

Systematic Theology 6.2

General Eschatology

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Part Six: The Doctrine of the Last Things — Section 6.2: General Eschatology

Editorial note

The text has been updated to UK English; gloss boxes have been added to explain technical terms; summaries have been included; and questions for further study have been added. We have also included a master outline with the part represented in this volume shown in bold.

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Berkhof's Systematic Theology: Master Outline

This six-part guide is designed for use at the beginning of each volume. The part represented in this volume is shown in bold.

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General Eschatology

I. The Second Coming of Christ

Christ will return visibly and gloriously to complete His redemptive work. The events that precede His return must be interpreted with care, but the Church's hope rests on His certain coming.

While the prophets do not clearly distinguish a twofold coming of Christ, the Lord Himself and the apostles make it abundantly clear that the first coming will be followed by a second. Jesus referred to His return more than once towards the end of His public ministry, Matt. 24:30; 25:19,31; 26:64; John 14:3. At the time of His ascension angels pointed to His future return, Acts 1:11. Moreover, the apostles speak of it in numerous passages, Acts 3:20,21; Phil. 3:20; I Thess. 4:15,16; II Thess. 1:7,10; Tit. 2:13; Heb. 9:28. Several terms are used to denote this great event, of which the following are the most important: (1) apocalupsis (unveiling), which points to the removal of that which now obstructs our vision of Christ, I Cor. 1:7; II Thess. 1:7; I Pet. 1:7,13; 4:13; (2) epiphaneia (appearance, manifestation), a term referring to Christ's coming forth out of a hidden background with the rich blessings of salvation, II Thess. 2:8; I Tim. 6:14; II Tim. 4:1,8; Tit. 2:13; and (3) parousia (lit. presence), which points to the coming that precedes the presence or results in the presence, Matt. 24:3,27,37; I Cor. 15:23; I Thess. 2:19; 3:13; 4:15; 5:23; II Thess. 2:1-9; Jas. 5:7,8; II Pet. 1:16; 3:4,12; I John 2:28.

A. THE SECOND COMING A SINGLE EVENT.

GLOSS Parousia: the coming or arrival of Christ in glory; the New Testament term especially used for His return.

Present day dispensationalists distinguish between a twofold future coming of Christ, though they sometimes seek to preserve the unity of the idea of the second coming by speaking of these as two aspects of that great event. But since these two are in reality represented as two different events, separated by a period of several years, each having a purpose of its own, they can hardly be regarded as a single event. The first of these is the parousia or simply “the coming,” and results in the rapture of the saints, sometimes represented as a secret rapture. This coming is imminent, that is, it can occur at any moment, since there are no predicted events which must precede its occurrence. The prevailing opinion is that at this time Christ does not come down to earth, but remains in the upper air. Those who die in the Lord are raised from the dead, the living saints are transfigured, and together they are caught up to meet the Lord in the air. Hence this coming is also called the “coming for His saints,” I Thess. 4:15,16. It is followed by an interval of seven years, during which the world is evangelized, Matt. 24:14, Israel is converted, Rom. 11:26, the great tribulation occurs, Matt. 24:21,22, and Antichrist or the man of sin will be revealed, II Thess. 2:8-10. After these events there is another coming of the Lord with His saints, I Thess. 3:13, which is called “the revelation” or “the day of the Lord,” in which He comes down to earth. This coming cannot be called imminent, because it must be preceded by several predicted events. At this coming Christ judges the living nations, Matt. 25:31-46, and ushers in the millennial kingdom. Thus we have two distinct comings of the Lord, separated by a period of seven years, of which the one is imminent and the other is not, the one is followed by the glorification of the saints, and the other by the judgment of the nations and the establishment of the kingdom. This construction of the doctrine of the second coming is very convenient for the dispensationalists, since it enables them to defend the view that the coming of the Lord is imminent, but is not warranted by Scripture and carries with it un-Scriptural implications. In II Thess. 2:1,2,8 the terms parousia and “day of the Lord” are used interchangeably, and according to II Thess. 1:7-10 the revelation mentioned in verse 7 synchronizes with the parousia which brings the

glorification of the saints of which the 10th verse speaks. Matt. 24:29-31 represents the coming of the Lord at which the elect are gathered together as following immediately after the great tribulation mentioned in the context, while according to the theory under consideration it should occur before the tribulation. And, finally, according to this theory the Church will not pass through the great tribulation, which is represented in Matt. 24:4-26 as synchronizing with the great apostasy, but the representation of Scripture in Matt. 24:22; Luke 21:36; II Thess. 2:3; I Tim. 4:1-3; II Tim. 3:1-5; Rev. 7:14 is quite different. On the basis of Scripture it should be maintained that the second coming of the Lord will be a single event. Happily, some Premillenarians do not agree with this doctrine of a twofold second coming of Christ, and speak of it as an unwarranted novelty. Says Frost: "It is not generally known, and yet it is an indisputable fact that the doctrine of a pretribulation resurrection and rapture is a modern interpretation — I am tempted to say, a modern invention." [The Second Coming of Christ, p. 203.] According to him it dates from the day of Irving and Darby. Another Premillenarian, namely, Alexander Reese, puts up a very strong argument against this whole idea in his work on The Approaching Advent of Christ.

B. GREAT EVENTS PRECEDING THE PAROUSIA.

GLOSS **Signs of the end:** events in redemptive history that point toward Christ's return, without giving a date for it.

According to Scripture several important events must occur before the return of the Lord, and therefore it cannot be called imminent. In the light of Scripture it cannot be maintained that there are no predicted events which must still come to pass before the second coming. As might be expected in view of what was said in the preceding, Frost, in spite of his dispensationalism, rejects the doctrine of imminence. He prefers to speak of the coming of Christ as "impending." Support for the doctrine of the imminence of the return of

Christ is found in Scripture statements to the effect that Christ is coming after “a very little while,” Heb. 10:37; or “quickly,” Rev. 22:7; in exhortations to watch and wait for His coming, Matt. 24:42; 25:13; Rev. 16:15; and in the fact that Scripture condemns the person who saith, “My Lord tarrieth” (or, “delayeth his coming”), Matt. 24:48. Jesus did indeed teach that His coming was near, but this is not the same as teaching that it was imminent. In the first place it should be borne in mind that in speaking of His coming, He does not always have in mind the eschatological coming. Sometimes He refers to His coming in spiritual power on the day of Pentecost; sometimes to His coming in judgment in the destruction of Jerusalem. In the second place He and the apostles teach us that several important events had to occur before His physical return at the last day, Matt. 24:5-14, 21, 22, 29-31; II Thess. 2:2-4. Therefore He could not very well regard and represent His coming as imminent. It is evident also that, when He spoke of His coming as near, He did not mean to represent it as immediately at hand. In the parable of the pounds He teaches that the Lord of the servants came to reckon with them “after a long time,” Matt. 25:19. And the parable of the pounds was spoken for the very purpose of correcting the notion “that the kingdom of God should immediately appear,” Luke 19:11. In the parable of the ten virgins the bridegroom is represented as “tarrying,” Matt. 25:5. This is in harmony with what Paul says in II Thess. 2:2. Peter predicted that scoffers would arise saying, “Where is the day of His coming?” And he teaches his readers to understand the predictions of the nearness of the second coming from the divine point of view, according to which one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day, II Pet. 3:3-9. To teach that Jesus regarded the second coming as immediately at hand, would be to represent Him as in error, since almost two thousand years have already elapsed since that time. Now the question can be raised, How can we then be urged to watch for the coming? Jesus teaches us in Matt. 24:32, 33 to watch for the coming through the signs: “when ye see all these things, know ye that He is nigh.” Moreover, we need not interpret the exhortation to watch as an exhortation to scan the heavens for immediate signs of the Lord’s appearance.

We should rather see in it an admonition to be awake, to be alert, to be prepared, to be active in the work of the Lord, lest we be overtaken by sudden calamity. The following great events must precede the coming of the Lord.

1. THE CALLING OF THE GENTILES. Several passages of the New Testament point to the fact that the gospel of the Kingdom must be preached to all nations before the return of the Lord, Matt. 24:14; Mark 13:10; Rom. 11:25. Many passages testify to the fact that the Gentiles will enter the Kingdom in goodly numbers during the new dispensation, Matt. 8:11; 13:31,32; Luke 2:32; Acts 15:14; Rom. 9:24-26; Eph. 2:11-20, and other passages. But those indicated above clearly refer to the evangelization of all nations as the goal of history. Now it will hardly do to say that the gospel has already been proclaimed among all peoples, nor that the labors of a single missionary in each one of the nations of the world would meet all the requirements of the statement of Jesus. On the other hand it is equally impossible to maintain that the words of the Saviour call for the preaching of the gospel to every individual of the different nations of the world. They do require, however, that those nations as nations shall be thoroughly evangelized, so that the gospel becomes a power in the life of the people, a sign that calls for decision. It must be preached to them for a testimony, so that it can be said that an opportunity was given them to choose for or against Christ and His Kingdom. These words clearly imply that the great commission must be carried out in all the nations of the world, in order to make disciples of all nations, that is, from among the people of all those nations. They do not justify the expectation, however, that all the nations will as a whole accept the gospel, but only that it will find adherents in all the nations and will thus be instrumental in bringing in the fulness of the Gentiles. At the end of time it will be possible to say that all nations were made acquainted with the gospel, and the gospel will testify against the nations that did not accept it.

It will readily be understood from what we said in the preceding that many dispensationalists have quite a different view of the matter. They do not

believe that the evangelization of the world need be, nor that it will be, completed before the parousia, which is imminent. According to them it will really begin at that time. They point out that the gospel indicated in Matt. 24:14 is not the gospel of the grace of God in Jesus Christ, but the gospel of the Kingdom, which is quite different, the good news that the Kingdom is once more at hand. After the Church has been removed from this earthly scene, and with it the indwelling Holy Spirit has gone — which really means, after Old Testament conditions have been restored —, then the gospel with which Jesus began His ministry will again be preached. It will be preached at first by those who were converted by the very removal of the Church, later on perhaps by converted Israel and a special messenger,[Blackstone, *Jesus is Coming*, p. 233.] or, particularly during the great tribulation, by the believing remnant of Israel. [Scofield's Bible, pp. 1033,1036; Rogers, *The End from the Beginning*, p. 144; Feinberg, *Premillennialism or Amillennialism*, pp. 134,135.] This preaching will be wonderfully effective, far more effective than the preaching of the gospel of the grace of God. It is during this period that the 144,000 and the great multitude which no man can number of Rev. 7 will be converted. And in that way the prediction of Jesus in Matt. 24:14 will be fulfilled. It should be remembered that this construction is one which the older Premillenarians did not accept, which is even now rejected by some present day Premillenarians. and which certainly does not commend itself to us. The distinction between a twofold gospel and a twofold second coming of the Lord is an untenable one. The gospel of the grace of God in Jesus Christ is the only gospel that saves and that gives entrance to the Kingdom of God. And it is absolutely contrary to the history of revelation, that a reversal to Old Testament conditions, including the absence of the Church and of the indwelling Holy Spirit, should be more effective than the preaching of the gospel of the grace of God in Jesus Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

2. THE CONVERSION OF THE PLEROMA OF ISRAEL. Both the Old and the New Testament speak of a future conversion of Israel, Zech. 12:10; 13:1; II Cor. 3:15,16, and Rom. 11:25-29 seems to connect this with the end of time.

Premillennialists have exploited this Scriptural teaching for their particular purpose. They maintain that there will be a national restoration and conversion of Israel, that the Jewish nation will be re-established in the Holy Land, and that this will take place immediately preceding or during the millennial reign of Jesus Christ. It is very doubtful, however, whether Scripture warrants the expectation that Israel will finally be re-established as a nation, and will as a nation turn to the Lord. Some Old Testament prophecies seem to predict this, but these should be read in the light of the New Testament. Does the New Testament justify the expectation of a future restoration and conversion of Israel as a nation? It is not taught nor even necessarily implied in such passages as Matt. 19:28, and Luke 21:24, which are often quoted in its favor. The Lord spoke very plainly of the opposition of the Jews to the spirit of His Kingdom, and of the certainty that they, who could in a sense be called children of the Kingdom, would lose their place in it, Matt. 8:11,12; 21:28-46; 22:1-14; Luke 13:6-9. He informs the wicked Jews that the Kingdom will be taken from them and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof, Matt. 21:43. And even when He speaks of the corruptions which in course of time will creep into the Church, of the troubles it will encounter, and of the apostasy which will finally ensue, He does not hint at any prospective restoration and conversion of the Jewish people. This silence of Jesus is very significant. Now it may be thought that Rom. 11:11-32 certainly teaches the future conversion of the nation of Israel. Many commentators adopt this view, but even its correctness is subject to considerable doubt. In the chapters 9-11 the apostle discusses the question, how the promises of God to Israel can be reconciled with the rejection of the greater part of Israel. He points out first of all in the chapters 9 and 10 that the promise applies, not to Israel according to the flesh, but to the spiritual Israel; and in the second place that God still has His elect among Israel, that there is among them still a remnant according to the election of grace, 11:1-10. And even the hardening of the greater part of Israel is not God's final end, but rather a means in His hand to bring salvation to the Gentiles, in order that these, in turn, by enjoying the blessings of

salvation, may provoke Israel to jealousy. The hardening of Israel will always be only partial, for through all the succeeding centuries there will always be some who accept the Lord. God will continue to gather His elect remnant out of the Jews during the entire new dispensation until the fulness (pleroma, that is, the number of the elect) of the Gentiles be come in, and so (in this manner) all Israel (its pleroma, that is, the full number of true Israelites) shall be saved. “All Israel” is to be understood as a designation, not of the whole nation, but of the whole number of the elect out of the ancient covenant people.

