



STATEMENT DE-155

BOOK REVIEW

THE MILLENNIAL MAZE: Sorting Out Evangelical Options

by Stanley J. Grenz

Modern evangelicalism is a broad-based movement of denominations, nondenominational churches, and parachurch organizations that affirm orthodox essentials such as the Trinity, the Incarnation, the inspiration of Scripture, and justification by faith in Christ. But part of the strength of evangelicalism is its toleration of doctrinal matters that permit diverse interpretations. One such area is eschatology, the doctrine of last things. Stanley Grenz has done evangelicals a great service in elucidating and evaluating evangelical options in eschatology as well as developing an overall eschatological perspective.

Grenz observes that the secular world yearns for certainty on ultimate matters of destiny, but cannot find it outside of Christ. Yet Christians have a heavenly hope rooted in God's saving revelation. To better understand the nature of our hope, Grenz explains the Bible's apocalyptic literature, a genre dealing with the culminating dramas of the End. He also surveys the history of the church's teaching on the matter of the Millennium (the nature of the thousand-year reign of Christ referred to in Rev. 20:1-4). This historical analysis puts the matter of the Millennium in a wider and richer perspective than would be evident in most popular books on the end times.

After presenting this important background material, Grenz clearly and thoroughly explains the major orthodox positions on the Millennium without caricature and with charity; at the same time he subjects each view to biblical scrutiny. Postmillennialism teaches that a nonliteral millennium began at the coming of Christ and will end at the Second Coming; it has been optimistic about Christianity's prospects in history. Amillennialism also denies a literal thousand-year reign of Christ on earth and has been less optimistic about the progress of the kingdom before the Second Coming. Dispensational premillennialism insists on a very literal interpretation of prophecy. It understands history as divided in distinct dispensations and looks for a literal millennium on earth after the Second Coming, which will occur only after worsening world conditions. Historic premillennialism also holds to a literal millennium after Christ's return but is less literal in interpreting prophecy.

Grenz's analysis is superbly documented in original sources while managing to avoid being pedantic or arid in style. Although Grenz, who was formerly premillennial, comes down on the side of amillennialism, he always looks for common themes between the various positions and distinctive strengths of each. Not all the views Grenz addresses can be true since they make different theological claims, but all contain truths that have something to teach the whole church.

Grenz concludes with an edifying chapter on "corporate eschatology" which emphasizes that biblical eschatology does not primarily concern the details of the future but rather declares that God's rule has begun through the

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Incarnation and will be consummated in God's good timing. This should give us confidence to live for Christ today in light of a better tomorrow. Grenz concludes this rewarding book with a stirring question that all evangelicals must answer: "Will we as the church be motivated by the vision of God's ultimate future to be about the Lord's business in the present era until Christ comes in glory and splendor?" (p. 215)

— *Reviewed by Douglas Groothuis*