

2.3 MEDIEVAL CHURCH THEOLOGIANS

With the start of the Medieval Period (around AD 500), there remained a steady stream of the Eschatological Gospel of Both Comings and premillennialism through the continuance of the Ordinances/Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion and recitation of the Lord's Prayer and the Creeds. Consider the following brief testimony from the Creeds. Some form of the Apostles' Creed is the oldest. The first record of it in its entirety was recorded in Greek by Marcellus between AD 336-341 and in Latin by Rufinius in AD 390. The form Christendom currently uses was received from the late seventh and early eighth century. The Nicene Creed has three different forms: 1) the original from the Ecumenical Council at Nicea in AD 325, 2) the enlarged Creed from the Council at Constantinople in AD 381 and 3) the Latin version with various dates—AD 589, AD 809, AD 858.

When both the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds are compared side by side, they both contain the exact same language in lines 7, 11 - 12: "7. And he shall come again, with glory, to judge the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end. . . . 11. And we look for the resurrection of the dead; 12. And the life of the world to come" (Schaff 1993, 1:21-28). These Creeds clearly mention two separate statements: one referring to the Second Coming of Christ to "judge the quick and the dead," and the other speaking of the "resurrection of the body and life everlasting." Since they each contain two separate statements, a case can be made that these two events happen at two distinctly different times (the same as the Rapture of the Church and the Second Coming). On the other hand, the Athanasian Creed, which probably was not written by Athanasius and did not appear in its full form until the end of the eighth-beginning of the ninth century, consolidates the separate thoughts of the previous creeds into one universal resurrection and judgment event occurring at the Second Coming in its lines 40-44: "40. From whence he

shall come to judge the quick and the dead. 41. At whose coming all men shall rise again with their bodies; 42. And shall give account for their own works. 43. And they that have done good shall go into life everlasting; and they that have done evil, into everlasting fire. 44. This is the Catholic Faith: which except a man believe faithfully, he can not be saved” (Schaff 1993, 2:36-9, 69-70). This makes sense, since the Athanasian Creed dates well after the previous two creeds, came out of the N. African School of Augustine and dates after amillennialism became the eschatological doctrine of the newly consolidated Catholic Church (Hebert 2006c:85-7).

The point made above regarding the Rapture happening at a different time than Jesus’ Second Coming for judgment is important, since this is the exact time when the resurrection and Rapture of the Body of Christ (Church) takes place in complete fulfillment of Jesus’ own resurrection and ascension at His First Coming and of the Eschatological Gospel of Both Comings. Additionally, “after 553, in fact, Origenism – especially Origenist eschatology – was generally considered heretical in both the Eastern and Western Churches” (Daley *Hope* 2003:190). This led to the numerous Patristic Fathers who continued the Eschatological Gospel stream of thought in both the Eastern and Western Churches until well into the eighth century.

From the Eastern Church, there was Romanos “the Melodist” (d.c. 560), who composed his *Hymn 50, On the Second Coming of Christ*. This hymn was “traditionally sung on the Sunday of ‘Farewell to Meat,’ eight days before the beginning of Lent, this poem depicts, with great dramatic power, the *trials of the Last Days and the Parousia and judgment of Christ* . . . Romanos *compares the first coming of Christ with his second coming* . . . But Christ will return in majesty, accompanied by ‘all the armies of angels,’ and *will raise the dead and lead the just into his ‘bridal chamber’*” [emphasis added] (Daley *Hope* 2003:200-1). Next was Andrew of Caesarea (563 and 614), who wrote his *Commentary on the Apocalypse and Therapeutike*: “a set

of questions and answers on eschatological subjects” (Daley *Hope* 2003:198-9). Then came Maximus the Confessor (580-662), who stated: “the *goal of history*, as far as *God’s own plan is concerned, is clearly the salvation of the whole human race and the union of all creation with himself*. . . . The heart of this eschatological renewal will be divinization Although . . . Maximus makes it clear in a number of passages that the final divinization . . . will only be realized in those who have shown themselves worthy of God’s gift” [emphasis added] (Daley *Hope* 2003:201-2). Lastly, John of Damascus (650-c. 750), who in “his *Expositio Fidei* (= *De Fide Orthodoxa*) . . . devotes the last two chapters to a thoroughly biblical discussion of the *Antichrist and the resurrection of the body* . . . asserting that the *God who created our bodies from the earth can raise them once again incorruptible, and reunite them to our souls*” [emphasis added] (Daley *Hope* 2003:203).

