THE ESCHATOLOGY OF GENESIS,
WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO CHAPTERS 1 AND 2

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**PREFACE**

The origin of this thesis, as with much of its contents, can have no claim to originality. It was whilst studying for the Genesis through Joshua course at Reformed Theological Seminary that my interest in Eschatology and the Pentateuch first began to grow. As a result I wrote my term paper for that course on the same topic as this thesis. I soon discovered that my paper could only scratch at the surface of this rich field of biblical theology. Thus it seemed fitting to pursue further studies in this area and attempt to write a thesis on it. Whether or not that first scratch has subsequently become a deeper excavation into the treasure filled vein of God’s Word is for the reader to decide. Either way, I cannot escape the abiding impression that so much more is yet to be mined from the depths of God’s revelation in Genesis.

A debt of thanks is due first of all to Dr. Richard Pratt Jr. for that stimulating course on Genesis through Joshua that planted the first seeds of what is to follow. In addition, I owe much to the staff at Reformed Theological Seminary, Virtual, for their guidance and support during my studying for an M.A. R., and during my writing of this thesis. The elders session at Cambridge Presbyterian Church, UK, have also been of immense help these past two years, through their example, instruction and encouragement; along with the deacons and members of the congregation who have taken an interest in my studies, and have ceaselessly supported me through their prayers and financial aid. Finally, the greatest thanks must be given to my wife, Davinia, who has proved to be, often unbeknown to herself, a tireless motivator, wise counsellor, patient helper, loving mother and God given foretaste of the eschatological glory that is yet to come.

Andy Young
Cambridge, UK
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### ABBREVIATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>EC</strong></td>
<td><em>The Encyclopedia of Christianity</em>, ed. Erwin Fahlbusch (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001)</td>
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<td><strong>JETS</strong></td>
<td><em>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</em></td>
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<td><strong>NBC</strong></td>
<td><em>New Bible Commentary</em>, ed. D. A. Carson (Leicester: IVP, 1994)</td>
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<td><strong>PTM</strong></td>
<td><em>Present Truth Magazine</em></td>
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<td><strong>SB</strong></td>
<td><em>The Standard Bearer</em></td>
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<td><strong>WTJ</strong></td>
<td><em>Westminster Theological Journal</em></td>
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INTRODUCTION

The subject of Eschatology has traditionally been appended to the end of systematic theologies, and left to a discussion “dealing with the glorification of the saints or the consummation of the rule of Christ.”¹ It has become a forgone conclusion that eschatology has reference to the future, and the future alone. It is assumed that it is a study of what is yet to happen and therefore has little relevance for the present and no significance for the past. In light of these assumptions the study of this subject in the book of Genesis would appear incongruent. What possible bearing can the first book of the Bible, which is all about beginnings, have upon a subject that deals with the end? What has creation to do with consummation? What has protology (first things) to do with eschatology (last things)?

Broadly speaking it is these very questions that this thesis will seek to answer. I will attempt to refute and prove to be unbalanced, these very assumptions about eschatology that would relegate it to the closing chapters of theology, and confine it to a study of the future. I will endeavour to demonstrate the breathtaking scope of eschatology as it literally encapsulates the whole of redemptive history and envelops both the beginnings and endings of all that God has done, is doing and will do. Finally, and most importantly, the essential relationship that eschatology sustains to Genesis, and that Genesis sustains to eschatology, will be established. The eschatological fabric of the book will be revealed, and the prognosticating nature of its first two chapters will be uncovered.

In the first place I will trace a brief overview of the history of the church in regard to its understanding of eschatology. The Patristic, Medieval, Reformation and Modern Eras will be surveyed, and the eschatological teaching and trends noted and developed. It will be seen

that Church History both legitimises a study of eschatology in Genesis, and provides an
impetus for it. Secondly, I will establish a correct definition of, and orientation to,
eschatology. The relationship between eschatology and theology will be explored and various
schemes will be discussed and evaluated. The etymology and concept of eschatology will be
examined and various eschatological categories proposed and developed. Thirdly, I will show
how important the subject is in the book of Genesis as a whole. By investigating how Genesis
relates eschatologically to the rest of the Bible, its significance within eschatology will be
secured. To this end, a variety of eschatological structures will be studied within Genesis and
the rest of the Scriptures that highlight the books eschatological veracity. And fourthly, I will
identify several eschatological themes found in the first words of God’s revelation (Gen. 1-2),
and trace these as they develop throughout the Old Testament and into the New, and beyond.

Throughout all of this, I hope that a new appreciation will be gained for the subject of
eschatology and the book of Genesis, and how each are but aspects of the other, and how
both find their noon day glory in the person and work of Jesus Christ.
I. ESCHATOLOGY IN CHURCH HISTORY

1. The Patristic Era (AD 100 – 430)

It is generally agreed amongst historians and theologians alike, that the early church was dominated by four chief eschatological concerns: the return of Christ, the resurrection, the judgement and the catastrophic ending of the present world order.\(^2\) It is apparent that at first these four themes were “held together in a naive, unreflective fashion, with little or no attempt to work out their implications or solve the problems they raise.”\(^3\) Despite this, the various claims made, and beliefs advocated, by the Apostolic Fathers, are well documented.\(^4\) Suffice to say that they expected the imminent second coming of Christ. They understood the resurrection of Christ as the “prototype”\(^5\) and proof of the believer’s resurrection, and intimately linked to Christ’s return. They conceived of the judgement as being a universal and future event, where all would be judged by their deeds and the righteous would be separated from the unrighteous. The former being crowned with eternal joy and bliss in heaven, whilst the latter condemned to “perish eternally.”\(^6\) And finally, they believed that the present creation and world as they knew it would be transformed into a realm fit for God’s people to dwell in for eternity. As such, the Early Church’s proclamations about these four eschatologically related subjects “represented a new and radical set of concepts in the Greco-


\(^4\) Ibid., 464; and Landa, “The Advent Hope in Early Christianity,” 66-68.

Roman world. To a Jew well versed in apocalyptic literature, they would not have been so startling. But to a Greek or Roman mindset, they would have appeared “too radical in fact to be credible.”

Many historians and theologians agree that chiliasm ( premillennialism) was the dominant, if not widespread view of the Early Church, especially in the first three centuries. Allen, a premillenialist, cites Philip Schaff in support of this view, and then refers to Barnabas, Papias, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tertullian and Clement of Rome as examples. And Landa argues that “in varying degrees, all were exponents of the millenarian, or chiliastic, doctrine.” Cornman also concedes this point when he writes “Origen was strongly opposed to the chiliastic position, which had been the traditional view until he offered an alternative.” However, Berkhof strongly demurs:

But it is not correct to say, as Premillenarians do, that it was generally accepted in the first three centuries. The truth of the matter is that the adherents of this doctrine were a rather limited number. There is no trace of it in Clement of Rome, Ignatius, Polycarp, Tatian, Athenagoras, Theophilus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Dionysius, and other important Church Fathers. Berkof seems to have a point. Especially when you take into account the fact that chiliasm does not feature in any of the orthodox creeds of the first few centuries, and in fact

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6 Ibid., 464.
8 All of these four tenets of the early church ran directly across the basic Hellenistic philosophy of the day which viewed history as cyclical not linear; the body as fundamentally corrupt; and the cosmos as permanent. For a more detailed comparison see Landa, “The Advent Hope in Early Christianity,” 68-69.
was condemned by the Council of Ephesus in 431. On the other hand, as we shall see, Hippolytus of Rome appears to have been representative of the mainstream church and argued for a chiliastic position. This leaves us with a problem. Who is correct? Was the Early Church chiliastic or not?

Perhaps the bridge over this apparent impasse of conflicting views is found in Shedd’s approach. After taking into account that some of the Early Church Fathers were chiliastic, and others were not, he draws the inference that “this tenet was not the received faith of the church certainly down to the year 150. It was held only by individuals.” He continues to trace the rise and fall of “Millenarianism” noting both its “blooming age” between 150 and 250, and the “decided opposition” to it from the third century on. This more nuanced approach to the issue represents the detail of the facts. Clearly some were chiliastic. But this on its own does not prove the church as a whole had accepted chiliasm as orthodox. On the contrary, the lack of creedal testimony to the chiliastic position should caution against overstating the chiliastic case. On the other hand, there is evidence for a surge in chiliasm at the end of the second century and into the third. This answers the conundrum posed by Hippolytus of Rome. He was representing the mainstream of the church in as much as many of the church at his time were chiliastic. It would appear that the fairest way of representing the facts is to acknowledge, as per Shedd, both that chiliasm was held by some individuals and that during roughly a hundred year period it was the dominating view. However, there were many Church Father’s that were not chiliastic, and the lack of creedal content in regard

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15 Ibid., 392.

16 Ibid., 395.
to the issue would indicate that as a church it never became a widespread and verifiably orthodox doctrine.

One intriguing reference from the Early Church that pertains directly to the topic of this thesis is found in The Epistle of Barnabas where the author, having asserted that the time was close when all things would perish with the evil one, goes on to apply his interpretation of the six days in Genesis to an expected eschatological time frame.\(^{17}\) Having understood each of the six days of creation to represent a thousand years each, the author expresses the belief that the universe would last six thousand years and then would end.\(^{18}\) The author continues to argue that seen as much of that six thousand years was nearly over, the end of the world must be close at hand. What is worth noting from this is not so much the eschatological time frame the author of The Epistle to Barnabas extracts from his interpretation of Genesis. Rather, it is the eschatological connections he makes between Genesis in general, and the six days of creation in particular, and the end times. He at the very least understands eschatology in the light of Genesis. His interpretation of the first book of the Bible, informs (albeit erroneously), his concept of eschatology. This marks the first post-biblical association of the book of Genesis with eschatology.\(^{19}\)

This basic and somewhat germinal eschatological outlook of the early church was forced into development however. One precipitating factor to this “rather more mature phase”\(^{20}\) was the delay of the return of Christ. As Dunbar argues, “it is clear that the unexpected extension of history was the cause of speculation, disagreement, and doctrinal

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\(^{17}\) The Epistle of Barnabas, in *ANF* Vol. I, ch. 15, 146-147.


\(^{19}\) It is also worth noting that Hippolytus of Rome appears to have made the same connection and application. See David G. Dunbar, “Hippolytus of Rome and the Eschatological Exegesis of the Early Church” in *WTJ* 45 (1983), 338.

and institutional development amongst the early Christians.”\(^{21}\) As time wore on and the return of Christ did not transpire, the early Christians were left with the increasing need to explain their eschatological ideas in the light of the actual course of history. As a result, it has been argued that “owing to the continuing delay of the Parousia, the whole doctrine of Primitive Christianity by inner necessity became, in its original sense-context, obscure and doubtful for Christians of the Post-Apostolic era.”\(^{22}\) In other words this crisis “led to a fundamental reshaping of the understanding of the Christian revelation.”\(^{23}\) This, however, would be to overstake the case.\(^{24}\) The eschatology of the early church clearly developed, but it did not fundamentally change. As both Kelly and Landa have asserted, there was a continuity between the eschatology of the first two centuries and that which followed.\(^{25}\) Furthermore, the delay of the Parousia was only one of a few contributing factors to this eschatological development.

An additional catalyst for development was the rise of Montanism at the end of the second century. With its concern to “preserve the eschatological fervour of the primitive church”\(^{26}\) and “their confident predictions of the imminent consummation,”\(^{27}\) Montanism proved influential enough that “orthodox church leaders could not avoid the issues raised.”\(^{28}\)

\(^{21}\) Dunbar, “Hippolytus of Rome,” 322.


\(^{23}\) Dunbar, “Hippolytus of Rome,” 322.

\(^{24}\) Ibid.

\(^{25}\) Kelly, Early Christian Doctrines, 464ff., argues that “the general pattern, indeed, remains unaltered, all the key ideas which form part of it being accepted without question.” He goes on to appeal to sources from Justin, Tertullian, Irenaeus and Hippolytus to support this claim. Landa, “The Advent Hope in Early Christianity,” 72, says that “in spite of these influences that tended to reshape the apostolic eschatology, Christian thinkers on the whole still remained faithful to the traditional teaching about the second advent.”

\(^{26}\) Ibid.

\(^{27}\) David F. Wright, “Montanism” in EDT.

\(^{28}\) Ibid. Cornman, “The Development of Third-Century Hermeneutical Views,” 279, makes the same point.
and dangerous enough that “they also incurred the hostility of church leaders.”
Thus the church was forced by the extremes of the Montanists to start fleshing out their eschatology in a more moderate fashion.

A final factor for development was the renewal of persecution in the beginning of the third century. In the tenth year of Septimus Severus ca.201, Christians were palpably reminded through this new wave of suffering that they were sojourners and strangers in a foreign land, and that their home was in heaven. This naturally resulted in “an increase in interest in the events and chronology of the end times.”

Thus, these three factors – the delay of the Parousia, the rise of Montanism, and persecution - produced an increase in interest in the details of eschatology, and that of individual eschatology as opposed to cosmic eschatology. The end of the world was not so nigh as at first it was thought to be. Thus attention moved more to the specifics of eschatology as they pertained to the issues of individuals and less to the generalities of eschatology as they had to do with the universe.

To speak more generally, it was the philosophy, culture and geography of the end of the second century, and beginning of the third, that played such an important role in developing eschatology. More precisely, these influenced to a large degree the hermeneutics of the Christian thinkers of the time, which in turn developed their eschatologies.

Origen (ca. 185 – ca. 254) is a good example of this. Being heavily influenced by Platonic philosophy, and approaching the Bible with an allegorical hermeneutic, he cut a

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29 David F. Wright, “Montanism”.


31 See Landa, 73ff., for more on this.

32 Cornman has persuasively argued this in “The Development of Third-Century Hermeneutical Views.”
furrow between Hellenistic categories and Gnostic heresies. He explained the resurrection by saying that we will have the same bodies as we did on earth in ‘form’, but instead of being fleshly they will be spiritual. As far as the coming of Christ is concerned, he thought that “the Saviour will not appear in any given place, but will make himself known everywhere.” And in regard to the judgement and hell, he was convinced that all things would be restored, including unbelievers and the devil himself. McGiffert helpfully summarises Origen’s doctrine of the last things for us:

Origen had an elaborate eschatology. He believed in or at least he hoped for the final restoration of all rational creatures, not only men but also demons, including even the arch fiend himself. The pains of hell are disciplinary in purpose and will be temporary only, not everlasting. When the present world has come to an end the material substance of which it is composed will be employed for the formation of another world in which the spirits of men not yet perfected will be still further disciplined and so it will go on until all have been redeemed when matter being unredeemable will be finally destroyed. The future life will be a life of the spirit; the flesh will have no part in it. The joys of heaven and the pains of hell will be mental not material.

In this way Origen “did not reject the Biblical language of the Advent hope...he rejected the literal interpretations of his Christian predecessors.” As such he continued the main eschatological ideas of Christ coming again, the resurrection, the judgement and the end of the world, “though not in the expected manner.” Or, as Kelly has pointed out in Origen’s treatment of the judgement, we see his “desire to retain traditional dogma and the desire to


38 Ibid.
reinterpret it in a manner palatable to intelligent believers.”39 Thus, “with Origen’s allegorical hermeneutic firmly in place, it became an easy jump to amillennialism.”40 The end times position which largely remained in place until the end of the Middle Ages.41

A contemporary and probable acquaintance42 of Origen was Hippolytus (ca. 170 – ca.236). Despite his sharing similar views on important issues of the day with Origen, they “developed along different lines in relationship to their hermeneutical and eschatological views.”43 Moreover, what we find in Hippolytus in contrast to Origen is “a kind of ‘main-line’ eschatology which may have been widespread during the closing decades of the second century.”44 In other words, Hippolytus is to be taken as far more representative of the eschatological views of his time, than Origen was, despite the fact that “his message grew faint” and “Origen became a driving force in theology.”45 Indeed, it would appear that just as Origen’s eschatology was heavily influenced by the neo-platonic traditions in Alexandria,46 so Hippolytus was influenced by the apostolic succession theology (with its various attendants) of Irenaeus (ca. 130 – ca. 200).47 In fact, any study of Hippolytus’ theology, necessitates a study of Irenaeus’ theology.48 Hippolytus was both a student of Irenaeus and

39 Kelly, Early Christian Doctrines, 472.

40 Allen, Theology Adrift, Ch. 4.

41 Cornman, “The Development of Third-Century Hermeneutical Views,” 285, argues that “It is he who is credited with making allegory, with its shift to amillennialism, the dominant method of Biblical interpretation until the end of the Middle Ages.”

42 Ibid.

43 Ibid.


46 Ibid., 279.


48 Dunbar, “Hippolytus of Rome,” 339, writes “Irenaeus is the source not only for specific points of Hippolytean exegesis but also for the overall eschatological approach.”
was “heavily influenced by his tutor’s understanding of inspiration and interpretation of Scripture.” 49 This then “created a mindset influencing his eschatological development.” 50

Irenaeus famously wrote a polemical work entitled Against Heresies. In this extensive exposé of the error of Gnosticism he argues against several approaches to Scripture, one of which was a “spiritualising of eschatology.” 51 He goes on to propose an interpretation of the Bible which was in full accordance with a summary of apostolic preaching – often referred to as “the rule of faith.” This included the doctrine of creation, redemption, resurrection and significantly, a chiliastic eschatology, 52 all of which constituted the “basic elements of the Christian faith.” 53 This summary proved to be essential to Irenaeus as he refuted the heresies of his day, and particularly contrasted the secret traditions of groups like the Gnostics, with the open and public traditions of orthodox Christianity. 54 And it was the tradition of the apostles that Irenaeus connects strongly to this “rule of faith,” as “he depended on the continuity of apostolic authority to guarantee the appropriate understanding of Scripture.” 55 The significance of this for the present study is that “this understanding of the proper method of interpretation resulted in the acceptance of the chiliastic view.” 56

Furthermore, “this foundation was passed on to his disciple Hippolytus” 57 who in writing a commentary on Daniel – both the earliest known one 58 and the oldest known

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49 Ibid.
50 Ibid.
51 Everett Ferguson, “Irenaeus” in EDT.
52 Ibid.
54 Ibid.
55 Ibid. See also Kelly, Early Christian Doctrines, 37-38.
56 Ibid. Allen, ch.5 also quotes Irenaeus as purporting a premillennial view.
continuous commentary by an orthodox Christian sets forth a chiliastic position. In this commentary he details his views on the antichrist in harmony with earlier traditions. He takes these traditions – and particularly the chronological scheme of Irenaeus – and develops them. As such, Hippolytus serves as a representative of the Early Church’s view on eschatology, as he was intensely interested in the subject, wrote extensively on it, and represented the mainstream views. In as much as he was chiliastic, preoccupied with the return of Christ and understood eschatology within the categories of the literal second coming of Jesus and its various attendant events, we can safely say, so was much of the Early Church to his time. Whilst Origen marks an eschatological development away from what the Early Church held to, Hippolytus signifies resolute concord with that same tradition, albeit a more sophisticated and comprehensive expression.

One final note must be taken of Hippolytus’s tutor – Irenaeus - whose most original contribution to the theology of the Early Church was his doctrine of recapitulation. This stated that “the fully divine Christ became fully man in order to sum up all humanity in himself.” This doctrine made an analogy between the first Adam, and the second – Christ. What was lost by the first through disobedience was restored by the second through obedience. The restoration won by Christ is then fully enjoyed by his people in heaven.

58 Everett Ferguson, “Irenaeus.”
60 Everett Ferguson, “Irenaeus.”
61 Dunbar, “Hippolytus of Rome,” 328-329. For the specific developments themselves I would refer the reader to this article.
62 Everett Ferguson, “Irenaeus.”
63 Ibid.
64 Thomas A. Von Hagel, “Irenaeus and his theology of Recapitulation” available <http://www.stanlemon.net/writings/irenaeus.html> (16th June 2007). He writes “Thus the process continues,
Thus Irenaeus consciously relates the events of Genesis 1-3 to the person and work of Christ and then on to eschatology. He even extends the analogy between Adam and Christ to include Eve. Mary, the mother of Christ, is seen as the new, or second, Eve. Clearly for Irenaeus Genesis 1-3 is important for our understanding of salvation and the end times. All three are strongly linked in as much as the last two recapitulate the first. This then provides early evidence for an associating of the events of Genesis with those of eschatology.

Augustine of Hippo (354 – 430) was responsible, on the whole through his book City of God, for “the promotion and acceptance of amillennialism.” In fact, it has been claimed that he “single-handedly sounded the death knell of chiliasm.” Written in his own “apocalyptic” context – the destruction of Rome and the fall of the Roman Empire – the book relates the “city of God” with the “city of the world.” The Church lives between the two advents of Christ, as an exile in the “city of the world.” As such Augustine “reworks” the Pauline tension between the “now” and the “not yet”. In the words of McGrath,

There is a strong eschatological tension between the present reality, in which the church is exiled in the world, and somehow obliged to maintain its distinctive ethos while surrounded by disbelief, and the future hope, in which the will be delivered from the world, and finally allowed to share in the glory of God.

and with it the recapitulating work of Christ until that final day when He comes again to take His people to be in heaven above, fully recapitulated in all their glory.”

65 See Everett Ferguson, “Irenaeus”, and Thomas A. Von Hagel, “Irenaeus and his theology of Recapitulation.”


69 Ibid.

70 Ibid.
This tension on the corporate level of eschatology is also found on the individual level in Augustine. Again McGrath writes

Salvation is something that is inaugurated in the life of the believer, but which will only find its completion at the end of history.  

