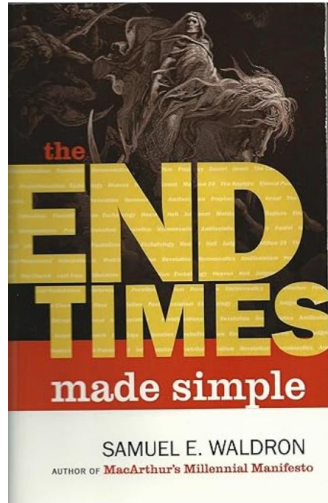


# REFORMED ESCHATOLOGY

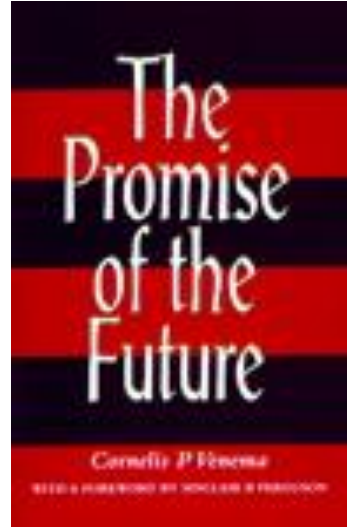
## 1. A Christian View of History

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# RESOURCES



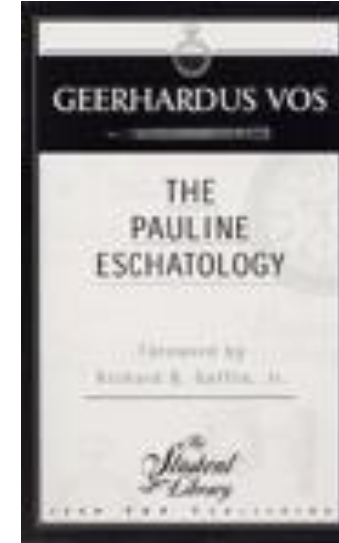
The best end-times book available for lay readers. Terrific.



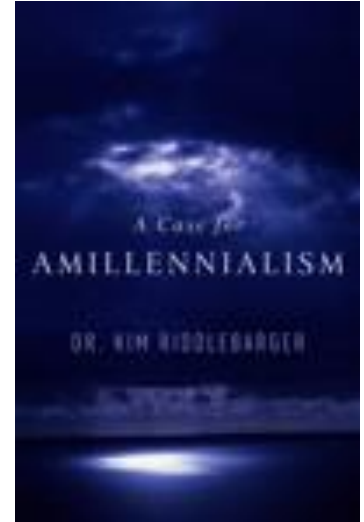
Another terrific book. More pastoral and devotional.



More academic than Waldron, but also more thorough. A classic.



Extremely technical and difficult to read. Also, perhaps the finest theology book of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.



An outstanding study and defense of the amillennial position.

# INITIAL THOUGHTS

- Won't things just "pan out" in the end?
- The pervasive power of systems
- Reformed eschatology flows from the Bible (not a system)
- Reformed eschatology is not merely about "what happens at the end," but comprehensively shapes how we understand redemptive history (including ourselves in it).

# OVERVIEW

"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel" (Mk. 1:15).

## What is Eschatology?

- Eschatos = Last Things
- Logos = Word or Doctrine
- Eschatology = Doctrine of the Last Things

## Two ways we speak about eschatology

- *Future* eschatology: those things yet to come
- *Inaugurated* or *Realized* eschatology: understanding the present in its relation to the end, and the believer's present enjoyment of end-time blessings.

"Biblical eschatology will be seriously impoverished if we do not include in it the present state of the believer and the present phase of the kingdom of God" (Anthony Hoekema).

# BASIC PRINCIPLES

## How We Are Going to Approach the Bible's End-Times Teaching?

- Use clear passages to interpret difficult ones
- Use the Bible's literal teaching to understand its figurative teaching
- First, study the Bible's general teaching, then look at the details.

