

and universities, and as their influence is felt in daily life, this series offers a serious yet readable map to navigate one's way through the complexities of the arguments and keep a solid, evangelical, Christian worldview in focus. I for one am exceedingly glad the series has been completed and completed so well.

CRAIG L. BLOMBERG AND SUNG WOOK CHUNG, EDS. *A CASE FOR HISTORIC PREMILLENNIALISM: AN ALTERNATIVE TO 'LEFT BEHIND' ESCHATOLOGY*. GRAND RAPIDS: BAKER, 2009. (XIX + 184 PP.) [ISBN: 978-0-8010-3596-8]

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Dispensational versions of eschatology have dominated evangelical theology for the last 100 years, especially in North America. The most common expression of such eschatology is the hugely popular sixteen volumes of the *Left Behind* novels by Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins (1995–2007), which sold millions of copies worldwide, and the earlier best seller of Hal Lindsey, *The Late Great Planet Earth* (1970). This version of eschatology offers a complicated and detailed timeline of future events, central to which is the secret pre-tribulation rapture of the church, the great tribulation, the rise of two individuals—the false prophet and the anti-Christ—the restoration of ethnic/national Israel, followed by the return of Christ to the earth to rule for a millennium, the last battle, the final judgments (of nations, individuals, Israel, and Gentiles), and the ushering in of the New Heavens and New Earth. For many Baptists this version of eschatology is the only one they could narrate. However, surprising it is to many, this is not the dominant understanding of eschatology in church history, or today.

Most Christian academics working today broadly fall into the amillennial category (a few are postmillennial); arguing that the promises to Israel are now spiritual in nature and are enfolded into the promises for the church. There is no literal tribulation, false prophet, anti-Christ, or millennium to come. For those who don't accept this argument on Scriptural grounds, there is a third option—historical premillennialism. Historic premillennialists see a future for Israel, a literal second coming of Christ to the earth for a golden age (1000 years or not), and then the creation of the new heavens and new earth. In addition, this position argues that historic premillennialism was the dominant position of the early church and of the Church Fathers and thus it has an eminent orthodox pedigree. It is this position the contributors to the present volume support, articulate, and seek to popularise. Most of the chapters of this volume were presented at a Denver Seminary conference on the theme and edited for this volume. Six of the contributors are Denver Seminary faculty and are historic premillennialists, the other two come from a South American Dispensationalist and a patristics scholar respectively. The volume does not seek to present a holistic or systematic exposition of historic premillennialism; rather, it offers perspectival reflections on aspects of this eschatology, something common to conference papers.

Four chapters address historical type issues. Timothy Weber critically reflects on the rise of Dispensational premillennialism and the demise of historic premillennialism until the work of George Eldon

Ladd writing in the 1950s (chapter 1). Weber shows how Dispensationalism is a populist eschatology while historical premillennialism is an elitist eschatology. By this he means that Dispensationalism appeals to the masses while other eschatology's appeal to academics. Hélène Dallaire makes Jewish eschatology; with its debates on messianism, Jewish apocalypticism, immortality, resurrection, divine retribution, the end of days, paradise, the and the netherworld; as the theme of her essay (chapter 3). She concludes that there is no one view of eschatology within Jewish literature, biblical and extra-biblical. Jewish theology thus does not rule in or out the conception of a millennium.

