

## THE ESCHATOLOGY OF THE BIBLE FRAMEWORK

by Thomas Ice

When I was first exposed to the teaching ministry of Charles Clough I was involved in the Jesus Movement, including speaking in tongues. I was a student at Howard Payne University, in Brownwood, Texas and I had a Jesus Rock radio program for one-hour on Sunday nights at 8:00. I was looking for sponsors and someone suggested I check in with George Schoner, a newly hired Vice President. George had no interest in helping to sponsor my program, but he invited me to a Bible Study at his house where they listened to tapes of their former pastor from Lubbock Bible Church. I started coming and within three months I had totally shifted much of my understanding of the Bible and theology. Even though I had become a believer at age 9, I consider Pastor Clough my theological spiritual father who has had the greatest impact on me when it comes to the Bible and theology to this day.

As was typical of the Jesus Movement in the early '70s, I was already a dispensational, premillennial, pretribber. As was true of much of what I believed at that time I could not defend my beliefs very well, which in the environment I lived in at that time rarely challenged those beliefs, except for most of the professors at my college. Not one of the Bible or Theology profs held to a pre-trib rapture. There was a math prof who went to my church that held to what I believed.

I became a "tapper" and was receiving my own tapes from Lubbock Bible Church (LBC) of pastor Charlie and was learning more from his teachings than from any of the Bible/Theology classes at the school. Then one day, George Schoner's wife, Alta Ada, who was a PhD in English and professor of English at Howard Payne, was able to get Clough as a chapel speaker. (Her parents were the largest donors to the college.) After Charlie's lecture in chapel, in which some of the Bible and theology profs argued with him after his presentation, I went to a class in which he spoke after that chapel and met him for the first time.

After graduating in Bible and Greek (my Greek professor, Jose Rivas from Mexico, was a premillennialist but do not know what he believed on the rapture), I applied to Dallas Seminary and received my rejection notice in less than a month. I did not want to go to any of the Southern Baptist Seminaries, so I decided to go on staff with Campus Crusade for Christ as suggested by the head of Crusade at the University of Texas. Janice and I were both from Austin and even though I did not attend UT I was somewhat involved in Crusade there. After serving for two years with Crusade I was accepted into Dallas Seminary because I had gotten to know some important graduates who gave me great recommendations.

While at Dallas I continued to listen to Clough tapes and even saw him one day there when he came for a visit at the Seminary. I have maintained a friendship with Charlie for over 50 years now. I went to high school in Maryland since my dad worked in

Washington, D.C. for four years. Janice and I visited Charlie and Carol last September before my 55<sup>th</sup> high school reunion. A month after graduating from high school in 1969 we moved back to Austin, and I started college at Southwest Texas State University in San Marcos, Texas where I meet Janice on the first day of registration. We had gone to the same junior high school in Austin during our seventh and eighth grades, but never met.

As noted earlier, I have always been interested in eschatology. The eschatology of the Framework is clearly dispensational, premillennial, and pretribulational in relation to the timing of the rapture. I do not think Clough was not overly interested in eschatology, although he had a clear view and when issues relating to the future came up in a biblical text or during a topical teaching, he was clear and thorough in his teaching on the pre-trib matter. He could even be classified as dogmatic in his views of eschatology. Clough once stated when he became a believer during his first semester at MIT through Campus Crusade staff member Roe Brooks, he had examined different views of eschatology but finally settled on dispensational premillennialism. This was during the 1950s. Clough graduated from MIT with an emphasis upon math, science, and meteorology. He then went into the Air Force for about four years as a metrologist before attending Dallas Seminary where He earned a ThM and graduated in 1968 having majored in Hebrew. Upon graduation he became pastor of Lubbock Bible Church in Lubbock Texas from 1968 until 1980. Clough then earned a MS in metrology from Texas Tech and moved to the Aberdeen, Maryland area and was head of metrological research at Aberdeen Proving Ground until his retirement a few years ago. He now spends much of his time working on Framework materials.

