

THE FUNDAMENTAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN PRE- AND POST-MILLENARIANS

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WHAT is the fundamental difference between a premillenarian and a postmillenarian?

1. It is not that there is to be a second advent. Both premillenarians and postmillenarians believe in a second advent. We differ as to the purpose of that advent, but not as to the fact of it.

2. It is not that we are to be watchful for our Lord's coming. Both believe that we should be. We differ as to the meaning of watching, but not as to the fact of it.

3. It is not as to whether Christ will have a kingdom, and that the saints will share with Him in that reign. We both believe that. We differ as to the nature of that kingdom, but not as to the fact of it.

4. It is not even that the saints are to reign with Christ on this earth. Many people believe that heaven is to be on this earth after it is rejuvenated, redeemed, and glorified, who hold nothing in common with premillenarians. Thousands have believed this, and thousands still believe this who are not premillenarians.

5. It is not that there is to be a period at the end of this world when righteousness will be absolutely triumphant. Neither premillenarians nor postmillenarians believe this. A premillenarian believes that, even after Christ reigns a thousand years upon this earth, there will still be much evil in the world for Satan to work on when he is loosed by Christ, and that there will follow the awful period of the final apostasy. A postmillenarian believes that the world will be Christianized by the influences of the gospel before the Second Advent; but that there will still be much evil in the world to be separated from the good when Christ comes. A premillenarian does

not know how fully the world will be Christianized by the personal reign of Christ, although he has all those hundreds of texts of Scripture which foretell the golden age. A postmillenarian does not know how fully the world will be Christianized by the teaching of the gospel, although he has all those same hundreds of texts of Scripture which foretell the golden age.

6. It is not as to whether there will be one resurrection or two resurrections a thousand years apart, although this is an important difference between the two schools of thought. Premillenarians base their belief in two resurrections on one Scripture text, and that text found in the most symbolical book in the Bible, and in the most symbolical section of the book. Postmillenarians base their belief in one resurrection on scores of plain texts in all of which the resurrections of both the righteous and the wicked are represented as occurring at the end of the world and at one and the same time.

TWO FUNDAMENTAL DIFFERENCES

There are two fundamental differences between premillenarianism and postmillenarianism. The one is as to the nature of that kingdom, whether it is carnal or whether it is spiritual; and the other is as to the power and purpose of the gospel in connection with that kingdom.

1. Premillenarians believe that Christ is coming back to this earth to set up the old Jewish kingdom and to rule over it. Jerusalem is to be the capital of the world. The Jews are to be the foremost people in the world; all other Christians are to be simply adopted citizens, and to occupy a lower place than the Jews. The Jewish nation will have a priestly function not accorded to other Christian people; they will be the Lord's special agents in the evangelization of the world; they will have a preëminent work to do over and above the ordinary citizen; and this preëminence will continue through the thousand years which they believe Christ will reign on the Jewish throne; and the Jewish convert will hold a higher place in privi-

lege and service than the privilege and service of the American or European Christian who is not a descendant of Abraham. They believe that in this carnal Jewish state the old Jewish worship will be established and maintained under the direction of Christ the reigning king.

In "The Prophetic Studies of the International Prophetic Conference held in Chicago in 1886," the late Dr. Nathaniel West said, as recorded on pages 122 and 123: "First, middle, and last, 'salvation is of the Jews,' eminent in each epoch-making node of evolution in the kingdom of God. . . .They alone of all nations are charged with this mission to the world."

In the Premillennial Prophetic Conference held in Chicago in 1914, Rev. A. C. Gaebelien said, as found on page 187 of "The Coming and Kingdom of Christ": "All nations are yet to know the glory of the Lord, but world-conversion is possible only after Israel is converted. Through Israel all nations of the earth will be blessed." On page 195 he says: "There is no such thing at this present time as saving the masses or converting the world. The masses will be saved and the world converted through the preaching of the Jews."

The Rev. Dr. I. M. Haldeman, a prominent writer on the premillennial side, says in his book "The Coming of Christ": "To them [Premillenarians] the Jews and the Gentiles are as far apart in the dealings of God and the blessings which shall come to each from Him, as the throne of God is distant from His footstool" (p. 14).

Postmillenarians believe that when Christ came the first time He did away with all differences between Jews and Gentiles. They believe that Paul was representing his Lord when he said: "There can be neither Jew nor Greek . . . for ye are all one man in Christ Jesus. And if ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise."

