

A Comparative Study of the Eschatological Differences  
between Roman Catholic and Baptist Traditions

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## *Abstract*

### A Comparative Study of the Eschatological Differences between Roman Catholic and Baptist Traditions

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Roman Catholics and Evangelical Baptists have always theologically differed regarding end times beliefs. On one side the quasi-totality of Catholics has an Amillennial view against a large proportion of Evangelicals that opt for Dispensational Premillennialism. However, from their respective beginnings, a common set of doctrines has been Christ's Second Coming (Parousia), the bodily resurrection, and the final judgement. Numerous theologians throughout the ages have contributed their input to enrich Christianity with their eschatological perspectives, many of which have been utilized for different political endeavors. A plethora of statistics have been recorded to quantify the American sentiment on several questions. One example is that 92% of American Evangelicals “believe Jesus will return to Earth someday” versus 63% for Catholics. Finally, Evangelicals and Catholics have found common ground today to pursue ecumenical efforts against what they perceive as a growing wave of immorality in America.

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## *Introduction*

When exploring eschatology for the first time, it is important to discern the fundamental traditional differences between the religions involved. A blatant case exists between Roman Catholics and Evangelical Baptists (the words “Baptist” and “Evangelical” will be used interchangeably to refer to Protestants throughout the thesis even though these are not necessarily synonymous). It is worth investigating the respective millennial views of each denomination which are the Amillennial view of Roman Catholics and the Dispensational Premillennial view of Evangelical Baptists. The former provides a figurative understanding of Christ’s millennial reign whereas the latter provides a literal understanding of a thousand-year reign preceding Satan’s liberation and the final battle of humankind. With that in mind, one may ask: “How should we go about understanding Christ’s millennial reign in both traditions?”

Historically, Catholics and Baptists were compelled and biblically motivated to “change society” to aim for better social and political aspirations. Political power can be defined as a perfect lever to wield the dynamics engendering societal changes. Overall, their intentions are guided by a Christian “moral compass” given their alignment against what they view as “malevolent forces” rampant in the world. However, the meddling of religion in the political realm has consequences. In an overarching sense, de-secularizing the political sphere and arbitrarily weaving in a religious mindset to direct society, even if well-intentioned, can be viewed as monolithic and unjust for many people who differ in values, especially in a pluralistic and democratic society.

The main driver for this behavior is an evangelistic spirit fueling Christian missions and Jesus’s commandment to spread the gospel throughout the whole world (Matthew 28:16-20). One could interpret Jesus’s offer to Peter of becoming a “fisher of men” as a foreshadowing of the Messiah’s desire to disseminate the “Good News” to all nations. In history, Christianity spread from the Middle East into different countries and gradually transformed several cultures until morphing into the multitude of denominations expressed today. Inevitably, culture influences social movements and political dynamics and from here, it is understood that Christian culture has diffused into the political sphere to shape many nations. Nowadays, nationalistic political actors may use this cultural attribute to impose Christian values onto other spheres of secular life, hence going against the pluralistic makeup of a modern populace. Regardless of denominations, a Christian hegemony may spark division and chaos in a population because a large number of people (Christians and non-Christians) will disagree with policies drafted in accordance with rules in the Christian religion (or at least the version of Christianity being promoted if it usurps politics).

In the contemporary context, one may ask what the implications of eschatology are as the latter is the study of the end times and it behaviorally influences people’s attitudes and choices in view of the future. This begs the question of what happens in the absence of eschatology. In light of Christ’s return, it is pertinent to probe if people fear an upcoming reckoning of the world. With that in mind, some New Testament letters, Gospel passages, and Old Testament prophecies plant the seeds for the idea of Christ’s Second Coming, but the popular catalyst of eschatology is undoubtedly the Book of Revelation where the Parousia (Greek for “being present”) is unambiguously seen. Without eschatology, someone may purport there would be no concerns about the world’s future, and no preparation for any earth-shattering events. An argument can be made that people would not care about the morality of their decisions. The Book of Revelation

would have been written in vain and its visions and predictions would be false. On this point, it is however important to consider the reader's intention behind their interpretation whether literalist/futurist or figurative/symbolic.

For Catholics, the eschatological term "Last Things" does not mean "ultimate"<sup>1</sup> and equally, a chronological sequence does not lead to increasing levels of definitiveness. From the Evangelical angle, the Catholic view of eschatology has a "simpler theological construct" when observing the ensemble of beliefs. To clarify, Catholics believe that all judgements are summed up into one cataclysmic event, one general judgement of an Amillennial nature. It is generally assumed that Catholics do not have any variety of beliefs regarding Christ's Second Coming given their centralized governance. In their belief, Evangelicals hold more than one judgement in Scripture which concern Israel, believers, Gentiles, angels, and the great white throne of judgement. In general, Evangelicals, just like a large portion of Protestants, do not hold an Amillennial view of Christ's reign, but rather hold Postmillennial, Premillennial, or Dispensational views.

### ***Some Different Beliefs and Similarities Between Catholics and Evangelicals***

To broadly introduce both faiths regarding eschatology, some basic differences should be highlighted, and a major question concerns the eschatological belief or disbelief in Jesus Christ's millennial reign during the end times over which Catholics and Baptists disagree quite eminently. Here, the three paradigms are Amillennialism (no belief in a millennial reign), Dispensational Premillennialism (Jesus's Second Coming occurs before his millennial reign in the world following dispensations), and Postmillennialism (the millennial reign occurs before the Second Coming and final events).

On one side, Roman Catholics hold an Amillennial view where the millennium is a symbolic concept, but nevertheless precedes a final judgment in one single definitive end. Hereby, Catholicism does not teach the doctrine of Rapture and thus, Catholics do not share the belief that some souls will go to heaven before the Great Tribulation (seven years). Additionally, one may correlate Christian eschatology with soteriology, the study of salvation. In Catholic soteriology, infant baptism is practiced as a traditional ritual and a form of exorcism performed by a priest to protect the child from demonic entities. In the event of death, Catholicism holds a steadfast belief in purgatory as a purification and sanctification phase for the Christian (or non-Christian), which does not limit personal redemption or salvation to the time spent alive. To list some particularities found in Catholicism, a strong belief in the Eucharist and the transubstantiation of the bread and wine respectively into the body and blood of Christ is of utmost importance along with the seven sacraments of sanctification. Hereby, it can be understood how Catholicism meshes the necessity of getting saved by grace through faith with good works when one "carries their cross" through life doing God's will. The Eucharistic sacrament therefore encourages the Catholic person to commemorate the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. Also, saints play a major role in the Catholic faith and feasts and prayers are dedicated to them throughout the calendar year; manifestly, Mary, the mother of Jesus, is held in highest regard. To yield a concise biblical example where Catholic eschatology differs from its Baptist counterpart, Revelation 12 in the New Testament presents an

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<sup>1</sup> Norman L. Geisler and Ralph E. MacKenzie, *Roman Catholics and Evangelicals, Agreements and Differences* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1995), 154.



unidentified woman with a “crown of twelve stars” and Catholicism indicates that she is none other than the Virgin Mary whereas Baptists believe that to be the twelve tribes of Israel.

On the other side, Evangelical Baptists are scattered when discussing Christ’s millennial reign where many believe in Dispensational Premillennialism, but others believe in Postmillennialism or Amillennialism. The Dispensational Premillennialists firmly believe in the Rapture and the logic behind it corroborates the related belief in the Parousia occurring before Jesus’s millennial reign during which Satan will be shackled in hell prior to being released for the ultimate battle. Here also, soteriology is intimately linked with eschatology and salvation must be a conscious decision made as an adult at baptism done in full water immersion by a pastor. Unlike Catholics, Baptists reject the ideas of purgatory and Universalism (salvation of everyone in the aftermath of the awaited eschatological events) due to a lack of scriptural verifiability and because they believe in heaven and hell as the only possible afterlife destinations. Regarding condemnation, Evangelicals may fall into the Annihilationist or Infernalist camps where the former means the eradication of evil souls and the latter implies a destiny of eternal torment in hell. This accentuates the zeal for evangelistic action-taking and urgency of repenting and getting saved on Earth before it becomes too late. Notwithstanding, almost every element of Catholicism listed beforehand is disregarded in Evangelicalism. This means the perspective on works tied to being “saved by grace through faith” is totally different for Evangelicals and they only partake in a few sacraments counting baptism and communion, the latter of which is not viewed as transubstantiation or consubstantiation, but rather a symbolic representation of the Last Supper. Also, no prayers are devoted to saints.

Likewise, it is important to outline the many similarities existing between Roman Catholics and Evangelical Baptists because these are more foundational to the Christian religion and thus, more important. Both denominations would agree on the supremacy of Jesus Christ over anything else as He is believed to be the Son of God and the incarnation of God Himself in the human world. So, Catholics still consider Jesus Christ as the one to whom all the glory and prayers are directed. In other words, belief in Christ before anything else supersedes any Christological, soteriological, or eschatological differences existing between Catholics and Baptists. In both denominations, baptism (and confession in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior) is a ritual required to be “saved” and to join God in heaven after this life passes.

Catholics and Baptists believe in heaven and hell and none of them denies a belief in final judgement by God for good deeds and unabsolved sins as shown in the New Testament’s Book of Revelation by the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Both Baptists and Catholics believe in Christ’s bodily resurrection after death by asphyxiation on the cross and then, a bodily ascension to heaven. As the New Testament describes it in the Gospels and in the Book of Acts, both believe in Christ’s post-mortem appearance to His disciples with His wounds explicitly shown in John’s Gospel to (doubting) Thomas. Purposefully, the Old Testament prophecies are believed to be completed in the Gospels when Jesus Christ is crucified and atones for the sins of the world so that all humanity may receive the gift of salvation. To put it differently, original sin is finally vanquished by Christ dying on the cross and paying the penalty for an undeserving wretched world after which He raises from the dead to redeem everyone who puts their faith in Him. Along with this vital tenet, one recognizes the Virgin Birth of Jesus of Nazareth and the Trinity (Father, Son, Holy Spirit) as important doctrines of Christianity, but most Christians emphasize the latter.

## *Eschatology and Politics*

As discussed later, the ties between eschatology and politics are worth exploring because a lot of doctrinal tenets drive political actions at the different levels of government in North America and most prominently, in the United States (policy drafting, spiritual movements, building institutions). As defined earlier, eschatology is the branch of theology concerned with the “last things” or “final events” concerning the material realm of history as well as the spiritual realm of beliefs. However, eschatology is not just a series of events expected in the future, but rather the body of knowledge carrying constantly evolving information as time moves toward an end point. One may demystify eschatology by considering the present moment as part of the whole eschatological process of unfolding incidents which may likely end with the apocalyptic events symbolically depicted in the New Testament’s Book of Revelation. Indeed, an important detail is that eschatology must reach a definitive conclusion for the Christian faith to find its foretold closure.

## *Methodology*

This thesis is situated in the realms of systematic and biblical theology because, the chosen approach draws from both. On one side, the approach is systematic because it reveals doctrinal beliefs from the Catholic and Baptist denominations in order to elucidate a theological matter. On the other side, biblical theology is used to support the different claims that will follow by anchoring their validity in Scripture. Just like Christian soteriology (doctrine of salvation), the Christian study of the end times pertains to systematic theology because it is fleshed out by analyzing doctrinal tenets with respect to the denominations in question. Also, regarding systematic theology, salvation is intricately related to end times beliefs because these two notions are rightfully coupled together although not concurrent in their events. To briefly define those terms, salvation implies a person’s acceptance into eternal life with God whereas the end times inherently withhold an understanding that the current world is destined to be transformed in the future. For this thesis, the main book read to delve into the systematic branch of theology is *Roman Catholics and Evangelicals, Agreements and Differences* by Norman L. Geisler and Ralph E. Mackenzie<sup>2</sup> because it extensively compares both denominations. Regarding biblical theology, an important note must be carefully taken: this thesis does not pretend to be an exhibition of biblical expertise despite certain remote references to Scripture to explain eschatology.

In my work, I will be using a comparative method to discuss the theological similarities and differences between Roman Catholicism and Baptist Evangelicalism. The comparative method “analyzes two or more systems of relation for common patterns and distinctions, usually identifying these patterns as products of either a shared genealogy or shared responses to specific historical conditions.”<sup>3</sup> Complementary use of statistical data will be presented to give this socio-political and theological analysis a quantitative sense. Herewith, this comparative analysis will indicate the areas where Catholics and Baptists agree in their biblical and systematic interpretations and other areas where they disagree. More precisely, the theological beliefs of each group will be investigated and correlated with political movements witnessed in North American society. To

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Devin Griffiths, “The Comparative Method and the History of the Modern Humanities.” *History of Humanities* 2:2 (Fall 2017), 473, <https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/epdf/10.1086/693325>.

summarize, the common denominator shared among religious groups who invest a lot of effort in political projects is the desire to fulfill God's will as reminded by the phrase "thy will be done". Though, many believe the latter statement is just a concealment of the real political ambitions under the surface. Hence, the examination of the means by which Catholic and Baptist groups politically operate along with the elaboration of their theological backdrop become ever so revelatory given their societal repercussions.

## Chapter 1: Defining Christian Eschatologies

### *1.1. The New Heavens and the New Earth*

Just like other monotheistic religions, Christianity's sacred Scripture communicates a message carrying the doctrine of final resurrection<sup>4</sup> implying a Christ figure returning at the end of time. The Second Coming of Jesus is sometimes referred to as the "Parousia" which is biblically characterized as the defining moment in the midst of all the cataclysmic events depicted in the Book of Revelation. In that same vein, several books in Holy Writ have foreshadowed or alluded to this Christological event and many are found in the Old Testament (e.g. Deuteronomy, Isaiah, Daniel, and Zephaniah), according to how Christians interpret the Bible. The Parousia can be understood as Jesus's powerful return comporting mercy and judgment. Mercy shall be for those who were faithful to God, and judgment to those who were willfully wicked and led by evil forces. In the final resurrection, the faithful will live for eternity and be given a new incorruptible body. Along with this, it is believed there will come a final destruction and condemnation where evil will be eradicated in an act of purification of the material cosmos. Hence, reprobate souls will be punished and, as Thomas Aquinas<sup>5</sup> puts it, "the whole of bodily creation will be appropriately changed to be in harmony with the state of those who will then be living."<sup>6</sup> This justifies the eschatological purpose of the Catholic pursuit of the *Imago Dei* (being in the image of God) because that which is not of God is destined for eventual destruction. In that same vein, Vatican Council II corroborates the *Lumen Gentium*<sup>7</sup> document detailing the importance of humans finding their destiny in God in the establishment of "the new heavens and the new Earth" which will be the abode for definitive godly justice and righteousness. Within the Catholic perspective, the visible universe's transformation into a proper dwelling for God is doctrinally endorsed in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*<sup>8</sup> and this restoration of the world to its original state (like in the Book of Genesis) will be catalyzed by the glorious return of Christ.<sup>9</sup> In Christianity, believers are somewhat divided regarding the doctrine of universal salvation where "God will be all in all" because it somehow denies the ideas of Annihilationism and Infernalism which respectively imply a destruction of evil souls or their eternal burning in hell. Here, some would think the Book of Revelation would have an answer to this disagreement, but concisely, eschatology and soteriology are still subjects for biblical and contextual interpretation.

In Universalism, the whole of God's creation is destined to obtain a redemptive and glorious freedom from decay and bondage<sup>10</sup> to sin once the Apocalypse comes to pass and God's historical saving plan, including nature and its orders, is fulfilled. Nonetheless, destructive signs

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<sup>4</sup> Paul O'Callaghan, *Christ Our Hope: An Introduction to Eschatology* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2011), 115.

<sup>5</sup> One of Europe's greatest medieval Catholic writers who exemplified personal sanctity and who spearheaded scholasticism in the realms of philosophy and theology and from whom many later thinkers have drawn. (<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aquinas/>).

<sup>6</sup> Aquinas, T. *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Book IV, (1259-1265), p. 97.

<sup>7</sup> Very important doctrinal document stemming from the Second Vatican Council. ([https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19641121\\_lumen-gentium\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html)).

<sup>8</sup> Document listing the Catholic Church's teachings related to faith and morals. (<https://uscatholic.org/articles/201106/what-is-the-catechism-of-the-catholic-church/>).

<sup>9</sup> O'Callaghan, *Christ Our Hope*, 116.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, 118.

inundate many biblical passages and act as signposts pointing to the Great Tribulation of the end times. As human society keeps breaking up, idolatry and lack of religion repeatedly triumph, and wars emerge along with a multitude of cosmic calamities,<sup>11</sup> it is no surprise that the end of the world will carry bleakness until the heavenly powers are “shaken” for restoration to ensue.

Scripture overtly presents discontinuity between the future glorified world and the world in its current cosmological condition. It also includes a continuity between both worlds where the Christian worldview holds that creation is destined for salvation. In fact, Tertullian<sup>12</sup> combatted Marcionism<sup>13</sup> and the belief that the material world is the corrupt product of an evil demiurge. Marcionism can be summed up as a focus on the New Testament only, denying Christ’s physicalness (like in Docetism which was opposed by Ignatius of Antioch),<sup>14</sup> and rejecting God the Creator in the Old Testament. He does so by observing that God is indeed the judge of the world since He is its Lord and therefore, its Creator, and its God.<sup>15</sup>

In the new heavens and new earth, it is believed that God aims to unite Himself with His creation and dwell with His children in paradise as shown in Genesis. Therefore, Christian eschatology interlinks the Bible’s beginning with its ending by metaphorically presenting the union between the world (the Church) and God as a final wedding. On that, the prophet Isaiah<sup>16</sup> would even add “former things”<sup>17</sup> will be dismissed or left behind and there will hence be no more death, evil, harm, or impurities. This may explain the necessity for the downfall of the cosmic order of the current world so that the path is carved for the “Son of Man” to return and engender a new creation or “new Jerusalem.” As described in the epistle to the Romans (8:19), the “children of God” are longing for the “day” of release from the evil bondage and decay for a glorious liberty to follow. As read in the epistle of 2 Peter (3:10), that “day” will “come like a thief”, totally unexpected, where everything will be “burned up.”<sup>18</sup> Until then, Christianity encourages people to live in godliness as they vigilantly hasten this coming day of judgement.

When contemplating paradise, Christians have differing views where, on one side, Thomas Aquinas claims the elements or beings in the material world (animals, pastures, plants) will be absent in heaven but, on another side, other Christians imagine heaven with a vast terrain having those elements (as C.S. Lewis<sup>19</sup> imagined in *The Great Divorce* and in *The Last Battle*). It will be

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 117.

<sup>12</sup> Church Father of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century C.E. who lived as pagan until midlife when he became a Christian and wrote works focusing on belief and discipline (<https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14520c.htm>).

<sup>13</sup> Marcion championed the ideas (considered heresy by the mainline Church) that a) the Old Testament should be rejected and b) Christ being the son of a “good” God which he does not equate as the “God of the Jews” (<https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09645c.htm>).