Premillennarians take the 26th verse to mean that, after God has completed His purpose with the Gentiles, the nation of Israel will be saved. But the apostle said at the beginning of his discussion that the promises were for the spiritual Israel; there is no evidence of a change of thought in the intervening section, so that this would come as a surprise in 11:26; and the adverb houtos cannot mean “after that,” but only “in this manner.” With the fulness of the Gentiles the fulness of Israel will also come in.

3. THE GREAT APOSTASY AND THE GREAT TRIBULATION. These two may be mentioned together, because they are interwoven in the eschatological discourse of Jesus, Matt. 24:9-12, 21-24; Mark 13:9-22; Luke 21:22-24. The words of Jesus undoubtedly found a partial fulfilment in the days preceding the destruction of Jerusalem, but will evidently have a further fulfilment in the future in a tribulation far surpassing anything that has ever been experienced, Matt. 24:21; Mark 13:19. Paul also speaks of the great apostasy in II Thess. 2:3; I Tim. 4:1; II Tim. 3:1-5. He already saw something of that spirit of apostasy in his own day, but clearly wants to impress upon his readers that it will assume much greater proportions in the last days. Here again present day dispensationalists differ from us. They do not regard the great tribulation as a precursor of the coming of the Lord (the parousia), but believe that it will follow “the coming,” and that therefore the Church will not pass through the great tribulation. The assumption is that the Church will be “caught up,” to be with the Lord, before the tribulation with all its terrors overtakes the inhabitants of the earth. They prefer to speak of the great tribulation as “the

day of Jacob's trouble," since it will be a day of great trouble for Israel rather than for the Church. But the grounds which they adduce for this view are not very convincing. Some of them derive whatever force they have from their own preconceived notion of a twofold second coming of Christ, and therefore have no meaning whatsoever for those who are convinced that there is no evidence for such a twofold coming in Scripture. Jesus certainly mentions the great tribulation as one of the signs of His coming and of the end of the world, Matt. 24:3. It is of that coming (parousia) that He is speaking throughout this chapter, as may be seen from the repeated use of the word parousia, verses 3,37,39. It is only reasonable to assume that He is speaking of the same coming in verse 30, a coming which according to verse 29 will follow immediately after the tribulation. This tribulation will affect also the elect: they will be in danger of being led astray, Matt. 24:24; for their sakes the days of agony will be shortened, verse 22; they will be gathered out of all quarters of the world at the coming of the Son of Man; and they are encouraged to look up when they see these things come to pass, since their redemption draweth nigh, Luke 21:28. There is no warrant for limiting the elect to the elect of Israel, as the Premillenarians do. Paul clearly represents the great falling away as preceding the second coming, II Thess. 2:3, and reminds Timothy of the fact that grievous times will come in the last days, I Tim. 4:1,2; II Tim. 3:1-5. In Rev. 7:13,14 saints in heaven are said to have come out of the great tribulation, and in Rev. 6:9 we find such saints praying for their brethren who were still suffering persecution.[For further defense of the position that the Church will pass through the tribulation, we refer to the works of two Premillenarians, namely. Frost, *The Second Coming of Christ*, pp. 202-227; Reese, *The Approaching Advent of Christ*, pp. 199-224.]

4. THE COMING REVELATION OF ANTICHRIST. The term antichristos is found only in the Epistles of John, namely, in I John 2:18,22; 4:3; II John 7. As far as the form of the word is concerned, it may describe (a) one who takes the place of Christ; then "anti" is taken in the sense of "instead of"; or (b) one who, while assuming the guise of Christ, opposes Him; then "anti" is used in the

sense of “against.” The latter is more in harmony with the context in which the word occurs. From the fact that John uses the singular in 2:18 without the article, it is evident that the term “antichrist” was already regarded as a technical name. It is uncertain, whether John in using the singular had in mind one paramount Antichrist, of which the others to which he refers were merely harbingers or forerunners, or simply meant to personify the principle embodied in several antichrists, the principle of evil militating against the Kingdom of God. Antichrist clearly does represent a certain principle, I John 4:3. If we bear this in mind, we shall also realize that, though John is the first to use the term “antichrist,” the principle or spirit indicated by it is clearly mentioned in earlier writings. Just as there is in Scripture a clearly marked development in the delineation of Christ and of the Kingdom of God, so there is also a progressive revelation of antichrist. The representations differ, but increase in definiteness as God’s revelation progresses.

In the majority of the Old Testament prophets we see the principle of unrighteousness working in the ungodly nations which show themselves hostile to Israel and are judged by God. In the prophecy of Daniel we find something more specific. The language used there furnished many of the features of Paul’s description of the man of sin in II Thessalonians. Daniel finds the wicked, ungodly principle embodied in the “little horn,” Dan. 7:8,23-26, and describes it very clearly in 11:35 ff. Here even the personal element is not altogether wanting, though it is not entirely certain that the prophet is thinking of some particular king, namely, Antiochus Epiphanes, as a type of Antichrist. The coming of Christ naturally calls forth this principle in its specifically anti-Christian form, and Jesus represents it as embodied in various persons. He speaks of pseudoprophetai and pseudochristoi, who take position against Him and His Kingdom, Matt. 7:15; 24:5,24; Mark 13:21,22; Luke 17:23. In order to correct the erroneous view of the Thessalonians, Paul calls attention to the fact that the day of Christ cannot come, “except the falling away come first, and the man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition.” He describes this man of sin as “he that opposeth and exalteth himself against all

that is called God or worshipped; so that he sitteth in the temple of God, setting himself forth as God,” I Thess. 2:3,4. This description naturally reminds us of Dan. 11:36 ff. and clearly points to Antichrist. There is no good reason for doubting the identity of the man of sin, of whom Paul speaks, and the Antichrist mentioned by John. The apostle sees the “mystery of lawlessness” already at work, but assures his readers that the man of sin cannot come forth until that which (or, “he that”) restraineth is taken out of the way. When this obstacle, whatever it may be (it is variously interpreted), is removed, he will appear “whose coming is according to the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders,” verses 7-9. In this chapter the personal element is presupposed throughout. The book of Revelation finds the anti-Christian principle or power in the two beasts coming up out of the sea and out of the earth, Rev. 13. The first is generally thought to refer to governments, political powers, or some world-empire; the second, though not with the same unanimity, to false religion, false prophecy, and false science, particularly the first two. This opponent, or opposing principle, John in his epistles finally calls “Antichrist.”

Historically, there have been different opinions respecting Antichrist. In the ancient Church many maintained that Antichrist would be a Jew, pretending to be the Messiah and ruling at Jerusalem. Many recent commentators are of the opinion that Paul and others mistakenly thought that some Roman emperor would be Antichrist, and that John clearly had Nero in mind in Rev. 13:18, since the letters in the Hebrew words for “emperor Nero” are exactly equivalent to 666, Rev. 13:18. Since the time of the Reformation many, among whom also Reformed scholars, looked upon papal Rome, and in some cases even on some particular Pope, as Anti-Christ. And the papacy indeed reveals several traits of Antichrist as he is pictured in Scripture. Yet it will hardly do to identify it with Antichrist. It is better to say that there are elements of Antichrist in the papacy. Positively, we can only say: (a) that the anti-Christian principle was already at work in the days of Paul and John according to their own testimony; (b) that it will reach its highest power towards the end of the

world; (c) that Daniel pictures the political, Paul the ecclesiastical, and John in the book of Revelation both sides of it: the two may be successive revelations of the anti-Christian power; and (d) that probably this power will finally be concentrated in a single individual, the embodiment of all wickedness.

The question of the personal character of Antichrist is still a subject of debate. Some maintain that the expressions “antichrist,” “the man of sin, the son of perdition,” and the figures in Daniel and Revelation are merely descriptions of the ungodly and anti-Christian principle, which manifests itself in the opposition of the world to God and His Kingdom, throughout the whole history of that Kingdom, an opposition sometimes weaker, sometimes stronger, but strongest toward the end of time. They do not look for any one personal Antichrist. Others feel that it is contrary to Scripture to speak of Antichrist merely as an abstract power. They hold that such an interpretation does not do justice to the data of Scripture, which speaks, not only of an abstract spirit, but also of actual persons. According to them “Antichrist” is a collective concept, the designation of a succession of persons, manifesting an ungodly or anti-Christian spirit, such as the Roman emperors who persecuted the Church and the Popes who engaged in a similar work of persecution. Even they do not think of a personal Antichrist who will be in himself the concentration of all wickedness. The more general opinion in the Church, however, is that in the last analysis the term “Antichrist” denotes an eschatological person, who will be the incarnation of all wickedness and therefore represents a spirit which is always more or less present in the world, and who has several precursors or types in history. This view prevailed in the early Church and would seem to be the Scriptural view. The following may be said in favor of it: (a) The delineation of Antichrist in Dan. 11 is more or less personal, and may refer to a definite person as a type of Antichrist. (b) Paul speaks of Antichrist as “the man of sin” and “the son of perdition.” Because of the peculiar Hebrew use of the terms “man” and “son” these expressions in themselves may not be conclusive, but the context clearly favors the personal idea. He opposes, sets himself up as God, has a definite revelation, is the

lawless one, and so on. (c) While John speaks of many antichrists as already present, he also speaks of Antichrist in the singular as one that is still coming in the future, I John 2:18. (d) Even in Revelation, where the representation is largely symbolical, the personal element is not lacking, as, for instance in Rev. 19:20, which speaks of Antichrist and his subordinate as being cast into the lake of fire. And (e) since Christ is a person, it is but natural to think that Antichrist will also be a person.

5. SIGNS AND WONDERS. The Bible speaks of several signs that will be harbingers of the end of the world and of the coming of Christ. It mentions (a) wars and rumours of wars, famines and earthquakes in various places, which are called the beginning of travail, the travail, as it were, of the rebirth of the universe at the time of the coming of Christ; (b) the coming of false prophets, who will lead many astray, and of false Christs, who will show great signs and wonders to lead astray, if possible, even the elect; and (c) of fearful portents in heaven involving sun, moon, and stars, when the powers of the heavens will be shaken, Matt. 24:29,30; Mark 13:24,25; Luke 21:25,26. Since some of these signs are of a kind which repeatedly occur in the natural order of events, the question naturally arises in what way they can be recognized as special signs of the end. Attention is usually called to the fact that they will differ from previous occurrences in intensity and extent. But, of course, this does not entirely satisfy, because those seeing such signs can never know, if there be no other indications, whether the signs which they are witnessing may not be followed by other similar signs of even greater extent and intensity. Therefore attention should also be called to the fact that there will be, when the end is near, a remarkable conjunction of all these signs, and that the natural occurrences will be accompanied with supernatural phenomena, Luke 21:25,26. Jesus says: "When ye see all these things, know that He is nigh, even at the doors." Matt. 24:33.

C. THE PAROUSIA OR THE SECOND COMING ITSELF.

GLOSS Second coming: Christ's visible and glorious return to raise the dead, judge the world, and consummate His kingdom.

Immediately after the portents just mentioned "the sign of the Son of Man shall be seen coming on the clouds of heaven," Matt. 24:30. In connection with this the following points should be noted:

1. THE TIME OF THE SECOND COMING. The exact time of the coming of the Lord is unknown, Matt. 24:36, and all the attempts of men to figure out the exact date proved to be erroneous. The only thing that can be said with certainty, on the basis of Scripture, is that He will return at the end of the world. The disciples asked the Lord. "What shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" Matt. 24:3. They link the two together, and the Lord does not intimate in any way that this is a mistake, but rather assumes the correctness of it in His discourse. He represents the two as synchronizing in Matt. 24:29-31, 35-44: comp. Matt. 13:39, 40. Paul and Peter also speak of the two as coinciding, I Cor. 15:23, 24; II Pet. 3:4-10. A study of the concomitants of the second coming leads to the same result. The resurrection of the saints will be one of its concomitants, I Cor. 15:23, I Thess. 4:16, and Jesus assures us that He will raise them up at the last day, John 6:39, 40, 44, 54. According to Thayer, Cremer-Koegel, Walker, Salmond, Zahn, and others, this can only mean the day of the consummation, — the end of the world. Another one of its concomitants will be the judgment of the world, Matt. 25:31-46, particularly also the judgment of the wicked, II Thess. 1:7-10, which Premillenarians place at the end of the world. And, finally, it will also carry with it the restoration of all things, Acts 3:20, 21. The strong expression "restoration of all things" is too strong to refer to anything less than the perfect restoration of that state of things that existed before the fall of man. It points to the restoration of all things to their former condition, and this will not be found in the millennium

of the Premillenarians. Even sin and death will continue to slay their victims during that period.[Cf. Thayer, Cremer-Koegel, Weiss, Bib. Theol. of the N. T., p. 194, note.] As was pointed out in the preceding, several things must occur before the Lord's return. This must be borne in mind in the reading of those passages which speak of the coming of the Lord or the last day as near, Matt. 16:28; 24:34; Heb. 10:25; Jas. 5:9; I Pet. 4:5; I John 2:18. They find their explanation partly in the fact that, considered from the side of God, with whom one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day, the coming is always near; partly in the Biblical representation of the New Testament time as constituting the last days or the last time; partly in the fact that the Lord in speaking of His coming does not always have in mind His physical return at the end of time, but may refer to His coming in the Holy Spirit; and partly in the characteristic prophetic foreshortening, in which no clear distinction is made between the proximate coming of the Lord in the destruction of Jerusalem and His final coming to judge the world. Sectaries have often made the attempt to fix the exact time of the second coming, but these attempts are always delusive. Jesus says explicitly: "But of that day and hour knoweth no one, not even the angels of heaven, neither the Son, but the Father only," Matt. 24:36. The statement respecting the Son probably means that this knowledge was not included in the revelation which He as Mediator had to bring.

