

CHARLES H. SPURGEON AND ESCHATOLOGY: *DID HE HAVE A DISCERNIBLE MILLENNIAL POSITION?*

Introduction

In the discussion of the various aspects of systematic theology, perhaps none has seen more ink spilt in the last 100 years than eschatology. Those who have “specialized” in this field are well-known and equally well-published; however, when the discussion of eschatology comes up, the name of one of the most published Christians in the history of the church¹, Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834-1892), is seldom mentioned. There are, of course, many reasons for this, not the least of which was Spurgeon’s own lack of emphasis on the subject in his own ministry, as was common in his day.

Given Spurgeon’s notoriety and the volume of his writings, it is perhaps no wonder that almost every advocate of an eschatological viewpoint has attempted to bolster their position by appealing to Spurgeon as “being in their camp.” A brief sampling of conclusions will serve to illustrate this point. Lewis A. Drummond states in his excellent biography,

¹Eric W. Hayden. “Did You Know: A Collection of True and unusual facts about Charles Haddon Spurgeon.” *Christian History*, 10:1, #29, (February 1991), 2. Hayden’s belief is that Spurgeon is the most published author in Church history. This is likely the case, although John Calvin (1509-64) wrote a great deal of material that has never been translated into English. Spurgeon’s sermons alone constitute 61 volumes and the entries for his individual titles constitute eight pages in the British Museum catalogue of serials.

“Spurgeon confessed to be a pre-millennialist.”² Peter Masters, currently pastor of Spurgeon’s church, The Metropolitan Tabernacle in London, stated, “If Spurgeon had lived in this century it is unlikely that he would have used the term ‘millennium’ to describe the first phase of the eternal glory. Certainly he would have stood much closer to amillennialism than to either of the other scenarios recognized today,”³ Erroll Hulse in his book, *The Restoration of Israel*, firmly declared Spurgeon to be postmillennial.⁴ So widespread is the effort to attach Spurgeon’s name to particular prophetic systems that even the newest tribulational/rapture formulation within the dispensational camp, known as “The Pre-Wrath Rapture,” calls on him for support. Robert Van Kampen states in his work *The Sign*, “Charles Haddon Spurgeon was not known to be one who wrote extensively on the end times. But what he did say perfectly parallels the sequence of events presented in this book.”⁵

Obviously Spurgeon could not have held all of these positions. But, which position, if any, did he believe? Can it be determined? And why is there this degree of confusion on the subject? These are the questions that this thesis will attempt to answer. The issue is an important one, as Spurgeon continues to be one of the most popular Christian authors in print, even a century after his death. Men of different positions, whether honestly or otherwise, seek to marshal support for their own prophetic interpretations by appealing to

²Lewis A. Drummond. *Spurgeon: Prince of Preachers*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel Publishing Company, 1993), 650.

³Peter Masters. “Spurgeon’s Eschatology.” *Sword and Trowel* (December 1989), 39.

⁴Erroll Hulse. *The Restoration of Israel*. (London: Henry E. Walter LTD., 1968), 154. Some in the “Christian Reconstructionist” or “Theonomist” movement, which holds postmillennialism as a virtual cornerstone of their system; in their writings have attempted to identify, or at least strongly imply that Spurgeon was postmillennial. See Gary DeMar and Peter Leithart, *The Reduction of Christianity* (Tyler, Texas: Dominion Press, 1988), 41. DeMar and Leithart also quote Spurgeon (p. 59) in support of their position, but that will dealt with in later sections of this work. In fact, given Spurgeon’s notable affection for the Puritans, the common opinion is that Spurgeon was also postmillennial. Hulse states, “Spurgeon is included here [in a listing of postmillennialists] on the grounds of his Puritanism and because of that magnificent sermon preached in 1864.” (Hulse, 154).

⁵Robert Van Kampen. *The Sign*. (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1992. Revised and expanded 1994), 274. This quote is also used as the “eye-catcher” on the back dust-jacket of the book.

Spurgeon for support. This is a practice that he would have certainly denounced.

Commenting on the issue of “Spurgeonism,” a phenomena of his own day, he stated:

There is no word in the world so hateful to our heart as that word *Spurgeonism*, and no thought further from our soul than that of forming a new sect. . . We preach no new gospel, we desire no new objects, and follow them in no novel spirit. We love Christ better than a sect, and truth better than a party, and so far are not denominational, but we are in open union with the Baptists for the very reason that we cannot endure isolation. He who searches all hearts knows that our aim and object is not to gather a band around self, but to unite a company around the savior [sic]. “Let my name perish, but let Christ’s name last for ever,” said George Whitefield, and so has Charles Spurgeon said a hundred times.⁶

The purpose of this thesis is to clarify Spurgeon’s view on the millennium by a careful examination of his own writings, in the light of his own times. Ideally, all students of prophecy would examine the prophetic Scriptures themselves and form their own opinions based on solid exegetical study of the text of God’s Word; “the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3b). There should be a reliance on the works of others as guides and help, without committing what D. A. Carson calls the logical fallacy of “simplistic appeals to authority.”⁷ Carson explains this fallacy in the following manner:

Such appeals can be to distinguished scholars, revered pastors, cherished authors, the majority, or various others. The fallacy lies in thinking that appeals to authority constitute reasons for interpreting texts a certain way; but in fact unless the authority’s reasons are given, the only thing that such appeals establish is that the writer is under the influence of the relevant authority! The most such an appeal can contribute to an argument is to lend the authority’s general reputation to its support; but that is not so much a reasoned defense or explanation as a kind of academic character reference.⁸

This author’s desire in this thesis is twofold: (1) That the uninformed will come to understand Spurgeon and his millennial view as clearly as possible, and, (2) that the misuse of his stature and the misinterpretation of his works will be diminished, at least on this issue.

⁶Charles H. Spurgeon. “Spurgeonism” in *The Sword and Trowel* 2:138 (September 1866).

⁷D. A. Carson. *Exegetical Fallacies* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1984), 125.

⁸Ibid., Carson goes on to say, “Doubtless we should be open to learning from all “authorities” in biblical and theological studies; but we should judge what they say, not on the basis of who said it, but on the basis of the wise reasons they advance.”

Because of his stature and continued influence, any study of Spurgeon's theological views is valid. As John Brown has stated, "He is worthy of prolonged and careful study on the part of any preacher."⁹ It is significant that while there have been several short articles on the subject of Spurgeon and the millennium, there is not any major study or dissertation quality work on this important topic.

W. Y. Fullerton, Spurgeon's personal assistant, editor, and biographer, perhaps understood the content and value of Spurgeon's works more than most. He noted, "the wise preacher or writer on religious subjects will do well if, after mapping out his own course, he sees what Spurgeon has to say about it."¹⁰ This present work seeks to throw fresh light on Spurgeon's significant contribution to prophetic studies and to inspire future study in this important area.

Thesis

This thesis will seek to demonstrate that Spurgeon did in fact hold a clear millennial position. This position will be seen as consistently held and expounded throughout his ministry, although Spurgeon will refine the expression of it with the maturing of his ministry. In presenting this thesis the author will also seek to demonstrate that Spurgeon's view of eschatology in relation to the millennium is best described as a "historic or covenantal premillennial" position.

Problem Posed in the Study

The key "problem" in this study is the sheer volume of material with which one must deal. As one examines the Spurgeonic literary legacy, there is almost despair of ever being able to process all the information. Also, because the bulk of Spurgeon's material is

⁹John Brown. *Puritan Preaching in England*, (New York: Charles Scribner and Sons, 1900), 226.

¹⁰W. Y. Fullerton. *Charles H. Spurgeon: London's Most Popular Preacher*. (Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 1966), 175.

sermonic in nature (over 3,500 individual sermons!), most students of Spurgeon tend to major on that primary source to the exclusion of his other works. While his sermons are the main source of information about his theological system, Spurgeon also wrote in many different forums: college addresses, lectures and a monthly magazine, and particularly two commentaries; one on the Psalms (*The Treasury of David*) and the other on the Gospel of Matthew (*Matthew: The Gospel of the Kingdom*), being only a few.¹¹ This thesis attempts to examine all avenues of Spurgeon's material, wherever he touched primarily or tangentially on the subject of eschatology in general or the millennium in particular.

Plan for this Study

The outline for this thesis will be as follows: Chapter One will begin with an examination of Spurgeon's life and ministry and the influences that shaped his theological thinking. This will be followed by an examination of the various millennial positions as they would have been understood in both Spurgeon's day and the definitions commonly accepted in the 20th Century. Chapter Two will examine the content of Spurgeon's writings as they touch upon prophetic and particularly millennial themes. Chapter Three will examine the varying millennial views against Spurgeon's statements, also commenting on authors whom have attempted to classify Spurgeon in the different positions. In the Conclusion, all of the points will be revisited and summarized with again the final conclusion being that Charles Spurgeon held to a historic or covenantal premillennial position on the millennial kingdom.

¹¹The wide and varied scope of Spurgeon's writing are well chronicled in his *Autobiography* Vol 2:153-74, Vol 3:305-22, and Vol 4:265-319.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTORY MATTERS

Introduction

In dealing with a subject such as Spurgeon and Eschatology, it is vital that some issues of introduction be covered first. A basic survey of the life and ministry of Spurgeon would also be helpful. Furthermore, an understanding of the basic tenets of the various eschatological schemes, as they were understood in Spurgeon's own day; is absolutely necessary before one can begin an examination of Spurgeon's teachings in this area. To complete this study there also needs to be a clarification of eschatological positions as understood today as they relate to those of Spurgeon's day.

Part One:

An Overview of Spurgeon's Life

Charles Haddon Spurgeon has been called both the "Heir of the Puritans"¹² and the "Father of Fundamentalism."¹³ The influence of his ministry is still felt today through the enormous amount of sermonic material and varied writings he left behind. There are

¹²Ernest W. Bacon, *Spurgeon: Heir of the Puritans* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1968)

¹³*Ibid.*

numerous biographies on Spurgeon in print.¹⁴ One publishing company exists almost exclusively on the basis of reprinting Spurgeon's writings and material about him.¹⁵ As one of his biographers keenly observed the life and ministry of Spurgeon, "contains so much that is strange, unusual, wonderful, and even truly miraculous, that it will require most careful statement and most conservative reasoning to convince the reader that the record is literally true."¹⁶

Section A: His Upbringing and Early Education

Charles Haddon Spurgeon was born on June 19, 1834 in Kelvedon, Essex. He was one of eight children¹⁷ and shortly after his birth his father moved the family to Colchester. He came from a long line of "dissenters", that is, those who rejected the Church of England

¹⁴The three best biographical sources for Spurgeon, in our opinion, are as follows: Lewis A. Drummond, *Spurgeon: Prince of Preachers* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel Publications, 1993) 895 pages. G. Holden Pike, *The Life and Work of Charles Haddon Spurgeon* (London: Cassell & Company, 1894, Six Volumes; reprint Carlisle, Pennsylvania: Banner of Truth Trust, 1993 Six Volumes in Two). Charles H. Spurgeon, C. H. Spurgeon's *Autobiography: Compiled from his Diary, Letters and Records by his Wife and Private Secretary*. (London: Passmore and Alabaster Publishers, 1897; reprint Pasadena, Texas: Pilgrim Publishing, 1992, Two Volumes). The *Autobiography* is also available in a Banner of Truth Edition (Two Volumes, 1962 & 1973), but this edition has been edited and a large portion of material, mostly records of personal correspondence, were not included. It remains in print and is a fine edition, however, the Pilgrim Publishing edition is a complete reprint of the original Passmore and Alabaster works. For an evaluation of Drummond's biography see the author's review in *The Master's Seminary Journal* 4:2 (Fall 1993), 229-31.

¹⁵This would be Pilgrim Publishing Company of Pasadena, Texas under the leadership of Bob L. Ross. Pilgrim's catalogue is almost exclusively dedicated the titles by or about Spurgeon. They are dedicated to reprinting the original works of Spurgeon without editing.

¹⁶Russell Conwell. *Life of Charles Haddon Spurgeon, The World's Greatest Preacher*. (New York: Edgewood Publishing Company, 1892), 17-18. Conwell was the able biographer and Baptist pastor, also wrote works on President James Garfield and John Wanamaker. He interviewed Spurgeon personally shortly before his last trip to Mentone, France. Regarding some of the controversies in Spurgeon's life also see Iain Murray, *The Forgotten Spurgeon* (Carlisle, Pennsylvania: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1972).

¹⁷John and Eliza Spurgeon, after the manner of the time, had 17 children, but nine died in infancy. Charles was the oldest son, and he and his younger brother James Archer Spurgeon were the only boys born to the Spurgeon's. Interestingly enough, John Spurgeon outlived his son by 10 years. The rheumatic gout which ultimately led to Charles Spurgeon's death appeared in his family in every other generation. It afflicted his grandfather James Spurgeon, but his father was never affected. It was such a well-known feature of the family that James Spurgeon once remarked to Charles; "Charles, I have nothing to leave you but rheumatic gout; and I have left you a good deal of that." Lewis A. Drummond, *Spurgeon: Prince of Preachers* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel Publishing Company, 1992), 80.

and the *Act of Uniformity of 1662*.¹⁸ His grandfather and father were independent ministers. His grandfather, James Spurgeon (1776-1864) was a noted Congregational pastor in Stambourne, where he ministered for 54 years.

When he was only 14 months old Spurgeon went to live with his grandparents, with whom he resided for nearly four years. During this time Spurgeon was cared for mostly by his 17 year old aunt, Ann. As Drummond states, the reason for this move “remains obscure.”¹⁹ Most likely the reason was financial, as well as the arrival of additional children. Neither Spurgeon in his autobiography²⁰ nor the comprehensive biography by G. Holden Pike²¹ give any mention of the reasons for this situation. Pike, in dealing with the event, simply quotes Spurgeon’s father as saying:

It has been said that Charles was brought up by his grandfather and grandmother. The fact is, that my father and mother came to see us when Charles was a baby of fourteen months old. They took him to stay with them, and he remained with them until he was between four and five years of age. Then he came home to stay with us at Colchester, where I was then residing, at the same time carrying on my ministerial work at Tollesbury, some miles distant. Afterwards he often went to spend his holidays with his grandparents, who were very fond of him.²²

For whatever reason, the relationship and influence of his grandfather was an extremely significant factor in the life of young Charles.

Spurgeon developed a love for books at a very early age. His grandfather’s manse had a large collection of Puritan works and under his aunt’s tutelage, he learned to read mainly out of these tomes. From the ages of 10 to 15 Spurgeon attended two different

¹⁸An ancestor of Spurgeon, Job Spurgeon, was jailed and had his property confiscated because he attended a “non-conformist” place of worship in 1677. This was a favorite story of Charles Spurgeon, who relished having descended from one who had suffered for the faith. He stated, “I had rather be descended from one who suffered for the faith, than bear the blood of all the emperors within my veins.” Eric W. Hayden, *The Spurgeon Family* (Pasadena, Texas: Pilgrim Publishing, 1993), 2.

¹⁹Drummond, *Spurgeon*. 78.

²⁰Charles H. Spurgeon, *C. H. Spurgeon’s Autobiography: Compiled from his Diary, Letters and Records by his Wife and Private Secretary*. (London: Passmore and Alabaster Publishers, 1897; reprint Pasadena, Texas: Pilgrim Publishing, 1992)

²¹G. Holden Pike. *The Life and Work of Charles Haddon Spurgeon*. (London: Cassell & Company Ltd., 1894; reprint Carlisle, Pennsylvania: Banner of Trust, 1991)

²²*Ibid.*, 1:17. In the manner of the time, personal matters, especially relating to the family, were simply not discussed in a public forum.

schools: The Stockwell House School and St. Augustine's Agricultural College. He showed a good deal of skill in learning, reading voraciously and possessing a remarkable memory.²³ He had a good mind for mathematics and while at St. Augustine's, "his uncle [the school's principal] recognized his mathematical ability and allowed him to make a set of calculations that proved of such benefit that a London insurance firm used them for half a century or more."²⁴

By the time Spurgeon was 15 his formal education had practically come to an end. He was an "usher"²⁵ for two years at Newmarket in Cambridgeshire, but he would never pursue a university education.²⁶ Nonetheless, Spurgeon went on to become a remarkably accomplished theologian and Biblical scholar. Southern Baptist pastor, B. H. Carroll stated of Spurgeon's sermons, that if arranged topically, "they would constitute a complete body of systematic theology."²⁷ He was largely self-taught and as Dallimore states, "The extent of his reading was utterly amazing for one so young, and in the works of his favorite authors -- the Puritan theologians-- he was especially versed."²⁸ At this tender age of 15 he wrote a 17

²³Spurgeon was gifted with an almost "photographic" memory. He would amaze his friends with his ability to remember people and their names even if years had passed since their last meeting. It was said that he could also remember anything that he ever read and where in the book any particular passage was located!

²⁴Arnold Dallimore, *C. H. Spurgeon: A New Biography* (Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 1984), 11.

²⁵An usher was the term used for a student who also taught in some of the elementary subjects for the regular teacher.

²⁶Bacon, *Spurgeon*. 16. The university system, particularly Cambridge and Oxford were not open to non-conformists until 1870. Although there were several substantial colleges and universities available, providence did not allow Spurgeon to enter any of them. His father had been rather forceful in encouraging Charles to complete a proper theological education. Arrangements had actually been made for Spurgeon to meet with Dr. Joseph Angus, then Principal of the Baptist College at Stepney (now Regent's Park College, Oxford), for an interview with a purpose of Spurgeon entering the college. Pike records, "The place of the meeting was to be at the house of a well-known publisher in the University town, and both the Doctor and the proposed student duly kept their appointment; but although both were in the same house together, it seemed destined that they were not to meet. Mr. Macmillan's servant-maid was apparently not the shrewdest of her sex; at all events, she quite failed to understand that the staid professor and the round-faced lad, who arrived at the house at nearly the same time, had any business with one another. She showed the Doctor into one parlour and closed the door; in his turn, she showed young Mr. Spurgeon into a second parlour and closed the door; and then, probably forgetting all about such a trivial circumstance, she left both of the morning callers to their peaceful cogitations. Having an appointment to keep in London, Dr. Angus had at last to hasten away to the railway station; and when Mr. Spurgeon felt that he could hold out no longer, he rang the bell, to learn when the servant came that the Doctor had gone away." Pike, *Spurgeon*, 1:72.

²⁷B. H. Carroll. *An Interpretation of the English Bible* (New York: Revell Publishers, 1916, 13 Volumes), 1:13.

²⁸Dallimore, *Spurgeon*, 11.

chapter, 290 page work entitled, *Anti-Christ and Her Brood; Or Popery Unmasked*, which won an honorable mention in an essay contest in Nottingham.²⁹

Throughout his life Spurgeon remained largely self-taught, reading on a wide scale in many of the disciplines, especially history and the natural sciences. He became well-rounded to the point that during his ministry in London he gave what he called, “lectures” on various subjects, including several on the emerging works of Charles Darwin and evolution.

Section B: The Theological Influences in His Life

The most important theological influence in Spurgeon’s life was clearly that of his grandfather. While living at Stambourne, Charles would spend hours in the manse library, at first looking at the wood-cut pictures in *Foxe’s Book of Martyrs* and *Pilgrim’s Progress*, then reading the works of Sibbes, Bunyan, Owen, Boston, Matthew Henry and the other Puritan stalwarts. If Charles Spurgeon is the “Heir of the Puritans,”³⁰ then his grandfather was likely the “last of the Puritans.” As Pike states:

James Spurgeon seemed to live as one of the last representatives of the Old Dissent. . . The venerable pastor of Stambourne was one of the last connecting links between the old times and the new. During his long life of nearly ninety years, what changes had time brought about in the world! In James Spurgeon’s days of childhood Dr. Johnson still ruled as the autocrat of London literary society; the establishment of the republic of the United States and the French Revolution were events of his youth; and he was in the early years of his pastorate when Napoleon was extinguished by Wellington at Waterloo. As a man and as a pastor, the Stambourne veteran belonged to the older world of the Georges into which he had been born; and it is probable that he had little or no sympathy with the innovations and modern methods of doing things which he lived to see introduced.³¹

In all of this Charles learned two things from his grandfather, a love for the Puritan’s and their theology, and a pastor’s heart. Charles would often sit in his grandfather’s study while

²⁹Drummond, *Spurgeon*, 103.

³⁰Bacon, *Spurgeon*, preface.

³¹Pike, *Spurgeon*, 1:15.

he prepared his messages or engaged in theological discussions with church members or visiting ministers. There is a rather famous story of a six year old Charles going to a “public house,” what American’s would call a tavern or a bar, to confront a “backsliding” member of his grandfather’s congregation by the name of Thomas Roads. He rebuked the man in full view of all the other patrons and then simply walked out. Roads left the bar, went to pray and ask God’s forgiveness and then made things right with his pastor!³²

Years later, when Charles Spurgeon was a famous young pastor in London, his grandfather was still ministering faithfully in Stambourne. In an example of how their preaching styles and theology were fitted so well together, Drummond records this incident:

Spurgeon enjoyed telling the story of one day traveling to Haverhill to preach. Because of unforeseen circumstances, he arrived late. So his grandfather, who attended the service, began the worship and preached on the text: “By grace you are saved” (Ephesians 2:8). Somewhat into the message, Charles Spurgeon, now the distinguished grandson, entered the chapel. “Here comes my grandson,” James explained, “He can preach the gospel better than I can, but you cannot preach a better gospel, can you Charles?” Briskly walking up the aisle, Charles replied, “You preach better than I, pray go on.” Grandfather James refused, but he told him his text and explained that he had shown the people that the source of salvation is grace. Charles took up from that point and preached the rest of the verse: “And that not of yourselves.” He set forth the total inability of people to come to Christ on their own. His grandfather interrupted right in the heart of Charles’ discourse, “I know most about that” [and apparently carried on the sermon for a few minutes]. Spurgeon preached while his grandfather said quietly, “Good, good.” Finally the old man burst out, “Tell them about that again, Charles.”³³

Charles Spurgeon was also influenced by his teacher at Stockwell House, Mr. E. S. Leeding. Spurgeon said of Leeding:

He was a teacher who really taught his pupils; and by his diligent skill I gained the foundation upon which I built in after years. He left Colchester to open a school of his own in Cambridge, and I to go, first to Maidstone, and then to New market for some two years. Then we came together again; for I joined him at Cambridge to assist in his school, and in return to be helped in my studies. He has left on record that he did not think that there was need for me to go to any of the Dissenting Colleges, since I had

³²Drummond, *Spurgeon*, 85-86.

³³*Ibid.*, 90.

mastered most of the subjects studied therein; and his impression that I might, while with him, have readily passed through the University if the pulpit had not come in the way.³⁴

Spurgeon began with the Puritans and really ended there. Regarding this Bacon stated:

Charles Haddon Spurgeon was completely moulded and fashioned by those spiritual giants of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Puritans. He stood in their noble tradition, in the direct line of their theology and outlook, and can without question be called The Heir of the Puritans.³⁵

Jay Adams, in evaluating the impact of Spurgeon's preaching said this regarding the scope of his learning:

One fact that even the most casual student of Spurgeon recognizes is his complete mastery of and intimate familiarity with the best preachers and religious authors prior to his time. In his day, he was probably the most able student of Puritan literature.³⁶

Adams goes on to point out that Spurgeon was, "no slave to the Puritans, he milked them dry, but he made his own butter."³⁷

One critic of Spurgeon has well observed his persistent stand for truth: "Here is a man who has not moved an inch forward in all his ministry, and at the close of the nineteenth century is teaching the theology of the first century."³⁸ Spurgeon saw this as the supreme complement instead of the severe criticism as it was intended. To Spurgeon, the evangelical Calvinism of the Puritans was the very essence of Biblical Christianity.³⁹ This was a founda-

³⁴Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1:45.

³⁵Bacon, *Spurgeon*, 102.

³⁶Jay E. Adams. *Sense Appeal in the Sermons of Charles Haddon Spurgeon*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1975), 2.

³⁷*Ibid.*, 3.

³⁸Richard Ellsworth Day, *The Shadow of the Broad Brim: The Life Story of Charles Haddon Spurgeon, Heir of the Puritans* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: The Judson Press, 1934), 124.

³⁹An excellent description of the core of Puritan theology is made by Duncan S. Ferguson. "The Puritan movement was steeped in Reformed theology and produced the historic Westminster Confession of Faith and innumerable volumes of dogmatics. The foundation of their confession and theological system was the assertion that the Bible was the very voice and message of God to humankind. It was the infallibly inspired work of the Holy Spirit and authoritative in all matters, including not only doctrine, worship, and church government but also civil and political problems, daily work, home life, dress, recreation and duty. The Puritans surveyed the whole gamut of life in light of the Bible and attempted to live accordingly. The literal word of Scripture was a direct message from God, spoken as much in the present as in the past." (Duncan S. Ferguson. "The Bible and Protestant Orthodoxy: The Hermeneutics of Charles Spurgeon." Journal of the

tional theme in his sermons, and he presented Calvinism on a clear and consistent basis. In 1856, the first year of his ministry at New Park Street Chapel, he stated:⁴⁰

I have my own private opinion that there is no such thing as preaching Christ and him crucified, unless you preach what now-a-days is called Calvinism. I have my own ideas, and those I always state boldly. It is a nickname to call it Calvinism; Calvinism is the gospel, and nothing else.⁴¹

Towards the end of his ministry in 1881 (46 volumes of sermons later) he stated, “We hold and assert again and again that the truth which Calvin preached was the very truth which the apostle Paul had long before written in his inspired epistles, and which is most clearly revealed in the discourses of our blessed Lord himself.”⁴² Spurgeon was consistent in his theology throughout his ministry. He may have refined the expression of his beliefs, but as to the foundation and content, his critic was correct.

Section C: The Theme and Achievements of His Ministry

The ministry of Spurgeon was centered around the preaching of Christ and the doctrines of grace. He said:

Evangelical Theological Society 25:4 [Dec 1982], 456). Ferguson goes on to offer a rather unfavorable conclusion to his article by stating, “In the final analysis, Spurgeon’s understanding of the nature and interpretation of the Bible does not adequately serve this generation of evangelical Christians who have come to accept the best of current Biblical scholarship while holding concurrently to the inspiration and authority of Scripture” (466).

⁴⁰The New Park Street Chapel in London, would move and become the famous Metropolitan Tabernacle. Spurgeon followed Benjamin Keach (1668-1704), John Gill (1720-1771), John Rippon (1773-1836), and Joseph Angus (1838-1840). There were also two others who followed Angus for a brief time before the young Spurgeon was called in 1856. Interestingly, Angus was the principal of Stephney Baptist College to whom Spurgeon had failed to be introduced. Angus later said of Spurgeon’s decision not to pursue theological education, “I should regret for your friend [Spurgeon] to settle without thorough preparation. He may be useful in either case, but his usefulness will be much greater, he will fill at all events a wider sphere, with preparation, than without it.” (Drummond, *Spurgeon*, 173). In the providence of God, Spurgeon brought revival to a ministry where Angus did not enjoy significant blessing.

⁴¹Charles H. Spurgeon, *New Park Street Pulpit* (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1856; reprint Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1990), 1:50.

⁴²Charles H. Spurgeon, *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit* (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1901; reprint, Pasadena, Texas: Pilgrim Publishers, 1982), 47:398.

Jesus is The Truth. We believe in Him, --not merely in His words. He is the Doctor and the Doctrine, Revealer and Revelation, the Illuminator and the Light of Men. He is exalted in every word of truth, because he is its sum and substance. He sits above the gospel, like a prince on his own throne. Doctrine is most precious when we see it distilling from his lips and embodied in his person. Sermons are valuable in proportion as they speak of him and point to him. A Christless gospel is no gospel at all and a Christless discourse is the cause of merriment to devils.⁴³

The cornerstone of Spurgeon's ministry was the preaching of "Christ and Him Crucified."

An emblem containing that verse was the symbol of Spurgeon's ministry.⁴⁴ Although his

preaching has not always been viewed as expository, and his exegesis described as

"difficult,"⁴⁵ his commitment to biblical content and a consistent presentation of evangelical

theology in that preaching, set him apart as the "Whitefield of Victorian England."⁴⁶

Speaking on the subject of sermonic content he told his students:

Sermons should have real teaching in them, and their doctrine should be solid, substantial and abundant. We do not enter the pulpit to talk for talk's sake; we have instructions to convey important to the last degree, and we cannot afford to utter pretty nothings. . . . To divide a sermon well may be a very useful art, but how if there is nothing to divide? A mere division maker is like an excellent carver with an empty dish before him. . . . Nothing can compensate for the absence of teaching; all the rhetoric in the world is but as chaff to the wheat in contrast to the gospel of our salvation.⁴⁷

The contemporary writers also noted the power and passion of his preaching. One writer stated this about Spurgeon's preaching:

How thoroughly English, vernacular: scarce a Latinized or Greek borrowed term. Is it any wonder with this, and with the rich, full, old doctrine of the Puritan age --election de-

⁴³Spurgeon, *New Park Street*, 1:iii.

⁴⁴Bob L. Ross. *A Pictorial Biography of C. H. Spurgeon* (Pasadena, Texas: Pilgrim Publishing Company, 1974), back cover. Pilgrim Publishing continues to use the same emblem in all of its Spurgeon reprints.