While a student at Dallas Seminary, Clough conceived of the idea of what we now know as "The Biblical Framework". He wrote a paper on the idea for a class at Dallas in which John Walvoord suggested he write it up for an article in *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Dallas Seminary's theological journal, which he never did. It was during his pastorate at LBC that Clough developed what is called "The Framework" in a five-volume series.<sup>1</sup> Although it was designed for parents to teach their children, the church developed a class to teach it to the parents for the purpose of training them to teach their children at home. Clough also produced some workbooks at different grade levels to aid parents in teaching their children at home. He strongly believed the Scriptural focus on the parents teaching their children at home, which was his motive for developing the supplemental workbooks.

The first framework item, *Giving The Answer*, was on epistemology where Clough lays out his view of Cornelius Van Til's apologetical approach where he claims the Bible is self-authenticating. This means nothing outside of God and His revelation of Himself

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<sup>1</sup> The five volumes are: *Giving the Answer*, *Laying The Foundation*, *Dawn of The Kingdom*, *Training for The Future*, and *Confrontation with The King*. These volumes were all published by LBC from 1976 till 1980.

through Scripture can be used to authenticate God as an epistemological starting point. There is no authority higher than God Himself with which to appeal. God can swear by no other name higher than Himself.

In the second volume, *Laying the Foundation*, Clough deals with biblical and theological issues relating to items found primarily in the first eleven chapters of Genesis. This is an area Clough is especially interested in and articulate because of his training in science and Hebrew. He lays out things like the Divine Institutions that are important to his overall theology.

In the third publication, *Dawn of The Kingdom*, Clough traces the rise and development of God's kingdom through the course of Israel's history. Even in this volume there is virtually no emphasis on Clough's view of eschatology in this pamphlet. It is not until the fourth pamphlet, *Training for The Future*,<sup>2</sup> that Clough begins to introduce and develop the area of eschatology. The primary issues of amillennialism, postmillennialism, and premillennialism are discussed. Clough is a strong—clearly dogmatic—dispensational premillennialist as he states his views and provides sophisticated interaction with other views. This volume contains the most of any of the framework pamphlets by far of his eschatology.

The fifth and final pamphlet, *Confrontation with The King*, is focused on the various phases of the life of Christ, from His birth to His death, resurrection, ascension, and current session at the right hand of the Father. It is in this pamphlet that Clough deals with the issue of the Trinity in which he holds to a tradition view. This pamphlet contains very little eschatology, but it does contain the second most of the five publications.

Clough speaks of the rise of apocalyptic literature within the canon of Scripture. He lists Daniel, Ezekiel, Zechariah, plus a few portions of some other books. In the New Testament he classifies Revelation as an apocalyptic book. Unlike the previous prophetic books, the apocalyptic books are less convicting and more comforting to believers. God assures His faithful ones that the Kingdom of Man will not ultimately triumph, that the sufferings will not go on forever, and that evil surely will be judged.<sup>2</sup>

Under the broad category of the doctrine of revelation, Clough deals with the uniqueness of Biblical prophecy. He notes there are two truth tests that separates genuine biblical prophecy from all other claims to true predictions about the future. The first truth test is whether a new prophecy lines up with previously revealed Scripture and is doctrinally orthodox (Deut. 13:1-5). Second, does the prophecy actually come to pass in history (Deut. 18:20–22). If either of these should fail, miracle or not, the prophecy would be rejected.<sup>3</sup> Clough believes biblical prophecy must be and has been 100% true

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<sup>2</sup> Charles A. Clough, *Training for The Future* (Lubbock, TX: Lubbock Bible Church, 1975), p. 60.

<sup>3</sup> Clough, *Training for The Future*, p. 63.

in history, which gives us confidence that future, unfulfilled prophecy will also come to pass.

