

Stop Calling Postmillennials "Judaizers" to Justify Your Version of Amillennialism: An Answer to Dr. R. Scott Clark. - Aldo Leon

Introduction

Before responding to Dr. Clark's article, a few qualifications must be said. Firstly and personally, I consider Dr. Clark a personal friend and highly respect him. I honestly would not be Presbyterian if it was not for his ministry. Nonetheless, I have some serious disagreements with the way he presents the Postmillennial position that I and most in church history have held (yes, I said most). Secondly, part of the reason for Dr. Clark's article on Postmillennials was due to the recent content in my podcasts on false teacher, Doug Wilson, as well as my conversations with Scott (I verified this with him), which is to say that my ministry was specifically on his mind while writing the article. Thirdly, I believe that me addressing this article that has a personal connection to me will be of great benefit to you, reformed Christians. Fourthly, I consider Scott to be a credible Theologian and gift to the church though I find his views of Kingdom and Eschatology to be more novel than historic.

Part 1: Postmillennial Glory and Premillennial Glory, Radical Differences

Let me start by addressing this quote in the article that says, "*People regularly say that amillennialism is 'pessimistic' but postmillennialism is 'optimistic.'*" I cannot speak for others but I can speak for myself in saying that I believe that some Amillennials are pessimistic while others are optimistic. If you are an optimistic Amillennial, I do not consider you a pessimist though you would not consider yourself postmillennial. Someone like Dr. Clark would fall into the category of the pessimistic Amillennial; however, his view of Amillennialism does not represent the full spectrum of the position. Why do I say this about Dr. Clark? Simply because any talk about the extent of the gospel and its effects on society leads him to call the person making such arguments a dispensationalist, a chiliast, a glory theologian, a TheoRecon, and a Judaizer. If that is how you respond to any discussion of the extensiveness and effects of the gospel, you are indeed overly pessimistic. One of the first things that Dr. Clark does in his article and ministry overall is to collapse the chiliast (Premill) position with the Postmillennial position. Our only difference (Postmill and Premill), according to Dr. Clark, is that the Reformed Postmillennial

position's thousand years is lacking a literal interpretation while the Chiliast position indeed speaks to a literal thousand years. According to Dr. Clark's position, Calvin, the Puritans, and I are nothing more than allegorical Premillennials. He says, *"Our postmillennial friends reject a literal millennium but they agree with the chiliasts that there will be a period of earthly glory."* It is at this point that Dr. Clark proves to not understand the Postmillennial position with his connection of the Postmillennial to earthly glory in a manner that is parallel to the Premillennial. Let me show you the differences between the thousand years of the Chiliast and the Postmillennial.

The Chiliast generally believes that the glory of the Kingdom will come in a revived, geopolitical, earthly Israel (there are different versions of this); however, the Postmillennial believes that the Kingdom is coming and will come through Eschatological Israel (church) which is heavenly (Heb. 12:22). The Chiliast believes that Christ's thousand year rule will be by Christ returning in military-like dominance and earthly force. However, the Postmillennial believes that Christ will rule from heaven in the power of the Spirit through the incremental progress of the gospel. The Chiliasts believe that a revival of the earthly Mosaic Theocracy (again, there are different versions of this) will comprise the thousand year reign of Christ, while the Postmillennial believes that God's rule and reign from heaven on the earth will be in the final administration of the covenant of grace (new covenant). The earthly glory that the Chiliast speaks of concerning the thousand year reign of Christ is indeed of an earthly nature. However, for the Postmillennial, the metaphorical thousand years of Christ's reign on earth is essentially Christological, Pneumatological, and Kerygmatic; its consequential effects are societal. The historic Postmillennial position does not see Christ's thousand year reign as a metaphorical time period in which geopolitical, earthly, Theocratic Israel will be revived from its sleep through the means of cultural-transformational measures. The Chiliast position is generally geopolitical-Israel-centric and often lacks a high Ecclesiology. Dr. Clark tactically brings up the TheoRecons in this section; this is due to his inability to separate the novel, so-called "Postmillennial" from the historic ones. One of the ways that people like myself are discredited by Dr. Clark in these positions is by dumping us into the TheoRecon crowd. The idea is somewhat like this, "You are Post-mill? You do not want to be a TheoRecon, do you?" "Are you a Shepherdite?" Such conclusions and methods are quite unpersuasive to someone who knows our historic roots. Dr. Clark seems to see "earthly" kingdom to be simply