That premillenarians believe that in this Jewish state the old Jewish sacrifices (the burnt offerings, peace offerings, sin offerings, etc.) will be reestablished, and the old

Jewish feasts (the Passover, the Feast of Weeks, etc.), there can be no question. It seems scarcely believable that good Christian men and women will accept and hold to a system of interpretation that compels them to believe that the Church, under Christ's own leadership, will go back to what Paul calls the carnal ordinances of the Old Testament dispensation; but so it is. They base these views on their interpretation of such passages as Ezek. xliii.-xlv. and other prophecies. The Rev. Dr. G. Campbell Morgan, in his book "God's Method with Man," has a chart in which he represents the sacrifices of the Old Testament by a red line. At the point in his chart where he represents Christ as coming for the resurrection of the saints, he makes this red line reappear, and extend through a period of a thousand years, during which he believes that Christ will reign on a literal throne in Jerusalem; yes, and to extend through both the rapture period and the final apostasy period. Dr. Morgan then explains that this red line represents the sacrifices.

George Dickison, in his book "The Second Advent" (1913), says: "Another striking feature of the millennium, looked at from the point of view of this Christian dispensation, will be that of a sacrificial service and priesthood which is to be established, such as was in Israelitish times. . . . The sacrificial system which will have to be observed during the millennium (see Ezek. xlv. 4, 15, 20), in a measure may take the place of the Lord's Supper as it is observed in the present dispensation" (p. 153).

The Rev. W. B. Riley, D.D., who read two papers before the Premillennial Conference held in Chicago in 1914, in his book "The Evolution of the Kingdom," argues for the reestablishment of the sacrifices. He says: "Might it not be, that with the symbolic ordinances of the Old Testament, reinstated in the millennium, the Jews themselves would be put in a place of peculiar power, as evangelists, in presenting the perfect fulfilment of the Old Testament to be found in Christ in the New? Is truth any the less spiritual when it becomes incarnate?" (p. 48).

David D. Rutledge, in his 800-page book, "Christ, Anti-Christ, and Millennium," says: "We therefore infer that when the Jews return to Palestine and the Lord Jesus shall sit on the throne of David, there is no reason, as far as Christianity is concerned, why some at least of the more important Jewish feasts should not be continued. We have seen that the rite of circumcision certainly will be continued. This view receives its confirmation from the book of Ezekiel. . . . In the forty-third chapter we have the dedication of the altar, after which memorial offerings and peace-offerings shall be continued. . . . In the forty-fifth chapter we find the passover will be continued as one of the feasts of the millennial period," etc.

Such quotations could be continued. No premillenarian who has ever written on this point has denied that the reestablishment of the Old Testament sacrifices is logically and surely bound up with premillennial interpretation of prophecy. Last August (1918), at a Prophetic Conference at Lake Winona, in which both sides of the millennial question were discussed for eight days, and at which the author of this paper made five addresses, Dr. James M. Gray, of the Moody Bible Institute, said, in answer to a written question, that "some of these sacrifices would be offered by the returned Jews, and some of them by other members of the kingdom during the millennium, as a kind of memorial."

This is one of the fundamental differences between the two schools of thought. Few premillennialists ever speak of this phase of the question in public. They seem to be ashamed to own it as a part of their belief, but every well-informed premillenarian knows that it is bound up with their system of interpretation of prophecy, and every writer who has been frank enough to discuss the point has declared it to be a logical part of his belief. I challenge any one to quote a single premillennial book-writer who has ever denied that it is a part of the system.

This point emphasizes the fact of the temporal and carnal character of the millennial kingdom. It is a Judaistic

kingdom. The *Jews* are to be to the front; it is the old Jewish kingdom that is to be set up, and the old Jewish sacrifices and Jewish feasts that are to prevail. As opposed to this carnal view, postmillenarians believe in a spiritual kingdom, with Christ reigning in the hearts and lives of His people. This is an important difference between premillenarians and postmillenarians: it is one of the two fundamental differences.

2. Premillenarians and postmillenarians differ widely in their conception of the power of the gospel and the purpose of God in this dispensation. Premillenarians do not believe that the world will be converted by the preaching of the gospel. They hold that nothing but Christ's personal presence as a reigning king in Jerusalem will save the world. In their view, the gospel as a world-saver is a failure. Even though the Holy Spirit is here to help on the gospel in its saving work, yet but little progress will be made towards saving the world. They think that the Church as a whole, instead of advancing, is retrograding, and will continue to retrograde until Christ comes again to stop the downward trend. Notwithstanding the preaching of thousands of clergymen and the work of millions of Christians, the Church is getting worse and worse. Notwithstanding all the uplifting influences of Christianity, the world is actually going back instead of forward.