⁴⁵James F. Stitzinger, "The History of Expository Preaching," in *Rediscovering Expository Preaching*, by John F. MacArthur and the Faculty of The Master's Seminary. ed.'s Richard Mayhue and Robert L. Thomas (Dallas, Texas: Word Publishing Company, 1993), 55. Spurgeon was an expositor after the manner of George Whitefield (1714-70), his homiletical hero. For a thorough evaluation of Spurgeon's exegesis and preaching see Horton Davies, "Expository Preaching: Charles Haddon Spurgeon," *Foundations* 6 (1963): 15.; Craig Skinner, "The Preaching of Charles Haddon Spurgeon," *Baptist History and Heritage*, 19:4 (Oct. 1984), 16-26.; R. Albert Mohler Jr. "A Bee-Line to the Cross: The Preaching of Charles H. Spurgeon," *Preaching* 8:3 (Nov.-Dec 1992), 25-30.; and Frederick Roth Webber, *A History of Preaching in Britain and America*, 3 vols. (Milwaukee: Northwestern, 1957)1:602.

⁴⁶Pike, *Spurgeon*, 3:76.

⁴⁷Charles H. Spurgeon. *Lectures to My Students*, (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1881; reprint, Pasadena, Texas: Pilgrim Publishing Company, 1990), 72.

fended, asserted, sovereign grace vindicated and glorified; Christ set forth as crucified and slain, pictures, anecdotes-- that, in spite of extravagance and much of self, the common people hear him gladly.⁴⁸

Throughout his ministry, in his voluminous writing and preaching, there is no aspect of systematic, Biblical, or practical theology that he did not touch on. The main thrust of his ministry was always to preach “Christ and Him crucified.” It is interesting to note here that Spurgeon was well aware of the issues of the day involving eschatology and the millennium; but he did not view those matters as important as the issues of salvation. He repeated this often throughout his long ministry. Preaching on the subject of the “Second Advent” at The Metropolitan Tabernacle in December of 1884, he stated this:

Some Christians are very curious, but not obedient. Plain precepts are neglected, but difficult problems the seek to solve. I remember one who used to be dwelling upon the vials and seals and trumpets. He was great at apocalyptic symbols; but he had seven children, and he had no family prayer. If he had left the vials and trumpets and minded his boys and girls, it would have been a deal better. I have known men marvelously great upon Daniel and specially instructed in Ezekiel, but singularly forgetful of the twentieth of Exodus, and not very clear upon Romans the eighth. I do not speak with any blame of such folks for studying Daniel and Ezekiel, but quite the reverse; yet I wish they had been more zealous for the conversion of sinners in their neighborhoods, and the more careful to assist the poor saints. I admit the value of the study of the feet of the image of Nebuchadnezzar’s vision, and the importance of knowing the kingdoms which make up the ten toes, but I do not see the propriety of allowing such studies to overlay the common-places of practical godliness. If the time spent over obscure theological propositions were given to a mission in the dim alley near the good man’s house, more benefit would come to man and more glory to God. I would have you understand all the mysteries brethren, if you could; but do not forget that our chief business here below is to cry, “Behold the Lamb!” By all manner and means read and search till you know all that the Lord has revealed concerning things to come; but first of all see to it that your children are brought to the saviour’s feet, and that you are workers together with God in the upbuilding of his church.⁴⁹

Spurgeon was able, in a relatively short lifetime, to build what many believed to be the largest Protestant Church in the world, establish and preside over a Pastor’s College,

⁴⁸“Spurgeon in the Pulpit,” in *The Texas Baptist* (7 January 1857), 1, cited in *Baptist and the Bible*. L. Russ Bush and Tom J. Nettles (Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 1980), 246.

⁴⁹Charles H. Spurgeon, “The Ascension and the Second Advent Practically Considered,” in *Spurgeon’s Expository Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1988), 4:442-43.

establish an orphanage, a book colportage, and innumerable organizations and societies within his church. The sustained publication of his sermons on a weekly basis continued over 20 years after his death, and was stopped only by the paper shortage brought on by World War I. Drummond acknowledges this as he states:

Many consider Spurgeon one of the ten greatest English authors with an estimate of up to 300 million copies of his sermons and books printed. During his life the whole evangelical world seemed to hang on his words; and he is still constantly republished to this day. He became a household word, and remains so to this moment in many evangelical circles. At any rate, there are more books, at least religious works, in print today by Spurgeon --a century after his death--than any living or dead English author.⁵⁰

In his recent work John F. MacArthur Jr. states this about the continuing impact of Spurgeon on today's evangelical world:

Surely no preacher in the history of the English language has had Spurgeon's facility with words, his ability to convey the authority of the divine message, his passion for truth, or his grasp of preaching combined with such knowledge of theology. He was also a churchman par excellence, innately gifted as a leader. Pastoring in troubled times, Spurgeon filled his 5,500 seat auditorium several times a week.⁵¹

The German pastor and theologian Helmut Thielicke summarized the ministry of Spurgeon, perhaps better than anyone, when he stated:

In no way was he like the managers of a modern evangelistic campaign, who manipulate souls with all the techniques of mass-suggestion, acting like salvation engineers. Charles Haddon Spurgeon --it is he of whom we are speaking-- was still unaware of the wiles of propaganda, and completely ignorant of the subliminal influence that operates by appealing to secret images, wishdreams, and anxiety complexes --and hence begins with the results of psychological tests. *He worked only through the power of the Word which created its own hearers and changed souls* ⁵² [emphasis ours].

Spurgeon was first and foremost a man who "pleased God rather than man." He was not afraid of theological battles, and fought many of them during his life. But his battles were over "the truth of the Gospel" (Galatians 2:14), not over other issues, which he

⁵⁰Drummond, *Spurgeon*, 25.

⁵¹John F. MacArthur Jr. *Ashamed of the Gospel: When the Church Becomes Like the World* (Waco, Texas: Word Publishers, 1993), xix.

⁵²*Ibid.*, 1.

considered secondary. In the area of eschatological and millennial considerations, he was, as shall be shown, content in his own views and expressed them sufficiently in both volume and clarity.

Part Two:

Eschatological and Millennial Definitions in Victorian England

Before Spurgeon's view of the Millennium can be identified there must first be a clear understanding of the millennial definitions of Spurgeon's own time. One writer on this subject; whose argument, according to his critic, "depends on an extremely broad definition of a-millennialism or an extremely narrow one of premillennialism,"⁵³ made the error of using his own definitions instead of those of the period he was discussing. Twentieth Century definitions of theological issues are, of course, important for this discussion; however, a valid understanding for the historic period in question is essential. The purpose here is not to examine every slight deviation from the basic systems herein discussed, but rather to show the essential tenets of each system. Furthermore, any view of the millennium, by necessity, depends on how Revelation 20:1-6 is to be interpreted. This issue will be discussed only as it applies to the various millennial schemes examined here and to Spurgeon's views themselves.⁵⁴

Section A: Introduction to the Millennial Schemes

⁵³C. W. H. Griffiths. "Spurgeon's Eschatology," *Watching and Waiting* 23:15 (July/September 1990), 227-28.

⁵⁴Again, this paper is not designed to present an interpretation, but rather examine Spurgeon's views on the subject. For an excellent and detailed survey of interpretational options of this passage see *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* by John F. Walvoord (Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 1966), 282-90.

The millennium, the thousand years of Revelation 20:1-10, has been variously understood throughout the history of the church. Four different millennial views which have emerged in the history of doctrine are designated by the prefixes; “a-”, “post-”, “pre-” and “historic pre-.” These designations have reference to the timing of the Return of Christ in relation to the commencement of this millennial kingdom as well as the essential nature of that kingdom.

The four millennial positions will be more clearly defined later, but essentially they are understood in the following manner:

(1) The *Amillennial* position is the belief that there will be no physical kingdom on earth. “Amillennialists believe that the kingdom of God is now present in the world as the victorious Christ rules his church through the Word and Spirit. They feel that the future, glorious, and perfect kingdom refers to the new earth and life in heaven.”⁵⁵

(2) The *Postmillennial* position teaches that there will be an extended period of peace, prosperity and a godly world brought about by “Christian preaching and teaching.”⁵⁶ This millennium will see the nearly universal rule of the Church and Christian principles in force in the world and will finally culminate with the return of Christ, and the translation into the eternal state.

The *Premillennial* position is divided into two very distinct segments.

(3) The *Historic or Covenantal Premillennial* view teaches that there will be a 1,000 year kingdom on earth in which Christ will personally reign, having returned to the earth to establish his rule “suddenly through supernatural methods rather than

⁵⁵Walter Elwell (ed.), *Dictionary of Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1984), s.v. “Views of the Millennium,” by Robert G. Clouse, 714-718.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*, 715.

gradually over a long period of time.”⁵⁷ In this scheme the Jews will have a prominent part in God’s plan, but the kingdom is essentially the culmination of the *church age*.

(4) The *Dispensational Premillennialist* teaches the same basic scheme as the Historical position; however, the essential nature of the kingdom is quite different. For the Dispensationalist, the 1,000 year kingdom is the culmination and final fulfillment of God’s promises to Israel. The kingdom which Christ personally rules over is the Davidic Kingdom of Israel’s Messiah. In Dispensational Premillennialism there is a greater distinction between Israel and the Church, than in the Historic/Covenantal position.⁵⁸

The other key eschatological questions regarding the tribulation and the timing of the rapture are sub-divisions of the “premillennial” views and are not primarily germane to this discussion. Interest in the question of the “rapture” itself was not unknown in Spurgeon’s day, but was a rather narrow focus and confined mainly to some of the Plymouth Brethren. Their unique view was known as “The Secret Rapture.”⁵⁹

Section B: The Millennial Schemes in Spurgeon’s Day: An Overview

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸That distinction or discontinuity between the Old and New Testaments (i.e.: Israel and the Church) is being challenged today by proponents of the “Progressive Dispensational” position. Craig Blaising and Darrell Bock state, “But this new dispensationalism see a greater continuity between the millennium and the eternal kingdom than was the case in some forms of essentialist dispensationalism.” Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock, *Dispensationalism Israel and the Church: A Search for Definition* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing Company, 1992), 383. By “essentialist dispensationalism” the authors mean dispensationalism as defined by the *sine qua non* points of Charles Ryrie in his *Dispensationalism Today* (Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 1965), and what others have called “classic dispensationalism.” It is beyond the scope of this thesis to interact with these dispensational differences. The dispensationalism that Spurgeon would have been familiar with in his day was, what could be called, “classic” as will be shown later in this thesis.

⁵⁹Again, this paper will limit its scope to the millennial views of Spurgeon. Questions of the rapture and its timing will only be mentioned as they relate to Spurgeon’s millennial views.

That all four of these millennial schemes were known and believed by various groups of Christendom within Victorian England is indisputable. In 1878 Nathaniel West, presenting a chronicle of the history of premillennialism, identified the three key strains of millennial thought when he wrote:

Thus does pre-millennialism become a protest against the doctrine of unbroken evolution of the Kingdom of God to absolute perfection on earth, apart from the miraculous intervention of Christ [i.e. postmillennialism]. And equally is it a protest against that vapid idealism which violates the perfect kingdom into a spiritual abstraction, apart from the regensis of the earth [i.e. amillennialism]. It asserts that the literal is always the last and highest fulfillment of prophecy.⁶⁰

What could be identified as Amillennialism was the official position of both the Roman Catholic Church, the Lutheran Church and the Church of England, although there was latitude within Lutheranism and Anglicanism for a variety of beliefs on this issue. The influential non-conformist theologian Philip Doddridge (1702-1751), “rejected the very notion of a millennium.”⁶¹ The Congregational theologian, Josiah Conder wrote in 1838 that any view of a literal millennial kingdom was “aberrational.”⁶²

In England “the postmillennial theory was evidently widespread.”⁶³ This view was spread by the influence of William Carey, Thomas Chalmers and others. Postmillennialism was the dominant view in America from the time of the Puritans to early in the 20th Century, and was also extremely well-established in England. A seminal work delineating the postmillennial view was David Brown’s, *Christ’s Second Coming: Will it be Premillennial?* (1846). Brown, who became the Principle of the Aberdeen Free Church College, presented

⁶⁰Nathaniel West, “History of the Pre-Millennial Doctrine” in *Premillennial Essays of the Prophetic Conference held in the Church of the Holy Trinity*, New York City, Nathaniel West (ed.), (Chicago, Illinois: Fleming H. Revell Publishers, 1879; reprint Minneapolis, Minnesota: Bryant Baptist Publications, 1981), 315. While it is admitted that this conference was held in the United States, one presenter (Dr. W. P. Mackay) and several of the participants were from England. It would be naïve to believe that Spurgeon was unaware of either these positions or perhaps even this conference.

⁶¹David Bebbington. *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730’s to the 1980’s* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1989), 62

⁶²Josiah Conder. *An Analytical and Comparative View of All Religions* (London: SPCK, 1838), 584-92.

⁶³Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 62.

what became the classic presentation of postmillennial eschatology in England.⁶⁴ So valuable is this work that it remains a standard reference to this day.

Dispensationalism, although still young by Spurgeon's time, did predate Spurgeon's ministry by a decade or so. John Nelson Darby and the "Brethren" were very influential and began spreading their system by the late 1830's. Bebbington states:

Although never the unanimous view among Brethren, dispensationalism spread beyond their ranks and gradually became the most popular version of futurism. In the nineteenth century it remained a *minority version among premillennialists*, but this intense form of apocalyptic expectation was to achieve much greater salience in the twentieth. [emphasis ours]⁶⁵

Since the dispensational perspective was viewed as a "minority version among premillennialists" it is evident that another premillennial position was in existence during this time. In fact, the Historicist view was the dominant premillennial option at this time. Bebbington goes on to state that during "the 1830's and 1840's two schools of thought emerged"⁶⁶ in premillennialism. One, he states was "normally called 'historicist'"⁶⁷ and the second was identified as "the futurist school."⁶⁸ In short, the "historicist" was most closely identified with the *Historic/Covenantal Premillennial* position; while the "futurist" was most clearly the *Dispensational Premillennial* position.⁶⁹

Among the non-conformists in 19th Century England (Presbyterians, Baptists, Congregationalists, and Methodists), any of the millennial schemes were able to be adopted. The reason for this seems to be the fact that the foundational creed for all of the Protestant denominations in England (and America), *The Westminster Confession of 1647* was not

⁶⁴This work has been reprinted several times most recently by the Theonomist, Dominion Press, and is looked to as foundational work by theonomist authors.

⁶⁵Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*., 86.

⁶⁶Ibid., 85.

⁶⁷Ibid..

⁶⁸Ibid.

⁶⁹Ibid., 85-86.

particularly specific on the issue. There is no mention of the millennium and the *Confession* ends with the comment:

So he [God] will have that day unknown to men, that they may shake off all carnal security, and be always watchful, because they know not what hour the Lord will come; and may ever be prepared to say, Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.⁷⁰

This statement is clearly non-specific. The other sections, “Of the State of Men after Death and of the Resurrection of the Dead” (Chapter 32) and “Of the Last Judgment” (Chapter 33), can easily be interpreted to fit any of the four millennial positions.

Section C: Spurgeon’s Understanding of the Millennial Questions of His Day

Spurgeon himself was obviously familiar and conversant with the various millennial schemes as defined above. In his *Commenting and Commentaries*, he identified the various interpretive schools of the Book of Revelation as he stated:

The works upon Revelation are so extremely numerous (Darling’s list contains 52 columns), and the views entertained are so many, so different, and so speculative, that after completing our List we resolved not to occupy our space with it, but merely to mention a few books of repute. As for the lucubrations upon parts of the book, they lie at the booksellers’ “thick as leaves in Vallambrosa.” Numbers of these prophecyings have been disproved by the lapse of time, and others will in due season share their fate. The following remarks may help the student, and at the same time prove the difficulty of making a selection.

Davidson⁷¹ distinguishes a fourfold manner of apprehending Apocalyptic Prophecy.

⁷⁰Philip Schaff. *The Creeds of Christendom: With a History and Critical Notes* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1931; reprint Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1990), 3:673. To this end Charles Hodge and the Princeton Theologians could promote Postmillennialism and be within the confines of The Westminster Confession; Currently at Westminster Theological Seminary, most hold to an amillennial position while holding to the Confession; however, some of the faculty are premillennial. As already demonstrated, Nathaniel West, a Presbyterian professor of the last century could be premillennial and within the bounds of the same creed; Lewis Sperry Chafer argued that Dispensational Premillennialism was not viewed as inconsistent with the Westminster Confession in several articles in *Bibliotheca Sacra* 100:337-45 (1943) and 101:257-60 (1944). See also Walter A. Elwell (ed.), *Dictionary of Evangelical Theologians* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1993), s.v. “Lewis Sperry Chafer” by Craig A. Blasing.

⁷¹It is uncertain whom Spurgeon is referring to here, possibly A. B. Davidson (1831-1902), a professor at New College in Edinburgh, who was well published and whose works were known to Spurgeon.

1. *Preterists*. The prophecies contained in the Apocalypse were fulfilled with the destruction of Jerusalem and the fall of heathen Rome. This is the view of Bossuet, Grotius, Hammond, Wetstien, Eichhorn, Ewald, DeWitte, Lücke, and others, among whom is the American expositor Moses Stuart.
2. *Continuists*. The Apocalyptic prophecies are predictive of progressive history, being partly fulfilled, partly unfulfilled. Thus, Mede, Brightman, Issac Newton, Woodhouse, Cunningham, Birks, Elliott (and many Germans).
3. *Simple Futurists*. According to these, only the first three chapters relate to the historical present of the Seer, all else having reference to the absolute future of the Lord's Appearing. Thus, Burgh, Maitland, Benjamin Newton, Todd, and others.
4. *Extreme Futurists*. Even the first three chapters of Revelation are a prophecy relative to the absolute future of Christ's Coming --being a prediction of the condition of the Jews after the first resurrection. Kelly, and some Irish authors.⁷²

All of the millennial positions mentioned above are represented in this small listing by Spurgeon, and among the commentaries he mentions. William Kelly, the Brethren writer in the "Extreme Futurist" group, was a Dispensational Premillennialist; Benjamin Newton, William Cunningham, and C. B. Elliott would be classified as "Historic or Covenantal Premillennialists; Moses Stuart was postmillennial; and Jacques Bossuet and Johann Eichhorn adhered to an amillennial approach. This, combined with his own admission that he was well-read in the prophetic literature of the day,⁷³ shows that Spurgeon was able to interact with the entire spectrum of millennial thought as it existed in his day.

Part Three:

Identifying the Major Eschatological Positions on the Millennium

Now that the existence of the four millennial views in Spurgeon's era has been briefly demonstrated, each of the systems must be examined in more detail. In this section each mil-

⁷²Spurgeon, *Commenting and Commentaries*, 198.

⁷³Pike, *Spurgeon*, 4:133.

lennial system will be surveyed in terms of Spurgeon's day and the modern expression of the system. Also the essential points of each system will be identified.

Section A: An Overview of Amillennialism

The eschatological view of the millennium known as "amillennialism" literally means "no millennium." In some senses the nomenclature is not entirely accurate and many who hold this position today prefer the label of "realized eschatology" for their position. In Spurgeon's day the designation, *amillennialism*, was unknown. William Cox, with perhaps excusable hyperbole, states:

The name is new, and there have been times in history when these teachings were not pronounced with vigor. But amillennial teachings are as old as Christianity itself. Amillennialism has always been the majority view of the historic Christian church, even as it remains today.⁷⁴

Amillennialism, despite Cox's assertions, is normally said to trace its lineage back to the time of Saint Augustine (354-430), who identified the church with the kingdom. According to Clouse:

. . . the statements in the Book of Revelation were interpreted allegorically by Augustine. No victory was imminent in the struggle with evil in the world. On the really important level, the spiritual, the battle had already been won and God had triumphed through the cross. Satan was reduced to lordship over the City of the World, which coexisted with the City of God. Eventually even the small domain left to the devil would be taken from him by a triumphant God.⁷⁵

The influence of Augustine led to the amillennial, or what Peters called an "anti-millennial" view.⁷⁶ This view of no millennium became the official view of the Catholic Church and would be the original view of the Protestant reformers. As Peters states:

⁷⁴William E. Cox. *Amillennialism Today* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1972), 7.

⁷⁵Walter A. Elwell (ed.), *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1984), s.v. Views of the Millennium by Robert G. Clouse. (716)

⁷⁶George N. H. Peters, *The Theocratic Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ as covenanted in the Old Testament and Presented in the New Testament*, 3 vols. (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1884; reprint, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel Publications, 1972), 1:527. According to Peters, what is today called

They (as e.g. Luther, Melancthon, Zwingli, Calvin, and Knox) occupied the Augustinian or Popish position. . . that the church, in some sense, was the Kingdom of God (preparatory to a higher stage), and that the millennial period (one thousand years) included this dispensation or gospel period (some of the millennial descriptions being applicable only to a future period either in heaven or the renewed earth), and hence was nearing its close.⁷⁷

This eschatological view was firmly embedded into the Reformed Tradition by the works of John Calvin. In his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Calvin wrote a section entitled, “The Error of the Chiliasts” in which he stated:

But a little later there followed the chiliasts, who limited the reign of Christ to a thousand years. Now their fiction is too childish either to need or to be worth a refutation. And the Apocalypse, from which they undoubtedly drew a pretext for their error does not support them. For the number “one thousand” (Rev. 20:4) does not apply to the eternal blessedness of the church but only to the various disturbances that awaited the church, while still toiling on earth. On the contrary, all Scripture proclaims that there will be no end to the blessedness of the elect or the punishment of the wicked.⁷⁸

Spurgeon, whom has been seen to consider Calvinism to be the essence of Christian theology,⁷⁹ was well acquainted with all of Calvin’s view and considered his commentaries to “be worth their weight in gold.”⁸⁰ The amillennial view of Calvin, while not well-developed, continued in the Reformed Tradition as Augustine’s views were not challenged on this issue. Amillennialism was then carried into Puritan theology by the classic *Institutio Theologiae*

“amillennialism” was known as the “Anti-Millenarian” or “Past-Millenarian” view during the 19th century (see 1:459).

⁷⁷Ibid.

⁷⁸John Calvin. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Edited by John T. McNeill, translated by Ford Lewis Battles. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), 3:25.5. In Calvin’s day the “Chiliasts” would have been synonymous with premillennialists. The word *Chiliasm* is derived from the phrase in Revelation 20:1-10 civlith or 1,000 years, and is synonymous with the Latin *millennia* or 1,000.

⁷⁹Spurgeon, *New Park Street Pulpit*, 1:50.

⁸⁰Spurgeon, *Lectures*, 4:4. Spurgeon stated, “He was no trimmer and pruner of texts. He gave their meaning as far as he knew it. His honest intention was to translate the Hebrew and Greek originals as accurately as he possibly could and then to give the meaning which would naturally be conveyed by such Greek and Hebrew words.” (4:4). Interestingly enough Calvin never wrote a commentary on the Book of Revelation.

Elencticae of François Turretin (1623-87). Turretin has been described as “something of a gloomy amillennialist.”⁸¹ Kennedy states of Turretin:

Turretin opposed the crasser, heretical chiliasts who anticipate an earthly millennium with sensual pleasures (including many wives and Jewish worship restored in Palestine) as well as the innocuous millennialism of such seventeenth-century Reformed theologians as Joseph Mede and Johan Heinrich Alsted. This kind of historical hope Turretin simply could not accept because he believed that the church must suffer, not reign in this life.⁸²

Perhaps the outstanding delineation of an amillennial position was that of Patrick Fairbairn (1805-75), professor at the Free Church College in Aberdeen. His commentaries on Ezekiel, Jonah and the Pastoral Epistles were highly recommended by Spurgeon.⁸³ Fairbairn’s classic work, *The Interpretation of Prophecy* (1856), laid out both an amillennial (although again it was not known by that designation) eschatology and hermeneutic. Fairbairn’s understanding of prophecy is that it was to be interpreted more in a symbolic sense, as he states in commenting on the binding of Satan in Revelation 20:2

It is impossible, excepting on the most arbitrary and forced suppositions, to bring such statements into harmony, if they are understood absolutely, and applied simply to the personelle of Satan. . . to consider the binding of Satan in a strictly personal light, is but another example of the intermingling of the literal with the symbolic, which has so greatly retarded the proper understanding of the prophetical Scriptures.⁸⁴

Fairbairn also viewed the martyrs under the altar (Rev 20:4) as “symbolic,”⁸⁵ referring to all of the saints throughout the ages; he also view the millennium as referring to the eternal state.⁸⁶ Fairbairn also rejected a literal interpretation of prophecy (which he viewed as part and parcel of the premillennial and to a lesser degree the postmillennial positions) as

⁸¹Earl William Kennedy. *From Pessimism to Optimism: Francis Turretin and Charles Hodge on “The Last Things.”* in *Servant Gladly: Essays in Honor of John W. Beardslee III*, edited by Jack D. Klunder (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988), 109.

⁸²Ibid., 107-108.

⁸³Spurgeon, *Lectures (Commenting and Commentaries)*, 4:125, 136, 184.

⁸⁴Patrick Fairbairn. *The Interpretation of Prophecy* (London, 1856; reprint, Carlisle, Pennsylvania: Banner of Truth Trust, 1993), 464-65.

⁸⁵Ibid., 471.

⁸⁶Ibid., 479-93.

“essentially Jewish.”⁸⁷ Peter Masters, a fervent amillennialist, praises Fairbairn’s

Commentary on Ezekiel by saying:

Fairbairn sets aside historical and literal views of Ezekiel, and presses Christian-spiritual (or typical) views. Thus the vision of the dry bones is linked with Isaiah and Daniel passages to depict the day of resurrection; while the reuniting of the kingdom of the ‘David’ refers to the eternal kingdom of Christ.⁸⁸

Moving into a modern articulation of the amillennial scheme Anthony A. Hoekema, one of the most articulate spokesmen for this position in recent times, states:

The term *amillennialism* is not a happy one. It suggests that amillennialists either do not believe in any millennium or that they simply ignore the first six verses in Revelation 20, which speak of a millennial reign. Neither of these two statements is true. Though it is true that amillennialists do not believe in a literal thousand-year earthly reign which will follow the return of Christ, the term *amillennialism* is not an accurate description of their view. Professor Jay E. Adams of Westminster Seminary in Philadelphia has suggested that the term amillennialism be replaced by the expression *realized millennium*.⁸⁹

From Hoekema’s statement one can see the essence of the amillennial position, namely that he does not “believe in a literal thousand-year earthly reign which will follow the return of Christ.” The amillennial position can be defined as a belief that:

... the Bible does not predict a period of the rule of Christ on earth before the last judgment. According to this outlook there will be a continuous development of good and evil in the world until the second coming of Christ, when the dead shall be raised and the judgment conducted. Amillennialists believe that the kingdom of God is now present in the world as the victorious Christ rules his church through the Word and the Spirit. They feel that the future, glorious, and perfect kingdom refers to the new earth and life in heaven. Thus Rev. 20 is a description of the souls of dead believers reigning with Christ in heaven.⁹⁰

⁸⁷Ibid., 505.

⁸⁸Patrick Fairbairn. *Commentary on Ezekiel*, foreword by Peter M. Masters (Grand Rapids, Michigan; Kregel Publications, 1989), 7.

⁸⁹Anthony A. Hoekema, “Amillennialism” in *The Meaning of the Millennium*. Robert G. Clouse (ed.), (Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press, 1977), 155.

⁹⁰Walter A. Elwell (ed.) *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1984) s.v. “Views of the Millennium,” by Robert G. Clouse.

Hoekema details several features of amillennial eschatology, which serve as a helpful backdrop for understanding their scheme. He details four basic premises of amillennialism and then six chronological details:

1. *Christ has won the decisive victory over sin, death and Satan.*

This victory of Christ's was decisive and final. The most important day in history, therefore, is not the Second Coming of Christ which is still future but the first coming which lies in the past. Because of the victory of Christ, the ultimate issues of history have already been decided. It is now a question of time until that victory is brought to its full consummation.⁹¹

2. *The Kingdom of God is both present and future.*

Amillennialists believe that the kingdom of God was founded by Christ at the time of his sojourn on earth, is operative in history now and is destined to be revealed in its fullness in the life to come. They understand the kingdom of God to be the reign of God dynamically in human history through Jesus Christ. Its purpose is to redeem God's people from sin and demonic powers, and finally to establish the new heavens and the new earth. The kingdom of God means nothing less than the reign of God in Christ over his entire created universe.⁹²

3. *Though the last day is still future, the church is in the last days now.*

When I say, "we are in the last days now," I understand the expression "last days" not merely referring to the time just before Christ's return, but as a description of the entire era between Christ's first and second comings. . . In the light of these New Testament teachings, we may indeed speak of an inaugurated eschatology, while remembering that the Bible speaks of a final consummation of eschatological events in what John commonly calls "the last day" (John 6:39-40, 44, 54; 11:24; 12:48). The fact that we are living in the last days now implies that we are already tasting the beginnings of eschatological blessings --that, as Paul says, we already have "the first fruits of the Spirit" (Rom. 8:23).⁹³

4. *As far as the thousand years of Revelation 20 are concerned, the church is in the millennium now.*

The amillennial position on the thousand years of Revelation 20 implies that Christians who are now living are enjoying the benefits of this millennium since Satan has been

⁹¹Hoekema, *Amillennialism*, 177

⁹²Ibid., 178

⁹³Ibid., 180.

bound for the duration of this period. As we saw, the fact that Satan is now bound does not mean that he is not active in the world today but that during this period he cannot deceive the nations --that is, cannot prevent the spread of the gospel. . .Amillennialists also teach that during this same thousand year period the souls of believers who have died are now living and reigning with Christ in heaven while they await the resurrection of the body. Their state is therefore a state of blessedness and happiness, though their joy will not be complete until their bodies have been raised.⁹⁴

While the amillennialist does not believe in a physical kingdom, and holds the 1,000 reference in Revelation 20 to be figurative; they do believe that Jesus will physically return to the earth. Chronologically, the amillennial scheme views the Second Coming of Christ as a single and unified event. After a period of increasing lawlessness and apostasy (although as Hoekema points out this “cannot prevent the spread of the gospel”), Christ will return. At this time the resurrection of the just and unjust will take place, as well as the glorification of those believers who are still alive on the earth.