2. THE MANNER OF THE SECOND COMING. The following points deserve emphasis here:

a. It will be a personal coming. This follows from the statement of the angels to the disciples on the Mount of the Ascension: "This Jesus, who was received up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye beheld Him going into heaven," Acts 1:11. The person of Jesus was leaving them, and the person of Jesus will return. In the system of present day Modernism there is no place for a personal return of Jesus Christ. Douglas Clyde Macintosh sees the return of Christ in "the progressive domination of individuals and society by the

moral and religious principles of essential Christianity, i.e. by the Spirit of Christ.”[Theology as an Empirical Science, p. 213.] William Newton Clarke says: “No visible return of Christ to the earth is to be expected, but rather the long and steady advance of His spiritual Kingdom. . . . If our Lord will but complete the spiritual coming that He has begun, there will be no need of a visible advent to make perfect His glory on the earth.”[Outline of Christian Theology, p. 444.] According to William Adams Brown “Not through an abrupt catastrophe, it may be, as in the early Christian hope, but by the slower and surer method of spiritual conquest, the ideal of Jesus shall yet win the universal assent which it deserves, and His spirit dominate the world. This is the truth for which the doctrine of the second advent stands.”[Christian Theology in Outline, p. 373.] Walter Rauschenbusch and Shailer Mathews speak in similar terms of the second coming. One and all, they interpret the glowing descriptions of the second coming of Christ as figurative representations of the idea that the spirit of Christ will be an ever-increasing, pervasive influence in the life of the world. But it goes without saying that such representations do not do justice to the descriptions found in such passages as Acts 1:11; 3:20,21, Matt. 24:44; I Cor. 15:22; Phil. 3:20; Col. 3:4; I Thess. 2:19; 3:13; 4:15-17; II Tim. 4:8; Tit. 2:13; Heb. 9:28. Modernists themselves admit this when they speak of these as representing the old Jewish way of thinking. They have new and better light on the subject, but it is a light that grows rather dim in view of the world events of the present day.

b. It will be a physical coming. That the Lord’s return will be physical follows from such passages as Acts 1:11; 3:20,21; Heb. 9:28; Rev. 1:7. Jesus will return to earth in the body. There are some who identify the predicted coming of the Lord with His spiritual coming on the day of Pentecost, and understand the parousia to mean the Lord’s spiritual presence in the Church. According to their representation the Lord did return in the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, and is now present (hence parousia) in the Church. They lay special emphasis on the fact that the word parousia means presence.[This interpretation is found in Warren’s *The Parousia of Christ*, and in J. M.

Campbell's The Second Coming of Christ.] Now it is quite evident that the New Testament does speak of a spiritual coming of Christ, Matt. 16:28; John 14:18,23; Rev. 3:20; but this coming, whether to the Church on the day of Pentecost or to the individual in his spiritual renewal, Gal. 1:16, cannot be identified with what the Bible represents as the second coming of Christ. It is true that the word *parousia* means presence, but Dr. Vos correctly pointed out that in its religious eschatological usage it also means arrival, and that in the New Testament the idea of arrival is in the foreground. Moreover, it should be borne in mind that there are other terms in the New Testament, which serve to designate the second coming, namely *apokalupsis*, *epiphaneia*, and *phanerosis*, every one of which points to a coming that can be seen. And, finally, it should not be forgotten that the Epistles refer to the second coming repeatedly as an event that is still future, Phil. 3:20; I Thess. 3:13; 4:15,16; II Thess. 1:7-10; Tit. 2:13. This does not fit in with the idea that the coming was already an event of the past.

c. It will be a visible coming. This is intimately connected with the preceding. It may be said that, if the coming of the Lord will be physical, it will also be visible. This would seem to follow as a matter of course, but the Russellites or Millennial Dawnists do not seem to think so. They maintain that the return of Christ and the inauguration of the millennium took place invisibly in 1874, and that Christ came in power in 1914 for the purpose of removing the Church and overthrowing the kingdoms of the world. When the year 1914 passed by without the appearance of Christ, they sought a way of escape from the difficulty in the convenient theory that He remained in hiding, because the people do not manifest sufficient repentance. Christ has come, therefore, and has come invisibly. Scripture does not leave us in doubt, however, as to the visibility of the Lord's return. Numerous passages testify to it, such as Matt. 24:30; 26:64; Mark 13:26; Luke 21:27; Acts 1:11; Col. 3:4; Tit. 2:13; Heb. 9:28; Rev. 1:7.

d. It will be a sudden coming. Though the Bible teaches us on the one hand that the coming of the Lord will be preceded by several signs, it teaches on the other hand in an equally emphatic manner that the coming will be sudden, will be rather unexpected, and will take people by surprise, Matt. 24:37-44; 25:1-12; Mark 13:33-37; I Thess. 5:2,3; Rev. 3:3; 16:15. This is not contradictory, for the predicted signs are not of such a kind as to designate the exact time. The prophets pointed to certain signs that would precede the first coming of Christ, and yet His coming took many by surprise. The majority of the people paid no attention to the signs whatsoever. The Bible intimates that the measure of the surprise at the second coming of Christ will be in an inverse ratio to the measure of their watchfulness.

e. It will be a glorious and triumphant coming. The second coming of Christ, though personal, physical, and visible, will yet be very different from His first coming. He will not return in the body of His humiliation, but in a glorified body and in royal apparel, Heb. 9:28. The clouds of heaven will be His chariot, Matt. 24:30, the angels His bodyguard, II Thess. 1:7, the archangels His heralds. I Thess. 4:16, and the saints of God His glorious retinue, I Thess. 3:13; II Thess. 1:10. He will come as King of kings and Lord of lords, triumphant over all the forces of evil, having put all His enemies under His feet, I Cor. 15:25; Rev. 19:11-16.

3. THE PURPOSE OF THE SECOND COMING. Christ will return at the end of the world for the purpose of introducing the future age, the eternal state of things, and He will do this by inaugurating and completing two mighty events, namely, the resurrection of the dead and the final judgment, Matt. 13:49,50; 16:27; 24:3; 25:14-46; Luke 9:26; 19:15,26,27; John 5:25-29; Acts 17:31; Rom. 2:3-16; I Cor. 4:5; 15:23; II Cor. 5:10; Phil. 3:20,21; I Thess. 4:13-17; II Thess. 1:7-10; 2:7,8; II Tim. 4:1,8; II Pet. 3:10-13; Jude 14,15; Rev. 20:11-15; 22:12. In the usual representation of Scripture, as already intimated in the preceding, the end of the world, the day of the Lord, the physical resurrection of the dead, and the final judgment coincide. That great turning point will also bring the

destruction of all the evil forces that are hostile to the Kingdom of God, II Thess. 2:8; Rev. 20:14. It may be doubted, whether anyone would have read the relevant passages in any other way, if Rev. 20:1-6 had not been set up by some as the standard by which all the rest of the New Testament must be interpreted. According to Premillenarians the second coming of Christ will primarily serve the purpose of establishing the visible reign of Christ and His Saints on earth, and of inaugurating the real day of salvation for the world. This will involve the rapture, the resurrection of the righteous, the wedding of the Lamb, and judgments upon the enemies of God. But other resurrections and judgments will follow at various intervals, and the last resurrection and final judgment will be separated from the second coming by a thousand years. The objections to this view have partly been given in the preceding and will partly be mentioned in the following chapters.

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY: Why cannot the term *parousia* simply be rendered ‘presence’ wherever it is found? In what different senses does the Bible speak of the coming of Christ? How should Matt. 16:28; 24:34 be interpreted? Does the discourse of Jesus in Matt. 24 speak of a single coming? Does the doctrine of the national restoration of the Jews necessarily involve the doctrine of the millennium? Do the following passages teach such a restoration: Matt. 23:39; Luke 13:35; 21:24; Acts 3:6,7? Does Daniel refer to Antiochus Epiphanes as a type of Antichrist in Dan. 11:36 ff.? How are the beasts of Rev. 13 related to Antichrist? Should the man of sin, of which Paul speaks, be identified with Antichrist? What is the restraining power which is mentioned in II Thess. 2:6,7? Did the apostles teach that the Lord might return during their lifetime? Does the New Testament warrant the idea that the phrase “the end” or “the end of the world” simply means ‘the end of the age’?

II. Millennial Views

Millennial views concern the relation of Christ's return to the thousand years of Revelation 20. Berkhof sets out the principal positions and weighs them by the whole teaching of Scripture.

There are some who connect with the advent of Christ the idea of a millennium, either immediately before or immediately following the second coming. While this idea is not an integral part of Reformed theology, it nevertheless deserves consideration here, since it has become rather popular in many circles. Reformed theology cannot afford to ignore the wide-spread millenarian views of the present day, but should define its position with respect to these. Some of those who expect a millennium in the future hold that the Lord will return before the millennium, and are therefore called Premillennialists; while others believe that His second coming will follow after the millennium, and are therefore known as Postmillennialists. There are large numbers, however, who do not believe that the Bible warrants the expectation of a millennium, and it has become customary of late to speak of them as Amillennialists. The Amillennial view is, as the name indicates, purely negative. It holds that there is no sufficient Scriptural ground for the expectation of a millennium, and is firmly convinced that the Bible favors the idea that the present dispensation of the Kingdom of God will be followed immediately by the Kingdom of God in its consummate and eternal form. It is mindful of the fact that the Kingdom of Jesus Christ is represented as an eternal and not as a temporal kingdom, Isa. 9:7; Dan. 7:14; Luke 1:33; Heb. 1:8; 12:28; II Pet. 1:11; Rev. 11:15; and that to enter the Kingdom of the future is to enter upon one's eternal state, Matt. 7:21,22, to enter life, Matt. 18:8,9 (cf. the preceding context), and to be saved, Mark 10:25,26. Some Premillenarians have spoken of Amillennialism as a new view and as one of the most recent novelties, but this is certainly not in accord with the testimony of history. The name is new indeed, but the view to which it is applied is as old as Christianity. It had at least as many advocates as Chiliasm among the Church

Fathers of the second and third centuries, supposed to have been the heyday of Chiliasm. It has ever since been the view most widely accepted, is the only view that is either expressed or implied in the great historical Confessions of the Church, and has always been the prevalent view in Reformed circles.

A. PREMILLENNIALISM.

GLOSS Premillennialism: the view that Christ returns before a future millennium; it appears in several distinct forms.

Since Premillennialism has not always assumed the same form, it may be well to indicate briefly the form which it generally assumed in the past (without noting all kinds of aberrations), and then to follow this up with a more detailed description of the most dominant premillennial theory of the present day.

1. THE PREMILLENNIALISM OF THE PAST. The view of Irenæus may be given as that which best reflects that of the early Christian centuries. The present world will endure six thousand years, corresponding to the six days of creation. Towards the end of this period the sufferings and persecutions of the pious will greatly increase, until finally the incarnation of all wickedness appears in the person of Antichrist. After he has completed his destructive work and has boldly seated himself in the temple of God, Christ will appear in heavenly glory and triumph over all His enemies. This will be accompanied by the physical resurrection of the saints and the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth. The period of millennial bliss, lasting a thousand years, will correspond to the seventh day of creation, — the day of rest. Jerusalem will be rebuilt; the earth will yield its fruit in rich abundance; and peace and righteousness will prevail. At the end of the thousand years the final judgment will ensue, and a new creation will appear, in which the redeemed will live forever in the presence of God. In general outline this representation is typical

of the eschatological views of the early Christian centuries, however these may differ in some details. During all the following centuries and into the nineteenth century, millennial thought remained essentially the same, though there were strange aberrations in some of the sects. Continued study, however, led to further development and to greater clarity in the presentation of some of its particulars. The main features of the common view may be stated somewhat as follows: The coming advent of Christ to the world is near, and will be visible, personal, and glorious. It will be preceded, however, by certain events, such as the evangelization of all nations, the conversion of Israel, the great apostasy and the great tribulation, and the revelation of the man of sin. Dark and trying times are therefore still in store for the Church, since she will have to pass through the great tribulation. The second coming will be a great, single, outstanding, and glorious event, but will be accompanied by several others bearing on the Church, on Israel, and on the world. The dead saints will be raised and the living transfigured, and together they will be translated to meet the coming Lord. Antichrist and his wicked allies will be slain; and Israel, the ancient people of God will repent, be saved, and restored to the Holy Land. Then the Kingdom of God, predicted by the prophets, will be established in a transformed world. The Gentiles will turn to God in great abundance and be incorporated in the Kingdom. A condition of peace and righteousness will prevail in all the earth. After the expiration of the earthly rule of Christ the rest of the dead will be raised up; and this resurrection will be followed by the last judgment and the creation of a new heaven and a new earth. Generally speaking, it may be said that this is the type of Premillennialism advocated by such men as Mede, Bengel, Auberlen, Christlieb, Ebrard, Godet, Hofmann, Lange, Stier, Van Oosterzee, Van Andel, Alford, Andrews, Ellicott, Guinness, Kellogg, Zahn, Moorehead, Newton, Trench, and others. It goes without saying that these men differed in some details.

2. THE PREMILLENNIALISM OF THE PRESENT. In the second quarter of the nineteenth century a new form of Premillennialism was introduced under the influence of Darby, Kelly, Trotter, and their followers in England and

America, a Premillennialism wedded to Dispensationalism. The new views were popularized in our country especially through the Scofield Bible, and are widely disseminated through the works of such men as Bullinger, F. W. Grant, Blackstone, Gray, Silver, Haldeman, the two Gaebelens, Brookes, Riley, Rogers, and a host of others. They really present a new philosophy of the history of redemption, in which Israel plays a leading role and the Church is but an interlude. Their guiding principle prompts them to divide the Bible into two books, the book of the Kingdom and the book of the Church. In reading their descriptions of God's dealings with men one is lost in a bewildering maze of covenants and dispensations, without an Ariadne thread to give safe guidance. Their divisive tendency also reveals itself in their eschatological program. There will be two second comings, two or three (if not four) resurrections, and also three judgments. Moreover, there will also be two peoples of God, which according to some will be eternally separate, Israel dwelling on earth, and the Church in heaven.

