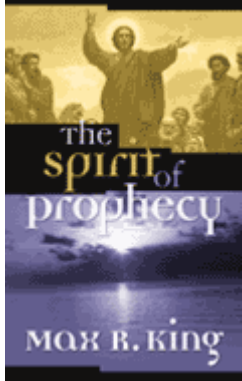


## The Transmillennial® View

by Timothy R. King, Jan 15, 2002



In 1971, Richard Nixon was president of the United States and the Vietnam War was still raging. I was only twelve at the time *The Spirit of Prophecy* came out and the youngest of Max's four sons. As a junior high student I was unaware of the counter-cultural earthquakes that the '60s had unleashed – but I clearly realized that my father's book was causing the tectonic plates of traditional church dogma to shift.

The year before, Hal Lindsey had released *The Late Great Planet Earth*, an end-time book predicting – and sensationalizing – the arrival of the second coming, the tribulation and the supposed end of planet earth. It would become the best-selling book of the 1970s. In contrast to Lindsey's phenomenal success, *The Spirit of Prophecy* received little attention outside of Max's immediate church tradition. Those who did take notice condemned it, much like the church had once done to Galileo for observing that the earth revolved around the sun.

It is easy now, with thirty years' worth of hindsight, to see Max's book as the seminal work of the modern fulfilled prophecy movement. Check the copyright dates of any fulfilled prophecy author from last century – none are earlier than 1971. Not only that, but they will readily admit that the writings of Max (or someone who studied him) had a profound impact on their present-day view of prophecy. No one, certainly not Max King, thought this work could possibly play the role it is playing in shaping how we think of fulfilled prophecy in the third millennium. Back then the way forward was not so clear – not so clear at all.

Max King came from humble beginnings. He grew up during the depression on a small farm on a hill in West Virginia. Unencumbered by big city lights, the farm revealed a star-filled sky that made God's promise to Abraham take on a whole new meaning. From this perch, Max was surrounded by God's creation and held a firm grasp on why God had proclaimed that everything He had made was "very good."

Why would God destroy such a creation, Max questioned, if Abraham received a blessing filled promise? The dogmatic hellfire-and-brimstone messages of his youth turned Max off. It didn't make sense to him that the victory of God would involve so many perishing and so few being saved.

Why would God want to incinerate such a beautiful earth? With an unyielding conviction that Scripture was the word of God, Max began to wonder: What was this story about? To whom was it written? Why did Jesus expect the kingdom of God to come in his generation if it would only be delayed for millennia? What was going on? What could we possibly be missing?

Largely self-taught but a diligent student of the Bible, Max began preaching at the age of 21. In 1962, after a decade of pulpit ministry, Max answered a call to move to Warren, Ohio. In addition to preaching on Sundays, he logged hours in his study tackling the Bible's unsolved 'Rubik's Cube' of eschatology.

## **Not a New Problem**

This apparent difference between what Jesus taught about his first-century return and what the church later came to teach about a far-distant second coming and resurrection at the "end of time" was not a new problem. It took nineteen centuries, however, for theologians and historians to frame the question.

In 1906, Albert Schweitzer pinpointed the problem in his landmark book, *The Quest for the Historical Jesus*.

The whole history of 'Christianity' down to the present day, that is to say, the real inner history of it, is based upon the delay of the Parousia, the non-occurrence of the Parousia, the abandonment of eschatology, the process and completion of the 'de-eschatologizing' of religion...[\[1\]](#)

For Schweitzer, the "delay of the Parousia" in the first-century confirmed Jesus' failure as an apocalyptic prophet. Max King agreed with Schweitzer's picture of Jesus as an apocalyptic prophet, but he *could not* accept Schweitzer's conclusion that Jesus had failed. He felt the Bible must have its own internal consistency that we have missed.

Even though he had hit his stride as a preacher in his church network and was in demand as a speaker and lecturer, at the age of forty, he risked alienation for his firm conviction that the church had not gotten the Bible right. With the writing of *The Spirit of Prophecy*, everything changed. Some of the criticism was personal; others wrote letters breaking fellowship with our local assembly and even family members distanced themselves from us.