Thus Augustine effectively historicised the Bible’s prophetic and apocalyptic passages by finding eschatological fulfilment in the gradual unfolding of history, rather than in a final moment of eschatological crisis. He popularised the amillennial position to such an extent that premillennialism was condemned at the Council of Ephesus (431). And he elucidated an eschatological tension that was reminiscent of Paul, and that connected the present existence of believers and the church, with the future. Despite this apparent break with the Early Church, he maintained in common with earlier thinkers, a concern with such issues as the coming of Antichrist, the resurrection and the destruction of the world. Significantly however, “he did not wish to be dogmatic concerning the exact nature and ordering of these events.” Rather than speculate on dates and attempt to predict the exact return of Christ by relating present historical calamities with Biblical prophecies, (as was the want of many of his predecessors); he focussed on the return of Christ in glory to judge and save, which was “not necessarily imminent and certainly unpredictable.”

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71 Ibid.
72 Paul S. Boyer, “Eschatology” in EP.
74 Emmerson, “The Advent Hope in the Middle Ages,” 98.
75 Ibid., 99.
2. The Medieval Era (A.D. 430 – 1500)

Included in all early Christian creeds is the expected return of Christ “whence he comes to judge the living and the dead,” the resurrection and eternal life. In the Medieval Era these creeds were believed alongside a three part view of history: that it had a beginning, a middle and an end. These three related to the “three advents of Christ: at the beginning as Creator, at the centre of history as the God-incarnate Redeemer, and at the end as Judge.”

Although some medieval theologians spiritualised eschatology the majority remained committed to the Augustinian tradition. Or as Lewis has recorded, “A figurative, spiritual, dehistoricised eschatology dominated the Middle Ages.”

Guerric of Igny, preaching in the twelfth century, and a student of Bernard of Clairvaux, is a good example of this and worth quoting at length:

For just as the Church awaited in the holy ones of old the first coming, so in us she is expecting the second. Just as she steadfastly hoped in the first for the price of her redemption, so she hopes in the second for the reward of her earning. This looking forward in hope raises her above earthly concerns; her eyes are fixed with joyous longing upon those in heaven. There are some, impatient to find happiness in the affairs of this present life, who neglect the Lord’s advice and make every effort to snatch the prizes this world offers. But blessed is the man whose whole hope rests in the Lord’s name and who takes no notice of spurious and empty foolishness...I am absolutely sure that in the end he will appear and will prove not to have deceived me;

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77 Emmerson, “The Advent Hope in the Middle Ages,” 97.

78 Ibid., 99-100.

79 Alan E. Lewis, “Escatology” in ERF.

80 I am indebted to Richard K. Emmerson in the already referenced article for directing my attention to this quote.
so in spite of the delay he imposes I shall go on waiting for him confidently, because he certainly will come and will not be later than the most timely day.\textsuperscript{81} Here, Guerric of Igny blends both a reluctance to be drawn on speculating the when of Christ’s return, with the certainty that he will return. In addition, and with echoes of Augustine and the \textit{City of God}, he draws out the implications of this for life in the world i.e. the hope of the second coming of Christ should lead Christians to holiness and to reject what this world offered. In other words, his eschatology transformed his Christian living.

Through Biblical commentaries – especially on the book of Revelation; the compilation of numerous chronicles and universal histories; the use and development of the liturgy; and even popular works and the literary and visual arts,\textsuperscript{82} the return of Christ and the attendant resurrection, judgement and new world, remained at they very centre of medieval life and theology. It also, at least until after the twelfth century, remained largely Augustinian and amillennial in its approach and understanding of eschatology.

Joachim of Fiore (1135 -1202) had a tri-theistic tendency that appeared in his views of history and that was condemned by Lateran IV (1215).\textsuperscript{83} He “understood the development of history in terms of the activity of the Trinity (in history) so that history reflects the Trinitarian relations.”\textsuperscript{84} He viewed the Old Testament as corresponding to the age of the Father and the New Testament, including the church, as corresponding to the age of the Son. After these two he proposed that “as the Spirit proceeds out of the Father and the Son, so an age (status) of the Spirit will develop out of the Old Testament age of the Father and the New Testament age


\textsuperscript{82} See Emmerson, “The Advent Hope in the Middle Ages,” for more on all of these categories.

\textsuperscript{83} M. F. Laughlin, “Joachim of Fiore” in \textit{NCE}.

\textsuperscript{84} R. J. Bauckham, “Joachism” in \textit{NDT}.
of the Son.”

This would be characterised “with the rise of new religious movements, leading to the reform and renewal of the church, and the final establishment of peace and unity on earth.”

Whereas Augustine’s bipartite view of history “which treated the period of the church as that era separating the coming (or “advent”) and returning (or “second coming”) of Christ,” was simple and straightforward, this was a more elaborate and speculative approach coupled with a “strongly eschatological orientation.” What accentuated the urgency of this eschatological orientation was the exact dating of Joachim’s three ages. By assuming each age to consist of forty two generations of thirty years each, he predicted that the age of the Son was due to end in 1260, which meant that the dawning of the age of the Spirit was literally on the doorstep. This inevitably raised eschatological expectations and reignited something of the eschatological fires that had been dampened by Augustinian amillennialism.

Ibid. Laughlin, “Joachim of Fiore,” gives us more detail. The age of Father was to be characterised by fear and servile obedience and was the age of the married and the old. The age of the Son was to be characterised by faith and filial obedience and was the age of the clergy and the young. And the age of the Spirit was to be characterised by love and liberty and was the age of monks and children.

McGrath, Christian Theology, 545. Laughlin, “Joachim of Fiore,” again gives us more detail: “The visible Church of the second age was to be absorbed by the spiritual Church of the third; the clergy and hierarchy were to have a place in the spiritual order; the active live as to be absorbed by the contemplative; Jews were to be converted, Greeks and Latins reconciled; wars were to cease, universal love would reign, and the theology of the beatitudes would endure to the end of the world.”

For more detail on Joachim of Fiore’s work with numbers and how he came to this, and his Trinitarian view of history, I would direct the reader to Marjorie Reeves, Joachim of Fiore and the Prophetic Future (London: SPCK, 1976), and to Delno C. West and Sandra Zimdars-Swartz, Joachim of Fiore A Study in Spiritual Perception and History (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983.)

Ibid. See also Laughlin, “Joachim of Fiore.” This seems to contradict Emmerson, “The Advent Hope in the Middle Ages,” 111, who claims that he “remained orthodox in refusing to predict its [the millennium] exact timing or duration.” This apparent contradiction can I think be reconciled by remembering that for Emmerson, Joachim did not equate the age of the Spirit with the millennium. Thus whilst he may have dated the age of the Spirit, he did not date the coming of the millennium.
What is perhaps unclear in Joachim is whether or not he identified this final age of the Spirit with the millennium of Revelation. Bauckham⁹¹ thinks he did whereas Emmerson⁹² is not sure. Either way, both agree that his followers rejected “his restrained conclusions based on careful exegesis”⁹³ and lost the subtlety of his theology,⁹⁴ by replacing it with a more fervent millenarianism. Or as Laughlin writes, “This doctrine was taken up by the Spiritual Franciscans, that is the Joachmites, mixed with ideas from the Apocrypha, and carried far beyond Joachim’s intentions.”⁹⁵ By doing so his devotees ensured that his name subsequently became a byword for fanaticism in the late Middle Ages.⁹⁶

Interestingly however, it is thought by some that in Joachim’s proposal lies the root of postmillennialism which first flourished in the seventeenth century.⁹⁷ What is certain is that he represents a move away from an Augustinian tempered view of eschatology, towards the excesses of speculation that became increasingly dominant after the twelfth century.⁹⁸

Dante Alighieri (1265-1321), who has been called “the most learned layman of his time and deeply versed in theology,”⁹⁹ represented a somewhat more poetic approach to eschatological issues. He wrote the *Divine Comedy* which was essentially a poetic expression

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⁹¹ Bauckham, “Joachism.”

⁹² Emmerson, “The Advent Hope in the Middle Ages,” 111.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Bauckham, “Joachism.”

⁹⁵ Laughlin, “Joachim of Fiore.”

⁹⁶ Emmerson, “The Advent Hope in the Middle Ages,” 111.

⁹⁷ For more on this see R. J. Bauckham, “Millenium” in *NDT*. 

⁹⁸ Emmerson, “The Advent Hope in the Middle Ages,” 108, writes, “After the twelfth century, however, an increasing number of works discussed the expectation of the last things, and many of these departed from the more conservative orthodox teachings of the fathers and doctors.”

⁹⁹ R. Montano, “Dante Alighieri” in *NE.*

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of the Christian hope which commented on life in the city of Florence in his day. In this recounted journey, which he claimed he experienced as a vision, the Roman poet Virgil guides him through hell and purgatory where he encounters many of his contemporaries and famous people of history. The importance of this work is that it is a depiction of the medieval worldview where “souls of the departed pass through a series of purifying and cleansing processes, before being enabled to catch a glimpse of the vision of God – the ultimate goal of the Christian life.” As such, it gives us an insight into the late Medieval era’s view of eschatology, with its acceptance of purgatory, and its fearful illustrations of hell.

One final figure of the Medieval Era is worth taking note of because of his break with Rome and his partial challenging of the Medieval eschatological status quo. Jan Hus (1372-1415) was a Czechoslovakian reformer who “became a significant leader in what has been called the First Reformation.” He was influenced by John Wycliffe’s ideas, especially on the spirituality of the church, and by other Czech reformers. He attacked Papal politics and the sale of indulgences for which he was eventually burned at the stake for heresy. Something of the passion and commitment of the man can be gleaned from the inscription on the Hus monument in Prague’s Old Town square, which bears these words from his

*Exposition of the Faith:* Therefore, O faithful Christian, search for truth, hear truth, learn truth, love truth, speak the truth, hold the truth, defend the truth till death. It was not necessarily his eschatological views that mark him out as worthy of note, for he “accepted the

100 McGrath, *Christian Theology*, 545.

101 See Montano, “Dante Alighieri” for more on this.

102 McGrath, *Christian Theology*, 545.

103 Schwanda, “Jan Hus” in *EC*.

104 P. Kurbricht, “Jan Hus” in *EDT*.

105 Schwanda, “Jan Hus.”

106 Ibid.
Roman Catholic doctrine of purgatory and expected a coming day of judgement. It is more the fact that he represents a bucking of the Medieval trend which discouraged eschatological speculation, particularly by the Laity. In the words of Boyer, “eschatology flourished at the grassroots level... often implicitly challenging the papacy, as in the... fifteenth century Hussite movement in Bohemia.” Or as Lochman has written, “The reforming postulates of the Hussites fall within the horizon of eschatological expectation.” In other words, it was his commitment to the Bible and his conviction that one day he would give an account to his Lord and God, that drove him to speak his mind, which meant speaking out against the instituted church.

107 Kurbricht, “Jan Hus.”
108 Boyer, “Eschatology.”
109 Jan M. Lochman, “Eschatology” in EC.
3. The Reformation Era (A. D. 1500 – 1650)

At first glance one could be forgiven for perceiving the Reformation Era as a whole as being somewhat enigmatic in its approach to eschatology. On the one hand at least some of the early Reformers “readily used eschatological imagery.”\(^\text{110}\) They particularly used Biblical allusions to the antichrist, the Beast, and the Whore of Babylon, to pursue their campaign against Rome.\(^\text{111}\) A quick perusal of the “hyper-Protestant marginal notes of the Genevan Bible of 1560” would prove the point.\(^\text{112}\)

On the other hand, many of the Reformation leaders like Luther, Zwingli and Calvin were deeply suspicious of eschatological speculation. This was partly due to the highly volatile religious and social situation they found themselves in.\(^\text{113}\) It was also due to what they saw as the excesses of their Anabaptist contemporaries who, often being fuelled by eschatological rhetoric and end times pronouncements, and so inspired to political and social action, led their followers to disaster.\(^\text{114}\) The Peasants War in Germany is an example of this. Thomas Muntzer enthused his followers with eschatological expectations until their catastrophic final stand at Framhenhausen in 1525. Similarly, less than a decade later, Jan Mathis took over the city of Munster and declared it the New Jerusalem. However, soon life

\(^{110}\) Boyer, “Eschatology.”

\(^{111}\) It is interesting that from a Catholic perspective it would appear that this attack against Rome has either been missed or ignored. M. E. Williams, “Eschatology (In Theology)” in NCE in his overview of the development of eschatology throughout history, has a small paragraph on the Reformation, and he simply notes: “It was the doctrine of purgatory that was called into question by the Reformers. This was connected as much with the basic Protestant idea of the nature of Justification and an inability to understand temporal punishment as with certain abuses in the practice of Masses for the dead and the use of indulgences.”

\(^{112}\) Boyer, “Eschatology.”

\(^{113}\) Ibid.

\(^{114}\) Vlach, Eschatology in Church History, writes, “Like others of this era, the Anabaptists of the sixteenth century participated in apocalyptic speculations. In fact, every strand of sixteenth-century Anabaptism emphasized apocalypticism. Even the most cautious Anabaptist writers frequently referred to ‘these last days’ and were on the lookout for signs of the antichrist.”
in the city degenerated into brutality, chaos and mass starvation, and the revolt ended calamitously as it was crushed by the authorities in 1535.\textsuperscript{115} Such events confirmed the Protestant leaders’ suspicions of “excessively literalist or present minded eschatological interpretations.”\textsuperscript{116}

However, these concerns did not render the Reformers bereft of an eschatology, and neither did they ignore or undermine issues that pertained to the end times. On the contrary, they had a “firm, orthodox belief of the last things.”\textsuperscript{117} Terpstra helpfully summarises their views:

In simple, straightforward fashion they followed the teaching of Scripture concerning the hope of the church. They understood this present age to be the so-called millennium of Revelation 20:1-6 and the last before the return of Christ. They believed the end of this age would be marked by increasing wickedness in the world and apostasy in the church, culminating in the rise of the antichrist. They held to the personable, visible, glorious coming (only one!) of Christ when all things were full according to God’s counsel. They embraced the truth of the bodily resurrection of the dead, the final, public judgement, and the re-creation of the heavens and the earth by Christ upon his return. And they believed the everlasting states of the righteous and the wicked – unending bliss with God in the new creation for the former, and unending torment in hell for the latter.\textsuperscript{118}

In this the Reformers were not essentially developing eschatology. They were in effect consciously “accepting the long-standing, amillennial eschatology of Augustine.”\textsuperscript{119} Apart from the issue of chiliasm which resurfaced, the fact is that the various doctrines that fall under the rubric of eschatology were widely agreed upon at this time, and so there was little controversy over them.

\begin{footnotes}
\item[115] Boyer, “Eschatology.”
\item[116] Ibid.
\item[118] Ibid.
\item[119] Ibid.
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More specifically, Luther believed that to live by faith in the kingdom of Christ meant engaging in the inner warfare between gospel and law.\textsuperscript{120} And so his eschatological hope related more to redemption from sin and death, than to the redemption of the whole world.\textsuperscript{121} As Lewis has commented, “His hope provides more consolation until the world is overcome than anticipation that the world shall itself be sanctified.”\textsuperscript{122} This is further borne out by the claim that Luther’s article by which the church would stand or fall, i.e. the doctrine of justification by faith alone, was very much “juxtaposed” with eschatology.\textsuperscript{123} Forell argues that “Luther’s understanding of justification by faith is developed against the background of what we would call realised eschatology.”\textsuperscript{124} If this is true, then Luther, along with many of the Reformers, appears to have had an emphasis on individual eschatology to the neglect of cosmological eschatology,\textsuperscript{125} as he related it to soteriology and not cosmology.

However, it has also been asserted that Luther had “an eschatological dimension in his teaching concerning creation.”\textsuperscript{126} Forell quotes David Lofgren as writing “The idea of creation and eschatology belong closely together in Luther,”\textsuperscript{127} and he continues by arguing “It is because God is the creator that a new creation is possible, and it is because of this new creation that the Christian life in time is possible.”\textsuperscript{128} Thus to claim that Luther had no

\textsuperscript{120} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{121} Lochman, “Eschatology.”

\textsuperscript{122} Lewis, “Eschatology.”

\textsuperscript{123} George Wolfgang Forell, “Justification and Eschatology in Luther’s Thought” in \textit{PTM} Vol. 44, Article 4, available <http://www.presenttruthmag.com/archive/XLIV/44-4.htm> (26\textsuperscript{th} July 2007)

\textsuperscript{124} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{125} Lewis, “Eschatology.” It is interesting to note that M. E. Williams, “Eschatology (In Theology), makes the same point about the Counter Reformation. He writes “Counter Reformation theology was characterised by stress on the last things of the individual, there was little about the Parousia.”

\textsuperscript{126} George Wolfgang Forell, “Justification and Eschatology in Luther’s Thought.”

\textsuperscript{127} David Lofgren, \textit{Die Theologie der Schopfung bei Luther} (Gottingen,1969), 301; quoted in Forell, “Justification and Eschatology in Luther’s Thought.”

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cosmological eschatology would clearly be to misrepresent the facts. He, along with other Reformers, understood that Christ’s return would pre-empt the re-creation of heaven and earth. Therefore, whilst Luther appears to have majored on individual eschatology as it related to salvation, it is worth noting he did have a cosmological eschatology, albeit one that was in the shadow of the former.

Something similar could be said of Calvin, who like Luther had much to say of individual eschatology, yet apparently less of the cosmological dimension. A quick survey of chapter twenty five in book three of the *Institutes* bears this out. Under the general chapter heading of “The Final Resurrection” he asserts the doctrine, deals with objections, and discusses “life in the hereafter” for both the elect and the reprobate. This seems to constitute the sum total of Calvin’s eschatology, which when coupled with the fact that he, like Luther, never wrote a commentary on the book of Revelation, would appear to indicate his total lack of concern with eschatology as it relates to the world.

This assumption however would, as with Luther, be erroneous. It is Calvin who “envisaged more clearly creations restoration” at the return of Christ. In commenting on Isaiah 65:17 Calvin writes,

> But when we shall be perfectly renewed, heaven and earth shall also be fully renewed, and shall regain their former state. And hence it ought to be inferred, as we have frequently remarked, that the Prophet has in his eye the whole reign of Christ, down to its final close, which is also called “the day of renovation and restoration.”

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128 Forell, “Justification and Eschatology in Luther’s Thought.”

129 See the above quote from Terpstra, “Reformed Eschatology (Amillennial) Since the Reformation” which outlines the Reformers general eschatological views.


131 Lewis, “Eschatology”

Calvin continues this theme as he comments on Isaiah 65:25:

He means that everything shall be fully restored, when Christ shall reign. And here it appears as if there were an implied comparison between Adam and Christ. We know that all the afflictions of the present life flowed from the sin of the first man...but since it is the office of Christ to bring back everything to its condition and order, that is the reason why he declares that the confusion or ruin that now exists in human affairs shall be removed by the coming of Christ; because at that time, corruptions having been taken away, the world shall return to its first origin. 133

Finally, in writing on Acts 3:21 Calvin says,

Therefore, if at this day we see many things confused in the world, let this hope set us upon foot and refresh us that Christ shall once come that he may restore all things. 134

This evidence disabuses us of any notion that Calvin only had an individual eschatology. Moreover, he not only seems to have understood that when Christ came a second time the world would be restored to its “first origin.” He also perceived that this process of renovation had “already begun in Christ’s glorified body.” 135 As such Calvin has an albeit implicit, but nonetheless very real, inaugurated and futuristic eschatology.

Furthermore, for Calvin this eschatology gives comfort for believers as they aspire for the life to come and await this cosmic restoration. 136 Lewis has put it memorably, “As Christ ascended awaits his final reign, so does the church in union with him await.” 137

133 Ibid., 405-406.


135 Lewis, “Eschatology.”

136 See Institutes III.ix.6.

137 Lewis, “Eschatology.”
The Puritans held unanimity of opinion in regard to the Papacy from the time of the Marian exile to the Protectorate of Oliver Cromwell. The Pope and the Roman Catholic Church were regarded as the antichrist and “they heartily believed that soon the cry would be heard “Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great.” The same unity of mind cannot be said of their attitudes to the conversion of the Jews however. Many Puritans believed that Rom 11:25 spoke of some kind of en masse conversion of the Jews before the end of the age, but there remained more than a few dissenters on this issue. It has also been noted that eschatological speculations periodically erupted in Protestantism’s more fervent and evangelical precincts at this time. This was particularly true in times of religious or social crisis. As Boyer has noted: “The wave of reform that followed Henry VIII’s establishment of the Church of England, culminating the Puritan movement, the Civil War, regicide, and the rule of Oliver Cromwell ... was marked by intense end-time anticipation.”

What the Puritans believed in regard to the other issues pertaining to eschatology was formulated in the most comprehensive and representative confessional document of its time, the Westminster Confession of Faith. This both embodied a covenant framework shaped by Johannes Cocceius and reflected “the influence of Puritan covenant theology.” It has been argued that this kind of covenant theology “often lapsed into dispensationalism” by finding eschatological significance only in the final epoch of a period of history, or else

138 Toon, Puritans, the Millennium and the Future of Israel, 126
139 Ibid.
140 Ibid., 128.
141 Boyer, “Eschatology.”
142 Ibid.
143 Lewis, “Eschatology.”
144 D. F. Wright, “Confessions of Faith” in NDT.
145 Lewis, “Eschatology.”
“reduced the interval from the resurrection to the last judgement to a static, necessary outworking of Christ’s completed work.” However, Thomas has pointed out that the very first question and answer of the Shorter Catechism has eschatological implications for Adam. He argues,

Christ came into the world to undo the effects of the Fall. When Adam fell, his future fell with him. By eating of the one tree forbidden to him, Adam forfeited the right to eat of the tree of life; his eschatological purpose – that he should “glorify God and enjoy him for ever” (SC1) – was shattered.

This then makes the criticism that the Westminster Confession of Faith only finds eschatological significance in the final epoch of history, unfounded. If Adam is depicted, albeit implicitly, in the Confession to have existed eschatologically, then not only is the final epoch of history eschatological, but the whole of history – from beginning to end.