<sup>14</sup> Bishop who wrote theological material and Apostolic Father who had direct ties to the apostles (<https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07644a.htm>).

<sup>15</sup> O’Callaghan, *Christ Our Hope*, 118.

<sup>16</sup> Predicted the Messiah’s coming and held clashing eschatological views where he discussed both destruction and hope (<https://www.nationalshrine.org/blog/the-prophet-isaiah-judgement-and-hope/#:~:text=Isaiah%20is%20one%20of%20the,promises%20of%20hope%20and%20prosperity.>)

<sup>17</sup> O’Callaghan, *Christ Our Hope*, 118.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, 119.

<sup>19</sup> Professor of English literature and twentieth century scholar who came to Christianity later in life and wrote about it. (<https://www.cslewisinstitute.org/c-s-lewis-life-works/>).

a milieu of effortless work yielding creativity, but John Chrysostom<sup>20</sup> and Augustine of Hippo<sup>21</sup> acquiesce that those elements of nature may be included in the beauty of heaven.<sup>22</sup> The promised new heaven and new earth in the awaited cosmic renewal involves a promise of resurrection, but the underlying political tone is the question of whether it will come from divine intervention or from human effort.

In a soteriological sense, Christ's work of salvation is two-pronged with a negative aspect and a positive one; the former involves overcoming the disharmony of sin/death and the latter involves the arrival of God's cosmos into definitive glorious fullness. Even so, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin<sup>23</sup> contributes a scientific perspective on the cosmology of the eschatological Christ where every phenomenon in God's creation converges toward an "Omega Point" of "ultimate perfection."<sup>24</sup> In terms of physics, matter is not exclusively bound to rigid laws of measurable nature, but the pleroma will increase in entropy (disorder) within a closed system not immune to spiritual factors until the eschatological "Christification" of the universe<sup>25</sup> fulfills the vision of creation consummated in Jesus Christ's Parousia.<sup>26</sup> Additionally, the letter to the Colossians (1:19) would clarify that the Word incarnate, Jesus Christ, goes beyond the instrumental "Christification" of the world made "in Christ" and correlates it with the divinization of the world. To corroborate the former, the Book of Acts (13:48) communicates Christ's everlasting and life-giving presence<sup>27</sup> as the Word providing vitality to all created things. All in all, Christian anthropology and ethics has been conceived on the belief in final resurrection culminating in eschatological perfection, accentuating the theology of creation "through" Christ, "for" Christ, and "in" Christ.<sup>28</sup>

Around the time of Vatican Council II, two views emerged regarding the development of cosmology: Eschatologism and Incarnationism. In the former standpoint, priority is placed only on continuity based in the acquisition of virtues by Christians as they "store treasures in heaven" by focusing on spiritual affairs rather than worldly ones, thus highlighting the discontinuity (separation) between the current and the awaited worlds. On the other hand, Incarnationists emphasize a lucid continuity between the material and spiritual worlds. Eschatologism and Incarnationism also diverge regarding (political) action and inaction in the establishment of God's Kingdom.<sup>29</sup> In one case, hope-driven preparation of the "New Cosmos" wishes to bring forth the humanity dreamt of and in the other case, God acts through Christ in the spirit so that Christ's saving work perdures in the world until His glorious return. On the Catholic side, Pope John Paul

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<sup>20</sup> Prominent fourth century preacher who counteracted authoritarian abuses done at his time and promoted ascetic practices. (<https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08452b.htm>).

<sup>21</sup> Heralded as one of the greatest theologians of Antiquity for his extensive writing and philosophical input. As a former follower of Manicheanism and latecomer to Christianity *via* his mother, he understood Latin which was prevalent at his time. (<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/augustine/>).

<sup>22</sup> O'Callaghan, *Christ Our Hope*, 120.

<sup>23</sup> Twentieth century French Catholic writer who philosophized on the topic of faith and evolution.

(<https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/ignatian-voices/20th-century-ignatian-voices/pierre-teillard-de-chardin-sj/>).

<sup>24</sup> Teilhard de Chardin, *P. Phenomenon of Man*. (London: Collins, 1959), p. 258.

<sup>25</sup> O'Callaghan, *Christ Our Hope*, 120.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*, 123.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*, 124-5.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid*, 125.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*, 126.

II's<sup>30</sup> 1981 encyclical *Laborem exercens*<sup>31</sup> heightens the value of work (sanctification in "carrying one's cross") as a dynamic process of paving the way for the world to come. Likewise, the Holy See's 1986 document *Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation*<sup>32</sup> values the meaning of Christian hope for an eternal Kingdom of freedom in accordance with a commitment to earthly progress. In the Kingdom of God, the work is finished, and Christians believe Christ will become the permanent supreme judge with perfect justice finally being carried out. In apocalyptic terms, the "Son of Man in the clouds" foretold in the Book of Daniel (7:13) and emphatically manifested in the Gospel of Mark (14:62) and in the Book of Revelation (1:7) will be the "Lord of Judgement" to rule over the entire world as a descendent of the House of David. Attributed to this eschatological character is the term "Anani"<sup>33</sup> which involves the clouds or divination in the Apocalypse of Daniel. Here, one notices the intertwining of "Son of David" (as in the Gospels) with "Son of Man." In ecclesiastical settings, baptism is an eschatological sacrament as much as a soteriological one since it serves to save the person from punitive judgement by God. Imaginatively, Noah's Flood could be interpreted as a massive widescale baptism of the entire world to "cleanse them from their sins" and as a worldwide judgement.

From another angle, some would advocate that true justice comes by ridding everyone of all worldliness and eradicating worldly authority and private property in preparation for Christ's Second Coming and the establishment of God's Kingdom. At the core of the divide between Catholics and Protestants, the Protestant Reformation turns eschatology into an individual matter and abandons society to the material world. Amid this, the idea of Christ's Kingdom being a spiritual matter emerged in contrast with a destination to be ushered in. In parallel, Scripture is the written theology of history<sup>34</sup> (including apocalypticism) just as much as the sum of God's wisdom. Today, it is possible to harmonize the understanding of God's Kingdom as the Holy Spirit's dwelling in the human soul just as well as a divine movement gradually increasing one's inner grace in the human world. Tethered to this idea is the notion of divine economy fulfilled in Christ's eternal reign over every nation from start to end.

In the Baroque period, the definition of eschatology took an ambiguous turn because it became associated with humanity presenting an arid faith driven by a vague desire for eternity.<sup>35</sup> To highlight the disparity between Catholics and Protestants, it is worth reiterating how they diverge with regards to the glorification of God. On the Catholic side, it is acceptable to perform certain deeds with the purpose of glorifying God on the quest towards redemption. It can thus be understood that Catholicism heralds the *ex opere operato* mindset where the individual earns the fruits of grace.<sup>36</sup> Conversely, Protestants are uncomfortable with this because of the paradigm-shifting Reformation idea of being saved by grace through faith with no additional works being required to be saved in the eschatological divine economy culminating in final judgement. In other words, one of Protestantism's core beliefs is to entrust the person's teleological redemption to pure

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<sup>30</sup> Polish pontiff (1<sup>st</sup> non-Italian pope in 455 years), Karol Jozef Wojtyla was globally revered and wrote extensively, notably on personhood and relationships. (<https://www.franciscanmedia.org/saint-of-the-day/saint-john-paul-ii/>).

<sup>31</sup> Written work by Pope John Paul II about the foundations for family life. ([https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_enc\\_14091981\\_laborem-exercens.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_14091981_laborem-exercens.html)).

<sup>32</sup> O'Callaghan, *Christ Our Hope*, 127-29.

<sup>33</sup> Jacob Taubes & David Ratmoko, *Occidental Eschatology* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 46.

<sup>34</sup> O'Callaghan, *Christ Our Hope*, 120.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, 122.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, 125-26.

grace freely given by God *via* the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross. Therefore, it becomes ephemeral to believe in any school of thought drifting away from the belief in a cosmic rebirth of the old order into a new paradigm with a new law and a new apostolic community. In older Christian traditions, the prophet Elijah<sup>37</sup> was considered as the *reparator omnium* or “harbinger of the new age” associated with the revelation of all the universe’s cosmological secrets in the advent of the Kingdom of the Holy Spirit.<sup>38</sup>

When contemplating Origen of Alexandria’s<sup>39</sup> *Apocatastasis*, it draws on concepts from Antiquity merged with early Christianity, which echoes the merger between Christian apocalyptic eschatology and the static and scientific conception of the world. This Church Father’s notion of restitution, while respected, is not agreed upon by Evangelical Baptists. The reason for this disagreement is that this doctrine of re-establishment poses an ideological breach by introducing a contradiction with the belief in the eternal damnation of evil souls. *Apocatastasis* also includes Satan and all the sinners normally condemned to an eternity in hell according to the Infernalist perspective. Origen’s idea of “restoration of all things” mediates the encounter between the Christian anticipation of the Eschaton and the eternal return of Antiquity.<sup>40</sup>

Much later in history, the Enlightenment age introduced a new mode of eschatology along with the arrival of Idealism’s historical dialectics. During this era, Voltaire<sup>41</sup> inaugurated the principle of immanent reason and the concept of cultural history to organize the data of historical humanity. In this framework, sensuality, imagination, and reason are the three spiritual powers<sup>42</sup> acting as the pillars holding together the “universal” man. Nevertheless, eschatology within Christianity deals with human self-realization *via* the divine promise of salvation. Under a Trinitarian scope, this actualization is confirmed by the supremacy of God the Father, revealed by His Son Jesus Christ, and driven by the power of the Holy Spirit. A point of contention between Catholics and Evangelicals concerns justification and the claim that God gifted His flock with the immortal destiny of perfect beatitude and whether it can be forfeited. The mere sending of God’s Son into the material world as Savior of all humanity serves as the basis of hope, the object of which is the divinizing grace won by Christ dying on the cross. However, this does not produce an immediate union with God because it requires a lifelong dedication to the faith for it to be fulfilled. Wolfhart Pannenberg<sup>43</sup> would even claim that this “justification by God” will only be fulfilled at the final consummation of the universe.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Major prophet of the Old Testament who was sent by God to turn the Israelites away from worshipping Baal and back to worshipping Yahweh (God). (<https://www.nationalshrine.org/blog/elijah-a-faithful-prophet-in-a-time-of-adversity/#:~:text=Elijah%20was%20a%20mighty%20prophet,to%20return%20to%20the%20Lord>).

<sup>38</sup> O’Callaghan, *Christ Our Hope*, 126.

<sup>39</sup> Second century theologian from which many Church Fathers and theologians drew for philosophy and theology despite his ideas regarding Christ’s nature/will were considered heretical by the Fifth Ecumenical Council or Second Council of Constantinople. (<https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11306b.htm>).

<sup>40</sup> O’Callaghan, *Christ Our Hope*, 128.

<sup>41</sup> François-Marie D’Arouet (Voltaire) was an eighteenth-century French writer whose philosophical work contributed immensely to the Enlightenment period. (<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/voltaire/>).

<sup>42</sup> O’Callaghan, *Christ Our Hope*, 129.

<sup>43</sup> Twentieth century German theologian who worked on history and how it serves as a vehicle for revelation, notably with Jesus Christ’s resurrection. (<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/themelios/article/the-christology-of-wolfhart-pannenberg/>).

<sup>44</sup> O’Callaghan, *Christ Our Hope*, 11.



Through anthropological lenses, eschatology explains personal involvement in eventually reaching hope for humanity and therein one finds the link between the end times (eschatology) and salvation (soteriology). In other words, the completion of God's eschatological promise for the future of all humans will quench the current longing for salvation experienced individually and collectively. Humans' desire for God's gift of salvation and resurrection is indeed a criterion for the divine promise to gain its full meaning without which the individual's relationship with God is empty and fruitless. Otherwise, eschatology loses all its essence when individuals close themselves off from receiving God's gift and here, hell is often defined as a (willful) separation of oneself from God. In all God's creation, humans are those capable of acknowledging their position in the world in the most sentient way, and the Book of Genesis (2:18-20) succinctly corroborates this when Adam is appointed to name all the animals in the Garden of Eden. Eschatologically, if humans recognize they have the supreme sentience, then they understand the importance of aligning themselves with God's desire of uniting Himself with them by diametrically reciprocating this sentiment.

Also, hope becomes a virtue by responding to the "truth about human nature" and this virtue may be conditionally satisfied by coupling receptivity to God's action and grace with a desire to embark on a teleological path toward salvation. Accordingly, one communes with God by shifting from a position of rigidity to one of openness to exchange with Him. From a Catholic perspective, Pope Benedict XVI<sup>45</sup> points to being filled with God's grace; hope not only becomes possible but becomes "stronger than the sufferings of slavery" and hence, transforms "life from within." It can be argued that an adult might develop a rationality driving them to become self-reliant regarding their needs for resources and solutions instead of relying on God. Hypothetically, understanding Matthew 18:3 where Jesus told the people that those like little children will enter the Kingdom of God, could imply that children's obedience to their parents is the example for grown adults in relationship with God.<sup>46</sup>

In Christian thinking, hope is a purifying sentiment with different phases: dignification, enrichment, and divination. This is manifestly synonymous with the process of sanctification in Catholicism. Again, the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ in the Gospels constitute God's gift of salvation as promised in the Old Testament paving the way for the Messiah's arrival. Nonetheless, Christian eschatology's ethos implies the truth in God's divine promise will only be revealed at the end of time. According to Christian belief, everyone will then know God is Lord as written in Ezekiel 29:6. Along with this, the classical apocalyptic corpus<sup>47</sup> alludes to the Apocalypse because the reader is repeatedly reminded of the world's divine judgement. Of course, Scripture champions a spiritual renewal engendered by God at His convenience and portrays the teleological pathway toward the end times. By including the material, collective, and historical dimensions of eschatology,<sup>48</sup> this anthropological aspect counterbalances the problem of interpreting eschatology solely with a biblical and spiritual tone.

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<sup>45</sup> Also named Cardinal Josef Ratzinger, he opposed the world's increasing secularization and encouraged a return to fundamental Christian values. He also reinvigorated the importance of art, Latin, and papal vestments in the Catholic ethos. ([https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/biography/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_bio\\_20050419\\_short-biography-old.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/biography/documents/hf_ben-xvi_bio_20050419_short-biography-old.html)).

<sup>46</sup> Thomas P. Rausch, & Catherine E. Clifford, *Catholicism in the Third Millennium* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2003), 192-01.

<sup>47</sup> O'Callaghan, *Christ Our Hope*, 14.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid*, 15.

Returning to Universalism, Infernalism, and Annihilationism, reading the New Testament makes it easier to accept the dichotomy existing between heaven and hell as the sole two options for the afterlife, but theologians like Origen of Alexandria and Karl Rahner<sup>49</sup> would disagree. Origen considers the Gospels' idea that "the wicked will be condemned to eternal punishment for their sins" as serving to sow "terror among those would not otherwise be restrained from an abundance of sin." A distinction is worth highlighting: the singular definition of eschatology (eschaton) against its plural counterpart (eschata).<sup>50</sup> In the former, "eschaton" signifies "the last thing" understood as one solitary "final event" involving an "encounter between Christ and the believer." In the latter, "eschata" involves several elements comprising "the last things" of God's promise counting "judgement," "purgatory," and "resurrection," describing the final destination. To correlate both terms, a Christological hermeneutic leads the reader to understand that the "eschaton" or "Christ our Hope" as "Savior" and "Judge" of the world sets the stage for the "eschata" elements fully revealing God's glory. Once more, an indivisibility exists between eschatology and Christology within Judeo-Christian thought because the former rests entirely on the latter (or the "Person of Christ"). Christian eschatology is constituted by winnowing apocalyptic materials and in it, Christ's saving work (parables, discipleship) culminates. Christ's relation to God prior to His advent into the material world qualifies Him to deliver God's knowledge to human beings. As the ultimate judge of humanity, Christ is not limited to teaching the "final resurrection," "universal judgement," and "eternal life," but positions Himself as the knowledge itself, with words found in John's Gospel like the "Word," the "truth," the "resurrection," and the "life."<sup>51</sup> For the sake of reliability, eschatological statements may be evaluated for their anthropological or spiritual appeals. For the anthropological kind, Christian hope's reasonableness must validly correlate with the human soul's immortality. The "integral immortality" of the "self" must also satisfy the mentioned rational preambles of hope. Spiritually, the excessiveness of death as the price to pay for the fulfillment of the divine promise of eternal life is addressed. In death, it is meant that God requires a sacrifice of self including what one has and their life. Lastly, spiritual eschatological statements driven by the Holy Spirit are also evaluated for their perceived truthfulness behind the firmness and consistency of Christian hope. All these statements lead the individual to acknowledge the ontological basis over which the spiritual and incorruptible soul meets the notion of human immortality in the next life.

As it relates to Platonism,<sup>52</sup> the idea of "immortality of the soul" is derived from Greek philosophy ever since the historical "unwarranted Hellenization"<sup>53</sup> during the early Christian Church's development. An argument can be made against the doctrine of the soul's immortality since it had dislodged<sup>54</sup> the central biblical doctrine of the resurrection of the body as stated in 1

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<sup>49</sup> Twentieth century Catholic theologian who studied sacraments, mysticism, spirituality, and grace and integrated personalism with Thomistic (from Thomas Aquinas) realism in his Christology.

(<https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/ignatian-voices/20th-century-ignatian-voices/karl-rahner-sj/>).

<sup>50</sup> O'Callaghan, *Christ Our Hope*, 16.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid, 18.

<sup>52</sup> Philosophy adhering to the metaphysical belief in the existence of non-material objects that are not bound by time and space. (<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/platonism/>).

<sup>53</sup> The spread of Greek culture into different areas such as the Near East from the 4th century B.C.E. until 70 C.E. (<https://www.jstor.org/stable/3155063>).

<sup>54</sup> O'Callaghan, *Christ Our Hope*, 19.

Corinthians 15:35-58. On the Catholic side, Ansgar Ahlbrecht<sup>55</sup> equates the “immortality of the soul” to the Protestant’s view on “works-righteousness” and this can be correlated with a supposition of the individual’s perverted stance before God by presenting to Him an “immortality of their own.” On the Evangelical side, an added difficulty arises when Karl Barth<sup>56</sup> argues “the soul cannot be immortal” since the first epistle to Timothy (6:16) claims “God alone is immortal.”<sup>57</sup> Moreover, Barth rejects the idea of the soul’s immortality<sup>58</sup> because it suggests a repudiation of both divine sovereignty and their own status as a created being. By reading works from the Church Fathers Clement of Alexandria<sup>59</sup> and Theophilus of Antioch,<sup>60</sup> one can reconcile the Catholic and Evangelical views around immortality by viewing it as a divine gift where the person’s soul is God’s creation and must hence be immortal and dialogical given its capability to see God beyond the material realm.

