

(Part 5 of 6 from)

THE MEDIATORIAL KINGDOM IN THE APOCALYPSE

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CHAPTER XXVI

From *The Greatness of the Kingdom* (1959)

7. *The Mediatorial Reign* (Rev. 20:2-7)

a. *The Measure of Time*

This is stated as "a thousand years," and the expression occurs six times in Revelation 20:2-6, once in every verse, thus indicating its importance. But this repetition is not merely tautological, for in each recurrence the expression is connected with a distinctive idea: First, Satan is bound for a thousand years (vs. 2). Second, the nations will not be deceived for a thousand years (vs. 3). Third, the martyred saints reign with Christ for a thousand years (vs. 4). Fourth, the rest of the dead live not again till the thousand years are finished (vs. 5). Fifth, *all* who have part in the first resurrection will be priests of God and reign with Christ a thousand years (vs. 6). Sixth, Satan will be loosed after the thousand years (vs. 7).

The measure thus repeated seems clearly to refer to a single unit of time. One writer of the modern postmillennial school says dogmatically that the "thousand years" of verses 1-3 refers to a future period on *earth*, while the "thousand years" of verses 4-6 refers to the intermediate state of the righteous souls between death and resurrection.¹ But no sufficient reasons are given for this radical theory. Obviously, this would make the second "thousand years" chronologically meaningless, for the time would be different for every one who dies, except for those who happen to die at the same time! Furthermore, to allege two different periods of a thousand years, referring to two totally different modes of existence, would destroy the literary unity of the passage which begins with the binding of Satan for a "thousand years" (vs. 2) and ends with his loosing after the thousand years (vs. 7). This is to say nothing about the unbiblical notion of disembodied "souls" reigning with Christ *before* their resurrection and glorification.

Most postmillennial and amillennial attacks upon the doctrine of a Millennial Kingdom, to

¹ Loraine Boettner, *The Millennium* (Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Pub. Co., 1958), p. 66.

be established at the second advent of Christ, begin with a denial of the *literality* of "the thousand years." All agree in giving to this figure a symbolic meaning, but they disagree over whether or not the idea of *time* is totally excluded. To some (as Warfield) the figure simply represents an inconceivable idea. To others the time element is genuinely present: the *years* are literal, but not the *sum* of a thousand!² This admission of a literal period of time, though the length is unknown, is fatal to the entire scheme. For if the period can be measured in literal years at all, we might just as well (and more wisely) accept the figure given by St. John.

All this leads to the observation that the figure as stated in the inspired record is patently not an unreasonable figure, else a vigorous critic of the premillennial view could hardly admit that the time would be "probably not less than a literal thousand years . . . a definitely limited period."³ Since the Kingdom of Christ is to be set in the context of human history, its length might well bear some relevance to what is known about that history. Viewed from this standpoint, the figure of a "thousand" sounds more reasonable than two hundred thousand or other speculative guesses of the anti-literalists. It may be recalled that in early Biblical history some of the patriarchs approached a millennium of years in their ages, and Isaiah declares of the righteous in the coming Kingdom that there shall be no more "an old man that hath not filled his days" (65:20). Furthermore, the Theocratic Kingdom of Old Testament history endured from Moses to the Captivity, a period of somewhat less than a thousand years. Thus, the figure set by St. John seems to make good sense. Why, then, should we tamper with it?

In chapters 4-20 of the Book of Revelation there are at least twenty-five references to measures of time. Of these, only two *require* what is called a "figurative" treatment: the "day of his wrath" (6:17), and "the hour of his judgment" (15:7).⁴ Such a usage of "day" and "hour" as referring to some period of time, whether long or short, is so common that it needs no discussion. But even in such cases the total time may be quite definite: thus we may speak of Hitler's "day," and we know exactly how long it lasted. The other twenty-three references to time may be divided into three classes:

First, there are seven references to the seventieth week of Daniel's prophecy and its two main divisions (Dan. 9:27); stated variously as 1260 days (11:3, 12:6), 42 months (11:2, 13:5), and 3 1/2 years (12:14). The "short time" of 12:12 clearly refers to the 42 months of 13:5, while the "little season" of 6:11 seems to cover both halves of the entire seven-year period. Now the *literality* of these stated figures is grounded in history, for the first 69 weeks of years in Daniel's prophecy have been fulfilled exactly by the first coming of Christ. If not,

2 To postmillennialist J. Marcellus Kik, and also to amillennialist Floyd E. Hamilton, the "thousand years" extend from the first coming of Christ to His second coming. To postmillennialist Loraine Boettner the period will not be less than a thousand years but probably much *longer*.

3 Loraine Boettner, *ibid.*, p. 64.

4 "The Lord's day" of 1:10 may also belong in this category, as I am inclined to believe; but it is also possible to interpret the reference as a literal day of an ordinary week.

then He is not the Messiah. We have a right to expect, therefore, a similar literal fulfilment of the seventieth week of years.

Second, there are the six references to the "thousand years" in Rev. 20:1-7. Since this measure of time is applied to the Kingdom which follows immediately the literal seven-year period of pre-Kingdom judgments, there is a strong presumption of literality as to the thousand-year measure. And any other viewpoint should be rejected unless based on Biblical reasons which are clear and indisputable. No such reasons have ever been produced, though brilliant minds have been struggling to do so for considerably more than a thousand years. Calvin, who rejected the idea of literality, was wiser in dismissing the matter *without* argument.

Third, the other ten references to time may be classed as miscellaneous: the "half an hour" of 8:1; the "five months" of 9:5; the "days" of the voice of the seventh angel of 10:7; the "three days and a half" of 11:9, 11; the "same hour" of 11:13; the "one hour" of 17:12 and 18:19; and the "one day" of 18:8. In fact, great precision in chronology is strongly suggested by the reference in 9:15 where we learn that the four angels were loosed that had been prepared for the "*hour*" and "*day*" and "*month*" and "*year*." It will have been observed by careful readers that each of these miscellaneous references represents a subdivision of the seven-year period of pre-Kingdom judgments, lending further weight to the presumption of literality. For, if the total time is literal, so also are its subdivisions.

In the thousand years of Revelation 20:1-7, then, we have set forth the *precise* length of the Mediatorial Kingdom, which earlier had been stated indefinitely in Old Testament prophecy. The outstanding parallel passage appears in Isaiah 24:21-23. In this chapter the prophet presents a picture of the judgments of God upon the world in preparation for His "reign in Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem" (vs. 23). At the close of these judgments, He gathers "the high ones that are on high" (Satan and his angels) and "the kings of the earth" (cf. Rev. 19:19), shutting them up "as prisoners . . . in the pit" (Isa. 24:21-22). Then the prophet says, "After many days shall they be punished" (vs. 22, ASV margin). The *many days* here correspond to the thousand-year reign of Revelation 20, which begins with the defeat of the earthly kings and the binding of Satan, and ends with the final judgment upon them.⁵

In arguing for the literality of the time-measures generally in the Book of Revelation, we do not deny that, in at least some cases, there may be also a symbolical meaning. But such meanings are strengthened by the literal and factual foundation. There is endless room for exploration in the symbolism of Biblical numbers. What we must regard as reprehensible is the assumption, too often manifested by the anti-premillennialists, that the admission of a symbolical meaning automatically shuts out of court any possible literality in Biblical numbers. As an argument against literality in the numbers in Revelation, the reference to

⁵ For other Old Testament parallels, see *The Thousand Years in Both Testaments* by Nathaniel West, 1880.