TESTIMONY OF PREMILLENARIANS ON THIS POINT

Rev. Dr. A. J. Frost, one of the speakers at the Chicago Convention of 1886, used this language:—

“Premillenarians maintain that the church and the world are destined to grow morally worse until the end of the age. . . . [We] as firmly believe that this dispensation will end in diabolical wickedness and well-nigh universal apostasy amid the crash of Apocalyptic thunder and the unparalleled judgments of God. . . . We shall endeavor to show that the sacred writers in the Old and New Testament scriptures foretold this state of moral declension and religious apostasy. With unerring wisdom through divine inspirations they predicted that this dispensation,

like all that had preceded it, would close in utter failure of men's hopes to redeem the world by the preaching of the gospel. . . . If then the condition of the church and the world at the close of this dispensation is to be that of well-nigh universal apostasy and judgment, does it not follow that the nominal church and the world are certain to grow worse and worse? . . . Does any one believe that more than one-half the protestant members have even been born of God? . . . If Christ is not to return till this world is converted by the preaching of the gospel He will never return until eternal ages roll away. . . . This dispensation is destined to grow worse and worse. . . . What is the moral condition of the church and the world to-day? We believe it to be growing worse and worse."

In that great convention of premillenarians there was not one who challenged these statements.

The Rev. Dr. Haldeman, in his book "The Coming of Christ," used these words: "The Postmillennialist looks upon this hour as the time of victory for God. The Premillennialist looks upon it as the hour in which the darkness in man and the evil in Satan are holding high carnival" (p. 13). "They [Premillenarians] do not expect the world to be converted by the gospel, and peace brought in through its instrumentality; on the contrary, they expect rather that the world will grow more and more indifferent to that gospel; that iniquity will abound, lawlessness prevail, and that so far from beating swords into ploughshares, the nations will turn the ploughshares into swords; . . . that the professing Church will grow more and more corrupt in doctrine and worldly practice, until the Son of God, rejecting it as His witness on the earth, shall spew it from His mouth" (p. 3).

Dr. Morgan says: "I sigh for the coming of the angels. I feel increasingly that the government of men is a disastrous failure, and will be to the end."

The Rev. Dr. George S. Bishop, at the Chicago Conference in 1886, said: "The Scriptures declare that the world, the natural order around us, moves on a descending scale, grows worse and worse. . . . Outwardly things may seem to improve. Foolish men and even ministers, foolish in this,

however they may laugh at our wisdom in other departments, may talk of progressive perfection. . . . The world is growing worse and worse. All the while Tubal Cain was hammering out his new machinery, and Jubal was building his big organs, the world was growing worse and worse, and preparing for the deluge, and so it is now. Nature grows worse and worse. The natural man grows worse and worse. . . . Deterioration is the rule of the times of the Gentiles."

In speaking of the march of the church of Jesus Christ toward the millennium, Dr. Riley said: "The music of that march has in it a minor key; it sounds more like a funeral dirge than a victorious blast" (p. 44).

Dr. Morgan, in one of his latest books, "Sunrise," has these words: "There is a wide-spread opinion that the work of the Church is the conversion of the world. . . . Now, as a matter of fact, there is not a single command of Jesus which warrants us in believing that the responsibility of the Church is the conversion of the world. The Church is called to the work of evangelizing the world; but not by a single parable of Jesus, nor by one sentence in His teaching, did He ever give us to understand that, as a result of the Church's mission, the world would be saved" (p. 33). Note the difference Dr. Morgan makes between converting the world and evangelizing it.

Rev. Dr. E. M. Milligan, in his pamphlet "A Statement of Premillenarian Beliefs" (1917), says: "During this age, then, God's plan is not the conversion of the world, but rather its evangelization through the efforts of those who are willing to be His witnesses and to endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ." Note the fact that Dr. Milligan makes a positive difference between evangelizing the world and converting it. Again, he says: "Before the end [of this age] comes, the gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world, not with any expectation of converting the nations, but rather as a witness unto them so that they shall be left without excuse" (p. 13).

