

MILLENNIALISM IN AMERICA: RECENT STUDIES

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AMERICAN APOCALYPSE: YANKEE PROTESTANTS AND THE CIVIL WAR, 1860-1869. By James H. Moorhead. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1978. Pp. 278.

THE LOGIC OF MILLENNIAL THOUGHT: EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY NEW ENGLAND. By James West Davidson. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1978. Pp. 308.

THE SACRED CAUSE OF LIBERTY: REPUBLICAN THOUGHT AND THE MILLENNIUM IN REVOLUTIONARY NEW ENGLAND. By Nathan O. Hatch. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1978. Pp. 197.

THE WORKS OF JONATHAN EDWARDS 5: APOCALYPTIC WRITINGS. Edited by Stephen J. Stein. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1977. Pp. 501.

The trouble with the present, it has been said, is that the future isn't what it used to be. Comparison of our centennial and bicentennial celebrations tends to substantiate that claim. On July 4, 1876, the American people focused their attention on local patriotic celebrations and on the international Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia, where twenty-five per cent of the American population gathered during the Exposition's six-month lifespan to celebrate the marvelous achievements of one hundred years and to examine inventions and ideas designed for improving life in this "land of the future." On July 4, 1976, the masses of Americans, after having been encouraged to "do your own thing" by the Bicentennial Commission, relaxed on beaches or in backyards, joining other Americans only to watch on TV eighteen tall ships from around the globe sail into New York harbor. Americans flew into the tricentennial on the wings of nostalgia, hedonism, presentism, and pessimism. Having lost what Jacob Bronowski called in 1948 "A Sense of the Future," the American people no longer feel equal to the future, much less envision themselves as the future's fulfilment. "We are not afraid of the future because of a bomb. We are afraid of bombs because we have no faith in the future. We no longer have faith in our ability, as individuals or as nations, to control our own future."¹ Americans are prone neither to believe in the future nor, as Robert Frost contended was more indigenous

¹ Jacob Bronowski, *A Sense of the Future: Essays in Natural Philosophy* (Cambridge: MIT, 1977) 3.

to American nationality, to believe the future in.² The past has become nostalgia, the future both fantasy and nightmare, and the present narcissism.

It is a revealing irony that theologians, historians, sociologists, social psychologists, and anthropologists are beginning to value the importance of the sense of the future to the life of humanity at the same time a general loss of confidence in the future characterizes Western culture. These four books under review, all published by Yale University Press within a year of one another, attest to the growing preoccupation of serious scholars with the subject of the future in general and millennialism (which Ernest Sandeen succinctly defines as "the cosmology of eschatology"³) in particular. Three publications from midcentury gave the subject enormous meaning and momentum: Ernest Lee Tuveson's widely influential *Millennium and Utopia* (1949); Norman Cohn's landmark study of medieval messianic cults *The Pursuit of the Millennium* (1957), now in its third edition; and Frederik Polak's Toynbee-style work *Die Toekomst is verleden Tijd (The Image of the Future)*, which still remains relatively unknown on this side of the Atlantic.⁴ In plover-like fashion these works forecasted what would become in the sixties and seventies a veritable blizzard of scholarly and popular writings in the often stormy field of millennialism.

Fortunately, there are numerous good bibliographical essays to mark the paths traversed and to give directions forward. Hillel Schwartz, whose illuminating bibliographical essay reveals that he has as firm a grasp of millennial scholarship as anyone in the country, contends that in 1969 the study of millennialism entered a new phase with a "second generation" of scholarship.⁵ Stein, Davidson, Hatch, and Moorehead epitomize

² Edward C. Lathem, ed., *Interviews with Robert Frost* (New York: Rinehart and Winston, 1966) 271.

³ Ernest R. Sandeen, "The Baptists and Millenarianism," *Foundations* 13 (1970) 104.

⁴ Ernest Lee Tuveson, *Millennium and Utopia* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1949); Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium: Revolutionary Millenarians and Mystical Anarchists of the Middle Ages* (rev. ed.; New York: Oxford University, 1970); Frederik Lodweijk Polak, *The Image of the Future* (2 vols.; Leiden: Sythoff; New York: Oceana, 1961). In 1973 Polak's book was translated and abridged by Elise Boulding and published in New York by Elsevier Scientific Publishing Company.

⁵ Hillel Schwartz, "The End of the Beginning: Millenarian Studies, 1969-1975," *Religious Studies Review* 2 (July 1976) 1-15. An especially penetrating treatment of "Historians and the Millennium" can be found in Clarke Garrett's *Respectable Folly: Millenarians and the French Revolution in France and England* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1975) 1-15. Garrett critiques what he calls the "Marxist socioeconomic school" and the "Cohn sociopsychological school" (designations I have adopted in the paper), arguing instead that to march to the tune of the millennium was to be in step with the age. Other bibliographical essays include John E. Groh, "The Kingdom of God in the History of Christianity: A Bibliographical Survey," *Church History* 43 (1974) 257-67; Weston LaBarre, "Materials for

this generation, whose edge of scholarship slices deeply into assumptions held by their forebears. All four authors exhibit many common dispositions. They are prone to stress the ambiguity and ambivalence of millennial thought. They are sensitive to the importance of eschatological symbols and apocalyptic rhetoric. They marvel at the endurance, flexibility, and tenacity of the myth of America as the "New Israel" and the arena for the future. All are concerned about grass-roots ideology, which leads them to place a high value on sermons as social documents or popular literature.⁶ Finally, the paranoid and polarizing tendencies in millennialism are confronted without the conclusion that millennialism is the product of mental aberration and psychosocial disorder.

There are still quite a few defenders of the first-generation notion that the serious study of prophecy either found a man crazy or left him so, or, as Walter Rauschenbusch phrased it in a more obfuscating fashion, "eschatology is usually loved in inverse proportion to the square of the mental diameter of those who do the loving."⁷ Bryan Wilson and Michael Barkun have recently harked back to Cohn's psychosocial thesis and stressed the pathological or deviant character of the millennial mind.⁸ Similarly, many recent scholars (e.g., John G. Gager, Guenter Lewy, and especially those involved in tracing millennial traits that transcend historical and cultural contexts through comparative, cross-cultural studies) present sophisticated revisions of the Marxist socioeconomic interpretation and its variant forms of revitalization and deprivation (relative, decremental, acculturative) theories first espoused by Anthony F. C. Wallace, Peter Worsley, Vittorio Lanternari, Eric Hobsbawn, Christopher Hill, Henri Desroches, E. P. Thompson, Wilhelm E. Muehlmann, Maria

a History of Studies of Crisis Cults: A Bibliographical Essay," *Current Anthropology* 12 (1971) 3-44; Vittorio Lanternari, "Nativistic and Socio-religious Movements: A Reconsideration," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 16 (1974) 483-503. For a critical bibliographical analysis of American millennialism, see Ira D. Brown, "Watchers for the Second Coming: The Millennial Tradition in America," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 39 (1952) 441-58, and David E. Smith, "Millenarian Scholarship in America," *American Quarterly* 17 (1965) 535-49.

⁶ The best case yet presented for the value of published sermons as a gauge of social thought is Hatch's "Note on the Printed Sermons of Massachusetts and Connecticut, 1740-1800," in *Sacred Cause of Liberty* 176-82.

⁷ Walter Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (Nashville: Abingdon, n.d.; originally published in 1917) 209.