"the seven Spirits of God" is often cited (Rev. 1:4, 3:1, 4:5), the assumption being that, since there is only *one* Spirit of God, the number here cannot be literal. And with this one example, some writers feel they have demolished the literality of all numbers in the Apocalypse. But here, it should be noted, the expression cited is not itself the symbol but is rather the divine *interpretation* of a symbol. What John saw was the symbol--"seven lamps of fire." And the symbol was literal. John actually saw the lamps of fire, and he saw *seven* of them, not eight or some indefinite number. Furthermore, when the inspired record declares that "the seven lamps" are the "the seven Spirits of God," it must be remembered that according to New Testament usage the Spirit of God may be mentioned when the reference is to His *work* or *gifts* rather than to His Person. The placing of the seven Spirits "before the throne" (4:5) clearly suggests the activity of ministration. Thus, while the number *seven* doubtless bears the symbolical meaning of unity and perfection, there is no reason for dogmatically denying the possibility of a reference to a literal *seven* of spiritual activities. The burden of proof rests upon those who deny this as a possibility.

In concluding our discussion of "the thousand years," we should observe that the mediatorial reign of *Christ* is not limited to this precise measure of time. The record specifically states that this measure applies to the reign of the *saints*: "they . . . shall reign with him a thousand years" (20:6). In a very real sense, the mediatorial reign of Christ Himself may be said to begin *de jure* with His judicial work from heaven, as suggested by the announcement in 11:15--"The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ." And not only so, but His mediatorial reign extends beyond the end of the thousand years. "For he must reign," Paul writes, "till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death" (I Cor. 15:25-26). And the destruction of death is beyond the end of the thousand years (Rev. 20:7, 14).

b. *Nature of the Millennial Reign*

One of the current arguments against the literality of the Kingdom, as described in Revelation 20, is that so little space is given to it there. Of course, if such an argument has any validity at all, it could be brought against the doctrine of any sort of a kingdom, whether spiritual or otherwise. But all such arguments ignore what has been called the principle of "parsimony" in Scripture. The Old Testament prophets had described this future Mediatorial Kingdom in great detail, and for those acquainted with the Old Testament there would be no need for any profuse repetition of what was already revealed. The Book of Revelation, as rightly observed by scholars of every school of thought, is saturated with Old Testament ideas and expressions and therefore can be approached only through the Old Testament. For those who use this approach, obviously, there would be no need for detailed repetition. This entirely reasonable assumption appears in the teaching and ministry of Christ. If men went wrong in their ideas of the Kingdom, He pointed to the source of their error: "Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures" (Matt. 22:29). And the Scriptures here, it is sometimes forgotten, are those of the Old Testament. Furthermore, the men to whom the Lord spoke were the scholars of His day, men who had a thorough

formal knowledge of the Old Testament, but who rejected in part what the prophets clearly taught. Similarly, as pointed out earlier in this volume, those today who are belligerently opposed to the idea of a literal Kingdom of Christ on earth are the scholars who either largely ignore the Old Testament or else dissolve in the acid of their "spiritualization" those prophetic elements which are repugnant to them.

By such men, it has also been argued that it is wholly incongruous for the Book of Revelation (according to our premillennial view) to give fourteen chapters (6-19) to the pre-Kingdom judgments extending over a short period of *seven* years, while only one chapter (20) is given to the Kingdom itself which lasts for a thousand years.⁶ To this it might be replied that God Himself calls the judgment period "a little season" and "a short time" (Rev. 6:11, 12:12); and we should be grateful that in the mercy of God this is so. But it is also a fact that Scripture generally gives more space to its warnings of judgment than to its descriptions of the joys of heaven. And this is wholly reasonable. On our highways, men do not ordinarily put up signs telling the traveler that "This is a safe road"; but for the most part all such signs are those of *caution* and *danger*. The world in which we live is one of sin and hazard and death. Some day all this will be ended, but until that day we should be thankful for the abundance of warnings concerning wrath and judgment to come.