At the time, Max stood alone. There was no Presence Ministries. There was no "third quest" for the historical Jesus. There were no fellow authors or preterist web sites. There was just Max, his Bible and his firm convictions.

## **None Dare Call It Heresy**

Anytime a new paradigm is proposed its detractors brand it heresy. This was true in the 16th century when Nicholas Copernicus first proposed a heliocentric solar system. It took more than 165 years, Galileo's telescope, and Newton's theory of gravity to complete what we now know as the Scientific Revolution. In the process, unfortunately, the Catholic church channeled its energy to suppress and condemn the new scientific paradigm. This fateful decision put the church on the wrong side of scientific inquiry for almost four centuries. In 1992, Pope John Paul II formally declared the Catholic church in error when it condemned Galileo.

There's a curious irony to the fact that in science or religion, if you're two steps ahead, you're hailed as a leader. If you're five steps ahead, you're considered a visionary. But if you're ten steps ahead, you're a heretic or a madman. When people first read in Copernicus' work that the Earth moved, and was not the fixed center of the universe, this new concept was so contradictory to everyday experience, so apparently false, that it hardly warranted serious discussion. A few thoughtful astronomers, however, began to find Copernicus's argument persuasive.

Just as the Scientific Revolution brought about a shift in the way we understand astronomy and the planets, so the field of fulfilled prophecy has begun to revolutionize the way we understand how

history revolves around Jesus. Instead of seeing Jesus as someday bringing world history to its end, fulfilled prophecy sees Christ as opening an unending Age of New Creation. In Jesus, redemptive history, or the story of Israel, is brought to fulfillment. In the Last Adam all things are fulfilled and, as the Second Man from heaven (1 Cor. 15:47), a new way has been opened. Universal history now unfolds as people of faith enter God's presence and likewise become a transforming presence in relation to nature and society.

All these lofty thoughts as to how *The Spirit of Prophecy* opened a new paradigm in biblical theology are hindsight. Personally, the worst part is that at the age of twelve, all you know about such matters is that your father can't be right because the whole world disagrees with him – but he can't be wrong because he's your dad, the pillar of your life.

I was torn within. For years after high school I couldn't even study eschatology without getting physically ill. I didn't want to know – but I *had* to know. My own journey was slow, arduous and more painful than most could imagine. I'm certainly pleased to have come out the other end with both an enlarged mind and heart. If you're having the same struggle, I can relate!

### **A Movement is Born**

Despite traditional criticism from those expecting a future second coming, the "fulfilled" Bible prophecy movement thrived. Fifteen years after writing *The Spirit of Prophecy*, Max wrote a definitive treatment of eschatology titled *The Cross and the Parousia of Christ*, placing the fulfilled view in the context of modern New Testament studies.

By the late '80s Max coined the term "Covenant Eschatology" to refer to this field of biblical study. He reasoned that all eschatology is tied to God's covenantal working. Once you leave the sphere of the covenant, you cut loose from the real story of the Bible. Covenant is to eschatology what gravity is to the earth and humanity – once you remove it, there's no telling where you're going to end up.

In 1989 Max began hosting annual seminars on Covenant Eschatology, a conference series that would last ten years. Additionally, he launched the *Living Presence Journal* as a regular research publication. Through these vehicles in addition to his books, many people outside the Restoration Movement (Christian Church/Church of Christ) became aware of Covenant Eschatology.

This was especially true in the Reformed world, when leaders like R.C. Sproul began to take a look at eschatology. As a result of Max's writings, people were discovering that this view had been taught in various degrees throughout church history. By the mid-'90s, a reprint of J.S. Russell's 1878 book, *The Parousia* became particularly popular. Many postmillennialists and Christian Reconstructionists began to study the "preterist" position. One of their most keen theologians, the late David Chilton, even adopted Covenant Eschatology before his untimely death.