⁸ Michael Barkun, *Disaster and the Millennium* (New Haven: Yale University, 1975); Bryan R. Wilson, *Magic and the Millennium: A Sociological Study of Religious Movements of Protest among Tribal and Third-World Peoples* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973). Barkun exemplifies in extreme form the folly of this approach in his tautological thesis that the temporary insanity produced by social and environmental disasters begets millennial movements, which he gratuitously distinguishes from other movements by the presence of "real" disasters.

Isaura Pereira de Queiroz, and others.⁹

Increasingly it is being realized by this second generation, however, that millennialism is a natural, rational, and sometimes normative force that can exert formative influence over all strata of society.¹⁰ Even elites are not immune to it, as the eschatological writings of James I, Oliver Cromwell, and Thomas Hobbes attest. Millennialism is not a preserve of peasants and the oppressed, of assorted cranks and crackpots, although its latent energies are sometimes transformed into mass movements of great power and passion. It may also not be a function of social frustration, economic dislocation, or cognitive dissonance. The reductionistic identification of millennial ideology with pathology meant that it was unworthy of serious scrutiny. Gone are the days when the millennialism of someone like Sir Henry Vane the Younger could be dismissed as "a certain hysteria, indicative of some mental unbalance." Instead, entire books are being written on the contribution of millennialism to the thinking of such figures as Isaac Newton and John Milton.¹¹ Davidson is one of the first,

⁹ John G. Gager, *Kingdom and Community: The Social World of Early Christianity* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1975); Guenter Lewy, *Religion and Revolution* (New York: Oxford University, 1972). The concept of "deprivation" is seen as a seminal one by a large number of contributors to Sylvia Thrupp's *Millennial Dreams in Action: Essays in Comparative History* (New York: Schocken, 1970; originally published in 1962). See Wallace, "Revitalization Movements," *American Anthropologist* 58 (1956) 264-81; Worsley, *The Trumpet Shall Sound* (London: MacGibbon and Kee, 1957); Lanternari, *The Religions of the Oppressed: A Study of Modern Messianic Cults* (New York: Knopf, 1963); Hobsbawn, *Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the 19th and 20th Centuries* (reprinted; New York: Norton, 1965); Hill, *Antichrist in Seventeenth-Century England* (London: Oxford University, 1971); Desroches, *The American Shakers: From Neo-Christianity to Presocialism* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 1971); Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (rev. ed.; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968); Muehlmann, *Chiliasmus und Nativismus* (Berlin: Reimer, 1961); Pereira de Queiroz, "Messianic Myths and Movements," *Diogenes*, Spring 1975, 78-99. For the inadequacy of the acculturation hypothesis, see James W. Fernandes, "The Idea and Symbol of the Savior in a Gabon Syncretistic Cult: Basic Factors in the Mythology of Messianism," *International Review of Missions* 53 (1964) 281-89. For a good critique of the reductionism inherent in relative deprivation theories, see Barkun, *Disaster and Millennium* 34-41, and Schwartz, "End of Beginning" 6-7.

¹⁰ The universality of millennial sentiment is emphasized by Garrett, *Respectable Folly* passim; Howard Kaminsky, *A History of the Hussite Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California, 1967); Donald Weinstein, *Savonarola and Florence: Prophecy and Patriotism in the Renaissance* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1970); Yonina Talmon, "Millenarism," *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* (New York: Crowell Collier and Macmillan, 1968) 349-62; John F. C. Harrison, *Quest for the New Moral World: Robert Owen and the Owenites in Britain and America* (New York: Scribner's, 1969); William S. Lamont, *Godly Rule: Politics and Religion, 1603-60* (New York: St. Martin's, 1969) and "Puritanism as History and Historiography: Some Further Thoughts," *Past and Present* 44 (1969) 133-46.

¹¹ Violet A. Rowe, *Sir Henry Vane the Younger* (London: Athlone, 1970) 202-6; Frank E. Manuel, *The Religion of Isaac Newton* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1974). Austin C. Dobbins

however, to systematically restore the theological dimension to millennial phenomena.¹²

Refreshing in its spicy wit and delicious prose, Davidson's study undertakes to refute earlier scholars (of whom he was one¹³) who interpreted millennial beliefs as "Rorschach inkblots" into which people projected anxieties and ambitions, a view which received classic expression in Thomas Paine's comments on the prophetic books of the Bible:

When a priest quotes any of those passages, he unriddles it agreeably to his own views and imposes that explanation upon his congregation as the meaning of the author. The *whore of Babylon* has been the common whore of all the priests, and each has accused the other of keeping the strumpet; so well do they agree in all their explanations.¹⁴

Robert Middlekauff and Sacvan Bercovitch have convincingly shown that millennial speculation was more than an amusing reverie for theologians; rather, it was a serious, sustained investigation which may have even dominated many after-dinner conversations.¹⁵ Davidson mounts an even more dramatic thesis: millennialism constituted a coherent eschatological system with a logic all its own, a logic not found in the chronology of apocalyptic scenarios leading to the eschaton (about which they all disagreed) but a logic inherent in the "afflictive model of progress" wherein the world was getting worse and better at the same time. Like Max Weber, Davidson believes that part of millennialism's power derived from its ability to address the problem of theodicy.¹⁶ The debate over whether the millennial orientation was at base "optimistic" or "pessimistic" is contrived, since the categories are anachronistic. The psychological stance that Davidson discerns at the heart of millennialism can best be

proposes the theory that *Paradise Lost* is essentially a Renaissance commentary on the Book of Revelation in *Milton and the Book of Revelation: The Heavenly Cycle* (University, Alabama: University of Alabama, 1975) 120.

¹² Exceptions to this statement might be H. W. Turner's "A Methodology of Modern African Religious Movements," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 8 (1966) 288; George Shepperson's "Comment on E. M. McClelland's 'The Experiment in Communal Living in Aiyototo,'" *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 9 (1966-67) 30-31; and S. Bercovitch's *Puritan Origins of the American Self* (New Haven: Yale University, 1975).

¹³ James W. Davidson, "Searching for the Millennium: Problems for the 1790's and the 1970's," *New England Quarterly* 45 (1972) 241-61.

¹⁴ Thomas Paine, *The Age of Reason. Being an Investigation of True and Fabulous Theology: Part the Second* (New York: Matland Lyon, 1796) 122.

¹⁵ Robert Middlekauff, *The Mathers: Three Generations of Puritan Intellectuals, 1596-1728* (New York: Oxford University, 1971); Bercovitch, *Puritan Origins of the American Self*.

¹⁶ See Weber, *The Sociology of Religion* (Boston: Beacon, 1963; originally published in 1922) 138-50.

designated "apocalyptic," a *Weltanschauung* that sustains the paradox that the world was getting better because it was getting worse. The caroming between despair and hope, judgment and mercy in this apocalyptic dialectic was present in microcosm in the morphology of conversion, which is ingeniously called "the smallest Awakening."

Aside from its immeasurable felicities of expression, Davidson's text is distinguished by subtleties of thought and invitations of revision, especially C. C. Goen's widely accepted argument that postmillennialism began in America with Jonathan Edwards, Alan Heimert's hotly contested thesis about the generative power of the Great Awakening to excite nationalistic sentiments, and Ernest Lee Tuveson's influential study of the nurturing of progressivism in the providential philosophy of history which emerged in the seventeenth century.¹⁷ The issue of the relationship of millennialism to typological constructs such as postmillennialism and to radical social change will be addressed later in this paper. Davidson's dismantling of Tuveson's work warrants some immediate discussion.