While admitting the “rapture” of I Thessalonians 4:17, amillennialists view this event as a meeting of “raised and transformed believers”⁹⁵ who meet Christ in the air and then return with Him to reign together in the New Earth, which most define as heaven or the eternal state. Also at this time the final judgment of the unbelievers and the rewarding of believers will occur and the eternal state will commence. Charles Wannamaker states this clearly in his commentary on the Thessalonian epistles:

Those who meet the Lord in the air (the space between the earth and the heavens in Jewish cosmology) are caught up in a heavenly ascent by the clouds without any indication that they then return to earth. Apart from the possible connotation that *ajpavnthsi* might have for a return to earth, the rest of the imagery (the clouds and being caught up with the Lord) are indicative of an assumption to heaven of the people who belong to Christ. That Paul adds his own definitive statement concerning the significance of this meeting in the clause *kai; ou[tw] pavntote sunv kurivw/ ejsovmega* (“and thus we will always be with the Lord”) suggests both living and dead Christians will return to heaven with the Lord, not only to enjoy continuous fellowship with him, but also in terms of 1:10, to be saved from the coming wrath of God.⁹⁶

⁹⁴Ibid., 181.

⁹⁵Ibid., 183.

⁹⁶Charles A. Wannamaker. *New International Greek Testament Commentary: Commentary on 1 & 2 Thessalonians*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990), 175.

Thus, for the amillennialist, the rapture is used by God to remove the living and dead saints from the earth, transforming them for and transferring them to heaven; while at the same time the judgment of the living and dead unbelievers is carried out.

While the terminology for amillennialism has been altered slightly since the time of Spurgeon, the essential features have remained the same. Those Spurgeon identified as “Preterist”⁹⁷ would fit into the amillennial scheme. Again the “Preterist” position holds that the prophecies of Revelation, are not really all that prophetic, since the “fulfillment of the apocalyptic taking place roughly contemporaneously with the Scriptural account of it.”⁹⁸ With that as the case, then the account of the millennium in Revelation 20 is not speaking of a future event, but rather the kingdom of God already functioning with Jesus seated in heaven. The chart below presents what can be called the *sine qua non* of the amillennial system.

<i>Essential Features of Amillennialism</i>	
1.	Satan has been defeated and is currently bound.
2.	The Millennium is the current Church Age. (although some of this school will identify the millennium with the eternal state)
3.	The Resurrections of the Just & Unjust occur simultaneously to the return of Christ.
4.	There is no sense in which the millennium has reference to a material, earthly kingdom.
5.	The Church is the succession of Israel in God’s plans.

Section B: An Overview of Postmillennialism

⁹⁷Spurgeon, *Lectures (Commenting & Commentaries)*, 4:198.

⁹⁸Millard J. Erickson. *Contemporary Options in Eschatology: A Study of the Millennium*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1977), 30.

The eschatological position on the millennium known as “postmillennialism” teaches that Christ will return at the end of the 1,000 kingdom. Clouse describes postmillennialism in the following manner:

The postmillennialists emphasize the present aspects of God’s kingdom which will reach fruition in the future. They believe that the millennium will come through Christian preaching and teaching. Such activity will result in a more godly, peaceful, and prosperous world. The new age will not be essentially different from the present, and it will come about as more people are converted to Christ. Evil will not be totally eliminated during the millennium, but it will be reduced to a minimum as the moral and spiritual influence of Christians is increased. During the new age the church will assume greater importance and many economic, social, educational problems can be solved. This period is not necessarily limited to a thousand years because the number can be used symbolically. The millennium closes with the second coming of Christ, the resurrection of the dead, and the last judgment.⁹⁹

Postmillennialism was the “dominant evangelical position”¹⁰⁰ of the 19th century in both America and England. It was born out of an optimistic view of Christianity’s growing impact on society and the legacy of Puritan theology.¹⁰¹ In detailing the aspects of postmillennialism, perhaps the most complete presentation was produced by the great Princeton Theologian, Charles Hodge. Hodge, whose *Systematic Theology* remains a standard work in America, was also highly respected in England and particularly by Spurgeon.¹⁰² Spurgeon was a great admirer of the Princeton Theologians and corresponded with both Charles and A. A. Hodge on several occasions. In reviewing A. A. Hodge’s *Outlines in Theology* (1878) Spurgeon stated:

⁹⁹Elwell, *Dictionary of Evangelical Theology*, s.v. “Views of the Millennium,” 715.

¹⁰⁰Kenneth A. Kantzer. “Our Future Hope: Eschatology and the Role of the Church.” *Christianity Today* 31:2 (February 1987), 5. An interview article with Gleason Archer, Jack Davis, Anthony Hoekema, Alan Johnson, and John Walvoord.

¹⁰¹Iain H. Murray. *The Puritan Hope: Revival and the Interpretation of Prophecy*. Carlisle, Pennsylvania: Banner of Truth Trust, 1971. In this book Murray presents an excellent historical theology of postmillennialism, centering on the Puritans, particularly the English Puritans.

¹⁰²Spurgeon had warm and pleasant relations with the Princeton Theologians. Of Charles Hodge he remarked, “With no writer do we more fully agree.” *Commenting and Commentaries* (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1893; reprint, Carlisle, Pennsylvania: Banner of Truth Trust, 1969), 178.

We commend the *Outlines of Theology* to all who would be well instructed in the faith. *It is the standard text-book of our college.* We differ from its teachings upon baptism, but in almost everything else we endorse Hodge to the letter.¹⁰³ [emphasis ours]

Spurgeon held the foundational work, Charles Hodge's *Systematic Theology*, in equally high esteem. Spurgeon asked for and had received both a portrait of the elder Hodge and a sample of the manuscript of this classic, which he greatly prized. A. A. Hodge traveled to London more than once and participated in a conference with Spurgeon at The Pastor's College on August 7th, 1877.¹⁰⁴ As shown, Spurgeon was enthusiastic about Princeton's position on theology, and as their theology was the text at Spurgeon's Pastor College, it goes without saying that the postmillennial view of both Hodge's was well-known and understood by Spurgeon. However, this was not a point of overwhelming concern for Spurgeon, nor a reason for a departure from with the works of the Hodge's.

Although other millennial schemes had their adherents, postmillennialism held the day in the 19th Century mainly because, "the great Princeton school of theology of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, represented by Hodge and Benjamin B. Warfield, staunchly defended this system."¹⁰⁵ Hodge detailed postmillennial thought as follows:

The common church doctrine is, first that there is to be a second personal, visible, and glorious advent of the Son of God. Secondly, that the events which are to proceed that advent are:

1. The universal diffusion of the Gospel; or, as our Lord expresses it, the ingathering of the elect; this is the vocation of the Christian Church.
2. The conversion of the Jews, which is to be national. As their casting away was national, although a remnant was saved; so their conversion may be national although some may remain obdurate.
3. The coming of Antichrist.

Thirdly, that the events which are to attend to the second advent are:

¹⁰³Charles H. Spurgeon, review of *Outlines of Theology*, by A. A. Hodge, in The Sword and Trowel 16:4 (April 1879), 327.

¹⁰⁴Pike, *Spurgeon*, 4:197.

¹⁰⁵Erickson, *Contemporary Options*, 61.

1. The resurrection of the dead, of the just and the unjust.
2. The general judgment
3. The end of the world. And,
4. The consummation of Christ's kingdom.¹⁰⁶

Foundational to Hodge's postmillennial scheme was his belief in the ultimate success of the Gospel. He called this the "universal diffusion," or more specifically, "the ingathering of the elect." He called it "The first great event which is to precede the second coming of Christ."¹⁰⁷ Here Hodge begins by a demonstration of the requirement for worldwide proclamation of the Gospel in Old Testament predictions. In the *Systematic Theology* he quotes Hosea 2:23 ("...and they shall say, Thou art my God.") and Isaiah 45:23 ("...that unto me every knee shall bow and every tongue shall swear.") in support of his thesis. He summarizes his position as follows:

That is, [commenting on Isaiah 45:23] the true religion shall prevail over the whole earth. Jehovah shall everywhere be recognized and worshipped as the only true God. It is to be remembered that these and many other passages of like import are quoted and applied by the Apostle to the Gospel dispensation.¹⁰⁸

Hodge believed that this "ingathering of the elect" was to precede the national conversion of the Jews. "In Romans xi. 25, Paul teaches that the national conversion of the Jews is not to take place 'until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in.' The plhvrwma tw'n eqnwn, is that which makes the number of Gentiles full; the full complement which the

¹⁰⁶Charles Hodge. *Systematic Theology*. (New York, Charles Scribner & Sons, 1871; reprint Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing, Three Volumes, 1949), 3:792.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., 3:800.

¹⁰⁸Ibid. Interestingly enough Hodge's close friend and associate at Princeton, J. A. Alexander, disagreed somewhat with Hodge's interpretation of Isaiah 45:23. In his classic *Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah*, Alexander stated, "This text is twice applied by Paul to Christ (Rom. xiv. 11; Phil. ii. 10), in proof of his regal and judicial sovereignty. It does not necessarily predict that all shall be converted to him, since, the terms are such as to include both a voluntary and compulsory submission, and in one of these was all, without exception, shall yet recognize him as their rightful sovereign." J. A. Alexander. *Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah*. (New York: Charles Scribner & Sons, 1846; reprint Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing Company, 1978), 188.

Gentiles are to render to make the number of the elect complete.”¹⁰⁹ Hodge readily admits that he is uncertain as to the exact timing of this, other than the fact that in the eternal counsels of God there is a determined number of elect Gentiles, who upon being saved, brings about the a[cri" ou, which Hodge states, “marks the terminus ad quem.”¹¹⁰ After this point the national conversion of the Jews will take place. However, even with this, Hodge states that God is not yet finished with the Gentiles,

All that can be safely inferred from this language is, that the Gentiles, as a body, the mass of the Gentile world, will be converted before the restoration of the Jews, as a nation. Much will remain to be accomplished after that event; and in the accomplishment of what shall remain to be done, the Jews are to have a prominent agency.¹¹¹

As has already been noted, Hodge believed that the church in his day was both ready and equipped, under God’s providence and power, to bring the task of worldwide proclamation to a climax.

It is only within the last fifty years that the church has been brought to feel that its great duty is the conversion of the nations. More probably, has been done in this direction during the last half century than during the preceding five hundred years. It is to be hoped that a new effusion of the Spirit like that of the Day of Pentecost may be granted to the Church whose fruits shall far exceed those of the first effusion as the millions of Christians now alive exceed in number the one hundred and twenty souls then gathered in Jerusalem.¹¹²

Hodge felt that in the work of gentile conversion, the church and the church alone, was to the immediate agency, used by God, for the spreading of the Gospel. “That the conversion of the Gentile world is the work assigned to the church under the present dispensation, and that it is not to fold its hands and await the second coming of Christ to accomplish that work for it, seems evident from what has already been said.”¹¹³ Hodge went on to say, “There is no intimation in the New Testament that the work of converting the

¹⁰⁹Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 3:803.

¹¹⁰Charles Hodge. *Commentary on Romans* (New York: Charles Scribner & Sons, 1886; reprint Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1950), 373.

¹¹¹*Ibid.*, 374.

¹¹²Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 3:804.

¹¹³*Ibid.*

world is to be effected by any other means than those now in use. It is to dishonour the Gospel, and the power of the Holy Spirit, to suppose that they are inadequate to the accomplishment of this work.”¹¹⁴

The means by which the world was to be converted was by the message of the Gospel. That message was to have progressively increasing success as the church again recaptured the zeal of the apostles and the early church. Since God has, “furnished it with all the means necessary for its accomplishment; He revealed the truth which is the power of God unto salvation; He instituted the ministry to be perpetuated to the end of the world, and promised to endow men from age to age with the gifts and graces necessary for the discharge of its duties, and to grant them constant presence and assistance.”¹¹⁵

The other main proponent of the postmillennial scheme in Spurgeon’s day was his near neighbor at Aberdeen, David Brown. As already mentioned, his book *Christ’s Second Coming: Will it be Premillennial?*, was very influential in both Scotland and England¹¹⁶. Brown, had himself formerly been a premillennialist, and once was an assistant to Edward Irving in London.

The theologians of Spurgeon’s day understood Postmillennialism to be the eschatological view which “looks forward to a golden age of spiritual prosperity during this present dispensation, that is, during the Church Age.”¹¹⁷ It was the dominant view in Spurgeon’s Victorian England and in Nineteenth Century American Christianity.

¹¹⁴Ibid., 3:805.

¹¹⁵Ibid., 3:805.

¹¹⁶Charles Hodge in his *Systematic Theology* refers to this work by Brown, calling it an “able work” (3:844) and referring his reader to it for further study in the interpretation of Rev. 20:1-6 and the entire postmillennial scheme.

¹¹⁷Lorraine Boettner, “Postmillennialism” in *The Meaning of the Millennium*. Robert G. Clouse (ed.), (Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press, 1977), 117. Boettner himself is in the “line” of the Princeton tradition on the matter of the millennium, having received his degree from Princeton in 1929, studying under Caspar Wistar Hodge, the last of the Hodge’s to hold the chair of Systematic Theology at Princeton, and the youngest son of Charles Hodge and brother of A. A. Hodge.

Postmillennial eschatology, while once dominate in evangelical circles has been relegated to a lesser role today. With the conclusion of the two World Wars, the Korean War, the Cold War and threat of atomic confrontation; postmillennialism, as a system, was thought to be dead or at least dying. In 1952 Charles L. Feinberg declared, “current events now make it impossible to hold to a postmillennial view, soon it will be abandoned completely.”¹¹⁸ Even in 1977 Millard Erickson stated, “Today postmillennialists are, if not an extinct species, at least an endangered species.”¹¹⁹ In recent years, however, postmillennialism in its classic understanding has been making something of a comeback.¹²⁰ For many years the outstanding advocate of Postmillennialism in this form has been Dr. Loraine Boettner. In his presentation of the subject in his work, *The Millennium*, Boettner states:

The Millennium to which the Postmillennialist looks forward is thus a golden age of spiritual prosperity during this present dispensation, that is, during the Church age, and is to be brought about through forces now active in the world. It is an indefinitely long period of time, perhaps longer than the literal one thousand years. The changed character of individuals will be reflected in an uplifted social economic, political, and cultural life of mankind. The world at large will then enjoy a state of righteousness such as at the present time has been seen only in relatively small and isolated groups.¹²¹

From the comments of Boettner it can be seen that the makeup and understanding of the postmillennial scheme has changed little since the Nineteenth Century. The chart below presents the *sine qua non* of the postmillennial system.

Essential Features of Postmillennialism

¹¹⁸Charles L. Feinberg. *Premillennialism or Amillennialism?* (Findlay, Ohio: Van Kampen Press, 1952), 62.

¹¹⁹Erickson, *Contemporary Options in Eschatology*, 62.

¹²⁰A type of postmillennialism has also begun to emerge since the 1970's under the guise of The Christian Reconstruction Movement, or Theonomy. For an explanation of the distinction between classic postmillennialism and that of the Theonomists, see the author's "Theonomic Postmillennialism: A Continuation of the Princeton Tradition?" A paper presented to the Far-West Region of the Evangelical Theological Society Annual Meeting, Sun Valley, California, March 1994. (Available on microfiche, through TREN). Also see *Theonomy a Reformed Critique*, William S. Barker and W. Robert Godfrey (ed's). (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing Company, 1990).

¹²¹Loraine Boettner. *The Millennium* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1957), 14.

1. The Gospel will ultimately be successful and the majority of the world will be converted.
2. The millennium is a period of 1,000 years (although some would view this number as symbolic) in which the Church is triumphant in the world.
3. Christ will return after this millennium and usher in the eternal state.
4. Because of the steady advance of Christianity, the societal structures will continue get better and better.
5. The Church has replaced Israel as the chosen people of God (although many postmillennialists teach that there will be a national or racial conversion of Israel)

Section C: An Overview of Historic Premillennialism

The “Historic” Premillennial position is easily seen in the early church fathers.¹²² It was formerly known as “Chiliasm,” after the Greek word for 1,000. Virtually all historians acknowledge that a premillennial faith was the dominant eschatological belief in the church from “the apostolic age until the time of Augustine.”¹²³ Nathaniel West (1826-1906), writing on “The History of the Premillennial Doctrine” (which Dr. Wilbur Smith called, “the most important history of the premillennial doctrine that exists in the literature of that generation.”¹²⁴) stated this:

¹²²J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (San Francisco, California; Harper & Row, 1959), 464-89. Kelly demonstrates that the premillennial position was the apostolic position and immediate post-apostolic age and “about the middle of the second century Christian eschatology enters upon a new, rather more mature phase. The general pattern, indeed, remains unaltered, all the key ideas which form part of it being accepted without question” (494).

¹²³Charles C. Ryrie. *The Basis of the Premillennial Faith* (Neptune, New Jersey: Loizeaux Brothers Inc., 1953), 17-35. See also Clouse, *The Meaning of the Millennium*, 7; and Erickson, *Contemporary Options in Eschatology*, 94.

¹²⁴Nathaniel West. *The Thousand Year Reign of Christ* (New York: Scribner & Sons, 1889; reprint, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregal Publications, 1993, foreword by Wilbur Smith), ix. West was an ordained Presbyterian minister and for many years professor at Danville Theological Seminary. He was a leading prophetic scholar of the age participating in many of the early prophetic conferences. He was orthodox in all of his theology after the manner of the Princetonian’s of the era. A close associate of his in the prophetic conferences was Dr. John T. Duffield of Princeton Seminary, whom Dr. Hodge refers to in his *Systematic Theology* (3:861ff). His son, Andrew West, became one of the great classical scholars of Princeton University and was dean of the graduate school he helped to begin over the objections of Princeton’s president Woodrow Wilson.

History has no consensus more unanimous for any doctrine than is the consensus of the Apostolic Fathers for the pre-millennial advent of Christ.¹²⁵

In distinction from Dispensational Premillennialism, this view has become known as “Historic Premillennialism” or “Covenantal Premillennialism” and denies the essential Jewish nature of the millennium. The essential chronology between the Dispensational and Historic schools is the same (with the exception of the timing of the rapture, which in the historical scheme is post-tribulational). However, the nature of the millennium is completely different. As Ryrie states:

The covenant premillennialism holds to the concept of the covenant of grace and the central soteriological purpose of God. He retains the idea of the kingdom, though he finds little support for it in the Old Testament prophecies since he generally assigns them to the church. The kingdom in his view is markedly different from that which is taught by the dispensationalist since it loses much of its Jewish character to the slighting of the Old Testament promises concerning the kingdom.¹²⁶

George Eldon Ladd, a prominent contemporary spokesman for the “historic” school, states the issue clearly:

Here is the basic watershed between dispensational and nondispensational theology. Dispensationalism forms its eschatology by a literal interpretation of the Old Testament and then fits the New Testament into it. A nondispensational eschatology forms its theology from the explicit teachings of the New Testament. It confesses that it cannot be sure how the Old Testament prophecies of the end are to be fulfilled, for (a) the first coming of Christ was accomplished in terms not foreseen by a literal interpretation of the Old Testament, and (b) there are unavoidable indications that the Old Testament promises to Israel are fulfilled in the Christian Church. . . . While the New Testament clearly affirms the salvation of literal Israel, it does not give any details about the day of salvation. This, however, must be said: Israel’s salvation must occur in the same terms as Gentile salvation, by faith in Jesus as their crucified Messiah. As we have pointed out, New Testament exegesis (Hebrews 8) makes it difficult to believe that Old Testament prophecies about the “millennial temple” will be fulfilled literally. They are to be fulfilled in the New Covenant established in the blood of Jesus. It may well be that Israel’s conversion will take place in connection with the millennium. It may be that in

¹²⁵Nathaniel West (ed.) *Premillennial Essays of the Prophetic Conference held in the Church of the Holy Trinity, New York City* (Chicago, Illinois: Fleming H. Revell Publishers, 1879; reprint, Minneapolis, Minnesota: Klock and Klock Christian Publishers, 1981), 332.

¹²⁶Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today*, 44.

the millennium, for the first time in human history, we will witness a truly Christian nation.¹²⁷

Writing in Spurgeon's era, West delineated the same understanding of the millennium when he said:

The Church shall be one with the Lord returned to earth in her midst, like the sun in the temple in New Jerusalem. The distinction still obtains, however, between the glorified church gathered around her Lord, in her glorified place on earth, and the outer unglorified humanity still liable to sin and death, yet freed from Satanic dominion, and subject to the dominion of Christ and his Church. . . . And thus the Bride above and the Bride below, the Risen Glorified Saints, and Israel in the flesh, redeemed, restored and holy, shall be One Bride, One Glorious Church in the Millennial Age, and share a Mutual Jubilee and Holy Sabbath.¹²⁸

It has already been noted that Dispensational Premillennialism "remained a minority version among premillennialists"¹²⁹ in the Nineteenth Century. However, it remains true that the position of "Historic Premillennialism" was widespread and growing in influence in Victorian England. Bishop J. C. Ryle (1816-1900), the outstanding Anglican churchman and expositor, adhered to this premillennial scheme. In a work entitled, *Coming Events and Present Duties*, he detailed a several point statement of his premillennial position, in which he stated in part:

1. I believe that the world will never be completely converted to Christianity, by any existing agency, before the end comes. In spite of all that can be done by ministers, members, and churches, the wheat and tares will grow together until the Harvest; and when the end comes, it will find the earth in much the same state that it was when the flood came in the days of Noah.
2. I believe that the widespread unbelief, indifference, formalism, and wickedness, which are to be seen throughout Christendom, are only what we are taught to expect in God's word. Troublous times, departures from the faith, evil men waxing worse and worse, love waxing cold, are things directly predicted. So far from making me doubt the truth of Christianity, they help to confirm my faith. Melancholy and sorrowful as the sight is, if I did not see it I should think the Bible was not true.

¹²⁷George Eldon Ladd, "Historic Premillennialism" in *The Meaning of the Millennium*. Robert G. Clouse (ed.), (Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press, 1977), 27-28.

¹²⁸West, *The Thousand Year Reign*, 301.

¹²⁹Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 47.

5. I believe that the Second Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ will be a real, literal, personal, bodily coming; that as He went away in the clouds of heaven with His body, before the eyes of man, so in like manner, will He return.

6. I believe that, after our Lord Jesus Christ comes again, the earth shall be renewed, and the curse removed; the devil shall be bound, the godly shall be rewarded, the wicked shall be punished; and that, before He comes, there shall be neither resurrection, judgment, no Millennium; and that not till after He comes shall the earth be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord.

7. I believe that the Jews shall be ultimately gathered again, as a separate nation, restored to their own land, and converted to the faith of Christ.

I believe, finally, that it is for the safety, happiness, and comfort, of all true believers to expect as little as possible from churches, or governments, under the present dispensation, to hold themselves ready for tremendous conversions and changes of all things established, and to expect their good things only from Christ's Second Advent.¹³⁰

Spurgeon himself was familiar with the works of Ryle and always spoke of him in glowing terms. Reviewing Ryle's *Expository Thoughts on the Gospels*, he wrote:

We prize these volumes. They are diffuse, but not more so than family reading requires. Mr. Ryle has evidently studied all previous writers on the gospels, and has given forth an individual utterance of considerable value.¹³¹

Historic Premillennialism views the Old Testament in much the same way as the amillennialist does, as Ladd readily admits.¹³² However, taking a literal interpretation of Revelation 20:1-6, regarding the millennium; and Romans 11, the national conversion of Israel; the Historic Premillennialist, rejects the amillennialist idea that "because many of the Old Testament promises are fulfilled in the church, this is to be taken as a normative principle and that all promises to Israel are fulfilled in the church without exception."¹³³

¹³⁰J. C. Ryle, *Coming Events and Present Duties*, cited by Nathaniel West (ed.) in *Premillennial Essays*, 7. Items 3, 4, 8, and 9 were not cited here as they did not pertain directly to the subject in question.

¹³¹Spurgeon, *Lectures, (Commenting and Commentaries)*, 4:149.

¹³²Ladd, "Historic Premillennialism," 27.

¹³³*Ibid.*, 28.

The other key tenet of the historic premillennial position is in fact “post-tribulationism,” that is, the “rapture” of the church occurs after the period of tribulation.¹³⁴ Until recently the adherence to a post-tribulation position was the distinguishing feature of the historic or covenantal premillennialist as opposed to the dispensational premillennialist. In recent times that is no longer quite the case, with several prominent dispensational theologians identifying themselves as post-tribulation in their view of the rapture. The historic position holds that the church will be protected “in the tribulation”, not “taken out of the tribulation.”¹³⁵ Ladd clearly states in his book, *The Blessed Hope*, that, “The Blessed Hope is not deliverance from the Tribulation; it is union with the Lord at His coming.”¹³⁶ Discussing the reason for this understanding of the rapture, Erickson, a adherent of the “historic premillennial” position¹³⁷, states:

. . . the sharp departure of national Israel and the church are difficult to sustain on biblical grounds. The pretribulation view that the prophecies concerning national Israel

¹³⁴The Tribulation is generally understood to be a seven year period, although some historic premillennialists reject the literalness of the seven years.

¹³⁵Douglas J. Moo “The Case for the Posttribulation Rapture Position,” in *The Rapture: Pre-, Mid-, or Post- Tribulation*, Richard R. Reiter (ed.) (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Academie Books, a division of Zondervan Publishing Company, 1984): 171-211. Moo presents a well argued case for the posttribulation position, also demonstrating the fact that post-tribulationism is no longer an exclusive distinction of the “Historic or Covenantal” school of premillennialism; but that some dispensationalists are adopting this rapture view as well. Moo states:

What is important, we would suggest, is to distinguish carefully between the prophecies directed to Israel *as a nation* (and which must be fulfilled in a national Israel) and prophecies directed to Israel *as the people of God* (which can be fulfilled in the people of God -- *a people that includes the church!*). It should be noted that such an approach is not allegorical or nonliteral; it simply calls upon the interpreter to recognize the intended scope of any specific prophecy. It is our contention, then, that the Great Tribulation predicted for Israel by, e.g., Daniel, is directed to Israel as the people of God. It can therefore be fulfilled in the people of God, which includes the church as well as Israel [emphasis his].

However, this is a recent position shift, and no dispensationalist of Spurgeon’s day would have held to this. Ryrie points out that a pretribulation position, “has become part of dispensational eschatology” (Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today*, 159). Based on the sharp distinction between Israel and the Church, which is perhaps the cornerstone of dispensationalism, a pretribulation position was demanded. In the emerging “Progressive Dispensationalism,” that is no longer the case. Robert L. Saucy states, “While most dispensationalists probably would hold to a pretribulation rapture of the church as being in certain respects more harmonious with dispensationalism in general, many would not desire to make this a determining touchstone of dispensationalism today.” Robert L. Saucy. *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing Company, 1993), 9.

¹³⁶George Eldon Ladd. *The Blessed Hope* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans’ Publishing Company, 1959), 13.

¹³⁷Erickson, *Contemporary Options*, 183.

will be fulfilled apart from the church and that, accordingly the millennium will have a decidedly Jewish character cannot be easily reconciled with the biblical depiction of the fundamental changes which have taken place with the introduction of the new covenant. . . The general tenor of biblical teaching fits better the posttribulational view. For example, the Bible is replete with warnings about trials and testings which believers will undergo. It does not promise removal from the adversities, but ability to endure and overcome them.¹³⁸

As opposed to Postmillennialism, which sees the millennial kingdom brought in by the effective efforts of the Church, The premillennialist see the kingdom being “dramatically or cataclysmically inaugurated by the second coming. While the millennium expected by the postmillennialist may begin so gradually that its beginning will be virtually imperceptible, there will be no doubt about the beginning of the millennium as premillennialists envision it.”¹³⁹

Historic Premillennialism, then, holds to two essential items: (1) the nature of the kingdom is in fact the culmination of the church age. Although Israel will experience a national repentance and salvation through Christ, its place in the kingdom is only in relation to the church; Israel is simply a continuation of the “single-people of God.” (2) The “rapture” will be after the tribulation (which is often undefined in terms of duration), with the church going through the tribulation, but being protected by the power of God. This system, which Spurgeon identified as “Continuists” or “Simple Futurists”¹⁴⁰ was well known and actively taught in Victorian England. In fact, as Bebbington testified, this brand of premillennialism was the dominant view among premillennarians in Spurgeon’s lifetime.¹⁴¹ The chart below displays the *sine qua non* of the Historic Premillennial position.

<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Essential Features of Historic Premillennialism</i></p>
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¹³⁸Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1983), 1224.

¹³⁹Erickson, *Contemporary Options*, 92.

¹⁴⁰Spurgeon, *Lectures (Commenting and Commentaries)*, 4:198.

¹⁴¹Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 62.

1. Christ Returns at the end of Tribulation before the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom.
2. The Millennial Kingdom is a literal 1,000 year earthly and physical reign of Christ over the world with the *Church being the focal point of His reign*.
3. The Jews will be converted nationally and restored to their land. They will occupy a special place in a national sense, but spiritually will be part of the Church.
4. The Two Resurrections of Rev 20 are separated by the 1,000 year kingdom.
5. At the end of the 1,000 years Satan will be released from his bondage, lead a rebellion of those who have been born during the kingdom era, but are yet unsaved. Christ will destroy the rebellion, and after the judgments the Church will enter the eternal state of heaven.