The purpose and function of Bible prophecy is unique. Clough cites Isaiah 41:21–23 where the Lord challenges the false prophets: “‘Present your case,’ the LORD says. ‘Bring forward your strong arguments,’ the King of Jacob says. Let them bring forth and declare to us what is going to take place; as for the former events, declare what they were, that we may consider them, and know their outcome; or announce to us what is coming. Declare the things that are going to come afterward, that we may know that you are gods; indeed, do good or evil, that we may anxiously look about us and fear together.” Clough declares that biblical prophecy provides clear evidence that orthodox Judeo-Christianity is true.

Further, Clough argues that Bible prophecy reassures the believer of God’s justice that will eventually come in history, even though it has yet to arrive. Such a truth encourages a believer to persevere through the present even though they may be troubling. “Biblical prophecy, then, functions to reveal God’s complete sovereignty over every culture and to reassure the believer that his works accomplished in the present have not lost their significance.”<sup>4</sup>

The literal fulfillment of Bible prophecy, argues Clough, supports the premillennial view of prophecy. Premillennialism is derived from the consistently literal interpretation and application of the prophetic portion of the Bible. “Premillennialism is the view,” declares Clough, “that the long-predicted ‘golden era’ of the OT will come to pass literally in mortal history after Christ returns. At this future point Christ will establish the Kingdom of God on earth for a thousand years (Rev. 20:1–6). The prophesied golden era is not fulfilled ‘spiritually’ by the Church or by the eternal state. Premillennialism is the logical outcome of literal prophetic interpretation.”<sup>5</sup>

The focus of Clough’s eschatology in his fourth framework pamphlet is on the millennial issue. However, even though he does not deal with it in his written material, he is an equally strong pretribulationist when it comes to the timing of the rapture. There is no doubt about his stand for pretribulationism which is clear from listening to the recordings of his Bible teaching.<sup>6</sup> Clough’s framework eschatology flows from an emphasis on the kingdom. Since he sees a time of literal future millennial blessing on earth for a thousand years, he vigorously proclaims and defends the dispensational premillennial viewpoint.

Clough begins his presentation of the millennial issue with what he calls the pre-New Testament debate which he indicates revolved around when the final judgment in history will take place in relation to the resurrection of believers. He teaches this

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<sup>4</sup> Clough, *Training*, p. 66.

<sup>5</sup> Clough, *Training*, pp. 66–67.

<sup>6</sup> It appears likely that Clough was going to deal with the timing of the rapture in a sixth pamphlet which never materialized that was to focus on the time of the Church Age.

controversy arose during the intertestamental period between the closing of the Old Testament canon and the beginning of New Testament times. "The question was whether the Kingdom would follow the great judgement and resurrection that would end history and, therefore, be essentially identical with the eternal state or whether the Kingdom would precede the great judgment and resurrection and be part of history."<sup>7</sup>

After the founding of the Church, the issue arose as to where the Church stands in relation to the Kingdom and was the Kingdom to be literal or just spiritual. The word for a thousand in Latin is "*mille*." Therefore, three basic views developed as explained by Clough: "**Premillennialism** is the view which places the millennium in history and the return of Christ prior to the millennium. Premillennialism, then, considers the Church distinct from the future Kingdom. **Postmillennialism** places the return of Christ after the millennium which the Church is gradually to bring about in history. The Church thus would merge into the future Kingdom. **Amillennialism** drops completely the idea of an earthly triumph of the Kingdom of God in mortal history and asserts that Old Testament prophecies of such a triumph are fulfilled spiritually by the Church and/or by the eternal state. The Church is conceived as a spiritual version of the Kingdom."<sup>8</sup> Clough argues strongly for the dispensational premillennial view.

Three questions are setup by Clough to show the comparison and contrast between the different views. The first question is whether Christ's return will end history? Premillennialism says no, while the other two say yes. Second, is the Kingdom to triumph over world culture? Pre and Postmillennialism say yes, while the amil says no. Thirdly, is evil not to be reduced greatly before Christ's return? Premillennialism and amillennialism say yes, while Postmillennialism says no.

