, ii.

²⁹ Millard Fuller, *The Theology of the Hammer*, Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 1994, 21.

toward Biblical Christianity,”³⁰ many have found in this model of progressive millennialism a great theological impetus to create a just society, the Kingdom of God.

On the Fringes: Extremist Millennialism on the Brink of a New Millennium

Dispensational premillennialism of the twentieth century brought catastrophic millennialism to the mainstream just as the Social Gospel of liberalism brought progressive millennialism to the mainstream, yet there are still forms of extremism that help to define the center. We will briefly consider a few examples of twentieth century extremist views.

Extreme Catastrophic Millennialism — The Branch Davidians at Waco

A modern-day form of catastrophic millennialism in the extreme came to national attention in America when a group calling themselves Branch Davidians set up a compound in Waco, TX called “Ranch Apocalypse.” It ended in an armed confrontation with ATF agents and a 51-day stand-off and conflagration in which all but a few members died. The group was led by Vernon Howell a.k.a. David Koresh. He was originally a member of the Seventh Day Adventist Church (an offshoot of the Millerite movement of the nineteenth century). According to Anthony and Robbins:

[Howell/Koresh] became fascinated with the prophetic realm of the imminent “last days” or end times, which in the Book of Revelation is mystically represented by the “Seven Seals” which Howell believed could only be opened by a new prophet . . . In developing his message, Koresh decoded cryptic apocalyptic passages from scripture, which he, like many fundamentalists, interpreted as referring to the present. For Koresh, “the inbreaking of God’s will into history was about to occur, with a cosmic struggle between good and evil; the forces of evil would be concentrated in the present center of earthy power, the government of the United States, whose Babylonian power would be brought to bear against the Lamb [Koresh] and his elect.” Koresh and his followers “must therefore build and fortify a compound and amass weapons to prepare for the inevitable war with [state] agents. . . . Under Koresh the government is evil personified and battle with the government

³⁰D. Chilton, *Paradise Restored, A Biblical Theology of Dominion*, Ft. Worth, TX: Dominion Press, 1985, 228.

was necessary to bring in God's Kingdom." The desperate struggle between the Lamb et al. and the Babylonians will bring down a heavenly host to decisively win the battle of Armageddon and inaugurate the Kingdom of God.³¹

The Koresh/Branch Davidian affair bears some eerie similarities to the Thomas Muntzer affair in Mulhausen nearly 500 years earlier. Koresh tapped into the same kind of fear and distrust of the state by those who were on the fringes. Violence was an accepted, even required, response to the forces of anti-christ, and the final result was death.

There is no reason to believe that there will be a lessening of these kinds of catastrophic millennial movements in the future. With the growing popularity of the Internet and speed of communication, it is becoming easier for these kinds of extremists to organize and publicize their message. One example can be found in a "Field Manual of the Free Militia" available on the Internet at <http://www.ifas.org/library/militia/1-1.html>. In this field manual we are told that Jesus condoned the use of violence against the state and that Christians are required to do so in the face of injustice. The field manual then goes on to describe various kinds of weapons and how they can be obtained.

In the Christian militia movement the government is seen as the enemy, the tool of the anti-Christ, a force that must be resisted with violence if necessary. These groups are viewed by the government as being extremely "right wing" in their political orientation.

On the Left — Liberation Theology

Liberation Theology is a progressive millennialist movement out of Latin America that champions the poor and oppressed. It is deeply rooted in a progressive view of eschatology. The champion spokesperson for this movement, Gutierrez, teaches that:

The elimination of misery and exploitation is a sign of the coming of the Kingdom The struggle for a just world in which there is no oppression, servitude or alienated work will signify the coming of the Kingdom. The Kingdom and social injustice are incompatible . . . the struggle for justice is also the struggle for the kingdom

³¹ Dick Anthony and Thomas Robbins, "Religious Totalism, Exemplary Dualism, and the Waco Tragedy," in T. Robbins and S. Palmer, *Millennium, Messiahs, and Mayhem, Contemporary Apocalyptic Movements*, New York/London: Routledge, 1997, 272.

