2.4 REFORMATION, POST-REFORMATION AND SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGIANS

The void in teaching the Eschatological Gospel began to be filled during and after the Reformation to a small degree by Martin Luther and his followers, who believed they were living in the Last Days, that Protestantism returned the apocalyptic focus back to the Bible and revived the Gospel for the Last Days (Eschatological Gospel) and that the papal office was the antichrist (Barnes 2003:329-31; Kyle 1998:55).The movement was then furthered to a great degree by eschatological radicals. One such man was Thomas Müntzer (ca. 1488-1525) in Germany. He broke away from Luther and continued the Taborite Millenarian thought of the elect kingdom on earth, taught/preached out of Daniel and Revelation, turned to the peasants when the princes did not believe him, and joined the Peasant Revolts and Wars of 1524-5 to bring about God's kingdom on earth. Another eschatological radical was Melchoir Hoffman (ca. 1495-1543), who taught that the kingdom of God would come to Strasbourg in 1533-4. It was in Strasbourg that he was jailed and ultimately died. His followers then tried to hasten the kingdom's coming in Münster by taking over the city, where they too were ultimately suppressed by the local prince-bishop in 1535 (Shelly 2002:18-25; Kyle 1998:58-60).

Consider this excerpt about what was happening in England at that time, according to Jesse Forest Silver (1914:118-124, 132-3):

> After the Reformation, William Tyndale (1480-1536), John Bradford (Chaplain to Edward the VI), Nicholas Ridley (Bishop of London), Hugh Latimer, and Thomas Cranmer (English Archbishop, 1489-1556) all died for their Reformed faith, which included premillennialism. During the reign of Queen Elizabeth (1558-1603), Protestantism took hold in England and premillennial thought could be found in the liturgies and prayers of that time. These English Puritans became the founding fathers of the Independents, Presbyterians and Baptists of Great Britain" (Hebert 2005c:3).

In the Catholic Church, the futurist premillennial perspective was resurrected through the writings of Jesuit Priest Francisco Ribera in 1590. He wrote a five hundred page document on

the Apocalypse which taught that the antichrist would come in the future for a literal three and one-half-year period just before the Second Advent. However, Ribera adhered to Augustinian amillennialism, believing that the Millennium was not a literal one thousand years, but the period of time between the cross and the antichrist (Froom 1948, 2:486-90; Kyle 1998:62).

This stream of Eschatological Gospel thought was continued into the seventeenth century by the Anabaptists, the Puritans, and in 1627 by Anglican Joseph Mede (or Mead) in his work *Clavis Apocalyptica*, and by Europe's Reformed theologian Johann Heinrich Alsted in his book *The Beloved City* (Clouse 1977:10-1, 213, cited in Shelly 2002:29). In England, this gave rise to the radical sect Fifth Monarchy Men, who like the Taborites, and led by Oliver Cromwell, tried to assist in establishing God's kingdom on earth in England between the years 1655-7. This movement was dealt with in short order (Barnes 2003:338; Kyle 1998:67; Froom 1948, 2:566-7). In 1643, the Westminster Assembly was convened to establish the doctrines of the Church of England. Many of the 151 attendees, including William Twiss (President of the Assembly), were expressed premillennialists. The results of the Assembly were *various statements of the premillennial view of the Lord's Return* [emphasis added] in the Shorter Catechism, Larger Catechism, and the Directory of Public Worship (Silver 1914:134-5). According to Michael J. St. Clair (1992:200), as cited by Kyle (1998:64), "By the mid-seventeenth century there developed a consensus in England that certain events were imminent: the defeat of the Antichrist, the return of Christ, and the start of the millennium."