But the twentieth chapter of Revelation is not entirely silent as to the nature of the millennial government. In general, it is characterized by three expressions: First, we are told that "judgment" (*krima*) will be given to the enthroned saints (20:4). Second, we learn that all who have part in the first resurrection shall be "priests" (*hiereis*) of God (vs. 6). And, third, the same verse declares that they shall "reign" (*basileusousin*) with Christ. Thus the governing activities of the coming Kingdom, as indicated by these terms, will be judicial, sacerdotal, and regal. It would be impossible, of course, to conceive of any kind of genuine government, whether human or divine, without the judging and ruling functions. But, to some, the *sacerdotal* idea is thought to be theologically incongruous. This objection seems to be based in part upon the *present* desirability of complete separation of church and state. In the coming Kingdom, however, this rather illogical separation will disappear. Under the personal rule of Christ, the firm union of church and state will not only be safe; it will be the highest possible good. The resumption of the priestly function, as a proper activity of government, will not modify in any sense the absoluteness of the exclusive priesthood of our Lord. For the priesthood of the members of the body of Christ even today, as also in the coming Kingdom, is only an activity of limited priestly service,⁷ such as is appropriate to saved sinners. We do not mediate between men and God. Hence, there can be no possible objection to its continuance in the Kingdom, for then the priestly service will be rendered by perfected saints, no longer marred by sinful inclinations and infirmity.

The governing function in the coming Kingdom is described somewhat more fully in Rev.

6 Loraine Boettner, *ibid.*, pp. 201-202.

7 Cf. the Greek verb *latrenō* in Rom. 1:9.

19:15 where, concerning the descending King, John says: "And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God." Such a rule on the part of a just and merciful God, it might be supposed, would be most welcome to all who are troubled with the terrible inequities of human history and the appalling problems current in our times. But here again the anti-premillennialists have labored hard to modify the force of the language of this passage. For example, Hamilton⁸ devotes considerable space in an attempt to show that the verb *poimainō* refers to the tender care of a shepherd rather than to a "rod-of-iron" rule over the nations.

It is true that the Greek *poimainō*, rendered "rule" in 19:15, has the general meaning of *shepherdly* rule. But this meaning implies, rather than cancels, the factor of severity in the rule of Christ over those who will believe during the thousand-year reign. The idea of severity runs through the context of the entire verse: there is here a "sharp sword" as well as a "rod of iron"; and in His rule our Lord "smites" the nations and "treadeth" the winepress of divine wrath. These are verbs which cannot be emptied of their severity.

Even in the Church of our present age, which by some is alleged to be the established kingdom of Christ on earth, our Lord often lays the rod of severe and deserved chastisement on His people, resulting sometimes in the ordeal of physical death (I Cor. 11:29-32). But such severity is always for our ultimate good--"that we should not be condemned with the world." Furthermore, there is operative even today a *providential* rule of God over the nations, in the exercise of which he sometimes "smites" the nations with great severity without utterly destroying them.

In fact, the shepherdly rule of God is always both severe and tender: lovingkindness toward all who yield to His perfect Will, but chastisement for those who stray from the path of righteousness, and destruction for those who are incorrigibly rebellious. And in the coming Mediatorial Kingdom of Christ this rule will be direct and immediate, no longer veiled in obscurity nor subject to the time-lag which so often now characterizes the working of the divine providential control. In that future Kingdom of Messiah there will be a perfect balance between tenderness and severity. As seen by Isaiah, He will rule with a "strong hand," but He also shall "gather the lambs . . . and carry them in his bosom" (40:10-11).

If in Revelation 20 the nature of the Mediatorial Kingdom is described very briefly and only in general terms, it should be observed that within this terminology ample room is left for all the profusion of detail set forth in the Old Testament prophetic picture of that Kingdom; and not a single element or aspect is canceled by either direct denial or implication. Hence, we cannot be wrong in following the Apostle Peter who said that at the second advent of Christ there would be ushered in an age described as "the times of

8 Floyd E. Hamilton, *The Basis of Millennial Faith*, 1942, pp. 83-90.

restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began" (Acts 3:20-21).

c. *Some Problems and Objections*

Objections to the premillennial view of the Kingdom have at times become so absurd and puerile that they deserve no answer at all. But for the sake of sincere seekers who may have been troubled by specious argument, at least a few of these alleged problems should be mentioned.

