

# Christian Reconstruction

Isaiah 61:4

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## ESCHATOLOGY AND PERSONAL MOTIVATION

by Gary North

And further, by these, my son, be admonished: of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh (Ecclesiastes 12:12).

People frequently ask me, "Does it really make much difference what eschatology a Christian holds?" My answer: "It depends on what the particular Christian wants to do with his life."

So far, at least, eschatology has been a major factor in sorting out the published leaders from literate followers in what has become known as the Christian Reconstruction movement. This is the more academically oriented branch of the dominion theology movement. There are numerous defenders of dominion theology who maintain publicly that they are still premillennialists, although we have yet to see a book by one of these premillennialists that states clearly just exactly how God's call to Christians to rebuild the world in terms of God's kingdom principles (a code phrase for "biblical law" in fundamentalist circles) is possible to sustain institutionally in a world that is inevitably going to reject Christ's gospel this side of the physical return of Christ to set up an earthly millennium. Such a book is clearly needed. It must be an apologetic—"This we believe!"—but not apologetic—"It's a shame that we Christians are inevitably going to fail, but here goes!"

### Suicide Squads

Try recruiting people into a full-scale suicide squad in a war that the recruiters insist is already lost. The postmillennialist asserts openly that such an appeal will fail to recruit very many self-sacrificing people over the long haul. Dave Hunt asserts this, too. The postmillennialist thinks that it is far easier to recruit people who believe that the war is lost into a movement that self-consciously stresses **personal retreat** from the political and social conflicts of life, and which denies that Christians as Christians have any responsibility to change the world. So does Dave Hunt.

Anyone who believes that the world will inevitably drift into greater and greater sin, and that Christians will enjoy progressively less influence historically, is a highly unlikely candidate for a lifetime of study—and probably self-financed study—to discover how Bible principles (Old Testament law) could and should be applied in history in a specific academic field which is also a real-world field. (Anyone who believes in the **inevitable** defeat of the institutional church in history has adopted a form of predestination, even if he insists that he believes in free will. If the defeat of the church is inevitable, then nothing that anyone can do will reverse it.)

### Lalonde and Hunt vs. Premillennialist Activism

Anyone with such a view of the world's future would have to be a kind of masochist to drain away time and money on

such a personal scale in order to produce a life's work of guaranteed antiquarianism. In a sense, such an effort would be immoral. It would be a misallocation of a Christian's limited resources. Consistent dispensationalist newsletter writer Peter Lalonde has accused Christians of near-immoral behavior for concentrating on such real-world solutions to real-world problems. Such efforts to transform the world are all futile, he says, and therefore they are a waste of God's gifts to Christians.

It's a question, "Do you polish brass on a sinking ship?" And if they're working on setting up new institutions, instead of going out and winning the lost for Christ, then they're wasting the most valuable time on the planet of earth right now, and that is the serious problem. . . .<sup>1</sup>

Premillennial political activists need to respond to Lalonde, just as they have needed to respond to J. Vernon McGee, who first coined the "polishing brass" analogy in the 1950's. Lalonde makes sense to premillennial retreatists. Dominion theology doesn't.

### Self-Fulfilling Prophecies

In short, eschatology counts, especially in personal motivation. Eschatology leads to self-fulfilling institutional prophecies. The pessimillennialist believes that the world is progressively controlled by Satan and those ethically covenanted to Satan. Thus, he is tempted to regard as historically futile the development of exclusively and explicitly biblical "blueprints" that should be used by Christians to replace the present humanist social order.<sup>2</sup>

With so few pessimillennial authors devoting themselves to such detailed intellectual work, the intellectual leadership of such practical efforts necessarily and steadily falls by default to theonomic (God's law) postmillennialists. Simultaneously, postmillennialist scholars, because they **do** believe that such comprehensive social transformation is not only possible but inevitable, work hard to achieve dominion in history.

Pessimillennialists self-consciously preach the progressive future failure of the gospel and therefore the inability or unwillingness of the Holy Spirit to transform the world positively in terms of kingdom standards. Dave Hunt goes so far as to say that God Himself is incapable of establishing His kingdom on earth: "In fact, dominion—taking dominion and

1. Peter Lalonde, "Dominion: A Dangerous New Theology," Tape One of *Dominion: The World And New World Order* (Ontario, Canada: Omega-Letter, 1987), 3 tapes.

2. See the multi-volume set, the Biblical Blueprints Series, published by Dominion Press, Ft. Worth, Texas, which began to appear in late 1986.

setting up the kingdom for Christ—is an **impossibility**, even for God. The millennial reign of Christ, far from being the kingdom, is actually the final proof of the incorrigible nature of the human heart, because Christ Himself can't do what these people say they are going to do. . . ."<sup>3</sup>

Whether premillennialist scholars like it or not, Dave Hunt has become **the** spokesman for premillennial social philosophy in this decade. He is the best-selling premillennialist author. Silence by premillennialist leaders regarding Hunt's books and his kingdom-denying conclusion is an admission that he in fact speaks for premillennialism today. Traditional kingdom-affirming premillennialists lose theologically to Hunt by default.