## 1.2. Final Judgement

Saint John of the Cross<sup>61</sup> states all will be judged by love and according to Church teachings, judgement is divided into two steps. The first step is death after which the human’s life is judged by God and the second step is the judgement of the universe by the returning Christ. In Scripture, God’s pedagogy of reward and punishment is seen in His Lordship over the “People of the Covenant,”<sup>62</sup> but God’s judgement (reward/punishment) was limited to the material world and the Old Testament Book of Ezekiel<sup>63</sup> (17:24) reminds the reader of God’s omniscient sovereignty over His entire creation.

Doubtingly, the apocalyptic eventuality was thought to not carry any justice for God’s people and that they will never triumph in the world. The doctrine of divine judgement on all nations is illustratively discussed in Zephaniah 3:8. It is often said “the day of the Lord is at hand,” which will be a punitive, wrathful, and devastating event for infidels. The prophet Joel<sup>64</sup> (2:28-29) also mentions this gloomy “Day of Yahweh”<sup>65</sup> where Judah will be vindicated with “multitudes in the valley of decision” or the “Valley of Jehoshaphat.” There, God will “enter into judgement”

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<sup>55</sup> Theologian who performed ecumenical work as a Catholic and wrote about the immortality of the soul. ([http://www.benediktinerlexikon.de/wiki/Ahlbrecht,\\_Ansgar](http://www.benediktinerlexikon.de/wiki/Ahlbrecht,_Ansgar)).

<sup>56</sup> One of the most influential theologians since Thomas Aquinas, he opposed the Nazi regime during his time and is known for "Church Dogmatics", an encyclopedic writing detailing his theology, namely his Christology pointing to divine self-revelation. (<https://barth.ptsem.edu/biography/>).

<sup>57</sup> O’Callaghan, *Christ Our Hope*, 20-1.

<sup>58</sup> Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of the Word of God*. (Zurich: Evangelischer Verlag A.G., 1936), 464.

<sup>59</sup> A highly educated Church Father who wrote extensively about Christian theology and against ideologies deemed heretical by the mainline Church. (<https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04045a.htm>).

<sup>60</sup> Also named Eusebius, he authored "Apologia Ad Autolyicum" where he explains the Christian idea of God (including the Trinity) addresses heresies and describes his conversion to Christianity from paganism. (<https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/02041.htm>).

<sup>61</sup> A Carmelite monk from Spain who lived an ascetic life in the sixteenth century, met with Teresa of Avila, and wrote poetic Christian texts. (<https://www.franciscanmedia.org/saint-of-the-day/saint-john-of-the-cross/>).

<sup>62</sup> O’Callaghan, *Christ Our Hope*, 131.

<sup>63</sup> A sixth century B.C.E. prophet who wrote his visions about the eventual destruction of Jerusalem followed by the Jews’ return to their land in Israel. (<https://free.messianicbible.com/feature/ezekiel/>).

<sup>64</sup> Old Testament prophet who forecasted “a great outpouring of the spirit upon the flesh” to predict the Messiah’s Second Coming. (<https://free.messianicbible.com/feature/the-prophet-joel-the-coming-restoration-of-israel-and-the-day-of-the-lord/>).

<sup>65</sup> O’Callaghan, *Christ Our Hope*, 132.

with all the nations and come out victorious over evil. Each person's merits will be judged by God and individual responsibility will weigh far heavier than collective responsibility.<sup>66</sup> Even in the Gospels, Jesus uses apocalyptic language when He labels Himself “Son of Man” (in His glory and all the angels with Him) or “judge.” The Gospel of Matthew says God “will repay every man for what he has done.” Varying viewpoints exist around the doctrine of judgement<sup>67</sup> like the case of Basil the Great<sup>68</sup> rejecting Origen of Alexandria's universal reconciliation because to him, it denies the idea of final judgement by Christ.

In Christian eschatology, the doctrines of final judgement and final resurrection intertwine as indicated by the apocalyptically rich Book of Daniel. Universal judgement allows for definitive justice, which then allows for final resurrection. In apocryphal literature, the Epistle to Barnabas corroborates the Christian view of assured judgement and retribution for the virtuous and the sinners alike. The former will be resurrected for eternal recompense and the latter, for condemnation. Cyril of Jerusalem<sup>69</sup> wrote that all “shall be raised” and everyone’s fate will be to wear “bodies eternal”<sup>70</sup> which explains the hope in the resurrection. Without the resurrection of the dead, there would be no justice, no judgement, and no meaning behind resurrecting. From Matthew’s Gospel, Jesus occupies the roles of Messiah (Savior) and perfect judge as He becomes the incarnation of God *de novo* in His providence during the “decisive and supreme moment of truth.”<sup>71</sup> The purpose of the two-fold act of judgement and personal salvation is for God to finally bring human nature to its fullness by raising the dead along with the living. The Gospel of John (12:47) states nonetheless that Jesus's ministry was to save the world and not judge it,<sup>72</sup> making salvation the central focus of eschatological revelation. Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI) sees truth as the eschatological judge of humankind who actually saves it and on judgement day, the opportunity to repent and accept God’s mercy will end.

Metaphorically, the reference to the idea that “the wheat will be separated from the chaff” means that the righteous will be separated from the unrighteous in final judgement. In the New Testament, eschatology conveys a missionary tone in the way the Gospel is preached worldwide before the end times. The universality of judgement of all nations proposes an objective judgement standard alongside an impersonal element to reward whomever “does the will of the Father” by following proper Christian ethics and moral teachings. Undeniably, Christian life is interpersonal, and charity weighs heavily in the final verdict.<sup>73</sup> Salvation is no longer incumbent on passive belongingness to “God's people” by simply following religious law but requires a genuine charity of one with Christ and others. Done with integrity, good actions will be rewarded by God with charity and love determining the measure of judgement as each member of Christ’s body shall follow moral rectitude. Failing to serve Him by not recognizing Him in the needs of the “least

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid, 133.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid, 134.

<sup>68</sup> Church Father who pioneered monasticism and defined it around community, labor, and prayer life. (<https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02330b.htm>).

<sup>69</sup> Fourth century C.E. Early Church theologian who stood by the claim that the Church is true and completes the Old Testament prophecies. He also made Jerusalem the “Holy City” a destination for pilgrimage within Christendom. (<https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04595b.htm>).

<sup>70</sup> O’Callaghan, *Christ Our Hope*, 135.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid, 135-6.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid, 136.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid, 137.

ones” (less fortunate people in society) is considered a sinful transgression before the Lord. Thus, the harvest metaphor vividly illustrates the public and definitive judgement of the universe where the *vitis* (life or eternal union with Christ) will be separated from the *ignis* (fire or eternal separation from Christ).<sup>74</sup>

Anthropologically, the all-encompassing end time judgement is definitive, corporeal, and interpersonal and God’s mercy does not change in the supreme anthropological moment during which He defines each person. For Tertullian, God’s identity is that of “God,” then “Creator,” then “Lord,” and then “judge”; the one who forgives, condemns, and consoles.<sup>75</sup> From all the above, the human response to divine grace (conversion) determines judgement, which is the subsidiary of the sinner’s justification by accepting God’s grace. As the Creator of the universe, God can unveil the human heart and hereby, conduct the fairest justice in judging humans. As a corollary, 1 Corinthians 3:19 states “the wisdom of this world is folly with God,” which exclusively grants God the power of judgment to determine the right standard and execute it. Jesus came from a position of simplicity and openness, but also from one of authority in the way He spoke as the “Son of God” to “save the lost.” This authority derives from His Sonship as He relates to God, His Father, who grants Him the power to judge all creation. In parallel, John the Evangelist<sup>76</sup> insinuates immediate doom unto those who do not believe, but an irony occurs when Jesus, the judge, gets judged and condemned by sinners.<sup>77</sup> In His arrest and condemnation, Jesus uncovers His identity and mission by audaciously affirming His Kingship to the ire of the High Court. Yet, His Kingdom is not from the material world, but is in the Father. Regarding the resurrection of all the dead, good people are destined for eternal life whereas evil people are destined for punitive judgment.

### ***1.3. The Fullness of Christian Hope***

As a result of the believed eschatological eventuality, all Christians share the soteriological desire for everlasting life as the ultimate destiny. Regardless of denominational differences, Jesus Christ established the Christian paradigm through His life, death, and resurrection for all humans to live with God in heaven. The Christ event planted the seeds for a “Christian hope” inseparable from “salvation”. From Hebrew, its significance is “security” or “freedom from constriction”<sup>78</sup> and in the ancient Israeli understanding, it was understood as “God’s interventions” (e.g. freedom from bondage in Egypt). This perspective slightly differs from the traditional notion of obtaining eternal life to get “saved” from hellfire. The latter echoes Pope John Paul II’s definition: “To save means to liberate from radical evil.” So, eternal destiny is geared toward the eschatological immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the body.

As a precursor to Christian hope, the Old Testament Books of Exodus, Job, Ezekiel, and Daniel provide numerous examples of Jewish hope. In the Book of Daniel, many passages foreshadow the apocalyptic literature presented in the Book of Revelation with emphasis on the resurrection of the dead. The object of hope is the “coming apocalyptic judgement” resulting in

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid, 138.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid, 139.

<sup>76</sup> One of the original twelve apostle of Jesus Christ; the beloved disciple who stood by Mary at the cross and who wrote the fourth (mystical) Gospel. (<https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08492a.htm>).

<sup>77</sup> O’Callaghan, *Christ Our Hope*, 141.

<sup>78</sup> Rausch & Clifford, *Catholicism in the Third Millennium*, 192.

“the dead raised to everlasting life.” Unlike Christianity in which Jesus’s resurrection is the most important belief, Judaism did not always “take for granted” the “resurrection of the dead” and thus, the concept of “life after death” was not understood in the same way. In the Jewish eschatological tradition of Antiquity, Israelites believed in a “resurrection of all the dead” at the end of time. More specifically, the early Christian community composed of Jews believed they would see the end of the world as buttressed by the Book of Revelation. Greek philosophy yielded a notion of dualistic anthropology explaining the relation between body and soul and Platonism criticizes the body as the soul’s prison. Upon death, the “spirit” exits the “self” and leaves the body to rot in a “place of darkness” called “Sheol.”<sup>79</sup> With no hope for any relationship with God, this drab milieu is lifeless, deprived of work or wisdom, and is the fate of evil people.

In contemporary theology, Christian eschatology entails traditional beliefs: resurrection occurs after death followed by the soul’s judgement and reunion with the body at the end of time. Ultimately, the human’s inferior body will conform with Christ’s glorified body to transcend the dimensions of time and space in the eschaton. More broadly, Christ’s “redemptive work” will liberate creation from the shackles of corruption. Teleologically, Christian hope is at the core of bodily resurrection and is geared toward heaven, the dwelling place of God, and the Apostles’ creeds (Nicaea and Constantinople) have explicitly posited this “formula of faith”. In eschatology, God accepts the individual for eternal life and grants them the “beatific vision” of seeing His face<sup>80</sup>. As the eschatological catalyst, the Parousia is often forecasted in the Book of Daniel as the “Son of Man”, the end times “agent of judgement”, “bringer of God’s salvation”, the resurrected Christ returning according to the “apocalyptic expectation” following “God’s trumpet”. In parallel, numerous Baptists believe in the “Rapture”<sup>81</sup> event where the most faithful will be “taken up” into heaven prior to the Great Tribulation.

As alluded to in the Bible, the “final judgement” reserved for the wicked is utter condemnation, but the destination is still debated among Christians. Traditionally, Christians believe evil doers would “pay for their sins” in hell, linguistically deriving from the German word “hel,” meaning “place of the dead.” The Hebrew word found in the New Testament is “Gehanna” in reference to the “valley of the sons of Hinnon” or wasteland outside Jerusalem, spiritually indicating the place where the evil ones’ bodies and souls are sent.

The belief that “all will be saved” is widely unpopular, but its proponents cannot accept that a merciful God would punish His children eternally. They would agree however to define hell as a separation from God and equate it with “suffering and alienation.” In contrast, Edward Schillebeeckx<sup>82</sup> holds a more evocative view in opposition with the Universalist theory which he accuses of “trivializing the struggle between good and evil”.<sup>83</sup> In addition, he affirms heaven and hell are “asymmetrical affirmations of faith” and distinguishes them: the former implies “eternal communion” of God, the “divine mystery,”<sup>84</sup> with His fellow human beings whereas the latter

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid, 193.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid, 196.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid, 197.

<sup>82</sup> Edward Schillebeeckx’s theology centered on the human person being in the image of God and he is also known for his role in ecclesiastic renewal and for combatting social injustice. ([https://schillebeeckx.nl/overlijden-edward-schillebeeckx/persoon?langswitch\\_lang=en](https://schillebeeckx.nl/overlijden-edward-schillebeeckx/persoon?langswitch_lang=en)).

<sup>83</sup> Schillebeeckx, E. *Church: The Human Story of God*. (New York: Crossroad, 1990), p. 7.

<sup>84</sup> Rausch & Clifford, *Catholicism in the Third Millennium*, 200.

implies the rejection of fellowship with God. The former results in eternal life beyond bodily death whereas the latter results in no subsistence into eternity. Schillebeeckx treads the line between Universalism and mainstream Christianity in the way he handles God's justice and mercy and human freedom while avoiding labelling God as vindictive.

One eschatological difference between Roman Catholics and Evangelical Baptists revolves around purgatory which, contrary to Catholics, Baptists do not believe in (mainly because it is not "biblically based"). The Catholic Bible's Book of 2 Maccabees 12:42 provides the root basis to pray for the dead, which is practiced by Catholics, but frowned upon by Baptists. Those prayers are directed to those dwelling in purgatory and undergoing "temporal punishment" to erase the "damaging effects of sin" in preparation to see God. Instead of discarding the concept of purgatory, the Roman Catholic Church reaffirmed it in the Council of Trent against the Protestant Reformation. Having no time and space, purgatory is the burning encounter with God after death, purifying the individual from the "self-centeredness" preventing them from unifying with God. Another dogmatic point in Catholicism is Jesus Christ's union with His mystical body, the Church, outside of which there is no salvation, or *Extra Ecclesiam Nulla Salus*.<sup>85</sup> Here, non-Catholic Christians would disagree and claim sufficiency in a confession of faith in Christ as in John 14:6.

All in all, for both denominations, Christ is expected to return to the world to judge the living and the dead. However, the notion of universalism (salvation of everything by God) is still pondered upon on the Catholic side, but heavily rejected on the Evangelical side. In any case, God will bring justice to the whole cosmos and thus, bring about the "new heavens and the new earth." Nevertheless, opinions differ regarding how much humans should do to prepare for the arrival of God's end times Kingdom to rule for eternity. Before this final consummation of the universe, God (in the form of the returning Christ) will judge each resurrected individual and then, the whole world so that humanity reaches its fullness in the eschaton.

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<sup>85</sup> Brother André Marie, "Doctrinal Beliefs," (April 15, 2019). Catholicism.org. accessed January 3, 2023, <https://catholicism.org/doctrinal-belief.html#:~:text=We%20believe%20and%20profess%20to,an%20absolute%20necessity%20of%20means.>

## **Chapter 2: Catholic and Baptist Eschatological Viewpoints**

### ***2.1. Baptist Eschatology and Dispensational Premillennialism***

During the seventeenth century, Baptists would mix with non-Baptist Separatists as they shared a common political cause, and this explains how they might have shared the same side during the American Civil War. In the nineteenth century, Baptists started developing affinities with different Evangelical churches as they co-founded “pan-Evangelical bodies” like the *Bible Society*, the *London Missionary Society*, and anti-slavery societies, all shaping America on the societal and political levels. Baptists were then able to sew new ties with other churches by putting aside ecclesiological differences. Herewith, pan-evangelicalism saw its early beginnings as Baptists and Evangelicals found biblical agreements. During this movement, Baptists started addressing the question of mixed membership within their midst and negotiating the question of ecumenism. For instance, it was possible to find Baptist churches practicing both adult and infant baptism as it was the case for Pastor John Bunyan’s<sup>86</sup> congregation before the eighteenth century. Until that moment, associations like the *Particular Baptist Movement*, which included the *Jacob-Lathrop-Jessey church*, would exercise the virtue of “charity,”<sup>87</sup> crucial in the Catholic Church. Pan-evangelicalism later examined non-members’ acceptance at the communion table, after which some churches opted for a more exclusionary stance towards people outside their tradition.

While respecting other denominations’ faiths and recognizing the unity shared in the “universal Church of Christ” including all the world’s Christians, church assembly can only be instantiated in local churches according to Baptist thought. In accordance with their convictions, Baptists reserve the right to disregard decisions made by central church bodies. While there is no “Baptist Church,” local Baptist churches agree on a list of characteristics: a body of believers assembled to worship, partaking in communion, the administration of baptism to a newcomer, mutual edification, and discernment of Christ’s mind. Eschatologically, this “Church” will stand strong as one apostolic body celebrating communion in remembrance of Jesus following the episcopacy ancestrally presented by the Early Church until the “Last Day when the dead rise” and Christ returns to the material world. In synchrony with Christian eschatology, preaching the sermon has priority over the church service, which is the exact opposite praxis when compared with the Roman Catholic mass. As it operates through the pastor as its vessel, the Holy Spirit is the main driver of the style of worship in view of the lurking end times ahead.

As a relatively new philosophy, Dispensationalism is a prophetic belief that arose in the United Kingdom and introduced by John Nelson Darby,<sup>88</sup> a major contributor to nineteenth century Evangelical theology, and it became a “hallmark of Fundamentalism,”<sup>89</sup> but many Christians

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<sup>86</sup> Celebrated English minister who authored the book *Pilgrim’s Progress*, the most prominent manifestation of the Puritan Christian outlook. (<https://www.britannica.com/biography/John-Bunyan>).

<sup>87</sup> Stephen R. Holmes, *Baptist Theology* (London; New York: T & T Clark, 2012), 92.

<sup>88</sup> Anglo-Irish Bible teacher who advocated for Dispensationalism and was a stark proponent of the pre-tribulation rapture and biblical prophecy. (<https://www.socalsem.edu/john-nelson-darby-a-brief-sketch-of-his-life-and-impact/>).

<sup>89</sup> Barry Hankins, *Evangelicalism and Fundamentalism: A Documentary Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 2008), 59.



differed on the matter. Before Darby, Edward Irving<sup>90</sup> championed Dispensationalism and Premillennialism and received support from the *Plymouth Brethren* church.<sup>91</sup> Irving interpreted biblical prophecy literally, advocated for the Jews' restoration in Palestine, and believed in an increasing apostasy on the part of the Church and in Christ's imminent return. Likewise, Darby made the distinction between Israel and the Church and split the Parousia into a first phase, the pretribulation Rapture when Christ will assemble His saints, and a second phase, the Second Coming when Christ will finally return. Hence, Dispensationalism successfully became widespread thanks to many outlets like periodicals, conferences, and the Scofield (reference) Bible.<sup>92</sup> Its elaborate end times scenario contained many elements that captivated the minds of many people: the Jew's restoration in Palestine with a rebuilding of Jerusalem's temple, the Rapture, the Antichrist,<sup>93</sup> the Great Tribulation, and the Battle of Armageddon. Dispensationalism is very often but not always coupled with the Premillennialism shared by many Evangelical churches and almost all Fundamentalists are concurrently Premillennial and Dispensational. In line with Premillennialism, the present would be expected to end with the "signs of the times"<sup>94</sup> preceding the Parousia of Revelation 20 to be taken literally. The latter will be ostentatious and sudden, and the subsequent Millennium will usher in an interregnum or "golden age" of peace and justice until the Last Judgment. Then, Satan will be unshackled from bondage to conduct a final insurrection against God only to lose. After initially being isolationist, Dispensationalists started getting more politically involved after the 1948 instalment of the State of Israel and the 1967 *Six Days War* because these events had prophetic end times significance for them.