understood as a kingdom that exists tangibly on the earth in some spatially verifiable way. However, the Bible and the Reformed tradition see the earthly kingdom as being a kingdom that you speak of on earth, and not simply a kingdom that is tangible on earth in a measurable way (Galatians 4:21-31). In the passage mentioned, both the heavenly and earthly Jerusalem are tangibly on the earth. However, the difference is one of Eschatological and Soteriological quality not simply a tangible existence on the earth. Satan's Kingdom and God's are both on the earth in a spatial and tangible sense; however, they are on the earth tangibly with different qualities, trajectories, and paradigms. An earthly institution like family being tangibly and visibly affected by the gospel does not make the Kingdom "earthly." Paul addressing how law and gospel tangibly and visibly affect earthly institutions such as the family and vocation does not make his kingdom views earthly. For Paul, earthly is not about what is visual or measurable on the earth but rather what is not Christological on the earth. Contrary to what Dr. Clark says, the heavenly kingdom affecting the earth does not make it "earthly." When you read Dr. Clark's article, at times you get the impression that he is saying that the Old Testament Kingdom is purely *earthly* and the New Testament Kingdom is purely *spiritual* (similar arguments made by Anabaptists against Calvin). However, the Kingdom of God (both in Old and New covenants) is never unhinged from Creation. The New Testament Kingdom and the Old Testament typological and anticipatory Kingdom, *are both earthly and spiritual*, i.e, the New Testament Kingdom is both Eschatological and earthly-spiritual. Bodies, children, families, vocation, and the civil sphere do not fall out of the Kingdom conversation in the name of so-called New Testament gospel-centeredness. It seems that Dr. Clark believes that earthly things are purely things that are particular to the Old Testament Kingdom, which is why whenever the Postmillennial brings up how God's Kingdom affects Creation, he throws down the Judaizer card. Why? In the New Testament Kingdom of God, we have left behind all those spatial, societal, and creational things. Sadly, it seems that the thousands of pastors from 1500's to 1800's would disagree. Sure, Dr. Clark can quote you a person here and there who holds to this radical discontinuity between the earthly Old Testament and the spiritual New Testament; however, my position has much backing from many in the Reformed tradition.

Earthly and Heavenly Glory?

In the next section Dr. Clark then writes, "*Augustinian Amillennialists, as Bauckham describes them, reject the idea of a literal 1,000 year reign of Christ after his return (chiliasm) and they expect no earthly glory age (e.g., a converted world) before Christ returns.*" Notice that Dr. Clark is claiming that an earthly glory age is understood as an age where there is a largely converted world. I find this definition of "worldly" most amusing considering what the Bible teaches about the supernatural nature of conversion. By this logic, lots of conversions means an "earthly" glory age. How on earth can conversions that are from above in the power of the Spirit through the means of grace be connected to "earthly" glory? There is nothing earthly about conversions as they are entirely heavenly (John 3:5-8). A large amount of heavenly, supernatural conversions on earth isn't any more earthly than one conversion on earth is. The numerical abundance of conversions has nothing to do with earthly glory! Unless you are a Remonstrant (which Dr. Clark is not), who believes that nature has intrinsic qualities conducive to conversion? Every conversion, whether one or many, is about the glory of heaven. One conversion on earth is heavenly and 5 billion conversions on earth are also heavenly. Lest you define "heavenly" as being a matter of smaller percentages and numbers. The more I hear from Dr. Clark it seems that "less and loss" are what make up "heavenly" and its opposite is "earthly." I suppose that Dr. Clark would call Moses a "glory theologian" when he said that the Abrahamic promises can be likened to the amounts of stars in the heavens. I also suppose that Dr. Clark would call the prophets like Isaiah and the apostle John "glory theologians" due to the astronomical expectations they had about conversions. Why do I say this? Because when someone like myself talks about the numerical, overwhelming increase of conversions in the time period in between Christ's comings, Dr. Clark says that such things are Judaistic glory nonsense. Am I putting words in his mouth? Dr. Clark writes, "*Augustinian Amillennialists, as Bauckham describes them, reject the idea of a literal 1,000 year reign of Christ after his return (chiliasm) and they expect no earthly glory age (e.g., a converted world) before Christ returns.*" My Amillennial brothers, you are free to not agree with the increasing conversions that the Postmillennial holds to. However, you are not free to, as Scott does, call us "earthly glory theologians" because we do.

Part 2: How the postmillennial reading of the OT is the reformed not “Jewish” reading of the OT.