A premillenarian sends missionaries, not with any expectation of converting many of the heathen, but so that they may be left without excuse. Dr. Milligan says: "The Spirit's mission is not to convert the world, but rather to convict the world of sin and righteousness and of judgment to come" (p. 24).

The late beloved Rev. Dr. S. H. Kellogg made an address in the great New York Premillennial Conference on the subject "Christ's Coming: Is it Pre-millennial?" In commenting on Matt. xxiv. 14, he said: "'This Gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world,' not for its conversion. Why did the Lord not say so if that were indeed the object?—but, 'for a witness unto all nations, and then'—without waiting for a general conversion of the nations—'then shall the end come.' All nations must hear, and then shall the end come. To sum up the argument, we may safely say that in the whole Bible among the formal statements of the object of the preaching of the Gospel by Christ's ministers, there is not a single one which states that object to be the conversion of the world to God." Is not that a strange statement for a speaker to make in a great conference of Bible students? and is it not strange that, so far as the records state, there was not one premillenarian present who took exception to the statement? They all seem to want to forget Matt. xxviii. 18 and 20: "Go ye, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, and baptize them," etc.

BELIEF OF POSTMILLENNARIANS

Over against this minimizing of the power of the gospel, postmillenarians believe that the world will be saved by the preaching of the gospel and the uplifting influences of Christianity; that the Church and the world are by these influences getting better and better; and that under these influences they will continue to get better until the end. They believe that it is Christ's plan to save the world through the influence of the gospel. Here is the plan as He laid it down. He made atonement by His suffering and

death; He ascended to heaven and took a seat at God's right hand; from His throne in heaven He directs the work of the church here on earth, but always in harmony with man's freedom to respond or to refuse. First of all, He sends His ministers with the gospel message; He sends the Holy Spirit in converting and assisting power to the Church and its members; He Himself by His Spirit comes and dwells in His followers. Through the gospel and these powerful influences He planned to save the world.

CHRIST'S PLAN

Now what is there to indicate that this is Christ's plan? First, He said: "It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I go, I will send him unto you" (John xvi. 7). Did not Christ say that this was the better plan for them? Secondly, He said that He would send the Holy Spirit to help them; and Pentecost was a demonstration that He was, and is, keeping His promise. Thirdly, after His crucifixion and resurrection He gave some final directions to his followers as to the work of His church. What were these directions? They are contained in His great commission:—

"All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. xxviii. 18-20).

Notice what He says in this commission:—

1. "Go . . . and make disciples of all the nations." This is no mere "evangelizing," as premillenarians use that term: it is making disciples of them; for He immediately adds "baptizing them into the name of Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." Did Christ or the apostles ever give direction to baptize any one until he gave evidence of conversion by the acceptance of Jesus as his Lord? Well, then, if the apostles were directed to baptize these

people of all nations, He surely had in mind that they were to be converted; they were really to accept Jesus as their Lord, and then to be baptized. Is there any defect in this reasoning?

2. Furthermore, after having been received into the church by baptism, they were to be instructed, "teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you." Is not that the program of the Christian church? Preach the gospel, and when the people are converted receive them into the church by baptism, and then instruct them fully as to the doctrines of the Scriptures?

3. The gospel was the means they were to use; they were to preach Jesus.

4. He promised to be with His disciples in this work of converting, baptizing, and instructing, even until the end of the world. "And lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." That is a great program: go and make Christians, and baptize them, and instruct them, and do it in the assurance that I am with you in the whole program. How could the work ultimately fail when their Lord had commanded them to do it, and when Christ by His own promise is to be with them?

5. Lest there be doubting Thomases among them, He prefaced all this by a statement that should settle every doubt: "All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth." Notice the significance of that statement in connection with this commission for world-conversion. All authority "in heaven" is His. What more could He have than that as far as heaven is concerned? All power "on earth" is His. What more could He have in that line? Christ during this dispensation has all power both in heaven and on earth. If this be so, and it is, then there will never be a time when He will have more power than He has now either in heaven or on earth. This present dispensation is the dispensation of Christ. He has all power both in heaven and on earth for this dispensation. This is not the dispensation of the Holy Spirit, as some say: it is the dispensation of Christ. The Holy

Spirit never testifies of Himself, but always of Christ. This is our Lord's own testimony as to the mission of the Holy Spirit: "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall bear witness of me" (John xv. 26). The Holy Spirit does not come of Himself: He is sent by Christ; He is the Lord's agent.