Now Clough provides a much deeper examination of the three views. He begins with Premillennialism and sees a pre-Christian form that had developed around the nature of the Messianic Kingdom before New Testament times. It was during this time before the coming of Christ that the Messianic Kingdom was seen as a temporary time in history before entrance into the eternal state. Within Judaism the Messianic Kingdom was always seen as a time in history that would be material, earthly, and centered in Israel and Jerusalem.

Within early Christendom, Premillennialists have always pointed to Revelation 19 and 20 as the key passage for their position because it is so clear, but also saw it taught in the Old Testament. The Apostles were premillennial and so were the non-Scripture writers in the early Church. By the year 200 all who expressed a view on this subject were clearly premillennial. A new exception arose within North Africa in Alexandria, which by this time had surpassed Athens as the center of Greek philosophy. During the next 150 years its tendency to weaken historic literature did its work and a non-literal

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<sup>7</sup> Clough, *Training*, p. 109.

<sup>8</sup> Clough, *Training*, p. 110.

hermeneutic became dominant. The Christian world was greatly influenced by a Neo-Platonic mindset that was attracted to abstract ideas. With these factors and some other influences, leadership within the church began to abandon premillennialism.

Also, in the 200s the church began to become increasingly anti-Semitic, as well as questioning a literal future kingdom reigned over by Jews became a hard pill for many to swallow. By the time of the Middle Ages premillennialism had been all but whipped out with only a few stragglers left. However, by the time of the second generation of the Reformation there began to arise a revival of premillennialism. Clough argues that chiliasm or premillennialism gradually declined during the fourth century because of three main factors. Politically the Church had become powerful after Constantine's conversion to Christianity in 313, so much so, that by 395 it became the official religion of the Roman Empire. The philosophy of Neo-Platonism exercised increasing influence through Origen (c. 185-254) and Augustine (354-430). Under such influence a key Platonic idea that affected the millennial discussion was that all matter is evil and anything good is immaterial. Therefore, with the dominance of such ideas a material kingdom would be evil, and Christ could not rule something evil. Such beliefs supported and gave rise to a non-literal, allegorical interpretation of the Bible. Finally, because of such thinking the Church became desirous of disassociating itself from Jewish culture. Increasingly Hebrew Christians were required to give up any vestige of Jewishness when becoming a Christian. Since premillennialism requires an earthly reign of Christ, it began to wain in such an environment.

Although mainline Roman Catholic thought continued to oppose premillennial eschatological thinking, one can trace a narrow line of premillennial groups from the fourth century in the late Middle Ages. The Waldensians, the Lollards, the Wycliffites, and the Bohemian Protestants represent a few of the groups which thought in premillennial terms. Unfortunately, there were also radical groups who seized upon the millennial vision as justification for social upheavals. Although they are closer to postmillennial thoughts of ushering in the golden age through human action, which is a postmillennial idea, they became associated with premillennialism. However, premillennialism actually believes the entrance of the millennium is to be brought in by what God Himself interjects into history at a point in time future to our day.

During the later Reformation period the Protestant leaders continued the Roman Catholic amillennial doctrine. Some of the factors present in the fourth century were still at work to suppress premillennialism. Many of the early protestants continued the incorrect notion that premillennialism was a wrongly conceived Jewish notion. Clearly, a certain kind of anti-Semitism seems to have been involved with this denial of premillennialism. Within the Reformed community in the late 1500s and early 1600s there was a burst of premillennialism within Protestantism. This is likely due to the fact that with the increased availability of the biblical text in both the original languages and translations there was a shift toward reading and expounding upon Scripture, rather

than a few controlled by the Catholic Church as was the case for the previous thousand years.