Another fundamental issue in Dr. Clark’s logic can be seen in this quote, *“The postmillennial hermeneutic typically requires us to read the Old Testament either in isolation from the New or in a way that the New Testament writers do not. In either case, it is not a tenable way of reading the Old Testament. Certainly the Old Testament is replete with promises of a future earthly glory. The question is: What did the New Testament do with those promises and how should we understand them now?”* From my conversations with Dr. Clark and his various writings (including this article), it seems that he has a narrow back-to-front reading of the Scriptures which means that he understands the Old Testament primarily (almost exclusively) through reading the New Testament. The Reformed hermeneutic, however, has always been about reading the Bible front-to-back and back-to-front. Which is to say that you understand the new in light of the old AND the old in light of the new. This is where Dr. Clark begins to sound like someone who elevates the New Testament over the Old, as well as someone who reads the Old Testament with a level of heightened discontinuity. You can see this by the way Dr. Clark will shut down an Old Testament reference to the Kingdom by saying that it is not stated verbatim in the New Testament. This position somewhat reminds me of the way Baptists shut down Old Testament texts about Sacraments due to the New Testament not stating such things with identical language. Dr. Clark’s responses to Old Testament texts about the Kingdom remind me of James White shutting down Old Testament texts about ecclesiology in his debates with Presbyterians (most ironic as Scott is the champion of explaining New Testament concepts of Sacraments with Old Testament texts). Reformed thinkers have always understood New Testament concepts in light of the Old and Old Testament concepts in light of the New, while Clark seems to want us to see the Old entirely and exclusively in light of the New. Whatever the Old Testament says can only be said if it is understood verbatim in light of New Testament words. However, this front-to-back and back-to-front reading of scripture can be seen regularly from the reformed throughout history.

George Gillespie (one of the Westminster Divines) helped the church understand New Testament ecclesiology from the Torah (understanding the new in light of the old). Gillespie did not have a Judaistic hermeneutic. In the WLC, Question 54, the Divines explain the New Testament reality of Christ's ascension rule in light of Psalms 16:11 and 110:1. In the WLC, Question 191, the Divines explain the Kingdom of sin and Satan being destroyed in light of Psalms 68:1. When the Divines explain the church being furnished with gospel offices and ordinances they do so in light of Psalm 67. Would you like me to remind you what that Psalm says in verse 4? "Let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you judge the peoples with equity and guide the nations upon earth. *Selah*. Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you!" Did you see that? The Divines explain the New Testament concept of the Kingdom through the Lord's conquest over the nations in the Psalm. In Question 191, the civil magistrate's role (1229) in the New Covenant era is also understood in light of the Old Testament. Which implies that the Divines understood Romans 13 in light of Malachi 1:11 which says, "For from the rising of the sun to its setting my name will be great among the nations, and in every place incense will be offered to my name, and a pure offering. For my name will be great among the nations, says the LORD of hosts." The Divines did not have a Judaistic hermeneutic.

Furthermore, in Calvin's *Institutes*, he explains the role and nature of civil government through the book of Daniel and Jeremiah (*Institutes* 4:26-29). In his commentaries, Calvin explains the civil sphere and how it is to function post-Pentecost through expositions of Exodus 18 and 1 Samuel 8. Calvin used the book of Deuteronomy to give clarity to what Paul meant in Romans 13 concerning the civil sphere (See his commentary on Deuteronomy). Calvin did NOT use Romans 13 to read over Deuteronomy but read them both together and both in light of each other; he did not have a Judaistic hermeneutic. Samuel Rutherford in his book *Lex, Rex, Or The Law And The Prince: A Dispute For The Just Prerogative Of King And People*, explained how to understand Romans 13 in light of the books of Moses and the prophetic books. Rutherford did not have a Judaistic hermeneutic. The Divines explain the administration of new covenant signs through Old Testament texts like Genesis 17:7 and Exodus 4:24. What is my point? My point is simply that the Reformed interpretation of New Testament revelation is through the Old and the Old through the New. Dr. Clark wants all of us to understand all Old Testament concepts purely through the New Testament and not understand concepts such as the Kingdom through

the Old. That radical discontinuity which purely leaves us reading back-to-front is not the way the historic-Reformers worked out their theology. It is not Premillennial to understand the Kingship of Christ post-Pentecost through the lens of Moses, the Prophets, and Psalms, unless you have a view of covenant and Kingdom that stresses radical discontinuity. Calvin did not have a Judaistic view of Christ's Kingship because he understood the role of the magistrate in light of 1 Samuel 8 and the divines did not have a Judaistic way of understanding the Kingship of Christ because they understood the magistrate in light of Malachi 1:11! Therefore, Reformed theologians read Old Testament and New Testament together in complimentary symbiosis but not at the expense of the Old Testament, neither in the dispensational elevation nor of the New Testament over the Old. Furthermore, I am a covenant theologian who can talk about baptism in the New Testament through Old Testament circumcision texts and I can talk about circumcision in the Old Testament through New Testament baptism texts. I am a covenant theologian who can speak about New Testament Kingdom and eschatology through Old Testament Kingdom and eschatology texts and vice versa. If Dr. Clark cannot agree with this then I am suspicious that a part of his theology has capitulated to the radical discontinuity of the dispensational paradigms.