Paul, in all his teaching concerning the power of Christ, referred to his power as the power of the indwelling Christ. "My little children, of whom I am again in travail until Christ be formed in you" (Gal. iv. 19). That is strong language; it is the figure of the unborn babe. As the babe is formed in the mother, and is vitally a part of herself; so Christ is to be formed in us, a very part of ourselves. Do we catch the fullness of this promise of Christ's presence with His church as she goes forth on her commission? "Lo, I am with you." Not as one beside us, but as an indwelling personality is Christ Jesus to be with His people in their work. He is an indwelling, vitalizing, and quickening power within us, a very living power. That is what He promises to the Church. And the promise here corresponds to the command. The Lord would surely not encourage His followers to fulfill His command to disciple all nations, by promising to be continuously ("all the days"), with them while time lasts ("even unto the end of the world"), unless the process of discipling the nations here commanded was itself to continue unbrokenly to this end; and unless He expected its accomplishment.

Premillenarians try to belittle the meaning of this text. First, they say: To make disciples of all nations does not mean that we are to make Christians of them: that it means simply to preach the gospel everywhere so as to give all the people a chance to be saved. The Rev. Dr. R. M. Russell, of the Moody Bible Institute, says: "The church is not charged with the responsibility for converting the world, but must evangelize the world" (The Kingdom View of the Gospel, p. 10). They simply mean that the gospel is to be preached everywhere, so that if the people

want to hear it they can. When a premillenarian talks about "evangelizing the world," he does not mean the Christianizing of it. Is this the full meaning of our Lord's great commission? He did not say "evangelize" them, but "disciple" them, and then baptize them, and then instruct them. Does not that indicate a continuous and persistent work for all the nations till the work is really done, until the people are Christianized? Though the divine commands are not always the measure of human success, there are here strong indications that the stupendous work of discipling the world enjoined by Christ on His disciples was intended by Him to be accomplished.

(a) Christ did not commission His church to preach the gospel as a witness simply; but to make disciples of the people, and to baptize them into the membership of the church. (b) In issuing this commission Christ gave no intimation that the effort to convert the world would be failure. The commission was to disciple the world. (c) In order to inspire confidence He pointed out the source of their success,—His presence and His all-power. The apostles would surely understand this as a commission to do things: they were to make disciples; they were to baptize; they were to instruct. They were to get results in the way of conversions and instructed Christians. This is a tremendously big commission. But our premillennial brethren would take the heart out of it by saying that it does not mean so much as this; that it does not mean results: that it means only that we are to preach the gospel everywhere, that all may have a chance to hear and be saved. They make very little of this great commission. They almost never quote it. They prefer to take that other text which says: "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a testimony unto all the nations; and then shall the end come" (Matt. xxiv. 14). They assume that the testimony will be unavailing. They interpret this text as if nothing more could be asked of us but to bear an unavailing testimony to Christ before all nations. Instead of interpreting this text by that much more

specific and clearly meaningful text, the Lord's great commission, they read out of the Lord's commission all that specific information and obligation that is not in this more meager and less meaningful text. They interpret the longer, fuller, and more specific text by the shorter and less specific text, instead of interpreting the shorter and less clear text by the longer, fuller, and more specific text on the same subject. Is that a correct principle of interpretation? In any other instance they themselves would admit that it is not. It seems that they adopt it here because this is the only way of getting rid of this great commission of our Lord, this text which so interferes with their theory.

A few of them, in order to get rid of the teaching of this troublesome text, would have us believe that what Christ meant was not that all the people were to be converted, but that a few of them were to be called out from all nations. In an address delivered before a Young People's Presbyterial Convention, the man who led in the calling of the 1914 Premillennial Conference in Chicago said: "Sometimes it is said that to evangelize the world means to Christianize the world. But that is not the teaching of the Bible. That text, 'Go ye and make disciples of all nations,' does not mean to Christianize all people. It means to make disciples from among all nations." He translated as if the Greek preposition *ek* were there; when, as a matter of fact, it was not. "All nations" is the direct object of the verb; go, disciple all nations.

Then, still further in their attempt to get rid of this troublesome text, they insist that "to the end of the world" does not mean that; but that it means "to the end of the age." Of this they never convince any but themselves. Both the American Revised Bible and the English Revised Bible translate it "to the end of the world." Then, too, our Lord's own use of the phrase elsewhere, makes this translation certain. He employs the phrase in two other places, — in connection with the parable of the tares, and of the drawnet:—

“And the enemy that sowed them is the devil: and the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are angels. As therefore the tares are gathered up and burned with fire; so shall it be in the end of the world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that cause stumbling, and them that do iniquity, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father” (Matt. xiii. 39-43).