The origins of the progress doctrine reside, Tuveson has maintained in *Millennium and Utopia*, not in Renaissance optimism but in seventeenth-century apocalyptic thought, which transformed Reformation "teleological degeneration" into Enlightenment "teleological progress." Thus millennialism fostered the notion that humanity lives "on the upward slope," as Ernest Gellner puts it, and that history is a "process of generally moving upward by a series of majestic stages, culminating *inevitably* in some great, transforming event which is to solve the dilemmas of society."¹⁸

Millennialism's influence on notions of progress, Davidson convincingly demonstrates, was not so simple. Others before him, like James F. Maclear in his study of Fifth Monarchist ideas in the Old and New World,¹⁹ also discovered after nonmaterialization of millennial hopes a shift in the mood and mentality of eschatological thinking from a simple progressivistic outlook toward a more complex appreciation of the role of affliction and apostasy in history. Yet Davidson's topical approach to his subject allows him to minimize the important fact that dynamic progress nevertheless occurs through the dialectic he has so deftly spelled out. Millennial logic is less a see-saw reaching higher the more it reaches

¹⁷ C. C. Goen, "Jonathan Edwards: A New Departure in Eschatology," *Church History* 27 (1959) 25-40; Alan Heimert, *Religion and the American Mind: From the Great Awakening to the Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1966); Tuveson, *Millennium and Utopia*.

¹⁸ Ernest Gellner, *Thought and Change* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1964) 4; Tuveson, *Millennium and Utopia* 14.

¹⁹ J. F. Maclear, "New England and the Fifth Monarchy: The Quest for the Millennium in Early American Puritanism," *William and Mary Quarterly* 32 (1975) 226.

lower than an "upward slope" that gets harder to climb and more calamitous the closer one gets to the top. The point that millennialists never failed to flail is that there is still progress. Millennialists climbed the uphill slope of history with an upbeat spirit, for the peak of time was nearer with each arduous step. Affliction served to perfect and purge, as Davidson argues, but it also served to punish and to prod. Sacvan Bercovitch has brilliantly analyzed the way in which America, which saw itself as the midwife to the millennium, had its vision vindicated by setbacks and affliction. God chastises most His chosen people, and affliction became a powerful proof of one's millennial self-image, the notion of progress, and the conviction that the end was near.

Davidson insists on the unity and continuity of eighteenth-century eschatological exposition, which he believes was buttressed by the hermeneutic of "synchronisms" developed by Joseph Mede, the man responsible for returning the millennium to the future after Augustine had spiritualized it. Recently Bercovitch has also emphasized continuity over change in eighteenth-century millennialism based not on any "afflictive model of progress" but on the persistence of Puritan "language and vision" concerning America's chosen status and millennial destiny.²⁰ Bercovitch has the better of the argument, particularly when it addresses the seminal position of Edwards. Fortunately, due to the meticulous and artful editing of Stephen Stein, we now can consult for the first time a published text of Edwards' almost forgotten private commentary "Notes on the Apocalypse,"²¹ and the first complete edition since the eighteenth century of *The Humble Attempt* (1748), which Davidson calls "the only significant piece of eschatological reinterpretation to come out of the [Great] Awakening" (150). Neither of these works substantiates Davidson's contention that *The Humble Attempt* constitutes merely a "shift in emphasis" from predecessor treatises, leaving the "afflictive model of progress" intact as the centerpiece of Edwardsean eschatology. Edwards' earlier *Faithful Narrative* (1737), for example, commented that the absence of affliction and catastrophe in the genesis of the Northampton revival made it all the more "surprising" and significant.²² Furthermore, the five Boston clergy who wrote the preface to *Humble Attempt* certainly did not think Edwards' innovations insignificant, spending as they did two of their seven paragraphs attacking his exegesis of the witnesses in Revelation 11, a controversy which soon caught the attention of George Whitefield even though he had not read the book. What made the treatise

²⁰ Sacvan Bercovitch, "The Typology of America's Mission," *American Quarterly* 30 (1978) 135-55.

²¹ Stephen J. Stein, "A Notebook on the Apocalypse by Jonathan Edwards," *William and Mary Quarterly* (Ser. 3) 29 (1972) 623-34.

²² C. C. Goen, ed., *The Works of Jonathan Edwards 4: The Great Awakening* (New Haven: Yale University, 1972) 133.

so problematic was its ardent advocacy of mobilizing human initiative and industry in advancing the kingdom. "Thus Christ teaches us," Edwards wrote, "that it becomes his disciples to seek this above all other things, and make it the first and last in their prayers, and that every petition should be put up in a subordination to the advancement of God's kingdom and glory in the world."²³ Edwards refrained from endorsing the notion, widespread among his ideological descendants, that human abilities alone operating in education, art, science, and government could help to implement the millennium. But he did contend that Christians must not only be "praying for it, but [are] to be seeking of it, in the use of proper means." The "means" he envisioned were chiefly universal and synchronized "concerts of prayer" which would unite and uplift Christians of different theological persuasions for a seven-year period of concentrated activity. What has been called "postmillennialism" began in America prophetically with the creation of a voluntary association.

Since Edwards' appeal was to convince the Church to actively promote the kingdom, he found especially troublesome the standard exegesis of Revelation 11, which held that the last of the witnesses had yet to be slain. How does one motivate the Church to advance the kingdom, Edwards reasoned, if antecedent to the kingdom is the Church's near-total destruction? Edwards saw suicidal prayer among Christians as "a great damp to their hope, courage, and activity," as well as tending "to hinder its [the kingdom's] even being at all."²⁴ Similarly, the projection of the destruction of the Antichrist into the distant future, as Edwards' apocalyptic mentor Moses Lowman had done, served, Edwards believed, to "damp and discourage all earnest prayers for or endeavors after its speedy accomplishment."²⁵ The new ingredient in Edwards' eschatology was not so much a belief that Christians had an important role to play in the inauguration of the kingdom—that notion had been a mainstay of seventeenth-century English millennialism—but the notion that Christian activity must be motivated by the "hope of success," with success defined in terms other than self-destruction.

The attraction of the Book of Revelation, as Davidson astutely points out, was less as a crystal ball designed to predict the future than as a pair of glasses enabling the viewer to comprehend the past and present, thereby giving purpose and direction to human activity. John Calvin did not perceive this potential in the book. Hence he wrote commentaries on all the books of the Bible except Revelation. Jonathan Edwards believed that Revelation could decipher order and meaning out of the historical process in and through which God worked. Hence he wrote a separate

²³ Stein, *Works of Jonathan Edwards* 5, 350.

²⁴ *Ibid.* 378–79.