Section D: An Overview of Dispensational Premillennialism

Premillennialism, as the prefix indicates, states that Christ will return to the earth personally and visibly, before the beginning of the millennium. Since about 1830 there have been two main branches of premillennial interpretation; *Dispensational Premillennialism* and *Historic Premillennialism*. Remembering that all Dispensationalists are Premillennial, but not all Premillennialists are Dispensational.¹⁴² The dispensational perspective will be expounded here.

Dispensational Premillennialism was popularized and propagated in Spurgeon's own era by the work of the Plymouth Brethren. Several of their key leaders included John Nelson Darby (1800-1882) and William Kelly (1821-1906).¹⁴³ The fact that Spurgeon was at odds

¹⁴²Charles R. Ryrie. *Dispensationalism Today*. (Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 1965), 44.

¹⁴³A great deal is currently being made of what has become known as "Progressive Dispensationalism" and several books have recently appeared on this subject. The key books include: *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church*, Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock (ed.'s), (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing Company, 1992.); *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism*, by Robert L. Saucy (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing Company, 1993); and *Progressive Dispensationalism: An Up-to-Date Handbook of*

with the “Brethren” is not a secret. He wrote and preached against some of the doctrines within Brethrenism on many occasions. However, it was generally the *ecclesiology* of the Brethren and not their *eschatology* that brought his ire.¹⁴⁴ Ryrie points this out as he states:

It was not until several years after leaving the Church of England that Darby became interested in prophecy and the through conferences at Powerscourt House out of which conferences the Irvingian movement began. “Darbyism” was first a protest over the practice of the Established Church, not the propagating of a system of eschatology.¹⁴⁵

Darby, trained as a lawyer, served in this profession for a short time before entering the Anglican church where he served as a deacon and eventually elevated to the priesthood where he served as curate in County Wicklow. Darby’s ministry was used to the advance of the church there and under his ministry, “Romans Catholics were passing over to Protestantism many hundreds in the week.”¹⁴⁶ Disillusioned by the worldliness and lack of piety he felt should exemplify a New Testament church, he left Anglicanism and began to

Contemporary Dispensational Thought, by Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock (Wheaton, Illinois: BridgePoint Books, a division of Victor Books, 1993). The entire issue of Progressive Dispensationalism is beyond the scope of this paper, as Spurgeon would have only been familiar with the classic form of Dispensational Premillennialism as presented by Darby, Kelly, et al of the Brethren and some of the early works of “classic Dispensationalists.” However, the ongoing discussion is vital in the study of dispensationalism, if what one reviewer stated is correct, “The peril is that so-called “developing dispensationalism” may in reality be none other than “disappearing dispensationalism.” (Ken L. Sarles, review of *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church*, Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock (ed.’s). In *The Master’s Seminary Journal* 4:1 (Spring 1993): 99.) The discussions in this area have not always been irenic; however Robert Saucy’s *Case for Progressive Dispensationalism*, has, according to George Zemek, “will hopefully produce as a byproduct another significant toning down of the emotionally charged atmosphere that has historically characterized these debates.” (George J. Zemek, review of *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism* by Robert L. Saucy, In *The Master’s Seminary Journal* 5:1 (Spring 1994): 111-12.) Those in the “classic” camp of dispensationalism have not been silent, recently advancing the debate with a new book *Issues in Dispensationalism*, Wesley R. Willis & John R. Master (general editors), Charles C. Ryrie (consulting editor), (Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 1994). In effect the issues of Spurgeon’s day on this subject are returning to prominence.

¹⁴⁴See *The Sword and Trowel*, 2:287, 5:196, 224 for a sample of Spurgeon’s comments on the Brethren. Spurgeon had little use for Darby personally and always had critical comments on his writings. In December 1872 an unsigned article in *The Sword in Trowel* called Darby’s translation of the Bible, “a faulty and pitiable translation of the sacred book.” Spurgeon actually only struggled with the “exclusive” or Darbyite faction of the Brethren. He had warm and happy relations with many in the Brethren camp, such as B. W. Newton and George Mueller, a regular companion of Spurgeon in Mentone, France; and an occasional speaker at The Metropolitan Tabernacle.

¹⁴⁵Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today*, 157.

¹⁴⁶Larry V. Crutchfield, *The Origins of Dispensationalism: The Darby Factor*. (Lanham, Maryland: The University Press of America, 1991), 4.

associate with the newly emerging Brethren Movement. Under the leadership of Darby and others the Plymouth or Christian Brethren began to grow rapidly.¹⁴⁷

Darby developed a system of *biblical interpretation* and *historical development* which became known as Dispensationalism. According to Hoffecker this system:

...broke not only from previous millenarian teaching but from all of church history by asserting that Christ's second coming would occur in two stages. The first, an invisible "secret rapture" of true believers, could happen at any moment, ending the great "parenthesis" or church age which began when the Jews rejected Christ. Then literal fulfillment would resume OT prophecy concerning Israel, which had been suspended, and fulfillment of prophecy in Revelation would begin the great tribulation. Christ's return would be completed when he established a literal thousand-year kingdom of God on earth, manifest in a restored Israel.¹⁴⁸

While there is some dispute as to the origins of Dispensationalism¹⁴⁹ E. Schuyler English states:

While some trace the roots of dispensational concepts to the patristic period most theologians credit J. N. Darby, a Plymouth Brethren scholar, with the first systematizing dispensationalis theology in the middle of the 19th century.¹⁵⁰

Darby is often difficult to interpret, mainly because of a rather abtruse writing style. During his own lifetime he was often misunderstood and in modern times Cruthfield states, "only the most intrepid of scholars deliberately choose to tackle Darby's works."¹⁵¹ Spurgeon himself commented on this when he stated regarding Darby's commentary on the Psalms, "If the author would write in plain English his readers would probably discover that there is nothing

¹⁴⁷For an excellent survey of the development of the Brethren movement, see H. A. Ironside, *A Historical Sketch of the Brethren Movement* (Neptune, New Jersey: Loizeaux Brothers, 1985). One of the best biographies of Darby is Max S. Weremchuk, *John Nelson Darby: A Biography* (Neptune, New Jersey: Loizeaux, 1992).

¹⁴⁸Elwell, *Dictionary of Evangelical Theology*, s.v. John Nelson Darby by William A. Hoffecker, 293.

¹⁴⁹Ryrie states: There is no question that the Plymouth Brethren, or which John Nelson Darby (1800-1882) was a leader, had much to do with the systematizing and promoting of dispensationalism. But neither Darby nor the Brethren originated the concepts involved in the system. (Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today*, 74.)

¹⁵⁰E. Schuyler English, "E. Schuyler English Looks at Dispensationalism." *Christian Life* 17 (September 1956): 24.

¹⁵¹Cruthfield, *Origins of Dispensationalism*, 8.

very valuable in his remarks.”¹⁵² However, in his *Lectures on the Second Coming*, Darby states his position clearly:

Here then we have the details of it. The Lord hath declared that He will come and receive us unto Himself; and now the apostle, by the revelation given unto him, explains, how it will be. He will come to call us to meet the Lord in the air. . . What we are called to expect is not to die --we may die, and a blessed thing it is to die-- but what we are to look for, as is expressed in the 5th of 2nd Corinthians, “Not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.” That Christ’s power over death may be fully shown, He takes to Himself mortal men, whether alive or dead; if alive, He changes them into glory without dying; if they are dead, He raises them¹⁵³

In his scheme Darby taught clearly that there was a clear and distinct difference between Israel, for whom the seven year Tribulation and the Millennial kingdom were designed for,¹⁵⁴ and the Church, whom would be removed by means of the rapture and “always with the Lord.” Commenting on Darby’s view of the millennium, Crutchfield states:

According to Darby, while the rapture primarily involves the hopes and destiny of the church, the millennial reign of Christ focuses predominantly upon the nation Israel and here hopes. There were two principles operative in the history of the Jewish people. On the one hand, unconditional promises had been made to Abraham (Gen. 12), and repeated to Isaac (Gen.26:3,4) and Jacob (Gen. 35:10,12) On the other hand, Israel had received promises under the condition of obedience (the giving of the Law at Sinai), and in this, failed miserably. Israel’s failure, however, did not abrogate the unconditional covenantal promises made to Abraham some four hundred years before, for they rest solely upon the faithfulness of God. While the unconditional promises to Abraham included both earthly and spiritual elements, prominent among them the an absolute gift of the country.¹⁵⁵

It must again be remembered that the dispensational scheme was not the exclusive view among the Brethren. Two early Brethren leaders, B. W. Newton and S. P. Tregelles, rejected the idea of pretribulationism and a sharp distinction between Israel and the Church. This particular issue was one of the key reasons for the division between Darby and Newton in the early years of the Brethren movement.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵²Spurgeon, *Commenting and Commentaries*, 84.

¹⁵³John Nelson Darby. *Lectures on the Second Coming* (London: Paternoster Press, 1904), 47.

¹⁵⁴*Ibid.*, 159-88.

¹⁵⁵Crutchfield, *Origins of Dispensationalism*, 192.

¹⁵⁶For further information see: B. W. Newton, *Thoughts on the Apocalypse* (London: Houlston & Sons, 1853); and S. P. Tregelles, *The Hope of Christ’s Second Coming* (London, Worthing Publishing, 1866). Again,

In the nature and timing of prophetic events there is very little difference between Darby, Kelly and those Spurgeon labeled as “extreme futurists”¹⁵⁷ and the “Classic Dispensationalists” of the last 50 years. In his commentary on the Book of Revelation William Kelly lays out a clear and detailed dispensational view of the millennium in his comments on Revelation 20. In part he states:

But in this is shown --what is of importance to see-- the true nature of the kingdom or millennial reign. “That Day” does not mean a time when everyone will be converted, but when the Lord Jesus will govern righteously, when overt evil will at once be judged, and good sustained wonderously for a thousand years.¹⁵⁸

As dispensational thought moved into the Twentieth Century, the single issue which set apart Dispensational Premillennialism continued to be its placement and position of Israel in the Millennial Kingdom. While there are adherents in all millennial schemes who teach that there will be a large scale conversion of the Jews in the end times in accordance with Romans 9-11; all but the dispensationalist see the millennial kingdom as some type of extension of the church, since, as Erickson points out:

He [the historic premillennialist] believes that the church has become the spiritual Israel and that many of the prophecies and promises relating to Israel are now fulfilled in the church. The Old Testament sacrificial system has forever passed away because Christ, the reality, has come. Nonetheless he believes that literal or national Israel is yet to be saved. He bases this primarily upon Romans 11:15-16. In the future Israel will turn to Christ and be saved.¹⁵⁹

On the other hand the dispensationalist has a much wider role for Israel in the millennial kingdom. For the dispensationalist the kingdom is not a culmination of the church age

the common notion is that The Brethren movement is part and parcel with pretribulation, premillennialism and dispensationalism in general. While in the most part this is true, it is not a necessary connection. The Brethren movement was primarily founded on the issue of ecclesiology. Again the reader is directed to H. A. Ironside's *Historical Sketch of the Brethren Movement* for a more detailed discussion. Another excellent work in this field is, *The Origins of Dispensationalism: The Darby Factor*, by Larry Crutchfield (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1991).

¹⁵⁷Spurgeon, *Lectures (Commenting and Commentaries)*, 4:192

¹⁵⁸William Kelly, *The Revelation Expounded*. (London: F. E. Race Publishers, 1880), 240.

¹⁵⁹Erickson, *Options in Eschatology*, 103.

before the eternal state; but rather, a fulfillment of all the Old Testament prophecies given to Israel. Again Erickson's evaluation is helpful:

Finally, in dispensationalism the millennium is more than merely a thousand-year reign of Christ on the earth. It has a clear, definite place in the plan of God; the restoration of national Israel to its favored place in God's program and the fulfillment of God's promises to Israel. The millennium therefore has a very Jewish tone. It is the time when Israel really comes into her own. Whereas in some other forms of premillennialism the purpose of the millennium is rather unclear, in dispensationalism it is an integral part of one's theology and of one's understanding of the Bible. Large portions of prophecy are still unfulfilled, and the millennium provides a time for their fulfillment.¹⁶⁰

Thus, dispensationalism is much more than simply "pretribulationism," or "premillennialism with charts and maps," it is the maintenance of a clear, distinct and essential difference between "Israel and the Church." As Ryrie states, "This is probably the most basic theological test of whether or not a man is a dispensationalist, and it is undoubtedly the most practical and conclusive. A man who fails to distinguish between Israel and the Church will inevitably not hold to dispensational distinctions; and one who does, will."¹⁶¹ Lewis Sperry Chafer also makes this point clear when he states:

Their [national Israel] destiny is traceable on into the millennium and the new earth which follows. However, in the present age, bounded as it is by the two advents of Christ, all progress in the national and earthly program for Israel is in abeyance and individual Jews are given the same privilege as individual gentiles of the exercise of personal faith in Christ as Savior and out of those thus redeemed, both Jews and Gentiles, the heavenly people are being called. It is clearly indicated throughout the prophetic scriptures that when the present purpose is accomplished God will, in all faithfulness, return to the full completion of His earthly promises in Israel (Acts 15:14-18; Rom. 11:24-27).¹⁶²

Dispensational Premillennialism, as articulated by Darby, Kelly and other contemporaries of Spurgeon, and continued by the "classic" dispensationalists of this century; is then a belief that God will bring about a literal, earthly kingdom in which Christ will reign over all the world through the agency of Israel. The Jewish nature of the kingdom is seen in the fact

¹⁶⁰Ibid., 122.

¹⁶¹Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today*, 45.

¹⁶²Lewis Sperry Chafer. *Systematic Theology* (Dallas, Texas: Dallas Theological Seminary Press, 1948; reprint Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregal Publications, 1993), 1:38.

that God is dealing with Israel in a national sense, apart from the church; which by means of the rapture has been removed from the earthly scene. Even the Old Testament sacrifices are seen as being reinstated, but instead of being utilized for the forgiveness of sin, the sacrifices are instead a memorial to what Christ has already done on the Cross.¹⁶³

In chronology, the Dispensational Premillennialist traditionally sees the following general scheme for the end times: (1) The Church Age ending with the “rapture” of the church when the living saints are translated and the dead saints are resurrected, meeting Christ in the air; (2) seven years of tribulation, specifically designed to both judge Israel and bring her to repentance, during which the Antichrist and his forces, empowered by Satan, attempt to gain control of the world; (3) the personal return of Christ (the Second Coming) to the earth with His saints, destroying the forces of Antichrist and banishing unbelievers to eternal punishment, while believers are allowed to repopulate the earth and serve Christ; (4) the millennial kingdom, a 1,000 years of Christ’s reign over the world from the throne of David in Jerusalem, re-instituted, albeit modified Temple functions; (5) at the end of the millennium, Satan is released from his imprisonment for a “little season” at which time he instigates a rebellion among those who have been born during the millennium, but have failed to personally accept Christ as their savior. Christ will put down the rebellion, and the final judgment will ensue with the wicked dead being resurrected and Satan, the fallen angels and all the unbelievers being cast into Hell for all eternity; (6) the eternal state commences in the New Heavens and New Earth.

All of these features of Dispensational Premillennialism would have been well-circulated and equally well-known by the time of Spurgeon’s ministry. Again, particular nomenclature may not have been widely used or even coined in Spurgeon’s day; since the

¹⁶³For an extensive discussion of this point see Ralph H. Alexander “Ezekiel” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*. Frank E. Gaebelien (ed.), (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing Company, 1986), 6:946ff. Alexander presents an extended excursus on Ezekiel 40-48 and the interpretation of the sacrificial system in the millennial kingdom. As to the efficacy of the Old Testament sacrifices themselves, there are diverse views, but the question is beyond the scope of this thesis, but for a thorough discussion see Charles Hodge’s *Systematic Theology*, 2:498-515.

system has been more clearly defined in recent times. Also some of the terminology, such as “secret rapture,” while widely used in the 19th Century Dispensationalism, is an almost unknown term today. Darby traveled around the world, especially to the United States, New Zealand and Australia, spreading his Dispensational teaching. In the process of this spread Dispensationalism became virtually synonymous with Fundamentalism. As Erickson states:

Because the rise of dispensationalism roughly paralleled that of the fundamentalist movement, it became virtually the official theology of fundamentalism. Some commentators have practically identified the two.¹⁶⁴

Interestingly enough, A. C. Dixon (1854-1925), an active and vocal dispensationalist and popular speaker in the Bible and prophetic conferences of the late 1800’s, was a frequent guest preacher in The Metropolitan Tabernacle pulpit during Spurgeon’s illnesses and was actually the pastor of the church from 1911-19. Dixon and Spurgeon’s son Thomas Spurgeon, were contributors to *The Fundamentals*, a famous collection of essays defending the “fundamentals of the Christian faith.” The Fundamentals were widely distributed in the early 1900’s and to a large degree gave a measure of definition to the fundamentalist movement. Clouse points out:

Premillennialism, because it was a well-articulated theology with considerable structure and defined leadership, was equipped to last and develop as one of the main ingredients of the Fundamentalist movement.¹⁶⁵

The *sine qua non* of dispensational premillennialism are listed in the chart below:

<i>Essential Features of Dispensational Premillennialism</i>	
1.	The Rapture of the Church before Daniel’s 70th Week (commonly known as the “Tribulation Period”)
2.	Christ Returns at the end of the Tribulation before the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom.

¹⁶⁴Erickson, *Contemporary Options*, 109.

¹⁶⁵Robert G. Clouse, “A History of the Interpretation of the Millennium,” in *New Testament Essays in Honor of Homer A. Kent Jr.* Gary T. Meadors, ed. (Winona Lake, Indiana: BMH Publishers, 1991), 214.

3. The Millennial Kingdom is a literal 1,000 year earthly and physical reign of Christ over the world *with Israel in the leading position. The kingdom is a fulfillment of the OT promises to Israel.*
4. The Two Resurrections of Rev 20 are separated by the 1,000 year kingdom.
5. At the end of the 1,000 years Satan will be released from his bondage, lead a rebellion of those who have been born during the kingdom era, but are yet unsaved. Christ will destroy the rebellion, and after the judgments Israel and the Church will enter the eternal state of heaven.

Summary

In summary, it is clear that all of the millennial schemes which are understood in the present day, were both well-known and well-taught during the lifetime of Charles H. Spurgeon. Spurgeon himself has shown his familiarity with all of these systems in terms of both their key features and their leading proponents. While some of the nomenclature of the present day would have been either unknown or unclear in Spurgeon's, it is certain that the basic features of the various systems would be well understood.

To review, the chart below is prepared to examine the four positions in question. Four key issues in the millennial question (Timing of the Second Coming, Timing of the Rapture, The Resurrection(s), and the Nature of the Millennium) are highlighted in terms of the four millennial positions in question.

	<i>Second Coming of Christ</i>	<i>Rapture of the Church</i>	<i>Resurrection</i>	<i>Nature of the Millennium</i>
<u><i>Amillennialism</i></u>	End of church age, the “realized” millennium, which begins the “heavenly” kingdom.	Equated with saints meeting Christ at His return	One Resurrection of the just and unjust at the 2nd age.	No earthly millennium, The millennium is to be equated with the church age.
<u><i>Postmillennialism</i></u>	At the end of the millennium	Equated with saints meeting Christ at His return	One Resurrection of the just and unjust at the 2nd coming	Culmination of Gospel ministry with the church & Christianity exercising virtual dominion in all areas of society. The 1,000 yrs may or may not be literally understood.
<u><i>Historic Premillennialism</i></u>	Prior to the start of the millennial kingdom	At the end of the tribulation period	2 Resurrections: the just at Christ’s return; the unjust at the end of the millennium	Culmination of the church age. Christ will rule and reign over the world thru the agency of the church. Israel will be nationally converted and be a part of the church.
<u><i>Dispensational Premillennialism</i></u>	Prior to the start of the millennial kingdom	Just prior to the beginning of the tribulation period (although in modern times some, such as Moo, have opted for a post-tribulational rapture; but this was unknown in Spurgeon’s day).	2 Resurrections, with the 1st in 3 phases: Christ as the “firstfruits”; Church saints at the rapture; OT & tribulation saints at the 2nd coming. The Unjust at the end of the millennium	Culmination of God’s promises to Israel. The millennium will see Christ reign over the world thru the agency of Israel. Modified OT worship will resume in the rebuilt Temple.

¹⁶⁶Obviously these are general observations. Within all of these positions, even in Spurgeon’s day, there was some room for differences of the finer points. For example some of the Historic Premillennial position hold to a literal 1,000 years while others view the this to be symbolic for a long period of time. Today, in some circles, a pretribulational rapture is no longer considered an essential part of Dispensational Premillennialism. Some Postmillennialists see a tribulation at the end of the millennium, others do not. Since dispensationalists see the resurrection of the righteous in multiple phases, they have been accused by their detractors of believing in three resurrections.

The task at hand is now to seek to identify which one of these millennial theories best corresponds with that presented by Spurgeon throughout his ministry. This will be accomplished through an examination of Spurgeon's own works as they relate to this question

CHAPTER TWO:

SPURGEON'S STATEMENTS ON ESCHATOLOGY

Introduction

As has been clearly demonstrated, the emphasis in the preaching of Charles H. Spurgeon, certainly did not find its center in the arena of eschatology. The entire idea of using prophecy or “prophetic conferences” as an evangelistic tool, would not have received much of a hearing with him. He also did not see the particular value of extended preaching on prophetic themes as a regular part of the Lord’s day services. “A prophetic preacher enlarged so much on ‘the little horn’ of Daniel, that one Sabbath morning he had but seven hearers remaining.”¹⁶⁷ He taught his students that their chief concern in preaching should not be prophetic speculations, but rather the gospel message and practical godliness.

Salvation is a theme for which I would fain enlist every holy tongue. I am greedy after witnesses for the glorious gospel of the blessed God. O that Christ crucified were the universal burden of men of God. Your guess at the number of the beast, your Napoleonic speculations, your conjectures concerning a personal Antichrist --forgive me, I count them but mere bones for dogs; while men are dying, and hell is filling, it seems to me the veriest drivel to be muttering about an Armageddon at Sebastopol or Sadowa or Sedan, and peeping between the folded leaves of destiny to discover the fate of Germany. Blessed are they who read and hear the words of the prophecy of the Revelation, but the like blessing has evidently not fallen on those who pretend to expound it, for generation

¹⁶⁷Charles H. Spurgeon. *Lectures to My Students* (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1881 1st Series; reprint, Pasadena Texas: Pilgrim Publishers, 1990 Four volumes in one), 1:100.

after generation of them have been proven to be in error by the mere lapse of time, and the present race will follow to the same inglorious sepulcher.¹⁶⁸

None-the-less, Spurgeon could say along with the Apostle Paul that he, “did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God” (Acts 20:27). Again his own testimony on this matter is sufficient:

You will bear me witness, my friends, that it is exceedingly seldom I ever intrude into the mysteries of the future with regard either to the second advent, the millennial reign, or the first and second resurrection. As often as we come about it in our expositions, we do not turn aside from the point, but if guilty at all on this point, it is rather in being too silent than saying too much.¹⁶⁹

It seems clear that even if Spurgeon's statement on matters of “the second advent, the millennial reign, or the first and second resurrection” were infrequent, they were not imprecise. Spurgeon clearly understood all of the features of eschatology as presented in the Scripture, although he did not give a great deal of his time to their “chronological arrangement.” On September 18th, 1876, he presented to the Metropolitan Tabernacle congregation this overview of eschatological events:

I am no prophet, nor the son of a prophet; neither do I profess to be able to explain all the prophecies in this blessed Book. I believe that many of them will only be explained as the events occur which they foretell. Yet there are some things which are plain even to the most superficial reader. It is plain, for instance, that it is certainly foretold that the power of Antichrist shall be utterly and eternally destroyed, and that Babylon, that is to say, the Papal system, with all its abominations, shall be cast like a millstone into the flood, to rise no more for ever. *It is also certain that the Jews, as a people, will yet own Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of David, as their King, and that they will return to their own land, “and they shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the old cities, the desolations of many generations.”* It is certain also that our Lord Jesus Christ will come again to this earth, and that he will reign amongst his ancients gloriously, and that there will be a thousand years of joy and peace such as

¹⁶⁸Ibid., 1:83. Even in Spurgeon's day the number of the beast and the identity of the Antichrist were items of intense discussion. Spurgeon was cautious that prophecy, when misused, would be a detriment to the proclamation of the gospel. During his ministry there was a great deal of prophetic speculation that Jesus would return in 1866. When Christ did not return in that year, the very thing Spurgeon feared began to happen; that is unbelievers began to ridicule all Christian preaching. Regarding this Spurgeon stated, “I am afraid of that spirit --’where is the promise of His coming? etc. etc.’ And to pronounce ‘all prophets as liars’ came to me exceedingly harsh; yea, more than that, it was calculated, I feared, to influence thousands of minds, and lead them in a wrong direction” (Pike, Spurgeon, 3:122).

¹⁶⁹Spurgeon, “The First Resurrection,” in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 7:345.

were never known on this earth before. *It is also certain that there will be a great and general judgment, when all nations shall be gathered before the Son of man sitting upon the throne of his glory; and his final award concerning those upon his left hand will be, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment;" and concerning those upon his right hand, "but the righteous into eternal life."* How all these great events are to be chronologically arranged, I cannot tell¹⁷⁰ [emphasis ours].

This tendency of Spurgeon, to reject tightly knit chronological sequences of eschatological events, remained with him his entire life. Drummond gives a good summary of Spurgeon's attitude on the subject:

He refused to spend an inordinate amount of time discussing, for example the relationship of the rapture to the tribulation period, or like points of eschatological nuance. An elaborate dispensational chart would have little or no appeal to Spurgeon. Any dispensational framework that has a tendency to divide the Scriptures into segments, some applicable to contemporary life and some not, did not get his attention at all. He probably would have rejected any such scheme. He kept to the basics of future things.¹⁷¹

It has already been shown eschatology was a secondary issue with Spurgeon; a valuable endeavor, but one which should never "overlay the commonplaces of practical godliness,"¹⁷² or be start before "first you see to it that your children are brought to the saviour's feet."¹⁷³ It was also, as has already been demonstrated, not an issue which came between Spurgeon and other major theologians such as Calvin, Hodge, Dixon, etc.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine Spurgeon's statements relating directly and sometimes indirectly to the area of the millennial kingdom and the events surrounding it. As already demonstrated, the vast majority of Spurgeon's statement on this matter are to be found in his sermons; however, his other writings must be consulted as well. In this endeavor this author does not pretend to have read the totality of the Spurgeonic corpus. That legacy took him a lifetime to produce and would take longer to digest and assimilate.

¹⁷⁰Spurgeon, "The Harvest and the Vintage," in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 50:553-54

¹⁷¹Drummond, *Spurgeon: Prince of Preachers*, 650. Drummond holds that Spurgeon was premillennial, but rejects the idea that he was, as some apparently claim, that he was dispensational.

¹⁷²Spurgeon, "The Ascension and Second Advent Practically Considered," in *Spurgeon's Expository Encyclopedia*, 4:442.

¹⁷³Ibid.

An extensive examination of Spurgeon's works has been made; sufficiently thorough, it is hoped, that the contents of this chapter will demonstrate a level of interaction with the Spurgeonic literary legacy sufficient to present a valid conclusion as to his thoughts on this matter. The danger always exists of basing a conclusion on too few passages. Dr. Peter Masters, the current pastor of Spurgeon's Metropolitan Tabernacle and an ardent amillennialist, criticized two writers for just this by drawing conclusions based on too few references.¹⁷⁴ This author would not wish to fall victim to the same criticism.

The conclusions offered here are presented decisively, yet with a tentative spirit for as previously stated, there is always room for additional scholarly work and interaction in this area. Since Spurgeon did not attempt to systematize his views on eschatology, the investigator into this area must cull out data from all sources. He must also be careful not to put words into the mouth of Spurgeon or go beyond his thoughts. The critical issue becomes most clearly not only the volume of material interacted with; but also how that material is assimilated and interpreted.

Part One:

Spurgeon's Sermons

The primary outlet for Spurgeon's theology was, of course his preaching. His preaching style was normally a topical or textual approach, although as one visitor to his home and study remarked about Spurgeon's work:

I was at first surprised to find Mr. Spurgeon consulting both the Hebrew and Greek texts. "They say," said he, "that I am ignorant and unlearned. Well let them say it; and in

¹⁷⁴Masters, "Spurgeon's Eschatology," 28

everything, by my ignorance, and by my knowledge, let God be glorified.” His exegesis was seldom wrong. He spared no pains to be sure of the exact meaning of his text.¹⁷⁵

Spurgeon was in the broad sense of the term, an expositor of the text of scripture. He was also a great systematizer of thought and theology; and delivered his messages in clear, forthright English. In this section Spurgeon's own statements, as quoted in the introduction, will be utilized and those statements will be examined in three eschatological areas: (1) The Second Advent, (2) The Millennial Reign, and (3) The First and Second Resurrections.

Section A: Spurgeon's Sermons Discussing "The Second Advent of Christ"

The first key feature which Spurgeon identified as foundational eschatological issues is The Second Advent of Christ. That Spurgeon believed in the personal and literal return of Christ to the earth is a fact which cannot be disputed. He looked forward to this great event with anticipation and announced it to his congregation with regularity.

