

REFLECTIONS ON THE HISTORY OF PREMILLENNIAL THOUGHT

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I owe a debt of gratitude to Dr Allan A. MacRae for the introduction to a thorough and careful study of the Word of God. It is an honor to add here my grateful recognition of his loyalty to the Bible. We have all been blessed by his meditations on Isaiah, and we eagerly await the commentary on Daniel. Not least among the many cherished doctrines Dr MacRae has inculcated and strengthened is the doctrine of the premillennial Advent of our Lord Jesus Christ.

A few years ago, the reading of Ernest Sandeen's *The Roots of Fundamentalism* directed my attention to LeRoy Froom's massive survey of premillennial thought, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, Washington, D.C., 1950-1954. Froom's work makes one aware of the movement of eschatological thought through the Christian centuries and provides a prodigious store of data for reflection.

I have thus been challenged to add the historical perspective of the development of doctrine to detailed exegetical work. In the present essay, therefore, I present some of my reasons, both historical and exegetical, for believing that the futurist premillennial doctrine is emerging from neglect and misrepresentation to prove itself the most stable form of Biblical eschatology, providing a satisfactory answer to a recurring historical and exegetical problem. I refer to the prevailing practice, at least up to the early nineteenth century, in both postmillennialism and premillennialism, of calculating the times and setting the date of the end of the age.

I propose, then, in this first part of the paper, to make a brief survey from Irenaeus to the early nineteenth century, looking at particular moments which will enable us to trace the development leading to the breakdown and abandonment of the Augustinian view of eschatology and the acceptance, in principle, of the futurist interpretation of Revelation.

THE DEVELOPMENT LEADING TO THE NINETEENTH CENTURY DEMISE OF THE AUGUSTINIAN -- TYCONIAN INTERPRETATION OF REVELATION

It is obvious that a strict and consistent futurist conception of the Book of Revelation involves the rejection of much of the time-honored continuous-historical view. I can only say at this point that the following discussion will show my reasons for rejecting a theory which necessarily involves a calculation of the times, especially if combined with the day/year theory. However, I do not think that we have no guidance through the generations which intervene between the First and Second Advents of our