²⁵ *Ibid.* 398.

commentary on only one biblical book, the Book of Revelation, and appended to it a ledger listing secular events that were invested with sacred meaning when conjoined to prophecy.²⁶

The curious interest in eschatology among sixteenth-, seventeenth-, and eighteenth-century scientists like John Napier, Sir Isaac Newton, William Whitson, William Oughtred, and Joseph Priestly²⁷ is explicable only when it is realized that natural science revealed the workings of God through the arena of nature, while prophecy unveiled the other arena of divine activity found in the historical process. The result of this alliance between scientific learning and prophetic exposition was that Puritan eschatology itself became a pseudoscience. Millennialism was more than ideological scaffolding for Puritan endeavors in science, medicine, education, and agriculture, as Charles Webster has contended, or an indispensable ingredient in creative scientific methodology, as presented by Raymond Ruyer.²⁸ Eschatological study was conducted with the same respect for exactitude, reason, charts, and formulas as were other scientific pursuits. And as an emboldened science moved from description to prescription, so did academic millennialism. Gradually exploratory calculations became authoritative predictions, and millennialism hitched its hopes to the horizon of scientific progress.

Academic millennialism,²⁹ defined as the scientific and scholarly study of biblical prophecy, remained a constant in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries. Sometimes it would generate an alert, activist millennialism, as it did in England and New England in the 1640's and with Edwards in the 1740's. Indeed, J. F. Maclear posits that it was the Puritans who first saw eschatology as less a realm of study than as an agenda for activity, perhaps because the Puritan notion of a gathered church, as Alethea Jay Gilsdorf has documented, was suffused with

²⁶ For a brief survey of attitudes attached to Revelation, see my article "The Revelation of St. John and History," *Christianity Today* 17 (May 11, 1973) 9-11. It is interesting to observe the relative esteem with which Frederick Engels held Revelation in comparison to other biblical books. See *Marx and Engels on Religion* (New York: Schocken, 1964; originally published in 1957) 205-12.

²⁷ Robert G. Clouse, "John Napier and Apocalyptic Thought," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 5 (1974) 105-14; Manuel, *The Religion of Isaac Newton*; for Priestly see Garrett, *Respectable Folly* 126-43. See also A. Rupert Hall, "Science, Technology and Utopia in the Seventeenth Century," in Peter Mathias, ed., *Science and Society, 1600-1900* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University, 1972) 33-53.

²⁸ Charles Webster, *The Great Insaturation: Science, Medicine, and Reform, 1626-60* (London: Duckworth, 1975); Raymond Ruyer, "El método utópico," in Arnheim Neuss et al., *Utopia* (Barcelona: Barral, 1971) 151-56. Webster's book is reviewed by Francis Yates in "Science, Salvation and the Cabala," *New York Review of Books* 23 (May 27, 1976) 27-29.

²⁹ I owe this category to the suggestion of Prof. Perez Zagorin of the University of Rochester.

eschatological impulses.³⁰

In short, what gives unity to colonial eschatology is its investment of space (first social space as a covenanted community, then geographic space as a covenanted nation) with eschatological consequences, and its invocation of human endeavors as divine instrumentalities. Puritans integrated human activity into their providential philosophy of history through the doctrine of "means" and "cooperation." Perry Miller's works have shown clearly how covenant theology worked to fashion a synergism of soteriology. In the salvation process God co-operates with the elect, who become God's instruments for effecting a final reforming of the Reformation, a political and social "utopian" (Alan Simpson³¹) tendency that imbued Puritanism with much of its dynamic character. Thus the distinction between naturalism and supernaturalism, secular and sacred, gradualism and catastrophism, this-worldly and other-worldly was muted in the Puritan millennial mind.³² The added sense of the necessity of human action in the inauguration of the coming kingdom which Puritanism gave to millennialism makes Norman Cohn's, Sylvia Thrupp's, and Bernard S. Capp's insistence on supernatural intervention in the millennial drama mistaken and unfortunate.³³ Uncritical acceptance of the supernatural dimension to millennial agencies has led otherwise astute scholars like Clark Garrett to straight-jacket millennial ideology during the French Revolution until the scope of his findings is needlessly shrunk.³⁴ It has also prompted political scientist Guenter Lewy to deny that Marxism is a "secularized millenarian movement."³⁵ Cogent argu-

³⁰ Maclear, "New England and Fifth Monarchy" 226; see Alethea Jay Bourne Gilsdorf's *The Puritan Apocalypse: New England Eschatology in the Seventeenth Century* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microfilms, 1965; 1965 Yale Ph.D. dissertation).

³¹ Alan Simpson, "Saints in Arms: English Puritanism as Political Utopianism," *Church History* 23 (1954) 119-31.

³² The polarizing of these motifs is presented in a most extreme form by Bryan Wilson, "Millenarianism in Comparative Perspective," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 6 (1963-4) 91-114, who has been subsequently criticized by, among others, Frances Hill, "Millenarian Machines in South Vietnam," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 13 (1971) 326, n. 7.

³³ For Cohn and Thrupp, see Thrupp, *Millennial Dreams in Action* 12, 31. Capp's attempt to distinguish millennialism from utopianism via supernaturalism can be found in his review of William M. Lamont's book *Godly Rule: Politics and Religion 1603-1660* (London: Macmillan, 1969) in *Past and Present* 52 (1971) 13.

³⁴ See my review of Garrett's book in *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 7 (1976) 338-39. Conrad L. Donakowski's sensitivity to the millennial images and sentiment abounding in popular music is a needed corrective to Garrett's narrow perception of the role of millennialism in the French Revolution. See *A Muse for the Masses: Ritual and Music in an Age of Democratic Revolution, 1770-1870* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1977) 37-75.

³⁵ Lewy, *Religion and Revolution* 237. The communist ideal, as expressed in Marxism, early Bolshevism, and radical Maoism, is an image of "Millennial Man," who is rewarded daily according to need, conceptualizes Charles J. Erasmus, *In Search of the Common*

ments can be marshaled for not seeing Marxism in millennial or utopian terms, as Alfredo Fierro has done,³⁶ but not on the basis of Marxism's high estimation of the value of human action.

As only a few scholars like Yonina Talmon and Hillel Schwartz have recognized,³⁷ millennial musings involve myths of space and time that need further study, especially since such myths help to make the widely overlooked but crucial distinction between millennialism (wherein space is immanent somewhere and time is *kairos*, of imminent historical impingement) from utopianism (wherein space is anywhere or nowhere and time is *chronos* if not inconsequential). Bernard Capp, Tuveson, and Bercovitch are attentive to this need for a distinction, although Capp's use of supernaturalism and Tuveson's suggestion of the Edenic myth as elements of differentiation are inadequate. Bercovitch, in his analysis of why the myth of the southern colonies was utopian while the Puritan myth millennial, isolates American millennialism from European utopian strands of thought in that "the location is not anywhere (or nowhere) but America; the society fulfills the movement of history, rather than some philosophical scheme, and beneath the technological jargon, the rhetoric is predominantly biblical."³⁸

Given the stubborn opacity of the subject, exemplified in the difficulty of separating millennialism from utopianism, it is understandable that an abundance of typologies and neologisms adorns the pages of millennial scholarship. Riberio has argued, for example, that millennial movements must be interpreted in distinction from messianic movements and nativist movements. Eric Hobsbawn has divided Spanish and Italian millennial movements according to function (revolutionary, reformist, and conservative), Moltmann according to mood (apocalyptic eschatology versus messianic eschatology), and many others by the role of prophets or redemptive agencies involved.

Most often, however, millennialism has been subtyped according to its goals and means. Ernest Lee Tuveson and Bryan Wilson in particular have insisted that millennialism be differentiated in part by the nature of the vision upheld: romantic primitivists, who would achieve progress through regress and move ahead into the kingdom by "getting back to God" and some Adamic or apostolic order, must be held apart from the

Good: Utopian Experiments Past and Future (New York: Free Press, 1977) 113-231. In contrast, "Capitalist Man" is rewarded according to capital and work incentives, and "Socialist Man" receives rewards based only on work.