Thomas shores up this position by making further reference to the “centralisation of the Westminster Confession on God’s eternal decree (WCF 3)” and to the “Confession’s recognition of God’s unified covenantal purpose (WCF 7).” For these two “there are implications for eschatology: throughout history, God has bound himself through the biblical covenants to redeem his people through the death of his Son.” With this in mind, it seems incredible to accuse a system of theology that centres upon the decreed and united covenant

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146 Ibid.

147 Question 1: What is the chief end of man? Answer: Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.


149 Ibid., 313.

150 Ibid. (Emphasis his).

151 Ibid. Thomas continues, “The unity of the covenant of grace forces us to read the Bible in such a way that we see the Old Testament as historical witness to an era of preparation in which everything was working towards the coming of the Messiah.”
outrusting of God, of relegating an essential implication of this theology, to the final epoch of history. The very fact that the Westminster Confession of Faith is covenantal to its core ensures that eschatology is not demoted to the end of time, but remains relevant to the whole of redemptive history.

It would also seem reasonable to assume that the Puritan divines who framed and wrote the Confession had some sense of inaugurated eschatology. The answer to Question 82 of the Larger Catechism identifies three parts to the “communion in glory that believers have with Christ.” The first of these include “this life.” Question 83 develops this in detail by outlining exactly what this communion in glory “in this life” entails.\textsuperscript{152} As such, it is safe to say that “The Westminster symbols, do not of course, allude specifically to a realised or inaugurated eschatology as such, but unconsciously there are allusions to it in some of its pronouncements.”\textsuperscript{153}

Of course the Confession closes with two chapters to do with the last things with an “emphasis on futuristic eschatology [which] is both clear and precise, though carefully selective.”\textsuperscript{154} Ferguson aptly summarises the contents of these chapters for us:

The Confession affirms the reality of Christ’s return, of the Last Judgement, and of Heaven and Hell. The last day, when all men and angels shall be judged has already been appointed, but remains unrevealed. On it God will manifest the glory of his mercy and the glory of his justice. This assurance should make the Christian watchful and create in him a spirit of expectancy, so that he is always prepared to say: ‘Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly’ (XXXIII.iii).\textsuperscript{155}

\textsuperscript{152} The answer runs as follows: The members of the invisible church have communicated to them in this life the first-fruits of glory with Christ, as they are members of him their head, and so in him are interested in that glory which he is fully possessed of; and, as an earnest thereof, enjoy the sense of God’s love, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, and hope of glory; as, on the contrary, sense of God’s revenging wrath, horror of conscience, and a fearful expectation of judgement, are to the wicked the beginning of their torments which they shall endure after death.

\textsuperscript{153} Thomas, “The Eschatology of the Westminster Confession and Assembly,” 311. (Emphasis his).

\textsuperscript{154} Ibid., 319.
Further eschatological implications and issues could be drawn from the Confession including its identifying the Pope as the antichrist and its teaching on the Lord’s Prayer and the kingdom of God. Finally, “it is, on one level, surprising that the Confession expresses no opinion regarding the Millennium, particularly so since many of its contributors had pronounced views on the matter.” This was probably because the Assembly was “too modest to dictate a belief amidst so many different opinions.” As such, and taking all of the above into account, the Westminster Confession of Faith is a “clear, lucid statement of Puritan thought at its best.” Whilst it may not contain an explicit inaugurated eschatology, it certainly has “eschatological features of conquest and renewal” as they pertain to both Adam and Christ and the new heavens and earth, and it typifies what the Church believed concerning futuristic eschatology at that time.

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156 I would direct the reader to Thomas, “The Eschatology of the Westminster Confession and Assembly,” 319-321, for a discussion on these issues.


4. The Modern Era (A. D. 1650 – Present)

Throughout the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, certain notable millennial views surfaced to varying degrees. Jonathan Edwards (1703-58) believed that the great awakening in the American colonies was a signal that “the ‘latter day’ millennium was dawning which would be followed by the general judgement, conflagration, eternal hell and heaven.”¹⁶¹ The subsequent revivals that occurred throughout England, Wales, Scotland and the Americas, were seen by many post- millennialists as “the first ripples of the movement of conversion which would engulf the world,”¹⁶² and which “played a key role in the development of missionary thinking”¹⁶³ and missionary activity.

Edward Irving (1792-1834), who has been referred to as “the first Reformed Pentecostal theologian,”¹⁶⁴ was both a popular and controversial figure of his day. Amongst other things he believed in the sinful nature of Christ’s flesh, insisted that the Pentecostal gifts had been restored to the church,¹⁶⁵ and preached Christ’s imminent return.¹⁶⁶ He is also considered by some as the “forerunner of the charismatic movement”¹⁶⁷ which is often associated with pre-millennialism.¹⁶⁸ Henry Drummond, who was a convert of Irving’s and a wealthy banker and Tory Minister of Parliament, held several prophecy conferences on his

¹⁶¹ J. H. Gerstner, “Jonathan Edwards” in NDT.
¹⁶² R. J. Bauckham, “Millenium.”
¹⁶³ Ibid.
¹⁶⁴ I. Hamilton, “Edward Irving” in NDT.
¹⁶⁵ Ibid.
¹⁶⁶ Boyer, “Eschatology.”
¹⁶⁷ Hamilton, “Edward Irving.”
¹⁶⁸ J. W. Ward, “Pentecostalist Theology” in NDT.
estate in the 1820s and 30s. At around the same time William Miller, who had drawn upon calculations of events and time sequences in the Hebrew Scriptures, proclaimed that the second coming of Christ would be sometime between 21\textsuperscript{st} March 1843 and 21\textsuperscript{st} March 1844. Thousands of people adhered to this and out of the ‘great disappointment’ produced by these failed prophecies came the Seventh Day Adventist church, which to date has been a “bastion of eschatological belief.”

John Nelson Darby (1800-1882), a founder of the dissenting sect the Plymouth Brethren, invented a system of eschatological interpretation known as premillennial Dispensationalism. One of his converts, a man called Cyrus Scofield, published in 1909 an annotated Bible with notes based on Darby’s scheme. Through this popular ‘Scofield Reference Bible’ and other associated periodicals, conferences, seminaries and the preaching of dispensational ministers, Darby’s eschatological scheme pervaded American evangelicalism to the extent that it “emerged as the dominant eschatology of grassroots American Protestantism.” This, along with tele-evangelists, popular novels like the Left Behind series, radio and television programmes, and a surge in the membership role of denominations like the Assemblies of God and the Southern Baptist Convention, has contributed to a ramping up of eschatological expectation to date. World events have also compounded this eschatological tension:

The atomic bomb; the United Nations; the movement for European unity; the establishment of Israel in 1948; the Israeli’s recapture of Jerusalem’s Old City in 1967; and later the rise of computers, a global economy, and a worldwide

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169 Boyer, “Eschatology.”

170 Ibid.

171 A. A. Hoekema, “Seventh-Day Adventism” in NDT.

172 Boyer, “Eschatology.”

173 Ibid.
communications system all struck prophecy writers as portentous signs of the times, making plain that the present dispensation would soon end.\textsuperscript{174}

This has all secured the place of eschatology – albeit a predominantly futuristic eschatology - at the very heart of modern day evangelicalism.

Moreover, the last one hundred or so years has seen a literal explosion of eschatologically oriented thought and opinion. As one surveyor has put it, “When one looks back on the history of theological thought in the twentieth century one cannot avoid the impression that it could correctly be called the century of eschatology.”\textsuperscript{175} Or as the present Pope memorably wrote before he took over the Pontificate, “the eschatological feverishness of the twentieth century developed, giving the previous century something of the idyllic quality of the legend of Sleeping Beauty in comparison.”\textsuperscript{176} With this in mind, the remit of this thesis can in no way give the people involved and the ideas they promulgated their due time and space.\textsuperscript{177} A swift survey of the major thinkers of the last century will have to suffice.

Albert Schweitzer (1875-1965) proposed a so called “consistent eschatology”\textsuperscript{178} in reaction to the nineteenth century reconstructions of the life of Jesus which “simply attributed to Jesus the liberal theology of their authors.”\textsuperscript{179} In The Quest of the Historical Jesus he insisted on the urgency of the first Christians eschatological expectations, and contended that the whole of Jesus’ ministry was founded on the belief that the world would end very soon.

\textsuperscript{174} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{177} For more detail on the background, influences, literary contribution and evaluation of the eschatology of the following men, I would direct the reader to the excellent work by Terry C. Dohm, The Rediscovery of Eschatology in the Message of Jesus and Its Impact on Theology on the Twentieth Century (Regensburg: Roderer Verlag, 2003).

\textsuperscript{178} F. F. Bruce, “Eschatology” in EDT.

\textsuperscript{179} R. M. Price, “Albert Schweitzer” in NDT.
Moreover, he argued, that the message of Jesus was thoroughly eschatological in that it was an ethical teaching designed for the interim between the beginning of his ministry and his manifestation in glory.\(^{180}\) When Jesus, believing he was the Messiah, found that the expected consummation did not come, he embraced death in order to forcibly inaugurate the Parousia. As Schweitzer himself sums up:

> Since the wheel of history would not respond to his hand and turn round to complete its last revolution, he threw himself on it and was broken by it, only to dominate history more decisively by his failure than he could have done by attaining his misconceived ambition\(^{181}\).

He also understood Paul as believing that Jesus’ messianic reign had begun, albeit invisibly, and that the sacraments, ethics, law and justification were all a function of Pauline eschatology.\(^{182}\) Whilst he undoubtedly overstated his case his importance for eschatology cannot be underestimated. His “work brought eschatology to the forefront and the impact is still being felt in the world of theology today.”\(^{183}\)

C. H. Dodd (1884-1973) espoused a ‘realised eschatology’ which was a “necessary reaction to the ‘futurist’ eschatology of Schweitzer and others.”\(^{184}\) For him, Jesus taught that the kingdom of God was already present in his ministry and so it was incumbent upon his hearers to make their own decision about whether it had arrived or not. Thus, the preaching of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus is the proclamation of the good news of the kingdom

\(^{180}\) Bruce, “Eschatology.”

\(^{181}\) Quoted in Bruce, “Eschatology.”

\(^{182}\) Price, “Albert Schweitzer.”

\(^{183}\) Dohm, *The Rediscovery of Eschatology*, 94.


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of God, and his redeeming work constitutes the “eschatological manifestation of God’s power operating for the world’s salvation.”  

Karl Barth (1886-1968) in his *Commentary on Romans* sounded a “bugle blast announcing a new epoch in theology.” In it he wrote “Christianity which is not entirely and completely eschatological ... is entirely and completely contrary to Christ.” For Barth, eschatology could no longer be relegated to a harmless chapter or two at the end of dogmatics, it had to be understood as “the perspective which determines the theological enterprise from the start.” He emphasised the alienness of the kingdom and articulated eschatology within the framework of God’s eternal otherness, which “intersects time and subverts human hopes.” As such he propounded a “transcendental” approach to eschatology.

Rudolf Bultmann (1884-1976) purported an existentialist interpretation of the Christian faith which thereby gave him an “existential approach” to eschatology. He applied Martin Heidegger’s existential philosophy of ‘authentic’ and ‘inauthentic’ existence to the Pauline categories of ‘spiritual’ and ‘natural’ man. As such, man determines his own judgement by the decisions he makes in his present existence. Furthermore, being a Christian means “existing eschatologically.” As such, the concept of eschatology is robbed of any temporal dimension as “what is authentic for the human person is not found in the things

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185 Bruce, “Eschatology.”
186 Ratzinger, *Eschatology, Death and Eternal Life*, 47.
188 Scwobel, “Last Things First?” 222.
189 Lewis, “Eschatology.”
190 Dohm, *The Rediscovery of Eschatology*, 239.
191 Ibid.
192 Ibid., 115.
that lie around us and over against us, but in an event of encounter.”

193 For Bultmann this brought back the urgency to eschatology since “our future is determined by our past.”

194 His impact on theology has been considerable as he “decisively reshaped the landscape of Protestant theology in Germany and beyond and his work continues to set the terms of reference for some theological traditions.”

195 Jürgen Moltmann (b. 1926) has built on the work of Ernst Bloch and developed a ‘future oriented eschatology’ with a distinctive “cosmological perspective.”

196 In Theology of Hope he focuses on the resurrection and sees in it the promise of transformation for the whole world. Utilising his dialectical methodology, he compares the death of Christ with the resurrection of Christ. In his death we see the present state of the world in all its negativity; but in his resurrection we see the future hope of cosmic renovation. As such, the contradiction between faith and the present world order is consciously preserved by opposing the facts of the present to the hope of the future – “This is what, for Moltmann being a Christian means.”

197 Furthermore, from this future oriented eschatological approach he draws “radical political conclusions.”

198 The hope of a future transformation of the world provides an incentive for present day renewal. In other words, for Moltmann, eschatology should impact, and even direct, praxis. As the future rests with God, we are freed to strive for a

199 R. J. Bauckham, “Jürgen Moltmann” in NDT.

200 Ratzinger, Eschatology, Death and Eternal Life, 57.

201 Lewis, “Eschatology.”
present day existence that will correspond with that coming triumph. This has in turn led to a
‘transformation’ in certain sectors of theological thought which perhaps indicate the influence
Moltmann is continuing to have:

The new manifesto ran: put Christianity into practice by transforming the world,
using the criterion of hope. The torch, was thus to be set to the tinder of the facts,
blazed up soon enough. It became Political Theology, the Theology of Revolution,
Liberation Theology, Black Theology.\(^{202}\)

Whereas Moltmann has promoted a ‘future oriented eschatology’ with a distinctive
cosmological perspective, Wolfhart Pannenberg (b. 1928) has developed a ‘future oriented
eschatology’ with a distinctive “historic perspective.”\(^{203}\) What is important for him is that
“faith must have an historical basis and that that historical basis is Jesus.”\(^{204}\) The ultimate
example of ‘proleptic revelation’ is the resurrection of Jesus. This can only be understood in
light of the resurrection of the dead at the end of time. Within this framework “the followers
of Jesus saw proleptically in his resurrection, the universal resurrection at the end of
history.”\(^{205}\) As such Pannenberg lays stress on “the eschatological goal which draws all
history towards God.”\(^{206}\)

At the beginning of the twenty-first century eschatology has varying prominence on
the landscape of Christianity. In liberal churches the \textit{Parousia} is more often than not
interpreted allegorically with a residual acknowledgement of eschatological realities in the

\(^{202}\) Ratzinger, \textit{Eschatology, Death and Eternal Life}, 58.

\(^{203}\) Dohm, \textit{The Rediscovery of Eschatology}, 239.

\(^{204}\) Ibid., 238.

\(^{205}\) Ibid., 230.

\(^{206}\) P. J. A. Cook, “Wolfhart Pannenberg” in \textit{NDT}.
recitation of a creed. In charismatic sectors however, and especially in American evangelicalism, it is not a matter of creedal affirmation, but a “vibrant reality, stirring fervent expectations of the approaching end and encouraging believers to search the Scriptures and scan the headlines for signs that history’s final climax was drawing ever nearer.” Despite the presence of these two extremes, it seems certain that with the eruption of eschatological interest in the last century the topic will remain a hotly debated and central issue for some time to come.

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207 Boyer, “Eschatology”

208 Ibid.
5. Conclusion

The above survey of eschatology throughout Church History has been no more than a review of what the Church and the spokesmen of Christianity have taught and believed in regard to the subject down the years. The need for a more in depth study, analysis and evaluation is patently obvious. Yet despite these limitations several conclusions can be drawn.

First of all, Christians for the last two thousand years have been characterised by certain eschatological emphases. They seem on the whole to have focussed on one dimension to the neglect of another. One of these emphases has been a fascination with futurist eschatology to the disregard of realised or inaugurated eschatology. There appears to have been a predilection to centre attention on the future and on the chronologically ‘last’ times. In other words, the expectant return of Christ and its attendant events of resurrection, judgement and cosmic renewal, has so enthralled some Christians they have devoted all their interest to this, and this alone. They have either been ignorant of, or not given due consideration to, the present dimension of eschatology in Christian theology and life. They have so been taken up with the ‘not yet’ they have forgotten the ‘now.’ This of course is only a general observation. There have certainly been individuals down the corridors of history that have had some grasp of both. The overview above has highlighted some of these. Yet the trend is still palpably evident, especially when one notes that even in recent years eschatology has still been confined to the last chapters of systematic theologies.209

Another preoccupation has been with individual eschatology to the detriment of cosmic eschatology, and vice versa. Many theologians and writers over the last two millennia

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209 See the following sections for more on this.
have placed emphasis on one of these, to the neglect of the other. Either they have given
detailed expression to the experiences and processes for individuals in eschatological
categories i.e. heaven and hell; or they have outlined the universal changes and impact that
these same categories will have on the world. Even if implicit references can be found to
support their regard of the apparently forgotten element in eschatology, these are often at best
embedded and in need of stressing by the reader, before they can be safely said to give
balance to the writer. Once again, this is a general observation and individuals can certainly
be found that, to a certain degree at least, hold individual and cosmic eschatology in tension.
Yet even in the most modern of contributors it is obvious that this criticism is valid. Both
Moltmann and Pannenberg for example, have devised cosmic eschatologies that provide very
little comment upon the individual’s experience and even less on their place within that
scheme.

A final emphasis has been upon the apocalyptic literature within the inspired corpus.
Eschatology and biblical books like Daniel, 1 and 2 Thessalonians and Revelation, have
become virtually synonymous. Where the end times have been discussed, these books have
been used and commented upon. To a lesser extent, an emphasis on the New Testament has
also been evident. This if course is to be expected to a large degree, especially within the
accepted categories of realised or inaugurated eschatology, and futuristic or consummated
eschatology. It is after all only when the promised Messiah had actually arrived and declared
that the kingdom had come, and had won the victory over death, that the last days had truly
begun. Yet it is worth noting that in comparison to the first thirty nine books of the Bible, the
last twenty seven have received much more attention in respect to eschatology. Whilst some
of the Old Testament books have received cursory consideration, the vast majority have been
totally passed over.
A second trend has been the recurring fascination with predicting the actual time of Christ’s return. Every era of the Church’s history has witnessed the rising up of groups and sects that have been obsessed with speculating on the exact dating of Christ’s second coming. Furthermore, this obsession has extended to chronologically mapping out the events that will lead to his return, and then an identifying of contemporary events with the signs of the end times. It seems to be a congenital temptation for every generation to try and specify the details of the Parousia, or worse, to actually hasten on or be a catalyst for those last days. Despite the efforts of some of the most influential representatives of the Church like Augustine and the Reformers, this sort of conjecture has persisted. So much so, that at the beginning of the twenty first century it is as strong, if not stronger, than ever. This of course could at least to some degree be traced alongside the rise, fall and return of chiliasm. It is to be expected that ones millennial views will naturally dictate ones attitude and activity (or lack of it) in this area. Chiliasm, more than the other two major positions of amillennialism and postmillennialism, cultivates this heightened sensitivity and interest in the details of futuristic eschatology. Yet it is surprising that with such a strong heritage of failed predictions, erroneous chronological systems and unfulfilled expectations, Christianity at large is not more cautious about repeating the same mistakes. With such a litany of spiritual ancestors and theological forbears who have repeatedly got this matter wrong, it is remarkable that their spiritual progeny and theological descendants so easily fall into the same tendencies.

A third and obvious conclusion is that eschatology has proved to be a point of division in the Church throughout history. It is pleasing that a level of consensus is evident over the last twenty centuries. Those four key doctrines of the return of Christ, the resurrection, the judgement and the cosmic renewal of the world, have from the beginning to the present day remained at the heart of eschatology. Yet the level of this consensus has often been a superficial one. What each of these has meant and entailed may have been quite
different, even though the same terminology has been used. The apparently multitudinous views on the how’s, when’s, what’s, and where’s of eschatology that are prevalent today, are a continuing testimony to this fact. In light of this it seems both a great act of wisdom, and a mark of the providential hand of God, that few significant creeds or confessions of the Church have reflected either the speculative tendencies of much of the Church, or been overly specific on certain aspects. With such a distinct lack of unanimity, and with the presence of discord and dispute, any detailed creedal declaration could only have worsened the situation. Furthermore, perhaps the very fact that there is so little creedal data is evidence of this disunity. It is surely the case that even if the framers and authors of many of our historic creeds and confessions had wanted to detail aspects of eschatology, they would never have been able to do so because of the disagreements amongst themselves, let alone the wider church. The fact that only those subjects within eschatology that the majority of the church has adhered to down the ages, are to be found in the Church’s creeds and confessions, is something to be thankful for, despite the continued presence of dissonance in the visible Church.