The following will give some idea of the Premillennial scheme that enjoys the greatest popularity to-day:

a. Its view of history. God deals with the world of humanity in the course of history on the basis of several covenants and according to the principles of seven different dispensations. Each dispensation is distinct, and each one of them represents a different test of the natural man; and since man fails to meet the successive tests, each dispensation ends in a judgment. The theocracy of Israel, founded on Mount Sinai, occupies a special place in the divine economy. It was the initiatory form of the Kingdom of God or the Kingdom of the Messiah, and had its golden age in the days of David and Solomon. In the way of obedience it might have increased in strength and glory, but as the result of the unfaithfulness of the people, it was finally overthrown, and the people were carried away into exile. The prophets predicted this overthrow, but also brought messages of hope and raised the expectation that in the days of the Messiah Israel would turn to the Lord in true repentance, the throne of David

would be re-established in unsurpassed glory, and even the Gentiles would share in the blessings of the future Kingdom. But when the Messiah came and offered to establish the Kingdom, the Jews failed to show the requisite repentance. The result was that the King did not establish the Kingdom, but withdrew from Israel and went into a far country, postponing the establishment of the Kingdom until His return. Before He left the earth, however, He founded the Church, which has nothing in common with the Kingdom, and of which the prophets never spoke. The dispensation of the law made way for the dispensation of the grace of God. During this dispensation the Church is gathered out of Jews and Gentiles, and forms the body of Christ, which now shares in His sufferings, but will once, as the bride of the Lamb, share in His glory. Of this Church Christ is not the King, but the divine Head. She has the glorious task of preaching, not the gospel of the Kingdom, but the gospel of the free grace of God, among all the nations of the world, to gather out of them the elect and further to be a testimony unto them. This method will prove to be a failure; it will not effect conversions on any large scale. At the end of this dispensation Christ will suddenly return and effect a far more universal conversion.

b. Its eschatology. The return of Christ is imminent now, that is, He may come at any time, for there are no predicted events that must still precede it. However, His coming consists of two separate events, separated from each other by a period of seven years. The first of these events will be the parousia, when Christ will appear in the air to meet His saints. All the righteous dead will then be raised up, and the living saints will be transfigured. Together they will be caught up into the air, will celebrate the wedding of the Lamb, and will then be forever with the Lord. The translation of the living saints is called “the rapture,” sometimes “the secret rapture.” While Christ and His Church are absent from the earth, and even the indwelling Holy Spirit has gone with the Church, there will be a period of seven years or more, often divided into two parts, in which several things will happen. The gospel of the Kingdom will again be preached, primarily, it would seem, by the believing remnant of the

Jews, and conversions on a large scale will result, though many will still continue to blaspheme God. The Lord will again begin to deal with Israel and it will probably at this time (though some say it will be later) be converted. In the second half of this period of seven years there will be a time of unequalled tribulation, the length of which is still a subject of debate. Antichrist will be revealed and the vials of God's wrath will be poured out upon the human race. At the end of the seven-year period the "revelation" will follow, that is, the coming of the Lord down to earth, now not for but with His saints. The living nations are now judged (Matt. 25:31 ff.), and the sheep separated from the goats; the saints that died during the great tribulation are raised up; Antichrist is destroyed; and Satan is bound for a thousand years. The millennial kingdom will now be established, a real visible, terrestrial, and material kingdom of the Jews, the restoration of the theocratic kingdom, including the re-establishment of the Davidic kingship. In it the saints will reign with Christ, the Jews will be the natural citizens and many Gentiles adopted citizens. The throne of Christ will be established at Jerusalem, which will also again become the central place of worship. The temple will be rebuilt on Mount Zion, and the altar will again reek with the blood of sacrifices, even of sin- and trespass-offerings. And though sin and death will still claim their victims, it will be a time of great fruitfulness and prosperity, in which men's lives will be prolonged and the wilderness will blossom as the rose. In this time the world will speedily be converted, according to some by the gospel, but according to the majority by totally different means, such as the personal appearance of Christ, the envy aroused by the blessedness of the saints, and above all great and terrible judgments. After the millennium Satan will be loosed for a little season, and the hordes of Gog and Magog assemble against the holy city. The enemies are devoured, however, by fire from heaven, and Satan is cast into the bottomless pit, whither the beast and the false prophet have preceded him. After this little season the wicked dead are raised up and appear in judgment before the great white throne, Rev. 20:11-15. And then there will be a new heaven and a new earth.

c. Some of the variations of this theory. Premillenarians are by no means all agreed as to the particulars of their eschatological scheme. A study of their literature reveals a great variety of opinions. There is indefiniteness and uncertainty on many points, which proves that their detailed construction is of rather doubtful value. While the majority of present day Premillenarians believe in a coming visible rule of Jesus Christ, even now some anticipate only a spiritual rule, and do not look for a physical presence of Christ on earth. Though the thousand years of Rev. 20 are generally interpreted literally, there is a tendency on the part of some to regard them as an indefinite period of shorter or longer duration. Some think that the Jews will be converted first, and then brought back to Palestine, while others are of the opinion that this order will be reversed. There are those who believe that the means used for the conversion of the world will be identical with those now employed, but the prevailing opinion is that other means will be substituted. There is a difference of opinion also as to the place where the risen saints will dwell during their millennial reign with Christ, on earth or in heaven, or in both places. Opinions differ very much, too, with respect to the continuance of the propagation of the human race during the millennium, the degree of sin that will prevail at that time, and the continued sway of death, and many other points.

3. OBJECTIONS TO PREMILLENNIALISM. In the discussion of the second advent the premillennial view of it was already subjected to special scrutiny and criticism, and the succeeding chapters on the resurrection and the final judgment will offer further occasion for a critical consideration of the premillennial construction of these events. Hence the objections raised at this point will be of a more general nature, and even so we can only pay attention to some of the most important ones.

a. The theory is based on a literal interpretation of the prophetic delineations of the future of Israel and of the Kingdom of God, which is entirely untenable. This has been pointed out repeatedly in such works on prophecy as those of Fairbairn, Riehm, and Davidson, in the splendid work of

David Brown on The Second Advent, in Waldegrave's important volume on New Testament Millennarianism, and in the more recent works of Dr. Aalders on De Profeten des Ouden Verbonds, and Het Herstel van Israel Volgens het Oude Testament. The last volume is devoted entirely to a detailed exegetical study of all the Old Testament passages that might bear in any way on the future restoration of Israel. It is a thorough work that deserves careful study. Premillenarians maintain that nothing short of a literal interpretation and fulfilment will satisfy the requirements of these prophetic forecasts; but the books of the prophets themselves already contain indications that point to a spiritual fulfilment, Isa. 54:13; 61:6; Jer. 3:16; 31:31-34; Hos. 14:2; Mic. 6:6-8. The contention that the names "Zion" and "Jerusalem" are never used by the prophets in any other than a literal sense, that the former always denotes a mountain, and the latter, a city, is clearly contrary to fact. There are passages in which both names are employed to designate Israel, the Old Testament Church of God, Isa. 49:14; 51:3; 52:1,2. And this use of the terms passes right over into the New Testament, Gal. 4:26; Heb. 12:22; Rev. 3:12; 21:9. It is remarkable that the New Testament, which is the fulfilment of the Old, contains no indication whatsoever of the re-establishment of the Old Testament theocracy by Jesus, nor a single undisputed positive prediction of its restoration, while it does contain abundant indications of the spiritual fulfilment of the promises given to Israel, Matt. 21:43; Acts 2:29-36, 15:14-18; Rom. 9:25, 26; Heb. 8:8-13; I Pet. 2:9; Rev. 1:6; 5:10. For further details on the spiritualization found in Scripture the work of Dr. Wijngaarden on The Future of the Kingdom may be consulted. The New Testament certainly does not favor the literalism of the Premillenarians. Moreover this literalism lands them in all kinds of absurdities, for it involves the future restoration of all the former historical conditions of Israel's life: the great world powers of the Old Testament (Egyptians, Assyrians, and Babylonians), and the neighboring nations of Israel (Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, and Philistines) must again appear on the scene, Isa. 11:14; Amos 9:12; Joel 3:19; Mic. 5:5,6; Rev. 18. The temple will have to be rebuilt, Isa. 2:2,3; Mic. 4:1,2; Zech. 14:16-22; Ezek. 40-48,

the sons of Zadok will again have to serve as priests, Ezek. 44:15-41; 48:11-14, and even sin and trespass offerings will again have to be brought upon the altar, not for commemoration (as some Premillenarians would have it), but for atonement, Ezek. 42:13; 43:18-27. And in addition to all that, the altered situation would make it necessary for all the nations to visit Jerusalem from year to year, in order to celebrate the feast of tabernacles, Zech. 14:16, and even from week to week, to worship before Jehovah, Isa. 66:23.

b. The so-called postponement theory, which is a necessary link in the premillennial scheme, is devoid of all Scriptural basis. According to it John and Jesus proclaimed that the Kingdom, that is, the Jewish theocracy, was at hand. But because the Jews did not repent and believe, Jesus postponed its establishment until His second coming. The pivotal point marking the change is placed by Scofield in Matt. 11:20, by others in Matt. 12, and by others still later. Before that turning point Jesus did not concern Himself with the Gentiles, but preached the gospel of the kingdom to Israel; and after that He did not preach the kingdom any more, but only predicted its future coming and offered rest to the weary of both Israel and the Gentiles. But it cannot be maintained that Jesus did not concern Himself with the Gentiles before the supposed turning point, cf. Matt. 8:5-13; John 4:1-42, nor that after it He ceased to preach the kingdom, Matt. 13; Luke 10:1-11. There is absolutely no proof that Jesus preached two different gospels, first the gospel of the kingdom and then the gospel of the grace of God; in the light of Scripture this distinction is untenable. Jesus never had in mind the re-establishment of the Old Testament theocracy, but the introduction of the spiritual reality, of which the Old Testament kingdom was but a type, Matt. 8:11,12; 13:31-33; 21:43; Luke 17:21; John 3:3; 18:36,37 (comp. Rom. 14:17). He did not postpone the task for which He had come into the world, but actually established the Kingdom and referred to it more than once as a present reality, Matt. 11:12; 12:28; Luke 17:21; John 18:36,37; (comp. Col. 1:13). This whole postponement theory is a comparatively recent fiction, and is very objectionable, because it breaks up the unity of Scripture and of the people of God in an unwarranted way. The

Bible represents the relation between the Old Testament and the New as that of type and antitype, of prophecy and fulfilment; but this theory holds that, while the New Testament was originally meant to be a fulfilment of the Old, it really became something quite different. The kingdom, that is, the Old Testament theocracy, was predicted and was not restored, and the Church was not predicted but was established. Thus the two fall apart, and the one becomes the book of the kingdom, and the other, with the exception of the Gospels, the book of the Church. Besides, we get two peoples of God, the one natural and the other spiritual, the one earthly and the other heavenly, as if Jesus did not speak of “one flock and one shepherd,” John 10:16, and as if Paul did not say that the Gentiles were grafted into the old olive tree, Rom. 11:17.

c. This theory is also in flagrant opposition to the Scriptural representation of the great events of the future, namely, the resurrection, the final judgment, and the end of the world. As was shown in the preceding, the Bible represents these great events as synchronizing. There is not the slightest indication that they are separated by a thousand years, except this be found in Rev. 20:4-6. They clearly coincide, Matt. 13:37-43, 47-50 (separation of the good and the evil at “the end,” not a thousand years before); 24:29-31; 25:31-46; John 5:25-29; I Cor. 15:22-26; Phil. 3:20, 21; I Thess. 4:15, 16; Rev. 20:11-15. They all occur at the coming of the Lord, which is also the day of the Lord. In answer to this objection Premillenarians often suggest that the day of the Lord may be a thousand years long, so that the resurrection of the saints and the judgment of the nations takes place in the morning of that long day, and the resurrection of the wicked and the judgment at the great white throne occurs in the evening of that same day. They appeal to II Pet. 3:8... “one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.” But this can hardly prove the point, for the tables might easily be turned here. The same passage might also be used to prove that the thousand years of Rev. 20 are but a single day.

d. There is no positive Scriptural foundation whatsoever for the Premillennial view of a double, or even a three- or fourfold resurrection, as

their theory requires, nor for spreading the last judgment over a period of a thousand years by dividing it into three judgments. It is, to say the least, very dubious that the words, “This is the first resurrection” in Rev. 20:5, refer to a physical resurrection. The context does not necessitate, nor even favor this view. What might seem to favor the theory of a double resurrection, is the fact that the apostles often speak of the resurrection of believers only, and do not refer to that of the wicked at all. But this is due to the fact that they are writing to the churches of Jesus Christ, to the connections in which they bring up the subject of the resurrection, and to the fact that they desire to stress the soteriological aspect of it, I Cor. 15; I Thess. 4:13-18. Other passages clearly speak of the resurrection of the righteous and that of the wicked in a single breath, Dan. 12:2; John 5:28,29; Acts 24:15. We shall consider this matter further in the following chapter.

e. The Premillennial theory entangles itself in all kinds of insuperable difficulties with its doctrine of the millennium. It is impossible to understand how a part of the old earth and of sinful humanity can exist alongside of a part of the new earth and of a humanity that is glorified. How can perfect saints in glorified bodies have communion with sinners in the flesh. How can glorified saints live in this sin-laden atmosphere and amid scenes of death and decay? How can the Lord of glory, the glorified Christ, establish His throne on earth as long as it has not yet been renewed. The twenty-first chapter of Revelation informs us that God and the Church of the redeemed will take up their dwellingplace on earth after heaven and earth have been renewed; how then can it be maintained that Christ and the saints will dwell there a thousand years before this renewal. How will sinners and saints in the flesh be able to stand in the presence of the glorified Christ, seeing that even Paul and John were completely overwhelmed by the vision of Him, Acts 26:12-14; Rev. 1:17? Beet truly says: “We cannot conceive mingled together on the same planet some who have yet to die and others who have passed through death and will die no more. Such confusion of the present age with the age to come is in the last degree unlikely.”[The Last Things, p. 88.] And Brown calls out: “What a

mongrel state of things is this! What an abhorred mixture of things totally inconsistent with each other!”[The Second Advent, p. 384.]

f. The only Scriptural basis for this theory is Rev. 20:1-6, after an Old Testament content has been poured into it. This is a very precarious basis for various reasons. (1) This passage occurs in a highly symbolical book and is admittedly very obscure, as may be inferred from the different interpretations of it. (2) The literal interpretation of this passage, as given by the Premillenarians, leads to a view that finds no support elsewhere in Scripture, but is even contradicted by the rest of the New Testament. This is a fatal objection. Sound exegesis requires that the obscure passages of Scripture be read in the light of the clearer ones, and not vice versa. (3) Even the literal interpretation of the Premillenarians is not consistently literal, for it makes the chain in verse 1 and consequently also the binding of verse 2 figurative, often conceives of the thousand years as a long but undefined period, and changes the souls of verse 4 into resurrection saints. (4) The passage, strictly speaking, does not say that the classes referred to (the martyr saints and those who did not worship the beast) were raised up from the dead, but simply that they lived and reigned with Christ. And this living and reigning with Christ is said to constitute the first resurrection. (5) There is absolutely no indication in these verses that Christ and His saints are seen ruling on the earth. In the light of such passages as Rev. 4:4; 6:9, it is far more likely that the scene is laid in heaven. (6) It also deserves notice that the passage makes no mention whatsoever of Palestine, of Jerusalem, of the temple, and of the Jews, the natural citizens of the millennial kingdom. There is not a single hint that these are in any way concerned with this reign of a thousand years. For a detailed interpretation of this passage from the Amillennial point of view we refer to Kuyper, Bavinck, De Moor, Dijk, Greydanus, Vos, and Hendriksen.