³⁶ Alfredo Fierro, *The Militant Gospel* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1977, originally published 1975) 269-71.

³⁷ Talmon, "Millenarianism" 352-53; Schwartz, "End of Beginning" 6.

³⁸ Capp, "Review Article" 13; Tuveson, "The Power of Believing," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 5 (1962-63) 466-77; Bercovitch, *Puritan Origins of American Self* 137-39, 146.

revolutionary progressivists, whose millennial vision was innovatory rather than restorative.³⁹ Yet whether the *Endzeit* was conceived of as *Urzeit* (as in cargo cults, Ghost Dance religion, Rastafarianism, and early American Campbellism⁴⁰) or as the construction of a new order (as in "civil millennialism"), it seems to matter little, because the focus was less on the contours of the kingdom, as Davidson and Robert K. Whalen point out,⁴¹ than on the redemptive and liberating promise of the millennium itself and the events leading up to it, which were listed by William Cogswell in 1836 according to benevolence societies in ascending order of importance and proximity to the millennium:

Bible Societies
 Tract Societies
 Foreign Missionary Societies
 Jews Societies
 Home Missionary Societies
 Education Societies
 Sabbath School Societies
 Temperance Societies
 Anti-Slavery Societies
 Seamen's Friend Societies
 Prison Discipline Societies
 Peace Societies
 Charitable Societies
 Benevolent Agencies
 Qualifications of Agents
 Revivals of Religion
 Millennium⁴²

The stock-in-trade of interpreters (especially American) of millennialism has been the typology of "pre" vs. "post," a distinction which continues to inform much of contemporary scholarship.⁴³ These volumes

³⁹ Tuveson, "Power of Believing" 466-67; Bryan Wilson, "Millennialism in Comparative Perspective" 99.

⁴⁰ For Alexander Campbell's millennial migration from restitutionism to progressivism, see Richard T. Hughes, "The Role of Theology in the Nineteenth-Century Division of Disciples of Christ," in Edwin S. Gaustad, comp., *American Religion: 1974* (Tallahassee: American Academy of Religion, 1974) 56-77.

⁴¹ Davidson, *Logic of Millennial Thought* 216; Robert Kiernan Whalen, "Millenarianism and Millennialism in America: 1790-1880" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, State University College of New York at Stony Brook, 1971) 131.

⁴² Cogswell, *The Christian Philanthropist; or Harbinger of the Millennium* (Boston: Perkins and Marvin, 1839) "Appendix" xii.

⁴³ See, e.g., Ronald G. Walters, *American Reformers, 1815-1860* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978). A useful guide to the four standard groupings of millennial interpretations (historic premillennialism, dispensational premillennialism, postmillennialism, and amillennialism) is Robert G. Clouse, ed., *The Meaning of the Millennium: Four Views* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1977).

voice a common dissatisfaction with the logical, mechanistic, and schematic dichotomization of eschatological thought into postmillennialism and premillennialism (or, in terminology which other scholars prefer, "millennialism" and "millenarianism"), categories which, as Stein observes, are "largely inappropriate for seventeenth- and eighteenth-century apocalyptic thought because they imply too rigid a set of opposing assumptions."⁴⁴ Scholars have been of two minds about the psychologies involved in these two positions. Theory-mongering scholars, attracted to millennialism because of its great conceptual fertility in cross-cultural analysis of the nature of social change, have argued that premillennialism versus postmillennialism translates into revolutionary-versus-reformist agendas for social change.⁴⁵ American historians, on the other hand, who have been preoccupied with studying nineteenth-century postmillennialism and its American premier in the writings of Jonathan Edwards, have made uninformed generalizations (some of a formulaic if not predictive character) about premillennialism and its association with quietism, pessimism, and catastrophism as opposed to the optimism, activism, and progressivism inherent in the post outlook.⁴⁶ A resurgence of attention to premillennial ideology (which was awakened by the French Revolution) by such adept scholars as Ernest Sandeen, Jonathan Butler, George Marsden, and others has demonstrated the weakness in this tidy typology.⁴⁷ The studies of colonial eschatology under review reinforce this retreat, Davidson even reducing Edwards' status to "only one in a steady line of those who believed in gradualism." The fact that America's foremost exemplar of premillennialism was not technically a full-fledged premillennialist (William Miller believed that the world would end after

⁴⁴ Stein, *Works of Jonathan Edwards* 5, 7, n. 6.

⁴⁵ George Shepperson, "The Comparative Study of Millenarian Movements," in Thrupp, *Millennial Dreams in Action* 44-54.

⁴⁶ Those who have made immense contributions to the development of our understanding of millennialism in its "post" expressions include C. C. Goen, Stow Persons, Alan Heimert, Ernest Tuveson, and Jean B. Quandt, "Religion and Social Thought: The Secularization of Post-Millennialism," *American Quarterly* 25 (1973) 390-409.

⁴⁷ Ernest Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism, 1800-1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1970); Jonathan M. Butler, "Adventism and the American Experience," in Edwin S. Gaustad, ed., *The Rise of Adventism: Religion and Society in Mid-Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974); George M. Marsden, *The Evangelical Mind and the New School Presbyterian Experience: A Case Study of Thought and Theology in Nineteenth-Century America* (New Haven: Yale University, 1970); Paul Clifford Wilt, "Premillennialism in America, 1865-1918, with Special Reference to Attitudes toward Social Reform" (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1976). Robert Kiernan Whalen has made an effort to determine the theological and social composition of nineteenth-century premillennialists in "Millenarianism and Millennialism in America: 1790-1800."

the Second Coming), that pre and post orientations were both present in the Populist and Progressive movements,⁴⁶ and that premillennialism in seventeenth-century England (e.g., Fifth Monarchists) and in other cultures has been socially progressive and even revolutionary should have alerted historians long before now to the need for models of more sophistication and nuance.

None emerge from these books, although they do provide some fixed points of reference for future explorations. The fundamental force that drives millennialism is the belief in a coming divine presence which will be imminent and immanent. Whether one's hopes are attached to an imminent personal return of Jesus Christ to earth or to the imminent diffusion of the principles of Christianity throughout the earth, both notions nourish the expectation of an advent, a second coming, an immediate series of events that prompt activist reflexes. Degrees of human activism can be seen as partial functions of the degree of imminence one perceives, provided of course that the words "social and political" are not always silently inserted before the word "activism" as they so often are. Yet-to-be-explored socioeconomic, political, cultural, and theological dynamics are at work to channel some human endeavors born of eschatological hopes into the social and political arena (Anabaptists, Taborites, Fifth Monarchists), while others (first-generation New England Puritans, Jehovah's Witnesses, Seventh-Day Adventists, Christadelphians) remained busy in solely religious spheres like conversion and missionary enterprises, such as John Eliot's millennial project of converting the Indians. But if a heightened sensibility of imminence is a major agent that transforms millennial myths into millennial movements, ample evidence demonstrates that a movement cannot sustain nonmaterialization for extended periods (though the problem is more acute when the Parousia precedes the millennium) without its ideology undergoing structural pressures for changes that enhance the emphasis on apocalyptic elements like judgment and redefine the millennial moment as proximate, not penultimate, and the present as "the latter days" rather than "the last of the latter days." This trend can be viewed among second-generation American Puritans and in the aftermath of the Great Awakening, the Civil War, and the First World War.