Why was fulfilled prophecy appealing to postmillennialists? The Protestant Reformation had given people permission to study the Bible anew from the vantage point of its original meaning to its first readers. Over the next three centuries this produced a limited "preterist" interpretation of the book of Revelation in places such as England and Germany. But in each case, these smoldering wicks were snuffed out and did not survive into the 20th century.

Webster's Dictionary defines "preterist" as "one who believes that the prophecies of the Apocalypse

have already been fulfilled." Picking up on this linguistic fragment, many from the Reformed world began to view Max King's writings as "preterism."

Soon "preterist" web sites sprang up. "Preterist" debates spread across the U.S. among Reformed churches. Within five years it became evident that there were various "shades and degrees" of preterism, *i.e.*, full, partial, hyper, consistent, etc., and that these differences could be radical and harsh at times. There were even militant "Christian Identity" patriots that considered themselves "preterists," advocating the armed overthrow of the U.S. government.

When the term "preterist" began to be used in the '90s, no one even spoke of "partial-preterism." In Max King's view of redemption post-A.D. 70, there was no such thing as "partial" covenant. God's redemptive plan is completely in place. All of it. And if the end fully came at the fall of Jerusalem, there is no need to invent a non-biblical resurrection and judgment for individuals at death. At best, by 1999, the "preterist" term no longer stood alone and had to be qualified in terms of degree. At worst, the term became a badge of infighting among postmillennialists.

In 1997, things came full circle as I left a lucrative career in the business world to help establish Presence Ministries and further Max's work. By this time thousands had read Max's books and attended his seminars and by the grace of God we were eventually able to become self-supporting as a faith ministry, supported by partner's gifts each month.

By 1999 we began to look long-term at what it would take to extend Max's research as a second generation and prepare the church for the postmodern age. It became all too apparent to me that the "preterist" impulse would never fully capture what fulfilled prophecy could mean for the 21st century church. The first definition for "preterists" in Webster's Unabridged Dictionary is "one whose chief interest and pleasure is in the past." Something more was needed than an obsession with the past to reframe the church's study of the kingdom of God and its future civilization building.

In the summer of 1999 we invented a new word – "Transmillennialism." As a new term, this could stand beside 'pre-', 'a-', and 'post-' millennialism, the final forms that had developed in Christian eschatology.

Unlike traditional dogma, Transmillennialism™ sees Christ's millennial reign in its first-century context, from the Old to the New Covenant, bringing about the transformation of the ages. It sees the thrust of the Bible's speaking about how heaven comes to earth, not primarily about how one gets to heaven.

Advocates of pre-, a-, and post- millennialism, with little success, seek to find their particular eschatology in the early church fathers in order to claim an historical precedent for their doctrine. They are largely unsuccessful. Each of Christianity's mainstream "millennialisms" sees the kingdom of God as yet future. The Transmillennial® view is distinct.

As a prefix to millennialism, "Trans-" means "across" or "over" or "on the other side of." It also means "above and beyond, transcending" such as "transatlantic." The "trans" part of Transmillennialism™ stands for moving through or beyond what has gone before.

In light of this, Transmillennialism™ is prepared to biblically challenge the other three mainline

millennial views. Through the first-century reign of Christ, God's creation was transformed – people were transformed. Humanity's relationship with God moved "through" or "past" the Mosaic system of death and into the New Creation of the resurrected Christ. Through this, the kingdom has come.

That following June we upgraded from ten years of annual seminars to hosting our first national conference, entitled "Transmillennial® 2000." This historic meeting put Transmillennialism™ on the map as a movement to stem the tide of present-day millennial madness, and it brought together all streams of the fulfilled Bible prophecy movement. As a result, a new standard for biblical unity emerged in the quest to help the church of the third millennium embrace its full redemptive heritage.

Through *The Spirit of Prophecy* and all that has followed the last three decades or more, Max King can be credited with founding an entirely new field of Christian millennialism that, unlike other efforts throughout the ages, will *not* be snuffed out. To insure that Transmillennialism™ would not lose its inherent meaning through sectarian feuds (as "preterism" has), Presence Ministries secured a registered trademark on the term "Transmillennial®," particularly in reference to its use in conferences and study materials. Our intent is for this worldview to be studied and written about widely, but not to be redefined or misused by sectarian upstarts, seeking to forward their own interests.