A fourth and final observation is that although the Old Testament in general has been neglected in reference to eschatology, it has not been totally abandoned. There is clear evidence from the earliest of Christians that eschatology has been understood in light of the Hebrew Scriptures. That these have been few and far between is indisputable. But that they have on times been present is equally true. More specifically, the book of Genesis and its first few chapters have historically been associated with eschatological ideas and concepts. The connecting of Adam with Christ, the notion of Edenic renewal, and the relating of the Sabbath rest with end times repose, have all been characteristic of some of the Church writers. This, more than the previous conclusions, is the most germane to this thesis. It proves

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210 As noted already, the Council of Ephesus in 431 did condemn chiliasm.
both that a study in the eschatology of Genesis is not so new to be historically alarming, and that also there is much work left to be done in this field. There is historic precedent for such an investigation. Yet this precedent rather than precluding such an enquiry, actually justifies the endeavours of it. As such, the above survey of eschatology and Church history has proven useful in laying the historic groundwork, and providing the impetus for what follows.
II. ESCHATOLOGY AND THEOLOGY

1. Locating Eschatology

The subject of eschatology has a firm and fixed place at the end of the writings of theologians, and certainly at the end of time in the thought of most Christians. It is about the last things and so is placed as the last chapter of systematic theologies. A quick survey of some of the most famous and well read Systematic Theologies bears this fact out.\(^{211}\) Louis Berkhof, Charles Hodge, Wayne Grudem, Alister E. McGrath and Robert L. Reymond\(^{212}\) all leave their discussions about eschatology to the final chapters in their Systematic Theologies. This fact alone is very telling in regard to both the place eschatology is given in theology, and the relevance it has for the Old Testament. Whilst as we shall see, some of these theologians do have a high view of eschatology in relation to the rest of theology, the very location of it in their theological treatises belies the place it has in their whole system of Dogmatics i.e. at the end. One is left having to ask the question: is the subject of eschatology only relevant after the rest of theology has first been dealt with? Is it only to be seen as a subject relating both to the latter parts of theology as a whole, and to the latter parts of time as it is consummated? The consistent placing of this topic at the very end of Systematic Theologies

\(^{211}\) The following five Systematic Theologians have been chosen as representative of the plethora of works available. The author is aware also of the Systematic Theologies and Theological Writings of (amongst others): John Calvin, John Owen, R. L. Dabney, A. A Hodge, B. B. Warfield, W. G. T. Shedd, Herman Bavinck, G. C. Berkouwer and John Murray. However, these were found to either make no comment on this issue, devote little space to it, or share similar ground with the five chosen.

seems to indicate the answers to these questions is in the affirmative. At the very least these questions, although not necessarily anticipated by Theologians, or intended by them to be posed, are still relevant, considering where they locate their treatments of eschatology.

Furthermore, one is left questioning the importance the Old Testament has to the subject of eschatology in these Systematic Theologies. Whilst some reference is made by them to the Old Testament under the heading of eschatology, either little space is devoted to it, or few references to the Old Testament are utilised in their presentation of the Biblical data. Berkhof implicitly refers to the etymological roots of the word eschatology in the Old Testament and makes note of the Old Testament prophetic distinguishing of only two periods of time. He goes on to relate this to the promise and coming of the Messiah.213 Charles Hodge devotes eight pages to “The Old Testament Doctrine on the Future State” under the chapter heading “State of the Soul after Death.”214 Yet he gives no specific definition of eschatology and dives straight in to what the reader can only assume are for him the headings which should be contained under this topic. As such the relevance of the Old Testament in both Berkhof’s and Hodge’s theology can at best be viewed as restrictive.

Wayne Grudem, in his five chapters on what he calls “The Doctrine of the Future,” appears to see practically no eschatological relevance in or to the Old Testament. He makes scant reference to Old Testament passages and not once discusses the place or role of eschatology in the first thirty nine books of the Bible. The reader is left with the distinct impression that the subject of eschatology is all about the future, and so has little significance to the Prophets, let alone the Law or the Writings. Similarly, Alister E. McGrath makes no reference to the Old Testament in his treatment of eschatology. He relates it solely to the New Testament and so whether knowingly or not, leaves the reader wondering if even the words,

213 Berkhof, Systematic Theology, 666.

let alone the ideas found within the Old Testament, should be considered alongside those of eschatology.

Finally, Robert L. Reymond includes a three page section under the heading of “Old Testament Eschatology.” Whilst this at first glance appears promising in that it at least gives room for discussing the topic under the auspices of the Old Testament, the reader soon becomes aware that he just regurgitates three other authors. In dealing with the Old Testament concept of the kingdom of God he delineates what George Eldon Ladd and Geerhardus Vos have written, and in summarising the eschatological outlook of the Old Testament he paraphrases Anthony Hoekema. At least in so doing he assumes, if not establishes, the relevance of the Old Testament to Eschatology. At least he traces the antecedent of New Testament eschatology to Old Testament eschatology and thereby provides some room for placing the Old Testament corpus within the bounds of the subject of eschatology. Yet in his appeal to, and practical reliance upon, Biblical Theology – for that is what the three books quoted are: Biblical Theologies not Systematic Theologies - he betrays the view (or at least appears to), that Systematic Theology has little or nothing to say about the relevance of the Old Testament to eschatology. Thus, for Reymond, as with the other four theologians mentioned, the reader is left unable to discern what the Old Testament may have to say on the subject of eschatology. Its location in Systematic Theology seems obvious – at the end of the end. And its consequence to the Old Testament appears minimal at best, and negligible at worst.

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2. Defining Eschatology

At the heart of the above location of eschatology within systematic theology is its definition of the same. How systematic theologians classify, label and demarcate eschatology is worth taking note of, because as we shall see, their definitions – or absence of them, appear to pre-determine their location.

Although Berkhof gives eschatology a high place in reference to the rest of theology – he argues that it is the “real capstone of dogmatic theology,” he fails to actually outline a specific definition of eschatology. He assumes that it is about the last things – and the last things alone, and therefore sets the parameters of eschatology in equation with the parameters of the last things. Whilst acknowledging that eschatology can pertain to the first coming of Christ, he goes on to say,

And when we speak of ‘eschatology,’ we have in mind more particularly the facts and events that are connected with the second coming of Christ, and that will mark the end of the present dispensation and will usher in the eternal glories of the future.

He then makes the distinction between “general” and “individual” eschatology and delineates the contents of both respectively as being that of: the return of Christ, the general resurrection, the last judgement, the consummation of the Kingdom, and the final condition of both the pious and the wicked; and: physical death, the immortality of the soul and the

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216 Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 665. I would fully endorse what Berkhof says here. Yet, as this thesis attempts to prove, it is a foundation to theology as well as its capstone. Berkhof does go some way here to acknowledging that eschatology has more to with than just the future. After this quote he shows how every theological discipline asks a question that eschatology answers. Yet the very language and phraseology he uses directs the reader to the future, as those same questions asked of theology, are only answered by eschatology at the end of time.

217 Ibid., 666.
intermediate condition. The rest of his treatment of eschatology is taken up with
developing these doctrines. As such, for Berkhof, eschatology is defined as much by its
contents as anything else. And by equating its contents with that of the last things, he appears
to render eschatology synonymous with the same. The reader is left with the notion that
eschatology is defined by the last things and by nothing else. Hodge effectively does the
same. He subsumes four chapters entitled “State of the Soul after Death,” “Resurrection,”
“Second Advent” and “Concomitants of the Second Advent,” under the heading of
“Eschatology,” without any discussion or definition of eschatology itself. Once again, the
reader is left assuming that eschatology is to be defined by these four aspects. That it has
solely to do with the contents of these four sub-headings. Even: that it is a loose title
pertaining to the general issues of death, resurrection and the end of the world.

Grudem is perhaps more explicit in his equating of eschatology with the future, or
with the last things. He begins Part 7 of his Systematic Theology entitled “The Doctrine of
the Future” with the simple definition: “The study of eschatology, then, is the study of the
‘last things.’” He goes on to deal with four chapters entitled “The Return of Christ: When
and How,” “The Millennium,” “The Final Judgement and Eternal Punishment” and “The
New Heavens and the New Earth.” Once again, and this time with clear intent, eschatology is
defined by the last things and vice versa. For Grudem, eschatology is the last things – they
are one in the same.

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218 Ibid.; 667.
220 Derek Thomas, “The Eschatology of the Westminster Confession and Assembly,” 310. Thomas
makes exactly the same point. He even draws attention in a footnote to Charles Hodge and Louis Berkhof and
how they fall into this “futuristic” only view of eschatology.
221 Grudem, Systematic Theology, 1091.
McGrath and Reymond are somewhat different however. Whilst they both place significant emphasis on connecting eschatology with the last times, they also point to a wider meaning and definition. McGrath argues that, “In the broadest sense of the term, ‘eschatology’ is ‘discourse about the end.’” As such he says nothing more than Berkhof, Hodge or Grudem. Yet in the same chapter entitled “Last Things: The Christian Hope,” he also refers his readers to previous sections in his book that have touched upon the subject of eschatology. These sections have to do with the resurrection of Jesus, the rediscovery of the eschatological aspect of the “kingdom of God” in the late nineteenth century, and the eschatological dimensions of Soteriology. McGrath goes on to discuss the developments in post-Enlightenment thought concerning eschatology and the New Testament. Thus, whilst he on the one hand identifies eschatology with “the end,” he explains how this end relates as much to the present era of God’s kingdom as to the future. In so doing, he expands the definition of eschatology to include New Testament history, and by so doing, re-orients eschatology to encapsulate more than just what is in the future.

Reymond, in a similar fashion to McGrath, enlarges his readers understanding of what eschatology is, and how it is to be understood, by giving it prime position in relation to the whole of the New Testament. He interestingly quotes Berkhof, and then comments,

In fact, eschatology is so significant for New Testament thought in general that many contemporary New Testament theologians are prepared to argue that New Testament theology as a whole, as the theology of the ‘age of fulfilment,’ is, if not eschatology per se, eschatologically oriented with respect to all of its major soteriological and ethical emphases.

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222 McGrath, *Christian Theology*, 540. I would take issue with this very wording. It is not a “broad” view of eschatology that understands it as relating to the end. Rather, it is a traditional and arguably narrow view. A broad view would surely equate more with the very argument of this thesis i.e. that eschatology has as much to do with protology as with the future, and is germane to the whole of theology, not just to its end.

223 Ibid.

224 See footnote 10 for my comments on this quote from Berkhof.
These words alert the reader to the fact that eschatology clearly has reference to more than just the future or the last things. If, as Reymond asserts, it is so significant to the New Testament as a whole, it must in the very least pertain to Christ and everything that historically flows from his incarnation. Reymond as much says this as he proceeds to analyse the eschatology of John the Baptist, Jesus, James, Paul, the book of Hebrews, Peter, Jude and John. In effect, he, like McGrath, widens the definition of eschatology from simply referring to the Last things, to incorporate the whole of the New Testament corpus.

Thus it would appear that, certainly for Berkhof, Hodge and Grudem, the reason why eschatology is located at the end of their theologies is because they define it as pertaining to the end, the last things or the future. Placing the subject of the end at the end of a book is certainly logical, and undeniably chronological. Yet I would suggest that the reason they do so is more theological and philosophical, than logical or chronological. It is because they define eschatology as relating – predominantly, if not exclusively – to the end, that they place the subject at the end. In other words, the location of eschatology in Systematic Theologies has as much to do with how it is defined, as what it contains. In fact, its definition limits the parameters of its contents, and thereby banishes its location to the end. By limiting the subject of eschatology theologically i.e. by saying it has to do with the end, one naturally will determine its place logically and chronologically i.e. at the end.


226 See Ibid., 990-1066.

227 It is essential at this point to recognise an important distinction. That aspects of eschatology are best placed at the end of systematic theologies I do not dispute. I acknowledge that sub-topics of eschatology like the return of Christ, the resurrection of the dead, the judgement and the final state of believers and unbelievers all naturally fit at the end of systematic theologies. They are best located at the end because they logically, chronologically and theologically fit there. They deal directly with what will happen at the end of time, and so it is appropriate to treat them at the end. My contention is that because of the apparent theological limitation of the subject of eschatology, in terms of its definition, the subject is often confined to the end because it is designated to only be about the end. It is defined as pertaining only to the last things and therefore is confined to literally, the last things.
This may be something of a simple and obvious statement to make - that eschatology is located at the end of theology because it has to do with the end. But in fact it identifies a salient distinction and exposes an integral presupposition. It distinguishes between location and definition; and it establishes that location is dependent on definition. As such the logic and/or chronology of systematic theology are largely determined by the definitions that systematic theology makes. These definitions must of necessity be theological, and possibly philosophical. Thus, what is theological determines what is logical and chronological. Or, how something is defined governs where that same thing is located in the system.

This relates directly to the topic of eschatology, and how it in turn relates to Systematic Theology. At first glance it seems that eschatology is located at the end of the systems of theology because that is where it logically and chronologically fits. Yet, in taking into account the above comments, it would be more accurate to say that eschatology is located at the end of the systems of theology because those same theologies define eschatology in such a theological way, that it necessarily must be placed at the end. Berkhof, Hodge and Grudem would be examples of this. Of course this begs the question why McGrath and Reymond, whilst defining eschatology in a broader sense than the other three, persist in leaving their treatment of the subject to the final chapters of their books. It may be that because many aspects of eschatology do pertain to the future that they deemed it best to comply with the traditional ordering of material. Whatever their reasons, it is clear that having a biblically accurate definition of eschatology is fundamental because this in and of itself will to a large extent set the limits and parameters of that eschatology. It will as such dictate the location and referents of eschatology within Systematic Theology.
3. Re-defining Eschatology

With the axiomatic role of one’s definition of eschatology in mind, it seems patently necessary to pursue a thorough examination of the Biblical idea of eschatology in order to re-define the subject. Although many of the above quoted theologians do make reference to the etymology of eschatology, very little work is done to establish the exact meaning and usage of this word in the Biblical data. As is well known, the etymology of the word “eschatology” is derived from the Greek word *eschaton*. This has the bare meaning of “last” or “last things.” With this single dimensioned definition of the term it is easy to see why for many evangelical Christians the concept of eschatology has only to do with the end times. As such, it has been given a temporal meaning referring to the end of time. It relates to that which is at the end of chronology, the chronological *telos* of all that is. It is the final consummation of God’s redemptive plan.

a. The etymology of *eschaton* in the Old Testament

However, the Greek word behind the term “eschatology” can be traced further etymologically. It has at the “back of it”228 the Hebrew word *acherith* which in turn is a derivative of the Hebrew word *acher*. Both *acher* and *acherith* have several complementary nuances of meaning. Used as an adverb *acher* can mean “behind” a person or thing. An example of this is found in Genesis 22:13. Abraham looks up and we are told that “behind

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228 Geerhardus Vos, *The Pauline Eschatology* reprint ed. (New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1994), 1. I am unashamed to acknowledge my indebtedness to Vos for much of what follows in this section. This thesis will attempt to build and extend upon his work, and so it is necessary to lay a similar foundation to him, so that the building can be further developed.
him a ram was entangled in a thicket.” Used as a preposition *acher* can have either the local meaning of “after” as in Genesis 37:17 where Joseph is said to have gone “after his brothers and found them near Dothan.” Or it can have the temporal meaning of “after” – as in Jeremiah 40:1 when the word of the Lord comes after Jeremiah had been released from Ramah. Similarly, *acherith* can be used spatially. In Psalm 139:9 it is used to refer to the “far side of the sea.” In Amos 4:2 it is used numerically: referring to the “cows of Bashan,” the LORD swears that he will take “the last of you with fishhooks.” It can also have temporal usage as in Deuteronomy 11:12 where it is used to describe God’s eyes being on the Promised Land “from the beginning of the year to its end.”

These various uses and meanings of *acher* and *acherith* are significant because they give reason, at least etymologically, to regard the sphere of their meaning beyond that of simply the end of time. They encompass within the biblical usage of their etymological derivatives the notion of space, or physicality, as well as time, or the end of time. Even more, as the Amos 4 and Psalm 139 passages indicate, they can refer to material things within space. As such they have a concrete aspect to their meaning. They can refer to that which can be touched and seen as well as to that which is experienced through the passage of time. They have the creation itself as a point of reference.

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229 Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture references are taken from the *New International Version.*
b. The concept of acherith in the Old Testament

As far as the concept of the word is concerned, there is bound up with it the idea of “eventuation.” Or, of pregnant meaning and fulfilment which surpasses a merely temporal goal. Vos, in examining passages like Job 8:7 and Proverbs 5:4, 11, shows how the word acherith is used as the end of something that has had a beginning. This is essential to grasp as it directly relates the end to what first started the process of movement to the end. He goes on to look at more explicitly eschatological passages to see if a similar meaning is to be found in these. In Genesis 49:10 and the related passages in Ezekiel 21:27 and Numbers 24:14, the prophesied Messiah is the embodiment of the pre-eminence of Judah and thus “is a Consummator in more than a purely chronological sense.” Furthermore, in comparing Balaam’s prophecy in Numbers, and that of Daniel, Vos notes how in the former the kingdom of God comes before the rise and fall of the evil kingdoms, whereas in the latter it comes as the culmination of the rise and fall of the evil kingdoms. Similarly, Deuteronomy 4:30 denotes the time after the calamities have occurred, whereas Deuteronomy 31:29 marks the period of the calamities themselves. Vos continues to note further Old Testament references where the word acherith is used in the same fashion.

What is crucial are the conclusions he draws from the above data. He asserts the place the word acherith has in the whole concept of eschatology and argues that it is “a sort of movable complex, capable of being pushed forward along the prophetic line of vision.” As

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230 Vos, The Pauline Eschatology, 2.
231 Ibid., 2-3.
232 Ibid., 3.
233 Ibid., 4-5.
234 Ibid., 5.
such it retains “the note of epochal finality” whilst not being “confounded with the idea of chronological fixity.” He also concludes that “the idea is elastic as to its extent, no less moveable as to its position.” By this he means that both favourable and unfavourable events are within its purview. Yet crucially, he elaborates by adding that both “points” in time, and “a condensation of events” that occupy a stretch of time, can fall within the concept of the acherith.

Therefore, not only does the etymology of acherith refer to more than a simple chronological meaning, but the Old Testament biblical concept of it does also. To be sure, the end in terms of chronology is often in view. But this “end” is flexible in as much as it can refer to an event, or a series of events, that will occur either before the very end of a sequence of events, at the beginning of that sequence, or at sometime during the sequence. Not only, as asserted already, is creation a point of reference. The very outworking of history in the sphere of creation appears to fall within its reference.

c. The use of eschaton in the New Testament

The extra-Pauline use of eschaton in the New Testament marks a sharp contrast with how the word and concept is used in the Old Testament. All of the writers are “conscious of the last days being upon them, or at least close at hand.” In this way the New Testament manifests significant progress in revelation and redemptive history. In the Old Testament the

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235 Ibid.
236 Ibid.
237 Ibid., 6.
238 Ibid., 8.
eschaton was seen to be sometime in the future – an albeit moveable, yet no less prospective, reality. In the New Testament this has suddenly become a present reality. In the words of Vos:

Sometimes belief in the imminence of final happenings and the pervasive eschatological state of mind engendered by this, seem to lead to scrutiny of the contemporary state of things for possible symptoms of the approach of the end, 2 Tim 3:1; 2 Pet 3:3; Jud 18. At other times the observation of the symptoms leads to the conclusion, or at least the strengthening of the conclusion, that the last hour is there, 1 Jon 2:18. Again at other times the thought has a thickly ominous colouring, Jas 5:3.239

The Pauline use of eschaton signals a further difference. He first of all conjoins the word as an adjective to several nouns. He speaks of the “last death,” the “last trumpet” and most significantly, the “last Adam.”240 In this way he shows both harmony with the Old Testament use, and movement forward, in that he specifies particulars to do with the eschaton that the Old Testament had looked forward to. Secondly, the very structure of Paul’s eschatology, in contrast with the Old Testament point of view, “appears antithetical.”241 Vos is worth quoting again here:

It places the end under the control of one principle with the sway of which an opposite principle of equally comprehensive rule and of primordial origin is contrasted, so as to make the two, when taken together, yield a bisection of universal history.242

This antithetical structure is more comprehensively understood in the Pauline distinction between two ‘worlds’ or ‘ages.’ He explicitly refers to this distinction in

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239 Ibid.
240 See 1 Corinthians 4:9 and 15:26, 45, 52.
241 Vos, The Pauline Eschatology, 10.
242 Ibid., 10-11.
Ephesians 1:21 where he asserts that Christ as seated at the right hand of the Father is far above all things “not only in this age, but in the age to come.” He strongly implies the distinction in various other passages. For example: he urges his readers not to be “conformed to this world” (Romans 12:2); he asks “Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?” (1 Corinthians 1:20); he discerns that the wisdom they impart is not “the wisdom of this age” (1 Corinthians 2:6); he notes that “the god of this world has blinded the minds of unbelievers” (Corinthians 4:4); and he believes that Christ “gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present age” (Galatians 1:4). 

It is clear that for Paul there is the reality of two worlds. The one is of the devil, which is to be rejected and is passing away. The other is of Christ and is to be conformed to, and will eventually supplant the former. In addition, this antithetical structure can be seen in other Pauline distinctions including his contrasting of the Old and the New Man, and the Flesh and the Spirit.

Furthermore, what is essential and most basic to the distinction between ‘this world’ and ‘the world to come’ is “the line of successiveness.” Where one ends the other begins. As such, for Paul, these two categories not only encapsulate the whole of history, but provide the fundamental link, and thus cohesive superstructure, to that same history. In light of this it is worth appreciating the integral nature that eschatology sustains to the rest of theology for Paul. As Vos argues, “It will appear throughout that to unfold the Apostle’s eschatology means to set forth his theology as a whole.” If this two age structure is fundamental to Pauline thought, and particularly to his understanding of (redemptive) history; and if it is also

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243 For more on this see Ibid., 12.

244 For more on these and other structures in Paul’s thought I would refer the reader to Hermon Ridderbos, *Paul An Outline of His Theology* paperback ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), pp 44-90.

245 Ibid., 25.

246 Ibid., 11.
quintessentially expressive of his eschatology; then it logically follows that for Paul eschatology is elemental to the very framework of his theology and his grasp of what God has done in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

However, this “plan of consecutiveness” is not a simple passing over from one age to another. With the first advent of Christ a new line of succession was anticipated. Whilst in a very real sense Christ ended the first age and began the second; at the same time, and just as importantly, this same outworking of succession heralded yet another succession that would occur at his second advent. Vos graphically sums this up:

The Messianic appearance again unfolded itself in two successive epochs, so that, even after the first appearance, and after making full allowance for its stupendous effect, the second epoch had, after the fashion of cell-separation, begun to form a new complex of hope moving forward into the future. In this way it will be seen that the scheme of successiveness had not been entirely abrogated but simply been reapplied to the latter half of the original scheme: the age to come was perceived to bear in its womb another age to come, so that with reference to the mother and the as yet unborn child, as it were, the category of what is and what is to be not only could, but had to be retained.