In popular literature, Carla C. Carlson and Hal Lindsey's book "The Late Great Planet Earth" has Dispensational Premillennialist overtones. In Dispensationalism, Darby explained God's unfolding redemptive plan by dividing time unequally into seven scriptural "dispensations,"<sup>95</sup> or God's ways of communicating with humanity. Common denominators are recycled at each failing Dispensational "test" ending in judgment, sin, and responsibility.

*First*, human being's failure occurs in Genesis and comes with the "dispensation of innocence" where humans no longer have their original purity given their disobedient actions.

*Second*, Adam and Eve fall from grace (with God) and become acquainted with the dichotomy of good and evil and their human conscience obtains a basis for "moral judgment" as an initial measure of responsibility (to commit good deeds, not bad ones). This second dispensation ends with the flood.

*Third*, God made humans in charge of His world's "government" so that mankind exercises "authority over the world."

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<sup>90</sup> Scottish minister who innovated Irvingism later renamed the Catholic Apostolic Church (not to be confused with the Roman Catholic Church since it is a branch of the Protestant Restorationist denomination). (<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Edward-Irving>).

<sup>91</sup> Thomas P. Weber. *Millennialism, The Oxford Handbook of Eschatology* Eschatology, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 378, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195170498.003.21>.

<sup>92</sup> Version of the Bible having commentary annotations and named after congregational preacher Cyrus I. Scofield. It is mostly read by Protestants, especially those favoring Dispensational Premillennialism. (<https://www.gotquestions.org/Scofield-Reference-Bible.html>).

<sup>93</sup> Ultimate opponent of Jesus Christ expected to arrive in the world before the final judgement. (<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Antichrist>).

<sup>94</sup> Weber, *Millennialism*, 367, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195170498.003.21>.

<sup>95</sup> Hankins, *Evangelicalism and Fundamentalism*, 60-1.

*Fourth*, God dispensed with the Israelites regarding His promise dependent on their "faithfulness and obedience," but this dispensation resulted in a "judgment of bondage in Egypt."

*Fifth*, God placed His people under a "covenant of law" which they flagrantly violated.

*Sixth*, Paul's letter to the Ephesians states the human being is "saved by grace through faith" as a "gift from God" of eternal salvation to every nation through Christ's sacrificial death.

Faith in Christ and a will to repent are demanded and, before the "Great Tribulation," those doing so will be "caught up to meet the Lord in the air" (1 Thessalonians 4:17). In the eschatological mindset, Christ's return to the material world in full glory sets the stage for the last dispensation.

*Seventh*, people will be ruled for a millennium by Christ sitting in Jerusalem after which Satan will be freed to assemble the nations against Christ and the Saints. Then ensues the final judgment with punishment for the wicked raised from the dead and the start of a "New Heaven and New Earth."

Pertaining to Scripture, it is worth outlining the statements of belief in the *Philadelphia Prophetic Conference*.<sup>96</sup>

*Firstly*, the conference's attendees claim the Bible is inerrant and is the final word of God and the only authority.

*Secondly*, Jesus Christ is Lord and is a deity and faith is placed in His "substitutionary death" as atonement for human sin, His resurrection, and His ascension until His "second appearance."

*Thirdly*, from an eschatological bent, the prophetic Word is geared toward fulfillment and the "coming of Jesus Christ" at the close of the age.

*Fourthly*, the Lord will be united with His Church.

*Fifthly*, people will congregate in Israel and their unbelief will turn into belief at the sight of Christ.

*Sixthly*, the Second Coming of Christ serves as the motivation for all human schemes to restructure.

*Seventhly*, under Christ's millennial reign, the Holy Spirit will "effuse upon the flesh."

*Eighthly*, all the previous statements are true and build the Christian character needed for immanent action-taking.

Regarding the Rapture, despite it not being explicitly written in the Bible, it is still part of the essence of the truth communicated in God's Word for Dispensational Premillennialists. On one side, the Rapture will result in the disappearance of millions of people and on the other side, people who will have dissented from the Church will be smitten by God's judgment. Concurrently, all "true believers" shall unite with Jesus in the air to go to the "glorious place" known as heaven. Otherwise, the Great Tribulation and the Battle of Armageddon<sup>97</sup> will generate a lot of bloodshed and turmoil like never seen before. As a speculation, the Roman Empire will be revived with a dictator at its head, and it will fight the Eastern nations composed of Red China and Russia among others. Specifically, the Eastern nations will betray the Roman dictator (Antichrist) and send an array of hundreds of millions against him. The story further depicts the Easterners settling in Jerusalem and even reaching Mount Zion, but their leader Gog will be defeated by God who will enter into judgment with him by "raining torrential rains"<sup>98</sup> on him. For its part, North America will not be immune to punishment because God is expected to "send fire on the Coastlands (United States of America)." Thus, the whole inhabited Earth will experience cataclysmic events with the greatest and most climactic war bound to happen near Mount Megiddo headlined as

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid, 62-3.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid, 65.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid, 67-9.

“Armageddon.” Famously, French Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte<sup>99</sup> had described Harmageddon (the “Valley of Jehoshaphat” in the Old Testament) as a place where the whole world “could maneuver for battle.” In Johannine apocalypticism, it is predicted that “all cities of the nations will be destroyed” and that the Eastern forces will “wipe out a third of the Earth’s population” where “entire islands and mountains would be blown off the map.”<sup>100</sup> Oddly, a contradicting mixture of hope and fear is associated with Jesus’s timely return at the moment of greatest destruction.

In the seventeenth century, several key individuals (“divines”), including Benjamin Keach,<sup>101</sup> Vavasor Powell,<sup>102</sup> and Hanserd Knollys,<sup>103</sup> brought forth “prognostications about Christ’s future millennial earthly reign.”<sup>104</sup> The former built his hermeneutical eschatology upon the foundations laid by the latter two, of which Knollys was Keach’s mentor. Nonetheless, these theological developments did not come without troubles, and this can be understood when noting that Hanserd Knollys “ran afoul of the religious leaders”<sup>105</sup> in the American colonies during the late 1630s. Besides, Vavasor Powell championed a theocratic kingdom, but opposed any monarchy-like government. Amid political chicanery, Powell espoused the vision of an eschatological future “necessitating military action,”<sup>106</sup> but the United Kingdom’s Restoration Government (focused on territorial grants and colonization) did not tolerate the ramifications. In parallel, Keach and Knollys’s publications dealt with prophetic biblical passages describing Christ’s end times Kingdom, which shaped Baptists’ eschatological views. Before Powell, Knollys, and Keach, Thomas Brightman,<sup>107</sup> had also submitted his eschatological publication about King Solomon’s *Song of Songs*<sup>108</sup> (Old Testament). From this came Powell’s 1650 sermon in which he divides the Kingdom into celestial, spiritual, and terrestrial aspects. On this sermon, Knollys’s vision of the “Glory and Perfection of Christ’s Kingdom” differs slightly from Powell’s because he conceptualized the “world that is to come” not as the eternal state of God’s Kingdom of glory, but as the glorious and spiritual state of Christ’s earthly Kingdom. From apocalyptic literature, Keach drew on several numbers attributed to past or future events in “redemptive history” to calculate the time until Christ’s Second Coming. Concretely, his numerological end times framework is comprised of 2300 days in Daniel 8, 70 weeks in Daniel 9, 1290 and 1335 days in Daniel 12, and 42 months and 1260 days in Revelation 11.<sup>109</sup> More so, Keach’s numerology implied Christ’s Second Coming would occur around 1730.<sup>110</sup> In sum, Christ’s visible earthly reign

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<sup>99</sup> French military leader and emperor who conquered a large portion of Europe in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. (<https://www.history.com/topics/european-history/napoleon>).

<sup>100</sup> Hankins, *Evangelicalism and Fundamentalism*, 70.

<sup>101</sup> Seventeenth century English Baptist minister who weaved in hymn singing during church worship. (<https://founders.org/articles/benjamin-keach-the-ministry-of-an-average-pastor/>).

<sup>102</sup> Influential seventeenth-century Welsh preacher who was active during the Puritan movement. (<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Vavasor-Powell>).

<sup>103</sup> Seventeenth century English preacher of the *Particular Baptist* movement. (<https://www.baptists.net/history/category/hanserd-knollys/>).

<sup>104</sup> Jonathan Arnold. “Radical, Baptist Eschatology: The Eschatological Vision of Vavasor Powell, Hanserd Knollys, and Benjamin Keach,” *Perichoresis* 17, (June 2019): 77, <https://doi.org/10.2478/perc-2019-0018>.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid*, 80.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid*, 82.

<sup>107</sup> English author of the seventeenth century who was considered a “divine” in the Puritan movement. (<https://www.biblicalcyclopedia.com/B/brightman-thomas.html>).

<sup>108</sup> Arnold, “Radical, Baptist Eschatology,” 83, <https://doi.org/10.2478/perc-2019-0018>.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid*, 85.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid*, 97.

and the eternal Kingdom were the two types of “future hope”<sup>111</sup> the three preachers provided to their congregations. As a Premillennialist, Keach believed in the Messiah’s Second Coming before the millennium, but before that, he envisioned a “spiritual Kingdom” which shall be “enveloped by the universal Kingdom”<sup>112</sup> to come. In Knollys’s Postmillennial end times perspective, the Messiah’s physical return happens after Christ’s spiritual reign through His people for a thousand years (Revelation 20). Therewithal, the three theologians believed in Scripture condoning armed action to resist earthly authorities since they thought Christ’s Kingdom was imminent and radical obedience to the Lord was necessary.<sup>113</sup>

In contemporary times, societal issues have superseded doctrinal differences between Christian denominations following theological novelties such as the *Nouvelle Théologie* and the Second Vatican Council. Also, ecumenical efforts have brought Christian groups together with an outlook on the end times and eschatology has become more central for most denominations. As unlikely as it seems, Traditionalist Roman Catholics have allied themselves with Evangelicals in the last quarter of the twentieth century where, orthodox and progressivists are clashing in culture wars. All these conflicts revolve around “morality” which progressivists view as “socially constructed” and orthodox view as “fixed and transcendent.”<sup>114</sup> In 1994, “Evangelicals and Catholics Together” was a statement issued to showcase both groups uniting despite previous opposition. Catholics and Evangelicals found common ground to put forth orthodox Christianity and traditional morality against modern society’s secularism and postmodern relativism. For a long time, Protestants (Evangelicals) rebuked the “Roman” aspect of Roman Catholicism and did not consider it as Christianity, primarily because of the pope,<sup>115</sup> whom they viewed as dislodging Christ. Nowadays, fences between denominations are slightly mended to combat postmodernism and the seemingly increasing distance between God and humanity.

Furthermore, the first reason for the claim that Roman Catholicism is not Christianity is its reliance on tradition aside from Scripture and their decrees and councils developed as inspired sources of knowledge and church practice. To explain papal infallibility, it is the authority of the pope to speak *ex-cathedra* “as a pastor or teacher in defining doctrine regarding faith and morals for the whole Church” based on Christ’s teachings. Catholics defend the pope’s legitimacy and claim that it comes from the inception of the Church as described in Matthew 16:18 where Jesus commissions Peter to lead the Church. Evangelical Baptists prefer a more decentralized system of praxis and do not believe in the pope’s authority as the vicar of Christ. To clarify the Catholic view, papal infallibility is not “impeccability, omnipotence, omniscience, or ad hoc inspiration”<sup>116</sup> contrary to how Protestants may perceive Catholics’ understanding of this notion.

Secondly, Roman Catholicism has been accused of committing diabolical deeds and the Roman Catholic Church has been equated with Revelation 17’s Babylonian woman “drunken with the blood of the saints”. Its “reveling in blood and crime” was often mentioned by Protestants, lots of whom were slain for their faith. These evil acts were considered “meritorious demonstrations

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid, 87.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid, 87.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid, 90.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid, 217.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid, 218.

<sup>116</sup> James M. O’Neill, *Catholicism and American Freedom* (New York: Harper, 1952), 159-60.

of fidelity” serving to “augment” God’s glory, feeding into the idea of Roman persecution. To state an example, the *Foxe’s Book of Martyrs* alludes to the “martyrs of the Reformation.”<sup>117</sup>

The third reason is the sanctification of the human person by Christ’s unique sacrifice and His perfecting of humankind. Evangelicals believe this sacrifice shall not be repeated, but Roman Catholics believe in Christ’s weekly sacramental sacrifice performed by priests during mass, the Lord’s Supper, for the “remission of sins”.

The fourth reason regards sinners’ justification and Paul’s letter to the Romans and mentions the “deeds of law” performed by the “flesh” will not serve to justify the soul before God. This accentuates the person’s justification by faith and that God “imputes righteousness without works” and only this imputation through faith is necessary. Again, from the Protestant viewpoint, Roman Catholicism mandates baptism to be justified and the Council of Trent indicates that renewal by the Holy Spirit “imparts”, “infuses”, and “implants” righteousness which are not defined as “imputation.”<sup>118</sup> Without this imputation (justification), the sinner has no hope to be saved, but the Council of Trent’s Session 6, canon 12, rebukes (“anathema”) the idea of only placing faith in divine mercy to be justified. In Session 6, canon 24, the nature of good works is questioned where the council refuses to define those as “merely fruits and signs of justification”. Here, works are a “cause of the increase (in justification),” and it scolds anyone not believing in its mechanism.

In the fifth reason, Jesus Christ is the only mediator (intercessor) between humankind and God, but Roman Catholicism elevates His mother, Mary, to that status where she can convert and save someone’s soul through her patronage detailed in the Book of Devotion. Session 25 also adds the “intercession of all departed saints”. Politically, Roman Catholicism was accused of opposing liberty by ushering in totalitarianism (e.g. the pope approving Mussolini’s conquest of Ethiopia).<sup>119</sup>

In the third millennium, Evangelicals and Catholics face the “opportunity and responsibility” to unite and, as Pope John Paul II said, face a “springtime of world missions” within one unifying Christian mission. In it, divisions within Christianity are not “legitimate diversity,” but the pressing need is for Christians to humbly “confess their sins” against the Christian unity Christ wanted.<sup>120</sup> Infighting between Christians should stop to allow for fraternal cooperation in obeying God according to the Holy Writ until the end times. This pope sees the deep communal separations between denominations and the risk of “distrustful polemic,”<sup>121</sup> but nothing should prevent Christians from living in unity pertaining to the “love of Christ” guiding them to love one another (e.g. His disciples). God’s will for His people Israel is extrapolated to all of humanity, but from the Christ event, the latter is only left with a precursor to the greatest ultimate revelation happening in the end times where God (the returning Christ) will face His creation and all His creatures. In Scripture, Christ’s self-revelation as the Word of truth allowed people to challenge and build each other up as members of the Body of Christ. Here, all relevant parties should present their disagreements within a “sustained conversation” like in the “formal theological dialogue”

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<sup>117</sup> Hankins, *Evangelicalism and Fundamentalism*, 220.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid*, 221.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid*, 223.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid*, 224.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid*, 235.

between Roman Catholics and Evangelicals who have constructed a relationship of trust despite “authentic disagreements.” Both are bound together to secure moral truth in the realms of politics, law, and culture in their contention against opponents of religious freedom<sup>122</sup> (first of all freedoms). Catholics and Evangelicals perceive the “moral experiment” as most essential to the “American Experiment,” the constitutional order established by the Founding Fathers of America. To both, religion secures virtue, which is crucial for the people to act in a free and just way in any institution.

## ***2.2. Catholic Eschatology and Amillennialism***

To flesh out millenarianism or chiliasm, one counts Christ’s glorious return to Earth, the gathering of the just, the annihilation of His adversaries, Christ’s reign with the saints, and the wicked’s condemnation. Here, Catholics disagree with the millennial reign because to them, the quantitative aspect, one thousand years, is not an essential element of the millennium.<sup>123</sup> Rather, Christ’s early return, the establishment of an earthly Kingdom, the resurrection of everyone, and the final judgment (heaven or hell) are all elements describing the Roman Catholic understanding of the millennium. In connection with Jewish eschatology, the Jews’ history of oppression from several civilizations led to a natural (worldly) and supernatural (otherworldly) apocalyptic view<sup>124</sup> and a longing for a Messianic figure that will save them from their enemies and reestablish Israel’s Kingdom on Earth.

Conversely, Roman Catholic eschatology portrays Jesus Christ as the Messiah who came to cleanse humanity of its sins and thus, establish God’s Kingdom through His birth, life, death, and resurrection. So, the Kingdom (of Israel) was understood as a spiritual concept rather than a physical one. Thence, one comprehends Roman Catholicism’s reading of the Book of Revelation, where God establishes His Kingdom by defeating the (symbolic) beast and the Antichrist in the end times after Christ and the Church defeat the evil forces of Satan in the world.

Defining Amillennialism goes beyond the absence of Christ’s literal millennial reign. The majority of Christians adopted this perspective around the fifth century in light of their understanding that God’s Kingdom has already been installed with Christ’s First Coming, hence fulfilling Old Testament prophecies. Nonetheless, Amillennialists are awaiting the Last Judgment after which a new heaven/new earth will take place. They also espouse the thoughts of Preterists who cloistered their eschatology in the period until the first century and Historicists who marked humanity’s timeline with the prophecies’ completion. Additionally, Amillennialists would agree Christ’s current earthly Kingdom is evolving to marry God’s end times Kingdom. Regarding Old Testament prophecies, Amillennialism is informed by “Supersessionism”<sup>125</sup> where Jews’ rejection of Christ as the Messiah implies the creation of a “new Israel,” the Church of believers. For three centuries after this, the Roman Empire persecuted the early Christians, which engendered apocalyptic millennialism. This eschatology was rebuked by Emperor Constantine the Great’s<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid, 227.

<sup>123</sup> Kevin Knight, (2023), “Millenium and Millenarianism,” New Advent, accessed February 11, 2024, <https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10307a.htm>.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Weber, *Millennialism*, 368, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195170498.003.21>.