B. POSTMILLENNIALISM.

GLOSS Postmillennialism: the view that Christ returns after a long period of gospel blessing and kingdom advance in history.

The position of Postmillennialism is quite the opposite of that taken by Premillennialism respecting the time of the second coming of Christ. It holds that the return of Christ will follow the millennium, which may be expected during and at the close of the gospel dispensation. Immediately after it Christ will come to usher in the eternal order of things. In the discussion of Postmillennialism it will be necessary to distinguish two different forms of the theory, of which the one expects the millennium to be realized through the supernatural influence of the Holy Spirit, and the other expects it to come by a natural process of evolution.

1. DIFFERENT FORMS OF POSTMILLENNIALISM.

a. The earlier form. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries several Reformed theologians in the Netherlands taught a form of Chiliasm, which would now be called Postmillennialism. Among them were such well-known men as Coccejus, Alting, the two Vitringas, d'Outrein, Witsius, Hoornbeek, Koelman, and Brakel, of which some regarded the millennium as belonging to the past, others thought of it as present, and still others looked for it in the future. The majority expected it toward the end of the world, just before the second coming of Christ. These men rejected the two leading ideas of the Premillenarians, namely, that Christ will return physically to reign on earth for a thousand years, and that the saints will be raised up at His coming, and will then reign with him in the millennial kingdom. While their representations differed in some details, the prevailing view was that the gospel, which will gradually spread through the whole world, will in the end become immeasurably more effective than it is at present, and will usher in a

period of rich spiritual blessings for the Church of Jesus Christ, a golden age, in which the Jews will also share in the blessings of the gospel in an unprecedented manner. In more recent years some such Postmillennialism was advocated by D. Brown, J. Berg, J. H. Snowden, T. P. Stafford, and A. H. Strong. The last named theologian says that the millennium will be “a period in the later days of the Church militant, when, under the special influence of the Holy Spirit, the spirit of the martyrs shall appear again, true religion be greatly quickened and revived, and the members of Christ’s churches become so conscious of their strength in Christ that they shall, to an extent unknown before, triumph over the power of evil both within and without.”[Syst. Theol., p. 1013.] The golden age of the Church will, it is held, be followed by a brief apostasy, a terrible conflict between the forces of good and evil, and by the simultaneous occurrence of the advent of Christ, the general resurrection, and the final judgment.

b. The later form. A great deal of present day Postmillennialism is of an entirely different type, and concerns itself very little about the teachings of Scripture, except as a historical indication of what people once believed. The modern man has little patience with the millennial hopes of the past with their utter dependence on God. He does not believe that the new age will be ushered in by the preaching of the gospel and the accompanying work of the Holy Spirit; nor that it will be the result of a cataclysmic change. On the one hand it is believed that evolution will gradually bring the millennium, and on the other hand, that man himself must usher in the new age by adopting a constructive policy of world-betterment. Says Walter Rauschenbusch: “Our chief interest in any millennium is the desire for a social order in which the worth and freedom of every least human being will be honored and protected; in which the brotherhood of man will be expressed in the common possession of the economic resources of society; and in which the spiritual good of humanity will be set high above the private profit interests of all materialistic groups.... As to the way in which the Christian ideal of society is to come, — we must shift from catastrophe to development.”[A Theology for the Social

Gospel, pp. 224 f.] Shirley Jackson Case asks: “Shall we still look for God to introduce a new order by catastrophic means or shall we assume the responsibility of bringing about our own millennium, believing that God is working in us and in our world to will and to work for His good pleasure?” And he himself gives the answer in the following paragraphs: “The course of history exhibits one long process of evolving struggle by which humanity as a whole rises constantly higher in the scale of civilization and attainment, bettering its condition from time to time through its greater skill and industry. Viewed in the long perspective of the ages, man’s career has been one of actual ascent. Instead of growing worse, the world is found to be constantly growing better . . . Since history and science show that betterment is always the result of achievement, man learns to surmise that evils still unconquered are to be eliminated by strenuous effort and gradual reform rather than by the catastrophic intervention of Deity.... Disease is to be cured or prevented by the physician’s skill, society’s ills are to be remedied by education and legislation, and international disasters are to be averted by establishing new standards and new methods for dealing with the problems involved. In short, the ills of life are to be cured by a gradual process of remedial treatment rather than by a sudden annihilation.”[The Millennial Hope, pp. 229,238 f.] These quotations are quite characteristic of a great deal of present day Postmillennialism, and it is no wonder that the Premillenarians react against it.

2. OBJECTIONS TO POSTMILLENNIALISM. There are some very serious objections to the Postmillennial theory.

a. The fundamental idea of the doctrine, that the whole world will gradually be won for Christ, that the life of all nations will in course of time be transformed by the gospel, that righteousness and peace will reign supreme, and that the blessings of the Spirit will be poured out in richer abundance than before, so that the Church will experience a season of unexampled prosperity just before the coming of the Lord, — is not in harmony with the picture of the end of the ages found in Scripture. The Bible teaches indeed that the gospel

will spread throughout the world and will exercise a beneficent influence, but does not lead us to expect the conversion of the world, either in this or in a coming age. It stresses the fact that the time immediately preceding the end will be a time of great apostasy, of tribulation and persecution, a time when the faith of many will wax cold, and when they who are loyal to Christ will be subjected to bitter sufferings, and will in some cases even seal their confession with their blood, Matt. 24:6-14, 21, 22; Luke 18:8; 21:25-28; II Thess. 2:3-12; II Tim. 3:1-6; Rev. 13. Postmillennialists, of course, cannot very well ignore entirely what is said about the apostasy and the tribulation that will mark the end of history, but they minimize it and represent it as predicting an apostasy and a tribulation on a small scale, which will not affect the main course of the religious life. Their expectation of a glorious condition of the Church in the end, is based on passages which contain a figurative description, either of the gospel dispensation as a whole, or of the perfect bliss of the external Kingdom of Jesus Christ.

b. The related idea, that the present age will not end in a great cataclysmic change, but will pass almost imperceptibly into the coming age, is equally un-Scriptural. The Bible teaches us very explicitly that a catastrophe, a special intervention of God, will bring the rule of Satan on earth to an end, and will usher in the Kingdom that cannot be shaken, Matt. 24:29-31, 35-44; Heb. 12:26, 27; II Pet. 3:10-13. There will be a crisis, a change so great that it can be called “the regeneration,” Matt. 19:28. No more than believers are progressively sanctified in this life until they are practically ready to pass, without much more change, into heaven, will the world gradually be purified and thus made ready to enter upon the next stage. Just as believers must still undergo a great change at death, so must the world suffer a tremendous change when the end comes. There will be a new heaven and a new earth. Rev. 21:1.

c. The modern idea that natural evolution and the efforts of man in the field of education, of social reform, and of legislation, will gradually bring in the perfect reign of the Christian spirit, conflicts with everything that the Word of

God teaches on this point. It is not the work of man, but the work of God to bring in the glorious Kingdom of God. This Kingdom cannot be established by natural but only by supernatural means. It is the reign of God, established and acknowledged in the hearts of His people, and this reign can never be made effective by purely natural means. Civilization without regeneration, without a supernatural change of the heart, will never bring in a millennium, an effective and glorious rule of Jesus Christ. It would seem that the experiences of the last quarter of a century should have forced this truth upon the modern man. The highly vaunted development of man has not yet brought us in sight of the millennium.

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY: What is the historic origin of Premillennialism? Was it actually the prevailing view in the second and third centuries? What was Augustine's view of the Kingdom of God and the millennium? Are the Kingdom of God and the Church distinct or identical in Scripture? Is the one natural and national, and the other spiritual and universal? Do Luke 14:14 and 20:35 teach a partial resurrection? Will any part of Israel constitute a part of the bride of Christ? Will the bride be complete when Christ returns? Are the Postmillennialists necessarily evolutionists? Is the optimism of the Postmillennialists, that the world is gradually getting better, justified by experience? Does the Bible predict continuous progress for the Kingdom of God right up to the end of the world? Is it necessary to assume a cataclysmic change at the end?

III. The Resurrection of the Dead

At Christ's return the dead will be raised bodily. The resurrection completes redemption for believers and brings every person before the final judgment.

The discussion of the second advent of Christ naturally leads on to a consideration of its concomitants. Foremost among these is the resurrection of the dead or, as it is sometimes called, "the resurrection of the flesh."

A. THE DOCTRINE OF THE RESURRECTION IN HISTORY.

GLOSS Resurrection: the future raising of the dead, in which body and soul are reunited by God's power.

In the days of Jesus there was a difference of opinion among the Jews respecting the resurrection. While the Pharisees believed in it, the Sadducees did not, Matt. 22:23; Acts 23:8. When Paul spoke of it at Athens, he met with mockery, Acts 17:32. Some of the Corinthians denied it, I Cor. 15, and Hymenæus and Phyletus, regarding it as something purely spiritual, asserted that it was already a matter of history, II Tim. 2:18. Celsus, one of the earliest opponents of Christianity, made especially this doctrine the butt of ridicule; and the Gnostics, who regarded matter as inherently evil, naturally rejected it. Origen defended the doctrine over against the Gnostics and Celsus, but yet did not believe that the very body which was deposited in the grave would be raised up. He described the body of the resurrection as a new, refined, and spiritualized body. While some of the early Christian Fathers shared his view, the majority of them stressed the identity of the present body and the body of the resurrection. The Church already in the Apostolic Confession expressed its belief in the resurrection of the flesh (*sarkos*). Augustine was at first inclined to agree with Origen, but later on adopted the prevalent view, though he did not deem it necessary to believe that the present differences of size and stature would continue in the life to come. Jerome insisted strongly on the identity of the present and the future body. The East, represented by such men as the two Gregories, Chrysostom, and John of Damascus, manifested a tendency to adopt a more spiritual view of the resurrection than the West. Those who believed in a coming millennium spoke of a double resurrection, that of the righteous at the beginning, and that of the wicked at the end of the millennial reign. During the Middle Ages the Scholastics speculated a great deal about

the body of the resurrection, but their speculations are mostly fanciful and of little value. Thomas Aquinas especially seemed to have special information about the nature of the resurrection body, and about the order and manner of the resurrection. The theologians of the period of the Reformation were generally agreed that the body of the resurrection would be identical with the present body. All the great Confessions of the Church represent the general resurrection as simultaneous with the second coming of Christ, the final judgment and the end of the world. They do not separate any of these events, such as the resurrection of the righteous and that of the wicked, and the coming of Christ and the end of the world, by a period of a thousand years. The Premillenarians, on the other hand, insist on such a separation. Under the influence of Rationalism and with the advance of the physical sciences some of the difficulties with which the doctrine of the resurrection is burdened were accentuated, and as a result modern religious liberalism denies the resurrection of the flesh, and explains the Scriptural representations of it as a figurative representation of the idea that the full human personality will continue to exist after death.

B. SCRIPTURAL PROOF FOR THE RESURRECTION.

GLOSS Resurrection hope: the Christian assurance grounded in Christ's own resurrection and in God's promise to raise His people.

1. IN THE OLD TESTAMENT. It is sometimes said that the Old Testament knows of no resurrection of the dead, or knows of it only in its latest books. The opinion is rather common that Israel borrowed its belief in the resurrection from the Persians. Says Mackintosh: "Strong evidence exists for the hypothesis that the idea of the resurrection entered the Hebrew mind from Persia." [Immortality and the Future, p. 34.] Brown speaks in a somewhat similar vein: "The doctrine of individual resurrection first appears in Israel after the exile, and may have been due to Persian influence." [Christian

Theology in Outline, pp. 251 f.] Salmond also mentions this view, but claims that it is not sufficiently warranted. Says he: “The Old Testament doctrine of God is of itself enough to explain the entire history of the Old Testament conception of a future life.”[The Christian Doctrine of Immortality, pp. 221 f.] De Bondt comes to the conclusion that there is not a single people among those with whom Israel came in contact, which had a doctrine of the resurrection that might have served as a pattern for the representation of it that was current among Israel; and that the faith in the resurrection which finds expression in the Old Testament does not find its basis in the religions of the Gentiles, but in the revelation of Israel’s God.[Wat Leert het Oude Testament Aangaande het Leven na dit Leven, pp. 263 f.] It is true that we find no clear statements respecting the resurrection of the dead before the time of the prophets, though Jesus found that it was already implied in Ex. 3:6; cf. Matt. 22:29-32, and the writer of Hebrews intimates that even the patriarchs looked forward to the resurrection of the dead, Heb. 11:10,13-16,19. Certainly evidences are not wanting that there was a belief in the resurrection long before the exile. It is implied in the passages that speak of a deliverance from sheol, Ps. 49:15; 73:24,25; Prov. 23:14. It finds expression in the famous statement of Job, 19:25-27. Moreover, it is very clearly taught in Isa. 26:19 (a late passage, according to the critics), and in Dan. 12:2, and is probably implied also in Ezek. 37: 1-14.