(1) Some people have been genuinely concerned about the *problem of sin* in an otherwise perfect Kingdom of God in human life. And, of course, Scripture makes it very clear that sin will be present during the Millennial Kingdom. The fact that Satan must be bound so that he cannot deceive the nations during the age of the Kingdom (Rev. 20:3) shows that in the people of that age there will remain the inclination to respond to satanic temptation. And the prediction that a great multitude will thus respond as soon as Satan is loosed (20:7-8) only confirms the existence of a sinful human nature. But this melancholy fact should not trouble the opposers of Premillennialism who believe in a *present* Kingdom of God on earth. Why should the presence of sin be regarded as an insuperable objection to a future Kingdom of God, if it can be reconciled with a present kingdom? Furthermore, the problem of sin in the coming Kingdom will be greatly alleviated by the binding of Satan and an immediate divine control over all overt acts of rebellion against the laws of the Kingdom. As to those who argue that human sin should be conquered by the "Gospel," not by divine *force*, we may ask whether they would be willing to dispense with the physical restraint of civil government *today*, poor as it often is. If the "sword" of civil rulers, who are called ministers of God (Rom. 13:4), is not inconsistent with the present providential Kingdom of God, why should force be thought out of place in the future Mediatorial Kingdom of Christ?

As to this problem of sin in the Millennium, there is a very striking parallelism between the "regeneration" of the individual person (Tit. 3:5) and what our Lord called the "regeneration" of human society in the Millennial Kingdom (Matt. 19:28). In each there takes place a radical and tremendous miracle: in the one case an absolutely new divine control enters the human personality; and likewise a new intrusion of supernatural control will come into the area of human affairs. In each case, there is left a sinful element which requires constant control. Yet in each case this situation is not the final state. For just as the old nature of the individual believer will at last be destroyed, even so after the thousand years will the Kingdom be purged of all that needs to be held in restraint by immediate divine control. Thus the future regeneration of society will recapitulate the present regeneration of the individual. Neither grows gradually into a new birth; but each begins and ends with a distinct "crisis" experience supernatural in character.

(2) It has also been objected that the *bodily* presence of Christ ruling on earth in the

Kingdom would be much inferior to His *spiritual* presence as now manifested in every place. Such an objection is based on both bad theology and bad logic. Why should it be assumed that the world could not enjoy the presence of Christ bodily and spiritually at the same time? If our Lord can be present bodily in *heaven* today while at the same time He is manifesting Himself wherever two or three are gathered in His name, why could He not during the millennial reign be present bodily in *Jerusalem* while at the same time manifesting Himself spiritually wherever men call upon Him? Or is heaven only a state of mind, and not a definite *place*?

This same objection has sometimes been pressed to ridiculous lengths: if Christ and His saints are to be present bodily ruling in the coming Kingdom, where would they live! The answer is, of course, in *heaven*. The residence of the saints in heaven while ruling on earth, actually, is much less of a problem than that of a business man whose office is in a city while his residence is in the suburbs. One wonders at times how foolish the objectors can get. Have they learned nothing about the powers of a resurrection body, as set forth in the Bible, with its immeasurable superiority over both space and time?

The appearance of Christ among the people of the Millennial Age will have a very practical effect. Intellectual belief in the existence of God will then no longer rest wholly on difficult and tenuous philosophic arguments. Christian evidences will no longer be largely dependent on the process of sifting and appraising historical testimony. The personal and visible presence of the glorified Son of God will constitute the supreme Christian apologetic, immediately accessible to all men. It has sometimes been argued that, since genuine belief cannot be produced by sense experience (Matt. 16:17), the visible presence of Christ could have no spiritual value. But this is an illogical deduction from a valid principle. It might just as well be argued that, since faith cannot be produced by any weight of historical evidence, therefore the latter has no spiritual value. The truth is that both historical evidence and sense experience may be *channels*, though not sources, of Christian faith.