<sup>126</sup> One of the most influential Roman Emperors who reshaped his empire and converted to Christianity. (<https://www.thecollector.com/who-was-constantine-the-great-and-accomplishments/>).

court theologian, Bishop Eusebius of Caesarea,<sup>127</sup> who rather agreed with Origen's allegorical view of the Book of Revelation's future Kingdom in the human soul. In contrast, Bishop Augustine of Hippo would eventually reject apocalyptic millennialism and Eusebius's perspective by claiming the city of God (Kingdom) and the city of man were coexisting separately. Since he sees the coming of the Antichrist and Satan reigning in the earthly city, Augustine holds the belief in a Last Judgment and to the unrelatedness of redemptive and secular history.<sup>128</sup>

Some early Church figures in Catholicism advocated for an actual millennium like Bishop Papias of Hierapolis<sup>129</sup> who mentions Christ's thousand-year Kingdom following the dead's resurrection.<sup>130</sup> In his opposition to Gnostic thinkers who denied the millennium, Irenaeus of Lyon<sup>131</sup> loosely corroborates this view by indicating that the saints would "enjoy a superabundance of earthly pleasures" during Christ's reign. Justin Martyr<sup>132</sup> also recognized the millennium as the time when people will live with their resurrected bodies in an "enlarged Jerusalem."<sup>133</sup> In the Early Church's Jewish conception, a thousand years was equated with one day and to explain, God created everything in six days which equals "six millennia" and thus, the Son of God would defeat the wicked and rest on the "seventh day."<sup>134</sup> (All this is a conjecture). Still, the Apostolic tradition included the resurrection of bodies and Christ's return as the world's judge, but not the millennium. Near the second century's end, the Church opposed millenarianism and its strongest opponent was Origen of Alexandria whose ecclesiastical theology held Neo-Platonist doctrines<sup>135</sup> which heavily influenced Oriental Christians to abandon millenarianism. Different saints in the fourth and fifth centuries such as Jerome of Stridon,<sup>136</sup> Ambrose of Milan,<sup>137</sup> and Augustin of Hippo also opposed this doctrine. Yet, Augustine temporarily championed a spiritual millennium after the universal resurrection and before the final judgment, but later became Amillennial when he combined both into one event. In his allegorical assessment of the millennium, Augustine correlates the first resurrection with baptism (and the spiritual birth entailed) and summates six thousand years as the whole of eternal life with the millennium as the sabbath of the end of the world. Symbolically, the number one thousand is an expression of perfection<sup>138</sup> (as God will perfect the world in the end times). During the early persecution of Christians, millenarianism served to help them persevere and hope for Christ's imminent return to defeat the persecutors, but chiliastic views slowly disappeared. Additionally, medieval Church doctrine did not have millenarianism, but in the

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<sup>127</sup> Fourth century Bishop who witnessed Christian persecution. (<https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05617b.htm>).

<sup>128</sup> Weber, *Millennialism*, 371, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195170498.003.21>.

<sup>129</sup> Apostolic Father who wrote oracles and about the apostle John. (<https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11457c.htm>).

<sup>130</sup> Kevin Knight, (2023), "Millenium and Millenarianism," New Advent, accessed February 11, 2024, <https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10307a.htm>.

<sup>131</sup> Second century Church Father who wrote against Gnosticism. (<https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08130b.htm>).

<sup>132</sup> Christian apologist of the first century who came from Platonism and wrote "Apologies" and "Dialogue" where he discusses philosophy and his conversion. (<https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08580c.htm>).

<sup>133</sup> Kevin Knight, (2023), "Millenium and Millenarianism," New Advent, accessed February 11, 2024, <https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10307a.htm>.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> Eusebius Sophronius Hieronimus was a fourth century priest and theologian best know for translating the Bible from Hebrew and Greek into Latin. (<https://www.thecollector.com/who-was-jerome-of-stridon/>).

<sup>137</sup> Bishop of Milan and Doctor of the Church, he was known for his aid to the less fortunate and his contributions to the Catholic Intellectual Tradition. (<https://www.sau.edu/about-us/our-history/ambrose-of-milan#:~:text=He%20became%20celebrated%20for%20his,of%20the%20Catholic%20Intellectual%20Tradition.>).

<sup>138</sup> Kevin Knight, (2023), "Millenium and Millenarianism," New Advent, accessed February 11, 2024, <https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10307a.htm>.

nineteenth century, Catholic theologians explained apocalypticism by conceiving a moderate and modified millenarianism (Post-tributational Premillennialism).<sup>139</sup> To name a few examples, one counts Giovanni Battista Paganì,<sup>140</sup> August Rohling,<sup>141</sup> Johann Nepomuk Schneider,<sup>142</sup> and Pierre Rougeyron.<sup>143</sup> On the eschatological timeline, the Antichrist would arrive, a symbolic millennium would occur, and Christ's Second Coming would coincide with the Last Judgment.

Several theologians on the Roman Catholic magisterium have contributed to eschatology by addressing humanity's destinies revolving around death, individual judgment, heaven, hell, the resurrection, the Parousia, and universal judgment.<sup>144</sup> Before Vatican II, Catholic eschatology was influenced by Platonic philosophy focusing on the soul's immortality and the individual person's fate rather than on that of the collective. In terms of salvation, a clash existed between the *Apocatastasis* doctrine of Universalism, and the eternity of hell brought forth by the Council of Constantinople (543). The Council of Toledo (675) and the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) reinvigorated the doctrine of bodily resurrection.<sup>145</sup> With Vatican II, eschatology shifted to the center of theology to connect all other doctrines together. This renewal of the Church's nature was part of the post-World War I *ressourcement* (vocation in communion with God) from the *Nouvelle Théologie* (New Theology) occurring in France and Germany.<sup>146</sup> A reference to Cyprian of Carthage<sup>147</sup> corroborated the necessity to adopt a Christocentric stance and place eschatology in ecclesiology. Here, one understands Christ had already catalysed the Last Days as the Church is guided by the Holy Spirit to change the world for God's Kingdom. Inherently, Catholics believe the Church will be perfected with the cosmos's renewal and reestablishment in Christ.

The Catholic Church views life as a pilgrimage with stationary sacraments toward God's ultimate revelation. In opposition to Marxism stating, "religion is the opiate of the masses," the Church wishes to transform the world with a collective eschatology involving everyone (hence, "catholic" meaning "universal"). At once, the Church differentiates between God's Kingdom and worldly progress, and recognizes the former's duty towards the latter to improve humanity. Also, some points in the 1979 *Congregation of the Doctrine of Faith's* letter<sup>148</sup> clarify Catholic eschatological beliefs: the resurrection of the dead, the soul's retrieval of the body, prayers for the dead, Christ's return, the Virgin Mary's assumption, and the recognition of heaven, hell, and purgatory. Another document, *De quibusdam questionibus actualibus circa eschatologiam* (issues

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> Defender of the Roman Catholic Church as the divinely appointed cornerstone of Christianity.

(<https://www.thriftbooks.com/w/the-pillar-and-foundation-of-truth/11953798/#edition=67943305&idq=59369931>).

<sup>141</sup> German Catholic Priest who taught exegesis. (<https://www.juedische-allgemeine.de/kultur/rassenantisemitismus-in-der-kirche-hoffachig-gemacht/>).

<sup>142</sup> Clergyman who served as Bishop of Trent and stood out by his works on virtue and charity.

(<https://catholicsaints.info/catholic-encyclopedia-johann-nepomuk-von-tschiderer-zu-gleifheim/>).

<sup>143</sup> French missionary priest who travelled to Oceania to preach the gospel. (<https://www.catholic-hierarchy.org/bishop/broug.html>).

<sup>144</sup> Peter C. Phan, *Roman Catholic Theology, The Oxford Handbook of Eschatology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 215.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid, 216.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid, 220.

<sup>147</sup> Third century convert to Christianity who became an eloquent orator, bishop, and martyr and wrote on God's grace and on the passing from the Old Law to the New Covenant. (<https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04583b.htm>).

<sup>148</sup> Phan, *Roman Catholic Theology*, 219.



with eschatology)<sup>149</sup> issued in 1992 by the *International Theological Commission*, outlines some eschatological Catholic doctrines: rejection of reincarnation, Jesus's bodily resurrection setting the example for humans', resurrection not happening right after death, death being good and evil, and the ontological unity of body and soul being scriptural rather than Platonic. Returning to the centrality of eschatology, its Christological and Trinitarian aspects are highlighted in some Protestant theologian's thoughts.<sup>150</sup> Ernst Kasemann<sup>151</sup> hyperbolically phrased apocalypticism as the "mother of all Christian theology." Johannes Weiss<sup>152</sup> and Albert Schweitzer<sup>153</sup> provided a conjecture that Jesus anticipated an impending end to the world in their "consistent theology." C.H. Dodd<sup>154</sup> adds that Jesus's death and resurrection has already fully established God's Kingdom, but theologians Wolfhart Pannenberg and Jurgen Moltmann<sup>155</sup> would agree with God having already established His Kingdom, but it not being completely realized yet. Besides that, Karl Barth and Rudolf Bultmann<sup>156</sup> affirm the existential realization of eschatology occurs in one's faith.

Onward, Roman Catholic theologians would accept the inclusive "presentist-futurist" approach over its dialectical counterpart. Karl Rahner devised his theses about Catholic eschatology: God being the only one knowing the end's exact date, eschatological events' demythologization being an error, and a connection between eschatology and protology (end and beginning). A subset of ideas<sup>157</sup> leaks out of Rahner's theses: individual and collective eschatologies as an ensemble, *Apocatastasis* being an object of hope, eschatology as Christological equivalent of anthropology, and God's final victory by transfiguring the world. When discussing death's "natural" and "personal" meanings, Rahner indicates it goes beyond the body's separation from the soul which profoundly unites itself with the whole cosmos ("pancosmicity" of the soul). Aside from transcendental freedom, Rahner explains that death offers the opportunity to finally accept the reality of creaturehood. For Rahner, purgatory is not a godly punishment, but a painful postmortem self-transformation restoring the person's unity fractured by sin. For him, heaven is the holy mystery of "beatific vision" experienced during transfiguration (the entry into grace when partaking in the Trinitarian exposure to the incomprehensibility of God). Regarding hell, Rahner acknowledges the doctrinal contradiction between eternal damnation and universal salvation but believes both should be conjunctly affirmed. In his view, denying the possibility of universal salvation means limiting God's will, which contradicts God's omnipotence. Lastly, Rahner encourages the Church's involvement in projects for peace, justice, and humanitarianism while awaiting the Parousia and the consummation of God's transcendent Kingdom on Earth.

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<sup>149</sup> Ibid, 219.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid, 221.

<sup>151</sup> German theologian, professor, and pastor who focused on the historical Jesus and the Church (body of Christ). (<https://uni-tuebingen.de/en/faculties/protestant-theology/chairs-and-institutes/new-testament/new-testament-iii/research/edition-of-the-correspondence-rudolf-bultmann-ernst-kaesemann/ernst-kaesemann/>).

<sup>152</sup> German theologian who critiqued the New Testament. (<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Johannes-Weiss>).

<sup>153</sup> German polymath who studied the religious philosophy of Immanuel Kant. (<https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/peace/1952/schweitzer/biographical/>).

<sup>154</sup> Welsh Protestant theologian and New Testament scholar of the nineteenth century who posited that the sole source of authority is truth. (<https://biography.wales/article/s6-DODD-HAR-1884>).

<sup>155</sup> German theologian of the twentieth century, he rose to prominence as a great contributor to the "theology of hope" or liberation theology. (<https://people.bu.edu/wwildman/bce/moltmann.htm>).

<sup>156</sup> Prominent twentieth century theologian known for the demythologization of the New Testament. ([https://people.bu.edu/wwildman/bce/mwt\\_themes\\_760\\_bultmann.htm](https://people.bu.edu/wwildman/bce/mwt_themes_760_bultmann.htm)).

<sup>157</sup> Phan, *Roman Catholic Theology*, 222.

Additionally, Hans Urs Von Balthasar<sup>158</sup> aligns his eschatological Catholic perspective with the Christocentric (theocentric) views of Rahner and Barth. Recalling Augustine, Balthasar defines God as the “Last Thing”<sup>159</sup> by stating that God is paradise, hell, judgment, and purgatory (having all their qualities). Ladislaus Boros<sup>160</sup> qualifies death as a metaphysical event when one’s eternal fate is decided as their body and soul are separated. Concerning God’s Kingdom, Edward Schillebeeckx’s work alludes to human suffering in the eschatological realization of the *humanum*<sup>161</sup> (humanity). He expounds that no salvation exists outside the world, which is a modification of *extra Ecclesiam nulla salus* (no salvation outside the Church), to emphasize humanity’s historical aspect ending in God’s reign. Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger believed in the soul’s immortality but not in death leading to immediate resurrection because he defines immortality as the relationship with what is eternal and meaningful, and the soul as a person’s capacity to relate with truth in love. In modern times, Hans Kung<sup>162</sup> addressed justice and dignity around the afterlife and his stance revolves around hope for eternal life and its consequences for responsibility toward society.<sup>163</sup> Regarding hope, Johannes Baptist Metz<sup>164</sup> parallels the memory of Christ’s suffering, the “eschatological provisio”, with the suffering in the world. To him, God’s Kingdom is a recompense for solidarity with those victims, and not just the fruit of human progress. In liberation theology, Father Gustavo Gutierrez’s<sup>165</sup> eschatology has political implications and social praxis but is not an escape route out of history. In feminism, Rosemary Radford Ruether<sup>166</sup> encourages a collective and ecological eschatology promoting the full humanity of women.

From Yves Congar’s<sup>167</sup> definition of Last Things (*eschata/novissimi*) to its centralization in the return of Christ (*eschaton*), many dimensions are accounted for: Trinitarian, Christological, and collective. For future research, Christian eschatology could benefit immensely from chaos theory (cosmic events’ unpredictability) because of various eventualities spurring from the establishment of a future Kingdom fulfilling God’s covenantal promises. In line with Catholic Amillennialism, John Calvin,<sup>168</sup> would rebuke millennialism or chiliasm as “too puerile to need

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<sup>158</sup> Swiss theologian considered as on the twentieth century’s greatest and who placed love at the center of his theology as the essence of truth. (<https://www.catholiceducation.org/en/culture/catholic-contributions/an-introduction-to-hans-urs-von-balthasar.html>).

<sup>159</sup> Phan, *Roman Catholic Theology*, 225.

<sup>160</sup> Twentieth century Hungarian theologian who was part of the postwar Jesuit theological firmament but laicized later on. ([https://books.google.ca/books/about/The\\_Mystery\\_of\\_Death.html?id=iA-5DwAAQBAJ&source=kp\\_author\\_description&redir\\_esc=y](https://books.google.ca/books/about/The_Mystery_of_Death.html?id=iA-5DwAAQBAJ&source=kp_author_description&redir_esc=y)).

<sup>161</sup> Phan, *Roman Catholic Theology*, 226.

<sup>162</sup> Twentieth century Swiss theologian and priest who served as interlocutor between members of different faiths. (<https://www.interactioncouncil.org/index.php/media-centre/lives-lived-hans-kung>).

<sup>163</sup> Phan, *Roman Catholic Theology*, 227-8.

<sup>164</sup> Twentieth century German theologian who developed a new line of thinking defined as a new political theology. (<https://johannbaptistmetz.com/life/>).

<sup>165</sup> Twentieth century Peruvian Dominican Priest and philosopher who started liberation theology in Latin America. (<https://liberationtheology.org/people-organizations/gustavo-gutierrez/>).

<sup>166</sup> Twentieth century American Christian feminist theologian who pioneered this genre. ([https://people.bu.edu/wwildman/bce/mwt\\_themes\\_908\\_ruether.htm](https://people.bu.edu/wwildman/bce/mwt_themes_908_ruether.htm)).

<sup>167</sup> Twentieth century French Dominican priest who revitalized the branch of ecclesiology by drawing on medieval, patristic, and biblical sources. (<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Yves-Congar>).

<sup>168</sup> Sixteenth century French Protestant theologian who pioneered the Reformed tradition and wrote “The Institutes of the Christian Religion” to detail his understanding. (<https://www.missouristate.edu/Reformations/Reformed.htm#:~:text=John%20Calvin%20is%20perhaps%20best,the%20personal%20life%20and%20destiny>).

refutation”<sup>169</sup>, but believes in Christ’s presence on the last day. To Calvin, the “golden age” idea where the godly subdue the godless is antithetical to apostolic teaching in the Christian faith.

In Roman Catholic eschatology, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*’s profession of faith deems millenarianism to be “falsification of Christ’s Kingdom” or “deception from the Antichrist”<sup>170</sup> ushering in messianic hope within history instead of the unfolding of eschatological judgment. After the Pentecost (Holy Spirit’s descent on the Apostles), Peter declared repentance crucial for human sin to be “blotted out” before Christ’s Second Coming. This is the call for Israel’s preparedness and for the Church’s “ultimate trial” (echoing tribulation in Protestantism), hence recognizing Christian persecution before the Church enters into glory with God. To Catholics, it is the final wedding between Jesus and His bride, the Church, after He comes again to “judge the living and the dead” alongside His followers despite already reigning through the Church “until all things are subjected to Him”.<sup>171</sup> From the Book of Revelation, the catechism teaches the resurrection of the body after the Parousia and the Kingdom coinciding with the universal judgment. Renewed in Christ, the Church will become perfect and fully glorified in heaven as God prepares a new peaceful dwelling to replace the current world blemished by sin. In short, this belief can be summed up as “God will be all in all in eternal life”<sup>172</sup> and this is how the eternal sinless Kingdom will reach its fullness where the just, in their new glorified bodies, will find their labour’s fruits and reign with Christ forever. Likewise, the particular individual judgment will precede the general judgment of everyone. The New Testament parable of Lazarus and the rich man (Luke 16:19-31) refutes the theory of soul-sleep<sup>173</sup> because they both meet their respective fates upon death. Also, the expediency of judgment is shown when Jesus on the cross tells the repenting thief “...today, you will join me in Paradise” (Luke 23:43).

In Thomas Aquinas’s scholasticism, he addresses signs of the end times by outlining some objections to this idea in his *Summa Theologica*.<sup>174</sup> The first objection shows people terrified by those signs, eliminating any sense of peace or security. The second objection to signs is that Christ’s return must remain a hidden matter, not preceded by signs pointing to the Parousia. The third objection indicates that, aside from prophecies of Christ’s First Coming, no signs were shown and thus, no signs should precede the Parousia. To these objections, Aquinas quotes Jerome’s fifteen signs (or “days”)<sup>175</sup> preceding judgment where the thirteenth and fifteenth have an eschatological tone. The thirteenth deals with bodily resurrection by illustrating “all graves from the east and the west will open to allow the bodies to rise again” and have “heavenly light” as Aquinas characterizes. The fifteenth buttresses the thirteenth: “all will die and will rise again with those who died long before”. Aquinas refutes those objections by stressing the necessity of signs stemming from (God’s) judicial power resulting in people “subjecting their hearts to reverence”<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>169</sup> Arnold, “Radical, Baptist Eschatology,” 76, <https://doi.org/10.2478/perc-2019-0018>.

<sup>170</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (New York City: Crown Publishing Group; Random House, 1995), 195.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid, 194.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid, 295-96, 298.