Part 3: The Postmillennials Rightly Read and Interpret The Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24:37-39

Later in the same section, Dr. Clark quotes Matthew 24:37-39 and then says, *“The postmillennial hermeneutic typically requires us to read the Old Testament either in isolation from the New or in a way that the New Testament writers do not. In either case, it is not a tenable way of reading the Old Testament. Certainly the Old Testament is replete with promises of a future earthly glory. The question is: What did the New Testament do with those promises and how should we understand them now?”* Much ink has been given to explain the partial preterist view of Matthew 24. Which suggests that the reference to Noah having first-century meaning has always been a legitimate understanding of the Olivet discourse. That said, I do believe that this has a first-century meaning AND also a last-hour meaning. Furthermore, there is a connection between Noah and the first century as well as the last hour. Dr. Clark loves to throw this verse at the Post-Mill guy; however, there are a few important things to notice here that do not help his exegetical case at all (Dr. Clark is a church historian, not an exegete). This passage says nothing about permanent and regular conditions; it simply speaks to the last hour and partially to the first century. Nothing in Matthew 24 would negate a progressive success of the gospel in the time period when Satan is bound. Nothing in this text demands a perpetual, indefinite, and growing state of apostasy between Christ’s first and second comings. Nothing in this text tells us how many will be saved and how many are lost the moment Christ returns. The final judgment of the unbelieving does not say anything about the impossibility of a mass amount of redeemed saints. Christ does not compare the time of Noah with His return numerically but rather situationally and circumstantially. Notice what Jesus says about the correlation to the days of Noah in Matthew 24:38, *“For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one left. Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming.”* The correlation to Noah is not numerical but rather it’s about an unexpected catastrophe. Jesus did not say that just as there were less than ten people left in Noah’s day there will be less than ten left on the last day; He says the judgment will be

catastrophic and sudden and in the midst of life being normal. If you play the numbers game with the Noah reference as the exegetical point you sound ridiculous. The connection to Genesis 6 does not make an exegetical case for why the gospel will not prevail around the globe and gather the nations during the period in which Satan is bound. Dr. Clark reads his pessimism into the text and then demands that we all see something which is not there and then calls us Jewish pre-mills for not seeing what is not there.

Part 4: Pessimistic Amillennials Misunderstand, Misinterpret, and Selectively Read Calvin and the Historic Confessions.

Dr. Clark then cites the Lutherans as his allies by saying, *“Were the Reformation-era Protestants pessimistic? In Article XVII of the Augsburg Confession (1530), the Lutherans confessed, “[The Lutherans] condemn also others who are now spreading certain [Jewish] opinions, that before the resurrection of the dead the godly shall take possession of the kingdom of the world, the ungodly being everywhere suppressed.”* From the Reformed perspective, citing the Lutherans does very little to further his case for the great commission being the great exception and great secret among the nations. The Calvinistic tradition has a very different view of God’s law (meaning we emphasize third use in ways the Lutherans do not) as well as God’s kingdom. It is not wise to cite Lutherans to those who are Westminster Reformed to make a case for the “Reformed” position. In the WLC Question 54 the Divines say that Christ, “subdues their enemies.” Subduing our enemies means that they decrease while we and our cause increase. WLC Question 191 says, “that the kingdom of sin and Satan may be destroyed, the gospel propagated throughout the world, the Jews called, the fullness of the Gentiles brought in, the church furnished with all gospel-officers and ordinances, purged from corruption, countenanced and maintained by the civil magistrate.” The Scottish Reformed position is unequivocally optimistic about the ongoing and increasing success of the gospel in the world (as well as its effects in the civil sphere) and the ongoing incremental dilution of the kingdom of darkness. Notice that Dr. Clark will never quote the Westminster Standards to make a case for why the truly Reformed are the kind of Amillennial that he is. Instead, he quotes Lutherans. The Reformed tradition from Westminster Abbey is not your ally in making a case for Christ being an invisible winner and/or a visible loser and still somehow ruling and reigning in victory. Dr. Clark then quotes the second Helvetic Confession to show that this perspective is not simply valid among Lutherans but also among the Swiss. If you take a close look at church history you will find that the meaning of statements such as these has a very particular purpose. The Reformed wrote these kinds of statements to address the fanatical, heretical Anabaptists who believed that they could either create a Christian utopia in some kind of Christian compound and/or believed that they could create a Christian utopia by plundering a city. Destruction of creation to set up the Kingdom of God was their eschatology; contrary to the chiliasts being targeted by the Swiss, the