In the United States after the Civil War there was a steep decline of the dominate postmillennialism, primarily among conservative Protestants. Postmillennialism did not seem to be actually working out. By 1878 when the American fundamentalists held their first interdenominational conference at the Episcopal Church of the Holy Trinity in New York City, premillennialism has begun a comeback in the United States. Such a comeback had already been occurring for fifty years in Great Britain. Many teachers from the Reformed Episcopal, Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian, Baptist, and Anglican denominations insisted at this Conference that premillennialism was the logical outcome of the literal, Protestant interpretation of Scripture. Presbyterian speaker Nathaniel West of Cincinnati explained why the Reformers dealt very little with eschatology. West argued that the primary focus of the first generation of Reformers was on soteriology, primarily justification by faith, and other great doctrines of grace. Once this most important doctrinal area became settled, it was the next generations that took up the mantle of other areas of theology like eschatology. Thus, the newly resurgent premillennialism of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was seen as a further extension of the Protestant Reformation. It finished "reforming" the faith from the medieval Roman Catholicism.

The central features of Premillennialism are stated by Clough. First, Christ's return does not end history. Against both amillennialism and postmillennialism premillennialism insists that Revelation 19:11-20 speaks of one chronologically continuous period of future history in which first Christ returns (19:11-21), then dead believers are resurrected to reign with Christ in His Messianic Kingdom for 1,000 years (20:1-6), and afterward a brief revolt by Satan is put down prior to the beginning of eternity (20:7-15).

Second, the kingdom of God will triumph over world culture. In agreement with postmillennialism, but against amillennialism, premillennialism insists that the Old Testament prophecies of a golden age in history amidst sin and death (*e.g.*, Isa 2:1-5; 65:18-25) must be fulfilled this side of eternity. Christ must subdue world culture, not just individuals, or His victory is incomplete. Before eternity begins there must be a manifestation of the glory of God in history over every area. Technological advances, cultural arts, and social institutions built up over previous human history will be carried over into the millennium as starting assets. Christ will suppress and bind Satan, but prophecies nowhere indicate that He will build man's culture for him. The millennium will be a time when human cultural advance will drastically accelerate beginning with what has been accomplished up to that point. Clough quotes Alva J. McClain as follows: "It says that life, here and now, in spite of the tragedy of sin, is nevertheless something worthwhile; and therefore all efforts to make it better are also worthwhile. All the true

values of human life will be preserved and carried over into the coming kingdom; nothing worthwhile will be lost.”<sup>9</sup>

Third, evil will not be reduced greatly before Christ’s return. In agreement with amillennialism, but against postmillennialism, premillennialism hold to the position that evil is so deeply rooted in history that it will require the cataclysmic return of Christ to reduce it to levels low enough for human culture to progress in any significant spiritual sense. Passages like Romans 8:18-26; 1 Corinthians 7:31; 2 Corinthians 4:4; Ephesians 2:2; Colossians 3:2; 2 Thessalonians 2:3-9; 2 Timothy 3:1-5; Hebrews 1:10-11; 1 Peter 4:12-19; 2 Peter 3:3-5; 1 John 5:19; Jude 1:18. If evil is to be gradually suppressed, as the postmillennialists insist, it is hard to find any place in history where this process has already begun. I made this point once to a leading postmillennialist and his answer was “yet”! Progress, then, according to premillennialism, may occur in local areas for limited time, but the full development of human culture awaits Christ’s return.

I now turn to amillennialism and begin looking at its origin and history. Amillennialism arose, like premillennialism, from pre-Christian developments. In the case of amillennialism, however, the developments did not have to do with the *time* of the triumphant Kingdom of God as much as they had to do with the *nature* of the Kingdom. Clough notes that an amillennial hermeneutic arose in Alexandria Egypt through the Jewish philosopher Philo who lived around 20 B.C. till A.D. 54. Bernard Ramm said: “Philo did not think that the literal meaning was useless, but it represented the immature level of understanding. The literal sense was the body of Scripture, and the allegorical sense its soul. Accordingly the literal was for the immature, and the allegorical for the mature.”<sup>10</sup> Clough further notes that the allegorical system of hermeneutics begun by Philo was adopted by increasing numbers of Church authorities during the first four centuries after Christ. Men like Origen (who live in Philo’s city of Alexandria) and Augustine (who was heavily influenced by Neo-Platonism at this point) popularized the allegorical treatment of the Old Testament in Christian circles. Augustine taught that the millennium is to be interpreted spiritually as fulfilled in the Christian Church. Amillennialism was carried on by the Reformers from Augustine so that today it is the majority view among Protestant Churches.

