

He Has Overcome the World:

The Importance of Dispensational Propositions in Addressing the Anxieties of Millennials and Generation-Z Related to Salvation, Political Upheaval, and the Environment.

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Introduction

Millennials and Generation Z are the most anxious generation on record in American history. Whether it is major media outlets¹ or psychological studies from various research groups,² all agree that Millennials and Generation Z are collectively “the anxious generation”. And yet, with the rise in anxiety around subjects like environmental crisis, political upheaval and change, and even existential anxiety, there seems to be little that major Christian resource outlets have been able to do to slow this major rise. To the contrary, in many cases, conservative Christian resource centers feed into much of the anxiety or provide commentary on these issues which only serves to feed the anxiety of young people around these issues. Many such articles mean well, attempting to provide theological insights into the issues at hand, but lack the Biblical eternal scope for grounding these issues properly. Instead, Christian resource centers either focus on an issue’s imminent concerns, only further legitimizing the

¹ Markowicz, Karol. “‘They Can’t Even’: Why Millennials are the ‘Anxious Generation’”. New York Post. NYP Holdings Inc. 2016. <https://nypost.com/2016/03/20/they-cant-even-why-millennials-are-the-anxious-generation/>

Fagan, Abigail. “Why 90 Percent of Generation Z Says They’re Stressed Out”. Psychology Today. Sussex Publishers, LLC. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-stressed-years-their-lives/201812/why-90-percent-generation-z-says-theyre-stressed-out>

² Scheffler, Richard. “Anxiety Disorders in Millennials: Causes and Consequences.” Petris Center.

Berkeley Institute for the Future of Young Americans. <https://petris.org/projects-2/completed-projects-2/anxiety/#:~:text=Anxiety%20is%20a%20growing%20problem,than%20it%20was%20in%202008.>

McMasters, Geoff. “Millennials and Generation Z Are More Anxious Than Previous Generations”. Folio. University of Alberta. <https://www.ualberta.ca/folio/2020/01/millennials-and-gen-z-are-more-anxious-than-previous-generations-heres-why.html>

anxious fixation of young people around these immediate concerns, or instead completely delegitimize these concerns, only serving to build resentment among younger people.

In meeting these concerns, Dispensationalism is uniquely positioned as a system with propositions that meet the anxiety of young people within the proper eternal scope without delegitimizing their concern. In particular, Dispensationalism's use of a doxological purpose for God's plan, distinct economies in God's unfolding revelation, the Israel-Church distinction, and its well developed Premillennial eschatology, each provide accessible Biblical grounding for mitigating Millennial and Generation Z anxieties around the environment, politics, and existential fear, without delegitimizing the concerns of these individuals.

The Matter at Hand: Millennial and Generation Z Anxiety

In 2018, the American Psychological Association published its annual "Stress in America" report which found that 91 percent of Generation Z individuals surveyed experienced symptoms of intense stress.³ Only a year prior, the same survey found that 58 percent of Millennials experience the same intense anxiety.⁴ While many think of increases in anxiety as a pandemic related issue, these surveys clearly show there is a generational difference in the level of anxiety irrespective of the pandemic era. In the most recent survey, these metrics have remained fairly consistent through the pandemic era, with Millennials reporting a consistent stress level of 5.7 and Generation Z reporting a

³ American Psychological Association (2018). Stress in America: Generation Z. Stress in America™ Survey. 5.

⁴ American Psychological Association (2017). Stress in America: Generation Z. Stress in America™ Survey. 3.

consistent stress level of 5.4, out of a total potential stress of 10.⁵ Younger generations are disproportionately anxious about a variety of issues to the point where it is beginning to effect their basic decision making.⁶ When it comes to the locale of their stress, a variety of issues can and have been named; however, three main categories can be discerned: the environment, political upheaval, and existential anxiety.

These different anxieties are also similarly documented. Concerning their political anxieties, in 2019 the Harvard Institute of Politics found that: “the state of our politics is contributing to the mental health challenges millions of young Americans already face.”⁷ Their 2019 Youth Poll results found that: “Half of young Americans experience anxiety, and it is correlated with views related to the state of our nation,” regardless of their political affiliation or background.⁸ Additionally, 52 percent agreed with the statement that they were particularly “concerned about the moral direction of the country.”⁹

Environmental concerns are also rampant among younger generations. In 2021, Pew Research Center reported that 69 percent of Generation Z reported anxiety related to environmental issues.¹⁰ Following quickly behind, 59 percent of Millennials felt the same anxiety surrounding environmental

⁵ American Psychological Association (2021). Stress in America: Generation Z. Stress in America™ Survey. 3.