<sup>173</sup> Geisler & MacKenzie, *Roman Catholics and Evangelicals*, 141.

<sup>174</sup> Theological encyclopedia written by Thomas Aquinas on the essentials for a faithful Christian life. (<https://www3.nd.edu/~maritain/jmc/etext/staamp6.htm>).

<sup>175</sup> Kevin Knight. (2017). “Question 73: The Signs that Will Precede the Judgment”. *Summa Theologica*. New Advent, accessed February 11, 2024, <https://www.newadvent.org/summa/5073.htm>.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

before Christ's return. He also separates what constitutes signs and what does not (e.g. the wars and fears mentioned in the Gospels count, but the sack of Jerusalem does not), but is unsure how much these signs increase the Parousia's imminence. To each objection, Aquinas delivers a reply. In the first one, he refers to Augustine stating the end times' "persecution of the good by the wicked"<sup>177</sup>. In this sign, the "wicked" will have a false sense of peace after the Antichrist's death and before the final judgment. For the second one, he posits the pre-judgment signs will not reveal the "Day of the Lord" when He will "come as a thief" (1 Thessalonians 5:2). In the third one, the First and Second Comings differ: signs are necessary before Christ's second advent but not for the first. Aquinas sees a frightening sign of the sun, moon, and other celestial bodies darkening, but increasing in light afterwards. Since Aquinas associated heavenly bodies' movement/variation with imperfection, the world's perfecting will require heavenly bodies to stop moving. Yet, he objected to "immobility being essential to blessedness"<sup>178</sup> by indicating "movement changes nothing pertaining to the state of blessedness,"<sup>179</sup> whereas movements' effects harm this state. For him, godly virtues cause spiritual creatures' (heavenly bodies) movement in nature, and he quotes the New Testament which says: "the stars shall fall from heaven and the powers of heaven shall be shaken" (Matthew 24:29)<sup>180</sup>.

### ***2.3. Common Eschatological Motifs and Further Study Ahead***

Roman Catholics and Evangelical Baptists share the belief in the Messiah's bodily return from heaven to judge the entire world, the living, and the dead. Like the Didache,<sup>181</sup> Matthew 16:27 foreshadows the Parousia when it reads "the Son of Man will come with His angels in His father's glory..." Roman Catholics and Evangelicals both acquiesce to signs: the evangelization of the world (including the Jews), the loss of faith, the Antichrist's arrival, and the tribulation. When the entire world gets evangelized, the final consummation of the world begins with a proliferation of false prophets, wars, and other calamities. A malevolent creature, the "Son of Perdition", will deceitfully lead numerous individuals astray. Irenaeus of Lyon advocated for the end times bodily resurrection by reminding his readers of God's capacity of infusing life into any creation.<sup>182</sup> Like Justin Martyr, Tertullian endorses the Parousia doctrine where Christ's return will give everlasting life to the faithful but condemn the wicked to everlasting fire. In response to denialists, Athenagoras<sup>183</sup> also talked about the resurrection of "dead bodies" by attributing to God the power to revert the body to its original elements regardless of dissolution. In Augustine's perspective, the resurrection happens in the same body where the soul once lived (same sex, no bodily loss) and God can reconstitute the decomposed parts of the body during the resurrection.

As mentioned by Peter in Acts 10:42, in the final moment of human history, God grants His Son the full power of general judgment. Following the Book of Revelation and 2 Thessalonians 1:10, judgment is meant to be stretched over all nations to glorify God. In the Last Days, Catholics

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<sup>177</sup> Augustine of Hippo. *Letter 185*, Chapter 2, Section 11. <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/1102185.htm>.

<sup>178</sup> Knight, "Question 73," *Summa Theologica*. <https://www.newadvent.org/summa/5073.htm>.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid.

<sup>181</sup> Christian manual predating 300 A.D. encapsulating the teachings of the twelve apostles. (<https://christianhistoryinstitute.org/study/module/didache>).

<sup>182</sup> Geisler & MacKenzie, *Roman Catholics and Evangelicals*, 148-49.

<sup>183</sup> Athenian philosopher who converted to Christianity and became an apologist for the faith. (<https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02042b.htm>).

and Evangelicals believe destruction will happen in the way described by Peter "... the earth and everything done on it will be burned up" (2 Peter 3:13). Relatedly, the Book of Isaiah talks about a new heaven/new earth (Isaiah 65:17), foundational for Jesus's reference to a "new age" (Matthew 19:28) and Paul's teaching of the "whole cosmos awaiting redemption" (Romans 8:18).<sup>184</sup> To conclude, the phrase "Last Things" is not chronological because it not only implies time, but definitiveness too. Roman Catholics and Evangelical Baptists both believe in divine judgment, but the former have one final event whereas the latter perceive several steps. In spite of speculations, no one knows the exact circumstantial parameters of the Parousia. As Augustine wrote, "God will be the end of all desires" and heaven will have degrees of honor based on merits.

Also, the end times resurrection of the body is important for Roman Catholics and Evangelical Baptists. Both biblical testaments present dead people rising from the dust (Daniel 12:2 and John 5:28-29).<sup>185</sup> Both denominations agree on the term "flesh" referring to the person's material and weak state and just like Christ, humans are also destined for a future resurrection without which Christ coming back from the dead makes no sense. With a Catholic connotation, Jesus will "raise up believers who ate His body and drank His blood (in sacramental terms)." Firstly, the soul leaves the dead body and metaphysically, the soul joins a new incorruptible body. Secondly, everyone will undergo resurrection and judgment with some receiving eternal life while others receiving damnation. Thirdly, resurrection will occur with the mortal body's transformation into a glorious, spiritual, imperishable, and immortal body. For salvation, Christians should die a "Christian death"<sup>186</sup> which essentially implies "dying in Christ Jesus" as the apostle Paul wrote in Galatians 2:20. Though never intended by God, death theologically results from sin, but through it, God calls the person to enter His domain. Besides, the doctrine of heaven is fundamental to Christian faith and is the soteriological goal of all Christians. Heaven's rudimentary nature is found in the Old Testament in Psalm 16 and Jesus refers to it repeatedly in the New Testament where it is equated with a wedding feast, the Father's house, life everlasting, and the beatific vision (to see God). On the other hand, hell is an abode of torment in which the condemned are destined to an unquenchable fire and a consuming worm as noted in Matthew 5:29 and Mark 9:44.<sup>187</sup>

For both Roman Catholics and Evangelical Baptists, Malachi 3:22 communicates an eschatological prophecy discussing the delay of the Day of Lord with an expected spiritual decline and moral decay. Just like the Book of Haggai, the Book of Malachi's contextual theological background is that of the early postexilic Persian era.<sup>188</sup> The passage (Malachi 3:17-21) says "nothing but ashes and no hope for any future at all"<sup>189</sup> giving the Day of the Lord a gloomy picture, but clearly delineating between the wicked and the faithful. Despite the tendency towards willful forgetfulness, God's community (Israel) acts according to Moses's Law as their morality barometer for public and private life with which comes a reminder of the upcoming divine judgment. In the next verse (Malachi 3:23),<sup>190</sup> the prophet Elijah's awaited return is indicated. In contrast with Canaanite culture, this is how the (eschatological) Jewish way of life is to be followed

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<sup>184</sup> Geisler & MacKenzie, *Roman Catholics and Evangelicals*, 153.

<sup>185</sup> Geisler & MacKenzie, *Roman Catholics and Evangelicals*, 148.

<sup>186</sup> Ratzinger, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 285.

<sup>187</sup> Geisler & MacKenzie, *Roman Catholics and Evangelicals*, 144.

<sup>188</sup> Bob Wielenga, "Remember the Law of Moses: Malachi 3:22 in Prophetic Eschatology with a Missional Postscript," *AOSIS*, (2019), 1.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid*, 2.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid*, 4.

before the “great day of Adonai” as encouraged in the Book of Malachi. During the provisional interlude between the present moment (in Malachi) and the final judgment, those outside the faith have a short opportunity to escape condemnation. Old Testament period Torah-compliance is ostensibly recycled today as Christians emphasize repentance before the looming judgment to occur unexpectedly in the future. From the Book of Haggai, God’s followers may feel spiritually invigorated when reading that the future involves a peace that will “spread out over the world”. This means *Yahweh Tsebaoth*<sup>191</sup> (the Lord of hosts) will be worshipped with joy by people beyond Israel’s borders and until God’s redemptive plan<sup>192</sup> is complete, the joy of worship continues as God cooperates with His faithful in the advent of His new world.

It would be worth exploring the historical evolution of Millennialism in the Middle Ages through the Renaissance, which may have led to the proliferation of millennialist ideologies. For many, the medieval conquest of Jerusalem by Muslims signaled the start of the end times, and Adso Dervensis<sup>193</sup> prophesied the Antichrist coming during the last emperor’s reign. Later, many peasants embarked on the People’s Crusade in the hopes of converting (or killing) Jews in the Holy Land because they believed the Antichrist would come from the Jewish tribe of Dan and they wanted to be there to witness the Second Coming. Crusaders persecuted the Jews because the latter were believed to become the Antichrist’s followers. In the 1100s, Joachim of Fiore<sup>194</sup> held strong millenarist views (e.g. a good pope fighting an Antichrist bad pope) and divided time into three periods (Father, Son, Holy Spirit). In his expansive vision,<sup>195</sup> he saw the tribes joining Satan against God and His faithful before the Last Judgment. The deadly consequences of mixing millennialism with politics can be observed in the case of the Taborites (followers of Jan Hus)<sup>196</sup> who aimed at “cleansing” the world before Christ’s arrival by necessitating violence to fulfill their eschatological duty. In opening, one could delve into apocalyptic interpretations such as Preterism (immediate historical context until the first century), Historicism (timeline of prophetic fulfillment), Futurism (prophetic scenario in the process of unfolding future), and Idealism (Book of Revelation’s artful depiction of good and evil).<sup>197</sup> One may connect these approaches with historical developments following the Protestant Reformation (i.e. many new denominations and the revival of forgotten millennial eschatologies).

Inspired by Augustine and Bernard of Clairvaux,<sup>198</sup> Martin Luther<sup>199</sup> used apocalyptic images to formulate his perspective on the millennium. As he believed the Antichrist would come from within the Church, Bernard of Clairvaux divided the time frame between Christ's First and Second Comings into three periods: persecution of the Church, its defence against heretics, and

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<sup>191</sup> Ibid, 6.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid, 8.

<sup>193</sup> Tenth century Benedictine monk who wrote a treatise on the Antichrist.

(<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Adso-of-Montier-en-Der>).

<sup>194</sup> Italian Cistercian abbot and mystic who dedicated his time to studying the hidden meaning of Scripture.

(<https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08406c.htm>).

<sup>195</sup> Weber, *Millennialism*, 366, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195170498.003.21>.

<sup>196</sup> Czech pastor, church reformer, and university faculty member who got executed for sharing John Wycliffe’s (other Protestant reformer) theology. (<https://www.cslewisinstitute.org/resources/the-legacy-of-john-hus/>).

<sup>197</sup> Weber, *Millennialism*, 366, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195170498.003.21>.

<sup>198</sup> Twelfth century French abbot who reformed the Benedictine order.

(<https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02498d.htm>).

<sup>199</sup> Sixteenth century German monk who catalyzed the Protestant Reformation by nailing his “95 theses” on Castle Church’s door in Wittenberg. (<https://www.biography.com/religious-figures/martin-luther>).

internal corruption by its own leaders. To Luther, the Anabaptists and Thomas Muntzer<sup>200</sup> were threats to peace. The latter waged a violent peasant revolt to “eliminate the godless” for Christ’s Kingdom to take place. Thus, Anabaptists welcomed whoever wished to avoid the coming judgment, but refused anyone flouting their ways (e.g. rebaptism).<sup>201</sup> Similar to Muntzer, Melchior Hoffman<sup>202</sup> claimed to be the prophet Elijah in light of the approaching Last Days. These events rippled through England where the Puritans adopted a similar form of millennialism inspiring them to rid the Church of England of Roman Catholic vestiges (esthetics/praxis). In the 1800s, William Miller<sup>203</sup> used the Book of Daniel’s numerology to devise a “millennial arithmetic”<sup>204</sup> foretelling Christ’s return, which attracted many followers (Millerites). From them emerged the Seventh Day Adventists who promulgated Premillennialism and the Shakers led by Mother Ann Lee<sup>205</sup> (considered the female incarnation of Jesus Christ).

In sum, from the Evangelical Baptist denomination's point of view, a complex framework serves to portray their eschatological perspective. Specifically, Evangelicals found opportunities to list out their beliefs in stepwise fashion such as John Nelson Darby's seven dispensations and the Philadelphia Prophetic Conference's eight statements. Among the historical characters that advocated for Dispensational Premillennialism, one can remember Keach, Knollys, Powell, Brightman, and of course, Darby. It is worth highlighting the newfound alliance between Catholics and Evangelicals against ideologies such as secularism, relativism, and postmodernism, which go against these two Christian groups' values. Most importantly, the notion of millennium is viewed differently by Catholics and Evangelicals where the former consider the thousand-year time period as a symbol of perfection (perfecting of the cosmos) and that God's Kingdom has already been installed since Christ's First Advent.

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<sup>200</sup> Former student of Martin Luther who proclaimed to be the last prophet before the Second Coming. ([https://spartacus-educational.com/Thomas\\_Muntzer.htm](https://spartacus-educational.com/Thomas_Muntzer.htm)).

<sup>201</sup> Weber, *Millennialism*, 374, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195170498.003.21>.

<sup>202</sup> Sixteenth century German Anabaptist preacher known for zealously sharing his eschatology. (<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Melchior-Hofmann>).

<sup>203</sup> Baptist Preacher whose followers believed Jesus would return in the nineteenth century. (<https://carm.org/seventh-day-adventism/the-history-of-the-seventh-day-adventist-church/>).

<sup>204</sup> Weber, *Millennialism*, 376, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195170498.003.21>.

<sup>205</sup> Spiritual mother of the Shaking Quakers (Shakers) who brought her religious beliefs from England to America and got imprisoned for those. (<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Ann-Lee>).

## **Chapter 3: Political Implications**

### ***3.1. Political Implications***

In the spirit of Evangelism, Christians are committed to mission where personal belief and political self-education turn into concrete action while avoiding causes deviating from their ideology. By discipling, evangelizing, and transforming different areas of life, Evangelical Baptists and Roman Catholics have publicly influenced America on the social, spiritual, and moral levels. Besides, most American adults do not inquire much about their pastor's stance on politics since only 8% "want to hear their pastors' political opinions." Nonetheless, a 2016 study<sup>206</sup> reveals that 96% of pastors have addressed their congregation with political talking points. Most likely, church leaders would bring up voting on political issues around election periods but are least likely to endorse a political candidate or express political affiliation. In fact, 51% of Americans agree that "It would be best if clergy stayed out of politics"<sup>207</sup> given the preconception that political matters should stay outside the church and thus, opt for a separation of Church and State. However, in 2014, a sample of Christian clergy was contacted about representational identity and 40% of them reported being in favor of a mutual representation between government officials and the congregation<sup>208</sup>. A week prior to the 2016 presidential election, a survey of 1200 White Christians<sup>209</sup> revealed that 37% of Evangelicals agreed that a "clergy person [is] one of [their] representatives to the public and government officials" to which 28% of Catholics also agreed (common denominator with Evangelicals: church attendance at least once a month). However, 51% of White Christians agreed that "It would be best if clergy stayed out of politics." When collecting 1002 surveys among Americans, 50% of practicing Protestants prefer attending a church heralding their political views of which 12% "strongly agreed" with the statement "I prefer to attend a church where people share my political beliefs,"<sup>210</sup> However, 23% of those interviewed "strongly disagreed" with the statement "My political views match those of most people at my church" (these people do not require political affinity to feel a sense of unity in church). Among the studied churchgoers, 19% "strongly agree" they prefer a church where people share their political views. For Baptists, 47% opt for congregations sharing a common political perspective,<sup>211</sup> which is fewer than Restorationists (80%) and Methodists (88%). Moreover, 55% of Protestant church attendees in America claim their political views match those of their fellow congregants. Returning to 2017, 51% of churchgoers perceived their congregations as politically homogenous against 11% who "strongly disagreed," which increased to 21% in November 2022. Accordingly, 28% of Protestant pastors "agreed" that their church saw "significant conflict" within their ranks in the past year.

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<sup>206</sup> Paul A. Djupe, (2017), "Does the Public Want Clergy in Politics?" Religion in Public, accessed March 2, 2024, [https://religioninpublic.blog/2017/01/19/contested\\_visions/](https://religioninpublic.blog/2017/01/19/contested_visions/).

<sup>207</sup> Ibid.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid.

<sup>210</sup> Aaron Earls, (November 1, 2022), "Church Goers Increasingly Prefer a Congregation that Shares their Politics," Lifeway Research, accessed March 2, 2024, <https://research.lifeway.com/2022/11/01/churchgoers-increasingly-prefer-a-congregation-that-shares-their-politics/>.

<sup>211</sup> Paul A. Djupe, (2023), "Apocalypticism – The Theology Doesn't Matter," Religion in Public, accessed March 2, 2024, <https://religioninpublic.blog/2023/04/19/apocalypticism-the-theology-doesnt-matter/>.



Following an activist religious tradition synonymous with “engaged orthodoxy” (actionable original convictions), Evangelicals believe their faith should go beyond Sunday mornings and deal with issues “from the White House to the poor house”<sup>212</sup> (e.g. education and stewarding the Earth). As members of the “body of Christ,” Evangelicals feel personally responsible to remedy worldly problems/social issues and change society for the better on their way to “unlearning selfishness.”<sup>213</sup> To do God's will, Evangelicals are called to “voice moral objections” and are encouraged to lead “informal crusades” in their respective microcosms (municipalities/neighborhoods) including volunteer work for political causes and protecting the environment. Among all Christians, Evangelicals are the most proficient at recruiting and retaining new members across numerous generations. A Fall 2022 survey shows 35% of 3757 American parents consider it very important their children (under 18 years-old) “develop similar religious beliefs to their own”<sup>214</sup> and this percentage (35%) is the same for Catholics, but doubles (70%) for White Evangelical parents.