During this same time period, the Western Church was characterized by the following statement: “*Even as eschatology lost much of its intellectual sophistication, it became, by the beginning of the seventh century, the central Christian concern*” [emphasis added]. This was attested to by Primasius (d. after 553), Bishop of Hadrumetum in North Africa, and Apringius, Bishop of Beja in modern Portugal. After AD 553 both composed commentaries on the Johannine Apocalypse (Daley *Hope* 2003:210-1). Additionally, there was Pope Gregory the Great (540-604), who “was convinced that the *Parousia* and judgment were not far off, and considered it one of his chief pastoral responsibilities, as bishop of Rome, to communicate this sense of impending crisis to his hearers and to the wider Christian world. . . . and *with whom, Latin Patristic eschatology reached its final form . . . and became a principle source for Latin eschatology in the centuries to come.*” Gregory the Great’s writings were “drawn upon by Isidore of Seville (c. 580-633) for his own encyclopaedic compilations of Christian thought, excerpted

and arranged schematically by Julian of Toledo (c. 652-90) in his eschatological handbook, the *Prognosticon Futuri Saeculi*, and embellished with further folkloric material by the erudite Bede (672-735)” [emphasis added] (Daley Hope 2003:211, 214-5). Lastly, consider the following quote regarding the same time period as Bede:

James F. Stitzinger notes, The *Codex Amiatinus* (ca. 690-716) is a Latin manuscript from England which was written under the auspices of Abbot Ceolfrid from the monasteries at Jarrow and Wearmouth. This manuscript was written during the same time period as the commentaries of Venerable Bede (who was also a monk at Jarrow monastery). In the *Codex Amiatinus*, in the title to Psalm 22 a note was written: “Psalm of David, the voice of *the Church after being raptured* [emphasis added]” (2002:158). While this is just an isolated statement in an isolated manuscript amid the sea of Augustine’s amillennial eschatology, it still shows the continuity of the belief in the Rapture of the Church during the Medieval Church Period (Hebert 2006c:88).

With the birth of Islam, around AD 610, and its rapid rise against the Christian Church in the following century, the concept of the antichrist took on more prominence in eschatology at that time (Kyle:42). The *Sibylline Oracles*, surviving prophetic books from Hellenistic Judaism written from 200 BC to AD 200, began to have a major impact on medieval prophecy (Shelly 2002:16-7). According to Bernard McGinn (1979:40-50) and Yuri Rubinsky and Ian Wiseman (1982:60), as quoted in Kyle, “In fact, the Sibylline Oracles’ influence on prophecy in the Middle Ages is second only to that of the Bible” (1998:43).

Additionally, David Olster states: “The period extending from the seventh into the ninth century constitutes the golden age of Byzantine apocalypses, when the formative texts and models were created. . . . The most important text . . . the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* . . . originally written around AD 690 . . . can be divided into two sections: a ‘historical’ section, which narrates the history of Rome and Byzantium; and an ‘apocalyptic’ section, which narrates the Arab invasion (as still in the future), the invasion of the ‘unclean races’ and Gog and Magog, and the final defeat of the Antichrist” (2003:263-4). Olster also states that the *Apocalypse of*

Pseudo-Ephraem was the only Byzantine apocalypse to mention the Book of Revelation, as compared to using Daniel 2, 9 and Ezekiel 38-39 (2003:256). This *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Ephraem* is also addressed as follows:

The next citation was discovered by Grant R. Jeffrey during the summer of 1994 in manuscripts apparently written by Ephraem the Syrian (306-373) and entitled, *Sermon On the Last Times, the Antichrist, and the End of the World*. However, since its recent discovery it has been determined that several prominent ancient Byzantine scholars (Ernest Sakur, 1862-1901, Wilhelm Bousset, 1865-1920, C. P. Caspari, in his 1890 book, and the late Paul J. Alexander) had already reviewed the manuscript and determined it to be written by a Pseudo-Ephraem, dating anywhere from 373 to somewhere between 565 and 627 (1995:108, 115) - (Hebert 2006c:87).

And finally, Olster mentions the *Apocalypse of Daniel*, written in the early ninth century and in the same format as *Pseudo-Methodius*, yet with a little later historical reference and a different origin for the antichrist—a Jew from the tribe of Dan (2003:266-7).