We know that Christ was really, personally, and physically here on earth. But it is not quite so clear to some persons that he is to come, really, personally, and literally the second time. . . Now, we believe that the Christ who shall sit on the throne of his father David, and whose feet shall stand upon Mount Olivet, is as much a personal Christ as the Christ who came to Bethlehem and wept in the manger.¹⁷⁶

On June 13, 1869, he told his congregation:

We are to expect the literal advent of Jesus Christ, for he himself by his angel told us, "This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven shall so come *in like manner* [emphasis his] as ye have seen him go into heaven," which must mean literally and in person.¹⁷⁷

He also commented on the Second Advent when he told the congregation at New Park Street Chapel:

¹⁷⁵Spurgeon, *Autobiography* (Banner of Truth Edition), 2:346.

¹⁷⁶Spurgeon, "The Two Advents of Christ," in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 8:39.

¹⁷⁷Spurgeon, "Things to Come," in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 15:329.

And, moreover, the Christian may await to-morrow with even more than simple hope and joy; he may look forward to it with ecstasy in some measure, for he does not know but that to-morrow his Lord may come. To-morrow Christ may be upon this earth, "for such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh."¹⁷⁸

Spurgeon had a great facility with the English language and his ability to create picturesque scenes in his sermons was unsurpassed. On December 28, 1884, he presented to his congregation:

Out great Captain is still heading the conflict; he has ridden into another part of the field, but he will be back again, perhaps in the twinkling of an eye. . . He went up not in spirit, but in person; he will come down again in person. . . "This same Jesus" literally went up. "This same Jesus" will literally come again. He will descend in clouds even as he went up in clouds; and "he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth" even as he stood beforehand. . . Brethren, do not let anybody spiritualize away all this from you. Jesus is coming as a matter of fact, therefore go down to your sphere of service as a matter of fact.¹⁷⁹

He also stated clearly:

Brethren, no truth ought to be more frequently proclaimed, next to the first coming of the Lord, than his second coming; and you cannot thoroughly set forth all the ends and bearings of the first advent if you forget the second. At the Lord's Supper, there is no discerning the Lord's body unless you discern his first coming; but there is no drinking into his cup to its fullness, unless you hear him say, "Until I come." You must look forward, as well as backward. So must it be with all our ministries; they must look to him on the cross and on the throne. We must vividly realize that he, who has once come, is coming yet again, or else our testimony will be marred, and one-sided. We shall make lame work of preaching and teaching if we leave out either advent.¹⁸⁰

Certainly there can be no doubt about Spurgeon's belief in the literal and physical return of Christ. But what did he have to say regarding this thesis' main topic, the Millennial Reign?

¹⁷⁸Spurgeon, "To-Morrow," in *The New Park Street Pulpit*, 2:237. Of course New Park Street Chapel was the name of Spurgeon's church in London before the new building was erected and the church renamed, The Metropolitan Tabernacle.

¹⁷⁹Spurgeon, "The Ascension and The Second Advent Practically Considered," in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 31:23.

¹⁸⁰Spurgeon, "He Cometh With Clouds," in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 33:592-93.

Section B: Spurgeon's Sermon's Discussing "The Millennial Reign"

Regarding the Millennial reign of Christ, Spurgeon was far from silent. It was not a topic that he gave a great deal of attention to, but when he did speak of it he spoke with a consistent view. In 1865 he stated this:

If I read the word aright, and it is honest to admit that there is much room for difference of opinion here, the day will come, when the Lord Jesus will descend from heaven with a shout, with the trump of the archangel and the voice of God. Some think that this descent of the Lord will be post-millennial --that is, after the thousand years of his reign. I cannot think so. I conceive that the advent will be pre-millennial; that he will come first; and *then will come the millennium as the result of his personal reign upon earth*¹⁸¹ [emphasis ours].

This comment not only seems to clearly demonstrate Spurgeon's position on the subject, but makes it clear that he was conversant with other millennial positions and their key features.

In the same sermon Spurgeon also spoke of the millennial reign in these terms:

Now, while speaking of glory, I think I must divide the glory which God gives to the justified into three parts. There is, first of all, the glory which disembodied spirits are enjoying even now; there is, secondly, the resurrection glory, which they will enjoy when the soul and body shall be re-united, and when, through the millennium, they shall be "for ever with the Lord;" and then there is "the eternal weight of glory," which is to be revealed both in body and soul, in the never-ending state of bliss which God has prepared for his people.¹⁸²

In another sermon he made this oft-quoted remark regarding the millennial reign:

Just as the twelve tribes, serving God day and night, looked for the first coming, so ought all the tribes of our Israel, day and night, without ceasing, to wait for the Lord from heaven. We are looking for the blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ. "Even so, come, Lord Jesus" is the desire of every instructed saint. I shall not go into any details about when he will come: I will not espouse the cause of the pre-millennial or the post-millennial advent; it will suffice me just now to observe that the Redeemer's coming is the desire of the entire church; and "unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation."¹⁸³

¹⁸¹Spurgeon, "Justification and Glory," in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 11:249.

¹⁸²Ibid., 11:247.

¹⁸³Spurgeon, "The Double Come," in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 27:390-91.

Spurgeon's disclaimer to not "espouse the cause" of two different millennial positions is attributed by Iain Murray as an example of Spurgeon admitting, "a fundamental uncertainty in his mind;"¹⁸⁴ however, this seems to be an unwarranted conclusion as pointed out by Masters' in his review of Murray, where he states this passage simply means that Spurgeon, "did not propose to espouse any particular millennial view in that particular sermon."¹⁸⁵

Later in the same sermon Spurgeon made this statement:

To my mind the doctrine of the coming of Christ ought to inflame the zeal of every believer who seeks the conversion of his fellow men, and how can he be a believer if he does not seek this end? The Lord cometh quickly: O sinner come quickly to the Lord, or it may be too late for you to come. We who call you may soon be silenced by his advent, and mercy may have no more to say to you. . . Stand in a Popish country and see them altogether given to their idols, and worshipping crosses and relics, and you will soon cry, "Come Lord Jesus. Let antichrist be hurled like a millstone into the flood, never to rise again." The vehemence of your desire for the destruction of evil and the setting up of the kingdom of Christ will drive you to that grand hope of the church, and make you cry out for its fulfillment.¹⁸⁶

Regarding the nature and location of the millennial reign he stated this:

There is, moreover, to be a reign of Christ. I cannot read the Scriptures without perceiving that there is to be a millennial reign, as I believe, upon the earth, and that there shall be new heavens and new earth wherein dwell righteousness.¹⁸⁷

He also was not of the opinion that the millennium on earth was to be identified with the eternal existence in heaven. He clearly made a distinction between the two. Beginning a sermon on the text, "Throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it" (Revelation 22:3), he stated, "We shall take these words as referring to heaven. Certainly it is most true of the celestial city, *as well as of the millennial city*, that the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it"¹⁸⁸ [emphasis ours].

¹⁸⁴Iain H. Murray. *The Puritan Hope: Revival and the Interpretation of Prophecy* (Carlisle, Pennsylvania: Banner of Truth Trust, 1971), 263.

¹⁸⁵Masters, "Spurgeon's Eschatology," 28.

¹⁸⁶Spurgeon, "The Double Come," 27:292.

¹⁸⁷Spurgeon, "For Ever with the Lord," in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 23:522.

¹⁸⁸Spurgeon, "The Throne of God and of the Lamb," in *Spurgeon's Expository Encyclopedia*, 8:409.

Discussing the relation of the timing of the Return of Christ to the millennium; and its necessity to commence that millennium, Spurgeon was certainly clear as he said:

Paul does not paint the future with rose-colour: he is no smooth-tongued prophet of a golden age, into which this dull earth may be imagined to be glowing. There are sanguine brethren who are looking forward to everything growing better and better and better, until, at the last this present age ripens into a millennium. They will not be able to sustain their hopes, for Scripture give them no solid basis to rest upon. We who believe that there will be no millennial reign without the King, and who expect no rule of righteousness except from the appearing of the righteous Lord, are nearer the mark. Apart from the second Advent of our Lord, the world is more likely to sink into pandemonium than to rise into a millennium. A divine interposition seems to me the hope set before us in Scripture, and, indeed, to be the only hope adequate to the situation. We look to the darkening down of things; the state of mankind, however improved politically, may yet grow worse and worse spiritually.¹⁸⁹

He also stated this in a sermon while he was at New Park Street Chapel and printed in his sermon series in 1899:

There are some men who have not seen Elias yet; they do not understand the prophecies. They think they perceive in the future a great progress of civilization, and they expect to see the spread of the gospel; they expect to hear of great agencies employed, of multitudes of ministers going forth to preach the Word, and a gradual conversion of the world to the religion of Christ; but he who understands the prophets, and has seen Elias, believes not in the immediate conversion of the world, nor in universal peace; he believes in "Jesus Only;" he expects that Jesus will first come; and, to him, the great hope of the future is the coming of the Son of man.¹⁹⁰

Thus it is clear that Charles Spurgeon believed in a earthly millennium which would be founded on and preceded by the Second Advent of Christ. While he apparently never commented directly on the literalness of the 1,000 year duration of the millennium, his emphasis on the literal interpretation of Revelation 20:1-10 would indicate that he would view the 1,000 as actual and not simply symbolic years.

Finally, Spurgeon, in keeping with his normal attitude towards things eschatological, presented a clear perspective on the practical nature of the Second Advent as he said:

¹⁸⁹Spurgeon, "The Form of Godliness without the Power," in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 35:301.

¹⁹⁰Spurgeon, "Jesus Only: A Communion Meditation," in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 45:374.

Jesus is not coming in a sort of mythical, misty, hazy way, he is literally and actually coming, and he will literally and actually call upon you to give an account of your stewardship. Therefore, now, to-day, literally not symbolically, personally and not by deputy, go out through that portion of the world which you can reach, and preach the gospel to every creature according as you have opportunity.¹⁹¹

The third investigation of this section, the Resurrections of the just and the wicked, is something that Spurgeon was equally clear about in his preaching.

Section C: *Spurgeon's Sermons Discussing "The First and Second Resurrections"*

A foundational concept in Spurgeon's eschatology was his belief in the resurrection of believers and unbelievers. Throughout his ministry he presented the truth that there would be *separate* resurrections of the just and unjust. It has already been noted that he makes a distinction between "the first and second resurrection."¹⁹² One of the key features that is unmistakable in his sermons is the fact that Spurgeon saw the resurrection of the just before the millennium and the unjust after the millennium. That he believed in a literal and physical resurrection cannot be denied as is shown in this following sermon:

Yet this Paul believed, and this he preached --that there would be a resurrection of the dead, both the just and the unjust, not that the just and the unjust would merely live as to their souls, but that their bodies should be restored from the grave, and that a resurrection, as well as an immortality, should be the entail of every man of woman born, whatever his character might be.¹⁹³

In the same sermon Spurgeon clearly declared that the resurrections would be distinct, separated by 1,000 years.

Notice that this reaping comes first, and I think it comes first in order of time. If I read the Scriptures aright, there are to be two resurrections, and the first will be the resurrection of the righteous; for it is written, "But the rest of the dead lived not again

¹⁹¹Spurgeon, "The Ascension and the Second Advent," 31:23.

¹⁹²Spurgeon, "The First Resurrection," 7:345.

¹⁹³Spurgeon, "Resurrection for the Just and the Unjust," *Spurgeon's Expository Encyclopedia*, 13:241.

until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power."¹⁹⁴

He also declared very clearly this fact:

We expect a reigning Christ on earth; that seems to us to be very plain, and put so literally that we dare not spiritualise it. We anticipate a first and second resurrection; a first resurrection of the righteous, and a second resurrection of the ungodly, who shall be judged, condemned, and punished for ever by the sentence of the great King.¹⁹⁵

Interestingly enough, and probably in keeping with what has already been seen of Spurgeon's avoidance of prophetic preaching, he only preached two sermons in his entire ministry with a primary text in Revelation 20, admittedly the key passage related to the millennium. He preached on Revelation 20:4-6,12 (skipping over the verses that one might have wished him to comment upon) in an 1861 sermon and Revelation 20:11 in 1866. He also never preached from any portion of Daniel 12, where one might have wished to see his interpretation of the first two verses. In this respect he very much followed in the steps of Calvin, who also largely ignored these passages.¹⁹⁶ Despite this he firmly declared his belief that the two resurrections would be separated by the 1,000 year millennial reign. In 1861 he told his congregation this:

You have perhaps imagined that all men will rise at the same moment; that the trump of the archangel will break open every grave at the same instant, and sound in the ear of every sleeper at the identical moment. Such I do not think is the testimony of the Word of God. I think that the Word of God teaches, and teaches indisputably, that the saints shall rise first. And be the interval of time whatever it may, whether the thousand years are literal years, or a very long period of time, I am not now about to determine; I have nothing to do except with the fact that there are two resurrections, a resurrection of the just, and afterwards of the unjust, --a time when the saints of God shall rise, an after time when the wicked shall rise to the resurrection of damnation.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁴Ibid., 13:358.

¹⁹⁵Spurgeon, "Things to Come," 15:329.

¹⁹⁶In his *magnum opus*, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Calvin refers only once to any verse in Revelation 20 (*Institutes*, 3.25.5), where in a passing remark he rejects the notion of a premillennial return of Christ. He cites Daniel 12:1 twice (*Institutes*, 1.14.7, 8) in his discussion of angels; Daniel 12:2 once (*Institutes*, 3.25.7) in his discussion of the resurrection; and Daniel 12:3 once (*Institutes*, 3.25.10) in his discussion of eternal life. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, two volumes (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: The Westminster Press, 1960. Translated by Ford Lewis Battles, edited by John T. McNeill)

¹⁹⁷Spurgeon, "The First Resurrection," 7:346.

In the same sermon he points to his belief that both resurrections are literal and physical. He attacks the position of the famous American Presbyterian commentator, Albert Barnes (1798-1870), who was amillennial in his eschatology,¹⁹⁸ as he states:

I must remark that two modes of understanding of this verse [Revelation 20:4-6,12] have been proposed, both of which I think are untenable. I have been reading carefully through Albert Barnes. He gives it, as his opinion, that the first resurrection here spoken of is a resurrection of principles, --a resurrection of the patience, the undaunted courage, the holy boldness and constancy of the ancient martyrs. He says these great principles have been forgotten, and, as it were, buried; and that during the spiritual reign of Christ which is to come, these great principles will have a resurrection. Now I appeal to you, would you, in reading that passage, think this to be the meaning? Would any man believe that to be its meaning, if he had not some thesis to defend? The fact is, we sometimes read Scripture, thinking of what it ought to say, rather than what it does say. I do not hesitate to affirm that any simple-minded person, who was intent upon discovering the mind of the Spirit, and not upon finding a method by which the words could be compelled to express his own mind, would say that the resurrection of principles, or the resurrection of doctrines, does not give the fair meaning of the words here stated. . . It is --we have no doubt whatever-- a literal resurrection of the saints of God, and not of principles nor of doctrines. But another interpretation has been proposed. I once had the misfortune to listen to an excellent friend of mine who was preaching upon this text, and I must confess, I did not attend with very great patience to his exposition. He said it meant blessed and holy is he who has been born again, who has been regenerated, and so has had a resurrection from dead works by the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. All the while he was preaching, I could not help wishing that I could propose to him the difficulty, how he would make this metaphorical interpretation agree with the literal fact, that the rest of the dead lived not till the thousand years were finished? For if the first resurrection here spoken of is a metaphorical, or spiritual, or typical resurrection, why the next where it speaks of the resurrection of the dead must be spiritual, and mystical, and metaphorical too. . . The fact is, in reading this passage with an unbiased judgment, having no purpose whatever to serve, having no theory to defend, --and I confess I have none, for I know very little about mysteries to come,-- I could not help seeing there are two literal resurrections here spoken of, one of the spirits of the just, and the other of the bodies of the wicked; one of the saints who sleep in Jesus, whom God shall bring with him, and another of those who live and die impenitent, who perish in their sins.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁸James E. Rosscup. *Commentaries for Biblical Expositors*. (Sun Valley, California: Grace Book Shack, 1993), 22. In discussing Albert Barnes works, "Barnes Notes: Explanatory and Practical," Spurgeon stated: "If a controversial eye had been turned upon Barnes' Notes years ago, and his inaccuracies shown up by some unsparing hand, he would never have had the popularity which at one time set rival publishers advertising him in every direction." (*Lectures, Commenting and Commentaries*, 4:14.)

¹⁹⁹Spurgeon, "The First Resurrection," 7:346.

It is clear that Spurgeon comments on the two resurrections, separated by the 1,000 years; are not as Murray states, “far from common in his sermons,”²⁰⁰ but a regular and consistent theme, when he dealt with the topic. Here is a final example of his statements on this subject:

Now we believe and hold that Christ shall come a second time suddenly, to raise his saints at the first resurrection; this shall be the commencement of the grand judgment, and they shall reign with him afterwards. *The rest of the dead live not till the thousand years are finished.* Then they shall rise from their tombs and they shall receive the deeds which they have done in the body²⁰¹ [emphasis ours].

There is one other prophetic theme which requires some attention. Spurgeon's view on the future of Israel as a people and as a nation bears some attention in this discussion. It has already mentioned that he believed that:

It is also certain that the Jews, as a people, will yet own Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of David, as their King, and that they will return to their own land, “and they shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the old cities, the desolations of many generations.”²⁰²

At a special meeting at The Metropolitan Tabernacle on June 16, 1864, Spurgeon preached on “The Restoration and Conversion of the Jews,” on behalf of the *British Society for the Propagation of the Gospel amongst the Jews*. In this sermon he laid out several important statements about the future of the Jewish people. First of all he believed that the Jews would physically and literally return to inhabit and have political control over their ancient land. He stated:

There will be a native government again; there will again be the form of a body politic; a state shall be incorporated, and a king shall reign. Israel has now become alienated from her own land. Her sons, though they can never forget the sacred dust of Palestine, yet die at a hopeless distance from her consecrated shores. But it shall not be so for ever, for her sons shall again rejoice in her: her land shall be called Beulah, for as a young man marrieth a virgin so shall her sons marry her. “I will place you in your own land,” is God's promise to them. . . They are to have a national prosperity which shall make them famous; nay, so glorious shall they be that Egypt, and Tyre, and Greece, and Rome, shall all forget their glory in the greater splendour of the throne of David. . . I there be

²⁰⁰Murray, *The Puritan Hope*, 259.

²⁰¹Spurgeon, “The Two Advents of Christ,” 8:39. Note that there is no equivocation on the literalness of the 1,000 years in this statement as there was in the earlier in the same year (1861).

²⁰²Spurgeon, “The Harvest and Vintage,” 50:553.

anything clear and plain, the literal sense and meaning of this passage [Ezekiel 37:1-10] - a meaning not to be spirited or spiritualized away-- must be evident that both the two and the ten tribes of Israel are to be restored to their own land, and that a king is to rule over them.²⁰³

He also believed that the conversion of the Jews was to come through Christian preaching by means of the church and other societies and mission agencies that God might raise up for that task.²⁰⁴

In this section it has been demonstrated that in his sermons Spurgeon presented a clear and consistent view of key eschatological events. First of all, he believed that the “Return of Christ” would be literal, personal and it would be to the earth. While he taught that the Second Advent would precede the millennium; he also taught that the exact timing of this return was completely unknowable to human speculation; that it was foolish at best, and wicked at worst, to delve into such speculation. Secondly, in relation to the “Millennial Reign,” Spurgeon believed again that it was Christ’s return that would mark the beginning of the Millennium. The Millennium was to be a period of Christ’s personal rule on earth, and that it was not to be equated with the eternal state. Finally he believed it was only the “divine interposition,” which is the Coming of Christ and the establishment of His Kingdom, that would bring to a culmination the Church Age.

Again, while the main source of information on Spurgeon’s theological views are his sermons, there is also a large (and often ignored) body of literature in his other writings. Any examination of his theology must also include a thorough examination of his non-sermonic material: his commentaries, his writings in the journal he edited for over 25 years, *The Sword and Trowel*, and the many other literary outlets he made use of in his ministry.

Part Two

²⁰³Spurgeon, “The Restoration and Conversion of the Jews,” in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 10:426.

²⁰⁴*Ibid.*, 430-36

Spurgeon's Writings

Charles Spurgeon had many other literary endeavors in his life, besides his sermons. He wrote many books, edited a monthly magazine, and a regular almanac. In fact, the listing of his literary endeavors, other than his sermons, take up over 15 columns in the London Museum Union Serial Catalogue.²⁰⁵ In this section the goal is to break down Spurgeon's writing into three areas: (1) his Commentaries, (2) *The Sword and Trowel*, (3) his other writings.

Section A: Spurgeon in his Biblical Commentaries

Despite his long preaching and literary career, Charles Spurgeon only wrote two works that could be called commentaries. The primary of the two was his monumental commentary on the Psalms, *The Treasury of David*. It was seven volumes and Spurgeon spent nearly 15 years in its completion, and next to his sermons it is his most widely distributed work. By 1893, a year after Spurgeon's death, the *Treasury* had sold over 140,000 copies in England, had been released in the United States and was in the process of being translated into German and Dutch.²⁰⁶ Spurgeon and his closest associates considered this work his *magnum opus*.²⁰⁷ It was his only thoroughly expository work, and it has remained in print, uninterrupted, since his death.

In *The Treasury of David*, Spurgeon sets as his hope, "that these volumes will be as useful to other hearts in reading as to mine in the writing."²⁰⁸ The *Treasury* had several components: (1) Spurgeon's own exposition, (2) a collection of quotes from other authors,

²⁰⁵Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 3:305-22. This chapter in the autobiography gives a detailed listing of Spurgeon's literary endeavors.

²⁰⁶*Ibid.*, 3:313

²⁰⁷*Ibid.*

²⁰⁸*Ibid.*, 3:312.

(3) his “hints to Village Preachers.” The commentary is not critical, although Spurgeon himself interacted with, by his own count, over 100 different commentaries and critical works. Spurgeon was not a great Hebraist, but he did possess a working knowledge of the Hebrew text. The purpose and usefulness of the *Treasury* is well defined by James Rosscup who states:

In this very detailed exposition, the London pulpit master dealt with each verse, giving a wealth of illustration, practical comment, and preaching hints. Spurgeon shows that he read widely in the best literature of his day, gleaning out rich quotes. On any given verse once can expect to find exposition or quotes looking at it from various angles. The devotional flavor is excellent. Here is a suggestive source for the preacher or teacher and much wealth for general readers, though readers must go elsewhere for word studies and exegesis to supplement their own personal exegetical study.²⁰⁹

As common in all of Spurgeon's works he sees most of the references to Israel in the Psalms as referring in one manner or another to the church.

Spurgeon does touch on the subject of eschatology on a few occasions within the *Treasury*. One such excursion is his comments on Psalm 14:7 where he states:

The coming of Messiah was the desire of the godly in all ages, and though he has already come with a sin-offering to purge away iniquity, we look for him to come a second time, to come without a sin-offering unto salvation. O that these weary years would come to an end! Why tarries he so long? He knows that sin abounds and that his people are down-trodden; why does he not come to the rescue? His glorious advent will restore his ancient people from literal captivity, and his spiritual seed from spiritual sorrow. Wrestling Jacob and prevailing Israel shall alike rejoice before him when he is revealed as their salvation. O that he were come! What happy, holy, halcyon, heavenly days should we see! But let us not count him slack, for behold, he comes, he comes quickly. Blessed are they that wait for him.²¹⁰

As in his sermons, Spurgeon anticipated the return of Christ would provide for the final victory of the church.

²⁰⁹Rosscup, Commentaries, 108.

²¹⁰Charles H. Spurgeon. *The Treasury of David: An Expository and Devotional Commentary on the Psalms*. Seven volumes (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1870-1884; reprint Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1977), 1:183. This set is also currently published by Pilgrim Publishing Company.

Commenting on Psalm 2:5-6 Spurgeon states, “his unsuffering kingdom *yet shall come* when he shall take unto himself his great power, and reign from *the river unto the ends of the earth*”²¹¹ [emphasis ours]. Commenting on Psalm 45:16 he stated, “The whole earth shall yet be subdued for Christ, and honoured are they, who shall, through grace, have a share in the conquest --these shall reign with Christ at His Coming.”²¹² In a powerful manner he comments on the nature of Jesus’ Millennial reign in Psalm 72:8, as he states:

Wide spread shall be the rule of Messiah; only Land’s End shall end his territory: to the Ultima Thule shall his scepter be extended. From Pacific to Atlantic, and from Atlantic to Pacific, he shall be Lord, and the oceans which surround each pole shall be beneath his sway. All other power shall be subordinate to his; no rival nor antagonist shall he know. . . As Solomon’s realm embraced all the land of promise, and left no unconquered margin; so shall the Son of David rule all lands given him in the better covenant, and leave no nation to pine beneath the tyranny of the prince of darkness. We are encouraged by such a passage as this to look for the Saviour’s universal reign; whether before or after his personal advent we leave for the discussion of others. In this Psalm, at least, we see a personal monarch, and he is the central figure, the focus of all glory; not his servant, but himself do we see possessing the dominion and dispensing the government.²¹³

Clearly in this passage, Spurgeon sees a personal reign of Christ on earth over nations. His comment on the advent of Christ is certainly seen to be refuting a Postmillennial view (as well as the amillennial position), which reject a personal reign of Christ on earth during the millennium. Later commenting on verse 11 in the same Psalm, he states:

“*Yea, all kings shall fall down before him.*” Personally shall they pay their reverence, however mighty they may be. No matter how high their state, how ancient their dynasty, or far-off their realms, they shall willingly accept him as their Imperial Lord. . . The extent of the mediatorial rule is set forth by the two far-reaching *alls*, all kings and all nations: we see not as yet all things put under him, but since we see Jesus crowned with glory and honour in heaven, we are altogether without doubt as to his universal monarchy on earth.²¹⁴

In the important Messianic Psalm 110, Spurgeon makes his millennial beliefs clear as he comments on verse 1 in the following manner:

²¹¹Ibid., 1:13.

²¹²Ibid., 2:359.

²¹³Ibid., 3:319.

²¹⁴Ibid., 3:320.

During the present interval, through which we wait for his glorious appearing and visible millennial kingdom, he is in the place of power, and his dominion is in no jeopardy, or otherwise he would not remain quiescent.²¹⁵

He also states:

He [Christ] shall not always sit in the waiting posture, but shall come into the fight to end the weary war by his own victorious presence. He will leader the final charge in person; his own right hand and his holy arm shall get unto him the victory.²¹⁶

In *The Treasury of David*, as is in his sermons, Spurgeon is clear and concise in his statements regarding the millennium. Those statement were perhaps not as often in coming as some other commentators on the Psalms have been, but they are thoroughly consistent with his sermons and other writings.

Spurgeon's only other commentary was also the final book that he completed. He finished the first draft only days prior to his death. Actually all of the notations were complete, but it was put into its final form by his wife Susannah. This was, *Matthew: The Gospel of the Kingdom*. Again this was not designed as a critical commentary, and because of his death, he was not able to edit the manuscript or even put it into the form that he may have intended. In the comments in the pivotal chapter of Matthew 24, he states that "Our Lord appears to have purposely mingled the prophecies concerning the destruction of Jerusalem and his own second coming."²¹⁷ Spurgeon understands most of the prophecies to refer to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. He understood that many Christians were in Jerusalem at the time prior to its destruction and the main thrust of the prophecies of Jesus were to warn them as to when to flee the city. Of Matthew 24:15-21 and the "abomination of desolation," he states this:

²¹⁵Ibid., 5:186.

²¹⁶Ibid., 5:188.

²¹⁷Charles H. Spurgeon. *Matthew: The Gospel of the Kingdom*. (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1893; reprint Pasadena, Texas: Pilgrim Publishing Company, 1974), 217. While this commentary was put into print soon after his death, it cannot be counted as much more than a "rough draft." Most of it was completed while he was recuperating in Mentone, France without the benefit of either revision or consultation in his massive library.

This portion of our Saviour's words appears to relate solely to the destruction of Jerusalem. As soon as Christ's disciples saw "the abomination of desolation," that is, the Roman ensigns, with their idolatrous, "stand in the holy place," they knew that the time for their escape had arrived; and they did flee to the mountains.²¹⁸

Spurgeon saw none of the prophecies of Matthew immediately related to a "tribulation" as modern dispensational teaching might, but saw the terror of the destruction of Jerusalem as typical of the time just before Christ's return.

When he comes, we shall know who he is, and why he has come. There will be no longer any mystery or secret about, "the coming of the Son of man." There will be no need to ask any questions then; no one will make a mistake about his appearing when it actually takes place. "Every eye shall see him." Christ's coming will be sudden, startling, universally visible, and terrifying to the ungodly: "as the lightening cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west." His first coming to judgment at the destruction of Jerusalem had terrors about it that till then had never been realized on the earth; his last coming will be more dreadful still.²¹⁹

In his Matthew commentary Spurgeon continues to affirm his belief in Christ's literal return, which will come at a time when the church is in dire straits.

Section B: Spurgeon in the "Sword and Trowel"

The Sword and Trowel was commenced by Spurgeon in 1865. Its subtitle was, "A record of combat with sin and labour for the Lord." *The Sword and Trowel* was edited from the beginning by Spurgeon and was the regular outlet for his comments on current events and affairs of the church. He stated:

Our magazine is intended to report the efforts of those churches and Associations which are more or less connected with the Lord's work at the Tabernacle, and to advocate those views of doctrine and church order which are most certainly received among us. It will address itself to those faithful friends, scattered everywhere, who are our well-wishers and supporters in our work of faith and labour of love. We feel the want of some organ of communication in which our many plans for God's glory may be brought before

²¹⁸Ibid., 215.

