

More importantly, White and Hopkins present material that calls for revision of our traditional view of the social-gospel movement. First, drawing upon the work of Timothy Smith and others, they show that the social gospel had deep roots in nineteenth-century American Christianity, both evangelical and liberal. It was, therefore, in part a product of the internal development of Christianity and not just a response to the industrialization and urbanization of America. Second, while urbanization was the key problem that the social gospel addressed, its activities in the south—where it became involved in farm tenancy, illiteracy, race relations, and other issues—indicate that it was “a particular kind of response to a whole variety of social problems in a changing society. . .” (p. 80). This argument receives further documentation in the section on “Neglected Reforms and Reformers” where material appears from Washington Gladden on race relations, Josiah Strong on imperialism, and Frances Willard on prohibition. Third, the social gospel appears as a theological movement as well as a social movement. As one would expect, Walter Rauschenbusch is the central figure, but the compilers emphasize his background of evangelical piety and present convincing evidence that he had a sense of human sinfulness surprisingly close to that of his later neo-orthodox critics. Underlining the religious nature of the movement were the prayers and hymns that it produced. Washington Gladden’s “O Master Let Me Walk With Thee” takes on new meaning, e.g., when read in the light of its author’s social-gospel struggles. Finally, the reader is reminded of the social gospel’s continuing significance in its influence upon such people as Martin Luther King, Jr., and George McGovern, and in its recent appearance in the evangelical Chicago Declaration. In his concluding essay, John C. Bennett states, “Many elements of the social gospel are now receiving fresh expression though in a context that is very different situationally and theologically” (p. 288).

For the historian *The Social Gospel* does not completely settle any of the above areas of interpretation, but it does point to the kind of evidence that further research must incorporate. At the very least, it is impossible now to continue regarding the social-gospel movement as simply a manifestation of political Progressivism within the liberal churches. It was a much more complex religious awakening.

For the theologian and other religious thinkers and doers to whom this book is also addressed, there is the reminder that American Christianity has a long tradition of social thought and action. The spirit (and in some cases the specific ideas) of the social-gospel movement is a living heritage. This volume enables the contemporary Christian to renew or initiate contact with that still-relevant past.

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Wilson, Dwight. *Armageddon Now!: The Premillenarian Response to Russia and Israel Since 1917*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1977. 258 pages. Paperback, \$4.95.

In this volume, the author, himself a premillenarian, takes note of a vast number of statements regarding Armageddon, Russia, and Israel made by one group of premillenarians, namely, dispensationalists. This group also holds a futurist position as part of their eschatological interpretation. Wilson acknowledges that there are other premillenarians, such as Seventh-day Adventists, whose views are different from those which he treats in this publication (p. 12).

In his “Introduction,” the author informs us that the sources from which his analysis “is basically drawn are premillenarian books and periodicals which are primarily the food of the laity rather than the clergy. Hence, it usually excludes formal theological treatises and scholarly premillenarian journals such as *Bibliotheca Sacra*,

even though they parallel the popular material in content" (pp. 12-13). However, as the volume itself reveals, this should not be taken to mean that dispensationalist scholars are excluded from the investigation. In fact, a good deal of the material quoted or alluded to derives from prominent dispensationalist scholars, including Arno C. Gaebelein, Charles L. Feinberg, E. Schuyler English, Charles C. Ryrie, Wilbur M. Smith, Louis T. Talbot, and John F. Walvoord. Some of the more popular speakers and writers, such as Richard DeHaan and Hal Lindsey, are also mentioned, of course.

After a chapter entitled "Before Balfour and Bolsheviks" (pp. 14-35), eight further chapters (pp. 36-214) continue the survey on the topic indicated in the title and subtitle. Numerous examples of dispensationalist pronouncements from 1917 to 1977 are carefully documented; and although these carry a somewhat common general concept regarding "Armageddon," they also reveal many vicissitudes and conflicting ideas in the matter of specifics in interpretation. One gets the impression that dispensationalist efforts to locate prophetic fulfillment in current events result in considerable confusion because of lack of a proper hermeneutic in dealing with the biblical literature.

This brief review cannot even begin to sample the massive information which Wilson provides, and it must suffice to point out that the almost overwhelming amount of detail given furnishes an account that is both comprehensive and authoritative. The fact that the author has not generally made use of scholarly publications may be a minor fault from the standpoint of completeness; however, the omission is compatible with his objectives and, moreover, can hardly be considered as a factor that might have altered his results.

Although the volume is not basically devoted to a critique of premillenarian views, the "Epilogue" (pp. 215-218) aptly reviews some of the problems inherent in the dispensationalist positions portrayed throughout the book. The author points out that although no attempt "has been made to evaluate or criticize the theological positions of the premillennial system in contrast to other systems of eschatology . . . any set of beliefs may be expected to demonstrate in practice an internal consistency *within* that body of ideas" (pp. 215-216). Literalism as a dispensationalist hermeneutical approach would seem to demand some consistency in finding prophetic fulfillment, but such consistency is lacking, Wilson points out, as one observes the vast array of changing interpretations regarding the "sign of the end," the "revival of the Roman Empire," "the northern confederation," the "supposed restoration of Israel," and the "end of the 'times of the Gentiles.'" He concludes that this sort of "loose literalism when considered as a whole is no more precise than the figurative interpretations of which these literalists are so critical" (p. 216).

Wilson also critiques the dispensationalists on the basis of "determinism" in that usual "definitions of aggression and violation of international law have been ignored in favor of prophecy," and on the basis of "opportunism" by suggesting that this group of premillenarians have "succumbed to the temptation to exploit every conceivably possible prophetic fulfillment for the sake of their prime objective: evangelism" (pp. 217-218). The internal inconsistency displayed in dispensationalist interpretation furnishes a valid basis for critique, being adequately substantiated by the historical survey itself. Wilson's views regarding dispensationalist "determinism" and "opportunism" are, however, somewhat more in the nature of value judgments; nevertheless, even here it must be remembered that these assessments have been made by a scholar who has "grown up" in the ranks of premillenarian thought and who thus in a certain sense speaks "from within" as an authority well versed in premillenarian teaching and practice.

In addition to the rather extensive notes (which appear as a separate section, on pp. 219-246), the volume contains a helpful bibliography (pp. 247-258).

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