In other words, there was to be an overlap or a coexistence of the two worlds or ages side by side. The first coming of Christ began the new world order, but it did not complete it. Equally, his first coming dealt a death blow to the old world order but it did not eradicate it. It is only his second coming that would both complete and consummate the new world order, and eradicate and finally remove the old world order.

\[247\] Ibid., 36.
\[248\] Ibid., 36-37.
Vos helpfully diagrams this for his readers by comparing the “Original Scheme” of a basic line of succession and consecutiveness (as seen in Figure 2.1 below), with his “Modified Scheme” of double succession and coexistent ages (Figure 2.2).\textsuperscript{249}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure21.png}
\caption{The Original Scheme}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{249} Ibid., 38. J. V. Fesko reproduces this modified scheme of Vos in \textit{First Things Last Unlocking Genesis 1-3 with the Christ of Eschatology} (Fearn: Mentor, 2007), 199.
d. Re-defined thus re-located?

What this diagram (Fig 2.2) does is represent a radically different view of eschatology than has been seen above in many Systematic Theologies. It would appear that Systematic Theology has defined, and therefore viewed eschatology within the broad parameters of Figure 2.1, where the end times are equated with the age or world to come. When this approach is taken it is natural to place eschatology at the end of Theologies and as pertaining
only to that which is yet to occur. Furthermore, within this scheme it would be obvious that the Old Testament has little, if any, bearing upon the subject whatsoever.

However, Figure 2.2 is a graphic portrayal of a more thoroughgoing understanding of eschatology, in terms of its biblical etymology, concept and usage. It epitomises a definition of eschatology that must include both the successive aspects and the coextensive nature, of the two ages or worlds that circumscribe history. If you understand eschatology within the dual framework of 1) the consecutive replacing of the age/world of darkness with the age/world of light; and 2) the overlapping of these two between the first succession and the second; then its place within Systematic Theology would have to be reviewed. This “definition”\(^{250}\) of eschatology is just too broad, too expansive, and too encompassing, to allow itself to be tagged on the end of any treatise on theology. Moreover, it demands a more central place to the whole working of theology itself. As has already been asserted – at least for Paul, eschatology and theology could be said to be one in the same. This can be expressed more specifically in relation to various key foci in theology. For example, the major thesis in the whole of Vos’s *Pauline Eschatology* is that

...not only the Christology but also the Soteriology of the Apostle’s teaching is so closely interwoven with the Eschatology, that, were the question put, which of the strands is more central, which more peripheral, the eschatology would have as good a claim to the central place as the others.\(^{251}\)

Herman Ridderbos says something similar when he argues that

\(^{250}\) By “definition” here I am referring to the biblical concept of eschatology as it has been surveyed above and expressed in Figure 2.2. I will attempt to articulate a more specific “definition” in the following sections.

\(^{251}\) Ibid., 28-29.
...this general eschatological character of Paul’s preaching is entirely defined and explained by the advent and the revelation of Jesus Christ. Paul’s “eschatology” is “Christ-eschatology,” and “the Pauline approach to history is faith in Christ.”252

What these two theologians assert in relation to Paul surely can be applied to the whole of the Biblical outlook. Eschatology has as much to do with many of the major and traditional foci of theology, as it has to do with anything. Whether it be Christology, Soteriology, Pneumatology, Ecclesiology or the Sacraments, eschatology pertains to, embraces and even sets the context of, these doctrines. It does not simply stand side by side with them as a doctrine of the Bible. It delineates those doctrines along its own lines. Just as Ridderbos points out that Paul’s eschatology is “Christ-eschatology,” so it could be said that the traditional foci of theology are “Salvation-eschatology,” or “Pneumatic-eschatology,” or “Ecclesiological-eschatology,” or “Sacramental-eschatology.” In this way it is clear that just as many Systematic Theologians define eschatology as pertaining to the end times, and so locate the subject at the end of their work, so defining eschatology in this way would direct us to place the subject at the centre or foundation of our Theology.

e. “Inaugurated” and “Future” Eschatology

Vos correctly identifies two key aspects of the eschatology of many religions. These consist of both movement in the present and a goal in the future. He sums them up:

As such, it is composed of two characteristic elements: (1) the limited duration of the present order of things; (2) the eternal character of the subsequent state.253

252 Ridderbos, Paul An Outline of His Theology, 49.

Biblical eschatology can also be defined by these two essentials as it is represented in Figure 2.2 above. It is concerned with the present as it moves towards a terminus, and also with that terminus and its consequent perpetuity. Hoekema identifies these in terms of “inaugurated” and “future” eschatology,\(^\text{254}\) arguing that a “full orbed biblical eschatology” must include both. In other words eschatology has to do with the “already” and the “not yet”.\(^\text{255}\) It has to do with what already has occurred and what is yet to occur.

This is borne out in Figure 2.2 as the resurrection of Jesus “inaugurates” the beginning of the age to come, and the heavenly world is realised in principle. In addition Figure 2.2 shows how there is a period of time between the resurrection and the Parousia. This period is characterised by the coexistence of the present world and the world to come. This is the time of tension – the “now” in that the heavenly age has begun, and the “not yet” in that whilst it has been realised in principle, it has not been realised in solid existence. The Parousia will consummate time, signal the end of the “now” and bring into solid existence the “not yet.” In this way both the categories of “inaugurated” and “future” are represented in Figure 2.2.

Furthermore, these two facets of “inaugurated” and “future” eschatology are not unrelated. They do not stand as isolated cogs in the inner workings of eschatology. On the contrary, they are both integrally connected in that the one is “the pledge and guarantee”\(^\text{256}\) of the other. The present inauguration, age or order, is both a foretaste and a down payment of the future age or state. As an engagement ring symbolises the present reality of a relationship between a couple, so it is also a symbol of the certainty that the awaited wedding day will

\(^{254}\) Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future*, 1. The phrase “inaugurated eschatology” comes from J. A. T. Robinson who held a viewpoint close to C. H. Dodds. For more on this see S.H. Travis, “Eschatology,” in *NDT*.

\(^{255}\) Travis, “Eschatology,” 229. Also see Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future*, 34-37.

\(^{256}\) Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future*, 20-22.
soon arrive. Figure 2.2 also bears this out as the connection between the resurrection and the Parousia is clearly displayed. As such, eschatology “involves an expectation for the future which is rooted in what has already happened in the past.”\textsuperscript{257} Thus to attempt to understand the future without reference to the past is to undermine both the reality of these two elements and their intimate relations.

It is also important to note not simply the dependence of these two aspects of eschatology upon each other, but the movement from the one to the other. History is not cyclical but linear.\textsuperscript{258} It moves from a beginning towards an end. In this way the “already” is moving towards the “not yet”; the “inaugurated” towards the “future.” This is crucial to consider for a number of reasons. Firstly, it directs the trajectory of past and present history. What has happened and what is happening have their ultimate \textit{telos} in what will happen. In other words, the events of the past and present are given real significance as they trace a direct line to the future. Secondly, if what has and is delineates what will be, then what will be is dependant on what has and is. In the words of Vos, “The correlate of eschatology is creation.”\textsuperscript{259} Both are mutually necessary. Thirdly, it affects our concept of God. A God who is not in control of the past or present, can in no way be in control of the future. Conversely, a God who is in control of all that has and is happening, can be trusted to be in control of what will happen. Vos articulates this memorably:

A God who cannot create cannot consummate…For eschatology, God needs not only to be the Potter sovereign with reference to the clay, but he needs to be a Potter who can produce his own clay with reference to its tractableness.\textsuperscript{260}

\textsuperscript{257} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{258} Travis, “Eschatology,” 228.

\textsuperscript{259} Vos, \textit{Eschatology of the Old Testament}, 1.

\textsuperscript{260} Ibid., 1-2.
It is worth noting at this point that these facts in and of themselves justify the study of eschatology in Genesis. It is in doing so that real significance can be given to its events; that eschatology can be correlated to creation and vice versa; and that God can be shown to be sovereign from the very beginning of time, and so certainty for the end of time can be secured.

f. “Anticipated” Eschatology

Building upon this, I would tentatively suggest a third aspect to eschatology which pertains directly to the topic of this thesis, and needs to be included in any definition of eschatology. I would propose that to be “anticipated eschatology,” and would place it as a prior category to “inaugurated eschatology.” Under this heading would fall the Old Testament Scriptures, as they look forward to the coming establishment of the end times, but are manifestly aware that this establishment has not yet occurred. Whether this should be a category in its own right or simply a sub-category of “inaugurated eschatology” is debateable. The coming of Christ heralded the reality of the dawning of the last days, and so inaugurated a wholly new expression of God’s rule on earth. However, the reality of that rule was in existence prior to his coming. From the inception of the world, God has been the Sovereign potentate, bringing to pass whatsoever was according to his will. In this sense there is an unchanging continuum between all ages of history, and therefore all categories of eschatology. That continuum is the being and existence of God as ruler and King over all. Just as Christ’s birth was an acknowledgement of his prior Sonship in the eternal Trinity and

261 Having become convinced both of the need of such a category, and of the appropriateness of the word “anticipated” to sum it up, I was encouraged to find that many theologians and writers use this word liberally to describe the Old Testament’s eschatological significance. Furthermore, I am aware that in many senses this category has overlap with what has traditionally been called “typology.” However, I believe there is a need for a separate eschatological category, as outlined in the present section.
not the beginning of it, so was his coming as a King in many senses an acknowledgement of his eternal reign and not the beginning of it. To put it simply, one can identify features of “inaugurated eschatology” from Gen 1:1 onwards. Thus the proposal of “anticipated eschatology” is not to deny the presence of “inaugurated eschatology” in the Old Testament. Yet, at the same time, there is data in the Old Testament which does not fit into this broad category. For example, the proto euangelion of Gen 3:15 very much looks forward to the coming of Christ and in no way marks its inauguration. It is prophetic anticipation of the event and not an establishing of it. For these reasons I believe a distinct category is warranted.

Moreover, without such a category, it is difficult to place the Old Testament corpus within the afore mentioned two essentials of eschatology, (and as we shall see, within Vos’s “Modified Scheme,” see Figure 2.2). To place it under “future” eschatology would obviously be erroneous; to place it under “inaugurated eschatology” would be to undermine the significance of the incarnation and the ensuing coming of the kingdom of Christ. The birth of Immanuel signalled the arrival of the eschaton, and as such a “cataclysmic “in breaking”…of God” into history. This distinguishes in eschatological terms the Old Testament from the New. The former was prospective of this event, whilst the latter retrospective of it. Or, the Old contained the promise, the New the fulfilment. The formulating of a third category is simply an attempt to draw attention to this difference. To simply gather much of the Old Testament with the New under the broad banner of “inaugurated” eschatology does not

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263 Vos, Eschatology of The Old Testament, 5, as much says the same as he notes the different usage of the term eschatai hemerai in the Old and New Testaments. He comments: “The Old Testament consciousness looked forward in a horizontal line. It did not look or speak as though it were itself in the midst of the great coming turnover of things. The things pertaining to that were relatively remote…In the New Testament it is different…They live to a certain extent in the most vivid realization that the actual end is well-nigh present.”
render sufficient import either to the coming of Christ or to the Testamental differences outlined above.²⁶⁴

Just as the two categories of “inaugurated” and “future” eschatology do not leave sufficient room for the Old Testament, so Vos’s “Modified Scheme” is deficient in the same regard. The question has to be asked: Where does the Old Testament fit in Figure 2.2? What relation does the Old Testament sustain to the two age/world structure of history? As we have seen the categories of “inaugurated” and “future” eschatology are well represented within this Figure, yet what about the proposed category of “anticipation”? If there is warrant for such a category, there is therefore a need to develop a scheme that represents it. Clearly the events and revelation of the first thirty nine books of the Bible cannot be positioned on or after the Resurrection of Jesus. Thus the only place they can fit is in “this age or world.” This locating of the Old Testament and “anticipated” eschatology would leave it merely awaiting the arrival of the eschaton. Without doubt, this is an important aspect of Old Testament eschatology as the Prophets in particular looked forward to the coming of the Messiah and the fulfilment of prophecy that he would signal. Even this however would justify a further modification of Vos’s already modified scheme. Figure 2.2 as it stands does not represent this prophetic looking forward to the first or second coming of Christ. Perhaps a diagram like the following one would go some way to rectify this:

²⁶⁴ It is at this point that I would like to ask questions of Hoekema’s book The Bible and the Future. Having established the bifurcation of “inaugurated” and “future” eschatology he goes on to devote a whole chapter to the “Eschatological Outlook of the Old Testament.” All of this is very helpful. However, the reader is left wondering under which category of eschatology does the Old Testament fall? Is it inaugurated or future? Hoekema emphasises the “expectation” of the Old Testament throughout the chapter and goes on to comment on how this related to both the first coming and second coming of Christ. Thus once again the reader is left in doubt. Which category is this expectation to be placed under? Is it either, neither or as I have posited, a third i.e. anticipated?
The dashed line arrows in Figure 2.3 represent the Old Testament expectation and prophetic looking forward to the advents of Christ. As already seen, these expectations sometimes referred to the first coming of Christ, sometimes to the second, and sometimes included reference to both. However, whilst this would go some way to providing a place for the Old Testament within the eschatological schema, it still has problems.

One of these problems lies in only acknowledging the prophetic dimensions of Old Testament eschatology. To be sure and as already discussed, the prophetic predictions of the advents of Christ are crucial, and need to be incorporated within the model. Yet there is more. The very word “anticipation” carries with it more than a simple waiting for something in the
It also can have the nuance of a foretaste. It can refer to what has already been experienced as a sample of what is yet to come. It can be a token of a future reality; the down payment of the total sum; the preview of the real event. The Old Testament data bears this fact out as time and again not only does the people of God look to future blessing, but they already receive it partially in the present. Abraham’s buying of the field of Ephron in Machpelah east of Mamre in the land of Canaan (Gen 23) is an example of this. God had promised to him that he would inherit the whole of the land of Canaan as a possession (Gen 15). Yet as we are told in Heb 11:13ff. Abraham “desired a better country, that is, a heavenly one.” Despite this longing for the future eschaton where he would enjoy the heavenly country, God still gave him an anticipation of that promise. He provided a piece of land for him to bury his wife in. In other words, he not only hoped for the heavenly land of God, in as much as he possessed a portion of the promised land of Canaan he was given a foretaste, a sample, a token and a preview of that heavenly land.265 This is but one example of many that could be cited, some of which will be dealt with below. Suffice to say that any diagram that attempts to represent the Old Testament eschatological outlook, must include both the elements of prophetic prediction and present anticipation.

A more obvious problem with the above diagrammatic representations is that even in the re-modified scheme of Figure 2.3, what relationship does “in Heaven” and “the world to come” have to the Old Testament as it lies in “This age or world?” It would appear that from both Figure 2.2 and Figure 2.3, “Heaven” and “the world to come” do not exist until the Resurrection of Christ. The diagram seems to convey that once Christ had risen from the dead, “Heaven” began. This is true at least to an extent. Christ did not begin his reign in heaven until he had risen from the dead, ascended to heaven and sat at the right hand of the Father. Yet does this represent the full extent of the biblical data? Or, more germane to the

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265 This biblical theme of the promised land of God will be further investigated eschatologically in the pages below.
above argument: was not heaven in existence before Christ’s resurrection as a reality for God, the angels and the glorified Old testament saints, as an anticipation of that reality for the saints on earth? The very first words of God’s revelation to man include the heavens in creation: “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen 1:1). Scripture clearly teaches that Jesus Christ himself “made all things” (John 1:3) and that “by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth” (Col 1:16). This was obviously done before his incarnation, death and resurrection. Thus it would appear necessary to represent this in any schematic model of biblical eschatology.

The answer to the above two problems is to propose yet another re-modified scheme. This would need to include both the prophetic and anticipatory elements of Old Testament eschatology, and the reality that the “Heavens” existed from the very beginning of creation. G. E. Ladd has gone some way to doing this. He re-modifies Vos’s scheme in the following way.\(^{266}\)

Apart from altering some of the terminology of Vos, Ladd makes two essential changes. The first is to move the line that represents the “Age to Come” down to fall in between “This Age” and the “Reign of God.” This for him represents a better understanding of New Testament theology as “In the Age to Come, heaven descends to earth and lifts historical existence to a new level of redeemed life (Rev. 21:2-3).”267 The second change is to add a dashed line that represents “God’s Reign” in the Old Testament period. During this time the kingdom of God was also to be seen at work. In the words of Ladd:

This diagram also suggests that God’s Kingdom was active in the Old Testament. In such events as the Exodus and the captivity in Babylon, God was acting in his kingly power to deliver or judge his people.268

267 Ibid.
268 Ibid.
Figure 2.4 goes a long way to rectify the problems noted above. It represents the reality of heaven and so God’s Reign from the beginning of creation, and even beyond. It also provides for some scope of interaction between that Reign and the present age or order. However, it fails to represent the fully-anticipatory nature of eschatology that has been proposed above, and completely leaves out the prophetic aspects of eschatology in the Old Testament. As such, whilst Ladd’s scheme provides a helpful and advanced understanding of Biblical eschatology, yet further modifications are required.

Figure 2.5 below represents a hybrid model of Vos’s and Ladd’s, and an advance on both. It attempts to take the best of their re-modifications and also to provide improvements in the area of Old Testament eschatology:
In this re-modification of the scheme of biblical eschatology all of the key elements are included, not only for a working New Testament eschatology, but also for an inclusive Old Testament eschatology. The three categories of anticipated, inaugurated and future eschatology are seen to relate to their specific areas of the scheme. The heavenly reality extends alongside “this age or world on earth” and signals the fact that God Reigns throughout eternity. The same terminology has been used on the “heavenly reality” line of succession so as to ensure continuity i.e. “the world to come realised in principle” is seen to
be so in “the heavenly reality.” Also, the terminology of the “future world realised in solid existence” has been modified to include “in the new heavens and new earth” in line with the language of Scripture i.e. Rev 21. The dashed line arrows now have pointers at both ends of their lines, so as to show how the Old Testament both predicted and looked forward to the two advents of Christ, but also anticipated and foretasted the blessing of these yet to occur events. And finally, grey blocked and dashed arrows have been inserted between “this age or world” and “the heavenly reality” to show further interaction between the two. All of these arrows in the Old Testament period will be developed further in Parts III and IV as we shall see how the heavenly reality is both partially manifested in the Old Testament, concretely experienced, and prophetically anticipated.

As such Figure 2.5 represents the culmination of the argument so far. Any definition of eschatology must include all of these elements as they relate to each other. The subject must be seen to pertain to the chronological end of time, but also to the heart of New Testament revelation and to centre of Old Testament experience. Eschatology stretches from creation to consummation and so frames the whole of history.
4. Conclusion

Traditionally, Systematic Theology has relegated the subject of eschatology to the final chapters of its treatises. As we have seen, this has had more to do with the definition eschatology has been given, than the location it has been placed in. A fully biblical understanding of eschatology needs to incorporate not only concepts to do with the future, but with the past and the present also. By re-defining eschatology along these lines, and re-modifying the various schemes it has been represented by, eschatology soon becomes a principle of theology, rather than a periphery. In fact, using the categories of “anticipated,” “inaugurated” and “future” eschatology, the scope of eschatology broadens to encapsulate the fullness of God’s revelation.

The importance of this cannot be overstated for the present study. If this view of eschatology is correct, the study of eschatology in Genesis moves from the realms of absurdity into necessity. In fact, the study of eschatology throughout the whole Bible and not simply in books like Daniel, Thessalonians and Revelation, becomes incumbent upon any would be theologian. If what has and is are intimately connected with what will be; if they anticipate and even inaugurate the future; if the future is but the full noon day expression of what was once shadow and type; then the whole of the Biblical revelation must be pored over to understand, orientate and shape our notions of eschatology. As Hoekema asserts, “Properly to understand eschatology, we must see it as an integral aspect of all of biblical revelation.”

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Having established the appropriateness of studying eschatology in the Old Testament, we now turn to the first book of that Testament, Genesis. As with any analysis in biblical studies it is worth examining the book as a whole before proceeding into the details of any one particular passage. As we shall see, the very structures of the book, and how these relate to the rest of the Bible, display its eschatological significance.

1. The Eschatological Literary Structure

Literary analysis is certainly not the only way of approaching the Bible. Both thematic and historical analyses have proved indispensable to the church throughout the ages. However, it is imperative to note how important literary analysis is. As Pratt argues:

The canon of Scripture is primarily structured according to literary units, not history or themes. We must pursue literary analysis because the Old Testament comes to us in literary units. To ignore this approach is to overlook how God structured the Scriptures.

This is no less true of the first book of the Bible. Rather than consisting of theological treatises on God, Man, Christ, etc., Genesis is fundamentally a piece of literature and so

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271 For an instructive overview of all of these means of approaching the Biblical text I would refer the reader to Richard L. Pratt, Jr., *He Gave Us Stories* (New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1990), 87-104.

272 Pratt, *He Gave Us Stories*, 98.
composed in literary units. To be sure, thematic analysis of these literary units would produce much material for our doctrines of God, Man, Christ, etc. But precisely because Genesis was written as literature, it should primarily be studied as literature.