To discount wholly the value of sense experience in matters of faith is to forget the original testimony of the apostles. In his great apologetic recorded in First Corinthians 15:3-8, Paul attaches great weight to the historical fact that the risen Christ had been "*seen*" by Cephas, by the twelve, by himself, and by over five hundred brethren at the same time. If these visible "appearances" of the risen Saviour had such a high value in the apostolic era, why should we deprecate similar appearances during the millennial age; with the added advantage that then the visibility will be made readily accessible to all--for "every eye shall see Him" (Rev. 1:7). Certainly in the Millennium, as also today, the testimony of sense experience alone cannot produce the response of Christian faith. But under God it has its value, as our Lord graciously recognized in the case of Thomas (John 20:24-31).

(3) The mingling of Christ and His glorified saints with people still in the flesh on earth has, by some, been regarded as an incongruity. This has even been called, almost impiously, a

"mongrel mixture." On this point, we can give no better answer than to point to the post-resurrection ministry of our Lord among His disciples, teaching them personally for the space of forty days (Acts 1:3), and even eating with them (Luke 24:43). Can it be a mere coincidence that the main subject of His teaching, while thus "mingling" with the disciples, was "the Kingdom of God?" If there was no pedagogical value in His bodily presence, why was not all this important instruction given *spiritually* after He had returned to heaven? While we should thank God every day for the spiritual presence and teaching of Christ, surely the addition of His bodily presence will be something of very precious value.

This objection at times has been based on unfair assumptions. Boettner, for example, thinks that for the saints to "return to earthly life and earthly conditions would be, literally and figuratively, a great 'come-down.'" And he feels that he would rather at death go to heaven than to suffer such a "come-down."⁹ Well, of course, no intelligent premillennialist ever taught that glorified saints would return to "earthly life and earthly conditions." As for the alleged "come-down," even if some things on earth might not be wholly to our liking, we cannot forget that our Lord once "came down" into a disagreeable world to extend help to sinners. And many a missionary since that time has been willing to "come down" in the scale of human comfort in order to relieve the spiritual and physical ills of humanity. Why should anyone suppose that the saints, once glorified, will become callous to the desperate needs of the world? Especially, since in that day the relief they will be able to bring can be ministered many times more effectively, and with no physical weakness or discomfort to themselves. Can anyone suppose that the great missionaries of the past, many of whom died at the beginning of their work, would be unwilling, once glorified, to resume their beloved ministry, as our Lord resumed His ministry following His resurrection? Will the sheer joy of helping needy people be lost when we get to heaven? If the saints can today minister to the various needs of the world without fear of contamination, surely it will not be impossible in the more perfect millennial age.

(4) Another oft repeated objection to a literal reign of Christ and His saints over the nations is that this would be a "carnal" reign. A recent book, criticizing the premillennial view, puts the matter like this: "The kingship of the believer does not require a literal throne with a subject people under him. His reign is spiritual. He reigns over the devil, the flesh, and the world. Even death is subject to him. This is a much superior reign than is generally conceived. Yet people seem to be fascinated by the lesser and carnal type of reign."¹⁰ To this argument it may be replied, first, that all premillennialists rejoice in the spiritual victory the Christian has now in Christ over the world, the flesh, and the devil. The implied dilemma is wholly false, for the difference here is not over what is affirmed, but rather in what the objector *denies*. As to his charge that a *literal* reign of Christ with His saints over the nations would be a *carnal* reign, I feel that his language is certainly careless, if not irreverent. For if our Lord can today exercise a literal but providential control over the nations in the Universal Kingdom of God, as He does, why should His literal but more

9 Loraine Boettner, *ibid.*, p. 80.

10 J. Marcellus Kik, *ibid.*, pp. 46-47.

direct control in the Millennial Kingdom be stigmatized as "carnal"?