“The harvest is the end of the world”; and Jesus explains this to mean that, as the tares are gathered up and burned with fire; so shall it be in the end of the world; the wicked shall be gathered up and cast into the fire. This cannot be the premillenarians’ “end of the age”; because the wicked, according to their own theory, are not gathered out and cast into the abyss till more than a thousand years after the end of their “age.” This casting out of the wicked does not come until the end of the world, even according to their theory. The phrase here “the end of the world” is the very same as is used in Christ’s great commission. He uses the same phrase in the parable of the drawnet:—

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: which, when it was filled, they drew up on the beach; and they sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but the bad they cast away. So shall it be in the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the righteous, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth” (Matt. xiii. 47-50).

The phrase is used again by the disciples of our Lord when they inquired of Him: “What shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?” (Matt. xxiv. 3.) Here the second coming of our Lord and the end of the world are treated as a single event. Even Alford, one of their own writers, explains “the end of the world” to mean “the completion of the state of time” after which

“time shall be no more.” So long as time endures, so long this commission of our Lord to the Church to disciple all nations by baptism and instruction continues in force.

Premillenarians and postmillenarians differ most radically as to the power of the gospel and the purpose of God in this dispensation. The one believes the gospel to be a failure as far as the Christianizing of the world is concerned. The other believes that the gospel is God's appointed means for converting the world and for the general uplift of society. The one believes that the Church and the world are growing worse and worse under the preaching of the gospel. The other believes that the gospel is the power of God, and that the world is being gradually but effectively saved by the preaching and the uplifting influence of the gospel, and that eventually, substantially the whole world will be brought to bow at the foot of the Cross.

FOREIGN MISSIONS

As a result of these different conceptions of the power of the gospel and the purpose of God in this dispensation, premillenarians and postmillenarians have before them different objects in foreign missions.

Premillenarians and postmillenarians both believe in foreign missions; but they believe in foreign missions from different standpoints. Premillenarians do not believe that any large number of the heathen will be converted by the missionary efforts. From their viewpoint the world and the Church are growing worse and worse, and will continue to grow worse until Christ comes to Jerusalem and sets things right. With such a conception of the course of things they cannot hold that the heathen will in any large numbers be saved by the efforts of the missionaries. Why then do they believe in sending missionaries? for they are active in missionary zeal. They seize on the word “testimony” in the passage, “And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a testimony unto all the nations, and then shall the end come.” They

claim that the gospel is to be preached as a "witness" to the nations, and that this must be done before Christ can come again. So in order to hasten the coming of our Lord they believe in sending missionaries to all the people. They do not expect that the heathen in any large numbers will respond; but all must have a chance to hear the gospel; so that, if they do not accept Christ, the fault will be their own.

Premillenarians in their preaching and writings never lay stress on the great gospel commission, "Go ye and make disciples of all the nations." They put the emphasis on preaching the gospel as a "testimony," and they use the word as a testimony against, and not a testimony for; they assume that it will be an unavailing testimony. In their view the gospel is to be preached as a testimony practically for condemnation; whereas Christ, in His great commission, put the emphasis on preaching the gospel for discipleship. "Disciple all the nations" is Christ's putting of it.

Does any one think we are not fair on this point? Here is a quotation from the official resolutions adopted by the International Prophetic Conference of Premillenarians held in Chicago, 1886:—

"Resolution 4. The Scriptures nowhere teach that the whole world will be converted to God, and that there will be a reign of universal righteousness and peace before the return of the blessed Lord," etc.

"Resolution 5. The duty of the church during the absence of the bridegroom is to watch and pray, to work and wait, to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, and thus to hasten the coming of God."

These same resolutions were adopted by the Great International Prophetic Conference of Premillenarians held in New York City eight years earlier. The reader will note that these Conferences, composed as they were of the leading premillenarians of America, and some even from Europe, declare, not that the purpose of sending missionaries is the conversion of the heathen, but "to hasten the com-

ing of God." That is the official expression of their purpose in sending missionaries — "to hasten the coming of God." This, too, is just what they all hold to-day.