2. IN THE NEW TESTAMENT. As might be expected, the New Testament has more to say on the resurrection of the dead than the Old, because it brings the climax of God’s revelation on this point in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Over against the denial of the Sadducees, Jesus argues the resurrection of the dead from the Old Testament, Matt. 22:23-33, and parallels, cf. Ex. 3:6. Moreover, He teaches that great truth very clearly in John 5:25-29; 6:39,40,44,54; 11:24,25; 14:3; 17:24. The classical passage of the New Testament for the doctrine of the resurrection is I Cor. 15. Other important passages are: I Thess. 4:13-16; II Cor. 5:1-10; Rev. 20:4-6 (of dubious interpretation), and 20:13.

C. THE NATURE OF THE RESURRECTION.

GLOSS Resurrection body: the body raised by God: truly bodily, yet transformed, incorruptible, and fitted for the life to come.

1. IT IS A WORK OF THE TRIUNE GOD. The resurrection is a work of the triune God. In some cases we are simply told that God raises the dead, no person being specified, Matt. 22:29; II Cor. 1:9. More particularly, however, the work of the resurrection is ascribed to the Son, John 5:21,25,28,29; 6:38-40, 44,54; I Thess. 4:16. Indirectly, it is also designated as a work of the Holy Spirit, Rom. 8:11.

2. IT IS A PHYSICAL OR BODILY RESURRECTION. There were some in the days of Paul who regarded the resurrection as spiritual, II Tim. 2:18. And there are many in the present day who believe only in a spiritual resurrection. But the Bible is very explicit in teaching the resurrection of the body. Christ is called the “firstfruits” of the resurrection, I Cor. 15:20,23, and “the firstborn of the dead,” Col. 1:18; Rev. 1:5. This implies that the resurrection of the people of God will be like that of their heavenly Lord. His resurrection was a bodily resurrection, and theirs will be of the same kind. Moreover, the redemption wrought by Christ is also said to include the body, Rom. 8:23; I Cor. 6:13-20. In Rom. 8:11 we are told explicitly that God through His Spirit will raise up our mortal bodies. And it is clearly the body that is prominently before the mind of the apostle in I Cor. 15, cf. especially the verses 35-49. According to Scripture there will be a resurrection of the body, that is, not an entirely new creation, but a body that will be in a fundamental sense identical with the present body. God will not create a new body for every man, but will raise up the very body that was deposited in the earth. This cannot only be inferred from the term “resurrection,” but is clearly stated in Rom. 8:11, I Cor. 15:53, and is further implied in the figure of the seed sown in the earth, which the apostle employs in I Cor. 15:36-38. Moreover, Christ, the firstfruits of the

resurrection, conclusively proved the identity of His body to His disciples. At the same time Scripture makes it perfectly evident that the body will be greatly changed. Christ's body was not yet fully glorified during the period of transition between the resurrection and the ascension; yet it had already undergone a remarkable change. Paul refers to the change that will take place, when he says that in sowing a seed we do not sow the body that shall be; we do not intend to pick the same seed out of the ground. Yet we do expect to reap something that is in a fundamental sense identical with the seed deposited in the earth. While there is a certain identity between the seed sown and the seeds that develop out of it, yet there is also a remarkable difference. We shall be changed, says the apostle, "for this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." The body "is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonor; it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body." Change is not inconsistent with the retention of identity. We are told that even now every particle in our bodies changes every seven years, but through it all the body retains its identity. There will be a certain physical connection between the old body and the new, but the nature of this connection is not revealed. Some theologians speak of a remaining germ from which the new body develops; others say that the organizing principle of the body remains. Origen had something of that kind in mind; so did Kuyper and Milligan. If we bear all this in mind, the old objection against the doctrine of the resurrection, namely, that it is impossible that a body could be raised up, consisting of the same particles that constituted it at death, since these particles pass into other forms of existence and perhaps into hundreds of other bodies, loses its force completely.

3. IT IS A RESURRECTION OF BOTH THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE WICKED. According to Josephus the Pharisees denied the resurrection of the wicked.[Ant. XVIII. 1,3; Wars II. 8.14.] The doctrine of annihilationism and that of conditional immortality, both of which, at least in some of their forms, deny the resurrection of the ungodly and teach their annihilation, embraced by many theologians, has also found favor in such sects as Adventism and

Millennial Dawnism. They believe in the total extinction of the wicked. The assertion is sometimes made that Scripture does not teach the resurrection of the wicked, but this is clearly erroneous, Dan. 12:2; John 5:28,29; Acts 24:15; Rev. 20:13-15. At the same time it must be admitted that their resurrection does not stand out prominently in Scripture. The soteriological aspect of the resurrection is clearly in the foreground, and this pertains to the righteous only. They, in distinction from the wicked, are the ones that profit by the resurrection.

4. IT IS A RESURRECTION OF UNEQUAL IMPORT FOR THE JUST AND THE UNJUST. Breckenridge quotes I Cor. 15:22 to prove that the resurrection of both saints and sinners was purchased by Christ. But it can hardly be denied that the second “all” in that passage is general only in the sense of “all who are in Christ.” The resurrection is represented there as resulting from a vital union with Christ. But, surely, only believers stand in such a living relation to Him. The resurrection of the wicked cannot be regarded as a blessing merited by the mediatorial work of Christ, though it is connected with this indirectly. It is a necessary result of postponing the execution of the sentence of death on man, which made the work of redemption possible. The postponement resulted in the comparative separation of temporal and eternal death, and in the existence of an intermediate state. Under these circumstances it becomes necessary to raise the wicked from the dead, in order that death in its widest extent and in all its weight might be imposed on them. Their resurrection is not an act of redemption, but of sovereign justice, on the part of God. The resurrection of the just and the unjust have this in common, that in both bodies and souls are reunited. But in the case of the former this results in perfect life, while in the case of the latter it issues in the extreme penalty of death, John 5:28,29.

D. THE TIME OF THE RESURRECTION.

GLOSS **General resurrection:** the raising of all the dead in connection with Christ's return and the final judgment.

1. THE PREMILLENNIAL VIEW RESPECTING THE TIME OF THE RESURRECTION. It is the common opinion among Premillenarians that the resurrection of the saints will be separated by a thousand years from that of the wicked. They almost seem to regard it as an axiomatic truth that these two classes cannot possibly arise at the same time. And not only that, but the type of Premillennialism which is now dominant, with its theory of a twofold second coming of Christ, feels the need of positing a third resurrection. All the saints of former dispensations and of the present dispensation are raised up at the parousia or the coming of the Lord. Those still alive at that time are changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. But in the seven years that follow the parousia many other saints die, especially in the great tribulation. These must also be raised up, and their resurrection will occur at the revelation of the day of the Lord. seven years after the parousia. But even at this point Premillenarians cannot very well stop. Since the resurrection at the end of the world is reserved for the wicked, there must be another resurrection of the saints who die during the millennium, which precedes that of the wicked, for the two cannot be raised up at the same time.

2. SCRIPTURAL INDICATIONS AS TO THE TIME OF THE RESURRECTION. According to Scripture the resurrection of the dead coincides with the parousia, with the revelation or the day of the Lord, and with the end of the world, and will immediately precede the general and final judgment. It certainly does not favor the premillennial distinctions with respect to this doctrine. In several places it represents the resurrection of the righteous and that of the wicked as contemporaneous, Dan. 12:2; John 5:28,29; Acts 24:15; Rev. 20:13-15. All of these passages speak of the resurrection as a

single event and do not contain the slightest indication that the resurrection of the righteous and that of the wicked will be separated by a period of a thousand years. But this is not all that can be said in favor of the idea that the two coincide. In John 5:21-29 Jesus combines the thought of the resurrection, including the resurrection of the righteous, with the thought of the judgment, including the judgment of the wicked. Moreover, II Thess. 1:7-10 clearly represents the parousia (vs. 10), the revelation (vs. 7), and the judgment of the wicked (vs. 8,9) as coinciding. If that is not the case, language would seem to have lost its meaning. Furthermore, the resurrection of believers is directly connected with the second coming of the Lord in I Cor. 15:23; Phil. 3:20,21; and I Thess. 4:16, but it is also represented as occurring at the end of the world, John 6:39,40,44,54 or at the last day. That means that believers are raised up at the last day, and that the last day is also the day of the coming of the Lord. Their resurrection does not precede the end by a period of a thousand years. Happily, there are several Premillenarians who do not accept the theory of a threefold resurrection, but who nevertheless cling to the doctrine of a double resurrection.

3. CONSIDERATION OF THE ARGUMENTS FOR A DOUBLE RESURRECTION.

a. Great emphasis is placed on the fact that Scripture, while speaking in general of the resurrection *ton nekron*, that is, “of the dead,” repeatedly refers to the resurrection of believers as a resurrection *ek nekron*, that is, “out of the dead.” Premillenarians render this expression, “from among the dead,” so that it would imply that many dead still remain in the grave. Lightfoot also asserts that this expression refers to the resurrection of believers, but Kennedy says, “There is absolutely no evidence for this definite assertion.” This is also the conclusion to which Dr. Vos comes after a careful study of the relevant passages. In general it may be said that the assumption that the expression *he anastasis ek nekron* should be rendered “the resurrection from among the dead,” is entirely gratuitous. The standard lexicons know nothing of such a

rendering; and Cremer-Koegel interprets the expression to mean “from the state of the dead,” and this would seem to be the most natural interpretation. It should be noted that Paul uses the terms interchangeably in I Cor. 15. Though speaking of the resurrection of believers only, he evidently does not seek to stress the fact that this is of a specific character, for he uses the more general term repeatedly, I Cor. 15:12,13,21,42.[Cf. also Waldegrave, *New Testament Millenarianism*, pp. 575 f.]

b. Premillenarians also appeal to certain specific expressions, such as “a better resurrection,” Heb. 11:35, “the resurrection of life,” John 5:29, “the resurrection of the just,” Luke 14:14, and “the resurrection of the dead in Christ,” I Thess. 4:16, — all of which refer to the resurrection of believers only. These expressions seem to set that resurrection off as something apart. But these passages merely prove that the Bible distinguishes the resurrection of the righteous from that of the wicked and afford no proof whatsoever that there will be two resurrections, separated from each other by a period of a thousand years. The resurrection of the people of God differs from that of unbelievers in its moving principle, in its essential nature, and in its final issue, and can therefore very well be represented as something distinctive and to be desired far above the resurrection of the wicked. The former does, and the latter does not, deliver men from the power of death. In spite of their resurrection unbelievers remain in the state of death.

c. One of the principal proof passages of the Premillenarians for a double resurrection is found in I Cor. 15:22-24: “For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; then they that are Christ’s, at His coming. Then cometh the end, when He shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father.” In this passage they find three stages of the resurrection indicated, namely, (1) the resurrection of Christ; (2) the resurrection of believers; and (3) the end (as they interpret it) of the resurrection, that is, the resurrection of the wicked. Silver puts it rather picturesquely: “In the resurrection Christ and many saints who

rise in and around Jerusalem appear as the first band. More than 1900 years afterwards ‘they that are Christ’s, at His coming’ appear as the second band. ‘Then,’ but not immediately, ‘cometh the end’ (verse 24), the last great body like a band of forlorn creatures ending the procession.”[The Lord’s Return, p. 230.] It will be noted that the idea “not immediately” is carried into the text. The argument is that because *epeita* (then) in verse 23 refers to a time at least 1900 years later, the word *eita* (then) in verse 24 refers to a time 1000 years later. But this is a mere assumption without any proof. The words *epeita* and *eita* do indeed mean the same thing, but neither one of them necessarily implies the idea of a long intervening period. Notice the use of *epeita* in Luke 16:7 and Jas. 4:14, and that of *eita* in Mark 8:25; John 13:5; 19:27; 20:27. Both words can be used for that which will immediately occur and for that which will occur only after some time, so that it is a pure assumption that the resurrection of believers will be separated by a long period of time from the end. Another gratuitous assumption is that “the end” means “the end of the resurrection.” According to the analogy of Scripture it points to the end of the world, the consummation, the time when Christ will deliver up the kingdom to the Father and will have put all enemies under His feet. This is the view adopted by such commentators as Alford, Godet, Hodge, Bachmann, Findley, Robertson and Plummer, and Edwards.[For a further discussion of this whole point cf. Salmond, *Christian Doctrine of Immortality*, pp. 414 f.; Milligan, *The Resurrection of the Dead*, pp. 64 ff.; Vos, *Pauline Eschatology*, pp. 241 ff.]

d. Another passage to which the Premillenarians appeal is I Thess. 4:16, “For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first.” From this they infer that those who did not die in Christ will be raised up at a later date. But it is perfectly clear that this is not the antithesis which the apostle has in mind. The statement following is not, “Then the dead who are not in Christ shall arise,” but, “Then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be caught up in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.” This is frankly admitted by Biedewolf.[*Millennium Bible*, p. 472.] Both

in this passage and in the preceding one Paul is speaking of the resurrection of believers only; that of the wicked is not in his purview at all.

e. The most important passage to which the Premillenarians refer is Rev. 20:4-6:... “and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. The rest of the dead lived not until the thousand years should be finished. This is the first resurrection.” Here the verses 5 and 6 make mention of a first resurrection, and this, it is said, implies that there will be a second. But the supposition that the writer is here speaking of a bodily resurrection is extremely dubious. The scene in the verses 4-6 is evidently laid, not on earth, but in heaven. And the terms employed are not suggestive of a bodily resurrection. The seer does not speak of persons or bodies that were raised up, but of souls which “lived” and “reigned.” And he calls their living and reigning with Christ “the first resurrection.” Dr. Vos suggests that the words, “This (emphatic) is the first resurrection,” may even be “a pointed disavowal of a more realistic (chiliastic) interpretation of the same phrase.”[ISBE, Art. Esch. of the N. T.] In all probability the expression refers to the entrance of the souls of the saints upon the glorious state of life with Christ at death. The absence of the idea of a double resurrection may well make us hesitate to affirm its presence in this obscure passage of a book so full of symbolism as the Revelation of John. Wherever the Bible mentions the resurrection of the righteous and the wicked together, as in Dan. 12:2; John 5:28,29; Acts 24:15, it does not contain the slightest hint that the two are to be separated by a thousand years. On the other hand it does teach that the resurrection will take place at the last day, and will at once be followed by the last judgment, Matt. 25:31,32; John 5:27-29; 6:39,40,44,54; 11:24; Rev. 20:11-15.