⁶ American Psychological Association (2021). Stress in America: Generation Z. Stress in America™ Survey. 3.

⁷ “Spring 2019 Harvard IOP Youth Poll Results”. Harvard Institute of Politics. Harvard University. 2019. <https://iop.harvard.edu/about/newsletter-press-release/spring-2019-harvard-iop-youth-poll-results>

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Tyson, Alec, Brian Kennedy, and Cary Funk. “Gen Z, Millennials Stand Out for Climate Change Activism, Social Media Engagement With Issue.” Pew Research Center. 2021. <https://www.pewresearch.org/science/2021/05/26/gen-z-millennials-stand-out-for-climate-change-activism-social-media-engagement-with-issue/>

issues.¹¹ Bath University took a similar survey and found that 59 percent of young people in the U.K. feared for the future of humanity due to environmental concerns.¹² A lead author on the study also noted that these anxieties intersect with political anxieties as well: “This shows eco-anxiety is not just for environmental destruction alone, but inextricably linked to government inaction...”¹³ And being that there is a level of mortal anxiety as well, these concerns around the environment are also existential concerns; and likely the same could be said for their concerns surrounding political upheaval.

Existential concerns manifest in a number of ways, from a fear of death to a fear of what comes after death. And surrounding the issue of death, the afterlife, and spirituality, younger people also experience a great amount of anxiety. In 2017, the Barna Group found that Millennials were twice as likely as previous generations to experience significant spiritual doubt.¹⁴ In his discussion on ministering to Millennials, the Gospel Coalition’s Derek Rishmawy crafts his aids around an understanding of the Millennial as one struggling with spiritual doubt of various kinds.¹⁵ And in 2021, the Gospel Coalition, in addressing key questions from Generation Z, addressed issues of salvation

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Harrabin, Roger. “Climate change: Young people very worried - survey.” BBC News. The BBC. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-58549373>

Often anxieties related to the environment are misconstrued as “apocalyptic” or “world-ending”; especially with regard to young people, due to usage of extreme terminology like “fearing for the future of humanity.” However, for the vast majority, these concerns are related to what science fiction writers refer to as a “soft apocalypse.” In distinction from a global or world-ending apocalypse, a “soft” apocalypse is characterized by an event or events which devastate human civilization such that it is irreversibly changed or lesser in quality. The Bronze Age Collapse, the Fall of Rome, and World War I would all be examples of “soft” apocalypses. This fear then is not that humanity will become extinct, rather that humanity will suffer irreparable harm due to environmental and ecological disasters or mismanagement.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ “Two-Thirds of Christians Face Doubt.” Barna Group. 2021. <https://www.barna.com/research/two-thirds-christians-face-doubt/>

¹⁵ Rishmawy, Derek. “Ministering to Millennials.” The Gospel Coalition. 2018. <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/ministering-to-millennials-in-a-secular-age/>

specifically.¹⁶ Even NPR ran a story around issues of Millennial spiritual doubt, particularly addressing afterlife doubt/assurance, back in 2013.¹⁷ Ed Springer of Youthworks, an Anglican youth education resource group in the United States, noted that “lack of assurance,” is an issue which is constantly plaguing young people today.¹⁸

And yet, despite both secular and Christian acknowledgement of these issues, attempts to stay the anxieties of young people has done little to dampen the trend, even among Christians. In general, two approaches have been attempted in order to stay the anxieties related to the political, environmental, and existential. The first is to simply dismiss the anxiety as unfounded. And the second is to make the claim that the anxiety is warranted and positive. Both methods can be seen in the writings of non-dispensationalists surrounding these issues.