As such, Genesis has an author, a date, and an intended audience. It is written in a genre and contains a particular structure as to its contents. It also has a wider literary context in other Ancient Near Eastern texts. What is important to focus on in terms of eschatology is the structure of the book, thus the following assumptions will have to be made in reference to the other literary aspects of Genesis:\textsuperscript{273} Moses is its author; the first generation of Israelites who left Egypt were its intended audience; ca.1450 B.C. was its rough date of composition; its genre is probably best classified as “theological history.”\textsuperscript{274} As to its wider literary context, several Ancient Near Eastern texts are worth being aware of. These include among others the Enuma Elish, the Myth of Atrahasis and the Gilgamesh Epic. Written before or at a similar time as Genesis, these texts provide the literary background to Genesis and the rest of the Pentateuch. They belie a wealth of parallels between the two that can inform our understanding of what Moses meant when he wrote in certain ways and recorded particular events of history. Moreover, and as we shall see, Moses often utilised the very structures of these Ancient Near Eastern texts in his own writing of Genesis.\textsuperscript{275}

\textsuperscript{273} For further details on these I would direct the reader to the various Introductions to the Old Testament and Commentaries that are available.

\textsuperscript{274} Tremper Logman III, \textit{How to Read Genesis} (Downers Grove: IVP, 2005), 61.

\textsuperscript{275} Although further reference will be made to these Ancient Near Eastern texts, the remit of this thesis does not permit a thorough analysis of them, or of their contribution to an understanding of Genesis. For further reading on these texts I would direct the reader to the following books: John D. Currid, \textit{Ancient Egypt and the Old Testament} (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997); Duane Garrett, \textit{Rethinking Genesis} reprint ed. (Fearn: Christian Focus, 2000); Tremper Longman III, \textit{How to Read Genesis} (Downers Grove: IVP, 2005).
a. The toledoth formula

By far the most widely accepted literary structure in Genesis is what is called the *toledoth* formula.\(^{276}\) It is so called because it refers to the Hebrew phrase ❄️*elleh toledoth* which occurs eleven times in the book (2:4; 5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10; 11:27; 25:12; 25:19; 36:1; 36:9; 37:2). This phrase is variously translated into English ranging from “these are the generations” to “this is the family history.” Each time it is used, it is followed by the name of a person, with the one exception of 2:4 where it is followed by “heavens and the earth.” In this way the book divides into the following sections: the heavens and earth, Adam, Noah, Noah’s sons, Shem, Terah, Ishmael, Isaac, Esau\(^{277}\) and Jacob. Although the personal name that follows the formula does not necessarily denote the most important character in that section, it does indicate the beginning of a section, and often the ending as the same person is recorded to have died at the close of that section. These sections then outline “a prologue (1:1-2:3) followed by ten sections”\(^{278}\) and can be seen “like chapter or section headings in modern books.”\(^{279}\)

A second word that is frequently found in Genesis and is often associated with this genealogical *toledoth* structure is *zera*. This can be translated variously including “descendants,” “offspring,” “seed,” “children,” “semen” or “line.” The fact that this word occurs 59 times in Genesis compared to 170 times in the rest of the Old Testament draws


\(^{277}\) Both 36:1 and 36:9 refer to Esau.

\(^{278}\) Ibid.

attention to its importance.\textsuperscript{280} What is vital to grasp however, is both the close connections that \textit{zera}s sustains to the \textit{toledoth} formula, and the purpose of this connection:

When Genesis is viewed as a whole it is very apparent that the genealogical structure and the concept of ‘seed’ are closely linked in order to highlight a single, distinctive, family lineage.\textsuperscript{281}

The close association of these two words and their accompanying ideas, taken with the recurring structure of the \textit{toledoth} formula, is clear indication that Moses, when writing Genesis, wanted to clearly trace the ancestry of a particular family line. One feature of this familial line of descent is worth noting: that it was a royal one. Abraham was promised that kings would come from him (Gen 17:6), as was Sarah (Gen 17:16) and Jacob (Gen 35:11). Also: Abraham and Isaac received the status and names of kingship (Gen 21:22-34; 23:6; 26:26-31); “the subject of kingship is prominent in the Joseph story”\textsuperscript{282} (see Gen 37:8-11; 41:39-43); and finally, Judah is given special attention in regard to the continuation of his family line (Gen 38) and he receives a “royal” blessing from his father that pointed to his right to rule over his brothers (Gen 49:8-12). Taken together, this constitutes compelling evidence that:

Genesis anticipates that the descendants of this line will become very numerous and that a royal dynasty will arise from the descendants of Abraham.\textsuperscript{283}

In other words, Genesis is clearly focussed on developing a story that points beyond itself. Its very structure is so formulated so that its readers will begin to anticipate the birth of David. It should not surprise us that Matthew begins his Gospel by tracing this same line to

\textsuperscript{280} Ibid., 103.
\textsuperscript{281} Ibid., 105.
\textsuperscript{282} Ibid., 109.
\textsuperscript{283} Ibid., 101.
the person of Jesus Christ. This royal line of descent, signifies an eschatological orientation to
the book of Genesis, as it looks forward to a king who would rule his people, namely Christ
himself.

b. The Ancestor Epic Pattern

A further importance to this *toledoth* or “genealogical” formula is found in how it fits
into what has been called the “ancestor epic pattern.” This pattern follows the structure of
certain ancient texts e.g. the Myth of Atrahasis, where there are three parts. These parts
consist of an introduction, three threats to the character or party (about which the story is
concerned), and a resolution or conclusion. For Garrett, this pattern is “the dominant structure
of Genesis,” and is found in at least two places: in the first eleven chapters, and in the book
as a whole. Figure 4.1 is a slightly modified version of one that Garrett uses and shows
how this pattern is found in Gen 1-11:

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284 Garrett, *Rethinking Genesis*, 107. I am indebted to this author for many of the facts presented in
regard to this pattern in Genesis.

285 For details on how this pattern is used in the Myth of Atrahasis, and how it is paralleled in Gen 1-11, see Ibid.

286 Ibid.

287 Ibid.
Figure 3.1 The Ancestor Epic Pattern in Genesis 1-11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creation (1:1-2:3)</td>
<td>Summary of Work of God&lt;br&gt;Creation of Man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Threat (2:4-3:24)</td>
<td>Genealogy of Heaven and Earth,&lt;br&gt;Adam and Eve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Threat (4:1-26)</td>
<td>Cain and Abel&lt;br&gt;1. Cain and Abel, genealogy&lt;br&gt;2. Lamech’s taunt (in genealogy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Threat (5:1-9:29)</td>
<td>Genealogy, Noah’s flood,&lt;br&gt;Salvation in ark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resolution (10:1-11:32)</td>
<td>Genealogy&lt;br&gt;Tower of Babel and Dispersion&lt;br&gt;Genealogy&lt;br&gt;Abram leaves Ur</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It can clearly be seen in this pattern where the *toledoth* formula fits in. It follows each major section, and whilst the “creation narrative is not followed by a formal genealogy, it is followed by the line, ‘These are the generations (*toledoth*) of heaven and earth.’”

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288 Ibid., 108.
way a clear pattern can be discerned that closely parallels that of at least one Ancient Near Eastern Text i.e. the Myth of Atrahasis.  

This “ancestor epic pattern” structures not only the first eleven chapters of Genesis, but the book as a whole. Figure 3.2 is once again a modified version of one Garrett uses and shows how this pattern manifests itself:

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**Figure 3.2 The Ancestor Epic Pattern in Genesis**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Genesis</th>
<th>Prologue</th>
<th>Primeval History</th>
<th>1:11-26</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transition</td>
<td>Genealogy</td>
<td>11:27-32</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Threat</td>
<td>The Abraham Cycle</td>
<td>12:1-25:11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition</td>
<td>Genealogy</td>
<td>25:12-18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Threat</td>
<td>The Jacob Cycle</td>
<td>25:19-35:22b</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition</td>
<td>Genealogy</td>
<td>35:22c-36:40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition</td>
<td>Genealogy</td>
<td>46:8-27</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resolution</td>
<td>Settlement in Egypt</td>
<td>46:28-50:26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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289 Garrett, *Rethinking Genesis*, 108, notes in reference to a further figure he calls ‘The Structure of Primeval History,’ “The parallel with the Atrahasis myth is remarkable; it even extends to the doublet of the second threat. As the threat of the drought is repeated twice in Atrahasis, there is a double account of violence in the Cain-Lamech section.”

290 Ibid., 121.
As was seen in Gen 1-11 the three parts of introduction, three fold threats, and resolution, can clearly be seen to structure the whole of the book of Genesis as well. What is more, the *toledoth* formula continues to play a vital role in helping to divide and segment each of the parts of this pattern.

The identification of the above structures in Genesis is important because it gives us an overarching idea of the content and flow of the book as a piece of literature. More importantly however, is the eschatological nature of these same structures. The very pattern of introduction, threats and resolution paint a markedly eschatological picture as that which was perfect (the introduction), is lost and subsequent tensions between what was and what will be occur (the threats), only to be concluded with a recovery of peace and long term safety (the resolution).

Furthermore, the above structure indicates a very clear and purposeful beginning and ending to the book which is also eschatological. As a book of origins it delineates how the world came into existence. It records “God’s making all things of nothing, by the word of his power, in the space of six days, and all very good.”291 As such it begins with the beginning, and starts at the start. Yet when taking into account the structure of Genesis, one has to be mindful of the end, even when considering the beginning. Moses, as he compiled his material, clearly had a specific flow, and a direct movement in mind. He was not recording the creation of the world as a story on its own. He was recording it as it played a part in the wider structure of the book. In other words, Genesis is not a conglomeration of individual stories and accounts that have no relation to each other. As we have seen above, each literary unit plays its part within the structure of the wider literary structure. Thus the beginning is integral to the end, and vice versa, or even, the beginning interacts with the end, and vice versa.

291 Westminster Shorter Catechism Answer to Question 9.
The ending of Genesis however, whilst it resembles an adequate resolution and conclusion to the flow of narrative that precedes it, is sufficiently lacking to make the reader not only look back to the beginning, but also look forward to the future. Garrett helpfully sums this up:

The final resolution of Genesis (46:28-50:26) describes no threat to the tiny, emerging people. They are secure in the choicest region of Egypt (47:11), and are given every courtesy as honoured guests. Nevertheless, like the resolution of Atrahasis and Genesis 1-11, it is not an entirely happy resolution. They are still aliens and strangers living in a land that is not their own. The potential of threat, in light of 15:13, is certainly present.292

By the end of Genesis, God’s people could rest in the relative peace and safety of the land of Goshen in Egypt. However, whilst this settlement resembled the promised land in that it was secure, prosperous and clearly blessed of God, it was not the promised land. That yet awaited them at some time in the future. In this way, Genesis finishes on a clear eschatological note: the people of God had peace, yet this was only a foretaste or anticipation of the lasting peace that was promised them in Canaan.

Thus the end of Genesis finishes on both a retrospective and prospective note by casting its readers back to the beginning, and launching them into the future, both at the same time. Joseph’s last words recount his unswerving faith that God would actually take his people out of Egypt and into the Promised Land (Gen 50:24ff.). He reminds his brothers that the land of promise is the same land that he swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. He even makes them assure him that when they leave Egypt to live in this land, they will take his bones and bury them there. As such, the very beginning and ending of the book sets forth at the start the ideal of Eden, and at its close the hope of a restored Eden in the promised land. In so doing it creates the eschatological tension between the “already” but “not yet.” There is reason for hope in the now because God has promised. But the reality of future blessing is yet

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292 Garrett, Rethinking Genesis, 124.
to come. This is given even clearer expression in the “Shiloh” promise of Gen 49:10. Here, not only is a future land of promise envisaged, but a king to rule over this land is predicted. Hence, the inauguration and future eschatological King and kingdom is “anticipated.”

Finally, the series of threats that form the main body of Genesis are further laden with eschatological meaning. Each of the major characters of the book – Abraham, Jacob and Joseph – are driven far from home. They find themselves to be aliens in foreign lands, often facing dangers, and frequently suffering threats to their progeny. In fact, it has been argued that this theme of ‘alienation’ constitutes the main theme of the entire book. As we shall see below, it is the covenant God who uses these same threats to bless his people. However, it is interesting to note that the heart of the three patriarchs experience was eschatological. They knew the promised presence of God. They were aware of his blessing. Yet at the same time they knew themselves to be sojourners, to be aliens, to be travelling through a world that was not their home. As such they looked for that better country, that heavenly promised land. They had at work at the very centre of their existence the eschatological tension of living in the “now,” but expecting and looking forward to the “not yet.”

The New Testament corroborates this as it views each of these men as those who had a glimpse of the future blessed reality in the now, but looked forward to its eternal consummation. Abraham saw and greeted the things promised from afar (Heb 11:13) and so by faith apprehended in the present what was to be his in the future. Yet he also sought a homeland, and desired a better, heavenly, country (Heb 11:14,16). He lived in the “now” in as much as he based his life upon the promised word of God that he had received. But this

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293 This is the main reason why Garrett argues Isaac is not to be seen as a major figure. Few verses are devoted to him, but more importantly, he is not driven from his home and so does not participate in the main theme of the book, which is alienation. See Rethinking Genesis, 120-121.

294 Ibid., 120ff.
also caused him to look to the “not yet,” as he realised what he had now ultimately pointed him to that future reality.295

Thus, the very structure of Genesis is eschatological in nature. Its beginning and ending, flow and movement, and content and theme, all set forth eschatological concepts, balances and tensions. Furthermore, within this eschatological structure, the beginning is seen to be crucial as it sets the standard that is often looked back to, and initiates the movement that flows toward the end. As the first eleven chapters signal a microcosmic model of the whole, so, as we shall see below, the whole book of Genesis is an eschatological pattern that the rest of the canon of Scripture is both modelled upon, and integral to.

295 As such faith is fundamentally eschatological in nature and is the perfect instrument to express life in the “now” but “not yet.”
2. The Eschatological Canonical Structure

The book of Genesis itself contains literary structures that have clear eschatological overtones. In addition, as Genesis relates to other books within the revealed canon of Scripture, further eschatological structures can be noted.²⁹⁶

a. From Genesis to Deuteronomy

Genesis is integral to the Pentateuch. It is the first book of the Torah, without which the other four would make little sense. Despite the five books containing quite different components, “someone has skilfully brought them together to form a narrative that exhibits considerable unity.”²⁹⁷ In fact, the same three part (ancestor epic pattern) structure found in Genesis, of introduction, triadic main body, and resolution, can be seen in the Pentateuch, with Genesis serving as the introduction, Deuteronomy as the resolution, and Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers as the triadic main sections.²⁹⁸ Genesis serves as an ideal introduction to the other four books as it sets the historical context to all the events that follow. For example:

²⁹⁶ I will only touch upon three of these canonical structures, although it would also be worth examining the eschatological relations between Genesis and Malachi as it is the last book of the Prophets, and Genesis and 2 Chronicles, as it is the last book of the Writings.

²⁹⁷ Alexander, From Paradise to the Promised Land, 98.

²⁹⁸ Garrett, Rethinking Genesis, 120.
The whole of the Joseph story provides an essential link between the stories of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob living in Canaan and the account of their descendants being rescued from Egypt.\footnote{Alexander, From Paradise to Promised Land, 98.}

Also, Exodus through Deuteronomy are dominated by the setting apart of Israel as distinct from all others. This harks back to Genesis as “the Pentateuch anticipates in part a return to the kind of divine/human relationship enjoyed in Eden.”\footnote{Ibid., 99.} In fact, although God did dwell in the midst of his people, only Moses himself enjoyed intimate communion with him, and barriers were still evident between the fellowship of the people of God with God. In this way, God’s relationship with his people “merely anticipated that which is yet to come in conjunction with the blessing of the nations of the earth.”\footnote{Ibid.} It is interesting that the writer of Hebrews picks up on this eschatological anticipation and contrasts the inaugurated eschatological fellowship that his readers could now enjoy, with the restrictions that hindered such fellowship for Moses and Israel (see Heb 12:18ff.). Thus the Pentateuch is “orientated to the future”\footnote{Ibid., 100.} and as such is thoroughly eschatological. In as much as Genesis is an integral cog to the structure of the Torah, and that the Torah exhibits an eschatological tenor, it also is essentially eschatological.

\textbf{b. From Genesis to Joshua}

The book of Joshua in many ways is the capstone of the Pentateuch even as Revelation is of the whole Bible. In it the promises of land and descendants come to

\footnotesize{\begin{itemize}
\item \footnote{Alexander, From Paradise to Promised Land, 98.}
\item \footnote{Ibid., 99.}
\item \footnote{Ibid.}
\item \footnote{Ibid., 100.}
\end{itemize}}
something of a culmination as Israel actually go in and possess Canaan. As one traces the development of God’s dealings with his people through these first six books of the Bible, the sense of flow and unity is evident. The last chapter records Joshua renewing covenant at Shechem (Josh 24). He begins by recounting God’s dealings with his people from Abraham to that time. He summarises the whole of the Pentateuch to that date. As such, the six books can be seen as telling one story and as having complete unity. This fulfilment of God’s promises and the taking of the land, typifies the inheritance and eternal rest that the second coming of Christ will bring.  

In this way, Genesis to Joshua holds forth a microcosmic picture of the macrocosmic eschatological reality. Even more so, the sin of Israel in not possessing the land fully, and in their subsequent breaking of covenant (see the book of Judges and following), poignantly reminded the readers that the best had not arrived, and was still to be expected. The eschatological “now” pointed to the eschatological “not yet.”

c. From Genesis to Revelation

As a book of origins Genesis lays the foundation for the rest of the Bible. As a book of endings, Revelation is the capstone of the Bible. Yet these two are like bookends that literally encompass God’s Word. Genesis, in its unfolding plan of redemption, anticipates and points towards Revelation; and Revelation, as it depicts the end and consummation of all things, is the “amplified reflection of the first creation.” To use the already discussed eschatological concepts, Genesis is the movement to which Revelation is the goal.

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The importance of understanding the creation of the world as depicted in Genesis in relation to the new creation in Revelation will be discussed below. What needs to be taken account of here is simply the use the book of Revelation makes of Genesis as it portrays this new creation. Rev 22:1-5 concludes John’s vision of the city of God and “shows conscious links with the description of the paradise in Eden (Gen 2-3).” At least five specific ideas or aspects of the original Eden are depicted to be present in this new Eden. The river of the water of life (v1) is reminiscent of the river that flowed out of Eden to water the garden (Gen 2:10). The presence of the tree of life (v2) is unambiguously connected with its presence in Gen 2:9 and 3:22. The removal of curses (v3) contrasts sharply with the first pronouncements of curses upon the serpent, the woman and the man (Gen 3:14-19). The face to face fellowship that is enjoyed (v4) reminds us of what was lost in the first garden when God used to “walk in the garden in the cool of the day” (Gen 3:8). And finally, the removal of night and God being the light of his people (v5) contrasts with the creation of the sun and the movement of day to night found in the creation story.

This all shows the inextricable links there are not just between Genesis and Revelation, but between creation and consummation. The new creation is very much fashioned after, or in contrast to, the old creation. In a sense, the Genesis creation account sets the parameters of the Revelation new creation account. The new creation is new in that it transforms the old into what it always promised to be, not in that it obliterates the old and starts completely from scratch. Thus, even the structure of the Biblical canon is testimony to the importance of Genesis to eschatology. If Revelation is unequivocally eschatological, and Revelation is mutually dependant upon Genesis, then it goes without saying that Genesis is

305 Lensch, Eschatology in the Book of Genesis, 3.

306 George R. Beasley-Murray, “Revelation” in NBC.
unequivocally eschatological. Both the beginning and ending of God’s revelation to man is framed by eschatology.
3. The Eschatological Covenantal Structure

The Bible is an organic unity.\(^{307}\) As such it is structured by several covenants that God makes with man. These are marked by a “unified character” and throughout them all “a definite line of progress may be noted.”\(^{308}\) The book of Genesis plays an important role in this covenantal development as it records two, (the Noahic and Abrahamic), arguably three, (the Adamic),\(^{309}\) of those covenants. One of the four agreed upon and essential elements to these covenants between God and man is that of promise.\(^{310}\) In each covenant administration God makes promises to his people. To Adam and his posterity was promised “life...upon condition of perfect and personal obedience.”\(^{311}\) After the Fall, the Covenant of Grace continued to be administered “under the law...by promises...”\(^{312}\) Noah and the whole of creation were promised that the earth would never flood again (Gen 9:11ff.). Abraham was promised that he would become a great nation, that he would be blessed, that he would have innumerable descendants, that his offspring would inherit the land of Canaan for their own possession and that his seed would be a blessing to all nations (see Gen 12, 15, 17 and 22). Thus, at the centre of God’s covenantal dealings with his people in Genesis stands this promissory dimension.

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\(^{309}\) For a detailed discussion of this issue see chapter two of Robertson.


\(^{311}\) Westminster Confession of Faith, VII. ii

\(^{312}\) Ibid., VII. v
This fact exposes the inherent eschatological character of covenant in Genesis and beyond. A promise by nature leaves the recipient of the promise with two things. Firstly, he gains a level of assurance for the present in accordance with his assessment of the ability of the one who promised to fulfil that promise. And secondly, he has the hope that at some time in the future he will enjoy the fulfilment of the promise. For the people of God this meant ultimate assurance and a certain hope as God swore on his own name to fulfil his promised word. As such, a promise is explicitly eschatological in that it gives comfort in the present as you are directed to the future. More specifically, the covenants of God with man are explicitly eschatological because they anticipate in the present what will be consummated in the future.

The import of this fact can be seen in light of the trajectory of the covenants. As one, they move towards their consummation in Christ at his second coming. All of the promises that they contain ultimately have their yes and amen in Christ. Their promises ultimately point to, focus attention upon, and promise, Jesus Christ. As Robertson argues “By the new covenant God shall fulfil all the promises of the covenants established earlier with his people.”313 In other words, the promises that shaped the covenants God made with man, had their ultimate telos in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Mckay puts it succinctly when he says:

All of the areas of Covenant Theology... reach their God-ordained consummation with the return of the Mediator in glory. As we shall see, covenant is integral to a biblical understanding of eschatology.314

313 Robertson, The Christ of the Covenants, 275.
314 David McKay, The Bond of Love (Fearn, Great Britain: Mentor 2001), 278.
In as much as Christ signalled the dawning of the *eschaton*, the covenant people prior to his arrival had lived on the basis of that very dawning. They had gained their assurance for the present from the hope of his coming, and they had looked to his coming as the fulfilment of God’s promise.