Figure 1: Responses to Questions Regarding Eschatology and Christian Life

Topic Presented to U.S. Public	Evangelicals	Roman Catholics
Do you believe we are living in the end times ?	“Yes” (63%)	“No” (70%)
Do you believe Jesus will return to Earth someday?	“Yes” (92%)	“Yes” (63%)
The events before Christ's return are unknowable.	45% Agree	44% Agree
A clergy person [is] one of [their] representatives to the public and government officials.	37% Agree	28% Agree
Children must develop similar religious beliefs to their parents.	70% Agree	35% Agree
“How important is religion in your life?”	79% “Very important” in 2007 & in 2014	“Very important”: 56% in 2007 & 58% in 2014
Prayer/Bible study	“At least weekly”: 41% in 2007 & 44% in 2014	“At least weekly”: 13% in 2007 & at 17% in 2014
Regular religious service attendance	“Weekly or more”: 58% in 2007 & in 2014	“Weekly or more”: 41% in 2007 & 39% in 2014
Sharing the faith with others	“At least weekly”: 34% in 2007 & 35% in 2014	“At least weekly”: 14% in 2007 & 16% in 2014
Protect and strengthen morality in society	87% Agree	82% Agree

Gauging the American public sentiment on the Apocalypse or Armageddon, the important statistics are the level at which people are “afraid” and the belief the latter “exists.” For the first prompt, 64.1% of responders (763/1190) reported not being afraid<sup>215</sup> and for the second prompt, the highest percentage (28.5%) was scored for the belief that it “definitely exists.” This poses an irony because Armageddon should inspire apprehension in those aware of it. Nonetheless, the percentage gaps between those believing Armageddon “definitely exists” and those believing it “probably exists” is 26.4% and between the former and those believing it “probably does not exist” is 25.2%.<sup>216</sup> In contrast, the percentage gap between those “not afraid” of Armageddon and those “slightly afraid” is 19.4%.

<sup>212</sup> Christian Smith and Michael O. Emerson, *American Evangelicalism: Embattled and Thriving* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 43.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

<sup>214</sup> Stephanie Kramer, (2023), “70% of White Evangelical Parent Say It’s Very Important that their Kids Have Similar Religious Beliefs to Theirs,” Pew Research, accessed March 2, 2024, <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2023/02/06/70-of-white-evangelical-parents-say-its-very-important-that-their-kids-have-similar-religious-beliefs-to-theirs/>.

<sup>215</sup> Christopher Bader, L. Edward Day & Ann Gordon, (2018), “Chapman Survey of American Fears, Wave 5 (2018) – Codebook,” (Question 104), The Arda, accessed March 2, 2024, <https://www.thearda.com/data-archive?tab=2&fid=CSAF2018#QN21E>.

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*

Figure 2: Level of Americans' Fear of the Apocalypse and Armageddon

	TOTAL	%
-1) Blank	2	0.1
1) Very afraid	81	6.8
2) Afraid	113	9.5
3) Slightly afraid	231	19.4
4) Not afraid	763	64.1
Total	1190	100.0

Figure 3: Level of Americans' Belief in the Apocalypse and Armageddon

	TOTAL	%
-1) Blank	1	0.1
1) Definitely exists	339	28.5
2) Probably exists	315	26.4
3) Probably does not exist	301	25.2
4) Definitely does not exist	235	19.7
Total	1191	100.0

In Christian eschatology, a decline in church attendance is a sign of the end times as seen in the decrease from the mid-1970's to the mid-1990's. Those considered "moderate attenders" are now "non-attenders" and numerically, the frequent attenders' percentage has diminished<sup>217</sup> between 1972 (15%) and 2016 (10%). This echoes a decrease in religion's "desirability" in society and thus, its societal and political influence. When surveying Americans asking them if they "believe we are living in the end times," 58% answered "No," but for Evangelicals, 63% answered "Yes" whereas Catholics answered "No" at 70%. When comparing White and Black Americans; the former answered "No" at 63% and the latter answered "Yes" at 68%. However, when Americans were asked if they "believed Jesus will return to Earth someday," 58% answered "Yes." For Evangelicals, 92% answered "Yes" to that question against 63% for Catholics.<sup>218</sup> Here, it is worth noting both denominations' eschatologies teach the belief in Jesus Christ's return. When comparing the results for White and Black Americans, 53% of Whites answered "Yes" to the question versus 77% for Blacks. So, from the two questions, Evangelicals and Black Americans believe most strongly in the end times and in Jesus's return to Earth. On another question, a tenth of all surveyed American adults believe Christ "will definitely or probably return in their lifetime," but 41% (the largest score) "do not believe Jesus will return to Earth." For Evangelicals, 50% are "not sure if Jesus will return within their lifetime" which heavily differs from the Catholic point of view where 34% "do not believe Jesus will return to Earth." The latter datum is very surprising because it totally counters Catholicism's eschatological doctrine as mentioned for instance in the Nicene Creed<sup>219</sup> which clearly states Jesus will come back in the end times to "judge the living and the dead." Regarding Evangelicals' views on the conditions of Christ's return, 44% opt for Premillennialism<sup>220</sup> whereas 45% claim this cannot be known. Regarding the latter claim, 44% of

<sup>217</sup> Ryan P. Burge, (2018), "Are People Leaving the Church?" Religion in Public, accessed March 2, 2024, <https://religioninpublic.blog/2018/04/30/are-people-leaving-the-church/>.

<sup>218</sup> Jeff Diamant, (2022), "About four-in-ten U.S. Adults Believe Humanity Is Living in the End Times". Pew Research, accessed March 2, 2024, <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2022/12/08/about-four-in-ten-u-s-adults-believe-humanity-is-living-in-the-end-times/>.

<sup>219</sup> Athanasius of Alexandria, (325), "Nicene Creed," Christina Reformed Church, accessed March 22, 2024, <https://www.crcna.org/welcome/beliefs/creeds/nicene-creed>.

<sup>220</sup> Jeff Diamant, (2022), "About four-in-ten U.S. Adults Believe Humanity Is Living in the End Times." Pew Research, accessed March 2, 2024, <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2022/12/08/about-four-in-ten-u-s-adults-believe-humanity-is-living-in-the-end-times/>.

Catholics would agree that the events before Christ’s return are unknowable against 15% of Catholics thinking His return will be “preceded by a global deterioration.”

**Figure 4: Level of Belief in Jesus Christ’s Second Coming in Americans’ Lifetime**

**One-in-ten U.S. adults believe Jesus will definitely or probably return in their lifetime**  
 % of U.S. adults who ...

	Believe Jesus will return to Earth some day			Do not believe Jesus will return to Earth/do not believe in Jesus
	Yes, Jesus will definitely/probably return in their lifetime	Not sure if Jesus will return within their lifetime	No, Jesus will definitely/NOT return in their lifetime	
All U.S. adults	10	27	19	41
Christian	14	37	25	22
Protestant	16	43	22	15
Evangelical	21	50	21	7
Mainline	6	30	27	32
Catholic	22	47	17	11
Historically Black	7	25	31	34
Other religion	2	10	6	79
Religiously unaffiliated	3	9	8	77
Republican/lean Rep.	12	35	22	28
Democrat/lean Dem.	8	20	17	52
High school or less	14	29	18	35
Some college	10	27	20	40
College graduate	5	24	19	50
White	8	26	19	43
Black	19	41	18	21
Hispanic	14	23	18	41
Asian*	8	15	16	61

\* Estimates for Asian adults are representative of English speakers only.  
 Note: Those who did not answer are not shown. White, Black and Asian adults include those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic. Hispanics are of any race. "Other religion" includes those who identify as Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, or with another world religion or other non-Christian faith.  
 Source: Survey conducted April 11-17, 2022.  
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In March of 2020, a survey conducted by Andrew Lewis and Ryan Burge (among others) on 3100 adults about end times beliefs showed 35% of them believe they “are very likely entering the prophesied end times” versus 28% who remain unsure. In 2012, PRRI (Public Religion Research Institute) reported 13% of their interviewees agreed with the statement “the end of the world, as predicted in the Book of Revelation, will happen in [their] lifetime.” On another end, Barker and Bearce reported in 2012<sup>221</sup> that 56% of Americans believe “Jesus will return to Earth someday,” which echoes a Pew Research report from 2010 stating 41% of Americans believe “Jesus Christ will [probably or definitely] return by 2050.” Overall, the general sentiment is that there likely is an end still far off in time rather than imminent.

In comparison with Postmillennialists, Premillennialists have 15% more adherents to their eschatology, which means 44% of Christians in America. When combining Postmillennialists and Premillennialists in America, 80% believe “we are now entering the end times.” Concerning modern prophecy (ability to prophesy in today’s age), over 44% of Premillennialists believe in it against 60% for Postmillennialists. An important particularity of Premillennialism is its focus on individual salvation and thus, it does not consider “national salvation” to be biblical nor working towards national control to render the individual “Rapture ready.”<sup>222</sup> An interesting finding is that 75% of Christian nationalists agree with Premillennialist positions and 61% of Premillennialists would agree with the use of force when deemed necessary (versus 70% for Postmillennialists). Between March 2011 and June 2023, the response to the statement “the severity of recent natural disasters is evidence that we are in what the Bible calls the *end times*”<sup>223</sup> that gained the highest

<sup>221</sup> Paul A. Djupe, (2020), “The Political Implications of End Times Belief,” Religion in Public, accessed March 2, 2024, <https://religioninpublic.blog/2020/06/11/the-political-implications-of-end-times-belief/>.

<sup>222</sup> Paul A. Djupe, (2023), “Apocalypticism – The Theology Doesn’t Matter,” Religion in Public, accessed March 2, 2024, <https://religioninpublic.blog/2023/04/19/apocalypticism-the-theology-doesnt-matter/>.

<sup>223</sup> “PRRI Climate Change Survey,” (June 8-28), PRRI, accessed March 2, 2024, <https://prri.parc.us.com/client/index.html#/search>.

percentage was “completely disagree” at 41% in December 2012 (contrary to what was implied by the Maya calendar ending in 2012) and the most recent value being 37% in June 2023.

A 2020 phone survey of 1000 senior pastors from Evangelical and historically Black churches reveals their beliefs about end times precursors. Consequently, 83% view the “rise of false prophets and false teachings” as a sign, 79% see “traditional morals becoming less accepted,” and 78% see “wars and national conflict” as a sign. To add, 75% see “people abandoning their Christian faith” as an end times precursor. In sum, “almost 9 in 10 pastors see some current events matching those Jesus said would occur shortly before He returns to Earth.” Additionally, 97% of pastors at Evangelical or historically Black churches believe “Jesus Christ will literally and personally return to Earth again.” Among those pastors interviewed, 56% “agreed” that they “expect Jesus to return in [their] lifetime” which compels 89% of them to communicate its urgency. Contrariwise, among the 20% of pastors who disagreed with the expectation of Christ’s return during their lifetime, 27% are aged 18-44 years old. Furthermore, 70% of pastors view the inauguration of the State of Israel for the Jews as an end times prophecy, 69% of them believe Christ will return very soon and 73% believe it will happen in Jerusalem to “fulfill God’s promises to David.” As for the Jews, 59% of pastors claim, “Jesus will return when they accept Him as their savior,” 98% believe “sharing the gospel with Jews is important,” 28% say “Jewish evangelism will speed up the return of Christ,” and 82% think “Jewish people are special in God’s sight.” To finish, 3 in 5 pastors deem it important to “preach on end times prophecies in the Book of Revelation and in the Old Testament (both at 60%) and devote some time to study eschatology (57%)”<sup>224</sup> and 48% of pastors “speak to their congregations about the end times several times per year.”

When 1000 surveys were completed by pastors and they were asked “Which of the following statements best describes your views on when the biblical Rapture will occur?”, 36% responded “Pretribulation” and 25% responded “the concept of Rapture is not to be taken literally.” Lastly, 18% responded “Post tribulation.” As such, 43% of Evangelicals believe in a Pretribulation Rapture, and this is especially true for the older audience. Regarding the Antichrist, 49% of Protestant pastors believe this will be a “figure who will arise sometime in the future,” 14% believe it to be a “personification of evil,” 12% believe it to be “no individual Antichrist,” 7% believe it to be “not a person but an institution,” 6% believe it to be a “figure who already arose sometime in the past,” and 7% believe “none of these.” Taken individually, each of these interpretations uniquely illustrates the Antichrist. Among Evangelicals, 75% of Baptists believe in a future Antichrist, and this is in accord with the belief in Premillennialism to which 75% of Baptists subscribe. Among the 1000 pastors interviewed, 48% believe in Premillennialism, 31% in Amillennialism, and 11% in Postmillennialism.<sup>225</sup> For those with a bachelor’s degree or no university education (respectively 63% and 71%), Premillennialism is preferred, but those with a master’s degree (41%) prefer Amillennialism.

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<sup>224</sup> Aaron Earls, (2020), “Vast Majority of Pastors View Signs of End Times in Current Events,” Lifeway Research, accessed March 2, 2024, <https://research.lifeway.com/2020/04/07/vast-majority-of-pastors-see-signs-of-end-times-in-current-events/>.

<sup>225</sup> Bob Smietana, (2016), “Pastors: The End of the World Is Complicated,” Lifeway Research, accessed March 2, 2024, <https://research.lifeway.com/2016/04/26/pastors-the-end-of-the-world-is-complicated/>.

From 2016 to 2020, Americans addressed the claim “Because things have gotten so far off track in this country, we need a leader who is willing to break some rules if that’s what it takes to set things right.” Here are the moments recorded with their highest data point: April 2016: 27% “completely disagree,” May 2016: 30% “mostly agree,” September 2016: 29% “mostly disagree,” October 2017: 28% “completely disagree,” and September 2020: 32% “mostly disagree.” Relatedly, when faced with the statement “Because things have gotten so far off track in this country, we need major policy changes to help everyday Americans,” 41% responded “mostly agree.” Regarding America, the statement “America was a Christian nation in the past but is not now” reflected Americans’ perspective most of the time between September 2010 and September 2020. Results: August 2012: 41%, June 2015: 45%, May 2016: 42%, September 2019: 42%, and September 2020: 40%.<sup>226</sup> When asked “if [America is] no longer a Christian nation [...], do you think this is generally a good thing or a bad thing?”, most of the 971 respondents chose “bad thing.” Between June 2015 and September 2020, “bad thing” recorded the highest score: June 2015: 61%, October 2018: 63%, September 2019: 63%, and September 2020: 59%.<sup>227</sup> In sum, most Americans think the United States shifting away from Christianity is not a desirable outcome. In March 2021, a Survey on Religion<sup>228</sup> with the statement “There is a storm coming soon that will sweep away the elites in power and restore the rightful leaders,” showed 50% of Americans “completely disagreed” (down to 41% in December 2022). Then, for the statement “The chaos in America today is evidence that we are living in what the Bible calls the *end times*,” 42% “completely disagreed.” Lastly, for the statement “Because things have gotten so far off track, true American patriots may have to resort to violence in order to save our country,” 59% also “completely disagreed” (down to 57% in December 2022). In the December 2022 survey,<sup>229</sup> 41% of respondents “completely disagreed” with the statement “If the U.S. moves away from our Christian foundations, we will not have a country anymore.” For the statement “we must maintain a strict separation of Church and State,” 49% “completely agreed.” For the statement “God has called Christians to exercise dominion over all areas of American society,” 54% “completely disagreed.”

Facing modernity, Evangelicals engross themselves in debate with society’s institutions and see America “turning its back on its Judeo-Christian roots.” However, many of the millions of American Catholics are “natural liberals,”<sup>230</sup> which means they would vote for more progressive policies. Evangelicals claim America’s moral and social degeneration has transformed mainstream institutions into hostile anti-Christian entities and interpret the media’s depiction of them as negatively stereotyped or unintellectual. More than Catholics, Evangelicals largely believe those in power are Christianity’s enemies intimidated by Christian absolutes opposing their agenda.<sup>231</sup> The issue lies in the intention behind “Christian thinking”<sup>232</sup> which may lead to “unintellectual” outcomes. Despite the abundant Evangelical activism from this generational mindset, its intellectual weakness needs realignment with true Christian charity. So, to truly

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<sup>226</sup> “PRRI 2020 American Values Survey,” (September 9-22), PRRI, accessed March 2, 2024, <https://prri.parc.us.com/client/index.html#/search>.

<sup>227</sup> Ibid.

<sup>228</sup> “IFYC-PRRI Survey on Religion and COVID-19 Vaccine Trust,” (March 8-31, 2023), PRRI, accessed March 2, 2024, <https://prri.parc.us.com/client/index.html#/search>.

<sup>229</sup> “PRRI 2022 White Christian Nationalism Survey,” (November 21-December 14, 2022), PRRI, accessed March 2, 2024, <https://prri.parc.us.com/client/index.html#/search>.

<sup>230</sup> O’Neill, *Catholicism and American Freedom*, 140-2.

<sup>231</sup> Smith & Emerson, *American Evangelicalism*, 137.

<sup>232</sup> Mark A. Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 1994), 123.

achieve the “mind of Christ,” Evangelical activism could adopt a posture of gratitude to God. Regarding the Bible, Evangelicals consider it inerrant, analyze it with a literal understanding, contemplate verses scientifically, and are fascinated with its apocalyptic text. In the future, Evangelicals could consider shifting from societal activism to studying sources outside their fold to gain wisdom. A theological reflection on other denominations’ spiritual realities should address their existing inability to communicate with a common vocabulary. Favourably, Evangelicals’ zeal<sup>233</sup> can promote a “Christian life of the mind,” but other Christian traditions have been exemplary at sharpening their spiritual discipline. As a starting point, attachment to Scripture could serve Evangelicals’ intellectual development by plunging into its deeper meanings. To enrich Evangelicalism, communicating the gospel across different cultures and languages yields several theological insights to decipher “distinctive” from “essential” cultural expressions of Christianity.

### 3.2. Millenarist Views

In Christian history, Jesus Christ’s thousand-year reign in the world following His Second Coming is an important theological idea because millenarianism can shape believers’ perspective on the future. To connect the current world with God’s Kingdom, Christians adopted a millenarian hope in their praxis, but despite the "separation of Church and State", people have always struggled to not mix one with the other. Of course, undesirable political consequences have resulted from the Church wearing the mantle of politics for the sake of installing the millennium.

Premillennialism's growth led to social revolt and, according to historian Norman Cohn<sup>234</sup>, many notable contributors to millenarianism such as John Ball,<sup>235</sup> Martin Huska,<sup>236</sup> Thomas Muntzer, and Jan Matthys<sup>237</sup> were familiar with apocalyptic prophecy and obsessed with “eschatological phantasies.” Cohn never described millenarianism as “overwhelmingly conservative” in upper and lower classes of society despite it being the case in its social, political, and theological dimensions. Possibly, Premillennialists in public offices may also have authoritarian societal views. On the opposite end of the spectrum, religious institutions are threatened by social instability and many churchmen of different denominations reassessed their religious and political views after the American Civil War. Thence, millenarians completed their rough draft of Premillennialism to oppose political liberalism and begin advocating for the Jews to regain Palestine.<sup>238</sup> In the face of the ongoing moral turpitude, millenarians saw Christ’s Second Coming as the only remedy for the world’s corrupt state. With the rise of millenarianism (and Premillennialism) came an inevitable rise in anti-Catholicism as the Church of Rome was deemed to be the “man of sin” (i.e. the Catholic Church being evil and tied to the Antichrist).

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<sup>233</sup> Ibid 124-26.

<sup>234</sup> Twentieth century British historian who studied religious intolerance and the coming millennium. (<https://www.cdamm.org/articles/norman-cohn>).