Non-Dispensational Approaches: Two Extremes

Politics are by nature divisive. And for that reason, dismissal of political anxieties is an attractive means of avoiding division in a Church or Church ministry; in addition to being a fairly simple answer to give. In Relevant Magazine’s “7 Things Christians Need to Remember About Politics,” writer Bryan Roberts makes the sort of dismissals common in Evangelical and Fundamental circles. Roberts writes:

¹⁶ Butler, Josh. “Gen Z’s Questions About Salvation and Predestination.” The Gospel Coalition. 2021. <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/podcasts/q-a-podcast/gen-z-questions-salvation-predestination/>

¹⁷ Greene, David. “On Religion, Some Young People Show Both Doubt And Respect.” NPR. National Public Radio. <https://www.npr.org/2013/01/17/169450811/on-religion-some-young-people-show-both-doubt-and-respect>

¹⁸ Springer, Ed. “How to Build Assurance in Young People.” Youthworks. 2021. <https://youthworks.net/articles/how-to-build-assurance-in-young-people>

“I balk when pastors tell me the Church should engage in the political process. Why would we do that? The political process is dirty and broken and far from Jesus. Paranoia and vitriol are hardly attractive accessories for the bride of Christ.”¹⁹

The article continues with similar statements about the political process and political concerns. Things like “both parties go to church,” and “those who argue over politics don’t love their country more than others.”²⁰ Overall, the goal is to place political issues to a lower order of concern as to mitigate any anxiety and avoid division. In the end though, dismissing the concerns of others does not lead to mitigation of their stress, but instead adds stress as individuals begin to feel distanced, delegitimized, and frustrated at having their very real concerns batted away. After all, “political issues,” like the cost of food, sheltering refugees, adoption, homelessness, judicial corruption, police accountability, and war are not issues which are insignificant. Therefore, the simple dismissal of “politics are corrupt” alone is insufficient to properly handle these anxieties.

On the other hand, some will instead choose to elevate political issues in the hopes of legitimizing political anxiety as ultimately positive. David G. Kibble for example, makes this statement concerning political activism:

“If evangelism and social justice are not to be identified and conflated together then they must in some sense be separate. The danger here, of course, is that we separate them so

¹⁹ Roberts, Bryan. “7 Things Christians Need to Remember About Politics.” Relevant Magazine. Relevant Media Group. 2016. <https://relevantmagazine.com/current/7-things-christians-need-remember-about-politics/>

²⁰ Ibid.

much as to make the one more important than the other. It must be emphasized that both are equally important.”²¹

Kibble elevated social justice concerns to equality with evangelism, and while he attempts to avoid the conclusions of liberation theologians, it is hard to divorce his own thoughts from that of those he dismisses, like this statement from Gustavo Gutierrez: “to participate in the process of [political] liberation is already, in a certain sense, a salvific work.”²² Kibble’s own conclusion is that the Kingdom of God being in the hearts of believers necessitates a level of political activism.²³ Trevin Wax makes a similar statement in writing for the Gospel Coalition in 2008: “As Kingdom people, we must be actively spreading God’s reign into every segment of society, influencing the world by bringing God’s love and grace to all, whether it be through the arts, through business, through politics or through our vocations.”²⁴ Using a non-dispensational theology of a “present” Kingdom on earth, Kibble, Wax, and even Gutierrez justify political activism and overt concern - an approach which only further exacerbates feelings of anxiety when the “present” nation does not look like the idealistic kingdom they have conceptualized. By elevating the import of the political to that of the command of God to make disciples, failure or lack of realization to this political goal amounts to not only feelings of anxiety

²¹ Kibble, David G. “The Kingdom of God and Christian Politics.” Themelios. The Gospel Coalition, Inc. 1982. <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/themelios/article/the-kingdom-of-god-and-christian-politics/>

²² Ibid.

Gutierrez, Gustavo. “A Theology of Liberation”. SCM: London. 1974. pg. 72.

²³ Kibble, David G. “The Kingdom of God and Christian Politics.” Themelios. The Gospel Coalition. 1982. <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/themelios/article/the-kingdom-of-god-and-christian-politics/>

²⁴ Wax, Trevin. “The Growing Kingdom of God”. The Gospel Coalition. The Gospel Coalition, Inc. 2008. <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/trevin-wax/7-types-of-southern-baptists/>

about the absence of godly justice but also feelings of failure before God or disobedience to Him because the supposedly stated command of God for the Christian is not being realized effectively.

