

A PREMILLENNIAL ARGUMENT

The premillennialist and the amillennialist agree in regarding this present age as an age of grace, an age which is not expected to evolve toward perfection, but in which the struggle between righteousness and iniquity, between the true faith and falsehood, between the church and the synagogue of Satan, will grow more and more intense until the final cataclysmic event, the visible glorious return of Christ to execute judgment. As we have had occasion to say elsewhere, the parable of the wheat and the tares is the central scriptural teaching on this point.

On the other hand, the postmillennialist holds that the church is, by a gradual process, to dominate human society, until finally the age of perfection is ushered in.

I have sometimes suggested (1) that the postmillennial view is contrary to the teaching of the Scriptures. That is not to say that postmillennialists consciously reject the Scriptures. I think it is fair to say, however, that postmillennialists generally have been characterized by inattention to the subject of eschatology.

The course of this age is not only clearly indicated in the parables of our Lord, particularly the parable of the wheat and the tares, but in the pastoral epistles, especially in I and II Timothy. The entire picture is constantly in the background and frequently brought forward for direct attention. In a very striking passage Paul informs us that in the last days (II Timothy 3:1) and with a view to the coming of Christ to establish his visible kingdom and to judge the world (II Timothy 4:1), there shall be "perilous times." "Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived." (II Timothy 3:1,12) It is only reasonable to take this passage in its entirety in the context in the pastoral epistle and compare it with what Paul says of the apostasy, "the falling away" which shall precede the return of Christ. (II Thessalonians 2:1-12) Such passages of Scripture, multiplied throughout the entire New Testament, make it impossible for the careful student of eschatology to accept the postmillennial interpretation.

One sometimes hears the superficial reply, "But evil men and seducers always have and always do wax worse and worse." This statement is true in itself. We have much Scripture to warn us that sin is dynamic in its character and that he who is evil waxes evil "yet more." However, this interpretation as applied to Paul's word to Timothy, is entirely incorrect, in fact, inexcusably superficial. Paul is definitely talking about the course of events between his time and the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in judgment. He is not discussing the course of sin in the life of the individual evil man and seducer. He is discussing the course of sin in this world with reference to the course of history and its consummation in the Lord's appearing. One who carefully reads through the corpus of the pastoral epistles is not likely to be deceived at this point.

We have also pointed out elsewhere (2) that the postmillennial view is likely to produce an attitude of indifference toward the law. And (3) the belief that progress is bound to take place according to the promise of God, is likely to weaken our ideas of what progress really would be according to scriptural standards; (a) weakening our conception of the gospel and leading us into compromise with "the social gospel" which is not a gospel; (b) weakening our ideas of the purity of life which must accompany and flow from redemption through the blood of Christ, inducing us almost to believe that progress in mechanical arts is identical with progress toward the Messianic age.

There is another argument against the postmillennial view and in favor of the view of the history of this age of grace held in common by the premillennialists and the amillennialists. I state this argument with some hesitancy lest I be