## GREEK VIEW OF HISTORY

- History as a cycle (endless repetition)
- No real significance to history; nothing really achieved or contributed
- Time and history are imperfect embodiments of timeless ideals
- No ultimate purpose or goal; man trapped in time
- Salvation is being freed from time to eternity, from history to ideal reality

# ATHEISTIC / EXISTENTIAL VIEW OF HISTORY

- No pattern or meaning to history
- No movement to goal; all is a meaningless succession of events
- Man is left to sheer individualism
- Meaning is only found through the experience of authentic choice.
- Albert Camus' *The Plague*.

# CHRISTIAN VIEW OF HISTORY

1. God discloses His purposes in history; history is the working out of God's purposes in time.

- History thus reveals God
- History reveals God's redemptive purpose

Only take care, and keep your soul diligently, lest you forget the things that your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. Make them known to your children and your children's children... To you it was shown, that you might know that the LORD is God; there is no other besides him (Deut 4:9-10, 35).



# CHRISTIAN VIEW OF HISTORY

## 2. God is the Lord of History

- “God is King and acts in history to bring history to a divinely directed goal” (G. E. Ladd).
  - “according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will” (Eph 1:11)
  - “He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place” (Act 17:26)
- That God is the Lord of history implies that all that occurs serves his purpose (Gen. 50:20).
- History fulfills the sovereign purposes of God for individuals and nations.
- God gives meaning and direction to history (Rom. 8:28), and reveals these through His Word (Eph. 1:9-10).

# CHRISTIAN VIEW OF HISTORY, CONT.

## 3. Christ is the center of history

- There is one unique and non-repeatable act at the center of history: the death of God the Son
- For Christians, the decisive event of human history is not future, but past. Its significance shapes all history afterwards.
  - The first coming of Christ was like D-day in World War II, in which the victory was accomplished and assured. Still, they looked forward to V-day, when the war would be over. Likewise, Christians live between D-day and V-day. The decisive victory has been won, but we are still fighting.
- Human history is thus dominated by Jesus Christ
  - His triumph over man's sin through the cross, reconciling sinners to God, provides *the story* for mankind (2 Cor. 5:19).
  - The Christian message of creation-fall-redemption-glory is not merely a story for mankind, but *the only* story that explains the world.

# CHRISTIAN VIEW OF HISTORY

## 4. The new and final age of history has already begun in Christ

- “Since Christ has appeared on this earth, has been crucified, and has risen from the dead, the new age has been inaugurated” (A. Hoekema).

“He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son” (Col 1:13).

“Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come (1 Cor. 10:11).

“But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty” (2 Tim. 3:1).

- Christians therefore live the new and eternal life in the old and passing world.

“If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come” (2Co 5:17).  
εἴ τις ἐν Χριστῷ, καινὴ κτίσις

# CHRISTIAN VIEW OF HISTORY

5. All history is moving toward God's goal of the new heavens and the new earth.
  - This new age has been *inaugurated* with the first coming of Christ.
  - The new age will be *consummated* with the return of Christ in the Second Coming.
  - In the time between the resurrection and Second Coming of Christ, *gospel missions is the primarily purpose* for believers (Mt. 28:19-20; Lk. 24:45-47)
    - Christ's Second Coming is "delayed" by his saving purpose
    - "not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9).
  - Christians presently live in the tension of the "already-not yet".
    - We enjoy the "powers of the age to come" (Heb. 6:4) while living in the old age of sin and death.
    - Though already children of God, "what we will be has not yet appeared" (1 Jo 3:2).
    - Luke's Great Commission: "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem" (Lk. 24:46-47).

# CHRISTIAN VIEW OF HISTORY

## 5. All history is moving toward God's goal of the new heavens and the new earth (cont.).

- History involves two lines of development: two peoples, two principles, two powers, two destinies.
  - “For the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish” (Ps. 1:6).
  - “Let both [good and evil] grow together until the harvest, and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.” (Mat 13:30 )
- Evil and good co-exist in history; only in the end does good finally triumph. Until the end, there will always be ambiguity.
- What man experiences now determines what he will experience in the age to come  
“it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment” (Heb 9:27 ).
- Christians are basically optimistic in viewing history  
Heidelberg Catechism 58: Q. What comfort do you derive from the article of the life everlasting? A. That, since I now feel in my heart the beginning of eternal joy, after this life I shall possess perfect bliss, such as eye has not seen nor ear heard, neither has entered into the heart of man – therein to praise God forever.”