Westminster Reformed believed that God's Kingdom renewed creation. The Reformed Postmillennial believes that grace renews creation while the Anabaptist (being addressed by the Swiss) believes that grace destroys creation. The Anabaptist Eschatology was about how a spiritual Kingdom on earth would be established by destroying creation. The Postmillennial Reformed tradition is about as relevant to this (2nd Helvetic) as Antinomianism is to the Calvinistic doctrine of perseverance. Notice the first phrase in Dr. Clark's quote that says, *"We also condemn those who thought that the devil and all the ungodly would at some time be saved, and that there would be an end to punishments. For the Lord has plainly declared."* Did you catch that? Dr. Clark is quoting someone who is rebuking a group of heretics who believe in some kind of universalism. And, intriguingly, he makes a connection between that group and the optimism of the Divines and Post-Mills like myself. Also, notice how the quote from the Second Helvetic Confession says, *"We further condemn [Jewish] dreams that there will be a golden age on earth before the Day of Judgment, and that the pious, having subdued all their godless enemies, will possess all the kingdoms of the earth."* The Swiss are addressing people that have a Jewish view of the Kingdom where the pious will subdue their enemies. They are rebuking people that have a Barabbas-like view of the Kingdom where the Jews take up arms to conquer their enemies (quacked Anabaptists). The Swiss are not talking about the Postmillennial view which speaks to how Christ conquers the nations with the gospel ministerially via the New Jerusalem. To compare the Swiss rebuke of the fanatics who seek to revive a Jewish empire by force to the Postmillennial position is dishonest and frankly absurd. Dr. Clark's usage of this as proof of how the Reformed saw Post-Mills as "earthly" has no relevance to the conversation. Anabaptists' anti-creational Chilianism has nothing to do with the Reformed Post-Mill, pro-creational view of the Kingdom.

But wait, it gets worse. Later Dr. Clark writes, *"What the postmillennialists call 'optimism' we might better call, in the broad sense, Judaizing. That is the point the Lutherans and the Swiss Reformed (and Calvin and others) were making when they denounced this glory-age thinking. For them, it was the transposition of Jewish expectations into the Christian eschatology."* Here Dr. Clark brings Calvin into his version of Amillennialism and also in his denunciation of Postmillennialism. Let's follow Dr. Clark here. Postmillennials believe that the gospel will be increasingly successful and that the power of new life in the people of God will positively (not perfectly nor in some linear uninterrupted sense) affect society. Dr. Clark believes that this is Judaizing and

that Calvin would call us “glory theologians”. Dr. Clark is brilliant but he tends to read himself back into what others write to make a point that they would never make. Let’s read what Calvin has to say on the issue, shall we? Calvin writes that the goal of civil government is, “to cherish and protect the outward worship of God, to defend sound doctrine of piety and the position of the church” (Institutes 4:20-2). He also writes, “Let no man be disturbed that I now commit to civil government the duty of rightly establishing religion.” (Institutes 4.20-3). And lastly, he states, “All I have confessed that no government can be happily established unless piety is the first concern.” (4.20-9). If you think that Calvin is someone who loses his Ecclesiological distinctness and Christological grounding due to these quotes listen to this, “Though godly Kings defend the kingdom of Christ by the sword, still it is done in a different manner from that in which worldly kingdoms are wont to be defended; for the Kingdom of Christ, being spiritual must be founded on the doctrine and power of the Spirit” (*Calvin’s Commentary on John*). Calvin clearly states that the Kingdom of Christ is spiritual and doctrinal and yet he believes that its power and effects will permeate a society nonetheless. A spiritual Kingdom that is heavenly, eschatological and that is felt in the social sphere, is good old-fashioned Reformed Calvinism, not Judaizing. To emphasize the point further, in writing to the King of France Calvin states, “Our doctrine must stand sublime above all the glory of the world, and invincible by all its power, because it is not ours but that of the living God and His anointed, whom the Father has appointed king that he may rule from sea to sea, and from the rivers even to the ends of the earth; and to smite the whole earth with and its strength of iron and brass, its splendor of gold and silver, with the mere rod of his mouth, and break them in pieces like a potter’s vessel; according to the magnificent predictions of the prophets respecting His kingdom (Dan 2:34; Isaiah 11:4; Ps 2:9)” (*Institute of the Christian Religion: Introduction*). Dr. Clark’s referencing Calvin to make a case for the success and effects of the gospel in the spheres of life as a biblical expectation to be likened to some Jewish, glory-age is nonsense! Also, notice how Calvin interprets the Prophets and applies them to society in the same way the present Post-Mills do (and in a way that Dr. Clark says is a Judaistic reading of the Bible).