Therefore, Covenant Theology is not only eschatological in nature, it delineates the way in which eschatology has moved, is moving and will move to its appointed climax. The various covenants trace the flow and movement of eschatology as it anticipates, inaugurates and finally consummates all of the promises of God. Thus, Genesis, in as much as it contains significant data concerning God’s covenant relations with his people, is an indispensable link in that same covenantal chain. In the same way, in as much as covenant theology is the practical expression of an “anticipated”, “inaugurated” and “future” eschatology, Genesis is necessary to it.

One final aspect of covenant theology which brings further eschatological bearing and significance to Genesis is the Adam-Christ structure, found particularly in Pauline Theology. As has been asserted, “Christ and Adam stand over against one another as the great representatives of the two aeons.”\(^{315}\) Just as Adam brought death through his disobedience, Christ brought life “by his obedience (that is, his death) and his resurrection.”\(^{316}\) Thus the work of the second Adam is quintessentially eschatological in that it inaugurated the *eschaton* and signalled the death knell of the kingdom of the devil. In this way, Christ was not only the covenant federal head of his people as he bore their sins and satisfied the demands of God’s law on their behalf; he was the *eschatological* covenant federal head, as he accomplished his peoples salvation and became the “first fruits of those

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\(^{315}\) Ridderbos, *Paul An Outline of His Theology*, 57.

\(^{316}\) Ibid. Ridderbos continues in summary “Paul’s preaching as we have seen, is ‘eschatology,’ because it is preaching of the fulfilling redemptive work of God in Christ. We might be able to delimit this further, to a certain extent schematically, by speaking of Paul’s ‘resurrection-eschatology.’”
who are asleep” (1 Cor 15:20ff.). His resurrection was the “guarantee” and the “pledge”\(^\text{317}\) of his people’s resurrection. The dawning of the \textit{eschaton} in Christ is surety for both the past and future dawning of the \textit{eschaton} for Christ’s people.\(^\text{318}\)

Similarly, Adam stood as the eschatological head of all those “in” him. In the words of Kline: “Eschatological destiny, the choice of eternal weal or woe, was set before man [Adam] in the dual sanctions of the covenant.”\(^\text{319}\) Just as Christ inaugurated eschatological “weal” for those untied to him by faith, so Adam inaugurated eschatological “woe” for the whole of mankind. His sin marked the end of the eschatological blessing he and his wife had up to that point enjoyed in Eden. They, along with the rest of his progeny, were cast out of the presence of God and marred by the debilitating effects of sin. Not until the second Adam came and stood as a new representative for man, could this eschatological disaster be reversed.

Thus, the Adam-Christ structure of biblical revelation portrays the fundamentally eschatological nature of that same structure. That it is the book of Genesis that contains the biblical data of the first Adam’s fall and eschatological ruin should not be missed. This fact further justifies the examination of the subject of eschatology within the confines of the first fifty two chapters, and especially the first three chapters, of the Bible.


\(^{318}\) For more on the past and future significance of the resurrection of Christ for believers see Ibid., 31-62.

\(^{319}\) Meredith G. Kline, \textit{Kingdom Prologue} (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2006), 91.
4. The Eschatological Redemptive Structure

Eschatology as asserted already, does not just relate to history. More specifically it relates to redemptive history. G. E. Ladd begins his article on eschatology with this very point:

Biblical eschatology is concerned not only with the destiny of the individual but also with history. This is due to the particular character of biblical revelation. God does not only reveal himself by means of inspired men, but also in and through the events of redemptive history.320

God has throughout history been redeeming a people to himself, and the end of history will be the final redemptive act of new creation. As such, redemption, like eschatology, has both a present outworking and a future goal. In this way, both are inextricably linked. Redemption is the expression of eschatology in history, and “eschatology is the crown of redemption both from God’s and from man’s side.”321 In effect, the study of eschatology is the study of redemption, and vice versa. Thus, as the redemptive acts of God can be traced as far back as the first chapters of Genesis, the presence of eschatology must also be assumed there. If Genesis is “the beginning of the story of redemption,”322 and redemption and eschatology are so closely knit together, then Genesis must also be the beginning of the story of eschatology.

However, to leave the relations between eschatology and redemption as simply coextensive would be to paint a somewhat simplistic picture. That they do enjoy significant

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320 G. E. Ladd, “Eschatology,” in NBD.


overlap in regard to history and the unfolding of God’s plan is certain. Yet a stage in this same plan and revelation of God can be detected that includes the one, but excludes the other. This stage would be the pre-redemptive period found in Genesis 1 and 2 that is both thoroughly eschatological, and wholly absent of redemptive currency. As Vos writes when arguing that eschatology should precede our notions of soteriology: “...a whole chapter of eschatology is written before sin.” The details and trajectories of this eschatological pre-redemptive stage are to be considered below in Part IV. Suffice to say at this juncture that Genesis 1 and 2 is laden with eschatological realities, and is bereft of any conception of redemption. Sin only enters in Genesis 3, and according to the grace of God, redemption with it. In Genesis 1 and 2 therefore, redemption is a redundant concept. Eschatology on the other hand is replete with meaning, and bristling with intent in these chapters.

This fact leads us to “a biblical schema that is the axis around which all biblical theology turns.” This schema is simply “Creation – the Renewal of Creation (Redemption) – the New Creation.” In this schema, the work of redemption is not only placed within the framework of creation and the new creation, it is itself seen as an act of new creation. Having surveyed the Old Testament connections between redemption and creation, Dumbrell sums up by saying:

Biblical theology commences from the creational base provided by the initial chapters of Genesis. It moves between the poles of creation and new creation as the two great moments in history. The heavy alliance of redemption with creation underscores the Old Testament view of redemption as an act of new creation, principally understood in terms of the Israel of the Old Testament.

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323 Vos, The Eschatology of the Old Testament, 73.
325 Ibid.
326 Ibid., 189.
In other words, redemption, or more specifically, redemptive eschatology, serves as an instrument that both “restores and consummates”\textsuperscript{327} creation. It is the mechanism of renewal that provides movement between “the poles of creation and new creation.” It serves the purposes of eschatology as it re-creates that which was lost in the original pre-redemptive, creation.

In this way a clear eschatologically redemptive structure can be seen. Both eschatology and redemptive history are coextensive in that they pertain to the same end i.e. the consummation of all things in Christ. However, the one is subservient to the other in that it is the apparatus whereby the eschatological pre-redemptive stage of history relates to, and creates, the eschatological post-redemptive stage of history i.e. the new creation. To put it simply: eschatology precedes soteriology, and soteriology is the means by which eschatology reaches its climax. This high view of redemption, and its even higher view of eschatology as it precedes redemption, elevates our assessment of Genesis. It is this book that contains the two chapters that pre-date redemption itself. It is in this book that the data of the eschatological creation is found, which the rest of Scripture traces restoration of and consummation to. Thus, Genesis, and particularly the first two chapters, is eminently able to not only withstand eschatological scrutiny, but to bear much eschatological fruit as a result of that scrutiny.

\footnote{327 Vos, \textit{The Eschatology of the Old Testament}, 74. He argues that redemption on its own could only restore. It is the eschatological aspect of redemption that consummates.}
5. Conclusion

The structures of Genesis as a book, and of Genesis as it relates to the canon are important not simply because of the structures themselves, but because of the eschatological nature of these same structures. They indicate to us that the very fabric of Genesis contains eschatological treasures that are worth mining for. In addition, the eschatological covenantal and redemptive structures that have been explored above, firmly posit Genesis, and the rest of the Old Testament for that matter, within the confines of eschatological enquiry. All of these structures highlight both the place eschatology has within Genesis, and the importance Genesis has for eschatology in the covenantally redemptive revelation of God.
IV. ESCHATOLOGY AND BIBLICAL STUDIES: PART II

1. Eschatological Motifs in Genesis 1 and 2

Having argued for the importance of the book of Genesis as a whole to eschatology; we now turn to the first two chapters to examine it for eschatological themes. If this pre-redemptive stage of creation is characterised above all by eschatology, it is natural to assume that an analysis of its contents will produce rich seams of eschatological gold. We shall discover that Genesis is not only as a book a component part of biblical eschatology, Genesis 1-2 in particular is replete with eschatological ideas and motifs.

The purpose of this section is not to provide a verse by verse, phrase by phrase commentary on these two chapters. Rather, it is to highlight certain key concepts and patterns that find their origins in these verses, and then to trace these concepts and patterns through the progressive revelation of God in Scripture. As we shall see, Genesis does not simply provide facts about the origin of the created order; it is paradigmatic and programmatic of how that same order is restored, renewed and ultimately consummated. The themes and motifs found in these chapters will prove to be a window into the very workings of God in history, as they not only indicate the ‘how’ of this working, but also the ‘what.’ What God does in Genesis 1 and 2, and how he does it, is pre-determinate of the ‘what’ and the ‘how’ of his work throughout redemptive history. As such, Genesis 1 and 2 are the first lenses that enable us to look down the telescope of God’s sovereign working in time and space, to focus on his purposes in Christ.
a. The “Psychical” Creation

That the account in Genesis 1 and 2 is about God’s creating a real and tangible and physical creation is something that few, if any, would debate. This is the world we now live in, and as such it is concrete, solid and material. However, this plain and undisputed fact holds within it an important eschatological reality that can only be grasped from a New Testament, and a particularly Pauline, perspective.

1 Corinthians 15:44-49 is located in a context where the resurrection body is being discussed. More specifically, Paul is comparing the bodies of believers before and after the resurrection. He depicts the former as “psychical” and the latter as “Spiritual.”328 As such, what Paul is discussing appears to have no bearing on Genesis and the creation of the world. That is until he continues the comparison by contrasting the first Adam and the last Adam (v45). He argues for the chronological necessity of a particular order i.e. that the “psychical” must come before the “Spiritual.” In fact he also argues for the philosophical necessity of a particular order as well: the existence of one necessitates the existence of the other. In other words, just as Adam was given life in Gen 2:7ff, so Christ, the second Adam, of necessity, was living.

This as far as it goes proves nothing of eschatological import. What does prove it however is both the contrast Paul makes, and the pattern he identifies as he makes it. Paul contrasts the pre-fall existence of the first Adam (the psychical) with the resurrected existence of the second (the Spiritual). As such he is comparing the creation with the new creation. The pattern he derives from this is that the created order of Genesis 1 and 2, as

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328 Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., Calvin and the Sabbath (Fearn: Mentor, 1998), 150-152. Gaffin deals with the apparent problem of the association of what is “psychical” with what is sinful. He convincingly argues that while this association certainly exists in other Pauline uses of the word, it does not in this passage. I am indebted to Gaffin for many of the following insights.
represented by the psychical body of Adam, of necessity is a precursor to the new creation, as represented by Christ’s resurrected body. Or to put it another way, the eschatological reality of the new creation had to be preceded by the existence of the first creation. Gaffin articulates this same idea as follows:

It is not the Pneumatic, the complete, the eschatological that comes first in the unfolding of history. Rather, first comes the anticipatory, the prefiguring, the pre-eschatological order (the “psychical” order) and then, consequently, the Pneumatic or eschatological order; the first, original creation looks forward to the new and final creation. 329

The importance of this cannot be overstated as it provides a New Testament framework for understanding the contents of the first creation in direct relation with the realities of the second. 330 It connects inextricably the events of the future, with the events of the past. Not only does this “psychical” creation point to and anticipate the “Spiritual” new creation in Christ, it is a pre-requisite to its coming. It is an essential strand in the unravelling tapestry of eschatology as it moves to the consummation of all things. The very fact that God created, ushered in the first phase of eschatological anticipation. The “Spiritual” of necessity had to follow the “psychical,” and so the inevitable eschatological consummation of all things was guaranteed in those first words of divine creative fiat.

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329 Ibid., 152.
330 This pattern fits perfectly with the schema proposed by William J. Dumbrell, and referenced in Part III above. He suggested the following schema: Creation – the Renewal of Creation (Redemption) – New Creation, where the middle section of renewal is the means to the restoration of the creation, and the consummation of the new creation. See The End of the Beginning, 196.
b. The Glory-Spirit

Prior to the creative fiats of God in Gen1:3ff, our attention is directed to the “hovering” of the Spirit of God over the primeval chaos. This “Glory-Spirit was a visible divine signature\(^{331}\) and represented not only the name and presence of God, but also the power and paradigm of God’s working.\(^{332}\) These few words encapsulated in 1:2b, provide a “preview” of God’s working in creation, and also a beholding of the shape of the world to come.\(^{333}\) What’s more, this same Glory-Spirit represents God as a witness in the ratification of covenant both at Sinai (the cloud pillar theophany) and Pentecost (the Glory Fire), and also envelops the Son as he swears that the mystery of God was to be completed (Rev 10:1, 5-7).\(^{334}\) Additional manifestations of this Glory-Spirits presence and working are to be found in the incarnation, baptism and transfiguration of Jesus Christ, and in the divine re-creative act of regeneration.

The eschatological overtones of this data are plain to see. At the inception of God’s creative acts, he is seen to not only manifest himself and his power, but to establish the very pattern of his working in the world and in the individual. This can be traced from creation to consummation, as the epitome of God’s activity. In the same way as God created the world, he is seen to ratify covenant, inaugurate Christ’s kingdom,\(^{335}\) anoint the Messiah as King, usher in the age of the new covenant, convert the sinner, and consummate the end of the ages. Gen 1:2 serves as a prototype, a prefiguring, a prognostication of how God would move in

\(^{331}\) Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 31.

\(^{332}\) Ibid.

\(^{333}\) Ibid., 32.

\(^{334}\) Ibid., 16.

\(^{335}\) See Luke 1:29-35 for the conjoining of the overshadowing of the Spirit with the promised coming of Christ’s kingdom.
history to bring history to its end. In other words it is eschatologically both paradigmatic and programmatic. It typifies and anticipates both the inauguration of the *eschaton* and the future fulfilment of the *eschaton*. It is definitively eschatological. Thus from the very first sentences of Genesis, an eschatologically all pervasive motif is emblazoned before us.

c. The Image of God

Genesis 1:26-27 records man on the sixth day being made in the image of God. He is created as a replica of the original divine Glory Spirit in 1:2.\textsuperscript{336} As such he possessed the ethical glory\textsuperscript{337} of knowledge, righteousness and holiness.\textsuperscript{338} This was prospective of the greater glory yet to be confirmed after his time of probation and of the “transformation into the likeness of the epiphanic light”\textsuperscript{339} of 1:2. Hence, the very creation of man was infused with eschatological expectation. As Kline argues:

\textit{Man was given the hope of an eschatological glorification that would change him into a transfigured glory-image of the radiant Glory-Spirit.}\textsuperscript{340}

Furthermore, this divine image is something the Bible consistently portrays as being re-created and renewed by the putting on of “the new man or Christ or resurrection glory.”\textsuperscript{341} The New Testament speaks of the restoration of this image through being united to Christ by

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\item[\textsuperscript{336}] Kline, \textit{Kingdom Prologue}, 42-43.
\item[\textsuperscript{337}] Ibid., 45.
\item[\textsuperscript{338}] See Westminster Confession of Faith’s Shorter Catechism, Question and Answer 10.
\item[\textsuperscript{339}] Kline, \textit{Kingdom Prologue}, 45.
\item[\textsuperscript{340}] Ibid.
\item[\textsuperscript{341}] Kline, \textit{Images of the Spirit}, 35.
\end{itemize}
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faith, (Rom 13:14; Gal 3:27; Eph 4:24; Col 3:10). Not only is the recovery of the image depicted, but the corollary eschatological hope is also promised. 1 Cor 15:35ff and 2 Cor 5:2ff in particular outline the certain hope of being clothed with imperishable bodies and heavenly dwellings. As such, the creating of man in God’s image serves to be used throughout the Bible as the pattern of “inaugurated” and of “future” eschatology. The same image possessed by Adam is recovered in Christ, and the same hope of glory that image conveyed to Adam, is held out in the promise of Christ’s return. Thus, not only is the creation of the world saturated in eschatological nuances, so is the creation of man in God’s image.

d. The King and the Kingdom

Man being made in the image of God signalled a royal investiture. By making mankind in his image, “God honoured them with the gift of kingship…” God appointed man with the privilege of being his vice-regent on earth. God also gave man a dominion to rule over. He “bestowed on them the blessings of the holy theocratic kingdom, a sanctuary paradise.” The Fall effectively signalled the dethroning of man as King and the exile of man from his kingdom. Yet this theme is time and again re-introduced and developed throughout the biblical revelation. David’s kingdom is promised to be never ending (2 Sam 7), Christ’s kingdom is seen as the fulfilment of this (Lk 1:26-38), the coming of the kingdom is announced in the coming of Christ and his preaching (Mk 1:14-15), the kingdom is said by Christ to the Pharisees to be “within” or “among you” (Lk 17:21), and the day of judgement is illustrated by a King judging the sheep and the goats (Matt 25:31ff.). Finally, Christ as the

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342 Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 42.

343 Ibid. The garden of Eden as a temple sanctuary is given separate treatment below.
second Adam (Rom 5:12ff.; 1 Cor 15:20ff.), is portrayed as the King on the throne (Rev 5:6,10), who alone is worthy to open the scroll and make the redeemed “a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth.” In this way, the royal investiture of Adam as a king with a kingdom, once more established the eschatological agenda. It served as a foreshadowing of what man could have been, what man lost, and what Christ has recovered on behalf of his people. It anticipates the very way in which God in Christ both inaugurates the eschaton, and consummates it.

e. The Garden Temple

The Garden of Eden stands as yet another eschatological motif or theme in the first chapters of Genesis. Contrary to the assumption that it was just a luscious farm for Adam to tend or simply the first location of agricultural activity, the garden holds strong evidence that it was the prototypical temple of God. The geography and topography of the garden hold the first clues. The fact that it was planted in the east (Gen 2:8) and that its entrance was in an eastern direction (Gen 3:24) should not be missed. These details correspond with the heavenly eschatological temple of God as depicted in Ezekiel (see 11:1, 23; 40:6; 43:1-4 and 44:1-2). The presence of a river in Eden (Gen 2:10), and the implication that it was topographically elevated, if not situated on a Mountain, are further hints. The eschatological temples portrayed in Ezekiel (47:1-12) and Revelation (21:1-2) have rivers flowing from their centre and are situated on Mountains (Ezek 28:14-16; Rev 21:10). In fact,

344 For more on this see: G. K. Beale, The Temple and the Church’s Mission: A biblical theology of the dwelling place of God, New Studies In Biblical Theology, Vol. 17 (Downers Grove: IVP, 2004), 74; J. V. Fesko, Last Things First Unlocking Genesis 1-3 with the Christ of Eschatology (Fearn: Mentor, 2007), 58.

345 The river flows out from Eden which implies elevation, and Ezekiel speaks of being in Eden and being on the holy mountain of God as an expression of the same thought (Ezek 28:13-14).
the experience of Israel and of the New Testament church was that they met God on mountains (Horeb – Ex 3:1; Sinai – Ex 18:5; Zion – Ps 48:1-2 and Heb 12:22). As Kline has succinctly stated:

This motif of God’s mountain is a pervasive element in biblical symbolism from creation, through redemption, to consummation. 346

The tree of life is another example of the clues the garden gives us that it was actually a temple. With Moses commanded to make a menorah, or lampstand (Ex 25:31-39) that both “had the flowering and fructifying appearance of a tree”347 and was placed “in relative proximity to the holy of holies, the throne of God,”348 it is not surprising that scholars understand this as referring back to the tree of life.349 The only other explicit reference to the tree of life is found in Rev 22:2 where it is once again located at the centre of the eschatological New Jerusalem.

The geology of Eden also yields eschatological treasures. We are told in Gen 2:11ff that in the land of Havilah (which was either in or very close to Eden), there was good gold, bdellium, and onyx stones. Similarly the tabernacle was be-jewelled with gold and fine gems (Ex 25:11ff), the high priests breast-piece was covered in precious stones (Ex 28:17-20), and when John examines the foundations of the eschatological holy city he finds once again, a multitude of rare and precious jewels (Rev 21:18-20).

A final, and decisive clue, is the presence of God. The same language is used to describe God as he walked in the garden (Gen 3:8) and as he was with his people in the


347 Beale, The Temple and the Church’s Mission,71.

348 Fesko, Last Things First, 62.

349 Ibid.
tabernacle (2 Sam 7:6). Only the high priest was allowed into the Holy of Holies, which was the symbolic inner sanctum of the very presence of God, and that only once a year. Yet Eden “was the place where Adam walked and talked with God.”

Furthermore, the vision John recounts of the New Jerusalem contains at its heart the coming down of God to dwell with his people (Rev 21:3).

Taken together, the above evidence leaves the reader without doubt that the garden of Eden had all the hallmarks of a Temple sanctuary. Added to this is the vision of Ezekiel 28:13ff where Eden is referred to as the “garden of God ... the holy mountain of God.” This constitutes, along with v18 where the fallen man is taken by most scholars to refer to Adam, “the most explicit place anywhere in canonical literature where the garden of Eden is called a temple.”

This view would find further support in both Ancient Near Eastern associations of temples with gardens, and in early Judaism’s view of the garden as the first sanctuary.