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY: Does the Apostolic Confession speak of the resurrection of the body, or of the resurrection of the flesh? How do you account for the change from the one to the other? Do not all Premillenarians have to posit another resurrection of the righteous in addition to those that occur at the parousia and at the revelation? How do Premillenarians construe

even Dan. 12:2 into an argument for a double resurrection? How do they find an argument for it in Phil. 3:11? What is the principal argument of modern liberals against the doctrine of a physical resurrection? What does Paul mean, when he speaks of the resurrection body as a *soma pneumatikon*, I Cor. 15:44?

IV. The Final Judgment

God will judge angels and all people through Jesus Christ. The judgment publicly reveals God's righteousness, vindicates His people, and confirms the final destiny of the righteous and wicked.

Another one of the important concomitants of the return of Christ is the last judgment, which will be of & general nature. The Lord is coming again for the very purpose of judging the living and consigning each individual to his eternal destiny.

A. THE DOCTRINE OF THE LAST JUDGMENT IN HISTORY.

GLOSS Last judgment: God's final, public judgment of angels and humanity through Jesus Christ.

The doctrine of a final general judgment was from the very earliest times of the Christian era connected with that of the resurrection of the dead. The general opinion was that the dead would be raised up, in order to be judged according to the deeds done in the body. As a solemn warning the certainty of this judgment was stressed. This doctrine is already contained in the Apostolic Confession: "From thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead." The prevailing idea was that this judgment would be accompanied with the destruction of the world. On the whole the early Church Fathers did not speculate much about the nature of the final judgment, though Tertullian

forms an exception. Augustine sought to interpret some of the figurative statements of Scripture respecting the judgment. In the Middle Ages the Scholastics discussed the matter in greater detail. They, too, believed that the resurrection of the dead would be followed immediately by the general judgment, and that this would mark the end of time for man. It will be general in the sense that all rational creatures will appear in it, and that it will bring a general revelation of each one's deeds, both good and evil. Christ will be the Judge, while others will be associated with Him in the judgment; not, however, as judges in the strict sense of the word. Immediately after the judgment there will be a universal conflagration. We leave out of consideration some of the other particulars here. The Reformers shared this view in general, but added little or nothing to the prevailing view. The same view is found in all the Protestant Confessions, which explicitly affirm that there will be a day of judgment at the end of the world, but do not enter into details. It has been the official view of the Churches up to the present time. This does not mean that no other views found expression. Kant inferred from the categorical imperative the existence of a supreme Judge who would right all wrongs in some future life. Schelling in his famous dictum, "The history of the world is the judgment of the world," evidently regarded the judgment merely as a present immanent process. Some were not inclined to grant the moral constitution of the universe, did not believe that history was moving on to some moral termination, and thus denied the future judgment. This idea was given a philosophical construction by Von Hartmann. In modern liberal theology, with its emphasis on the fact that God is immanent in all the processes of history, there is a strong tendency to regard the judgment primarily, if not exclusively, as a present immanent process. Says Beckwith: "In his (God's) dealing with men there is no holding in abeyance, no suspension of any attribute of his being. The judgment is, therefore, no more truly future than it is present. So far as God is the author of it, it is as constant and perpetual as his action in human life. To postpone the judgment to a future public hour is to misconceive of justice, as if it were dormant or suspended,

wholly bound up with outward conditions. On the contrary the sphere of justice must be sought not first without but within, in the inner life, in the world of consciousness.”[Realities of Christian Theology, pp. 362 f.]

Dispensationalists believe whole-heartedly in the future judgment, but speak of judgments in the plural. According to them there will be one judgment at the parousia, another at the revelation of Christ, and still another at the end of the world.

B. THE NATURE OF THE FINAL JUDGMENT.

GLOSS **Judgment seat:** the tribunal of Christ before which every person will appear and God’s righteous verdict will be declared.

The final judgment of which the Bible speaks may not be regarded as a spiritual, invisible and endless process, which is identical with God’s providence in history. This is not equivalent to a denial of the fact that there is a providential judgment of God in the vicissitudes of individuals and nations, though it may not always be recognized as such. The Bible clearly teaches us that God even in the present life visits evil with punishment and rewards the good with blessings, and these punishments and rewards are in some cases positive, but in other instances appear as the natural providential results of the evil committed or of the good done, Deut. 9:5; Ps. 9:16; 37:28; 59:13; Prov. 11:5; 14:11; Isa. 32:16,17; Lam. 5:7. The human conscience also testifies to this fact. But it is also manifest from Scripture that the judgments of God in the present are not final. The evil sometimes continues without due punishment, and the good is not always rewarded with the promised blessings in this life. The wicked in the days of Malachi were emboldened to cry out, “Where is the God of judgment?” Mal. 2:17. The complaint was heard in those days: “It is vain to serve God; and what profit is it that we have kept His charge, and that we have walked mournfully before Jehovah of Hosts? And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are built up; yea, they tempt God and

escape,” Mal. 3:14,15. Job and his friends were wrestling with the problem of the sufferings of the righteous, and so was Asaph in the 73rd Psalm. The Bible teaches us to look forward to a final judgment as the decisive answer of God to all such questions, as the solution of all such problems, and as the removal of all the apparent discrepancies of the present, Matt. 25:31-46; John 5:27-29; Acts 25:24; Rom. 2:5-11; Heb. 9:27; 10:27; II Pet. 3:7; Rev. 20:11-15. These passages do not refer to a process, but to a very definite event at the end of time. It is represented as accompanied by other historical events, such as the coming of Jesus Christ, the resurrection of the dead, and the renewal of heaven and earth.

C. ERRONEOUS VIEWS RESPECTING THE JUDGMENT.

GLOSS Universalism: the teaching that all persons will finally be saved; Berkhof rejects it as contrary to Scripture’s warnings.

1. THE JUDGMENT PURELY METAPHORICAL. According to Schleiermacher and many other German scholars the Biblical descriptions of the last judgment are to be understood as symbolical indications of the fact that the world and the Church will finally be separated. This explanation serves to evaporate the whole idea of a forensic judgment for the public determination of the final state of man. It is an explanation which surely does not do justice to the strong statements of Scripture respecting the future judgment as a formal, public, and final declaration.

2. THE JUDGMENT EXCLUSIVELY IMMANENT. Schelling’s dictum that “the history of the world is the judgment of the world” undoubtedly contains an element of truth. There are, as was pointed out in the preceding, manifestations of the retributive justice of God in the history of nations and individuals. The rewards or punishments may be of a positive character, or may be the natural result of the good or evil done. But when many liberal

scholars claim that the divine judgment is wholly immanent and is determined entirely by the moral order of the world, they certainly fail to do justice to the representations of Scripture. Their view of the judgment as “self-acting” makes God an otiose God, who merely looks on and approves of the distribution of rewards and punishments. It completely destroys the idea of the judgment as an outward and visible event, which will occur at some definite time in the future. Moreover, it cannot satisfy the longings of the human heart for perfect justice. Historical judgments are always only partial and sometimes impress men as a travesty on justice. There always has been and still is occasion for the perplexity of Job and Asaph.

3. THE JUDGMENT NOT A SINGLE EVENT. Present day Premillenarians speak of three different future judgments. They distinguish: (a) A judgment of the risen and living saints at the parousia or the coming of the Lord, which serves the purpose of vindicating the saints publicly, rewarding each one according to his works, and assigning to them their respective places in the coming millennial kingdom. (b) A judgment at the revelation of Christ (the day of the Lord), immediately after the great tribulation, in which, according to the prevailing view, the Gentile nations are judged as nations, according to the attitude they have assumed to the evangelizing remnant of Israel (the least of the brethren of the Lord). The entrance of these nations into the kingdom depends on the outcome. This is the judgment mentioned in Matt. 25:31-46. It is separated from the earlier judgment by a period of seven years. (c) A judgment of the wicked dead before the great white throne, described in Rev. 20:11-15. The dead are judged according to their works, and these determine the degree of punishment which they will receive. This judgment will be more than a thousand years later than the preceding one. It should be noted, however, that the Bible always speaks of the future judgment as a single event. It teaches us to look forward, not to days, but to the day of judgment, John 5:28,29; Acts 17:31; II Pet. 3:7, also called “that day,” Matt. 7:22; II Tim. 4:8, and “the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God,” Rom. 2:5. Premillenarians feel the force of this argument, for they reply that it may be a

day of a thousand years. Moreover, there are passages of Scripture from which it is abundantly evident that the righteous and the wicked appear in judgment together for a final separation, Matt. 7:22,23; 25:31-46 Rom. 2:5-7; Rev. 11:18; 20:11-15. Furthermore, it should be noted that the judgment of the wicked is represented as a concomitant of the parousia and also of the revelation, II Thess. 1:7-10; II Pet. 3:4-7. And, finally, it should be borne in mind that God does not judge the nations as nations where eternal issues are at stake, but only individuals; and that a final separation of the righteous and the wicked cannot possibly be made until the end of the world. It is hard to see how anyone can give a tolerable and self-consistent interpretation of Matt. 25:31-46, except on the supposition that the judgment referred to is the universal judgment of all men, and that they are judged, not as nations, but as individuals. Even Meyer and Alford who are themselves Premillenarians consider this to be the only tenable exposition.

4. THE FINAL JUDGMENT UNNECESSARY. Some regard the final judgment as entirely unnecessary, because each man's destiny is determined at the time of his death. If a man fell asleep in Jesus, he is saved; and if he died in his sins, he is lost. Since the matter is settled, no further judicial inquiry is necessary, and therefore such a final judgment is quite superfluous. But the certainty of the future judgment does not depend on our conception of its necessity. God clearly teaches us in His Word that there will be a final judgment, and that settles the matter for all those who recognize the Bible as the final standard of faith. Moreover, the underlying assumption on which this argument proceeds, namely, that the final judgment is for the purpose of ascertaining what should be the future state of man, is entirely erroneous. It will serve the purpose rather of displaying before all rational creatures the declarative glory of God in a formal, forensic act, which magnifies on the one hand His holiness and righteousness, and on the other hand, His grace and mercy. Moreover, it should be borne in mind that the judgment at the last day will differ from that at the death of each individual in more than one respect. It

will not be secret, but public; it will not pertain to the soul only, but also to the body; it will not have reference to a single individual, but to all men.

D. THE JUDGE AND HIS ASSISTANTS.

GLOSS Christ the Judge: Jesus Christ, in His mediatorial kingship, is appointed by the Father to judge the living and the dead.

Naturally, the final judgment, like all God's opera ad extra, is a work of the triune God, but Scripture ascribes it particularly to Christ. Christ in His mediatorial capacity will be the future Judge, Matt. 25:31,32; John 5:27; Acts 10:42; 17:31; Phil. 2:10; II Tim. 4:1. Such passages as Matt. 28:18; John 5:27; Phil. 2:9,10, make it abundantly evident that the honor of judging the living and the dead was conferred on Christ as Mediator in reward for His atoning work and as a part of His exaltation. This may be regarded as one of the crowning honors of His kingship. In His capacity as Judge, too, Christ is saving His people to the uttermost: He completes their redemption, justifies them publicly, and removes the last consequences of sin. From such passages as Matt. 13:41,42; 24:31; 25:31, it may be inferred that the angels will assist Him in this great work. Evidently, the saints will in some sense sit and judge with Christ, Ps. 149:5-9; I Cor. 6:2,3; Rev. 20:4. It is hard to say just what this will involve. It has been interpreted to mean that the saints will condemn the world by their faith, just as the Ninevites would have condemned the unbelieving cities of Jesus' day; or that they will merely concur in the judgment of Christ. But the argument of Paul in I Cor. 6:2,3 would seem to require something more than this, for neither of the two suggested interpretations would prove that the Corinthians were capable of judging the matters that arose in the Church. Though the saints cannot be expected to know all those who appear in judgment and to apportion the penalties, yet they will have some real active share in the judgment of Christ, though it is impossible to say just what this will be.

E. THE PARTIES THAT WILL BE JUDGED.

GLOSS Public judgment: the open manifestation of God's righteous verdict, before which all human beings must appear.