of God. [Because of this, Liberation theologians believe that the scripture] presupposes the defense of the rights of the poor, punishment of the oppressors, a life free from the fear of being enslaved by others, the liberation of the oppressed.³²

Gutierrez is a tremendous critic of catastrophic millennialism. He writes:

In contradistinction to a pessimistic approach to this world which is so frequent in traditional Christian groups and which encourages escapism, there is proposed . . . an optimistic vision which seeks to reconcile faith and the world and to facilitate commitment. But this optimism must be based on facts. Otherwise, this posture can be deceitful and treacherous and can even lead to a justification of the present order of things. In the underdeveloped countries one starts with a rejection of the existing situation, considered fundamentally unjust and dehumanizing. Although this is a negative vision, it is nevertheless the only one which allows us to go to the root of the problems and to create without compromises a new social order, based on justice and fellowship. This rejection does not produce an escapist attitude, but rather a will to revolution.³³

“Punishment of the oppressors” and a “will to revolution” are primary goals for those who wish to create a Christian social order. Of course, violence is often necessary in achieving these goals; so Liberationists possess an eschatological justification for the use of force.

The great irony of comparing extreme right wing catastrophic millennialism and extreme left wing progressive millennialism is that the two intersect when it comes to the means to achieving a desired end — violence. In both cases the civil powers are seen as the enemy, as a tool of anti-Christ, and therefore must be resisted to the point of death.

Extreme Progressive Millennialism — Dominionism and the Christian Coalition — Evangelicalism discovers political activism

There is one last example of extremism, this time in progressive millennialism. This example can be contrasted with both militia-style pessimism and liberationist-style optimism in that, while those movements attempt to defeat the powers of civil government by violence and force,

³² G. Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1973, 97.

³³ *Ibid.*, 101-102.

this final example seeks to transform the society, creating the Kingdom of God, not by violence or force, but rather through the political process.

Modern-day progressive millennialism is being propounded by a movement known as Dominionism or Christian Reconstructionism. Chilton has written an apologetic treatise that helps lay out their goals:

Our goal is a Christian world, made up of explicitly Christian nations. How could a Christian desire anything else? Our Lord Himself taught us to pray “Thy Kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:10). We pray that God’s orders will be obeyed on earth, just as they are immediately obeyed by the angels and saints in heaven. The Lord’s prayer is a prayer for the worldwide dominion of God’s Kingdom — not a centralized world government, but a world of decentralized theocratic republics.³⁴

In the vision of the Christian Reconstructionists, the world will one day be made up of theocratic nation-states whose governments are based on the law code laid out in the books of Moses.

How is this kingdom to come about? Through evangelization, yes, but beyond that, Christians must, through political activism, transform the government of each nation by establishing their own political candidates and political agenda.

In the late twentieth century, there has been a gradual shift in the world of evangelicalism away from catastrophic premillennialism to progressive millennialism. A prime example of this shift has been Pat Robertson. O’Leary chronicles Robertson’s shift:

It is impossible to ascertain exactly when Robertson began to develop political ambitions; what is clearly evident, however, is that his interpretation of biblical prophecy began to change as he considered a political career.

In a series of books and speeches from 1983 to 1987 Robertson gradually moved away from pessimistic scenarios of Antichrist, Soviet invasions, and socioeconomic catastrophe, and began to offer visions of the future that resembled the postmillennial apocalypse of the Second Great Awakening revivalists. Robertson’s new spirit of optimism was apparent in a televised speech broadcast in December 1984. Here he recklessly proposed something that

³⁴ D. Chilton, *Paradise Restored, A Biblical Theology of Dominion*, 219.

premillennialists had always rejected as heresy, that Christians could enjoy the benefits of the millennium before the return of Jesus:

“What’s coming next? . . . I want you to think of a world . . . where humanism isn’t taught any more and people sincerely believe in the living God . . . a world in which there are no more abortions . . . juvenile delinquency is virtually unknown . . . the prisons are virtually empty . . . And I want you to imagine a society where the church members have taken dominion over the forces of the world. Where Satan’s power is bound by the people of God, and where there is no more disease . . . You say, that’s a description of the Millennium when Jesus comes back . . . but these things can take place now in this time . . . and they are going to because I am persuaded that we are standing on the brink of the greatest spiritual revival the world has ever known. God is going to put us in positions of leadership and responsibility and we’ve got to think this way.”³⁵

Robertson’s political aspirations did not cease with his failed bid for the Republican presidential nomination in 1988. With the demise of Jerry Falwell’s Moral Majority, Robertson helped engineer the Christian Coalition, a not-for-profit political lobbying organization which worked with conservative local churches to put forth a conservative political agenda in an effort to take over the United States government. Instead of being a king, Robertson chose to become a king-maker.

The Christian Coalition and Pat Robertson demonstrate the shift within evangelicalism from a catastrophic millennialism to a progressive millennialism in which the Church ceases to be a prophetic voice against the dominant culture and attempts to become the dominant culture. Thomas and Dobson, after having spent many years as insiders in this type of movement, make the following assessment:

Good Christians disagree on such issues as the environment, nuclear weapons, gun control, capital punishment, and support of the State of Israel. Whenever the church or a group of Christians, such as the Christian Coalition, engages in the political system, it eventually takes a stand on a variety of issues. The danger is that this implies to others — Christians and non-Christians alike — that

³⁵ S. O’Leary, *Arguing the Apocalypse, A Theory of Millennial Rhetoric*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994, 185.

there is a correct “Christian” position on every political issue. The net result is that the understanding as to what it means to be an authentic Christian becomes contaminated The Christian Coalition reduces the Christian faith to a series of political positions, and that is the equivalent of theological heresy. But whether it is the Christian Coalition or the church, neither has any business in the political system.³⁶

Wallis puts his finger on the key problem:

The dominant political ideologies of liberal and conservative, left and right, seem equally incapable of discerning our present crisis or leading us into the future. Politics has become almost completely dysfunctional. We long for something more truthful, more insightful, more compassionate, more wise, more humble, more human. Conservatives have tended to dwell on only some aspects of our social crisis, while liberals continually focus on the other dimensions Conservatives talk endlessly about personal morality and responsibility (remember Moral Majority) while liberals seem to only know the language of human rights and social compassion (witness the ACLU).³⁷

Wallis then goes on to lay out his own solution: “It’s time to stop our ideological battles in political process, which are often motivated by the competition for power and scarce resources. What is called for now is that particular combination of which the prophets most often spoke — justice and righteousness.”³⁸

Looking at the issue of pessimism/optimism from a secular/historical framework, Lasch makes the following observation:

A sign of the times: both left and right, with equal vehemence, repudiate the charge of pessimism. Neither side has any use for “doomsayers.” Neither wants to admit that our society has taken a wrong turn, lost its way, and needs to recover a sense of purpose and direction. Neither addresses the overriding issue of limits, so

³⁶ C. Thomas, E. Dobson, *Blinded by Might: Can the Religious Right Save America?* San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1999, 161.

³⁷ J. Wallis, *The Soul of Politics, Beyond “Religious Right” and “Secular Left,”* San Diego: Harcourt, Brace, 1995, 24.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 25.

threatening to those who wish to appear optimistic at all times. The fact remains; the earth's finite resources will not support an indefinite expansion of industrial civilization. The right proposes, in effect, to maintain our riotous standard of living, as it has been maintained in the past, at the expense of the rest of the world. This program is self-defeating, not only because it will produce environmental effects from which even the rich cannot escape but because it will widen the gap between rich and poor nations, generate more and more violent movements of insurrection and terrorism against the West, and bring about a deterioration of the world's political climate as threatening as the deterioration of its physical climate.