The Rev. Dr. L. W. Munhall says: But some inquire, do not the Scriptures teach that the world will be converted? I answer, not by a single word. . . . The Word of God does not teach that the world will be converted. It teaches most emphatically that it will not be. . . . The Word nowhere by a single sentence, intimates that the world is to be converted" (*The Coming One*, p. 25).

The Rev. R. V. Miller says: "Israel is now like a local train, placed on a side track, in order to let the church, a through train, pass by taking on only a few passengers, then Israel will be switched back on the main line, stopping everywhere and taking up the world" (p. 25). His idea plainly is that the Church to-day is not in the business of saving the world, but is taking on only a few passengers; while in the millennium, after Israel has returned to Palestine and has been put in charge under the direct leadership of Christ, then the Church will take up the serious work of saving the world.

Dr. Morgan uses these words of the Church's work: "The Son of man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all that cause stumbling, everything that offends. This is my hope to-day. Oh, my hope is not in any missionary society in existence, nor in any evangelistic society in existence. I pray that they may do their duty, and preach the gospel, and hasten the coming day; but my hope is in flaming seraphs; my heart cries out for their coming." Dr. Morgan wants the gospel preached to the ends of the earth, not with any expectation that many will be converted; he does not think this to be the mission of the Church; the saving of the world will not come about till the flaming seraphs come to gather the people in.

The Rev. Dr. R. A. Torrey, dean of the Bible Institute of Los Angeles, California, said in his book "*The Return of the Lord Jesus*" (1914): "The purpose of preaching

the gospel of grace in this dispensation is *not the winning of the whole world for Christ but the gathering out of the world a people for His name*. Many people in these days raise the watch cry, 'America for Christ,' but those who know their Bibles know that we shall not see 'America for Christ,' nor the whole world 'for Christ' in the present dispensation. The Gospel of grace has not failed — it is accomplishing just what God intended it should accomplish, gathering out a people for His name, the church, the bride of Christ" (p. 120).

It is worth while to note some things about Dr. Torrey's statement:—

1. God never intended that the preaching of the gospel during this dispensation should convert the whole world nor any large part of it. It is hard to understand how Dr. Torrey could reconcile that statement with Christ's great commission, "Go ye, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them," and "teaching them."

2. Dr. Torrey has no thought of the conversion of the world in this dispensation.

3. The gospel of grace is accomplishing just what God intended it should accomplish in this meager ingathering to which they hold. According to such a conception, one can hardly see that the Church is to be blamed for not getting better results in conversions; for God never intended the Church to get better results; God never intended that the Church should accomplish more than she is accomplishing in the way of ingathering.

The late Dr. A. T. Pierson, who died in 1910 and who, during his lifetime, was one of the very foremost premillennialists in this country and the world, at the International Prophetic Conference in Chicago, gave a brilliant address on the subject "Premillennial Motives for Evangelism." He gave six motives which should move premillennarians to evangelism. But the making disciples of the heathen was not given as one of them, — indeed, he never mentioned the conversion of the heathen; and Christ's great commission, "Go ye, therefore, and make disciples

of all the nations," was never quoted, or even referred to, as playing any part among their missionary motives. And yet the subject of that paper was "Premillennial Motives for Evangelism." Neither is Dr. Pierson alone in his silence on that subject. I have read every address given in the International Prophetic Conferences of Premillennarians held in New York, in Chicago, in Allegheny, and in Chicago in 1914. I have read scores of books and pamphlets written by premillennarians, and in not a single one of them is there any stress laid on that great commission of our Lord. If it is quoted at all, it is tucked away in a corner and hurried away from. In all the addresses of at least three of these great conventions it was not so much as even quoted. When I began reading Dr. Pierson's address on the subject "Premillennial Motives for Evangelism," I said to myself, Surely I will find here some reference to my Lord's great commission; but there was not a word.

Why do they ignore this great commission? Is it because it so completely cuts across their theory for the kingdom? Dr. Morgan, in his book "God's Method with Man," after setting forth the course of events in this dispensation and how thoroughly Satan prevails, and the fewness of those being saved, according to premillenarian conceptions, adds: "Some will say then God is beaten, inasmuch as comparatively few are being gathered into the church." "That," he says, "is a very short-sighted view. God has never for a moment been defeated in the course of human history. Event has followed event in God's progressive work in redemption and regeneration, all the details of which have been necessary."

Note carefully Dr. Morgan's meaning. Though few are being saved, and though Satan thoroughly prevails, yet God is not beaten, for "this is God's plan." This he and others say in the face of Christ's commission, "Go ye, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations."