In another historical chapter, Donald Fairbairn canvasses the patristic period (AD 100–600) views on the millennium, taking note of exegetical, theological, historical, and cultural influences at play (chapter 6). Fairbairn's essay achieves three stated goals, 1) to address the question of whether premillennialism was the consensus of the early church, 2) to resolve what kind of premillennialism was found in this period, and 3) to examine the way premillennialism functioned in the theology of the early church. As to the first question, Fairbairn's analysis shows that the first two centuries were dominated by a chiliasm, when the issue was raised at all, until Origin's critique of it in the mid-third century, when it declined in the East. It persisted in the West at least until the early fifth-century when it lost favour due to Augustine's rejection of it. As for the second question, Fairbairn convincingly shows that a dispensational pretribulationism was foreign to the thinking of the early church; "Every reference that betrays any idea of a relationship between the tribulation and the return of Christ suggests that he return follows the tribulation" (p. 128). As to the third question, Fairbairn highlights how teaching on the millennium has to do with the unity of Scripture, the unity of God's purposes, and the ultimately the unity and goodness of the God we worship. Fairbairn also offers a poignant observation that in letting go of eschatology, the church today has still not quite gotten rid of Gnosticism, "the greatest battle the church has ever faced" (p. 131). Take that all 'panmillennialists'! The final chapter by Oscar Campos is a reflection on South American dispensational premillennialism's impact on missiology (chapter 8). Campos provides a good account of the shortfalls of dispensational missiology as being non-holistic and individualistic. In its place a sort of "contextual evangelicalism" rose up, with a helpful emphasis on "holistic mission" and social responsibility. While an interesting chapter in its own right it seemed out of place in this collection and added little to the work as a cohesive whole.

There are two chapters explicitly devoted to biblical studies. Richard Hess surveys Old Testament passages (chapter 2) and finds a basis for a historical premillennialism there. According to Hess, a straightforward reading of the Old Testament demands a more-or-less literal hermeneutic (a realistic hermeneutic) in which a literal Temple, literal spatio-temporal time period (the millennium), and a literal future for literal Israel is demanded. This is not the wooden literalism of dispensationalism, but also not the spiritualizing hermeneutics of amillennialism. New Testament scholar Craig Blomberg refutes outright the pretribulationist view of dispensationalism, and instead offers a New Testament reading for posttribulationism, something central to historical premillennialism (chapter 4). In his unusual and judicious way Blomberg analysis the pretribulationist view before deconstructing it and offering a posttribulationist, premillennial alternative. The crux of Blomberg's argument is that "no matter how many flashbacks or

disruptions of chronological sequence one might want to argue for elsewhere in Revelation, it makes absolutely no sense to put one in between Revelation 19 and 20 as both amillennialists and postmillennialists must do” (p. 67). This is one of the best essays in the collection as it stays on theme, deals with primary texts, and makes a convincing case.

Two further chapters deal with issues of systematic theology. Theologian Don Payne offers an insightful essay on the theological method of premillennialism, and in the process offers something of an introduction on how to think theologically (chapter 5). Using the Wesleyan Quadrilateral (Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience), Payne analyses the sources of premillennial theology, astutely working his way through each one with well chosen select evidence. Payne then offers implications on these sources of theology before offering insightful reflections on how and why dispensationalism has used popular Christianity and low-church methods to populate its message—with huge success. Sung Wook Chung offers a focussed and forthright chapter challenging Reformed theology over its almost exclusive rejection of anything but an amillennial view of eschatology (chapter 7). According to Chung, a Reformed amillennial interpretation of Rev 20:1–6 is seriously problematic within the theological contours of covenant theology. The central argument Chung makes is that “by overly focussing on the covenant of works in Genesis 2:15–17, Reformed covenant theology has not correctly understood the significance of Genesis 1:26–28 for the reality of God’s kingdom in general and the millennial rule of Jesus Christ in particular” (p. 135). Chung’s reappraisal of Reformed theology is a clear and compelling one which will arouse much interest amongst the Reformed community. It is, I believe, a proposal well worth considering.

*A Case for Historical Premillennialism* is a much needed and interesting work, with a number of very useful essays. It does, however, have some drawbacks. With only two chapters dedicated to biblical themes many will feel that this is too light and more close readings of Scripture were required to really make a “case” for this eschatology. With most of the essayists coming from Denver Seminary there was also a narrowness to the volume which could, unfortunately, give the impression that this eschatology is more of a niche theology and not, as is the case, a broadly received position. The volume also lacked several more well researched essays of a theological and pastoral nature, in order to more clearly highlight the implications of the position and how it fits with other biblical, theological, and pastoral-missional commitments. In short, many will appreciate this book but want more. If this volume is a primer or stimulus for more works from this position then this will have been a worthwhile venture to offer the Christian public.