But the historical program of the left has become equally self-defeating. The attempt to extend Western standards of living to the rest of the world will lead even more quickly to the exhaustion of nonrenewable resources, the irreversible pollution of the earth's atmosphere, and the destruction of the ecological system, in short, on which human life depends. These considerations refute conventional optimism and both the right and left therefore prefer to talk about something else — for example, to exchange accusations of fascism and socialism [But] neither fascism nor socialism represents the wave of the future. Gorbachev's momentous reforms in the Soviet Union, followed by the collapse of the Soviet empire in eastern Europe, indicate that socialism's moment has come and gone The history of the twentieth century suggests that totalitarian regimes are highly unstable, evolving toward some type of bureaucracy that fits neither the classic fascist nor the socialist model. None of this means that the future will be safe for democracy, only that the danger to democracy comes less from totalitarian or collectivist movements abroad than from the erosion of its psychological, cultural and spiritual foundations from within.³⁹

Lasch's suggestion is that unwarranted optimism and failure to take seriously the threats inherent within our present world system contain the seeds of our own destruction. In the West, our enemy is not "out there" but comes from within as our spiritual foundations erode. Lasch seems to agree with Wallis that the answers cannot be found simply in the political process, and as Thomas and Dobson recognize, the Church is entering dangerous territory, for which it is ill-equipped, when it trades its mission of proclaiming the Kingdom of God for raw political power.

³⁹ C. Lasch, *The True and Only Heaven*, New York: W.W. Norton, 1991, 24-25.

V. CONCLUSION

The author began with the assertion that “paradoxically, the mission of the Church is best fulfilled where both views [catastrophic millennialism and progressive millennialism] come together in the teaching and ministry of the Church, in a kind of millennial dance.”

After surveying the basic tenets of catastrophic millennialism and progressive millennialism and seeing ways that these views have been lived out historically in the life of the Church from Thomas Muntzer to William Miller to David Koresh, and from Thomas More to Walter Rauschenbusch to Gustavo Gutierrez to Pat Robertson, readers may be left scratching their heads and wondering how these two polarities can possibly come together in a millennial dance.

Paradox is defined by the concise Oxford dictionary as “seemingly absurd though perhaps actually well-founded statement; self-contradictory or essentially absurd statement.”

In his now standard study of faith development James Fowler describes what he has termed “Stage Five” or “Conjunctive Faith.” Fowler writes:

Stage 5, as a way of seeing, of knowing, of committing, moves beyond the dichotomizing logic of Stage 4’s “either/or.” It sees both (or the many) sides of an issue simultaneously. Conjunctive faith suspects that things are organically related to each other; it attends to the pattern of interrelatedness in things, trying to avoid force-fitting to its own prior mind set.⁴⁰

Fowler goes on to say that:

Conjunctive faith, therefore, is ready for significant encounters with other traditions than its own, expecting that truth has disclosed and will disclose itself in those traditions in ways that may complement or correct its own. Krister Stendahl is fond of saying that no interfaith conversation is genuinely ecumenical unless the quality of mutual sharing and receptivity is such that each party makes him- or herself vulnerable to conversion to the other’s truth. This position implies no lack of commitment to one’s own truth tradition. Nor does it mean a wishy-washy neutrality or mere fascination with the exotic features of alien cultures. Rather, conjunctive

⁴⁰ J. Fowler, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning*, San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1981, 185.

faith's radical openness to the truth of the other stems precisely from its confidence in the reality mediated by its own tradition and in the awareness that that reality overflows its mediation. The person of Stage 5 makes her or his own experience of truth the principle by which other claims to truth are tested. But he or she assumes that each genuine perspective will augment and correct aspects of the other, in mutual movement toward the real and the true.⁴¹

Fowler later refers to a person at this stage as having a "paradoxical understanding of truth."⁴²

As we have noted throughout this article, the Christian tradition has been strongly divided between those who possess a pessimistic worldview and those who possess an optimistic worldview. Often this runs along the lines of the individual or group's feelings of empowerment in relation to the dominant culture. Where the Church finds itself outside societal power structures, it is often pessimistic, and looks for divine intervention to come and establish the Kingdom of God, or else it discovers an optimism and becomes militant and seeks to seize power through either violent force or the political process, and thus create the Kingdom of God. Where the Church finds itself having a key role in societal power structures, it tends to be optimistic about the future and attempts to build and maintain the Kingdom of God.