It is conceded that amillennialism relies on the allegorical method of interpretation for much of the Bible, primarily when it comes to things relating to future, yet unfulfilled prophecy. It is difficult to nail down the details of amillennial prophecy since their arguments are primarily negative, that is, why future biblical prophecy is not literal.

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<sup>9</sup> Clough, *Training*, p. 116. Quote from Alva J. McClain, *The Greatness of the Kingdom* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1959), p. 531.

<sup>10</sup> Clough, *Training*, p. 117. Quote from Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Interpretation*, (rev. ed., Boston: W. A. Wilde Co., 1945), p. 3.



Premillennialist Charles Feinberg has said, “This is the amillennial method: to raise as many questions as possible, but at the same time to build no system of one’s own.”<sup>11</sup>

Christ’s return ends history is the next category. Amillennialism agrees with postmillennialism and differs from premillennialism in holding that Christ’s return does not usher in the last era of history but ends history completely. The key premillennial proof-text, Revelation 19:11—20:15, is handled by amillennialists in a variety of ways. Some see it as a general victory Christ wins through His Church by His Word. Most amillennialists take the nineteenth chapter as referring to the second advent and then consider the twentieth chapter as a recapitulation of His return. The thousand years, they believe, are symbolic of the saints reigning in heaven with Christ.

Amillennialists believe the Kingdom of God is currently in operation and will not triumph over world culture. Prophecies of a golden age are to be applied either to the Church or to the eternal state. They claim Jesus taught spiritualization of the current church age in the parables in Matthew 13 about the kingdom. They believe the Lord took the disciples aside and taught this spiritual truth as the mysteries of the kingdom. The real nature of the kingdom is spiritual and is currently occurring taking place through the Church with Christ sitting in heaven at the right hand of the Father.

Evil will not be reduced greatly before Christ’s return is another important viewpoint of amillennialism. At this point amillennialist agree with premillennialists. One important point unique to amillennialists is that Satan is bound during the current church age is taught in Revelation 20:1-2. Since Revelation 20 refers to the church age and not some future time, it is often asked of them in what sense is Satan bound today? They believe it refers to the restraining ministry of the Holy Spirit as taught in 2 Thessalonians 2:7: “For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way.”

The final area to examine is postmillennialism as I begin looking at its origin and history. Clough notes that postmillennialists also claim Augustine as one of their founding fathers. Their reason is because Augustine equated the Church with the Kingdom and fully expected it to flourish until Christ’s return occurred several centuries after Augustine’s day. The first real postmillennial statement, declares Clough, in the modern sense of the word, was made in the twelfth century by Joachim of Floris, a Roman Catholic. More recent postmillennialist R. J. Rushdoony claims the key role in the founding of the United States was provided by postmillennialists. “Post-millennialism once turned this country around. First, it established it, with the Puritans. Then with the new Puritans, Bellamy and Hopkins [two Puritan leaders very responsible for the War of Independence] and their followers it turned the country around again, and we gained our freedom.”<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Clough, *Training*, p. 118. Quote from Charles L. Feinberg, *Premillennialism or Amillennialism?* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Wheaton, IL: Van Kampen Press, 1954), p. 331.

<sup>12</sup> Clough, *Training*, pp. 120-21. Quote from R. J. Rushdoony, “A blocked or Open Future?” An occasional

Postmillennialism, claims Clough, agrees with amillennialism concerning Christ's return as the end of history, which it and premillennialism agree that the Kingdom of God will triumph over world culture. Clough only compares a single point in relation to postmillennialism since the other two have already been noted under the two other views.