After this period of Byzantine apocalypse, there came an apocalyptic eschatological dry spell until the time of Joachim of Fiore (ca. 1135-1202), a monk from Italy, who revived interest in the premillennial belief through his new prophetic interpretation of eschatology in three ages or dispensations: 1) the Father (or Law), from Creation to the Incarnation; 2) the Son (or Grace), *from Jesus' First Advent to His Second Advent at the year AD 1260* [emphasis added]; and 3) the Holy Spirit (or the Spiritual Church), for the Millennium and into eternity (Froom 1950, 1:683, 692-6; Kyle 1998:47-9). According to Schaff, “Joachim was the millenarian prophet of the Middle Ages” (2002, 5:378). Building on Joachim’s premillennial eschatology were the Franciscan and Dominican monks, some of whom saw themselves as part of the 144,000 male virgins in Revelation (Kyle 1998:49; Shelley 2002:18-9). Kyle continues with historical information from Malcolm Lambert (1977:190), McGinn (1979:205) and Richard K. Emmerson (1981:69), “The Franciscan Peter Olivi (ca. 1248-98) built on Joachim’s three ages and divided the church’s history into seven periods. He also believed in a ‘double Antichrist—the Mythical

Antichrist, a coming false pope who would attack the Franciscan Rule, and the Great, or Open Antichrist, whose defeat would usher in the final period of History” (1998:50).

In 1260, a lay group called the Apostolics (or Apostolic Brethren) was formed in Italy by Gerardo Segarelli as an alternative to the Franciscans. Segarelli was burned at the stake as a heretic in 1300. Brother Dolcino of Novara succeeded him as the leader of the Apostolics and steered the group in a decidedly apocalyptic direction (Potesta 2003:300; Gumerlock 2002:353):

The author of the treatise *The Sect of Those Who Say They Belong to the Order of the Apostles* (1316) mentions that Dolcino sent three letters to his followers . . . In the first letter (August 1300), introducing himself as the new leader . . . divides history into four major *status*, or states: 1) the state under the law of the Old Testament . . . 2) the state under the church from its origins until Constantine and Pope Sylvester . . . 3) the state of the church after Constantine . . . 4) the state of the imminent reformation of the church and its return to its pristine life-style. . . . In the final part of the letter, whose content is simply summarized, Dolcino addresses the church’s contemporary condition and expresses himself on what, according to his personal ‘revelations,’ would occur in the future (Potesta 2003:300-1).

The following citation is taken from *The History of Brother Dolcino*, written in 1316 by an anonymous notary in the diocese of Vercelli, Italy:

Again [Dolcino believed and preached and taught] that within those three years Dolcino himself and his followers will preach the coming of the Antichrist. And that the Antichrist was coming into this world within the bounds of the said three and a half years; and after he had come, then he [Dolcino] and his followers would be transferred into Paradise, in which are Enoch and Elijah. And in this way they will be preserved unharmed from the persecution of the Antichrist. And that then Enoch and Elijah themselves would descend on the earth for the purpose of preaching [against] Antichrist. Then they would be killed . . . (Gumerlock 2002:353-5).

Brother Dolcino was later arrested, prosecuted, tortured, and burned at the stake on June 1, 1307.

Both Segarelli and Dolcino took a major step in the medieval apocalyptic movement by bringing the laity into this realm of theology. (Potesta 2003:302).

Following that, and “between the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the Inquisition succeeded in repressing apocalyptic movements both in France and in Italy” (Potesta 2003:308).

Therefore, the movement was continued elsewhere, as in England with John Wyclif (1324-1384), who was a master at Oxford, “a patriot, a champion of theological and practical reforms and the translator of the Scriptures into English” (Schaff 2002, 6:315-6). Wyclif was the first to openly speak out and preach against the Pope and ultimately termed the papal office of the Catholic Church “the Antichrist” (Potesta 2003:308; Schaff 2002, 6:332). Wyclif also furthered the cause of the laity by translating the Scriptures into his native English, because as he said, “This book is the whole truth which every Christian should study” and remained “the supreme authority for every Catholic tenet” (Schaff 2002, 6:338-9). His movement in England became later known as the “Lollards,” which continued well into the early sixteenth century, and was continued on the continent of Europe by John Huss (1371-1415), a professor at the University of Prague. Huss was burned as a heretic for declaring the pope as Antichrist and for challenging other doctrines of the church. His radical followers became known as the Taborite Millenarians: “The Taborites took their name from Mount Tabor; the mountain where they believed Christ foretold his second coming,” (Kyle 1998:51-2) believed that purification of the land was necessary prior to the Second Coming and Millennium and that bringing these events about would involve revolt of the established State and Church (Hebert 2004b:6-7). Norman Cohn (1974:211-14) and Michael J. St. Clair (1992:130-1), as quoted in Kyle, noted that this movement was ended by “their crushing defeat in 1434” (1998:52). In fifteenth-century Italy, there was a resurgence of apocalypticism. There were itinerant prophets who preached imminent destruction. The best-known of these prophets was Girolamo Savonarola (1452-98) (Kyle 1998:52; Potesta 2003:316-7).