The same approaches manifest in non-dispensational perspectives with regard to environmental anxiety. On the side of apathetic dismissal, a rather mixed article from *Answers in Genesis* writer Avery Foley argues that Christians should not be anxious about the environment; firstly, because God is in control, secondly that “God has commanded us not to be afraid”, and then that God has promised that the seasons will continue.²⁵ Foley continues by arguing that environmental efforts worth supporting should be judged by a metric of their effect on human beings, rather than any environmentally exclusive concern.²⁶ And while certain aspects of Foley’s article may ring true in some sense, like the common assent non-dispensationalists tend to give to the necessity of ambiguous “creation care” measurements derived from Genesis, its dismissal of environmental anxiety as unfounded and disobedient lead to the same anxious ends as dismissals of political anxiety. Individuals experiencing anxiety over environmental damage, their effects on society, and the animal kingdom, upon being met with this dismissal are given then to frustration or further stress at finding their concerns treated as either unimportant concerns or, at worst, sinful ones.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, and born out of the widespread concern of young Christians, some elevate environmental concerns as fundamentally “Gospel” concerns. Christianity Today, for example, published an article in 2016 entitled: “Why Conservation is a Gospel Issue.” In it, Peter Harris argues that: “Our worship and work and witness will be incomplete until our

²⁵ Foley, Avery. “Climate Change and the Bible”. *Answers in Genesis*. Answers in Genesis. 2020. <https://answersingenesis.org/environmental-science/climate-change/climate-change-and-the-bible/>

²⁶ *Ibid.*

responsibility to conserve the glorious, God-given diversity of earth's creatures becomes second nature."²⁷ Harris' argument is simply that environmental destruction is a sin issue, caused by issues like greed and selfishness, and therefore it is an issue that must be addressed by Christians. This is not only a good thing for Christians to do, but actually a part of ensuring that "our worship... work, and witness" are complete.²⁸ Geneva College summarizes it this way in their statement on Christians and the environment: "God commissions us to rule over the creation in a way that sustains, protects, and enhances his works so that all creation may fulfill the purposes God intended for it. We must manage the environment not simply for our own benefit but for God's glory."²⁹ Geneva College, like Christianity Today, builds its argument from Old Testament passages like Genesis 1:28 and Psalm 24:1-2, and gains its specific New Testament commission from Colossians 1:19-20.³⁰ Simply put, because God is reconciling all things through Christ, we who are in Christ should reconcile creation to God through creation care. Implicit within this is a presupposition that the entirety of Christ's work is accomplished and that all things should be reconciled to Him *in the present* as much as possible. Once again, this perspective, rather than mitigating environmental anxiety, encourages it, and leads to a deeper anxiety. For as the environment continues to degrade or certain environmental efforts fail, the Christian becomes yet more anxious and discouraged, viewing himself as a failure before God or worse as sinning against God for failing to reconcile the creation.

²⁷ Harris, Peter. "Why Conservation is a Gospel Issue." Christianity Today. Christianity Today. 2016. <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2016/september-web-only/why-does-nature-matter.html>

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ "Christians and the Environment." Geneva College. Geneva College. 2022.

https://www.geneva.edu/community/environmental-stewardship/why_care#:~:text=God%20commissions%20us%20to%20rule,but%20for%20God%E2%80%B2s%20glory

³⁰ Ibid.

It is hardly surprising that issues of existential anxiety surrounding death and assurance are addressed using the same theological arguments of either dismissal or elevation such that anxiety is applauded. Dismissal arguments concerning assurance have become far more popular as of recent; most significantly in the form of arguing for an agnosticism about the afterlife and by the removal of Hell as an afterlife destination. Peter Enns, for example, popularly argues against the existence of Hell in favor of a so-called “Kingdom” centered perspective.³¹ According to Enns, Christianity’s job is to “establish God’s Kingdom until Jesus returns to fully restore things,” as opposed to offering salvation from any kind of wrath.³² Arguments like these are meant to stave off existential anxiety by simply removing the cause for anxiety: wrath. Rather than address the actual anxiety related to God, eternal destiny, and the salvation question, Enns and others simply dismiss the question by removing the perceived cause of anxiety. This falters for a number of reasons, chief among them being that there is wrath and justice reserved for those who refuse to accept the forgiveness of Christ.³³ Additionally, Enn’s argument in application to believers would not lead to further assurance, only further ambiguity, anxiety, and doubt; for by removing Hell, God’s commission to humanity becomes undefined. While Enns would have his readers and listeners shoot for a philosophic “good life” rather than an eternal destiny and heavenly call, the definition of this “good life” God asks for remains open. Thus further anxiety and confusion will befall those who chase it; never knowing if they have ever arrived. Perhaps it is for this reason that Enns also argues that doubt and uncertainty are ultimately far

³¹ Enns, Peter. “Let’s Talk About Hell, Shall We.” Youtube. February, 2019.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nR9hc9gAPYM>

³² Ibid.