Then I ask you to note again that a premillenarian never talks about Christianizing the world in this generation, or

in this dispensation, or even about saving the world at all. He never talks about Christianizing the world — how could he? — for he does not believe such to be God's plan. God's plan for the kingdom is to gather out a few, and to preach the gospel as a witness, and then to have the real work of saving the world done after Christ sets up His throne at Jerusalem. He talks about "evangelizing the world in this generation." But ask him what he means by "evangelizing." He does not mean Christianizing it; he does not mean saving it; he means simply that the Church shall send missionaries to all parts of the world, so that people everywhere may have a mere chance to hear the gospel. He does not expect many of them to respond; but the gospel will have been preached as a "testimony," and the fault will be theirs. It is submitted that this is a low ideal.

The Rev. Dr. Minter, a missionary of the Presbyterian Church to China, told the writer this incident. At the annual meeting of the missionaries in China one of the ministerial members, who was a strong premillennialist, in relating the story of his work, told about a trip he made through a province in which, up to that time, no missionary work had been done. He told in a most enthusiastic way of how he had gone to a town and preached in the forenoon, then to another town and preached in the afternoon, and to another in the evening, and how he had kept this itinerant work up for a month, until he had preached in a large number of towns. He was most enthusiastic over the work. One of his fellow workers interrupted him and asked how many converts he had made. "Oh," he answered, "I do not know that I made any converts, but I preached the gospel sufficiently to damn those people."

That premillennialist was surely lacking in delicacy in his putting of the case; but, as a matter of fact, it is not a bad illustration of what is meant by a premillennialist when he talks about "evangelizing the world in this generation."

Dr. Simpson says: "We are to preach the gospel among all nations, not with the expectation that they will be

converted, but as a witness and as an opportunity for salvation for every sinful man." That is not as blunt as the China missionary put it, but it means practically the same thing. How can any one believe that this is what Jesus meant when He gave His great commission?

Yes: premillenarians are active in foreign missionary work. Many of them are our foremost leaders in missionary activity; and many of our foreign missionaries are themselves premillenarian in their beliefs. But premillenarians believe in sending missionaries, so that the second coming of Christ may be hastened. Incidentally, and with great heart-yearning, they hope that many will be converted. And their practice, too, is better than their theory; else they would keep moving on from place to place so as to reach as many as possible, instead of tarrying to instruct and baptize. But the primary purpose in their sending missionaries is that they may fulfill the conditions for the second coming of the Lord to reign at Jerusalem. So they have declared in two of their great premillennial conferences, and so have their writers declared.

POSTMILLENARIANS AND MISSIONS

Postmillenarians send missionaries with the primary purpose of converting the heathen. They take as their marching orders, "Go ye, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations." Their program is Christ's program, — "make disciples." It has in it the ring of sincerity, and it has in it the ring of truth. "All authority is given unto me in heaven and on earth," — He can never have more power than this. "Go ye, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them . . . and teaching them," — there can be no stronger command than that. It means Christianizing, not evangelizing, and it takes in the world. In carrying out this command, He says: "And lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world," — there could be no more sweeping promise as to His presence and help. It is for always, and it is to the end of the world. Why should any one minimize such a glorious and blessed

promise? That great promise, too, is just in harmony with His every utterance as to the future of His kingdom, and with His whole bearing on the subject. Christ gave no word as to how long it would take to disciple the world; and He certainly gave no intimation that the Church would have to give up this plan. And with Christ back of His church in this program, and in the use of His "all authority" she will in the end not fail.

Postmillenarians send missionaries to the heathen, in answer to Christ's command and promise of help, for the purpose of making disciples of them; and, while the work may be slow, they fully believe that eventually the work will be done, and substantially the whole world will be converted, and will acknowledge Christ as universal Lord.

Premillenarians send the gospel to the heathen primarily to hasten the coming of Christ, and incidentally to save a few.

I submit that there is a tremendous difference between the two motives. Which is the more in harmony with Christ's great commission, and with Christ's great loving desire to have all saved?¹

¹The Neale Publishing Company, 440 Fourth Avenue, New York City, has just brought out a volume of 300 pages by Dr. McClenahan, entitled "The Postmillennial View of the Second Coming of Christ." This book is a clear and comprehensive study of the Biblical arguments for and against premillennialism. Its price is \$1.50.—*Error.*