Calvin believed that the spiritual Kingdom of Christ affecting the surrounding societal spheres was not Judaistic but rather Augustinian. It was Augustine, after all, that told the civil magistrate to use their authority to restrain the madness of the Donatists. Calvin believed that the gospel should comprehensively stand head and shoulders above everything, everywhere,

and that Christ would progressively crush the opposition of everything, everywhere. Calvin believed that Psalm 2 was not spiritualized in the New Testament to mean anything more than that God would save some marginalized, privatized remnant. This shows that Calvin believed that when the Psalmist said nations and kings it simply meant nations and kings. To Calvin, this was not about earthly glory or Jewish empires but about the glory of God's eschatological Kingdom glorifying God in all the earth. Furthermore, Calvin wrote his Institutes about the Christian faith to the King of France so that the king in the society, social, and civil sphere would acknowledge Christ as the establisher and ruler over thrones, rulers, and nations. Clearly, Calvin believed that before Christ returned the gospel would advance in such a way that it would affect societies, nations, and kings and not merely some obscure, marginalized, individuals scattered secretly as they await for Christ to return while all society is autonomously governed merely by pagan common sense and an ever-increasing amount of unbelievers. If you believe that, you do not write theology books with revelational truth to civil figures. Instead you just quote Romans 13 (as Dr. Clark does) to the modern-day Postmillennial follower of Calvin and call him a Premillennial chasing an earthly kingdom (and then claim to be representing Calvin). What Calvin was simply doing what Luke did with Acts (*written to the most excellent Theophilus*). Which was to tell the kings about the Kingdom of God as they kiss the Son soteriologically as well as in their societal domain.

Part 5: Pessimistic Amillennials have an OT remnant theology that continues post pentecost

It also seems that the amount of people Christ saves on the earth is some kind of humanistic glory-age to Dr. Clark. It also seems that the power of regeneration tangibly affecting spheres of life is also some kind of utopic over-realized eschatology. I suspect that when Luke wrote about the economy being radically changed by Paul's preaching in Ephesus it was because Luke had bought into the Jewish glory-age and was given to romanticized views of the Kingdom (Acts 19:18-20). I suppose when the vision of the Son of man in Daniel 7:13-14 says, "I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him..." And the re-statement of the vision of Daniel (post-ascension) in Revelation 5 which speaks about the innumerable amounts of Saints is also nothing more than the inflated presumptuous fancies of the "glory-theologian" with fantasies about large numbers.

Dr. Clark then writes, *"It is properly optimistic to hold, as the amillennialists do, that the sovereign Lord Jesus is saving every single one for whom he became incarnate, for whom he obeyed, for whom he died, for whom he was raised, and for whom he is interceding now at the right hand of the Father."* What Dr. Clark implies by this is that the increase and spread of the gospel and its consequences have no bearing on the glory of His work. However, the issue with this is that Jesus describes the efficacy of His work in the New Covenant with the extent and progress of it in time. In Daniel 2:35 the King's gracious work is spoken of in this way, "But the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth." In Matthew 13:31 the work of the King is said to be like a small seed that becomes the largest tree on the earth where all the birds find their shelter (increasing size is in the passage). Which determines the finished work of Christ two-thousand years ago, both its progress in the believer's life and also its Ecclesiological progress, are inextricably linked elements in the conversation of the work of the King. It seems that Dr. Clark is the one who actually has an Old Testament Jewish view of the New Covenant kingdom of God. Why do I say that? Because in the OT the covenant community was an obscure exception, a mere tiny remnant. Dr. Clark would like the post-Pentecost, New Covenant Kingdom to remain nothing more than an ongoing exception, nothing more than a

tiny remnant with the only difference being a scattered gentile remnant rather than a Palestinian, confined Jewish remnant. However, the post-Pentecost Kingdom is greater in every way than how the Kingdom was in Israel. The 144,000 in Revelation 7 does not imply a limited numerical remnant but rather an innumerable amount of believers. The gospel in the New Testament sense is not presented to us through Scott's version of optimism due to its mere efficacy in the minimal elect. As if the glory of the gospel is in 15 people getting effectually saved in the mass abyss of lostness. The New Testament presents the gospel as glorious in its efficacy for the elect and also in its global extensiveness (Daniel 7; Isaiah 2). The Great Commission speaks of discipleship with regard to the extent and scope of nations, not random privatized anomalies (Matthew 28:16-20). That is the way the work of Christ is presented via Revelation 5 and 7; with both efficacy and extensiveness, with both effectual language and numerical language. A helpful analogy is that of the gospel as it pertains to sanctification. The Christian's salvation has nothing to do with his progress and yet in the Kingdom of God the Lord has bound our progress with our forensically objective rescue. The King fully established His Kingdom two-thousand years ago in the ascension event and yet He has by decree declared that Kingdom to be bound to incremental progress (Matthew 13:33). Postmillennials are not bringing about a Kingdom but simply applying and appropriating that which is already so. Jesus is the ruler of the Kings of the earth and God has already set all things under His feet (Revelation 1:5; Ephesians 1:22). The Postmillennial simply applies and appropriates that which already is and believes that progressive appropriation is not a negation of what already is but simply is. Back to the analogy, a believer who believes that He is grounded in what already is so, and will be progressively appropriating what is so, and will one day in fullness be consummate in what is so, is not "earthly." The way Dr. Clark talks about the appropriating progression of the Kingdom in the world being likened to over-realized Ecclesiology reminds me of the "Side B Christian" claiming that progressive sanctification is over-realized Wesleyan piety. You may say, "Dr. Clark believes in progressive sanctification." Yes, he does. However, Dr. Clark has privatized progress to individuals yet denied it to the corporate Kingdom.