In brief, there has been little conceptual consensus about the constitutive components of millennialism, breeding an infestious definitional imprecision that must be corrected before any major strides can be taken in interdisciplinary understanding and intelligible analysis. When, as we are apt to find, "apocalypticism" is used as a synonym for "prophecy,"

⁴⁶ See Peter H. Argensinger, "Pentecostal Politics in Kansas: Religion, the Farmer's Alliance, and the Gospel of Populism," *Kansas Quarterly* 1 (1969) 23-35.

"chiliasm" is confused with "millennialism,"⁴⁹ "messianism" is equated with "nativism," and the drive to build a "better world" is interpreted as the drive to build a "perfect world," it is time to consult a dictionary. Historians need to display the same care in their use of words as Lord Clarendon embodied in his refusal to tag his political opponents with the epithet "Antichrist" because the meaning of the word was being stretched beyond repair by its casual use as a generic personification of anything that anyone deemed opposed to the teachings of Christ.⁵⁰ Definitional integrity is all the more pressing since the concept of millennialism is now being summoned to describe movements and ideas which lie outside the parameters of the Judeo-Christian (and even Islamic) traditions and which have nothing to do with a thousand-year dispensation.⁵¹ Indeed, the state of millennial scholarship is such that millennialism is almost a primordial urge of humanity. Such an inflation of millennialism's conceptual currency leads to an inevitable devaluation of its buying power in the marketplace of ideas. When scholars, on the prowl for millennialism, discover its scent almost everywhere, the rigor of analysis is lost and the promise of illumination imperiled. Like the grand concepts of "modernization" and "secularism," millennialism has served so many masters that benefit from its continued employment is sometimes threatened. Scholars in the field need to clean up their vocabulary and define more carefully the set of beliefs and behavior which comprise the millennial phenomenon.

These studies also break new paths in their exploration of the conservative forces unleashed by millennial platforms. Just as theologians like Helmut Gollwitzer, Johannes Baptist Metz, Edward Schillebeeckx, and Jürgen Moltmann (for whom theology virtually collapses into eschatology)⁵² so

⁴⁹ H. C. Greisman deserves credit for his care in keeping these two separate in "Marketing the Millennium: Ideology, Mass Culture, and Industrial Society," *Politics and Society* 4 (1974) 514.

⁵⁰ B. H. G. Wormald, *Clarendon: Politics, History, and Religion* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University, 1951) 167.

⁵¹ See Manuel Sarkisyanz, "Messianic Folk-Buddhism as Ideology of Peasant Folks in 19th Century and Early 20th Century Burma," *Review of Religious Research* 10 (Fall 1968) 32-38; Kitsiri Melagoda, "Millennialism in Relation to Buddhism," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 12 (1970) 424-41; Frances R. Hill, "Millenarian Machines in South Vietnam," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 13 (1971) 325-50.

⁵² See Helmut Gollwitzer, "Die Revolution des Reiches Gottes und die Gesellschaft," and Jürgen Moltmann, "Gott in der Revolution," in Ernst Feil and Rudolph Weth, ed., *Diskussion zur "Theologie der Revolution"* (Mainz and Munich: Kaiser and Matthias Grünewald, 1969); Johannes B. Metz, "The Church's Social Function in the Light of a 'Political Theology,'" and Edward Schillebeeckx, "The Magisterium and the World of Politics," in Metz, ed., *Faith and the World of Politics* (Concilium 36; New York: Paulist, 1968) 2-39.

historians have concentrated on the great power possessed by millennialism to stimulate and legitimate revolutionary, nationalist, and reformist activity.⁵³ Some have exhibited almost as much of a cabalistic bent in their search for a millennial equation for revolution as academic millennialists demonstrated in their probings of Scripture and "signs" for a formula which would reveal the date of the Parousia.

In an earthly sense, of course, millennialism is antiauthoritative. The advent of the highest authority is blessed and beckoned. Thus millennialism is often the study of change, instability, social protest, subversion, political expression, and radical resistance, as in the case of the Zealots, Bohemian Taborites, Thomas Muntzer, radical Anabaptists, Fifth Monarchists, the Eight Trigrams and Taipings revolution in nineteenth-century China, Sudanese Mahdia, Melanesian cargo cults, and African messianisms. Indeed, Ernst Block and others have been so struck by this overwhelming evidence of a linkage between millennialism and revolution that they have theorized that millennialism served as an ideological ancestor of the revolutionary tradition in the modern West. The envisioning of the millennium's onset in terms "not of graves burst open but of institutions broke down" (Mark Schorer's picturesque phrase⁵⁴) helped to sire Western revolutionary traditions.

Yet millennial ideology is resilient in its occurrence and multivalent in its operations, as Paul Christianson points out in his study of the apocalyptic tradition in seventeenth-century England, using Thomas Kuhn's paradigm theory.⁵⁵ Millennialism is quite capable of releasing a range of responses which more and more are seen to include stances toward society that are conservative, *status-quo* oriented, and oppressive. Recent studies of seventeenth-century English Latitudinarians (Margaret C. Jacob), eighteenth-century American Federalists (Christopher M. Beam), and nineteenth-century American premillennialists (Ernest R. Sandeen and Robert K. Whalen) reveal the employment of millennial thinking by those committed to extreme social, political, and economic stability, conditions which were viewed as a prerequisite to prophetic fulfilment and, in the latter two cases, for the completion of America's millennial assignment.⁵⁶ Davidson adds his name to the list of scholars who retreat

⁵³ Representative studies from the American scene include Stephen J. Stein, "An Apocalyptic Rationale for the American Revolution," *Early American Literature* 9 (1975) 211-25; Heimert, *Religion and the American Mind*; and Timothy Smith, *Revivalism and Social Reform: American Protestantism in the Age of the Civil War* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1957).

⁵⁴ As quoted in Melvin J. Lasky, *Utopia and Revolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1976) 419.

⁵⁵ Paul Christianson, *Reformers and Babylon: English Apocalyptic Visions from the Reformation to the Eve of the Civil War* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1978) 247-48.

⁵⁶ Margaret C. Jacob, "Millenarianism and Science in the Late Seventeenth Century,"

from seeing millennialism as a way station on the route to modernization and revolution, or what Melvin J. Lasky terms "the divine tryout."⁵⁷ The primary social function of millennialism in the eighteenth century, Davidson concludes, was twofold. First, it offered an ideological filter for looking at evil, thereby affording people unnerved by instability and adversity a comforting theodicy which promised ultimate victory and promoted steadfast spirits. Second, it served as a "grammar" for "translating" Revolutionary ideology into a Puritan vocabulary of great emotive and symbolic power capable of sharpening disputes and strengthening allegiances. Religion in general and millennialism in particular had no formative influence on the coming of the American Revolution, although the Revolution did confirm the centrality of the "afflictive model of progress" to millennial thought.