In order to keep Transmillennialism™ a trans-denominational concept, we immediately established a "Council on Transmillennialism™." This is a group of like-minded leaders and ministries to help steward this sacred trust, thus ensuring that Transmillennialism™ remains open to all faiths and believers.

Up until this edition, only some 10,000 copies of *The Spirit of Prophecy* had been circulated since its inception in 1971. That hardly compares to the 35 million printed copies of *The Late Great Planet Earth*, but I firmly believe that Max King's tortoise could someday overtake Hal Lindsey's hare.

Not only is it biblically sound, Transmillennialism™ helps the church shun Chicken-Little "Sky-is-Falling" religion, to seek first the kingdom by joining hands in building the civilizations of tomorrow. Leaving behind the escapism of traditional eschatologies, Transmillennialism™ is a worldview calling forth believers to serve humanity in the full image of a loving, compassionate and gracious God.

### **On Earth as it is in Heaven**

The great Reformation leader, Martin Luther, once wrote, "In our sad condition, our only consolation is the expectancy of another life." The conventional understanding of religion is that faith is a means of getting to heaven. We prepare for a better *death* – one that leads to the "pearly gates" or the "streets of gold." "If you died tonight," goes the classic line from revivals and witnessing manuals, "do you know where you will go?" Heaven and hell are at stake and the final exam awaits us at some point in a future known only by God... but what about a better *life*?

Christianity has focused on its relationship to the afterlife to such a point that most believers no longer have a relationship to their present – or what becomes the future. Rebuilding faith's

relationship to the future might well be the difference between the church's surviving or *thriving* throughout the course of the third millennium.

Some, throughout cultural history, have seen the greater reality, finding eternal life in the here and now. Even so, the emphasis was on personal experience, and an inward journey, with no prescription for the relationship of faith to the surrounding culture. Spirituality flourished in monasteries and convents but had little to offer those who had no such "vocation."

After the Reformation, the monastery walls came down but the cloister mentality remained. Faith either consisted of following the appropriate religious script to gain entrance to heaven at death or it consisted of denying the temporal world and its trappings so as to experience "heaven" in the present – but still only as a foretaste of the better life to come.

In his book, *The Passion of the Western Mind*, Richard Tarnas writes, "In this sense it could be said that much of Christianity was still waiting for its redeemer – not unlike Judaism, though now with a more afterworldly emphasis." Tarnas continues, "Humanity's hope lay in the future... in the afterworld, and, for the present, in the bulwark of the church."<sup>[2]</sup> In contrast, those who discover the Transmillennial® view realize that recovering humanity's hope begins *now*.

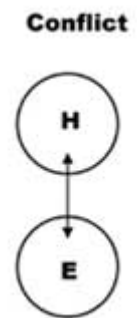
Few Bible scholars prior to Max King have been willing to say that the kingdom of God fully came in Jesus' day. But now that the case has been biblically made in terms of Jesus' original setting, faith can open whole new frontiers and shape society in the third millennium.

### **God is With Us**

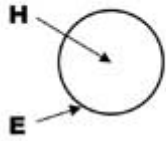
In Revelation 21:3, John heard a voice proclaiming, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God."

This is not merely some future state of eternity, as traditional dogma has maintained, but the glorious fruit of the *Parousia*: God now dwells with us. By faith, then, we have come "to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels" (Heb. 12:22). We are Zion-born – heaven is our birthright, the country we now inhabit (Ps. 87:4-7).

The Transmillennial® view of reality is a radical departure from postponement theology. Because traditional dogma does not yet embrace the fulfillment of Revelation 21-22, it lives in a conflict paradigm, a pre-*Parousia* conception of the cosmos. Two spheres can depict this: heaven above and earth below. These two worlds are still at war, and locked in an eternal struggle. In this dualistic world, all reality is divided into two camps, good angels against bad demons, good nations against evil ones, good guys against the bad guys. All creation awaits God's coming to set things aright.



