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RESPONSE TO ROBERT L. SAUCY'S PAPER

VERN S. POYTHRESS

I have a large measure of agreement with Dr. Saucy's paper, and I agree that he has put his finger on some points of weakness and unclarities in my book. I also agree that the two points that he singles out for major discussion are indeed significant (pp. 4-10). Let me take up his two points in order.

THE TYPOLOGICAL AND SYMBOLIC

First, the question of the typological and symbolic. I agree that this question is complex, and that mere appeal to typological or symbolic dimensions of the OT does not answer many of our questions about the exact nature of future fulfillment. It is therefore difficult to find where Dr. Saucy and I substantially disagree. I do locate "some material fulfillment" in the new earth (p. 4). That new earth will be in many respects like the premillennialists' millennium, and so need not be "quite different than the historical picture of the prophecies" (p. 4).

What, then, about the future role of Israel? My book was not as clear as it should have been. I think that it is true both that the church has a typological relation to OT Israel and that the Jews have a continuing distinct national identity alongside other nations. Moreover, believing Jews are to have a continuing priestly ministry, just as the other nations within the church do. My remaining question is whether this ministry will be effectively excluded to Gentiles. What I am against, as I indicate in my response to Karleen, is the exclusion of Gentiles rather than the inclusion of Israel.

With regard to the heavenly Jerusalem, I regret that on pp. 119-20 I did not make it clear that it is the present heavenly Jerusalem together with the future new Jerusalem that is the fulfillment, not the present Jerusalem alone. Saucy is quite right that my statement was one-sided.

PREMILLENNIALISM

Saucy's second question is about the number of stages in eschatological fulfillment. Do we have two stages, namely, now and the new earth, or three, now, millennium (following the Second Coming), and new earth.

Saucy is technically correct: I presently hold a two-stage view. However, I do not think that this view is very clearly taught in the Bible. There are some passages that appear to point in that direction, but others, such as some cited by Saucy, appear to point toward premillennialism or postmillennialism. In the face of these difficulties, I would like to remain very open to changing my position. Premillennialism has been represented in the church at least since the second century, and continues to be the position of both dispensational theologians and some covenant theologians (including three members of the present faculty of WTS). Hence in my book I attempted to put the millennial dispute as far in the background as I reasonably could.

Under point 1, Saucy cites a number of passages that have traditionally been related to the millennial kingdom. I agree that they may have the implications that he envisions. Zechariah 14, if read in a straightforward manner, is particularly difficult for an amillennialist. In fact, if I were to defend premillennialism in a debate, I would probably choose Zechariah 14 as a main text. On the other hand, the fact that Zechariah 14 is apocalyptic means that it presents hermeneutical challenges. I am reluctant to put much weight on it.

Some of the other texts do not really pose a difficulty to an amillennialist of the new-earth type. As Saucy knows, such amillennialists see the language as a broad description of the nature of the coming of eschatological salvation. The passages are thus to be seen as relevant to the two or three eras involved, but not every detail of every passage is relevant in a straightforward, nonmetaphoric way to all of the eras. For example, the conflicts indicated in Isa 2:4a, Mic 4:3a, and Isa 11:4, might, in an amillennial scheme, be eliminated at the Second Coming, rather than before or after it.

Perhaps, then, the difference concerns questions of timing. I do not like to make too many assumptions about Dr. Saucy's position, but I can at least envision that dispensationalists might agree with much that I say about such prophecies. However, they would not be satisfied unless they could find at least one era in which the whole passage is realized all at once, in its most detailed and nonmetaphoric form. I understand this desire, but it seems inconsistent with the way in which dispensationalists have elsewhere maintained that two parts of a passage are realized in two distinct eras (e.g., Isa 61:1-2; 52:7-10?).

Under point 2, I do not see 1 Cor 15:24 as a significant objection. For one thing, it is precisely through Christ's work, in its social and

cosmic implications, including the Second Coming, that death is destroyed and the kingdom is brought to full realization. Hence the past work of Christ forms the indissoluble basis for the peace of the new earth. Rev 22:1 describes the throne of the new Jerusalem as the throne of God and the *Lamb*. The mention of the name of the Lamb seems to have the same implications. Thus I doubt whether amillennialists will agree with Saucy's claim that "If it is only the eternal state that brings open peace and righteousness among the peoples of the world, then this societal salvation would not seem to be a part of the work of the Messiah in his messianic office" (p. 10; cf. Isa 51:6).

Moreover, one must be careful about drawing implications from 1 Cor 15:24, or one will find oneself contradicting the eternal duration of the throne and kingdom of David, as it is asserted in Isa 9:7. I understand 1 Cor 15:24 as a description from the standpoint of Christ as the last Adam. The language in 15:25-27 goes back to Ps 8:6, which in turn reflects on the role of Adam and humanity represented by him. Adam was to offer all his labors as service to God. The completion of the task of humanity by Christ is fittingly crowned by the consummate act of worship, in which Christ as the head of the new humanity offers up the completed universe to God the Father in order that the Father may fill it with the consummate glory of his kingly presence and rule. Such an act does not necessarily imply the cessation of the rule of the incarnate Son, but rather the Father's word of approval, "Well done," and the consequent confirmation of the eternity of the reign of the incarnate Son.

Hence, I believe that 1 Cor 15:24 is effectively neutral with respect to the premillennial/amillennial/postmillennial issue.