Assessment of the interplay between the American Revolution and millennialism takes a giant stride forward with Hatch's book *The Sacred Cause of Liberty*. Hatch joins Davidson in emphasizing the stunning, visual imagery of the millennial vocabulary, wherein enemies were as fearful as William Blake's horrid monsters or Albrecht Dürer's ten woodcuts on the Apocalypse and the future was a plausible vista of serene "sound-color" which Olivier Messiaen has so masterfully captured in his tone poem "Quartet for the End of Time." But even more than that, Hatch realizes that it is naive to think that the millennial vocabulary which derived from Puritan eschatology could be adopted as the grammar for revolution without a corresponding altering of attitudes and perceptions of the revolution itself. By shifting our focus away from the Great Awakening and toward the French and Indian Wars, Hatch has shown how political and military instruments were endowed with millennial significance until the "sacred cause of liberty" replaced conversion as the primary engine of eschatological evangelism. *Heilsgeschichte* was now acted out on the political stage, as English Whiggery donned the garb of Puritan millennialism in its battle against the Antichrist of tyranny. The investiture of radical republicanism with millennial rhetoric helps to explain the strange anomaly of clerical revolutionaries becoming law-and-order Federalists after the autocratic Antichrist had been defeated. The conservative Federalism of the 1790's emerged naturally from the principles inherent in "civil millennialism."

Hatch's thesis, forceful and provocative as it is, would have been immeasurably enriched by some mention of the place of the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights in the conflation of civil and religious liberty. Even more serious is his contention that the eighteenth-century transferral of the symbol of Antichrist from pope to

Journal of the History of Ideas 38 (1976) 335-41; Christopher M. Beam, "Millennialism and American Nationalism, 1740-1800," *Journal of Presbyterian History* 54 (1978) 182-99.

⁵⁷ Lasky, *Utopia and Revolution* 419-22.

tyranny marked "the most innovative theology of the future" and "the first substantially new eschatology" since the Reformation.⁵⁸ Even a glance at Christopher Hill's *Antichrist in Seventeenth-Century England* would have convinced him otherwise.⁵⁹ Nevertheless, Hatch is correct in perceiving that the conjoining of oppression to the Antichristian myth was freighted with apocalyptic baggage (originally packed by John Foxe and others) which did then and still does lead Americans to universalize their history until, in Moltmann's words, they "transform every hope into a *program*, every opinion into a *message*, every task into a *mission*, every struggle for the good into a *crusade*, and every new experience into *resurrection*."⁶⁰

Unfortunately, both Hatch's and Davidson's analysis breaks down at precisely the same point. Neither appears well grounded in the history of Calvinism.⁶¹ They particularly need to review the studies on Calvinist political thought by Winthrop S. Hudson, Leo F. Solt, Robert Kingdon, and Michael Walzer, to name but a few, which have discovered in Calvinism a seedbed for ideals of freedom and the right of revolution. Without the perspective gleaned from these scholars, Davidson is able to mistakenly attribute an "apolitical" status to eighteenth-century millennialism, in which "any number of different social or political orders would work well in a regenerate world" (230), thereby underestimating the impact of millennialism as both a goad and a goal on the American Revolution. On the other hand, Hatch's contention that the union of millennialism and republicanism which he christens "civil millennialism"⁶² helps to explain how America became "a nation with the soul of a church" overstates the contribution of millennialism to the American Revolution. The observation by Alexis de Tocqueville quoted by Hatch that "The Americans combine the notion of Christianity and of liberty so intimately in their minds that it is impossible to make them conceive the one without the other" is as explicable within the context of Calvinist political theory as it is within the category of "civil millennialism."

James Moorhead's study of the relationship between millennial ideology and political behavior during the American Civil War contributes

⁵⁸ Hatch, *Sacred Cause of Liberty* 16.

⁵⁹ Christopher Hill, *Antichrist in Seventeenth-Century England* (London: Oxford University, 1971). For the role of the Antichrist in Puritan religion, see Maclear, "New England Fifth Monarchy."

⁶⁰ Jürgen Moltmann, "The American Dream," trans. by M. Douglas Meeks, *Commonweal* 104 (August 5, 1977) 492.

⁶¹ See Robert T. Handy's review of Hatch's book entitled "Final Freedoms," in *Christian Century* 95 (July 19-26, 1978) 714.

⁶² In her study of the origins of civil religion in the Revolutionary period, Catherine L. Albanese's category of "natural millennialism" has many affinities with Hatch's "civil millennialism"; see *Sons of the Fathers: The Civil Religion of the American Revolution* (Philadelphia: Temple University, 1976) 109, 111.

greatly to our understanding of the cruelty latent in millennial thought through its denial of the ubiquity and pertinacity of evil. Sensitive to the encouragement by millennialism of a naive social theory among northern Protestants, Moorhead describes the wait-and-see attitude toward relief from social and political evils like slavery spawned by a facile reliance on historical process rather than human power.⁶³ Even many who felt it necessary to aid the momentum of millennial impulses in obliterating the stain of slavery from the American fabric supported colonizationist schemes which blacks denounced.⁶⁴ By dutifully baptizing American policies with the waters of divine sanction (a phenomenon Moorhead calls "culture Protestantism") and by raising the expectations and self-image of Americans to such heady heights, millennialism helped to facilitate the social withdrawal of American Protestants in the Gilded Age. Historians have yet to study other retrogressive aspects of millennialism, such as its use in the justification of the looting and polluting of the land, the conquest of nature, slavery, and even genocide (as in the case of native Americans and Jews in the "Third Reich," attitudes towards both of whom were shaped by Joachite theology).

The manner in which a millennial role was progressively attributed to the Puritan gathered church,⁶⁵ to New England as the land of promise, and ultimately to New England as the Promised Land, to American Protestantism, and finally to the American nation, which assumed the role of a church for Americans itself, is a story without an author. An outline is traceable from studies already published. Joseph Mede speculated that the New World was the home of God and Magog and the headquarters for hell. Increase Mather, while believing that New England might aid in Christ's return, nevertheless agreed with Mede that the New World would be burned at the Second Coming. Cotton Mather, one of the first to impute a millennial destiny to New England, harbored the hope that America would somehow be a part of the New Jerusalem. Similarly, Samuel Sewall attacked Mede's attribution of evil to America, and made the wilderness setting a sign of destiny, not damnation. It was Jonathan Edwards, although somewhat embarrassed later by his exuber-

⁶³ Lois W. Banner makes a similar point in her "Religious Benevolence as Social Control: A Critique of an Interpretation," *Journal of American History* 60 (1973) 23-41.

⁶⁴ The interfacing of colonizationism and millennialism is explored in my book *Black Images of America, 1784-1870* (New York: Norton, 1976) 35-68, and in Fred J. Hood, "The American Reformed Tradition in African Colonization and Missions," *Journal of Church and State* 19 (1977) 539-55. Millennialism might also provide the basis for a defense of slavery, as Charles C. Bishop shows in "The Pro-Slavery Argument Reconsidered: James Henry Thornwell, Millennial Abolitionist," *South Carolina Historical Magazine* 73 (1972) 18-26.