And once they lose theological leadership to Hunt, they lose intellectual leadership to the Reconstructionists.

### Intellectual Leadership: Winning by Default

This does not mean that non-postmillennialists will never produce works in the field of applied Christian theology. Dutch amillennialists have done so. Premillennialists have done so, especially in the field of natural science.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, it is not an accident that as of 1987, all of the major academic works in the Christian Reconstruction movement have been written by postmillennialists. I am speaking here of books written from the perspective of a Christian theology of positive cultural transformation, in contrast to merely negative Christian academic criticism.<sup>5</sup> I mean books that really do propose specific, Bible-mandated ways to reconstruct today's humanism-dominated society.

It is also not an accident that the bulk of the premillennial leaders and their organizations that directed the formation of the New Christian Right in 1979 and 1980 have disappeared from the political scene, just as I predicted in 1982.<sup>6</sup> Most people are highly unlikely to stay in the front lines of Christian social and political reform without the psychological support of a consistent theology of social and political reform. The humanist news media sharks will grind them down relentlessly on the altogether relevant question of **theocracy**, and premillennialist leaders' timid supporters will cease sending them money if they say publicly that they believe in theocracy. So the leaders either waffle or grow suspiciously silent. Neither waffling nor silence changes society or gathers the troops together for a full-scale confrontation. Christian political leaders need **biblical law** (which dispensationalism denies) and a **positive eschatology** (which premillennialism denies). Christian media leaders are presently petrified of both.

Christian Reconstructionists therefore have won intellectual leadership of Christian activists by default. Like Harry Truman, we enjoy the heat, so we stay in the kitchen.

Eschatology unquestionably matters in the life of a Christian scholar who regards his life's work as anything more important than going through a series of academically accept-

able intellectual exercises. Postmillennialism is an important motivation to those scholars who are self-consciously dedicated to long-term Christian Reconstruction. I devote ten hours a week, fifty weeks per year, to writing my economic commentary on the Bible. Anyone who holds a different eschatology is unlikely to sit down for ten hours or more per week, for thirty or forty years, to discover exactly what the Bible teaches about a real-world subject, and how its principles might be applied by people in the New Testament era.

**Time is on the Reconstructionists' side**, not the side of our many critics. I believe that Christians have plenty of time to work toward the transformation of this world, so I work long and hard to publish the intellectual foundations of this transformation. In contrast, pessimillennialists believe that Jesus is coming soon. They waste little time on such "utopian" intellectual projects. I see hope in long-term scholarship; pessimillennialists see little hope in long-term anything. (Write to Dave Hunt and ask him when he thinks the Rapture is coming, 1988 or 1989. See if he is willing to say that it might not come for centuries.)

Time is also on our side in another sense. Christian Reconstructionist authors have built up a large body of published materials. The more we write, the more difficult it is for anti-Reconstruction scholars to refute us: **too much stuff to refute**. We can also respond to them within thirty days: **newsletters**. To put it bluntly, we Reconstructionists have mailing lists, non-profit foundations with some money in the bank, and at least a small and dedicated market of book buyers.

Christian Reconstruction in general is winning by default. Our critics have not done their academic homework. Literate Christians recognize this.

Our Christian critics really do believe that they can fight **something** (a growing body of Reconstructionist literature) with **nothing** (snide remarks, an occasional book review in some unread academic periodical, unpublished grumbling, and above all, the silent treatment: the academic blackout). They are incorrect. You cannot beat something with nothing. When the long-awaited Christian revival hits, our views will sweep the field, both academically and politically, simply because nobody else will be on the field. We will surely beat nothing with something.

### Conclusion

This essay should not be regarded as a denial that premillennialists and amillennialists can produce academic works that are useful in Christian Reconstruction. What I am arguing is that any call by pessimillennialists to reconstruct society along Christian lines must always be accompanied by this warning in fine print: "Warning: this call to Christian Reconstruction can never be achieved in church history." Full-time historical defeatists such as Dave Hunt have built their careers telling their dispensational followers—millions of them, if book sales are indicative of anything—that all such efforts to improve society are futile, that to argue otherwise is psychologically inconsistent for a premillennialist, and that those people who argue otherwise are either New Agers or dupes of the New Agers.

Hunt has made his case. Where is the book that refutes him in terms of a self-conscious presentation of premillennial eschatology, Bible verse by Bible verse? (The postmillennial book refuting him is at the printers.) This, in a nutshell, is the summary of this report. Postmillennial books on real-world social issues are **always** at the printers.

3. Dave Hunt, Tape Two, "Dominion and the Cross," in *Dominion: The Word And New World Order*.

4. Almost always, however, from the point of view of historic pessimism: an improper use of the second law of thermodynamics, or "entropy." See Gary North, *Is the World Running Down? Crisis in the Christian Worldview* (ICE, 1987).

5. I have in mind here the negative critical works of premillennialist Francis Schaeffer and Dutch tradition amillennialists Herman Dooyeweerd and Cornelius Van Til.

6. Gary North, "The Intellectual Schizophrenia of the New Christian Right," *Christianity and Civilization*, 1 (1982).

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