<sup>235</sup> Fourteenth century English priest who played a significant role in the *Peasant’s Revolt*. (<https://hrc.cass.anu.edu.au/events/works-shaped-world-john-ball-and-peasants-revolt#:~:text=John%20Ball%20was%20the%20most,preaching%20presented%20in%20medieval%20chronicles>).

<sup>236</sup> Eloquent fifteenth century Czech Hussite priest who helped lead the Taborite revolution. (<https://archive.is/20110920124321/http://www.husitstvi.cz/ro45.php#selection-532.8-532.11>).

<sup>237</sup> Captivating sixteenth century Anabaptist leader who partook in the Munster rebellion. ([https://dbpedia.org/page/Jan\\_Matthys](https://dbpedia.org/page/Jan_Matthys)).

<sup>238</sup> David N. Hempton, “Evangelicalism and Eschatology,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 31, no. 2, (April 1980): 185.

At Albury Park in Surrey, Southeast England, the *Established Churches of England and Scotland* outlined the following theological agreements<sup>239</sup> (summarized):

- 1) The current Christian dispensation shall be completed by judgements and ended in the destruction of the Church and its polity.
- 2) During those judgements, the Jews will finally retrieve their motherland.
- 3) Christendom will be the main recipient of those judgements.
- 4) The millennium will come after the completion of those judgements.
- 5) The “Second Advent” will begin when the millennium begins.
- 6) The 1260-year time period starts with the Justinian reign and ends with the French Revolution after which the seven plagues listed in the Book of Revelation will be inflicted. Then, the second advent becomes imminent.

In their historical context, this group became known to have the best-defined millenarian system and the Scofield Bible increased Dispensational Premillennialism’s popularity, resulting in a wider influence on many Americans’ religious life. With this eschatological standpoint, Christians will interpret the Bible literally as the absolute authority. In the Albury school of thought, Premillennialism stemmed from distrust of society, of liberalism, and of Roman Catholicism.

Millenarianism can serve to distinguish apocalypticism from eschatology which is also contrasted with providence. Notably, apocalypticism does not interrelate God's eschatological plan with human beings’ worldly concerns because the latter gravitate to a more anthropological eschaton. As theologian Jurgen Moltmann correlates politics and religion, he claims the Church aims for a better future by counteracting the *status quo* in politics. In his opinion, the “new creation’s” instalment reaches wider levels beyond individual salvation, but contrary to apocalypticism which rejects the world in its current state, his eschatology implies human participation in God’s ongoing work of creation and entails Christ’s transformation (not destruction) of the world into a Kingdom of untampered justice and freedom. Since the time of Augustine of Hippo, the Church has believed in a “realized eschatology” or “Amillennialism”, denying Christ’s literal millennial reign because it claimed to have brought God's earthly reign and hence, not requiring a millennium to achieve this. Emperor Constantine's conversion and the Roman Empire’s collapse historically justified this eschatology. Aside from viewing Premillennialism intertwining with apocalypticism, Moltmann described God’s Kingdom as a “presentative” or “historical” form of millenarianism,<sup>240</sup> the latter directing the Church’s original focus on the future towards current socio-cultural concerns. Besides, despite his hope against worldly evils, Moltmann disagrees with Postmillennialism because to him, no amount of labor will ever suffice to install an ideal political order.<sup>241</sup> Regarding the millennium, Moltmann is undecided between defining it as a future historical event or a sign in the current world beckoning an unknown ethereal reality.

He classifies Christian political endeavors aimed at eschatology in three categories:

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<sup>239</sup> Ibid, 186.

<sup>240</sup> Stephen H. Webb & Jerry L. Walls, *Eschatology and Politics, The Oxford Handbook of Eschatology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 500-17, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195170498.003.30>.

<sup>241</sup> Ibid, 504.

- 1) Actively opposing murderous methods of killing at a wide scale (e.g. nuclear weapons).
- 2) Protecting the environment from any actions leading to its destruction.
- 3) Helping third-world countries diminish risks rendering them poorer.

In contrast with Moltmann's views, Pope Benedict XVI links eschatology with theological matters like death, judgement, purgatory, and hell more than with human concerns because he is preoccupied with the spiritual over the material. He dissociates God's Kingdom from human political organizations and thus, denies it being a political endeavor with an eschatological tone. Despite having moral essence, Moltmann's political eschatology does not acknowledge the "contributions of nation-states" to God's revelation. In a pluralistic democracy, George Weigel<sup>242</sup> and Richard John Neuhaus<sup>243</sup> would diverge from Moltmann's views and advocate for patience over politics and remaining apolitical. Concisely, Weigel distinguishes the Church's efforts for a common good from humanity's unity established in God's Kingdom. Notwithstanding, Wolfhart Pannenberg sees this Kingdom already at hand with "nation-states" pursuing harmony and justice to satisfy God's desire of saving everyone through truth (1 Timothy 2:4).<sup>244</sup> Surely, Israel is the prime example of a nation-state under God's supervision because of its intended providential role as "light of world", which buttresses Premillennialism. Arguably, the restoration of this people's national sovereignty will determine the togetherness of the rest of the world (and set the millennium). If seen as an "oppositional force"<sup>245</sup> to the world's nations, the Kingdom might pose an "eschatological dualism" (coined by theologian Richard J. Mouw<sup>246</sup>). Here, "Providence" explains history by correlating the Bible's end time predictions and interpreting those in parallel with history's ongoing vicissitudes and reaching an endpoint. Providence entails God's continuous creative actions (or revelations) through the social and biological transformations (*creatio continua*) rooted in the world's creation from nothingness (*creatio ex nihilo*). Inversely, theological viewpoints of a future where God topples the world's nations may be deemed "antiprovidential."<sup>247</sup> Paul Ricœur<sup>248</sup> highlights the productiveness of hope by grafting the "passion for the possible" onto experienced tendencies. In contrast with Moltmann, Ricœur fortifies his conception of hope by indicating God's intention to fulfill time without obliteration and considers parables as links between the "middle" and the "end" of eschatology,<sup>249</sup> maintaining the legitimacy of God's creative process. In Dispensationalism, a demarcation exists between the "Davidic covenant" and the "Church," denoting God's Kingdom and the State of Israel's reconstitution and despite not being monolithic, Premillennialism has often supported pro-Israel policies. Working toward the millennium, people could establish a legitimate political order and a debatable example is Israel's

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<sup>242</sup> Twentieth century Catholic writer and theologian whose work focused on ecumenical research and foreign/domestic policy issues. (<https://cicdc.org/speakers/george-weigel/>).

<sup>243</sup> Influential Canadian twentieth century Catholic writer who had connections in religion and politics. (<https://www.firstthings.com/store#!/Richard-John-Neuhaus-A-Life-in-the-Public-Square/p/143725232/category=2541046>).

<sup>244</sup> Webb & Walls, *Eschatology and Politics*, 506, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195170498.003.30>.

<sup>245</sup> Ibid, 510.

<sup>246</sup> Twentieth century Reformed philosopher/theologian who taught and presided at Fuller Theological Seminary and leading thinker on Christian's civil political engagement. (<https://calvin.edu/news/archive/richard-mouw-comes-home-to-calvin>).

<sup>247</sup> Webb & Walls, *Eschatology and Politics*, 510, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195170498.003.30>.

<sup>248</sup> Twentieth century French Protestant philosopher whose political and anthropological work became world-renowned. (<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ricoeur/>).

<sup>249</sup> Webb & Walls, *Eschatology and Politics*, 510, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195170498.003.30>.



reconstitution “in all its political glory”<sup>250</sup> echoing Christ’s return to “restore Israel to its proper status.”

Ironically, Baptists supporting Premillennialism cleverly equilibrate their doubtful views of the material world with optimism for national rejuvenation. Russell Moore<sup>251</sup> indicates Premillennialist Evangelicals will alter their views on the millennium to gain more political involvement. As a corollary, a fusion of Premillennialism with Postmillennialism called “Progressive Millennialism” (or “Reconstructed Dispensationalism”)<sup>252</sup> was endorsed by Craig Blaising<sup>253</sup> and Darrell Bock<sup>254</sup> because it removes the dispensational aspect of Premillennialism and blends the Davidic covenant, the Church, and the millennium as one continuum.<sup>255</sup> Through the Church, it immediately grants Christ political authority over the world instead of at the end of time, but also awaits His end times arrival. In this view, God’s Kingdom is simultaneously in the world and still to come. To end, Evangelical A-, Post-, or Pre- millennialism is politically involved through eschatological activism (revival) to transform the world before Christ returns.

### ***3.3. Evangelicals and Catholics Together***

Despite doctrinal differences, a declaration of unity called *Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium* wishes to unify both denominations by acknowledging their common faith and mission. Lutheran minister turned Catholic priest Richard John Neuhaus sponsored several ecumenical meetings, but some perceive assembling on an impression of common faith as sacrificing the truth. Charles Colson<sup>256</sup> endorses ecumenism, highlights Scripture’s unifying power, and his writing motifs cover God’s sovereignty, Christ’s Lordship, and Scripture’s authority.<sup>257</sup> Christian diversity differs from religious divisions just like the notion of “one Christ” differs from the goal of “one mission.” The common doctrinal terrain includes the Apostle’s Creed, Christ’s Lordship, Scripture’s divine inspiration, and salvation by faith in Christ. Doctrinal differences provide certain questions: Is the Church a part of the Gospel or a consequence of it? Is the Church a visible or invisible fellowship? Does Scripture or the Church have authority? Does the Church rely upon apostolic succession or priesthood of all believers? Politically, the Catholic-Evangelical union promotes moral truth within different institutions. Despite never agreeing on the Gospel’s content (and other irreconcilable differences), both faiths would advocate for love as core of the “Christian witness” against the increasing secularism in the West. Of interest, this work of “new ecumenism” or “co-belligerence against sin

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<sup>250</sup> Ibid, 513.

<sup>251</sup> Chief editor of *Christianity Today*. (<https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/people/r/russell-moore/>).

<sup>252</sup> Webb & Walls, *Eschatology and Politics*, 514. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195170498.003.30>.

<sup>253</sup> Twentieth century American theologian who supported “progressive dispensationalism” and served as provost of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. (<https://www.theopedia.com/craig-blaising>).

<sup>254</sup> Twentieth century Canadian scholar who taught New Testament studies at Dallas Theological Seminary. (<https://www.cslewisinstitute.org/resources-category/speakers/darrell-bock/>).

<sup>255</sup> Webb & Walls, *Eschatology and Politics*, 514, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195170498.003.30>.

<sup>256</sup> Twentieth century American lawyer who was incarcerated for obstruction of justice during the Watergate scandal, but later founded *Prison Fellowship Ministries* to preach to felons. (<https://www.prisonfellowship.org/about/chuck-colson/>).

<sup>257</sup> Charles Colson et al, (May 1994), “Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium,” *First Things*.com, accessed March 27, 2024, <https://www.firstthings.com/article/1994/05/evangelicals-catholics-together-the-christian-mission-in-the-third-millennium>.

and evil”<sup>258</sup> was signed by many important figures including some from the *Southern Baptist Convention*. Catholics and Evangelicals diverge on the “sufficiency” of Scripture, not its “infallibility;” the latter claim Scripture is sufficient (*Sola Scriptura*) whereas the former claim the Church has the authority to interpret Scripture and add tradition and teachings to the ecclesiology. When comparing today’s denominational divergence with that during the Reformation, progress toward peaceful dialogue has been achieved. In fact, 52% of American Protestants believe faith with good deeds are required for salvation, 52% of them state both the Bible and the Church’s teachings are needed for guidance, and 36% do not believe in either *Sola Scriptura* or *Sola Fide*. For American Catholics, they have maintained their traditional beliefs where 81% believe good deeds and faith are needed for salvation and 75% trust Bible and Church teachings for guidance. In White Evangelical churches where the beliefs in *Sola Fide* and *Sola Scriptura* are still strong, 19 % of them do not subscribe to either belief against 67% who believe *Sola Fide* is needed.<sup>259</sup>

It is worth reiterating that 51% of Americans prefer a separation between church-related matters and the political realm. Besides, from the numbers, an irony can be perceived because about 29% of interviewed Americans believe Armageddon and the Apocalypse “definitely exist,” contrasting with about 64% of interviewees being “not afraid” of those events. The aforementioned studies showed even more interesting data where 58% of Americans and specifically, 70% of Catholics do not believe “we are living in the end times” against 63% of Evangelicals that believe the contrary. Also, regarding Jesus Christ's return, 92% of Evangelicals believe in it against 63% for Catholics. Notably, 44% of Evangelicals (in America) are Premillennialists. Overall, religiosity in America has massively decreased since the “nones” (non-religious) category has increased by about 1% each year from 2007 to 2014. This shift in the population's piety is interpreted by many Christians as a sign of the end times.

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<sup>258</sup> Timothy George, (April 10, 2015), “Ecumenism in the Trenches: Evangelical and Catholic Dialogue,” Biola.edu, accessed March 2, 2024, <https://cct.biola.edu/ecumenism-trenches-evangelical-catholic-dialogue/>.

<sup>259</sup> “U.S. Protestants Are Not Defined by Reformation-Era Controversies 500 Years Later,” (August 31, 2017), Pew Research Center, accessed January 3, 2023, <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2017/08/31/u-s-protestants-are-not-defined-by-reformation-era-controversies-500-years-later/>.

## Conclusion

In summary, when comparing both denominations, one can retain a list of commonalities in Evangelical Baptists and Roman Catholics' respective eschatologies along with another list of very unambiguous differences. Both believe in Christ's Second Coming which carries a two-fold effect on the world, deserved mercy for the good and punitive judgement for the wicked. Evangelicals (including Baptists) have imagined different scenarios in their end times views involving the Rapture, the Great Tribulation, and several millenarist philosophies such as Premillennialism, Postmillennialism, Dispensationalism, and Amillennialism. However, the Catholic Church has predominantly focused on one eschatological conception catalysed by Christ's return, Amillennialism, which excludes the tribulation period, the Rapture, and the literal millennial reign. It is worth reiterating Thomas Aquinas's statement about the entire end times scene where God will change the whole universe to give it a new life and turn it into His rightful abode resembling its original state. Attached to Origen's *Apocatastasis* and Universalism, where all of God's creation is redeemed, Edward Schillebeeckx described a coexisting school of thought balancing God's justice and mercy. Others like Basil the Great and numerous Protestants objected to Origen's universalist perspective since to them, it went against the purpose of final judgement. Accordingly, Christians do not wish to label God as vindictive, but see the need for the cosmic order to be altered to prepare the way for the "Son of Man" to return. In the renewal, God perfects the entire world for its "Christification" in His desire to be united with His creation.

From Vatican Council II, the perspective of Eschatologism seems to contradict Incarnationism because the former emphasizes the focus on spiritual issues instead of prioritizing worldly matters. As Father Francis-Xavier Nguyen Van Thuan<sup>260</sup> describes it, revelation (kerygma) comes from the "Eucharistic table where flesh and spirit become one with Christ,"<sup>261</sup> the ultimate "eschaton" of Christianity. In the universe's final consummation, one recalls the correlation between the end times and salvation with justification by God to enter His Kingdom. Notably, Christian hope is rooted in Jewish eschatology of Antiquity communicated throughout the Old Testament by different prophets from whom the Israelites learned the ideas of resurrection and Sheol.

On the Baptist side, numerous developments have unfolded since the seventeenth century with several conventions, societies, key individuals, and denominational proliferation in the United Kingdom and the United States. Inevitably, one must mention John Nelson Darby's innovative eschatological perspective of Dispensationalism where he outlines the seven steps of history. From the *London Missionary Society*, the *Bible Society*, the *Particular Baptist Movement*, the *Jacob-Lathrop-Jessey church*, and the *Philadelphia Prophetic Conference*, Evangelicals have remarkably outlined their beliefs based on the blueprint of Reformed theology. Contrary to Catholics, much weight is given to the Rapture, the Great Tribulation, the Battle of Armageddon, and end times numerology, which explains why many of them adopt Premillennialism.

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<sup>260</sup> Vietnamese priest known for his evangelization efforts amid the struggles between South and North Vietnam. (<https://www.stignatiusmobile.org/saint-of-the-month-ven-francis-xavier-nguyen-van-thuan/>).

<sup>261</sup> Fr. Roger Landry, "The Eucharistic Shape of Cardinal Van Thuan's Holy and Heroic Life," (September 16, 2022), Catholic Preaching, accessed December 20, 2023, (<https://catholicpreaching.com/wp/the-eucharistic-shape-of-cardinal-van-thuans-holy-and-heroic-life-the-anchor-september-16-2022/>).

As a reminder, Catholic eschatology exclusively entails Amillennialism where the millennium and the beast are symbolic with Christ's Kingdom already installed since the first advent. Only His end times return is awaited to restore the world to its sinless origin. End times events are bundled into one phenomenon where Christ returns, overturns the Antichrist, judges the world, and renews it. Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine, and Origen all rejected the doctrine of millenarism because they chose to view it allegorically with the "thousand years" symbolically representing perfection. In the nineteenth century, a few Catholic theologians conceived a "Post-tribulational Premillennialism" having an Antichrist, a symbolic millennium, and then, Christ's return before the final judgement. A prominent Catholic doctrine is the resurrection of bodies in the end times, which emulates Christ's resurrection from the cross and several theologians have written about this including Rahner. Another distinctly Catholic doctrine is purgatory discussed by Balthasar. Along with this, Catholics believe in the soul's immortality for eternity as expounded by Ratzinger. Among ecumenical initiatives, the *Nouvelle Théologie* has allowed for common ground between both Christian faiths since both believe in bodily resurrection and in Christ's return to subject the world to final judgement and establish God's Kingdom.

To reiterate some important statistics distinguishing the Catholic and Evangelical perspectives, 96% of pastors have uttered political content despite 51% of Americans agreeing on religion staying out of politics as stated earlier. Furthermore, a 2012 PRRI study showed 13% of Americans believe the end times will occur during their life and a 2010 Pew Research study showed 41% believe Jesus will return by 2050. Lastly, 83% of (partly Evangelical) senior pastors saw false prophets/false teachings on the rise in a 2020 phone survey.

As millenarist views clash, several factors popularized Dispensational Premillennialism such as the Scofield Bible and the Albury Park convention's theological agreements, which led to social revolts and the desire to install God's Kingdom regardless of the ensuing societal instability. Without endorsing nation-states' actions to promote the coming of God's Kingdom, Moltmann connects religion with politics by indicating the Church's goal to improve the state of the world by overthrowing the *status quo*. However, Amillennialism was the Church's *de facto* eschatological perspective since Augustine because it was established that God's earthly reign had already commenced with Christ's atonement and resurrection, thus not requiring a millennium.

Nevertheless, more study could cover the presentist-futurist approach, the relation between protology and eschatology, and the soul's pancosmicity. Today, efforts toward a "new ecumenism" are put forth in the face of growing secularism and decreasing religious fervor, and Catholics and Evangelicals are uniting on a moral and political front against what they view as evil.

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