⁶⁵ This is the argument of Alethea Joy Bourne Gilsdorf's *The Puritan Apocalypse*, wherein she contends that strict church admissions policies must be viewed in an apocalyptic context, as Puritans struggled to turn a church into a kingdom.

ance, who draped America in the millennial mantle: "And if we may suppose that this glorious work of God shall begin in any part of America, I think if we consider the circumstances of the settlement of New England, it must needs appear the most likely of all American colonies, to be the place whence this work shall principally take its rise."⁶⁶

A little over a century after the war with France had helped to politicize and nationalize the millennial vision, Bishop Matthew Simpson declared in his "War Message" before Abraham Lincoln (1864) that "if the world is to be raised to its proper place, I would say it with all reverence, God cannot do without America."⁶⁷ The kingdom of God in America became the American kingdom of God, Americanization stood as a synonym for millennialization, and the course of American history assumed the character of a millennial movement. James W. Moorhead has selected as his window into the decade of the 1860's the self-image of America as a "Redeemer Nation," the subject of excellent interpretive essays on American religion by Ernest L. Tuveson, Winthrop S. Hudson, Martin E. Marty, Sidney Ahlstrom, Robert Handy, and Conrad Cherry. At times Moorhead's analysis can be brilliant. His discussion of the eschatological dispute in the ante-bellum period over what part of America was sacred—its institution or its peoples—is penetrating and suggestive. He probes to unexplored extents the internal logic of America's messianic complex, which made the Civil War an irrepressible "holy war." His analysis of how the impeachment of Andrew Johnson derived from premises about America's millennial mentality is as novel as it is persuasive. But for great portions of this book Moorhead loses sight of his millennial theme,⁶⁸ merely tacking on as an afterthought how his analysis relates to America's conception of itself as either messianic or diabolic, worth everything or nothing. What the author intended to be "both more and less than a survey of millennialism" turns out to be more a general survey of the subtitle "Yankee Protestants and the Civil War, 1860-1869" and less a study of "American Apocalypse." Moorhead has not written a systematic treatment of millennialism's impact on "The Ennobling War," as Tuveson terms it in the last chapter of his book, but he has advanced the best interpretation we have to date of northern Protestant social and political attitudes during the decade of the 1860's. Historians must still wait for someone to complete what Timothy Smith and Ernest Lee Tuveson began in the last chapters of their two most famous books, the story of

⁶⁶ *Some Thoughts concerning the Revival of Religion in New England* (1742), as quoted in Goen, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* 4, 358.

⁶⁷ Quoted in Moorhead, *American Apocalypse* 145.

⁶⁸ A similar problem plagues Elise Boulding's chapter on "Millennialism and New-Old Roles for Women in the Middle Ages: A European Story, A.D. 1000 to 1450," in *The Underside of History: A View of Women through Time* (Boulder, Col.: Westview, 1976) 415-519.

millennialism's impact on the Civil War.⁶⁹

Much of what needs to be said concerning American millennialism has yet to be written, especially the role of millennialism in giving American Christianity an outward thrust. While scholars like Mircea Eliade and John Leddy Phelan have brilliantly scrutinized eschatological awareness as it interfaced with the age of exploration and discovery,⁷⁰ scholars have not given the same level of sophisticated analysis to millennialism as a force in westward expansion,⁷¹ in prodding efforts toward evangelical unity and ecumenical co-operation,⁷² in constructing the voluntaristic machinery for the benevolence empire in the nineteenth century (something which has been widely recognized but not systematically studied), in fostering missionary activity, in justifying educational reforms from infant schools to manual-labor colleges, and in investing America's wars with transcendent imperatives which derived from their assumed eschatological significance. Familiar theses like Timothy Smith's argument that perfectionism plus revivalism when multiplied by millennialism equals social reform need to be tested by careful examinations of non-holiness groups. Unclear subjects such as the effect of millennialism on ecclesiology and hymnology need research, especially if the popular nineteenth-century hymn writer Lowell Mason is correct in his observation that postmillennialism gave to music "an entirely new spirit."⁷³

Millennialism is also an important topic for those scholars engaged in writing history from the underside. First, the identity of American Indians was partially shaped by twin forces engendered by millennialist ideology, the squeeze of conquest on one side and the pressure for conversion on the other. Second, no one has studied the symbiotic relationship between millennialism and the women's movement in the nineteenth century. Millennial underpinnings infused the women's crusade until women architects were made the only fit builders of the kingdom, since the millennial age was envisioned as a feminine age wherein feminine virtues like those enshrined in the Declaration of Independence would reign. Third, the manner in which millennial ideology fired faith and forged it to works in the black experience, and not just among insurrectionists like Nat Turner, has not been explored. Donald G. Mathews has observed

⁶⁹ Smith, *Revivalism and Social Reform* 225-37; Tuveson, *Redeemer Nation* 187-214.

⁷⁰ Mircea Eliade, "Paradise and Utopia: Mythical Geography and Eschatology," in Frank E. Manuel, ed., *Utopias and Utopian Thought* (Boston: Beacon, 1967) 260-80; and John Leddy Phelan, *The Millennial Kingdom of the Franciscans in the New World* (2nd ed.; Berkeley: University of California, 1970).

⁷¹ A preliminary study of this theme is Klaus J. Hanson's "The Millennium, the West, and Race in the Antebellum Mind," *Western Historical Quarterly* 3 (1972) 371-90.

⁷² See Hughes, "The Role of Theology" 60-62.

⁷³ Quoted in Barbara Cross, ed., *The Autobiography of Lyman Beecher* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1961) 112.

that black religion is primarily premillennial, which is not surprising considering the importance to black theology of a day of judgment in the apocalyptic drama.⁷⁴ But the evidence is impressive that black eschatology early overflowed the quietistic bounds of a heavenly hereafter. Indeed, the prevalence of apocalyptic overtones so struck Thomas Wentworth Higginson that he concluded that the Bible of American blacks consisted mainly of the Books of Moses and the Revelation of St. John.⁷⁵ Mathews has read the sources well with his claim that "it is the Apocalypse which is missing from most evaluations of black Christianity."⁷⁶ Finally, if we are to understand the way in which millennial tentacles reached out to take hold of such popular movements as nativism, Protestant Zionism, phrenology, and spiritualism (the latter particularly thrived under millennialism, because seances were seen as earnest of the eschaton), we must first work from critical studies of millennialist theologies as they emerged in denominational and social groupings.⁷⁷

The yield from millennial scholarship has been great, and its prospects are even more promising. It has promoted cross-cultural, comparative research, encouraged conversations between social scientists, historians, theologians, and anthropologists, and necessitated improvisation and improvement of social theories. Through its lens one is able to see clearly the social consequences of religious ideology, and the dissemination of theology among folk audiences and mass movements.⁷⁸ These are not bad dividends from a subject that is mentioned only once in the Bible (Rev 21:1-15), but has become, even more than baseball, America's favorite pastime: watching, waiting, and working for the millennium.⁷⁹

⁷⁴ Mathews, *Religion in the Old South* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1977) 223-25.

⁷⁵ Higginson, "Negro Spirituals," *Atlantic Monthly* 19 (1867) 685-94.

⁷⁶ Mathews, *Religion in the Old South* 231.

⁷⁷ See, e.g., Joseph F. Zygun's "Prophetic Failure and Chiliaistic Identity: The Case of Jehovah's Witnesses," *American Journal of Sociology* 75 (1970) 926-48.

⁷⁸ A path-breaking exercise in delineating the relationship between prophecy and popular religion is Deborah M. Valenge's analysis of chapbooks, "Prophecy and Popular Literature in Eighteenth-Century England," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 29 (1978) 75-92.

⁷⁹ M. S. Berkowitz notes that "the apocalypse" has been called the great American sport in "Religion and Irreligion in America: From Edwards to Melville," *The Canadian Review of American Studies* 9 (1978) 190.