²¹⁹Ibid., 216.

believers and commended to their aid. Our friends are so numerous as to be able to maintain a magazine, and so earnest as to require one. Our monthly message will be a supplement to our weekly sermon, and will enable us to say many things which would be out of place in a discourse. It will inform the general Christian public of our movements, and show our sympathy with all that is good throughout the entire church of God. It will give us an opportunity of urging the claims of Christ's cause, of advocating the revival of godliness, of denouncing error, of bearing witness for truth, and of encouraging the labourers in the Lord's vineyard.²²⁰

One of the key features of *The Sword and Trowel*, was the book review section, in which Spurgeon gave his opinion on different works.²²¹ In one review on a certain B. C. Young's, *Short Arguments about the Millennium; or plain proofs for plain Christians that the coming of Christ will not be pre-millennial; that his reign will not be personal*.

Reviewing this book Spurgeon made the following comments:

Those who wish to see the arguments upon the unpopular side of the great question at issue, will find them here; this is probably one of the ablest of the accessible treatises from that point of view. We cannot agree with Mr. Young, neither can we refute him. I might tax the ingenuity of the ablest prophetic writers to solve all the difficulties here started, and perhaps it would be unprofitable to attempt the task. . . Only fools and madmen are positive in their interpretations of the Apocalypse.²²²

In this review it should be noted that perhaps his comment, "neither can we refute him," has reference to not inability, but to either a lack of space or lack of interest in attempting the task.

As noted earlier, that Spurgeon was no friend of John Nelson Darby and his branch of the "Plymouth Brethren" is no great secret. On several occasions Spurgeon gave space in the *Sword and Trowel* to speak against some of the practices of the Brethren, and especially Darby. However, as previously stated, Spurgeon's main argument against the Brethren was

²²⁰Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 3:307-308.

²²¹Spurgeon's work, *Commentating and Commentaries*, was specifically designed as a bibliographic resource for Biblical commentaries. In *The Sword and Trowel* Spurgeon dealt with a wide variety of books.

²²²Charles H. Spurgeon, review of *Short Arguments about the Millennium; or plain proofs for plain Christians that the coming of Christ will not be pre-millennial; that his reign will not be personal*, B. C. Young. In *The Sword and Trowel* 1:470 (October 1867).

their ecclesiology and soteriology, with some features of their eschatology being only secondary issues.

Spurgeon's displeasure with "dispensationalism," as promoted by Darby, was the single issue to separate the Church and Israel into separate people's in God's program. In 1867 he wrote a long article outlining his objections to the theology of the Brethren.²²³ In that article he states his main objection:

Their [the Brethren] question is --"In view of the various dispensations under which it has pleased God to gather an elect and faithful people out of the world, has it not been reserved to the Christian dispensation to furnish the privileged company which, in their unity, is called 'the Church,' 'the Bride of Jesus,' 'the Lamb's wife?'"²²⁴

In the entire article Spurgeon deals with the issue of "the one people of God", the continuity between the Old Testament and New Testament saints.

Difference of dispensation does not involve a difference of covenant; and it is according to the covenant of grace that all spiritual blessings are bestowed. So far as dispensations reach they indicate degrees of knowledge, degrees of privilege, and variety in the ordinances of worship. The unity of the faith is not affected by these, as we are taught in the eleventh chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews. The faithful of every age concur in looking for that one city, and that city is identically the same with the New Jerusalem described in the Apocalypse as "a bride adorned for her husband."²²⁵

He goes on to state:

Surely, beloved brethren, you ought not to stumble at the anachronism of comprising Abraham, David, and others, in the fellowship of the Church! If you can understand how we, who live in the present economy, and unlike those Jews have never been circumcised, are nevertheless accounted true circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, and not in the flesh --you can have very little difficulty in perceiving that those

²²³It should be noted again that Spurgeon was not against all members of the Brethren. The Plymouth Brethren early on split between John Nelson Darby and B. W. Newton. Darby and his followers being known as the "Exclusive Brethren" and Newton's group becoming known as the "Open Brethren" or "Bethesda Group." Spurgeon had little use for the "Exclusive" branch of Brethrenism but he maintained warm relations with many in the "Open" school, among those being B. W. Newton and George Mueller. Even within the "Exclusive" group he respected the commentary work of William Kelly and C. H. Macintosh, although he generally disagreed with their conclusions.

²²⁴Spurgeon, "There be some that Trouble You," in *The Sword and Trowel*, (March 1867), 120.

²²⁵Ibid.

Old Testament saints, who were participators in the faith of Christ's death and resurrection, were verily baptized into him according to the Spirit.²²⁶

Interestingly enough, in this entire article, Spurgeon says nothing about eschatological interpretations of the Brethren, only the fact that Dispensationalism does violence to his Reformed view of the Covenant of Grace.²²⁷ For their part the Brethren did not respond to Spurgeon in formal exchange. On several occasions members of the "Exclusive" branch passed out leaflets in front of the Tabernacle before services, but Spurgeon generally ignored these episodes. In *The Sword and Trowel* he did remark on one occasion to a leaflet attack that he had blasphemed the Lord:

Our name and character are in too good a keeping to be injured by these dastardly anonymous attacks. Neither Mr. Newton nor Mr. Mueller would sanction such action; it is only from one clique that we receive this treatment.²²⁸

Iain Murray, in his work *The Puritan Hope*, states that Spurgeon, "makes a pungent attack on the general prophetic outlook of the Brethren,"²²⁹ in *The Sword and Trowel*. However, an examination of the article in question makes it clear that Spurgeon himself was not the author of that particular segment.²³⁰

²²⁶Ibid., 121.

²²⁷Interestingly Spurgeon's view here follows a similar line which a committee for the Presbyterian Church in the United States took in 1943 in evaluating Dispensationalism in light of the Westminster Confession of Faith. Ernest Thompson in his *Presbyterians in the South*, 3 vols. (Richmond, Virginia: John Knox Press, 1963-73) stated the following: "This committee, composed of representatives from the theological seminaries, to whom a couple of old-fashioned premillennialists [i.e. historic or covenantal premillennialists] were later added, brought in a lengthy and carefully worded report, adopted practically without debate, which ended with the unanimous opinion of the committee that dispensationalism was 'out of accord with the system of doctrine set forth in the Confession of Faith, not primarily or simply in the field of eschatology, but because it attacks the very heart of the theology of our church,'" (3:488). The General Assembly took no official action on the report

²²⁸Charles H. Spurgeon, "Plymouth Brethren," in *The Sword and Trowel* (January 1867), 3:72.

²²⁹Murray, *The Puritan Hope*, 259.

²³⁰The article is in fact unsigned, and also refers to Spurgeon in the third person, indicating that someone other than Spurgeon wrote the piece. See "Jerusalem Which is Above," in *The Sword and Trowel* (August 1866): 371. Spurgeon, as the editor for *The Sword and Trowel*, did approve of all of the copy, but it seems unwise to use this article as a primary source as Murray has done. This author's conclusion that Spurgeon did not author the article in question is also supported by Dr. Bob L. Ross, Director of Pilgrim Publishing in Pasadena Texas, a major reprinter of the Spurgeonian literary legacy.

Section C: Spurgeon in his Other Writings

The fine and comprehensive biography by G. Holden Pike gives several glimpses of Spurgeon's millennial views. In an 1874 article in *The Freeman*, that Pike quotes, Spurgeon stated this regarding his eschatological scheme:

The more I read the Scriptures as to the future, the less I am able to dogmatise. I see the conversion of the world, and the personal pre-millennial reign, and the sudden coming, and the judgment, and several other grand points; but I cannot put them in order, nor has anyone else done so yet. I believe every prophetic work I have seen (and I have read very many) to be wrong in some points. I feel more at home preaching Christ crucified than upon any other theme, and I do believe that He will draw all men to unto Him.²³¹

Spurgeon repeated this same general statement on several occasions, mainly in sermons, as has already been seen.

In Pike's biography, Spurgeon made a statement regarding prophetic themes. Someone had circulated a pamphlet predicting the return of Christ in 1866²³² supposedly written by Spurgeon. Spurgeon responded in this manner:

You will hear of me in Bedlam when you hear such rubbish as that from me. The Lord may come in 1866, and I shall be glad to see Him; but I do not believe He will, and the reason I do not believe He will is, because off these twopenny-halfpenny false prophets say He will. If they said that He would not come, I should begin to think He would; but, inasmuch as they are all crying out as one man that He will come in 1866 or 1867, I am inclined to think He will not arrive at any such time. It seems to me that there are a great many prophecies which must be fulfilled before the coming of Christ, which will not be fulfilled within the next twelve months; and I prefer to stand in the position of a man who knows neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of man commeth, looking always for His appearing, but never interfering with those dates and figures which seem to me only proper amusement for young ladies who have nothing else to do, and who take to that instead of reading novels, and for certain divines who have exhausted their stock of knowl-

²³¹Pike, *Spurgeon*, 4:133.

²³²The year of 1866 was signaled as the time for Christ's return by many in England. This was developed mainly from the work of James Hatley Frere and his book *A Combined View of the Prophecies of Daniel, Esdras, and St. John* (1815). As Bebbington states Frere gained most of his reputation because, "Frere enjoyed the prestige of predicting, shortly before Waterloo, the downfall of Napoleon," (Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Britain*, 82.) Spurgeon was also familiar with this work and stated, "This has been esteemed by many in its day, but we do not recommend its purchase," (Spurgeon, *Lectures: Commenting and Commentaries*, 4:127). In short it was believed that Napoleon III (1808-73) was the Antichrist and timing the seven year tribulation from his campaign in Italy in 1859, it was believed Christ would return in 1866. Spurgeon obviously rejected any such notion.

edge about sound doctrine, and therefore try to gain a little ephemeral popularity by shuffling texts of Scripture, as the Norwood gypsies shuffled cards in days gone by.²³³

Another interesting work by Spurgeon was his *Commenting and Commentaries*. This was produced as the fourth in the series of *Lectures to My Students*. It is two lectures on the use and usefulness of commentaries and then a catalogue of commentaries with comments by Spurgeon. While his comments are too brief and often “tongue in cheek” some things can be discerned about his prophetic views from some of his comments.

In commenting on a certain R. Amner's commentary on Daniel, Spurgeon stated that it was built, “on the absurd hypothesis that the prophecies were all fulfilled before the death of Antiochus Epiphanes.”²³⁴ On I. R. Park's work on Zechariah he stated, “This author explains the prophecy spiritually and asserts that ‘the spiritual is the most literal interpretation.’ We more than doubt it.”²³⁵ In discussing commentaries on Daniel and Revelation, he calls the premillennial work of E. B. Elliott's *Horae Apocalypticæ*, “The standard work on the subject.”²³⁶

A particular entry in the section on commentaries on the Book of Revelation is noteworthy. Spurgeon's principal at the Pastor's College was a venerable Congregational pastor and scholar by the name of George Rogers. Regarding Rogers Spurgeon stated:

This gentleman, who remained until 1881 our principal tutor, is a man of Puritanic stamp, deeply learned, orthodox in doctrine, judicious, witty, devout, earnest, liberal in spirit, and withal juvenile in heart to an extent most remarkable in a man of his years. The most sincere affection exists between us, we are of one mind and one heart; and what is equally important, he has in every case secured not merely the respect but the filial love of every student.²³⁷

²³³Ibid., 2:141-42.

²³⁴Spurgeon, *Lectures (Commenting and Commentaries)*, 4:126.

²³⁵Ibid., 4:139.

²³⁶Ibid., 4:199. Elliott took a historical interpretation of Revelation and was premillennial.

²³⁷Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 3:138.

This is not to say they agreed on every point. Rogers was a Congregationalist and a paedobaptist, a position which Spurgeon firmly rejected. But it is the note in *Commenting and Commentaries* which is of concern here. Rogers wrote a four volume commentary on Revelation entitled, *Lectures on the Book of Revelation*.²³⁸ Spurgeon's entry regarding this work was as follows:

Not half so well known as it ought to be: a mass of judicious remarks. We do not subscribe to the author's system of interpretation, but his expositions always command our respect.²³⁹

Rogers' view of the millennium was that it would be an earthly reign of Christ and would last for 1,000 years; that Satan and his demons would be bound during that time; and that there would be rebellion at the end of the 1,000 years, led and inspired by a released Satan. The millennium would end with God's direct intervention in the destruction of Satan's revolt. Rogers stated, "How evident is it from this consideration that, though less than heaven, the millennium is something more than [sic] the present church-state upon the earth!"²⁴⁰ Spurgeon did not object to Rogers' view of the millennium; but rather, to his system of interpretation. Rogers' system was to view history and God's program in terms of seven "divine dispensations" of which is the final 1,000 year period, the "apex of the pyramid, the key-stone of the arch, the entablature of the column, the cupola of the building, that very thing which is required to perfect the whole structure."²⁴¹ Rogers admitted that this system is of "human taste and reason,"²⁴² but also stated that "it may be correct and probably is, but has no claim upon our confident belief."²⁴³ While Rogers did not put belief in this system on a par with Scripture, he did see it as a reasonable explanation of human history. It

²³⁸George Albert Rogers, *Lectures on the Book of Revelation* (London: John Snow Booksellers, 1844). This particular commentary is now extremely rare, the only copy available in the United States being at the Syracuse University library in New York.

²³⁹Spurgeon, *Commenting and Commentaries*, 4:200.

²⁴⁰Rogers, *Lectures on Revelation*, 4:330.

²⁴¹*Ibid.*, 4:339.

²⁴²*Ibid.*

²⁴³*Ibid.*

is not necessary to classify Rogers as a “dispensationalist,” but he did hold many of the same views of as those which Darby had articulated by this time.

During his lifetime Spurgeon amassed one of the largest and finest biblical and theological libraries of his day. There were no books on the shelves which he had not read, at least the major parts of, and he had both the contents and location of the books in his collection memorized! His vast resources and his almost insatiable reading habits clearly enabled Spurgeon to be exposed to all of the various interpretations of prophecy and the Book of Revelation in general, and Revelation 20 and the millennium in particular. He kept up to date on current theological trends and new interpretations and was able to interact with them. In fact it was his theological acumen and “watchman on the wall” mentality that enabled him to foresee the theological decline that would lead to the “Downgrade Controversy,” the event which led to the formulation of his famous “Statement of Faith.”

Part Three

Spurgeon's Statement of Faith

At the height of the Down-Grade Controversy²⁴⁴ Charles Spurgeon and several others created and signed a statement of faith, to mark out the doctrinal point of reference which set them apart from those in the Baptist Union who were on the “down grade.” The statement

²⁴⁴This was a controversy which precipitated Spurgeon's withdrawal from the Baptist Union. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to give space to present a discussion of this controversy. In short this was a controversy which began when Spurgeon issued a series of articles in *The Sword and Trowel*, chronicling the decline of Biblical Christianity in his time. He cited higher criticism from Germany and its effect on authority of the Scripture and the natural decline in doctrinal purity and evangelical fervor as the chief problems. He and Mr. Robert Shindler commented on this issue in *The Sword and Trowel* for several months with the culmination coming in his withdrawal from the Baptist Union in October 1887. There are several excellent sources for information on this subject. See: *The Down Grade Controversy: Collected Materials which Reveal the Viewpoint of the Late Charles H., Spurgeon* (Pasadena, Texas: Pilgrim Publishing Company, n.d.); John F. MacArthur Jr. *Ashamed of the Gospel: When the Church Becomes Like the World*. (Waco, Texas: Word Publishing Company, 1993), particularly appendix one; Iain Murray, *The Forgotten Spurgeon* (Carlisle, Pennsylvania: Banner of Truth Trust, 1966); and Lewis A. Drummond. *Spurgeon: Prince of Preachers*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel Publications, 1992). Also J. C. Carlile's *C. H. Spurgeon: An Interpretive Biography* (London: Religious Tract Society, 1933) is an excellent source as he evaluates the history of the controversy and shows that Spurgeon had been vindicated.

was published in *The Sword and Trowel* in 1891 and dealt mainly with the inspiration and authority of the Scriptures, with nearly half of the confession given to that subject. It does close with the final point: "Our hope is the Personal Pre-Millennial Return of the Lord Jesus in Glory."²⁴⁵

In discussing this Confession and its signatories, C. W. H. Griffiths states this:

Mr. Spurgeon's Confession of Faith arose from a fraternal which was formed early in 1890. It then included Mr. Spurgeon himself, Adolph Saphir (who died in April, 1891), Archibald G. Brown, J. Douglas, William Fuller Gooch, G. D. Hooper, James Stephens and Frank H. White. It is clearly to the point to ask what these men understood by "pre-millennial." Dr. Adolph Saphir strongly contended for the same position as this Testimony (S.G.A.T.)²⁴⁶ in all his voluminous writings. Archibald Brown who conducted C. H. Spurgeon's funeral, believed in a millennium after the Lord's return (and a final rebellion at its end!). William Fuller Gooch wrote, "Facts Concerning the Second Coming of then Lord." There is no doubt where he stood. The writings of Frank White have been circulated by this Testimony from the beginning. James Stephens was a founder of the S.G.A.T. These men were powerful contenders for what we would understand as pre-millennialism. Of J. Douglas and G. D. Hooper we know little, but have no reason to doubt that they were kindred spirits with the others in their views.²⁴⁷

As Griffiths noted, Dr. Archibald G. Brown, conducted the funeral of Spurgeon in 1892, and was also one of Spurgeon's longest and closest friends. He said of Brown, "Few are the men like-minded with Mr. Brown, a brother tried and true."²⁴⁸ Spurgeon also wrote to Brown in reference to the "Down-Grade Controversy" which had led to the creation of the Statement of Faith, "You have long been dear to me, but in protest against deadly error, we have become more than ever one."²⁴⁹ Brown served his own large congregation in East London, but also gave much assistance to the Tabernacle during the last months of Spurgeon's life. This statement of faith is among the strongest sources for positioning

²⁴⁵"Mr Spurgeon's Confession of Faith," in *The Sword and Trowel*, (August 1891): 26:446-48.

²⁴⁶Sovereign Grace Advent Testimony, publishers of *Watching and Waiting*. This group adheres to a "historic premillennial" position as noted by E. L. Bynum (*Plains Baptist Challenger*, September 1990, 49:9, 1), and their own testimony.

²⁴⁷C. W. H. Griffiths, "Spurgeon's Eschatology," in *Watching and Waiting* 23:15 (July/September 1990): 227.

²⁴⁸Pike, *Spurgeon*, 6:325.

²⁴⁹cited in Drummond, *Spurgeon*, 750.

Spurgeon among those who hold to the Historic Premillennial position, with even Iain Murray citing it as substantial proof.²⁵⁰

Dr. Peter Masters, currently the pastor of The Metropolitan Tabernacle, and a staunch amillennialist, dismisses the importance of the “Manifesto” as it was called, saying that their definition of “premillennialism was considerably broader than it is today.”²⁵¹ However, as Erickson points out the confusion of millennial positions was not between the amillennial and premillennial views, but rather the fact that “amillennialism has often been difficult to distinguish from postmillennialism.”²⁵² Masters strongly asserts that Spurgeon was amillennial, and implies that the others who signed this statement were as well. However, Masters offers no proof of his assertion and never presents a cogent definition of any millennial position as understood in the Victorian era and does not quote any writer of the era to support his thesis. In the next chapter the writings and conclusions of Dr. Masters will be more closely examined and evaluated against Spurgeon’s own statements.

Summary

In this chapter the attempt has been made to present the writing of Spurgeon on the key issues regarding eschatology, primarily the Millennium. In doing so it has been demonstrated that in a consistent manner, in all of his varied sermons and writings, Spurgeon expressed the belief in a literal and physical return of Christ, the resurrection of the righteous and the wicked *separated* by a 1,000 year period of Christ’s rule on earth known as the millennium. On some other issues he believed in both the national (or racial) conversion of

²⁵⁰Murray, *Puritan Hope*, 257.

²⁵¹Master’s, “Spurgeon’s Eschatology,” 28.

²⁵²Erickson, *Contemporary Options*, 74.

the Jews and their restoration to the land of Palestine (a remarkable belief in his day, and about 75 years before it would actually happen!). He made clear differentiations between the Millennium, the current church age, and the eternal state.

It seems clear that from Spurgeon's varied writings that he presented a clear and consistent view on eschatological matters. Now those views must be examined against the tenets of the different millennial schemes, outlined in chapter one, to see which one most clearly represents Spurgeon's millennial view.

CHAPTER THREE

ANSWERING THE PREVAILING OPINIONS

Introduction

Now when Spurgeon's own material is examined, it seems clear that one would have to agree with the observation of C. W. H. Griffiths when he said, "Mr. Spurgeon declared that he believed in 'the Personal Pre-Millennial return of the Lord Jesus in glory,' the whole onus of proof must fall upon those who assert otherwise."²⁵³ This chapter will attempt to place Spurgeon's own declarations against the key features of each of the four millennial positions previously outlined. There will be interaction with several writers who have attempted to "claim" Spurgeon in support of their own positions.

Part One

Spurgeon and Amillennialism

In the Chapter One an examination of the basic tenets of the amillennial position was made. This position rejects any earthly and physical "millennium," instead believing that the

²⁵³Griffiths, "Spurgeon's Eschatology," 227.

“kingdom” is both present in the “dynamic reign of God in human history through Jesus Christ,”²⁵⁴ and future in the “new heaven and new earth.”²⁵⁵

Perhaps the most significant and well-documented evaluation of Spurgeon’s eschatology, and corresponding attempt to place him in the amillennial camp has come from Dr. Peter Masters. As already mentioned Masters is currently the pastor of The Metropolitan Tabernacle in London. Becoming pastor of this famous church, which had been suffering decline for many years, Masters is to be commended in being used by God to again extend the influence of the church and revitalizing its ministry. Masters is a vocal and prolific writer for the amillennial position, and seems to approach Spurgeon with a certain pre-understanding in that direction. In a 1991 article in *Sword and Trowel*, he presents a brief critique of Iain Murray’s appendix in *The Puritan Hope*, entitled, “C. H. Spurgeon’s views on Prophecy.” He also briefly notes Tom Carter’s work, *Spurgeon at His Best*.²⁵⁶ Masters basic complaint with both works is the same.

The problem with Mr. Murray’s assessment is that it is based on too few of Spurgeon’s eschatological statements. Using only a handful of scattered quotations, he writes that, ‘Spurgeon was far from clear’ on ‘some of the cardinal points’ of prophecy, and ‘cannot be said to have followed any previous school of thought consistently.’²⁵⁷

He also states:

A recent book of quotations from Spurgeon’s sermons --a fine book apart from this blemish-- declares on the basis of three short passages that Spurgeon was a post-tribulation premillennialist.²⁵⁸

After leveling the criticism of brevity of citations on these two works, Masters then goes on to lay out, in chronological fashion, quotations from Spurgeon’s sermons ranging over his entire ministry. He presents quotations from nearly 30 different sources (many of which

²⁵⁴Hoekema, *Amillennialism*, 178.

²⁵⁵Ibid.

²⁵⁶Masters does not refer to Carter or the book by name in his article, but it is unmistakable which work he is referring to.

²⁵⁷Masters, “Spurgeon’s Eschatology,” 28.

²⁵⁸Ibid.

were presented in chapter two) and presents the conclusion that, “Certainly he would have stood much closer to amillennialism than to either of the other scenarios recognized today.”²⁵⁹

However, Masters’ assertions are, more often than not, simply assertions. After presenting a synopsis of what he presupposes Spurgeon believed about the relevant aspects of eschatology; he lists the quotes and simply asserts that they, “demonstrate beyond doubt the firm and clear views of Spurgeon.”²⁶⁰

There are several facets of Masters’ work which must be commented upon. In the first place Masters never defines any of the millennial views, he simply caricatures them and often misrepresents them. In one instance, he makes a point about the millennial reign and contrasts it to a dispensational view. He states:

According to Spurgeon, as the saints took up their everlasting abode on the glorified earth with their savior, the millennial reign would begin. This, however, would not be a millennium like that *expected by dispensationalists*. *Spurgeon’s millennium would not be interrupted by any resurgence of evil.*²⁶¹ [emphasis ours]

However, it is not an exclusively dispensational teaching that foresees a rebellion at the end of the millennium (based on Revelation 20:7-9); the Historic Premillennial view would normally interpret this passage in the same manner; and even Charles Hodge in his presentation of Postmillennialism taught a rebellion at the end of the 1,000 years which would be put down only by the personal return of Christ!²⁶²

Perhaps the most critical observation of Masters’ work that can be made is the fact that his quotations of Spurgeon on some occasions have had phrases and sentences removed, without any effort being made to make a note of that fact. Obviously the use of an ellipsis is

²⁵⁹Ibid., 39.

²⁶⁰Ibid., 29.

²⁶¹Ibid.

²⁶²Hodge. *Systematic Theology*, 3:812.

acceptable in a long reference when it does not alter the intended meaning of the author; however, these omissions clearly alter the meaning of the quotation. In his review of Masters, Griffiths points this out as he states:

Yet more seriously, Dr. Masters omits statements from the sections he has quoted which contradict his analysis of Mr. Spurgeon's views. Frequently sentences and paragraphs are deleted without any indication that they have been removed. In some cases, this may have been for the sake of brevity although even here we feel readers should always have been told where editing has taken place in such a controversial article.²⁶³

He then presents two examples of editing which Griffiths states, "appears to have been a deliberate suppression of Mr. Spurgeon's view."²⁶⁴ Masters states that, "Spurgeon's millennium, was, in effect simply the *opening phase* of the eternal hereafter²⁶⁵ [emphasis his], and that there would not be any resurgence of evil and that, "no unregenerate person could possibly exist there."²⁶⁶ However, in quoting Spurgeon's sermon²⁶⁷ he omits a key phrase (although here he does use an ellipsis to indicate editing). Masters quotes the sermon in this manner:

The people of Israel are to be converted to God, and . . . their conversion is to be permanent . . . this thing shall be, and . . . both in the spiritual and in the temporal throne, the King Messiah shall sit, and reign among his people gloriously.²⁶⁸

However, the full quotation is as follows:

All these promises certainly imply that the people of Israel are to be converted to God, and that this conversion is to be permanent, for the tabernacle of God is to be with them, the Most High is, in an especial manner, to have His sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore; *so that whatever nations may apostatize and turn from the Lord in these days*, the nation of Israel never can, for she shall be effectually and permanently converted, the hearts of the fathers shall be turned with the hearts of the children unto the Lord their God, and they shall be the people of God, world without end. We look forward, then, for these two things. I am not going to theorize upon which of them will come first, whether they shall be restored first and converted afterwards, or converted first, and then restored.

²⁶³Griffiths, "Spurgeon's Eschatology," 229.

²⁶⁴Ibid.

²⁶⁵Master's, "Spurgeon's Eschatology," 29.

²⁶⁶Ibid.

²⁶⁷Spurgeon, *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 10:429-30.

²⁶⁸Masters, "Spurgeon's Eschatology," 30.

They are to be restored, and they are to be converted too. Let the Lord send these blessings in his own order, and we shall be well content which ever way they come. We take this for our joy and our comfort, that this thing shall be, and that both in the spiritual and in the temporal throne, the King Messiah shall sit, and reign among his people gloriously.²⁶⁹ [emphasis ours].

Certainly the highlighted phrase indicates that Spurgeon did hold out for the possibility, if not the likelihood, of some type of apostasy or falling away among the nations during the reign of Christ on earth. He also clearly makes a distinction between a temporal and a spiritual throne for the Lord Jesus in relation to his reign over the Jewish nation.

A more overt example is his quotation of Spurgeon in another 1864 sermon in which the quote is laid out as follows:

They shall not say to one another, Know the Lord: for all shall know Him, from the least to the greatest.

The whole earth will be a temple, every day will be a Sabbath, the avocation of all men will be priestly, they shall be a nation of priests --distinctly so, and they shall day without night serve God in His temple.²⁷⁰

Here there has been no effort to indicate that any editing had been done. Masters simply moves from one paragraph to the next. He begins this sermon excerpt with a statement that Spurgeon believed that, “There would be no Jewish worship, nor Christian ministers, and all shall know the Lord.”²⁷¹ However, an examination of the sermon indicates that a key phrase has been omitted, and the quote, in its entirety would read as follows:

They shall not say to one another, Know the Lord: for all shall know Him, from the least to the greatest. *There may even be in that period certain solemn assemblies and Sabbath days, but they will not be of the same kind as we now have;* for the whole earth will be a temple, every day a Sabbath, the avocation of men will be priestly, they shall be a nation of priests --distinctly so, and they shall day without night serve God in his temple, so that everything to which they set their hand shall be a part of the song which shall go up to the Most High.²⁷² [emphasis ours].

²⁶⁹Spurgeon, “The Restoration and Conversion of the Jews,” 10:430.

²⁷⁰Masters, “Spurgeon’s Eschatology,” 30

²⁷¹Ibid.

²⁷²Spurgeon, “The Lamb, The Light,” in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 10:439.