Scripture contains clear indications of at least two parties that will be judged. It is quite evident that the fallen angels will stand before the tribunal of God, Matt. 8:29; I Cor. 6:3; II Pet. 2:4; Jude 6. Satan and his demons will meet their final doom in the day of judgment. It is also perfectly clear that every individual of the human race will have to appear before the judgment seat, Eccl. 12:14; Ps. 50:4-6; Matt. 12:36,37; 25:32; Rom. 14:10; II Cor. 5:10; Rev. 20:12. These passages certainly leave no room for the view of the Pelagians and of those who follow in their wake, that the final judgment will be limited to those who have enjoyed the privileges of the gospel. Neither do they favor the idea of those sectarians who hold that the righteous will not be called into judgment. When Jesus says in John 5:24, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word and believeth Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and cometh not into judgment, but hath passed out of death into life," he clearly means in view of the context, that the believer cometh not into condemnatory judgment. But it is sometimes objected that the sins of believers, which are pardoned, certainly will not be published at that time; but Scripture leads us to expect that they will be, though they will, of course, be revealed as pardoned sins. Men will be judged for "every idle word," Matt. 12:36, and for "every secret thing," Rom. 2:16; I Cor. 4:5, and there is no indication whatsoever that this will be limited to the wicked. Moreover, it is perfectly evident from such passages as Matt. 13:30,40-43,49; 25:14-23,34-40,46, that the righteous will appear before the judgment seat of Christ. It is more difficult to determine, whether the good angels will be subject to the final judgment in any sense of the word. Dr. Bavinck is inclined to infer from I Cor. 6:3 that they will be; but this passage does not prove the point. It might do this, if the word *aggelous*

were preceded by the article, which is not the case. We simply read, “Know ye not that we shall judge angels?” Because of the uncertainty connected with this matter, it is better to be silent. The more so, since the angels are clearly represented only as ministers of Christ in connection with the work of judgment, Matt. 13:30,41; 25:31; II Thess. 1:7,8.

F. THE TIME OF THE JUDGMENT.

GLOSS **Day of judgment:** the final divine assize associated with Christ’s return, resurrection, and the renewal of all things.

Though the time of the future judgment cannot be determined absolutely, it can be fixed relatively, that is, relative to other eschatological events. It will clearly be at the end of the present world, for it will be a judgment passed on the whole life of every man, Matt. 13:40-43; II Pet. 3:7. Moreover, it will be a concomitant of the coming (parousia) of Jesus Christ, Matt. 25:19-46; II Thess. 1:7-10; II Pet. 3:9,10, and will follow immediately after the resurrection of the dead, Dan. 12:2; John 5:28,29; Rev. 20:12,13. The question whether it will immediately precede, be coincident with, or immediately follow, the renewal of heaven and earth, cannot be settled conclusively on the basis of Scripture. Rev. 20:11 would seem to indicate that the transformation of the universe will take place when the judgment begins; II Pet. 3:7, that the two will synchronize; and Rev. 21:1, that the renewal of heaven and earth will follow the judgment. We can only speak of them in a general way as concomitants. It is equally impossible to determine the exact duration of the judgment. Scripture speaks of “the day of judgment,” Matt. 11:22; 12:36, “that day,” Matt. 7:22; II Thess. 1:10; II Tim. 1:12, and “the day of wrath,” Rom. 2:5; Rev. 11:8. We need not infer from these and similar passages that it will be a day of exactly twenty-four hours, since the word “day” is also used in a more indefinite sense in Scripture. On the other hand, however, the interpretation of some of the Premillenarians, that it is a designation of the whole millennial period, cannot be regarded as a

plausible one. When the word “day” is used to denote a period, it is a period which is, as a whole, characterized by some special characteristic, usually indicated by the genitive that follows the word. Thus “the day of trouble” is the period that is characterized throughout by trouble, and “the day of salvation” is the period which is in its entirety noted for its outstanding display of God’s favour or grace. And it certainly cannot be said that the millennial period of the Premillenarians, while beginning and ending with a judgment, is throughout a period of judgment. It is rather a period of joy, of righteousness and of peace. The outstanding characteristic of it is certainly not that of judgment.

G. THE STANDARD OF JUDGMENT.

GLOSS **Revealed will of God:** the standard by which God judges, taking account of the light, truth, and responsibility each person received.

The standard by which saints and sinners are judged will evidently be the revealed will of God. This is not the same for all. Some have been privileged above others, and this naturally adds to their responsibility, Matt. 11:21-24; Rom. 2:12-16. This does not mean that there will be different conditions of salvation for different classes of people. For all those who appear in judgment entrance into, or exclusion from, heaven, will depend on the question, whether they are clothed with the righteousness of Jesus Christ. But there will be different degrees, both of the bliss of heaven and of the punishment of hell. And these degrees will be determined by what is done in the flesh, Matt. 11:22,24; Luke 12:47,48; 20:47; Dan. 12:3; II Cor. 9-6. The Gentiles will be judged by the law of nature, inscribed in their hearts, the Israelites of the old dispensation by the Old Testament revelation and by that only, and those who have enjoyed, besides the light of nature and the revelation of the Old Testament, the light of the gospel, will be judged according to the greater light which they have received. God will give to every man his due.

H. THE DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE JUDGMENT.

GLOSS Sentence: the public declaration and execution of God's righteous judgment, bringing eternal reward or punishment.

Here we should distinguish:

1. THE COGNITIO CAUSAE. God will take cognizance of the state of affairs, of the whole past life of man, including even the thoughts and secret intents of the heart. This is symbolically represented in Scripture as the opening of the books, Dan. 7:10; Rev. 20:12. The pious of the days of Malachi spoke of a book of remembrance written before God, Mal. 3:16. It is a figurative description which is added to complete the idea of the judgment. A judge usually has the book of the law and the record of those who appear before him. In all probability the figure in this case simply refers to the omniscience of God. Some speak of the book of God's Word as the statute book, and of the book of remembrance as the book of predestination, God's private record. But it is very doubtful whether we should particularize in that fashion.

2. THE SENTENTIAE PROMULGATIO. There will be promulgation of the sentence. The day of judgment is the day of wrath, and of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God, Rom. 2:5. All must be revealed before the tribunal of the supreme Judge, II Cor. 5:10. The sense of justice demands this. The sentence pronounced upon each person will not be secret, will not be known to that person only, but will be publicly proclaimed, so that at least those in any way concerned will know. Thus the righteousness and grace of God will shine out in all their splendor.

3. THE SENTENTIAE EXECUTIO. The sentence of the righteous will convey everlasting blessedness, and that of the wicked everlasting misery. The Judge will divide mankind into two parts, as a shepherd separates the sheep

from the goats, Matt. 25:32 ff. In view of what will be said of their final state in the following chapter, nothing more need be added here.

V. The Final State

The final state is everlasting misery for the wicked and everlasting blessedness for the righteous. For believers it includes the new creation and perfect, joyful communion with God.

The last judgment determines, and therefore naturally leads on to, the final state of those who appear before the judgment seat. Their final state is either one of everlasting misery or one of eternal blessedness.

A. THE FINAL STATE OF THE WICKED.

GLOSS Hell: the final place and condition of punishment for the wicked, marked by exclusion from God's favour and the consequence of sin.

There are especially three points that call for consideration here:

1. THE PLACE TO WHICH THE WICKED ARE CONSIGNED. In present day theology there is an evident tendency in some circles to rule out the idea of eternal punishment. The Annihilationists, which are still represented in such sects as Adventism and Millennial Dawnism, and the advocates of conditional immortality, deny the continued existence of the wicked, and thereby render a place of eternal punishment unnecessary. In modern liberal theology the word "hell" is generally regarded as a figurative designation of a purely subjective condition, in which men may find themselves even while on earth, and which may become permanent in the future. But these interpretations certainly do not do justice to the data of Scripture. There can be no reasonable doubt as to the fact that the Bible teaches the continued

existence of the wicked, Matt. 24:5; 25:30,46; Luke 16:19-31. Moreover, in connection with the subject of “hell” the Bible certainly uses local terms right along. It calls the place of torment gehenna, a name derived from the Hebrew *ge* (land, or valley) and *hinom* or *beney hinom*, that is, Hinnom or sons of Hinnom. This name was originally applied to a valley southwest of Jerusalem. It was the place where wicked idolators sacrificed their children to Moloch by causing them to pass through the fire. Hence it was considered impure and was called in later days “the valley of tophet (spittle), as an utterly despised region. Fires were constantly burning there to consume the offal of Jerusalem. As a result it became a symbol of the place of eternal torment. Matt. 18:9 speaks of *ten geennan tou puros*, the gehenna of fire, and this strong expression is used synonymously with *to pur to aionion*, the eternal fire, in the previous verse. The Bible also speaks of a “furnace of fire,” Matt. 13:42, and of a “lake of fire,” Rev. 20:14,15, which forms a contrast with the “sea of glass like unto crystal,” Rev. 4:6. The terms “prison,” I Pet. 3:19, “abyss,” Luke 8:31, and “tartarus,” II Pet. 2:4 are also used. From the fact that the preceding terms are all local designations, we may infer that hell is a place. Moreover, local expressions are generally used in connection with it. Scripture speaks of those who are excluded from heaven as being “outside,” and as being “cast into hell.” The description in Luke 16:19-31 is certainly altogether local.

2. THE STATE IN WHICH THEY WILL CONTINUE THEIR EXISTENCE. It is impossible to determine precisely what will constitute the eternal punishment of the wicked, and it behooves us to speak very cautiously on the subject. Positively, it may be said to consist in (a) a total absence of the favor of God; (b) an endless disturbance of life as a result of the complete domination of sin; (c) positive pains and sufferings in body and soul; and (d) such subjective punishments as pangs of conscience, anguish, despair, weeping, and gnashing of teeth, Matt. 8:12; 13:50; Mark 9:43,44,47,48; Luke 16:23,28; Rev. 14:10; 21:8. Evidently, there will be degrees in the punishment of the wicked. This follows from such passages as Matt. 11:22,24; Luke 12:47,48; 20:17. Their punishment will be commensurate with their sinning against the

light which they had received. But it will, nevertheless, be eternal punishment for all of them. This is plainly stated in Scripture, Matt. 18:8; II Thess. 1:9; Rev. 14:11; 20:10. Some deny that there will be a literal fire, because this could not affect spirits like Satan and his demons. But how do we know this? Our body certainly works on our soul in some mysterious way. There will be some positive punishment corresponding to our bodies. It is undoubtedly true, however, that a great deal of the language concerning heaven and hell must be understood figuratively.

3. THE DURATION OF THEIR PUNISHMENT. The question of the eternity of the future punishment deserves more special consideration, however, because it is frequently denied. It is said that the words used in Scripture for “everlasting” and “eternal” may simply denote an “age” or a “dispensation,” or any other long period of time. Now it cannot be doubted that they are so used in some passages, but this does not prove that they always have that limited meaning. It is not the literal meaning of these terms. Whenever they are so used, they are used figuratively, and in such cases their figurative use is generally quite evident from the connection. Moreover, there are positive reasons for thinking that these words do not have that limited meaning in the passages to which we referred. (a) In Matt. 25:46 the same word describes the duration of both, the bliss of the saints and the penalty of the wicked. If the latter is not, properly speaking, unending, neither is the former; and yet many of those who doubt eternal punishment, do not doubt everlasting bliss. (b) Other expressions are used which cannot be set aside by the consideration mentioned in the preceding. The fire of hell is called an “unquenchable fire,” Mark 9:43; and it is said of the wicked that “their worm dieth not,” Mark 9:48. Moreover, the gulf that will separate saints and sinners in the future is said to be fixed and impassable, Luke 16:26.

B. THE FINAL STATE OF THE RIGHTEOUS.

GLOSS New creation: the renewed heavens and earth in which righteousness dwells and God's people enjoy full communion with Him.

1. THE NEW CREATION. The final state of believers will be preceded by the passing of the present world and the appearance of a new creation. Matt. 19:28 speaks of "the regeneration," and Acts 3:21, of "the restoration of all things." In Heb. 12:27 we read: "And this word, Yet once more signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken (heaven and earth), as of things that are made, that those things which are not shaken (the kingdom of God) may remain." Peter says: "But according to His promise, we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness," II Pet. 3:13, cf. vs. 12; and John saw this new creation in a vision, Rev. 21:1. It is only after the new creation has been established, that the new Jerusalem descends out of heaven from God, that the tabernacle of God is pitched among men, and that the righteous enter upon their eternal joy. The question is often raised, whether this will be an entirely new creation, or a renewal of the present creation. Lutheran theologians strongly favor the former position with an appeal to II Pet. 3:7-13; Rev. 20:11; and 21:1; while Reformed theologians prefer the latter idea, and find support for it in Ps. 102:26,27; (Heb. 1:10-12); and Heb. 12:26-28.

2. THE ETERNAL ABODE OF THE RIGHTEOUS. Many conceive of heaven also as a subjective condition, which men may enjoy in the present and which in the way of righteousness will naturally become permanent in the future. But here, too, it must be said that Scripture clearly presents heaven as a place. Christ ascended to heaven, which can only mean that He went from one place to another. It is described as the house of our Father with many mansions, John 14:1, and this description would hardly fit a condition. Moreover, believers are said to be within, while unbelievers are without, Matt. 22:12,13;

25:10-12. Scripture gives us reasons to believe that the righteous will not only inherit heaven, but the entire new creation, Matt. 5:5; Rev. 21:1-3.

3. THE NATURE OF THEIR REWARD. The reward of the righteous is described as eternal life, that is, not merely an endless life, but life in all its fulness, without any of the imperfections and disturbances of the present, Matt. 25:46; Rom. 2:7. The fulness of this life is enjoyed in communion with God, which is really the essence of eternal life, Rev. 21:3. They will see God in Jesus Christ face to face, will find full satisfaction in Him, will rejoice in Him, and will glorify Him. We should not think of the joys of heaven, however, as exclusively spiritual. There will be something corresponding to the body. There will be recognition and social intercourse on an elevated plane. It is also evident from Scripture that there will be degrees in the bliss of heaven, Dan. 12:3; II Cor. 9:6. Our good works will be the measure of our gracious reward, though they do not merit it. Notwithstanding this, however, the joy of each individual will be perfect and full.