Evil will gradually decline before Christ's return is a central feather of postmillennialism. To postmillennialists the great commission of Matthew 28:18-19 is not just a command to preach the gospel and make disciples, but to conquer the world culture for Christ. James H. Snowden says, "To reduce this great commission to the premillennial program of preaching the gospel as a witness to a world that is to grow worse and worse until it plunges into its doom in destruction, is to emasculate the gospel of Christ and wither it into pitiful impotency."<sup>13</sup> Accordingly, postmillennialists look for Christianity to become the controlling and transforming influence, not only in the moral and spiritual life of some individuals, but also in the entire social, economic, and cultural life of the nations. Postmillennialists reply to passages that appear to contradict their view like Matthew 7:14: "For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and few there are those who find it." And Matthew 22:14: "For many are called, but few are chosen." These passages say that most people in the world will not be saved. Instead, they say these passages are meant to be understood in a temporal sense, as describing the conditions which Jesus and the disciples saw existing in Israel only in their day.

Of course, Clough is a strong dispensational premillennialist. He believes such matters must be decided on the basis of a significant issue like hermeneutics, not form *ad hominem* claims. How literally or how figuratively should one interpret such passages? Clough does not believe an individual changes their hermeneutic based upon a subject matter. He believes a single hermeneutic is to be employed throughout the entire Bible, that of literal one also known as the historical-grammatical contextual approach.

Within the framework of a literal hermeneutic Clough suggests four areas to test the validity of the proper interpretive approach. Interestingly, he sees the three millennial views as a spectrum hermeneutically. The most literal is premillennialism and the most non-literal is amillennialism with postmillennialism as a blend of the two in the middle. I personally would see postmillennialism as a blend but mainly on the allegorical side. If we add non-dispensational premillennialism as a fourth view, which many do, then it would be partway between dispensational premillennialism and the middle.

Clough's four criteria areas which he examines are 1) Cosmic Possibility; 2) Theological Fulfillment; 3) Historical Responsibility; and 4) New Testament Precedent.

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lecture from the Chalcedon Foundation.

<sup>13</sup> Clough, *Training*, p. 121. Quote from James H. Snowden, *The Coming of the Lord: Will it be Premillennial?* (New York: MacMillian, 1919), p.103.

Cosmic Possibility is defined by Clough as a criterion that “deals with the limitation upon what can take place in history.”<sup>14</sup> He discusses whether the wolf and lamb feeding together noted in Isaiah 65:25 is a literal possibility. Clough quotes various biblical passages noting that just as the curse after the Fall brought about changes in the animal world, so also will there be changes after Christ’s second coming that will impact nature and the animal kingdom in a reversal of the curse. In commenting on Ezekiel 38 Clough speculates that it is possible because of God’s cosmic intervention that many modern weapon systems may be rendered useless and therefore there would be a return to more primitive warfare using horses and older military systems. Clough says, “the natural catastrophes associated with the end-time judgments will cause such widespread malfunction of highly sophisticated weapons systems that military commander will ‘degrade’ their arsenals to more primitive weapons that can function reliably in a catastrophic environment. Earthquakes and associated tidal waves could rupture runways, petroleum pipelines, storage tanks, and ocean-going tankers. Solar interference with the ionosphere could neutralize radio transmissions.”<sup>15</sup>

In the area of theological fulfillment, Clough wonders if humanity will ever reach this goal before eternity begins. He believes this will be fulfilled in history by at least the time of the millennium. Clough bases this issue upon the mandate given to humanity to Adam before the fall in Genesis 1:26-28. He argues that if this “cultural mandate” is not fulfilled in history then the Lord will have failed in His program for mankind. That is the whole point of sending the second Adam, Jesus Christ, to correct the problem created by fallen mankind and to fulfill the original mandate from Genesis 1. All of this must be fulfilled in history, before God’s program enters eternity for this to be considered a completion of God’s plan. Clough notes that only a premillennial perspective makes sense of this purpose.