The basic conclusion to draw from this is that “… Eden was the first archetypal temple, upon which all of Israel’s temples were built.” The tabernacle, the temples, and the eschatological New Jerusalem, all trace the origins of their main features back to Eden. They were fashioned after the pattern laid down in the first creation. They were moulded after this edenic prototype. They conformed to this pre-redemptive blueprint. In the ever descriptive words of Kline:

Chosen as the focal throne-site of the Glory-Spirit, the garden of Eden was a microcosmic, earthly version of the cosmic temple and the site of a visible, local projection of the heavenly temple. At first, then, man’s native dwelling place coincided with God’s earthly dwelling. This focal sanctuary in Eden was designed to

350 Beale, The Temple and the Church’s Mission, 66.

351 Ibid., 75-76.

352 Ibid., 76-80. See also Fesko, Last Things First, 74, where he draws attention to Luther and Barth as making similar observations.

353 Ibid., 80.
be a medium whereby man might experience the joy of the presence of God in a way and on a scale most suited to his nature and condition as an earthly creature during the first stage of his historical journey, walking with God.354

Thus, the first chapters of Genesis, in as much as they relate the geography of Eden, and the fellowship Adam enjoyed with God, are trumpeting the first notes that will become the eschatological melody that recurs throughout the symphony of God’s established worship on earth and in the new creation. Eden was a garden that Adam and Eve lived in, tended and ate from. Yet more fundamentally it was a temple sanctuary where God met with them, and they worshiped him, and where the lines of temple worship throughout redemptive history would find their origin.

f. The Land of Paradise

Connected to the motif of the Garden Temple is the motif of the land. Even a cursory reading of the Old Testament will elicit the importance this theme has in the developing story of the people of God. God promised the land of Canaan to Abraham, and so the subsequent history of Israel unfolds this promise as it is fulfilled at various stages. The whole of the book of Joshua for example, is about going into the land, conquering the land and inhabiting the land. The present conflict in the Middle East bears twentieth century testimony to the significance of this idea to the Jews and their forbears.

What is often missed in regard to this however, is that the “concept of a land that belongs to God’s people originated in Paradise.”355 The concept of a “promised land” does

354 Kline, Kingdom Prologue, 49.
not find its roots in what God said to Abraham, it finds its roots in Genesis 1 and 2.

Furthermore, all of the resultant promises and assurances God gives to his people throughout the Old Testament in regard to the land of Canaan can be traced back to the original paradise. Despite the loss of access to Eden as a result of the Fall, God promised as an essential part of redemption, to re-establish his people in a land flowing with milk and honey. Robertson as much says the same when he writes:

> As Adam and Eve had known God’s blessing in Eden, so God would bless his people in a new land. This idea of restoration to paradise provides the proper biblical context for understanding God’s promise to give land to Abraham (Gen 12:1). This promise to the patriarch became the basis for all subsequent understanding of the role of the land in the unfolding history of redemption.\(^{356}\)

The New Testament development of this land motif is particularly intriguing. Instead of limiting its dimensions to the geographic confines of the land of Israel, it expands the concept to incorporate the whole earth. Abraham is declared to be heir of the world (Rom 4:13), the whole of creation groans as it awaits the full redemption of the cosmos (Rom 8:22-23), Christ teaches that the meek shall inherit the earth (Matt 5:5) and the disciples are told they are to be Christ’s witnesses to the end of the earth (Acts 1:8). As such “the imagery of a return to a ‘land’ flowing with milk and honey was refocused [in the New Testament] on a rejuvenation that would embrace the whole of the created order.”\(^{357}\)

The significance of this lies in its relations to Eden. Whilst the original paradise had clear geographic limits, the cultural mandate given to Adam as the bearer of God’s image was to go forth and multiply and to fill the earth (Gen 1:28). God’s intention was that the whole of


\(^{356}\) Ibid., 7-8.

the world would be dominated by his vice-regents. Sin of course curtailed this prospect and it was not until the first coming of Christ that the magnitude of the original design could be restored and renewed. Thus, Christ inaugurated a prospect that had first been anticipated in the Paradise of Eden. And he will consummate that same prospect when he comes again in glory and every knee will bow to him in heaven, earth and under the earth (Phil 2:10) and he will reign in righteousness over the whole of the cosmos.

In this way, the motif of the land or the paradise of Eden in Genesis 1 and 2 has substantial impact on our understanding of the rest of Scripture. It once again sets the parameters and defines the course of the whole of redemptive history. Not only was the promised land something to look forward to, it was a restoring of what was lost by sin, and a consummating of God’s sovereign intentions for his creation.

g. The Sabbath

The resting of God on the seventh day, as well as being a completion of divine creation, was an “enthronement of the Creator.” God assumed his rightful position as Sovereign King of all as he sat and surveyed the cosmos he was Lord over. Moreover, this Sabbath rest and completion of the work of creation set forth God not only as Creator, but also as Consummator.\(^{359}\) He was the one who could begin and end all that he set out to do.

This set the pattern for man in the image of God to follow. As the replica of God’s Glory Spirit, the image of his maker, and the vice-regent of the great King, man was in similar fashion to God, to begin and end his kingdom labour. He, like God, was to work and

\(^{358}\) Kline, Kingdom Prologue, 19.

\(^{359}\) For a fuller discussion of this see Ibid., 33-34.
rest from his work, in the six-day-then-Sabbath- rest pattern. This pattern was as much a promise as a command. It held out eschatological hope in the Sabbath rest. If man had completed his work and fulfilled his time of probation successfully, he had the certain hope of partaking of a similar rest as God had. As such, Adam’s task of refraining from eating the forbidden fruit was eschatological in nature and reward. According to Gaffin,

Adam’s task may be understood as the obligation, by means of successful probation, to raise the pre-eschatological, psychical order to the eschatological order, which it anticipates.\textsuperscript{360}

A similar point can be made from a different perspective. The creation pattern of six days then rest served as a “continual reminder to Adam that history is not a ceaseless repetition of days.”\textsuperscript{361} As each new week dawned, he had the constant hope of its ending with a day of rest. This weekly cycle epitomised the movement that the whole of creation was involved in towards an end goal. It typified the eschatological trajectory that the physically created order was destined to be raised into a spiritually new created order. This emphasises the thoroughly eschatological nature of the Sabbath institution. As Gaffin once again sums up:

Seen in this light, the creation Sabbath was the preeminent type of the prefall period. The physical rest of each week prefigured the ultimate, eschatological goal of the whole created order and, at the same time, emphasised its present state of pre-eschatological incompleteness.\textsuperscript{362}

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\item Gaffin, \textit{Calvin and the Sabbath}, 154-155.
\item Ibid., 155.
\item Ibid.
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The Fall did not negate this principle. Rather it intensified it. Man was to both look back at the example and promise of Sabbath rest, and look forward to the Saviour-Consummator of that rest.\(^{363}\) Just as the creation Sabbath was given an “eschatological thrust and direction,”\(^{364}\) so the Sabbath of redemptive history was to have an “eschatological thrust and direction.”

This is evident when the two records of the Decalogue in the Old Testament are examined side by side. In Exodus 20:8-11 the reason given for the Sabbath ordinance is that God himself rested in creation. Just as Adam was to conform to the “imitation of God principle”\(^{365}\) in covenant law and mimic the working and resting of God; so were the people of Israel. They were to keep the Sabbath holy simply because the eschatological pattern established in Gen 1 and 2 was still in force.

However, the reiteration of the Ten Commandments in Deuteronomy 5 provides a second reason for keeping the Sabbath holy. This was located in the redemptive work of God as he brought his people out of slavery in Egypt (vv12-15). As such, a new perspective is given to the Sabbath. Whereas in Exodus 20 the reason for Sabbath observance was based on the pattern of work and rest that God himself and exemplified in creation, in Deuteronomy 5 the reason for Sabbath keeping is based upon the redemptive work of God in bringing his people out of slavery (an abuse of work) towards the land of Canaan (the promised residence of rest). As such a second focus is given to the Sabbath. This focus is redemptive in character. As it stands, the reason for the Sabbath command in Exodus 20 would fit as well in the pre-redemptive stage as the post-redemptive. It would not have been out of place if given to Adam, because it was in reality codifying in law of the principle that had already been

\(^{363}\) McKay, *The Bond of Love*, 232.

\(^{364}\) Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 78.

\(^{365}\) Ibid.
established in practice in Genesis 1 and 2. Deuteronomy 5 is different however. It would not have had relevance in the pre-redemptive stage. Any idea of redemption has as its natural concomitant and necessary partner, an idea of sin. Yet despite this fact, and despite the fact that the Israelites were given the reiteration of the Sabbath command in the context of sin and redemption, the “thrust and the direction” of the command remains the same. It still points to the rest that the Sabbath typifies, in that redemption from Egypt was procured by God that his people may enter the promised land of rest i.e. Canaan. Thus, even in redemptive history, the Sabbath stands in retrospect of the creation, and prospect of the consummation.

The first coming of Christ, and in particular his death and resurrection, marked an eschatological shift for the Sabbath as it moved from the seventh to the first day of the week. Christ being raised from the dead signalled the first episode in a double resurrection event. It guaranteed the future resurrection of believers. As such, Christ’s resurrection is not only a re-institution of the Edenic promise of Sabbath rest, it is a confirmation of the assurance of its attainment of it for all in him (Heb 4:1-11).

More than this even, it is the inauguration of that rest in the world to come. The rest that Christ himself enjoyed as he sat down at the right hand of the Father signified that the promised rest for the people of God had finally been realised in principle. What had been eschatologically anticipated by Adam in the garden was eschatologically realised by Christ in heaven. What the people of Israel had eschatologically anticipated as they kept the Sabbath holy, Christ had eschatologically inaugurated through his sacrifice on the cross.

Thus it can be said eschatologically that the inaugurated guarantees the future. What Christ accomplished in his death and resurrection, stands as the pledge and assurance of the future consummation of all things, where the people of God will join Christ in enjoying that

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366 Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., Resurrection and Redemption, 35.
eternal rest. Therefore, the Sabbath rest pattern exemplified by God, and to be followed by man, encapsulates all three aspects of eschatology outlined above: it “anticipates” the eternal rest; it is “inaugurated” in the resurrection of Christ; it is consummated in the “future” resurrection of the saints and their eternal residence in the new heavens and new earth. The Sabbath’s very warp and woof is eschatological.
2. Conclusion

This overview of eschatological motifs in Genesis 1 and 2 has certainly not been exhaustive. Other themes like ‘The Heavens and the Earth,’ ‘The Word of God,’ ‘The Light,’ ‘Blessing,’ ‘The Cultural Mandate’ and ‘The Marriage Institution’ would all be worthy of a similar study. However, it seemed somewhat appropriate to focus on the seven most prominent ones. Take these motifs separately and one can apprehend the component parts of proto-typical, archetypal existence: the Psychical Creation established the divine progression of eschatological movement, the Glory Spirit stamped the divine signature, the Image of God resembled the divine replica, the King and the Kingdom deposited the divine investiture, the Garden Temple revealed the divine sanctuary, the Land of Paradise offered the divine residence and the Sabbath instituted the divine pattern of existence. On the other hand, take these together and one perceives something of the profound and all pervasive eschatological nature of Genesis 1 and 2. They exhibit eschatological nuances, shades, patterns and trajectories. They prove conclusively, that an examination of Genesis in its detailed parts yields much eschatological fruit. Even the pre-redemptive stage of history is satiated with blueprints, precedents and archetypes of God’s redemptive plan, and point beyond themselves to the consummation of all things in Christ.
CONCLUSION

The above survey of history, analysis of theology and examination of biblical data answers conclusively the question of whether eschatology has reference only to the future. The resounding response is in the negative. To be sure, a significant part of eschatology does have to do with the chronological end times. The very goal and telos of eschatology ultimately resides in what is yet to happen. The end point to which eschatology steers and guides the past and present is the future consummation of all things in Jesus Christ. Yet, as this study has sought to show, eschatology, whilst pertaining to the future, is not confined to it. In fact, it has as much to do with the past and present, as with the future. Far from being a simple enquiry into what is yet to happen, eschatology is the study of all that has, is and will happen. Its scope is as broad as redemptive history – if not broader. Its breadth ranges from creation to consummation, from the beginning to the end, from the first to the last.

This view of eschatology has immediate impact upon several other questions that were posed at the outset of this study. I asked: what possible bearing can the first book of the Bible, which is all about beginnings, have upon a subject that deals with the end? What has creation to do with consummation? What has protology to do with eschatology? The answer must of necessity be: everything! The very fabric of Genesis is eschatological. The soil in which the book plants its roots, and out of which it grows, is eschatological. The air that the book breathes and the atmosphere it resides in is eschatological. Its literary, canonical, covenantal and redemptive structures are eschatological. Its content, flow, and narratives are eschatological. Its themes, ideas and motifs are eschatological. The heart of the book beats to an eschatological rhythm and its blood courses through eschatological veins. Genesis is quintessentially and archetypically, eschatological.
As such, creation is to be seen as essential to consummation, protology as indispensable to eschatology, and the book of Genesis as integral to the book of Revelation. The first words of God’s revelation in Genesis 1 and 2 set the parameters of all that follows, define the strictures of redemptive history, and demarcate the lines of trajectory that run all the way through the first coming of Christ, to the second, and beyond. The consummation will be a recapitulation of creation, eschatology a replication of protology, and Revelation a resounding echo of Genesis. Creation, protology and the book of Genesis, give the context to all that God has, is and will do, in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

It is at this juncture that a further question regarding Genesis and eschatology is worth asking: is the eschatology of Genesis rightly deemed ‘eschatology,’ or would it be more appropriate to speak of Genesis as ‘pre-eschatological?’ In other words, does what has thus far been termed ‘eschatology’ in reference to Genesis, and in particular to Genesis 1 and 2, more specifically relate to what is before eschatology? The answer must lie in the meaning of the term. If ‘pre-eschatological’ is taken to mean that the contents of Genesis 1 and 2 are prior to eschatology in that no notion of substantial and material relationship between itself and what comes afterward is to be considered, then I would suggest that the term should not be used. However, if ‘pre-eschatological’ is taken to mean that Genesis 1 and 2 are located before the events of redemptive history, yet sustain a firm and secure link to that same redemptive history, then I believe the term is plausible. That Genesis 1 and 2 depict life prior to sin is indisputable. As such, they display the pre-redemptive stage of history, and so arguably a pre-eschatological stage of history. However, this stage is eschatological to the core as it anticipates the eschatology of inauguration and consummation outworked through the redemptive plan of God. Thus the importance of the category of “anticipation” can be seen. It is this category, (more than that of pre-eschatology), that supplies the link and

367 As quoted above, Gaffin, *Calvin and the Sabbath*, 154-155, uses this term.
connection between Genesis 1 and 2 and the eschaton itself. Furthermore, it is this category that embraces the whole of the Old Testament corpus and places it squarely within the remit of eschatology. As the opening couple of chapters of the Scriptures provide an anticipatory view of what the eschaton is, so the unified nature of God’s eschatologically unfolding revelation and eschatologically developing redemption can be grasped. Also, as the Old Testament saints increasingly anticipate that same eschaton, so the necessary backdrop to, and context of, the eschatological arrival of Christ, can be understood. Thus whilst Genesis 1 and 2 could theoretically be referred to as ‘pre-eschatological,’ it is more precise and consistent to understand it under the nomenclature of ‘eschatological anticipation,’ or ‘anticipated eschatology.’

If Genesis does enjoy such an intrinsic position in eschatology and creation is so fundamental to consummation, then several corollaries should be noted. First of all, the study of Genesis, and also of the whole of the Old Testament, should be conducted in this light. In other words, the movement to, the relations between, and the trajectory of, the Old and New Testaments should be highlighted. It is in the retrospective light of Genesis, and particularly chapters 1 and 2, that the eschatological scene is set. Then, and only then, can the prospective promise and reality of the Messiah and the last days be fully understood. To say the same thing from a different perspective: redemptive history needs to be seen as it relates to eschatology. As eschatology book-ends redemptive history and frames its development, so that eschatological context needs to be ever kept in view. The very focus of redemptive history is eschatology, so to lose sight of this, is to blur the overarching purposes of God. As such the Creation – Re-Creation – New Creation framework of eschatology needs to be highlighted. Redemption is as much an act of re-creation as it is an anticipation of new creation. Both the re-creative acts of God in redemption and the new creation of God in the consummation look back to, and develop from, creation. This three stage model encapsulates
the full eschatological master plan of God and provides the setting and goal for redemptive history.

This raises interesting questions about the relations of Genesis 3:15 to Genesis 1 and 2 in the schema of God’s plan. Often the lines of trajectory from the Old Testament to Christ are traced back to the so called proto euangelion with little or no reference to Genesis 1 and 2. It is as if the first two chapters of Genesis have no bearing on the work of God in redemption. Of course the first promise of the seed should occupy a prominent place in our understanding of the gospel, especially as it relates to Genesis 3:1-14 and the fall of man. However, surely if redemption is re-creation and Genesis 3:15 is the origin of redemption, then Genesis 3:15 of necessity must be set within the context of creation and Genesis 1 and 2. To refer to the promise of the seed that would bruise the head of Satan without placing it within this creation – re-creation – new creation framework, is to present an adumbrated and dislocated schema. What occurs from Genesis 3:15 onwards has fundamental reference to Genesis 1 and 2. Redemption is the effective mechanism that renews creation, and so it should be seen and set in this light.

This has particular relevance to those who have been set apart by God to preach to and teach his people. Not only should this concept of eschatology and Genesis be an inspiration to further study in the Old Testament, it should also provide the macrocosmic view of all that God has, is and will do. Week by week, Christians should be encouraged by the overwhelming sweep of God’s eschatologically oriented work. They should be edified by the grandiose scheme of God’s eschatological redemptive plan throughout all time. Their faith, love and hope should be stimulated as they begin to grasp the heights, depths, lengths and breadths of God’s eschatological plans for his people. This is the ‘big picture,’ and it is only within this view that the details, anxieties and trials of life will make sense, and gain purpose.
Secondly, Scripture of necessity should be interpreted by Scripture, or, as only a diamond can cut a diamond\textsuperscript{368}, so only the Word of God can exegete the Word of God. This simple, yet crucial hermeneutical point has been borne out time and again in the above study. No book of the Bible stands as an island in relation to the others, and we have seen that Genesis cannot be understood unless it is appreciated in the light of other biblical books like Revelation. The creation can only be comprehended fully as it is observed through the lens of consummation, and consummation is best apprehended as it is associated with creation. To put it in the category terms discussed already, the inaugurated and future, needs to be seen in the context of the anticipated, and the anticipated has its apex in the inaugurated and future. All three cohere together to give meaning to each other.

At the same time, hermeneutical pre-eminence should be afforded to the New Testament over the Old. Whilst the Old Testament certainly awaits, expects, points towards, delineates, demarcates and anticipates the New, and so is helpful for our understanding of it; the New is the culmination of the Old in that it marks the zenith of God’s progressive revelation in Jesus Christ. It is through the paradigm of the New that the shadows and the types of the Old come into full focus. Thus, through this same paradigm, the full import of Genesis can be perceived as it relates to eschatology.

Thirdly and finally, the book of Genesis should primarily be regarded, not as a textbook on science, or as an almanac on the history of the world, but above all as a manual of theology. That is not to say that the contents of Genesis, and even the first two chapters, do not have anything whatsoever to say in the fields of science or history. On the contrary, they explain and depict the origins of the world and so inform much of our understanding in these areas. However, they are principally chapters that pertain to theology. They have to do

chiefly with God and his relations with man, not with the mechanics and chronology of the world.

More specifically, Genesis, as it relates to eschatology, is supremely Christological. It is “the entry point to the person and work of Christ.”

Our understanding of the second person of the Trinity, the incarnate Son of God, the federal representative of his elect, is not limited to the pages of the New Testament. It begins, as the New Testament pours light on the Old, in Genesis 1 and 2. We are told that it is Jesus Christ who created all things (John 1:3; Col 1:16), that all the Scriptures concern Jesus Christ (Lk 24:27), and that Adam was a type of the one to come, namely, Jesus Christ (Rom 5:14). As such, this study of ‘The Eschatology of Genesis’ is better understood as a study of ‘The Christ of the Eschatology of Genesis.’ All the eschatology that can be found in Genesis finds its crystallisation, realisation and ultimate consummation, in the God-man Jesus Christ.

The three fold mediatorial office of Christ as prophet, priest and king, is the culminating example of this. Its origins can be discovered as far back as the first man, Adam, as he also functioned as a prophet, priest and king. Its fulfilment can be traced forward to the second man, Jesus Christ. Thus, it is Christ that eschatology anticipates; it is Christ that inaugurates eschatology; and it is Christ who will finally consummate eschatology. Jesus Christ is the orb around which eschatology turns. He is the ultimate eschatological man, in whom the whole of eschatology finds its telos. The study of the eschatology of Genesis is pre-eminently a study of the Christ that both eschatology and Genesis find their fullest, best and most glorious expression in. Jesus Christ is the eschatological fulfilment of all that they

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369 Fesko, Last Things First, 30.

370 Ibid., 33. Fesko writes: “Adam is the first prophet, priest and king. He was the first prophet, in that he was given the command of God to propagate, not to eat of the tree of knowledge. He was the first priest, in that he was to tend and keep the garden, the first temple, God’s dwelling place among his people. And, he was the first king, in that he was given the dominion mandate to rule as God’s viceregent.”
promise. It is in this light that Christ’s declaration in Revelation 22: 13 is given its fullest significance:

I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.

Throughout all of this, the study of eschatology has proved to be much more than simply an enquiry into the second coming of Christ and its attendant corollaries. It is an all encompassing and all pervasive element of the biblical revelation. It has as its beginning the creation; its end, the consummation; and its content, the whole of redemptive history. Genesis 1 and 2 are testimony to this as they allude to, provide the patterns for, and are paradigmatic of, “inaugurated” and “future” eschatology. They are both a prescription for, and a prognostication of, the very means and methods of God’s great saving plan for his people, as it stretches from Genesis through to Revelation, in and through the person and work of Jesus Christ. As such, it is, or rather, he is, breathtaking to behold.
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