## Reconciled



The Transmillennial® view sees a world of reconciliation and divine potential. Through the Cross, Resurrection and *Parousia*, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!" (Rev. 11:15).

We live in the new heavens and new earth that has come. We can see this reconciled paradigm as a single sphere or reality, with a heavenly and earthly aspect. Heaven is the inner spiritual reality, and earth is the outer visible reality. This is not to deny a dimension beyond our present one – where we, along with David, may "live in the house of the Lord forever" (Ps. 23:6). What must be clear, however, is that Scripture teaches that through the finished work of Christ we are indeed reconciled to God *now*, and in the words of Jesus, "will never die" (Jn. 8:51).

With heaven and earth being reconciled, the presence of God can transform all things in life and society. The City of Godnow exists in the midst of the City of Man. Our mission is to work toward the wholeness of persons and the healing of the nations through Christ (Rev. 22:2).

## Recovering Hope

At the end of the modern age, our world is marked more by despair than hope. For most of the world, including the church, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved" (Jer. 8:20). Like Jeremiah we ask, "Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why then has the health of my poor people not been restored?" (Jer. 8:22).

Is it any wonder that humanity suffers, when the church has been blind to its heritage in Christ? This is where the Transmillennial® worldview can offer the antidote to despair. It can take the church beyond cultural pessimism into a responsible engagement with society. This is not to say that Transmillennialism™ is a "utopian" movement. Scripture has made two things clear – one, as to the increase of God's kingdom, there is no end (Dan. 2:44; Lk. 1:33), and two, while we serve together in the new and heavenly city of Jerusalem, there will always be those "outside" the city to whom we are called to minister (Rev. 22:15).

The chart below offers the various building blocks of Transmillennialism™. Stated simply, its aim is "Recovering Humanity's Hope." We believe that this hope was *restored* in Christ, but *lost* throughout history, and can now be *recovered* in our generation by faith in the consistency of God's word.

<b>Transmillennialism™</b>		
<b>Theology</b>	<b>History</b>	<b>Futures</b>
<b>covenant eschatology</b>	<b>worldview analysis</b>	<b>church futures</b>
<b>“Recovering Humanity’s Hope”</b>		
<b>Hope Restored</b>	<b>Hope Lost</b>	<b>Hope recovered</b>

As part of this recovery, we need to look backward, inward and forward. In studying Covenant Eschatology, we look *backward* at how God has fulfilled all things in Christ. Through worldview analysis, we look *inward* – we study history to see why the West has not entered its redemptive rest. Then we look *forward*, prepared to create a future in keeping with God’s will.

Jesus’ whole ministry was about helping people recover hope. In Mark 8:22-25, we read the story of how he took the blind man out of Bethsaida and restored his sight. He touched the man once, and the man could see, but people looked like trees walking around. It took a second touch to get him to where he could see everyone clearly. The church today needs to receive a second touch to see the "restoration of all things." Rather than seeing "men like trees walking," we need to discover a whole new world that is made possible through fulfilled redemption.

### **The Study of First Things**

Traditionally, Christian theology has thought of eschatology as the "study of last things" with little or no concern for what takes place *after* that. Recently we began to ask ourselves: Is there a corresponding doctrine of *first things* in Christian theology? Since most theologians believe that the world will come to a fateful and fiery destruction, it seems there is not.

We speak of the transition period from the Cross to A.D. 70 as being the *last days* of the Old Covenant, while seldom giving a thought that they were also the *first days* of the New and everlasting Covenant. We are comfortable asking, What were the last things of the Old Covenant remaining to be fulfilled? We rarely think to ask, What were the first things of redemption that would shape humanity’s future?

As our annual conference for 2002 drew near, we began to search the Scriptures for a word that complemented "eschatology" and would hold the promise of reshaping Christian theology for the next generation.

"Eschatology" is derived from a Greek word, *eschaton*, meaning the study of the End. The corresponding Greek word would be *archon*, meaning "origin," "beginning," or "first" chronologically. So we dubbed this new theological field "archonology," or "archonics." (Archonology is not to be confused with "archaeology" – that’s the study of primitive material remains.)