In pursuing his illogical argument against the literality of the millennial reign, Mr. Kik arrives at an inconsistency so glaring that one wonders how he could have failed to see it. As already stated above, he believes that we are *now* living in the Millennium, and that the saints are *now* reigning with Christ. The promise of Christ to His disciples, that they would "sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel," is *now* being fulfilled, according to Mr. Kik, by the saints ruling the church. If we ask how the saints are reigning in the church, he answers that this in part is by church *discipline* (p. 45)! Thus we come at least to something very *literal*, as the late Dr. Machen, and others, could have personally testified. Doubtless Mr Kik would say that the exercise of church discipline should be a *spiritual* matter; to which we heartily agree, and also point out that if church discipline can be exercised today both literally and spiritually, the same thing can be true about the reign of the saints in the coming Millennium.

As to the term "carnal," used so frequently by the objectors in an epithetical [unfavorable/derogatory] manner: if it can be applied properly to anything, certainly it would more fitly describe their alleged *present* millennial "reign" of the saints in church discipline than the premillennial view of the saints' future reign. For now, all too often, the wrong people are thrown out of the church, while the wrong people are left in; and the judges themselves need to be judged. Also, as Paul once pointed out, it is often hard to find even one man today who is wise enough to settle the ordinary disputes within the church (I Cor. 6:1-7). Actually, if the term is to be used at all, it is Mr. Kik's view of the saints' co-called present "reign" in the church that deserves the term "carnal."¹¹ there will be no such carnality when the perfected and glorified saints reign in the future Kingdom of Christ.

In his attempts to vindicate the *spirituality* of his own view, and also fasten the charge of *carnality* upon his opponents, Mr. Kik lists the many great spiritual blessings *now* enjoyed by the saved: Christ is our Saviour; God is our Father; the Holy Spirit is our Comforter; we are members of the Bride of Christ; we have security from all possible enemies. Then he asks, What more could we desire? And he wonders whether perhaps we may not be hankering after *carnal* things--more money, less physical discomfort.¹² Well, the answer to this is that, like Mr. Kik, we thank God every day for what we have right now by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. But, with the Apostle Peter, we are also looking for even more of the exhaustless grace of God which is to be brought at the "revelation of Jesus Christ" (I Pet. 1:13) to establish His Kingdom over all the earth. We admit that we are concerned about the problems of physical existence. We think that the Church right now could well manifest more of the compassion of Christ about these things. We would like to see an *end* of the terrible diseases of mankind, and *end* of the deadly peril of another world war, and *complete economic justice* for all men. Furthermore, we would like to see the Good News of

¹¹ See St. Paul's application of the term to the Corinthians (I Cor. 3:3).

¹² J. Marcellus Kik, *ibid.*, p. 30.

Christ carried *fully* to every human soul without delay. And this takes both material wealth and physical stamina, even in Mr. Kik's present-day millennium.

It may be argued, of course, that the Church should be working at these problems right now, and not waiting with folded arms for the coming of a future kingdom. To this we agree; and we thank God for the souls already saved, and for the influence of the Gospel toward the solution of economic problems and relief of human suffering. But the problems are so vast in number and size, the wheels of progress turn so slowly, and the reverses often so disastrous, that we find ourselves longing for another intrusion of supernatural help from above, greater and more prolonged than any such intrusion in past history, to reinforce the present efforts of His people. Moreover, we believe that such help from above has been promised in the Word of God; and that in looking for its coming we shall be made better servants of His, and more faithful in all that we do before the arrival of His Kingdom. The intelligent Christian does not serve God because he is afraid the world will go to pot without his efforts, but out of love and obedience to a Saviour who gave Himself that we might be saved.