Part 6: Pessimistic Amillennials Monopolize Hope to the Second Coming At the Expense of All That God Does In the Meantime.

Here is how Dr. Clark concludes his article, *“The first comfort of the martyrs has always been that Christ is reigning now and, in his sovereign, mysterious providence, he sometimes sends his children through great suffering. A second comfort, however, which we find richly reflected in the Revelation, is that justice is coming. That is why French Reformed (Huguenot) martyrs sang Psalm 68 on the way to the gallows. “God shall arise and by his might, put all his enemies to flight.” They knew that justice delayed is not justice denied. They knew that our ruling King Jesus will return in glory to consummate the defeat of his enemies that he inaugurated on the cross. They knew that he sits in the heavens and laughs at his enemies, who will be crying on that last day. He will cast them into the pit and heaven will rejoice. Our chiliast and postmillennial friends want an earthly glory age and all the amillennialists are saying is: wait. There will be a new heaven and a new earth. It will not be a literal 1,000-year glory age and it will not precede Christ’s return, but there will be a glory age.”* The issue with this kind of Amillennialism that he presents is that it consolidates the Eschaton in the consummation. Sure, a few elect here and there can get converted and grow in personal piety; but anything more than this is over-realized, Jewish, glory mongering. This is likened to the Christian’s hope being exclusively (not primarily) in His glorified state devoid of any hope in the time between Christ’s first and second comings. Which implies that God’s defeat of His enemies and ours is entirely understood in the consummation. Which suggests that if your eschatology expects any kind of triumph over evil and relief before the return of Christ then you are being presumptuous and have bought into the thousand year glory age. Meaning that unless the reign of Christ leaves you a perpetual marginalized victim then you have bought into an over-realized eschatology. While it is certainly true that the ultimate and final relief and conquest are consummate, it is false that incremental conquest and relief are presumptuous “glory theology.” Below I will provide 16 points that will address this discussion. 1) Psalms 110 speaks about Jesus presently ruling over and in the midst of His enemies. Which is to say that God is putting Christ’s enemies under His footstool in the midst of enemies and opposition (not at His return when there are no enemies). In 1 Corinthians 15:26, The Apostle Paul states that the last enemy that Christ defeats is death, which speaks to how Christ is incrementally subduing His enemies unto the consummation, not simply and only in the consummation. 2), the Church cites Psalm 2

about the kings needing to repent or perish as a present reality. This ultimatum was inaugurated for the kings in the ascension event; it is not merely a statement about the ultimatum of consummation. 3), the seals and bowls and trumpets in Revelation speak of God's present and incremental judgment on the kingdom of darkness. Meaning God's conquering judgments are continuous, not merely consummate.4), in the book of Acts God kills kings that oppose the church multiple times and Luke presents that as particularly connected to the Kingdom advancing. 5), after apostate Israel opposed the church He judged the nation of Israel to bring present relief to the New Israel. Meaning that God judges our enemies, providing relief before the eschaton. 6) In Romans 13 says that the civil office is God's avenger who brings wrath on the evildoer which brings present relief and benefit to the church (as Paul says in verse 4). 8), whenever Christianity spreads and saturates the spheres of society, they are affected and justice increases which brings present relief (Proverbs 11:11). 9), God makes covenantal promises to households up to the second and third generation which brings present relief amid generations of household decadence (Isaiah 59:21). God renews households that bears relation to the length of life and the spiritual quality of life (Ephesians 6:1-4) 10), God plants more (increasingly more) local churches in more places where God's people presently experience the foretaste of the eschaton and the first fruits of its relief (Hebrews 6:1-8; Acts 3:19,20). 11), regeneration and its ethics benefit science, education, care of the vulnerable, and in turn provide present relief in the fall for the elect and the non-elect (the entire story of Joseph). 12), God presently judges and kills false teachers to protect the church and give it present relief from destructive doctrines (Revelation 2:16). 13), God makes Christians holy and wise which prohibits them from inordinate present sufferings related to sin and folly (1 Peter 3:8-12). 14), God, through prayer at times and when He chooses, heals Christians from the effects of the fall in the present (2 Kings 20:1-11). 15), God has the Devil bound and restrains His deceptions which brings relief and the comforts of the gospel in the present (Revelation 20; 2 Thessalonians 2:6). 16), God uses the church to save people in power to presently bring relief and blessing to the church (1 Timothy 2:1-2). I think you get the point. The Christian believes that we can ultimately be hopeful about the relief that God will provide in the eschaton, but nonetheless, God in many ways in His present Kingdom defends the people of God and advances their cause and gives much relief and renewal in the present (not just in the church but in all spheres of life). Christ's Kingdom is comprehensive, not ecclesiastically compartmentalized. His Kingdom is ultimately hopeful and