In evaluating Masters this reviewer must be critical of both his technique and analysis of Spurgeon. Masters clearly damages the credibility of his thesis and casts great doubt as to the validity of his conclusions by engaging in such careless handling of the written evidence. Certainly this author would not characterize Masters as dishonest; but rather careless in handling the material. Griffiths makes the same observation:

It appears that Dr. Masters has been over zealous in his attempt to identify the character of Mr. Spurgeon's millennium with that of the a-millennialists and that this has led to manipulation of quotations to his own end.²⁷³

Foundational in Masters' attempt to classify Spurgeon as amillennial is his contention that for Spurgeon, the millennium was simply, "the opening phase of the eternal hereafter."²⁷⁴ However, this requires a completely different definition of heaven, or the eternal state; for heaven is a realm of existence which by its very nature has no "time" or "phases."²⁷⁵ Certainly Spurgeon understood this most clearly. In his commentary on *The Westminster Confession* A. A. Hodge declared that heaven is a place where the saints enjoy "the presence of the Lord, with whom they are to continue in a state of conscious and exulted happiness, excellence, and honour, for an absolutely unending eternity."²⁷⁶ However, Masters must contrive this scheme in order to explain the clear fact, as even he admits, that Spurgeon believed in *two separate resurrections*.²⁷⁷ The first resurrection was to be of believers, followed by the millennium, and then the second resurrection of unbelievers; to fit them for, and dispatch them to their eternal punishment. In presenting his case, Masters seems to commit the fallacy of assuming his conclusion; that is, although he is attempting to prove that Spurgeon was amillennial, when confronted with facts which seem untenable to his position (i.e. two resurrections separated by a 1,000 year millennium), he declares that

²⁷³Griffiths, "Spurgeon's Eschatology," 230.

²⁷⁴Masters, "Spurgeon's Eschatology," 29.

²⁷⁵A. A. Hodge, *Outlines of Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1949), 380-81.

²⁷⁶A. A. Hodge, *The Confession of Faith* (New York: Scribner & Sons, 1869; reprint Carlisle, Pennsylvania: Banner of Truth Trust, 1958), 392.

²⁷⁷Ibid.

Spurgeon's millennium must simply be the "opening phase" of eternity, since Spurgeon was in fact amillennial. Masters states this regarding the problem of two resurrections:

Spurgeon's belief in a later resurrection and judgment of the lost would not fit the amillennial position, but neither would it fit into the premillennial scheme, as Spurgeon's second resurrection did not follow a rebellion in the millennial period, nor did it mark any further development to a better heavenly glory. As we have repeatedly pointed out, Spurgeon's millennium was merely the first phase of the full and everlasting kingdom of God.²⁷⁸

Again, Masters confuses the issue as he shifts his categories of thinking. He seems to assume that the amillennial position is a sort of "default" position. That is, if Spurgeon does not fit every one of Masters perceptions of what premillennialism is, then Spurgeon must have been amillennial.

He first declares that Spurgeon's clear belief in two resurrections is not compatible with an amillennial position; but then he follows this up by saying that his view is inconsistent with a premillennial position, since Spurgeon did not believe in a rebellion at the end of the millennium. In answering this there are only two points which must be made. First of all, it has already been demonstrated that in at least one of his sermons Spurgeon did hold out the possibility that there would be some type of apostasy at the end of the millennium (although Masters carefully did not include that phrase in his quotation). Secondly, the issue of whether or not there will be a rebellion at the end of the millennium is certainly not an essential point of premillennial eschatology and it has nothing to do with the resurrection of the wicked.

As has already been shown, Spurgeon's millennium was not the "opening phase" of eternity or heaven. He made a distinction between the heavenly or eternal throne and the temporal, earthly throne; between the eternal and heavenly state and the temporal earthly kingdom of Christ. As cited previously, Spurgeon said, "We shall take these words ["The

²⁷⁸Ibid., 39.

throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it” Rev. 22:3] as referring to heaven. Certainly it is most true of the celestial city, as well as the millennial city, that the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it.”²⁷⁹ He also stated, “We take this for our joy and our comfort, that this thing shall be, and that both in the spiritual and in the temporal throne, the King Messiah shall sit, and reign among his people gloriously.”²⁸⁰

Masters, then, is only able to “prove” his case by incompletely quoting Spurgeon or reinterpreting Spurgeon’s statements to his own ends. Griffiths points this out clearly as he says:

The key to the success of this part of Dr Masters’ argument [that Spurgeon’s millennium was the opening phase of the eternal state] in his analysis and selective quotation of Mr Spurgeon’s statements Several times he inserts ‘By this phrase Spurgeon does not mean...’ ‘the phrase probably means...’ ‘the last phrase does not imply...’ . . . To us, most of the statements of Mr Spurgeon are plain enough and one of our chief worries about the article is that Dr Masters frequently distorts and reinterprets the plain meaning to fit the conjecture about his prophetic views.²⁸¹

Finally Masters must resort to a “very broad definition of a-millennialism or an extremely narrow one of pre-millennialism,”²⁸² in order to make his case.

On a point by point comparison, Spurgeon’s teachings simply do not match typical amillennial teaching. First of all he claims to be premillennial. While the term “amillennial” may not have been coined in Spurgeon’s day, he nonetheless understood the concept and the teaching which would come to be called amillennial. The amillennial position was well-known and well-established in his day. His idea of two resurrections separated by a millennial age is totally incompatible with amillennial eschatology, as Hoekema states:

At the time of Christ’s return, there will be a general resurrection of both believers and unbelievers. *Amillennialists reject the common premillennial teaching that there resurrection of unbelievers will be separated by a thousand years*²⁸³ [emphasis ours].

²⁷⁹Spurgeon, “The Throne of God and of the Lamb,” 8:409.

²⁸⁰Spurgeon, “The Restoration and Conversion of the Jews,” 10:430.

²⁸¹Griffiths, “Spurgeon’s Eschatology,” 228.

²⁸²Ibid.

²⁸³Hoekema, “Amillennialism,” 182.

His belief that Israel would be re-gathered and have a “native government again; there will again be the form of a body politic; a state shall be incorporated, and a king shall reign,”²⁸⁴ is certainly foreign to amillennial eschatology. His belief that Christians are to “expect a reigning Christ on earth,”²⁸⁵ is the opposite of the amillennialist who see Christ’s reign as spiritual. In fact, Spurgeon warned in the very same sermon that the earthly reign of Christ is, “put so literally that we dare not spiritualize it.”²⁸⁶ Certainly no amillennialist would agree with the statement by Spurgeon, “I conceive that the advent will be pre-millennial; that he will come first; and then will come the millennium as the result of his personal reign upon the earth.”²⁸⁷

The only conclusion that can be reached, after a careful examination of Spurgeon’s statement on the vital features of eschatology, is that he was not amillennial in his eschatology.

Part Two

Spurgeon and Postmillennialism

It has been almost the “default” belief among Christians that Spurgeon was postmillennial in his eschatology. This is because of Spurgeon’s close association with the English and American Puritan writers on whom he “cut his theological teeth.” However, from the material which was cited in Chapter Two, it becomes obvious that of all the millennial positions, the postmillennial scheme was the only one which he clearly defined and categorically rejected. To repeat several quotes from Spurgeon:

There are sanguine brethren who are looking forward to everything growing better and better and better, until, at last this present age ripens into a millennium. They will not be

²⁸⁴Spurgeon, “The Conversion and Restoration of the Jews,” 10:426

²⁸⁵Spurgeon, “Things to Come,” 15:329.

²⁸⁶Ibid.

²⁸⁷Spurgeon, “Justification and Glory,” 11:249.

able to sustain their hopes, for Scripture gives them no solid basis to rest upon. We who believe that there will be no millennial reign without the King, and who expect no rule of righteousness except from the appearing of the righteous Lord are nearer the mark.²⁸⁸

Also:

They think they perceive in the future a great progress of civilization, and they expect to see the spread of the gospel; they expect to hear of great agencies employed, of multitudes of ministers going forth to preach the Word, and a gradual conversion of the world to the religion of Christ; but he who understands the prophets, and has seen Elias, believes not in the immediate conversion of the world, not in universal peace; he believes in “Jesus Only;” he expects that Jesus will first come; and, to him, the great hope of the future is the coming of the Son of Man.²⁸⁹

And perhaps most clearly:

Some think that this descent of the Lord will be post-millennial --that is, after the thousand years of his reign. I cannot think so. I conceive that the advent will be pre-millennial; that he will come first; and then will come the millennium as the result of his personal reign on earth.²⁹⁰

It seems that there can be little doubt that Spurgeon both clearly identified and summarily rejected the tenets of postmillennialism. However, a brief comment by one postmillennial writer who has discussed Spurgeon’s views will be helpful here.

In *The Puritan Hope*, Iain Murray presents a section on Spurgeon’s eschatology. Murray was criticized by Peter Masters, for referring to too few citations of Spurgeon’s material and then reaching the conclusion that, “there was a fundamental uncertainty in his mind,”²⁹¹ regarding eschatology. Murray’s thesis is that although Spurgeon made many statements affirming a premillennial position, he also made statements, that according to Murray were contradictory to a premillennial position. Murray admits that he has “no ready solution to the apparently contradictory features in Spurgeon’s thought on prophecy.”²⁹²

²⁸⁸Spurgeon, “The Form of Godliness without the Power,” 35:301.

²⁸⁹Spurgeon, “Jesus Only,” 45:374.

²⁹⁰Spurgeon, “Justification and Glory,” 11:249.

²⁹¹Murray, *The Puritan Hope*, 263.

²⁹²*Ibid.*, 260.

However, after rejecting the thesis of G. Holden Pike, who believed that Spurgeon shifted his millennial beliefs after, “he had received a few scars in the conflict,”²⁹³ Murray does present three general explanations for Spurgeon’s “contradictory features.”

First of all he postulates that in the initial phase of Spurgeon’s London ministry (1855-65) when there were “conversions in large numbers, particularly after what may have been called the national spiritual awakening in Ulster in 1859,”²⁹⁴ he was more “inclined to emphasize and preach the traditional Puritan hope which he had imbibed during his upbringing and youth.”²⁹⁵ For Murray the Puritan hope is the postmillennial scheme of eschatology.²⁹⁶ Second, he accurately states that Spurgeon “had a profound distrust of many pre-millennial dealers in prophecy.”²⁹⁷ These he identifies mainly with certain members of the Plymouth Brethren movement who were always, “trumpeting and vialing.”²⁹⁸ Lastly Murray interprets some of Spurgeon as indicating that he “was deliberately open in acknowledging the limitations of his understanding.”²⁹⁹

Murray’s evaluation of Spurgeon’s prophetic views does not seem to be adequate on several fronts. Most importantly, Murray ignores the clear and direct statements that Spurgeon makes refuting the postmillennial scheme. While in one place rejecting Pike’s contention that Spurgeon changed his millennial views later in his ministry, in another place he states:

That the pre-millennial hope came to the fore in Spurgeon’s closing years is not surprising. For it was then that he fought the cruel battle of the Down-Grade, when disbelief in any personal advent of Christ began to be heard in the church and when the

²⁹³Pike, *Spurgeon*, 5:96.

²⁹⁴Ibid.

²⁹⁵Ibid.

²⁹⁶In the introduction to *The Puritan Hope*, Murray explains that he himself was premillennial in his youth, but upon reflection on the great creedal statements of the Reformed tradition, the Puritan writers and the scriptures, he became convinced that “millenarianism” was an untenable position.

²⁹⁷Murray, *Puritan Hope*, 261.

²⁹⁸Ibid.

²⁹⁹Ibid.

idea of “progress”
became a hallmark of liberalism.³⁰⁰

However, the three sermon excerpts that have been cited here, Spurgeon clearly rejected the postmillennial scheme date over the entire range of his ministry, not simply during the time of the Down-Grade battle. “Jesus Only”³⁰¹ was preached at New Park Street in 1857, when Murray has Spurgeon, “inclined to emphasize and preach the traditional Puritan hope.”³⁰² Perhaps Spurgeon’s clearest statement, where he both identifies and rejects postmillennialism categorically, occurs in his sermon “Justification and Glory,”³⁰³ which he presented to the Metropolitan Tabernacle congregation in 1865. The other sermon cited which rejects the postmillennial scheme was given in 1889 at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, entitled “The Form of Godliness without the Power.”³⁰⁴ Secondly, while it is certainly irrefutable that Spurgeon rejected any attempt to set dates for Christ’s return (which the Scriptures forbid and careful theologians always avoid) and did not use prophecy preaching as an “evangelistic tool,” this does not imply a “fundamental uncertainty” in Spurgeon’s view on prophecy. Lastly, as has already been mentioned, Murray’s use of statements where Spurgeon seems to equivocate on his grasp of prophetic matters is somewhat overdone. Prophecy was not a foundational issue in his ministry, but as already shown, he was certainly as capable as anyone to present and defend his views in the proper setting.

Throughout Murray’s essay, it seems that he is arguing the fact that Spurgeon was not a “dispensational premillennialist.” With this conclusion there can be no disagreement; however, to be premillennial is not to require one to also be dispensational. For whatever reason Murray fails to acknowledge this point or entertain the possibility that Spurgeon could be covenantal and puritanical in his theology and also be premillennial. Griffiths sums this

³⁰⁰Ibid., 264.

³⁰¹Spurgeon, *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 45:373ff

³⁰²Murray, *Puritan Hope*, 260.

³⁰³Spurgeon, *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 11:241ff.

³⁰⁴Ibid., 35:301ff

matter up well when he states of Murray, “Unable to claim him as a postmillennialist, he was unwilling to concede him to be a pre-millennialist.”³⁰⁵

Part Three

Spurgeon and Dispensational Premillennialism

Although “there has been a decided tendency to equate Spurgeon with the whole pre-millennial, dispensational system of Darby, Scofield, and others;”³⁰⁶ this position is also untenable on several counts. While affirming that Spurgeon was in fact premillennial, the evidence is also clear that “not all premillennialists are dispensational.”

John Nelson Darby presented his system of Dispensationalism roughly at the same time Spurgeon was ministering. As has already been shown Spurgeon was certainly familiar with dispensational thought. Darby taught that the church should be “looking for His coming.”³⁰⁷ Darby’s presentation of the Dispensational scheme for the millennium: (1) a pretribulational “rapture” of the church, (2) Seven years of tribulation with the earth under the control of Antichrist, (3) the Second Coming at the end of the tribulation, (4) the establishment of the Millennial kingdom --for Israel, not the church-- with Christ personally reigning as Messiah, were all items widely distributed and well known in Victorian England. These distinctive features of dispensational premillennialism have remained somewhat consistent in the teachings of those identified as “Classic Dispensationalists.”

Ryrie, representing the “classic” position, points this out by presenting what he called the *sine qua non* of dispensationalism. Those points are: (1) maintenance of a clear dis-

³⁰⁵Griffiths, “Spurgeon’s Eschatology,” 226.

³⁰⁶Drummond, *Spurgeon*, 650

³⁰⁷Darby, *Lectures*, 1.

inction between Israel and the Church, (2) a normal or literal hermeneutic, (3) the underlying purpose of God in human history, namely His glory.³⁰⁸ He sums it up by stating:

The essence of dispensationalism, then, is the distinction of Israel and the Church. This grows out of the dispensationalists consistent employment of normal or plain interpretation, and it reflects an understanding of the basic purpose of God in all His dealings with mankind as that of glorifying Himself through salvation and other purposes as well.³⁰⁹

The issues of a “normal hermeneutic” and the “purpose of God in human history” are beyond the scope of this thesis; but the key issue of the distinction of Israel and the Church is not, and it is on this issue that Spurgeon distances himself from Dispensational Premillennialism.

Spurgeon rejected any notion which separated the people of God into separate camps, as taught by Darby and dispensational teaching. In a clear reference to the teaching of Dispensationalists on this point, he clearly rejected this notion in a sermon when he said:

Distinctions have been drawn by certain exceedingly wise men (measured by their own estimate of themselves), between the people of God who lived before the coming of Christ, and those who lived afterwards. *We have even heard it asserted that those who lived before the coming of Christ so not belong to the church of God!* We never know what we shall hear next, and perhaps it is a mercy that these absurdities are revealed at one time, in order that we may be able to endure their stupidity without dying of amazement. Why, every child of God in every place stands on the same footing; the Lord has not some children best beloved, some second-rate offspring, and others whom he hardly cares about. *These who saw Christ's day before it came, had a great difference as to what they knew, and perhaps in the same measure a difference as to what they enjoyed while on earth meditating upon Christ; but they were all washed in the same blood, all redeemed with the same ransom price, and made members of the same body. Israel in the covenant of grace is not natural Israel, but all believers in all ages.* Before the first advent, all the types and shadows all pointed one way --they pointed to Christ, and to him all the saints looked with hope. Those who lived before Christ were not saved with a different salvation to that which shall come to us. They exercised faith as we must; that faith struggled as ours struggles, and that faith obtained its reward as ours shall³¹⁰ [emphasis ours].

³⁰⁸Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today*, 43-47.

³⁰⁹*Ibid.*, 47.

³¹⁰Charles H. Spurgeon, “Jesus Christ Immutable,” in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 15:8.

That Spurgeon sees the Church and Israel united “spiritually”, there can be no mistake. The same point is made in a *Sword and Trowel* article of 1866 entitled, “Jerusalem which is Above.”³¹¹ It can also clearly be seen in Spurgeon’s *Treasury of David*, that he viewed the church as the recipient of the kingdom promises of God. Also in his commentary on Matthew, while not stating so specifically, Spurgeon strongly indicates his belief that the church would go through the tribulation, being preserved and protected by the power of God.

While there are many features relating to dispensationalism on which Spurgeon is either silent or says very little; those features are not central to the issue.³¹² On the central feature of dispensational premillennialism, Spurgeon does not hold to the distinction of Israel and the Church that would be common to a “classic dispensational” approach. For Spurgeon the millennial kingdom was the culmination of God’s program for the Church.

The writings of another writer in the dispensational tradition must be addressed at this point, for he attempts to identify Spurgeon as supporting a particular teaching on the rapture.³¹³ In his recent book entitled, *The Sign*, Robert Van Kampen, has presented a unique

³¹¹This article, as already mentioned is attributed to Spurgeon by Iain Murray in *The Puritan Hope* (259). However, it is not entirely clear whether or not this is the case. The article itself is unsigned and refers to Spurgeon in the third person (372). In a personal conversation with Bob L. Ross of Pilgrim Publishing (Pasadena, Texas) on February 1, 1994, it was his opinion that the article was not written by Spurgeon. For that reason Pilgrim Publishing did not include it in their *Sword and Trowel* reprint (Vol. 1). While Spurgeon was editing the journal and approved of all the contents; however, since this quote cannot not be attributed to him with 100% confidence it is not used for support in this thesis .

³¹²Masters states this: “Spurgeon clearly dismissed all the special features of dispensational premillennialism --the postponement teaching; the secret rapture; the dual return of Christ; the presence of unredeemed people during the millennial reign; the rebuilding of the Temple, the re-establishment of the Old Testament theocracy; and the resurgence of evil after 1000 years, with Satan’s little season and Armageddon at the close of the millennium.” (“Spurgeon’s Eschatology,” 38). Again Masters is not entirely accurate in his depiction of dispensationalism, but this issue is beyond the scope of this thesis.

³¹³It is debatable as to whether or not the abandonment of a pre-tribulational rapture, removes one from a true dispensational position. Writing in 1977 Erickson states:

It is important to observe the relationship between this eschatological position [pretribulationalism] and the general theological system known as dispensationalism. In practice they are almost invariably wedded to one another, yet logically they are somewhat independent. All dispensationalists are pretribulationalists --for pretribulationalism is a part of the full system of dispensationalism-- but not all pretribulationalists are dispensationalists. (Erickson, *Contemporary Options*, 125.)

While this author and others agree with Erickson’s assessment and would argue that pretribulationalism is an essential and necessary feature of dispensationalism, there are now others who would not. As mentioned earlier

view of the timing of the rapture which he calls, *The Pre-Wrath Rapture* of the church. Without dealing with this issue at length, it is a view which holds that the church will go through the majority of the tribulation, but will be raptured out of the world just before the “wrath of God” is poured out on the earth. The timing of the “Pre-Wrath” position is after a “mid-tribulational” rapture, but sometime before a “post-tribulational” rapture.³¹⁴ Mention of this issue would seem irrelevant to a thesis about Spurgeon, except that Van Kampen makes the following statement:

Charles Haddon Spurgeon, the great English preacher of the nineteenth century, was never known to have been a preacher who spoke extensively concerning the end times. But what he did say showed a remarkable understanding concerning the inter-relationship of the events developed in the past several chapters and summed up beautifully in the passage above [Luke 21:25-28]. The following are excerpts from his sermon entitled “Joyful Anticipation of the Second Advent.”

I must leave this first point, concerning the terrible time [a time of fearful national trouble] when this precept is to be carried out, by just reminding you that, when the Lord Jesus Christ shall come, the heavens shall tell us: “There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars.” . . . Now I come to THE REMAKABLE PRECEPT itself: “The look up, and lift up your heads.” . . . Let there be no looking down because the earth is quaking and shaking, but let there be a looking up because you are going to rise from it; no looking down because the graves are opening; why should you look down? You will quit the grace, never more to die. “Lift up your heads.” The time for you to hang your heads, like bulrushes, is over already, and will certainly be nigh. Wherefore, “look up, and lift up your heads.”³¹⁵

On the back page of the “dust cover” of the book Spurgeon is again referenced with the following statement:

Charles Haddon Spurgeon was not known to be one who spoke extensively on the end times. But what he did say perfectly parallels the sequence of events presented in this book. Thus in his sermon on “The Joyful Anticipation of the Second Advent” Spurgeon taught the events of the end times would occur according to the following order:

there are those in the “Progressive Dispensational” camp would no longer hold pretribulationalism as essential to dispensational premillennialism.

³¹⁴This position was first articulated by Marvin Rosenthal in *The Pre-Wrath Rapture of the Church* (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1990), although most acknowledge that it was Van Kampen who originated the concept. Rosenthal’s work has been thoroughly critiqued in several journals, the best of which perhaps being by John McLean in the *Michigan Journal of Theology* (Vol. 2:1 & 2, 1992). For a discussion of Van Kampen’s, *The Sign*, see John A. Witmer in *Bibliotheca Sacra* 151:113-16 (Jan.-March 1994)

³¹⁵Van Kampen, *The Sign*, 286-87.

The great tribulation by Antichrist

“First, then here is a terrible time . . . a time of fearful national trouble.”

Then the signs appear in the heavens

“When the Lord Jesus shall come, the heavens shall tell us: ‘There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars.’”

The Rapture and the resurrection of the saints

“And then, . . . our own eye shall tell us, for we shall see ‘the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.’ . . . ‘Look up, and lift up your heads’ . . . because the graves are opening . . . You will quit the grave never more to die.”³¹⁶

Several things need to be mentioned regarding this “use” of Spurgeon by Van Kampen. First of all his methodology of quoting Spurgeon is, to put it simply, intellectually amateurish. The first quotation is a stringing together of sentences from three different paragraphs spread over two pages of the sermon text.³¹⁷ While Van Kampen does show an ellipsis, he does not mention the fact that the second part of the quotation is actually the heading of an entire new section of the sermon. The quotation on the “dust cover” is even more poorly executed. It is the combination of four clauses, not even complete sentences, from paragraphs spread over several different pages and in two different sections of the sermon. With this kind of quotation methodology Spurgeon (or anyone else in print) could be shown to have said virtually anything, entirely at the whim of the editor!

None of Van Kampen’s usages represent either complete sentences or main thoughts in the paragraphs from which they have been excised. This ineffective and actually misleading use of quotations is rift throughout Van Kampen’s work and led one reviewer to comment, “This misleading selective quotations of pretribulation writers [Jeffrey

³¹⁶Ibid., back dust jacket cover.

³¹⁷In critiquing Van Kampen here the references to Spurgeon will show a different pagination than the ones in *The Sign* as this work utilizes the sermon and exposition from the original Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit (Vol. 42, 1896) series and Van Kampen references the sermon from a collection of Spurgeon’s sermons, *The Treasury of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing Company, 1965). The sermons themselves are identical in both works.

Townsend, Richard Mayhue and Gerald Stanton] seems to characterize Van Kampen's work."³¹⁸

The selective use of phrases from this sermon of Spurgeon is used to attempt to prove something which Spurgeon had no notion of demonstrating.³¹⁹ In this sermon Spurgeon clearly lays out his "post-tribulation" position. Spurgeon felt that the church would pass through the tribulation entirely and remained unharmed. He stated that the passage of Luke 21:28-31 should be interpreted to:

Moreover, I think that, from this chapter, if we are able to understand it all, --and it is confessedly very difficult to comprehend, --we must regard the siege of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple as being kind of a rehearsal of what is yet to be.³²⁰

He then goes on to state how the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 applied to the church:

But all that time, --the most awful time, perhaps that any nation ever endured,-- the disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ were altogether unharmed. It is recorded that they fled to the little city of Pella, were quiet according to their Lord's command, and that not a hair on their head perished.³²¹

Nowhere in this sermon does Spurgeon say anything about the "rapture," pre-wrath or otherwise. On the contrary, he always indicates that the church will go through the tribulation of those days in total.

So shall it be when, at the last great day, we walk among the sons of men calmly and serenely. They will marvel at us; they will say to us, "How is it that you are so joyous? We are alarmed, our hearts are failing us for fear;" and we shall take up our wedding hymn, our marriage song, "The Lord is come! The Lord is come! Hallelujah!" The burning earth shall be the torch to light up the wedding procession; the quivering of the heavens shall be, as it were, but as a dancing of the feet of angels in those glorious

³¹⁸John A. Witmer, review of *The Sign*, by Robert Van Kampen, in *Bibliotheca Sacra* 151 (Jan.-March 1994): 114

³¹⁹Interestingly enough the first book presenting the "Pre-Wrath" position, by Marvin Rosenthal has as a sub-title, "A *new* understanding of the Rapture, the Tribulation, and the Second Coming" [emphasis his]. If it is "new" understanding then it follows that an appeal to an older authority in support of the position has undermined the thesis' claim to originality!

³²⁰Spurgeon, "Joyful Anticipation of the Second Advent," 42:601.

³²¹*Ibid.*, 42:603.

festivities, and the booming and crashing of the elements shall, somehow, only help to swell the outburst of praise unto God the just and terrible, who is to our exceeding joy.³²²

Van Kampen attempts to show that Spurgeon “taught that the events of the end times would occur according to the following order,”³²³ when in reality nothing in the sermon indicates anything of the kind. First of all, already seen on several occasions, Spurgeon studiously avoided ever putting the features of eschatology in a chronological order; and in fact stated, “How all these great events are to be chronologically arranged, I cannot tell.”³²⁴ Secondly, nowhere in the sermon, particularly in the immediate context of the clauses put together to fabricate a quotation, does Spurgeon even mention Antichrist. In the second “chronological” point, Van Kampen attempts to show that Spurgeon taught there would be “signs in the heavens” announcing the Lord’s return. This much is true, but in the full context of Spurgeon’s statements he is clearly speaking of the Second Advent and His coming to the earth. Lastly, in perhaps the most misleading and specious use of Spurgeon, Van Kampen essentially creates a quotation attempting to demonstrate the timing of the Rapture and resurrection of the saints. His quotation is structured as follows:

And then, . . . our own eyes shall tell us, for they shall see ‘the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.’ . . . ‘Look up and lift your heads’ . . . because the graves are opening. . . . You will quit the grave never more to die.³²⁵

If this is to refer to the rapture, then Van Kampen must explain why in the first phrase he deletes a vital clause in his ellipsis. The complete sentence reads:

And then, *as all these voices shall proclaim his coming*, our own eyes shall tell us, for they shall see “the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory³²⁶ [emphasis ours].

³²²Ibid., 42:607.

³²³Van Kampen, *The Sign*, dust jacket.

³²⁴Spurgeon, “The Harvest and the Vintage,” 50:554. Interestingly enough this particular sermon was delivered at The Metropolitan Tabernacle on September 17, 1876, only few years before the message which Van Kampen is quoting from. If Spurgeon was now putting the features of eschatology in “chronological order” it was a clear departure from his previous understanding.

³²⁵Van Kampen, *The Sign*, dust cover.

³²⁶Spurgeon, Joyful Anticipation of the Second Advent, 42:606.

It certainly cannot be contended that the ellipsis was put in to preserve space, since the clause contains only eight words. It seems clear that it was deleted because what Spurgeon was really discussing was the Second Advent, not the rapture of the church, as Van Kampen asserts. It seems that Van Kampen assumes a chronology of eschatology from Spurgeon's sermon, based purely on the flow of the sermon.

It seems clear that in this case the words of Spurgeon have mistakenly been interpreted in a manner which he never intended. It appears that in this case the popular and familiar name of Charles Haddon Spurgeon has been misused to sell books, and to persuade some of an eschatological position which he himself never expounded.

The teachings of Charles Spurgeon on eschatological issues are simply not consistent with a dispensational premillennial approach, which brings us to the final millennial scheme to be considered, that of Historic or Covenantal Premillennialism.

Part Four

Spurgeon and Historic Premillennialism

Having examined the three other millennial positions and found them inconsistent with Spurgeon's beliefs on eschatological subjects; this thesis comes to the "Historic Premillennial" position. Thus far this thesis has demonstrated that Spurgeon rejected the key features of the amillennial, postmillennial, and dispensational premillennial schemes. At this point only two possible conclusions remain: first, that Spurgeon had a completely unique view of the millennium not consistent with any of the "Contemporary Options" as Erickson called them, or secondly that Spurgeon most closely adhered to what has been defined as the Historic or Covenantal Premillennial position. There is no evidence for the idea that

Spurgeon held to a position on the millennium unique to himself; so the purpose of this section will be to demonstrate the contention of this thesis that Spurgeon did hold a Historic or Covenantal Premillennial view.