Archonology, then, would be the study of first things in the light of the New Jerusalem. The use of the word *archon* or "origin" is best found in Revelation 22:13, where Jesus says, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Origin and the Consummation." "Origin and the Consummation" can also be translated as "the beginning and end." For us then, archonics is the architecture of the possible.

Paul said, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come" (2 Cor. 5:17). God calls us by faith to give ourselves to these new possibilities and to be social architects – to shape the future through originality, creativity, vision and leadership.

*Archon* appears elsewhere in Scripture as well. In Revelation 3:14 Christ uses *archon* again to refer to himself as "the Origin of God's Creation" or "God's Creative Original." In Colossians 1:16-17, Paul says of Christ, "all things were created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together."

Eschatology tells us how the reign of the First Adam was brought to an end. Archonology, on the other hand, tells us how the reign of the last Adam began and was consummated in the appearing of Jesus, the Second Man from heaven – Jesus Christ, God come in the flesh. Throughout the Bible, eschatology counted down to the end; archonology counts up from the beginning. Eschatology deals with the end of Israel's story; archonology with the beginning of the human story as redeemed in Christ. The story of the Bible is the story of transformation, of being elevated from the world of sin to the world of grace. Now we have the awesome privilege of exploring the divine limits of human potential!

Just as Max King has led the fulfilled Bible prophecy world into the study of eschatology that dealt with the consummation of the Old Covenant, my aim is to join with you in moving humanity into the study of archonology and the commencement of the New Covenant in a world without end (Eph. 3:21).

### **Join a Grassroots Movement**

For nearly twenty centuries the Bible has been a fulfilled book, and redemption a finished work. We, more than any generation since the apostles, have the insight and the resources to understand its full message. This is not to say that organized religion will grasp the message of *The Spirit of Prophecy* any time soon.

Institutions are often self-protecting and preoccupied with the past and in extending their own self-interests for the future. We must keep in mind that God created us as human *beings* and far too often our institutionalized gospel has coerced us into a system of *doing*. Institutionalism is not likely to be the carrier vehicle of this "good news" that sets people free. Grassroots movements, on the other hand, can be free of religious dogma and work through real relationships that focus on "being."

Christ did not die on the cross for organized religion. He did not suffer for sectarianism. He died on the cross and rose from the dead that we might share in *his* life in *this* life. This world is not going to be okay because religion will change. It will be okay because *we* change. It will be okay because we discover the fullness of God's presence and allow it to flow through us.

There is no hierarchy in God's kingdom. Every person is valuable, made in the image of God. And the full expression of that faith is not just to be found on Sundays – it is found from Monday to Saturday, in homes, in schools and in workplaces. Transmillennialism™ must never be associated with any group that seeks to lead the masses rather than walk with them. It must forever remain a movement of God among the people, regardless of what secondary creeds, denominations, or confessions we follow.

I invite you to join head, heart and hand in this movement called Transmillennialism™. We need what you can bring in this new day the Lord has made. We are all partners – equals. Together we can build the civilizations of tomorrow that bring honor and glory to God.

Thanks for making the journey – let us hear how we might continue to serve with you in this grassroots movement.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Why have books like *The Late Great Planet Earth* and the *Left Behind* series been so popular? How does *The Spirit of Prophecy* compare or contrast to these books?

2. How did Christianity develop, such that there are various eschatological positions, such as pre-, a- or post- millennialism? What is at stake in one's eschatological position?

3/ How does Tim King define the Transmillennial® view? How does this compare or contrast to other millennialisms?

4. What lessons, if any, can you take from Max King's example in studying and sharing the Transmillennial® view?

5. What does it mean for God to dwell with humanity? How can a fulfilled understanding of prophecy help us in "Recovering Humanity's Hope"?

6. What is Archonology? Why do we need to balance the "study of last things" with the "study of first things"?

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[1] Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, (The Macmillan Company, 8<sup>th</sup> printing, 1973), p. 360.

[2] Richard Tarnas, *The Passion of the Western Mind*, Ballantine, 1991, p. 134.