According to Bernard McGinn, “The fifteenth century witnessed a rich proliferation of popular preachers of the end, whose ideas were widely disseminated toward the close of the

century through the new medium of the printed page” (2003:292-3). One of the most well-known of these late fifteenth-century and early sixteenth-century preachers was Christopher Columbus (1451-1506), who wrote his *Book of Prophecies*, a compilation of texts from the Bible, Church Fathers and other various medieval authors. The purpose of this book was to show that his voyages to the “New World” or West Indies were part of the divine plan to recover the Holy Land from the Muslims, rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem (with gold from the New World), and begin the millennial age of Spanish rule and worldwide conversion (McGinn 2003:293; Kyle 1998:57).

As a result of Columbus’ discovery of the New World and his prophetic ideas, his Eschatological Gospel ideology was transferred to the other Hispanic or Iberian discoverers, conquerors and settlers that followed throughout Central and South America (Milhou 2003:420). This was primarily transmitted through the Spanish Franciscan and Dominican Friars and Jesuits who viewed the New World as a “Christian Utopia,” after Thomas More’s (1478-1535) book *Utopia* (1516) (Milhou 2003:422). Some examples are listed as follows: Dominican Friar Bartolome de Las Casas in his writings *Eighth Remedy, Brief Account of the Destruction of the Indies* (ca. 1542) and *History of the Indies* (ca. 1560) (Milhou 2003:426-7); an anonymous Jesuit, probably Andres de Oviedo, in 1550, speaking of the coming of Joachim of Fiore’s third period of history and of universal evangelization (especially in the New World) in “a messianic treatise to the glory of the recently founded *societas Iesu*” and providing exegesis of Psalm 106, the hymn in Habakkuk 3 and several passages in Revelation, such as Revelation 3:7-13 (Milhou 2003:428-9); Portuguese Jesuit Antonio Vieira (d. 1697), missionary to Brazil, who “never ceased to prophesy the coming of the fifth empire in Daniel’s vision (Dan 2:31-45) to the benefit of the new Sebastians”; and Chilean Jesuit Manuel Lacunza (1731-1801), who wrote “the most

complete work of Catholic millennialism—*The Return of Christ in Glory and Majesty* . . . published in 1812 after his death in Italian exile” (Milhou 2003:429). Lacunza’s work was later translated from Spanish into English by Edward Irving in 1826.

McGinn continues to say that apocalypticism was connected to church reform in the late Medieval Period and could be divided into four broad categories as follows: 1) Gregorian, following the pattern of Gregory VII and his twelfth century followers, who focused on repairing the “diseased state of the church in light of the imminence of the end”; 2) Joachite, following Joachim of Fiore’s revival of millennial hopes in light of his Trinitarian view of history (specifically the third period of the Holy Spirit that basically equated to the Millennium of Rev 20); 3) “The Imperial Model,” originally appearing in *Pseudo-Methodius* and the *Tiburtine Sibyl*, focusing on the “rise of Islam, as a predecessor of Antichrist” and the ultimate deliverance of the Church through a holy and righteous “Last Roman Emperor”; and 4) “Angelic Reform,” focusing on the deliverance of the Church coming by the hands of an “Angelic Pope (*pastor angelicus*)” (2003:276-8).

However, according to Kyle, there were three basic approaches to eschatology in the Middle Ages. These approaches were as follows: 1) The official church position (from Augustine’s amillennialism) that spiritualized the Millennium, identified it with the Church Age and stated that, “the end would come in the form of the last judgment and then the eternal state”; 2) “A strong current of apocalyptic millennialism” that “erupted” in the latter part of the Middle Ages and which believed in the antichrist’s appearance and defeat, followed first by a “golden age of an indefinite length,” and then “followed by the return of Christ”; and 3) “The secular apocalyptic,” spawned by the “Black Death” being seen as divine judgment, thereby opening the door for “natural causes” to be related to “end-time thinking” (1998:53).

Despite all these pockets of apocalyptic thought and activity, which were strongly related to the Eschatological Gospel of Both Comings of the Lord Jesus Christ, there still remained a huge void in the Church of teaching such a doctrine or dogma. As mentioned above, this was primarily due to the acceptance of Augustine’s amillennialism as the Catholic Church’s orthodox view of eschatology and the official position of the Church that the teaching and preaching of dogma and the Scriptures should remain in the hands of the priesthood, while the laity remained in the dark (possibly one reason why this historical period was also termed “The Dark Ages”). This became a chief reason—priesthood of believers, along with evil church politics and policies emanating or at least allowed by the papacy—for Martin Luther breaking with the Catholic Church and starting the Protestant Reformation, which will now be investigated.