When examining the “historic premillennial” position it was observed that there were essentially two key features: (1) The nature of the kingdom being the culmination of the church age. Although Israel will experience a national repentance and salvation through Christ, its place in the kingdom is only in relation to the church; nationally converted Israel is simply a continuation of the “single-people of God”; and (2) The “rapture” will be after the tribulation, with the church going through the tribulation, but being protected by the power of God. Ladd also delineates this millennial position when he states:

A nondispensational eschatology forms its theology from the explicit teachings of the New Testament. It confesses that it cannot be sure how the Old Testament prophecies of the end are to be fulfilled, for (a) the first coming of Christ was accomplished in terms not foreseen by a literal interpretation of the Old Testament, and (b) there are unavoidable indications that the Old Testament promises to Israel are fulfilled in the Christian Church.³²⁷

To examine Spurgeon’s millennial views it would be helpful to outline the main features of his beliefs as they have already been delineated in Chapter Two of this thesis (particularly pp 51-63) and then reiterate Spurgeon’s statements on these points.

1. After Pentecost, the church will continue for an undetermined time working in the world to spread the gospel by the power of and under the sovereignty of God.
2. In the last days the spiritual condition of the gentile world will grow progressively worse, while Israel as a national and political entity will both return to their land and submit themselves to the Gospel of Christ.
3. As a result of the spiritual deterioration, true believers will be increasingly persecuted, led by the “antichrist system” which for Spurgeon was the Papal system of the Roman Catholic Church.³²⁸

³²⁷Ladd, “Historic Premillennialism,” 27.

³²⁸*The Westminster Confession*, Chapter 25, Section VI, declares the pope to the Antichrist, and with this Spurgeon was in complete agreement. See Drummond, *Spurgeon: Prince of Preachers*, 103-104.

4. God will judge the unbelieving world and the Antichrist system with a period of tribulation. During this great tribulation the true church, God's elect (Jews and Gentiles) will be supernaturally protected and demonstrate a miraculous joy.

5. The personal and visible return of Christ will bring an end to the tribulation, as well as the end of the Antichrist system. His return will apparently also culminate the process of world-wide evangelism. Unbelievers will be swept away, Satan and the demons bound and the dead saints in Christ resurrected. Those Christians living on earth both Jew and Gentile), protected during the great tribulation will prosper and reign with Christ during the millennial kingdom on earth. Christ will personally reign from the throne of David in Jerusalem and the Jews will enjoy the full blessings of God that the earlier generation at the time of Christ had forsaken.

6. At the end of the 1,000 years the time for judgment of the ungodly will arrive and the second resurrection of the unjust will occur. Satan and the demons as well as all unbelievers from all ages will be cast into the "lake of fire" for all eternity. The New Heavens and New Earth will be revealed and all believers will move into the eternal state of heaven.

Regarding some secondary issues of eschatology Spurgeon says very little. He does apparently hold out a possibility of a rebellion or apostasy of the nations toward the end of the millennial kingdom, but he never, as far as this writer could determine, expounds on that theme. At least one place he seems to acknowledge that certain aspects of Jewish worship may exist in the millennial kingdom; but again, he is less than specific on the issue. On these issues it seems to be unwise to ascribe firm conclusions for Spurgeon on the basis of these two brief statements. It also must be remembered that neither of these points are primary issues to the question at hand, nor are they vital to *any* millennial scheme.

In relation to Spurgeon's millennial view it seems conclusive that he fits most consistently into the "Historic or Covenantal Premillennial" scheme. The reasons for this conclusion are based on several factors.

First of all, it has been shown that Spurgeon believed that the church would go through the totality of the tribulation.

So shall it be when, at the last great day, we walk among the sons of men calmly and serenely. They will marvel at us; they will say to us, "How is it that you are so joyous?"

We are alarmed, our hearts are failing us for fear;” and we shall take up our wedding hymn, our marriage song, “The Lord is come! The Lord is come! Hallelujah!” The burning earth shall be the torch to light up the wedding procession; the quivering of the heavens shall be, as it were, but as a dancing of the feet of angels in those glorious festivities, and the booming and crashing of the elements shall, somehow, only help to swell the outburst of praise unto God the just and terrible, who is to our exceeding joy.³²⁹

Tom Carter, in one of the few editorial comments in his compilation of Spurgeon quotations, draws this conclusion from quotations on the Second Advent:

The above two quotations [in his book, p. 183] state that the first event after Christ’s return is the millennial reign. This strongly implies that CHS believed that the church would pass through the tribulation before the second coming. This would make him a premillennial posttribulationist. The last sentence in the final quotation under this same topic (from 55.318) also leads to this conclusion.³³⁰

Peter Masters, in a reference to the work by Carter, seeks to refute this conclusion by stating:

A recent book of quotations from Spurgeon’s sermons --a fine book apart from this blemish-- declares on the basis of three short passages that Spurgeon was a post-tribulation premillennialist.³³¹

However, as already demonstrated, Masters’ methodology in relation to quotations and references is not above substantial criticism. Also his criticism is specious because it assumes that Carter, while compiling a listing of over 2,500 quotations, is unaware of any other quotations which might support his conclusion. In contrast it seems more reasonable that he choose to limit his quotations in this particular area of the book, while basing his conclusion on a much wider knowledge of Spurgeon’s writings.³³²

Second, Spurgeon believed that the Second Advent would precede the millennial kingdom; that is a premillennial coming:

If I read the word aright, and it is honest to admit that there is much room for difference of opinion here, the day will come, when the Lord Jesus will descend from heaven with a

³²⁹Ibid., 42:607.

³³⁰Tom Carter. *Spurgeon at His Best*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1988), 183-84.

³³¹Masters, “Spurgeon’s Eschatology,” 28.

³³²Indeed, it has already shown in this thesis that any compilation of quotations on the subject of eschatology might have been allowed to consume multiple pages of such a book!

shout, with the trump of the archangel and the voice of God. Some think this descent of the Lord will be post-millennial --that is, after the thousand years of his reign. I cannot think so. I conceive that the advent will be pre-millennial; that he will come first; and then will come the millennium as the result of his personal reign upon earth.³³³

Third, Spurgeon felt that the millennial kingdom was the culmination of God's program for the church:

. . . you will cry, "Come Lord Jesus. Let antichrist be hurled like a millstone into the flood, never to rise again." The vehemence of your desire for the destruction of evil and the setting up of the kingdom of Christ will drive you to *that grand hope of the church*, and make you cry out for its fulfillment³³⁴ [emphasis ours].

Fourth, Spurgeon believed that there would be two separate resurrections, one of the just and one of the unjust, separated by the 1000 year millennium:

If I read the Scriptures aright, there are to be two resurrections, and the first will be the resurrection of the righteous; for it is written, "But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrections. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power."³³⁵

And:

We anticipate a first and second resurrection; a first resurrection of the righteous, and a second of the ungodly, who shall be condemned, and punished for ever by the sentence of the great King.³³⁶

Fifth, Spurgeon taught that the Jews, as a national, political and temporal entity would again emerge in their own land, coming to faith in Christ and having Him to reign:

There will be a native government again; there will again be the form of a body politic; a state shall be incorporated, and a king shall reign. . . If there be anything clear and plain, the literal sense and meaning of this passage [Ezekiel 37:1-10] --a meaning not to be spirited or spiritualized away-- must be evident that both the two and the ten tribes of Israel are to be restored to their own land, and that a king is to rule over them.³³⁷

³³³Spurgeon, "Justification and Glory," 11:249.

³³⁴Spurgeon, "The Double Come," 27:292.

³³⁵Spurgeon, "Resurrection of the Just and the Unjust," 13:241.

³³⁶Spurgeon, "Things to Come," 15:329.

³³⁷Spurgeon, "The Restoration and Conversion of the Jews," 10:426.

Finally, Spurgeon taught that while the Jews would return to their land and that Messiah would reign over them, they would come to faith in Christ in the same manner as the church and would be part of the church, as is once again demonstrated:

Distinctions have been drawn by certain exceedingly wise men (measured by their own estimate of themselves), between the people of God who lived before the coming of Christ, and those who lived afterwards. *We have even heard it asserted that those who lived before the coming of Christ do not belong to the church of God!* We never know what we shall hear next, and perhaps it is a mercy that these absurdities are revealed at one time, in order that we may be able to endure their stupidity without dying of amazement. Why, every child of God in every place stands on the same footing; the Lord has not some children best beloved, some second-rate offspring, and others whom he hardly cares about. *These who saw Christ's day before it came, had a great difference as to what they knew, and perhaps in the same measure a difference as to what they enjoyed whole on earth meditating upon Christ; but they were all washed in the same blood, all redeemed with the same ransom price, and made members of the same body. Israel in the covenant of grace is not natural Israel, but all believers in all ages.* Before the first advent, all the types and shadows all pointed one way --they pointed to Christ, and to him all the saints looked with hope. Those who lived before Christ were not saved with a different salvation to that which shall come to us. They exercised faith as we must; that faith struggled as ours struggles, and that faith obtained its reward as ours shall³³⁸ [emphasis ours].

Summary

Spurgeon was most certainly premillennial, although not dispensational. Though in our own age this has been disputed, during his own lifetime his position was well known and attested to. As Drummond points out, "Nineteenth Century premillennialists loved to get Spurgeon in their camp. The Episcopal Recorder, November 1, 1888, wrote, 'C. H. Spurgeon (is a) . . . pronounced premillennialist.'"³³⁹ In one of the outstanding "Prophetic Conferences" in the United States in the later part of the 19th century, one of the speakers, Dr. S. H. Kellog said this:

³³⁸Charles H. Spurgeon, "Jesus Christ Immutable," in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 15:8.

³³⁹Drummond, *Spurgeon*, 650.

And, if we may be permitted to refer to those who, in our own day, hold to what seems to us to be the primitive and apostolic faith upon this subject, we shall find them not by any means among the ignorant and superficial, but most notably among those who, by common consent, hold the very highest place as learned and devout expositors and preachers of God's word. We find ourselves in such company, for example, as Stier, Auberien, Luthardt and Lange among the Germans; Professor Godet, of Lausanne, among the French; Bishops Trench and Ellicot, Dean Alford, *Mr. Spurgeon*, and others, among the English; the brothers Andrew and Horatius Bonar, among the Scotch; Van Oosterzee, Professor of Theology in the University of Utrecht, among the Dutch --not to speak at this time of well-known names among the living and the dead in our own country.³⁴⁰ [emphasis ours]

Previously this thesis demonstrated that Spurgeon would readily respond to those who misrepresented his views, especially in the area of eschatology. However, there is no record that he attempted to place any distance between himself and any of these assertions regarding his premillennial views.

This fact has also been recognized by historical-theologians of this era. George Marsden commenting on religious periodicals of the nineteenth century, particularly *The Christian Herald and Signs of the Times*, refers to it as “a premillennial organ, featuring such contributors as A. J. Gordon, A. T. Pierson, Samuel Kellog and England's Charles Spurgeon.”³⁴¹

All of these features combined, along with the additional references that have not repeated here, constitute a body of evidence that is both unmistakable and irrefutable in demonstrating that Charles Haddon Spurgeon most clearly and certainly held to a premillennial eschatology. Furthermore his millennial views were consistent with the

³⁴⁰S. H. Kellog, “Christ's Coming: Will it be Premillennial” in, *Premillennial Essays of the Prophetic Conference held in the Church of the Holy Trinity, New York City*, Nathaniel West (ed.) (Chicago, Illinois: Fleming H. Revell Publishers, 1879; reprint Minneapolis, Minnesota: Bryant Baptist Publications, 1981), 74. S. H. Kellog (1839-99) was one of the outstanding linguists and theologians in the Presbyterian church. He graduated with high honors from Princeton College and Seminary in 1861 where he studied under Charles Hodge and Addison Alexander.

³⁴¹George Marsden. *Fundamentalism and the American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism, 1870-1925*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 84. Interestingly enough Gordon and Pierson were frequent preacher at Spurgeon's Tabernacle and A. C. Dixon (a dispensationalist) served as pastor for several years after Thomas Spurgeon retired due to ill health.

“Historic” or “Covenantal” view of premillennialism, and also he held this position firmly and announced it clearly, although not with elaborate frequency, throughout his entire ministry.

In summarizing Spurgeon’s views on the various questions of the millennial kingdom, a return to the chart of Chapter One, overviewing the main features of the various millennial schemes, is helpful to bring a measure of closure to this discussion. As was demonstrated, Spurgeon had clear views on these key issues which have been documented in this thesis. Building off of the main chart, Spurgeon’s statements in relation to the key issues are laid out against each millennial view.

Comparison of Key Features the Millennial Schemes

	<i>Second Coming of Christ</i>	<i>Rapture of the Church</i>	<i>Resurrection</i>	<i>Nature of the Millennium</i>
<u><i>Amillennialism</i></u>	End of church age, the “realized” millennium. Then the “heavenly millennium” begins.	Equated with saints meeting Christ at His return	One Resurrection of the just and unjust at the 2nd coming	No earthly millennium, The millennium is to be equated with the church age and/or heaven.
<u><i>Postmillennialism</i></u>	At the end of the millennium	Equated with saints meeting Christ at His return	One Resurrection of the just and unjust at the 2nd coming	Culmination of Gospel ministry with the church & Christianity exercising virtual dominion in all areas of society. The 1,000 yrs may or may not be literally understood.
<u><i>Historic Premillennialism</i></u>	Prior to the start of the millennial kingdom	At the end of the tribulation period	2 Resurrections: the just at Christ’s return; the unjust at the end of the millennium	Culmination of the church age. Christ will rule and reign over the world thru the agency of the church. Israel will be nationally converted and be a part of the church.
<u><i>Dispensational Premillennialism</i></u>	Prior to the start of the millennial kingdom	Just prior to the beginning of the tribulation period (although in modern times some, such as Moo, have opted for a post-tribulational rapture).	2 Resurrections, with the 1st in 3 phases: Christ as the “firstfruits”; Church saints at the rapture; OT & tribulation saints at the 2nd coming. The Unjust at the end of the millennium	Culmination of God’s promises to Israel. The millennium will see Christ reign over the world thru the agency of Israel. Modified OT worship will resume in the rebuilt Temple.

<i>Spurgeon and Amillennialism</i>	
Issue	Spurgeon's Statement
<p><u><i>Second Coming of Christ</i></u> Occurs at the End of the Church Age or the "realized" millennium. The "heavenly millennium" then begins.</p>	<p><i>Spurgeon would have partially accepted this statement as far as it goes.</i> Among other things he stated, "This same Jesus literally went up. This same Jesus will literally come again. He will descend in clouds; and, 'He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth' even as beforehand. . . Brethren, do not let anyone spiritualize away all this from you."³⁴²</p>
<p><u><i>Rapture of the Church</i></u> Equated with the Saints Meeting Christ at His Return</p>	<p><i>Spurgeon said little, if anything, about the rapture.</i> He seems to have most likely equated this with the Second Coming. However, he did believe that the church would pass through a tribulation, thus any "rapture" in his thinking would be posttribulational. He said, "we must regard the siege of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple as being a kind of rehearsal of what is yet to be."³⁴³</p>
<p><u><i>Resurrection</i></u> One Resurrection of the Just and Unjust at the 2nd Coming</p>	<p><i>Spurgeon categorically rejected this idea.</i> He repeated this theme on many occasions. "Notice that this reaping comes first, and I think it comes in order of time. If I read the Scriptures aright, there are to be two resurrections, and the first will be a resurrection of the righteous; for it is written, "But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished."³⁴⁴</p>
<p><u><i>Nature of the Millennium</i></u> No earthly millennium. The Millennium is to be equated with the Church Age and/or heaven.</p>	<p><i>Spurgeon rejected this idea of the millennium.</i> He stated, "I conceive that advent will be pre-millennial; that he will come first; and then will come the millennium as the result of his personal reign on earth."³⁴⁵</p>

It can be seen clearly that on the key points of the amillennialism, Spurgeon rejected most of the key tenets which give definition to that millennial scheme. The only conclusion can be that Spurgeon was not an amillennialist.

³⁴²Spurgeon, "The Ascension and the Second Advent Practically Considered," 31:23.

³⁴³Spurgeon, "Joyful Anticipation of the Second Advent," 42:601.

³⁴⁴Spurgeon, "Resurrection of the Just and the Unjust," 13:241.

³⁴⁵Spurgeon, "Justification and Glory," 11:249.

<i>Spurgeon and Postmillennialism</i>	
Issue	Spurgeon's Statement
<u><i>Second Coming of Christ</i></u> Occurs at the end of the Millennium	<i>Spurgeon rejected this concept in rather clear terms.</i> He stated, "Some think that this descent of the Lord will be post-millennial --that is after the thousand years of his reign. I cannot think so." ³⁴⁶
<u><i>Rapture of the Church</i></u> Equated with the Saints Meeting Christ at His Return	<i>Spurgeon said little, if anything, about the rapture.</i> He seems to have most likely equated this with the Second Coming. However, he did believe that the church would pass through a tribulation, thus any "rapture" in his thinking would be posttribulational. He said, "we must regard the siege of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple as being a kind of rehearsal of what is yet to be." ³⁴⁷
<u><i>Resurrection</i></u> One Resurrection of the Just and Unjust at the 2nd Coming	<i>Spurgeon categorically rejected this idea.</i> He repeated this theme on many occasions. "Notice that this reaping comes first, and I think it comes in order of time. If I read the Scriptures aright, there are to be two resurrections, and the first will be a resurrection of the righteous; for it is written, "But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished." ³⁴⁸
<u><i>Nature of the Millennium</i></u> Culmination of the Gospel ministry with the Church and Christianity exercising virtual dominion in all areas of society. The 1,000 years may or may not be literally understood.	<i>Spurgeon clearly rejected this concept of the millennial kingdom.</i> He declared it to be flawed both biblically and historically. He said, "There are sanguine brethren who are looking forward to everything growing better and better and better, until, at last this present age ripens into a millennium. They will not be able to sustain their beliefs, for Scriptures gives them no solid basis to rest upon. We who believe that there will be no millennial reign without the King, and who expect no rule of righteousness except from the appearing of the righteous Lord are nearer the mark." ³⁴⁹

Postmillennialism was the system that Spurgeon most clearly identified and categorically rejected in his works. The evidence does not support identifying Spurgeon as a postmillennialist.

³⁴⁶Ibid.

³⁴⁷Spurgeon, "Joyful Anticipation of the Second Advent," 42:601.

³⁴⁸Spurgeon, "Resurrection of the Just and the Unjust," 13:241.

³⁴⁹Spurgeon, The Form of Godliness without the Power," 35:301.

Spurgeon and Dispensational Premillennialism

Issue	Spurgeon's Statement
<p><u>Second Coming of Christ</u> Occurs Prior to the Start of the millennial kingdom</p>	<p><i>This was Spurgeon's position, which he consistently presented. As already mentioned, he stated, "I conceive that the advent will be pre-millennial; that is he will come first; and then will come the millennium as the result of his personal reign upon earth."³⁵⁰</i></p>
<p>He <u>Rapture of the Church</u> Occurs just prior to the beginning tribulation period.</p>	<p><i>Spurgeon clearly did not adhere to a pretribulational view of the rapture.</i></p> <p>stated, "we must regard the siege of Jerusalem and the destruction of the of Temple as being a kind of rehearsal of what is yet to be."³⁵¹ In his few the discernible comments on the rapture, Spurgeon is most easily identified as posttribulational.</p>
<p><u>Resurrection</u> Two Resurrections with the first: in three phases: Christ, as "first-fruits," the Church Saints at the Rapture; OT and Tribulation Saints at the 2nd Coming. The Unjust at the end of the millennium.</p>	<p><i>Spurgeon never apparently commented on this aspect of Dispensationalism, however his clear views on a posttribulational view and statements on two resurrections, make the dispensational view antithetical to Spurgeon's thought. He stated, If I read the Scriptures aright, there are to be two resurrections, and the first will be a resurrection of the righteous; for it is of written, "But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished."³⁵²</i></p>
<p><u>Nature of the Millennium</u> Culmination of God's promises to Israel. The millennium will see Christ reign over the world through the agency of Israel. Modified OT worship will resume in the rebuilt temple.</p>	<p>As seen above, this was not Spurgeon's view of the nature of the millennium. Spurgeon saw one people of God, and the millennium as the culmination of the church age, with the personal reign of Christ. Israel would certainly be converted on a national scale and have a prominent place in the kingdom, but it would be through the agency of the church. He stated, "Israel in the covenant of grace is not national Israel, but all believers in all ages."³⁵³</p>

³⁵⁰Spurgeon, "Justification and Glory," 11:249.

³⁵¹Spurgeon, "Joyful Anticipation of the Second Advent," 42:601.

³⁵²Spurgeon, "Resurrection of the Just and the Unjust," 13:241.

³⁵³Spurgeon, "Jesus Christ Immutable," 15:8.

Spurgeon and Historic Premillennialism

Issue	Spurgeon's Statement
<p><u>Second Coming of Christ</u> Occurs Prior to the Start of the millennial kingdom</p>	<p><i>This was Spurgeon's position, which he consistently presented. As already mentioned, he stated, "I conceive that the advent will be pre-millennial; that is he will come first; and then will come the millennium as the result of his personal reign upon earth."</i>³⁵⁴</p>
<p><u>Rapture of the Church</u> At the end of the tribulation period.</p>	<p><i>With as little as Spurgeon said on this subject, the posttribulational view seems to fit the best. He stated, "So shall it be when, at the last great day, we walk among men calmly and serenely. They will marvel at us; they will say to us, 'How is it you are so joyous? We are alarmed, our hearts are fail us for fear;' and we shall take up our wedding hymn, our marriage song, 'The Lord is come! The Lord is come! Hallelujah!' The burning earth shall be the torch to light the wedding procession; the quivering of the heavens shall be, as it were, but as the dancing of the feet of angels in those glorious festivities, and the booming and crashing of the elements shall, somehow, only help to swell the outburst of praise unto God the just and terrible, who is our exceeding joy."</i>³⁵⁵</p>
<p><u>Resurrection</u> Two Resurrections: the Just at resurrection; Christ's return; the Unjust at the end of the millennium.</p>	<p><i>This was Spurgeon's belief, which all students of Spurgeon have admitted. Spurgeon stated, "We expect a reigning Christ on earth; that seems so plain that we dare not spiritualize it. We anticipate a first and second</i> <i>a first of the righteous, and a second resurrection of the ungodly, who shall be judged, condemned, and punished for ever by sentence of the great King."</i>³⁵⁶</p>
<p><u>Nature of the Millennium</u> Culmination of the church age. Christ will rule and reign over the world through the agency of the Church. Israel will be nationally measure converted and be a part of the Church.</p>	<p><i>This was Spurgeon's position on the nature of the millennium. He stated, "There is, moreover, to be a reign of Christ. I cannot read the Scriptures without perceiving that there is to be a millennial reign, as I believe, upon the earth."</i>³⁵⁷ He also believed that the Jews would be converted and be a part of the church. He stated, "These who saw Christ's day before it came, had a great difference as to what they knew, and perhaps in the same <i>a difference as to what they enjoyed while on earth meditating upon Christ; but they were all washed in the same blood, all redeemed with the same ransom price, and made members of the same body. Israel in the covenant of grace is not national Israel, but all believers in all ages."</i>³⁵⁸</p>

³⁵⁴Spurgeon, "Justification and Glory," 11:249.

³⁵⁵Spurgeon, "The Joyful Anticipation of the Second Advent," 42:603.

³⁵⁶Spurgeon, "Things to Come," 15:329.

³⁵⁷Spurgeon, "Forever with the Lord," 23:522.

³⁵⁸Spurgeon, "Jesus Christ Immutible," 15:8.

While Spurgeon must be identified as a premillennialist, he is most accurately described as a premillennialist of the “historic” or “covenantal” variety. He adhered to every major point which identifies this position, while certain features of dispensational premillennialism (e.g. the timing of the rapture and the nature of the millennium) were in opposition to his biblical and theological understanding.

The thrust of the Premillennial view, as espoused by Charles Spurgeon, is well-summarized by Clouse when he states:

In every age when the return of Christ has been a living reality premillennialism has been the prevailing view. Even today it is among dispensationalists that the second coming is emphasized. Those who adopt other views seldom mention the return of Christ and the fact that history will end one day with the establishment of God’s kingdom. Neglecting the second coming is a failure to proclaim the whole counsel of God and deprives Christians of a powerful source of comfort. The Gospel is a message of hope and openness toward the future. Premillennialism constantly reminds the believer that no matter how discouraging the situation is today, millennial glory awaits. Perhaps one’s social class is declining or his theological viewpoint is on the wane or some great personal tragedy has befallen him yet he may take heart, for one day assuredly he will rule the world with Christ.³⁵⁹

³⁵⁹Robert G. Clouse, “A History of the Interpretation of the Millennium,” in *New Testament Essays in Honor of Homer A. Kent Jr.* Gary T. Meadors, ed. (Winona Lake, Indiana: BMH Books, 1991), 215.

CONCLUSION

In this study, several things have been observed about Charles H. Spurgeon; specifically his beliefs about eschatology in general and the nature of the millennial kingdom and its relation to the return of Christ in particular. This study was motivated by observing men of vastly different millennial beliefs all attempting to “use” Spurgeon to bolster their own views and/or to help them in influencing others to their particular view.

When a single individual writes as extensively and divergently as Spurgeon, the sheer volume of material will have the tendency to make proper interpretation or systemization difficult. If only a part of a sermon here and there is examined, devoid from its context, message, occasion, and audience, no doubt Spurgeon could be “proven” to adhere to many theological positions that he clearly would have rejected.

As stated in the introduction, this writer’s hope is that this thesis will serve two distinct purposes: (1) the uninformed will come to understand Spurgeon and his millennial views clearly, and (2) that the misuse of his stature and the misinterpretation of his works would come to an end, at least on this issue.

In this thesis the author has attempted to show that Spurgeon did not display a “fundamental uncertainty”³⁶⁰ in his thinking on issues of eschatology. He held a clear and consistent view of the “major” features of eschatology: namely the second coming of Christ, the eventual restoration of national Israel to their land and their corporate faith in Christ, the

³⁶⁰Murray, *Puritan Hope*, 263.

resurrections of the just and unjust, the millennial kingdom, the reality of heaven and the certainty of hell. On some other minor issues he either commented little or not at all. But all in all, the evidence is irrefutable that Spurgeon was a premillennialist of the “historic” or “covenantal” school.

Spurgeon’s ministry was built around the exposition of the Scriptures and the declaration of the Gospel. He refused to use prophetic themes in a “sensational” way as a means to attract people to either his church or to the Gospel. In eschatological issues he majored on “personal” eschatology; that is, the final abode of each individual, either heaven or hell. He preached the joys of heaven for the believer and he preached the terrors of hell for those who would reject the salvation which God graciously provided for and offers to all men. He was strongly Calvinistic in his understanding of redemption and God’s purposes, but at the same time he called on “all men everywhere to repent,” and turn to Christ. In relation to the “corporate” eschatology, he discussed those issues when either his text or the situation demanded such attention, but that was admittedly a small percentage of the time. As he stated:

You will bear me witness, my friends, that it is exceedingly seldom I ever intrude into the mysteries of the future with regard either to the second advent, the millennial reign, or the first and second resurrection. As often as we come about it in our expositions, we do not turn aside from the point, but if guilty at all on this point, it is rather in being too silent than saying too much.³⁶¹

It seems that Spurgeon preferred to stay on the “too silent” side of eschatological issues, in the great tradition of the Reformers (e.g. Calvin, Luther, Zwingli, Knox, et al). He lived in an age where speculation on the return of Christ was rampant. The Millerite movement of the United States had crossed the Atlantic; and, again there was a wave of excitement about the setting of dates and speculation on exactly when Jesus would return. This was especially true in the early part of his ministry in the middle and late 1860’s.

³⁶¹Spurgeon, “The First Resurrection,” 7:345.

Spurgeon took the words of Acts 1:7, “It is not for you to know the times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority,” very seriously. He viewed any prophetic speculation that delved into these areas to be unprofitable at best and dangerously wicked at worst. Even in his own day there were those who attempt to misuse his name and stature to give credence to their views on things eschatological. One false publication, with Spurgeon’s name affixed, declared his belief that Jesus would return in 1866. When he heard of this he wasted no time in condemning the action and informing his congregation that, “you will hear of me in Bedlam when you hear such rubbish as that from me.”³⁶²

It is futile to speculate how Spurgeon would articulate his eschatological beliefs if “he had lived in this century.”³⁶³ It is suffice to say that Spurgeon had a clear and consistent view of all the major areas of systematic theology, including eschatology. Some might have wished he had said more, while others may have wished that he had said less. However, all that he said is internally consistent and there can be no doubt to the conclusion that Spurgeon was, a self-proclaimed premillennialist in his eschatology.

This study has been extensive, but perhaps not exhaustive, in it’s searching out the writings of Charles Haddon Spurgeon in the area of his millennial beliefs. While all may not agree with the conclusions presented, the evidence speaks for itself and seems to be irrefutable. Since 1993, a century after the death of Spurgeon, a renewed interest in the life and ministry of Spurgeon has been seen. Because of the stature of Spurgeon in the evangelical community, the continued study of his works is clearly needed. Inevitably Spurgeon will continue to be quoted and cited in many circles on many issues; both properly and improperly, and perhaps the only thing that will end the irresponsible use of his name is a definitive systematic theology of Spurgeon’s works. Should that task ever be undertaken, this study will at least have answered the question on Spurgeon and the millennium. It is

³⁶²Pike, *Spurgeon*, 2:141.

³⁶³Masters, “Spurgeon’s Eschatology,” 39.

also hoped that it will inspire future students to further clarify and further develop Spurgeon's views in this important area.