Those who are pessimistic in their orientation can find adequate biblical support to theologially justify their pessimism to themselves. Those who are optimistic in their orientation can also find adequate biblical support to theologially justify their optimism to themselves.

So how is it that these two radically opposite eschatologies can come together in a millennial dance? How can this paradox be resolved? How can we move from an either/or to a both/and position? The astute reader will already have discovered some clues earlier in this article. In a previous section, where we examined twentieth century fringe elements, we noted that in the case of the extreme right wing Christian militia groups of North America and the left wing liberation movements of Central and South America they came together in their common agreement that violence against the state is an acceptable and often necessary means of initiating the Kingdom of God on earth. Pessimistic fundamentalists in Texas armed

⁴¹ *Ibid*, 186-187.

⁴² *Ibid*, 198.

themselves and committed violent acts against ATF agents in their belief that the end was near and that society was about to collapse. Marxist-Christians in Central America have armed themselves and gone to war against their oppressive governments in an attempt to secure their freedom and experience the lessening of the yoke that was promised with the arrival of the Kingdom of God on earth.

Where these two traditions — pessimism and optimism — come together in agreement, violent opposition to the world's system provides us with a shadow view of the millennial dance.

The millennial dance comes when the best of progressive millennialism and the best of catastrophic millennialism merge: non-violent opposition to the world's system.

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
 Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.
 Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.
 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they
 will be filled.
 Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.
 Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.
 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.
 Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness,
 for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
 Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely
 say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be
 glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way
 they persecuted the prophets who were before you.
 You are the salt of the earth You are the light of the world . . .
 Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds
 and praise your Father in heaven (Matthew 5:3-16, NIV).

Jesus calls his followers to live out the life of the Kingdom of God now. The disciples of Jesus are called to create a community of the Kingdom of God now, even as we are living in this evil age. The Church is at its worst whenever it aspires to or achieves worldly power. The Church is at its best when it seeks to live out the life of the Kingdom of God in the absence of political power. The Church is at its worst when it withdraws from engaging the world prophetically and pessimistically surrenders to the cultural forces of darkness, passively awaiting the return of the Messiah. The Church is at

its best when, in the face of incredible moral and political opposition, it insists on bearing the light of the gospel and calling upon the forces of evil to repent.

The Church is at its worst when it chooses violent means to achieve the noble ends of liberation and justice. The Church is at its best when it sacrifices itself, taking up its cross, and uses non-violent means to achieve liberation and justice. It is optimistic in its belief that it can make a difference in spreading the Kingdom of God throughout the world by establishing truly Christian communities where Christ's teachings are lived out in opposition to the sinfulness of the surrounding culture. Its optimism is not cockeyed, however; it recognizes that sin must ultimately be dealt with on a cosmic scale by means of a final intervention of God in the affairs of mankind. Yet it is not content to passively wait for the end, or to hasten the end through violent confrontation, but rather, it seeks to live out the life of the kingdom, spending itself, sacrificing itself as a servant, even as it announces the coming reign of God over all the earth.

The Church is at its best when it takes seriously both the parables of the kingdom which predict a slow and steady growth of the kingdom, as leaven in dough, and those which recognize the inevitable cataclysmic intervention of God into the affairs of man, as when two are grinding at the mill, and one is taken and the other left behind. It embraces, in a paradoxical way, a worldview that is both optimistic and pessimistic about society's ability to become transformed into the Kingdom of God. It embraces those whose apocalyptic visions are dominated by dragons and beasts and also those whose apocalyptic visions are inhabited by lions and lambs. And it courageously seeks to find a point of convergence, a merging, a millennial dance. That dance will occur only when Christians agree to lay down their political agendas, their weapons of destruction, and their will to worldly power, and "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness," when they join hands in the millennial dance, a dance that can only be danced at the foot of the cross.