yet presently powerful. The Christ who looks at His people and merely says that things will be better in the end is a fantasy Jesus; He is definitely not less than that but certainly is more. Scott is Dutch reformed. I would like to remind him what the Heidelberg Catechism Question 51 says, "First, through His Holy Spirit He pours gifts from heaven upon us His members. Second, by His power He defends and preserves us from all enemies." Also, Question 123 says, "Your Kingdom come means: rule us by your word and Spirit in such a way that more and more we submit to you. Preserve and increase your church. Destroy the Devil's work. Destroy every force which revolts against you and every conspiracy against your holy word. Do all this until your kingdom fully comes when you will be all in all." All of this language makes it clear that the Lord is presently, not merely consummately, comforting the people of God with the Kingdom's advance and Babylon's present demise. The Reformed view is that God's Kingdom is advancing AND that the Devil's kingdom is decreasing. This is why John says in 1 John 2:8 that the "darkness is fading away and the true light is already shining."

I will conclude by quoting some more of those so-called "glory age theologians". Iain Murray says in his book *"The Puritan Hope Revealed and the Interpretation of Prophecy,"* "when the Holy Spirit is poured out in a day of power the result is bound to affect whole communities and even nations." James Kirkton says about Scotland, "every parish had a ministry, every village had a school and every family had a Bible." John Owen (a Westminster Divine), another glory, Judaistic, glory age theologian" who reads the Bible like a Rabbi says, "God in His appointed time will bring forth the Kingdom of the Lord Christ unto more glory and power than in the former day, I presume you are persuaded. Whatever will be more, these six things are clearly promised.....3. Multitudes of converts, many persons, yea, nations, Isaiah 60:7, 8; 66:8, 49:18-22, Revelation 7:9.....5. Professed subjection of the nations throughout the whole world unto the Lord Christ, Dan 2:44, 7:26, 27; Isaiah 60:6-9- the Kingdoms become the Kingdom of our Lord and His Christ (Rev 11:15), amongst whom His appearance will be so glorious that David shall be said to reign. 6. A most glorious and dreadful breaking of all that rise in opposition unto Him, Isaiah 60:12- never such desolations, Rev 16:17-19." Alexander Duff, another Jewish glory Scottish theologian says, "we think not of individuals merely; we look to the masses. Spurning the notion of a present days success and a present years wonder, we direct our views not merely to the present, but to future generations."

The Postmillennial Benediction

-Dr. Clark is still one of the best theologians we have in this day.

-Heidelberg does not represent the Reformed position on Kingdom and Eschatology. In my case the Westminster Standards do.

-Dr. Clark does not understand the historic Postmillennial position. Many NAPARC Post-Mills that are men in good standing would agree. When we read articles like this we find Dr. Clark to be not even close to representing our position. His credibility as a historian will suffer if he doesn't make adjustments here.

-Dr. Clark wrongly has Post-Mills like me, the TheoRecons, Anabaptists, and Dispensational-Pre-mills in the same Eschatological/Kingdom soup.

-Dr. Clark needs to stop this ungrounded rhetoric of Post-Mills. Immediately. His ministry will be much better for it.

-The Calvinistic position of Kingdom and Eschatology and that of the Westminster Divines is in many ways not consistent with that of Westminster West.

-If my views on the Kingdom are Jewish then Dr. Clark needs to say that Calvin's and the Divines' are as well.

-Optimistic Amills are fine, the pessimistic ones need to consider moving next to their optimistic Amill brothers before they become irrelevant in our day. The time is up and the clock is ticking for the highly pessimistic Eschatology. We have watched it for about 60 years and it is anemic.

-The Postmillennial position is confessional, biblical, and to be respected by all in the confessional world. You can heartily disagree but show some respect and see its legitimate historic roots.

-The WSC Question 23 says, "Christ as our redeemer executes the offices of a prophet, of a priest, and of a king in his estate of humiliation and exaltation." Dr. Clark talks a lot about the theology of the cross which I can affirm. However, the WSC says that Christ executes the offices of prophet, priest, and King in the state of humiliation AND exaltation. Meaning that there is too much cross and humiliation in Dr. Clark's Eschatology and not enough resurrection and ascension and exaltation in it.

Pastor Aldo Leon

Miami, FL

Pinelands Presbyterian PCA