Also around this time, Irish archbishop James Ussher (d. 1656), through the study of historical chronology coupled with biblical chronology, determined the date of creation to be 4004 BC (Barnes 2003:340). Then, "From this environment came John Wesley's Nonconformist father—Samuel Wesley (1662-1735). He wrote in the October 17, 1691, edition of the Athenian

Gazette, 'We believe, as all Christians of the purest ages did, that the saints shall reign with Christ on earth a thousand years. At the beginning of the thousand years shall be the first resurrection, wherin the martyrs and holy men shall rise and reign in spiritual delights' (Silver 1914:153). This then was the environment into which both John and Charles Wesley were born during the early 1700's" (Hebert 2005c:4). This interest in chronology and prophecy of Ussher's was shared by Isaac Newton (d. 1721): "In his *Observations of the Prophecies of Daniel and the Apocalypse of St. John* (not published until 1733), Newton calculated the fall of the apocalyptic beast for 1867, the coming of the millennium for the year 2000" (Barnes 2003:343).

The Puritan millennial fervor was transferred to America upon their arrival with a Columbus-like vision of setting up the New Jerusalem or "city on a hill" in the New World (Fuller 1995:42-3).Gradually, the focus shifted from the same as their English counterparts in Europe to the vision of bringing Christ's kingdom in their new holy, Christian commonwealth. Although these American Puritans, seen as a mix of pre- and post-millennialists, there remained very strong voices in Increase (1639-1723) and Cotton (1663-1728) Mather for the standard pretribulational premillennialism of the Eschatological Gospel. Robert Middlekauff (1976:323) amplifies that Cotton Mather "inaugurated an era of apocalyptic expectation in America that did not lose its force until after the American Revolution." However, in the eighteenth century, and with the Great Awakening, came Jonathan Edwards (1703-58) and postmillennialism, which lasted well into the nineteenth century (Kyle 1998:78-80). (For more info on "Apocalypticism in Colonial North America," see Smolinski's article (2003) by the same name).

Around this same time in France and after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes (1598), which gave the French Protestants (Huguenots) the ability to freely worship in 1685, persecution began and *apocalyptic millenarianism* [emphasis added] resurfaced through a couple of

movements. The first of these movements was the Camisards, whose followers "saw their sufferings as divine preparation for the coming millennium" (Harrison 1979:25; Garrett 1987:16-20; St. Clair 1992:224). From the Camisards, prophets arose and made many end-time predictions. The best known of these prophets was Pierre Jurieu, who predicted judgment day was to come in 1689. Clarke Garrett (1987:31-4) and St. Clair (1992:226-7) further elucidate, as quoted in Kyle, "The French authorities brutally crushed the Camisards, executing more than twelve thousand of them. Fierce resistance continued until 1704, when many Camisards left France for England" (Kyle 1998:70). The second movement was the Jansenists, which started in the 1630's and had followers who were Augustinian in their critique of the "worldliness and moral laxity of the French Church." By the 1730's, the Jansenist "convulsionaries" believed they were the fulfillment of the final outpouring of the Holy Spirit prophesied in Joel 2 (Barnes 2003:345).

It was about this same period of time that the term "eschatology" was first coined by Philipp Heinrich Friedlieb in 1644 in Germany. Eschatology then began to be incorporated in the systematic approach to theology by Abraham Calov in 1677, in conjunction with "the end" mentioned in 1 Corinthians 15:24: "then comes *the end*, when He delivers up the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power [emphasis added]" (Sauter 1996:136). Also in the late seventeenth century, and in the midst of Lutheran Pietism led by Philipp Jakob Spener (d. 1705) in Germany (Barnes 2003:346), Lutheran Dogmatics incorporated eschatology into their final section of systematic theology as relating to death, resurrection, last judgment, eternal life, and the end of the world (Dalferth 1995:157). This then gave rise to the Pietist Leader Johann Albrect Bengel (d. 1752), "who in the 1730's and 1740's issued numerous influential writings of biblical chronology" (Barnes 2003:346). This Pietist

eschatological fervor touched one of the greatest preachers, theologians and beloved English ministers of all-time—John Wesley—who, by at least several accounts (Silver 1914:158-161; Gray 1916; Strawson 1959; Hebert 2005c) believed in and taught the Eschatological Gospel of Both Comings of Jesus Christ. This then gave birth to the eschatological theologies and Christologies of the Eschatological Gospel of Both Comings of Jesus that began to be espoused and published in the next century.