The third area Clough advocates is needed for prophetic clarity is historical responsibility. He means by this “that usually the more complex the interpretation of prophecy is, the closer it is to the truth. By its very nature prophecy is a very abbreviated view of the future. In Genesis 3:15, for example, a ‘simple’ prophecy is made that somehow the child of the woman will triumph over the serpent. According to Genesis 4:1 Eve adopted the ‘simple’ interpretation that she was the woman and her son, Cain, was the child. Many thousands of years passed, however, before the Child was born of a woman. The fulfillment of the Genesis 3:15 prophecy was more complicated than Eve had thought.”<sup>16</sup> When applied to Israel, there are many prophecies that have yet to be fulfilled in relation to our day. Even though there have been many ups-and-downs from our perspective we know all of the Lord’s prophecy will be fulfilled exactly as foretold. Clough adds, “such biblical prophecy has always finally

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<sup>14</sup> Clough, *Training*, p. 123.

<sup>15</sup> Clough, *Training*, p. 125.

<sup>16</sup> Clough, *Training*, p. 126-27.

come to pass in a non-contradictory way, though in a manner unvisualized by men at the time the prophecy was announced.”<sup>17</sup> Clough is certainly right when he notes that some passages like Matthew 24—25 and 2 Peter 3 speaks of Christ’s return in a simple form, when compared with Revelation 19:11—20:11, which is much more detailed and complex. This is the way real past and future history has and will occur.

The fourth and final criterion to be discussed is that of New Testament precedent. How did New Testament writers interpret Old Testament prophecy, literally or figuratively? It is clear, that some New Testament writers used some figurative motifs to illustrate a point. Examples of this include Christ as the spiritual lamb corresponding to the literal Old Testament Passover lamb in 1 Corinthians 5:7; also, the veil covering Moses’ face as a picture of spiritual darkness of present unbelieving Israel in 2 Corinthians 3:13-16. The question is not how New Testament writers interpreted Old Testament passages in general, but one of how they interpreted Old Testament prophetic passages. Clough tells us that “beginning in Matthew 1 Christ is pictured as the literal seed of David; He is virgin born to fulfill literally Isaiah 7:14. His birthplace is in literal Bethlehem (Matt. 2:1-6), and Joseph takes Jesus to literal Egypt (Matt. 2:13-15). After discussing a number of other examples, Clough concludes: “That NT writers interpreted parts of the OT figurately or spiritually is not the issue. That some OT prophecies contain spiritual factors is not the issue. The matter of NT precedent has to do with the final complete fulfillment of prophecy: is it only spiritual, or is it both spiritual and physical.? Premillennialism is the only view that does not reduce the complexity of prophecy to merely spiritual factors; it maintains that prophecy is fulfilled in both spiritual and physical realms. In doing so, of course, premillennialism makes the verification prophecy clear and free from ambiguity.”

The three-sided controversy over the final triumph of the Kingdom of God has been described from the standpoint of each of the three major views—premillennialism, amillennialism, and postmillennialism. The issue finally comes down to a matter of hermeneutics. How literally or figuratively should one take prophecy? Clough believes that matter can be decided by going back to four criteria involving a biblical view of history and past precedents set in the Bible concerning past fulfilled prophecy. How was prophecy relating to Christ’s first coming fulfilled? He presented four issues as a basis to test the various schools of prophecy and concluded that only premillennialism passed all four evaluations. Therefore, premillennialism is the Bible’s viewpoint on these matters.

What about the pre-trib rapture in Clough’s eschatology? At least one footnote indicates that he had planned a sixth framework pamphlet which was never produced. It is most likely that he would have made his case for pretribulationism in the never produced sixth pamphlet since he clearly and strongly taught pretribulationism many times in exposition of biblical books of the Bible and through lessons on doctrinal topics.

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<sup>17</sup> Clough, *Training*, p. 127.

In closing, I would just like to say that if it were not for the ministry of Charles Clough then I would not have likely traveled the path in my ministry that I did. If it were not for Clough's ministry, I guess the Lord could have used someone else to impact my life, but nevertheless, He did use Charlie in this way. I just want to say thank you Charlie for your ministry contributions.