The prejudice against such divine help from above, strange to say, has been stubborn, unreasonable, and not a little childish. Many years ago I sat in a seminar which was discussing some of the problems of society. The professor in charge had said that if only two goals would be reached--the abolition of war and the attainment of social justice--the world could enjoy a virtual millennium. He was a bit surprised at my suggestion that these identical goals are named in Biblical prophecy, to be realized fully in the Kingdom which is to be established supernaturally at the coming of Christ. But his rejoinder was that such a way of solving human problems would not be a good thing at all; that men should and must solve their own problems. When I asked whether he might not welcome a little supernatural help from above, he remained unshaken in his position.

Of course, logically, if it is always best for us to solve our own problems, we should kill off all our geniuses, for these rare individuals have solved hundreds of problems completely beyond the ability of the vast majority of the human race. (And the argument is strengthened by the fact that Christ is no alien to our race, but became true man by His virgin birth, and still so remains). But the rather petulant prejudice against supernatural help from above has no logic. It recalls the remark of Robert Louis Stevenson who, when he was told of the death of Matthew Arnold, said, "That's too bad. He won't like God." Or the "propaganda" advertisement appearing in a radical socialist publication: "WANTED--A new social order; a new sense of economic justice, a new approach to the problem of war, and a new political system. *No gods need apply.*" Or the erection of a placard by a certain French king which read: "All miracles in this place are forbidden."

A measure of this secular foolishness seems to have rubbed off on some of our present-day theologians. They are willing to let God work miracles in what they call the spiritual realm, but in other realms they have posted their "no miracle" signs all over the place. We

need to be taught again and again that our fallen human nature deeply resents the truth that there are some things wholly beyond our power to do, and which only God can supernaturally accomplish. Men may indeed *improve* themselves and society in many ways; but just as the regeneration of the human soul is a miracle from above, so also is the regeneration of society. "With men this is impossible." This is not a philosophy of quietism, but only a realistic recognition of human limitations in a sinful world. The hope of supernatural reinforcement from above, instead of stultifying Christian effort, should give us new encouragement because we know that "*The morning cometh.*" The eschatological motive has been a tremendous force in the history of human progress; and recently is being given more of the attention that it deserves, even by liberal writers.¹³

(5) The employment of *force*, it has been objected by some theologians, would be wholly inappropriate in any future Kingdom of God. They argue that the divine reign should be "spiritual" in character, a rule of *love* through the Gospel. To this we may reply that what *ought* to be is often not the same as what actually is. In a sinful race, the ideal is one thing; the realistic possibilities are often something else. As an example of this clash of opinion, we have, on the one hand, a very influential, liberal, religious publication declaring that no peace in the world can be "based on force"; while, on the other hand, a great secular magazine argues that "America's strength (militarily) is the last, best hope of peace on earth." The truth lies somewhere in between these two extremes. The power of love is great beyond imagination, but even love has its limitations in a sinful world where freedom of will exists. If this were not so, we might safely dispense with civil government as the world advances. Actually, however, the progress of civilization only increases the size and complexity of government. More than that, if love conquers all, hell itself might be abolished at last. The present need for human government, and the everlasting character of hell, constitute the best answer to those who feel that the employment of *force* is unworthy of the Kingdom of God.

In discussing the matter of human government, a recent writer has stated realistically the problem as follows:

The science of morals is concerned with things as they ought to be. The science of law is concerned with things as they are supposed to be. The science of politics is concerned with things as they are You cannot make governments out of moral aspirations. Every revolution begins as an idea, but it ends as a fact. Absolute power (like every sort of power) can be yielded, of course, but it cannot be conferred. It can only be taken and kept.¹⁴

This very blunt appraisal of the problem of power among human governments is not inapplicable to the divine government. It should remind us that when the Kingdom of Christ arrives, it will not come by a majority vote of the people, nor as a result of

13 See Ray C. Petry, *Christian Eschatology and Social Thought* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1956).

14 F. Lyman Windolph, "Wanted: A Sovereign," *The American Scholar*, No. 2, 1947, p. 161.

international agreements. It will rather be a supernatural action of divine sovereignty, resulting in the glad cry, "We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty . . . because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned" (Rev. 11:17).