³³ Matthew 25:41, 2 Thessalonians 1:9, Revelation 20:13-15

superior to any form of assurance,³⁴ once again avoiding the question of assurance by simply dismissing it entirely.

By contrast, some have argued that such lack of assurance is important to a mature Christian life. Joel Beeke, writing for Ligonier, argues that in order to have assurance, one needs to examine their good works which act as proof of salvation.³⁵ In this sense, Beeke argues, afterlife anxiety encourages the believer to stay “holy”. Beeke continues by arguing that God Himself might withhold assurance from a believer so that they “understand how bitter sin is,” and “keep us low and humble,” as well as to “value assurance even more” and “pursue obedience to God... and give Him glory for our obedience to Him.”³⁶ Jon Bloom, writing for *Desiring God*, expounds on this point in the following:

“When we see the dross, we can fear that our faith may not be real. And that is what God wants. For when we see the horrible sin in us and feel our own helplessness to get rid of it... it pushes us in desperation to trust Christ’s work.”³⁷

From a non-dispensational perspective, afterlife anxiety is an important part of continuing in proper sanctification. Unfortunately, evaluations of assurance based on works are subjective. How many are enough and how many bad works are too many to prove otherwise, become the continuous refrain as

³⁴ Bean, Alan. “The Sin of Certainty: Peter Enn’s Journey from Belief to Trust.” Baptist News Global. Baptist News Global. 2016. <https://baptistnews.com/article/the-sin-of-certainty-peter-enns-journey-from-belief-to-trust/#.YsiCunbMLrd>

³⁵ Beeke, Joel. “Loss of Assurance.” Ligonier. Ligonier Ministries. 2016. <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/loss-assurance>

“We cannot enjoy high levels of genuine assurance in low levels of obedience... loss of assurance shows that sin has serious consequences for the believer...”

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Bloom, Jon. “How God Gives Assurance.” *Desiringgod.org*. Desiring God. <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/how-god-gives-assurance>

they are with most every salvation issue.³⁸ This leads only to more of the same anxiety or even despair; or otherwise overwhelming pride. As Alistair Begg noted in his viral sermon on the cross of Christ, to focus upon something other than the cross of Christ in our daily life leads to either a crippling depression at the realization we are incapable or a sort of “gross egotism,” believing we are actually quite capable.³⁹ Therefore, a positive evaluation of afterlife anxiety is ineffective in mitigating these anxieties, leading only to deeper despair, or otherwise the sin of pride.

Many of these issues involve either a lack of understanding surrounding the definitive mission of the Church in relation to each of these concerns, a blurred conception of Israel and the Church and their distinct commands, and a fundamental misunderstanding of the nature of the Kingdom of God. Further, their concentrations are anthropocentric; whether dealing with politics, the environment, or assurance; and the place of human desires in the Christian life is either dismissed or an indicator of their necessity in our immediate circumstances. Dispensationalism, by contrast, allows for a far more consistent manner by which these anxieties and their locales are addressed. This is because Dispensationalism propagates a focus on interpreting progressive revelation through a simple, normal hermeneutic leading to a clear vision for the mission of the Church and its members in distinction from the nation of Israel, and a Premillennial Eschatological conception of the Kingdom which is theocentric, doxological, and provides a Christocentric understanding of our desires.

³⁸ Paul’s own argument in Galatians would seem to directly contradict any measurement of sanctification by works at all. For, after making his lengthy argument concerning salvation coming through the Spirit by faith, free from obedience to law, Paul delivers, in chapter 5, an exhortation to not only be made alive by the Spirit, but to live by the Spirit and not the law. As he concludes in 5:25: “If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.” (NASB)

³⁹ Begg, Alistair. “The Power and Message of the Cross.” Truth for Life. Youtube. 34:50-35:00. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SL8mJQ39zjw&t=0s>

Dispensational Propositions and Political Anxiety

God clearly cares about politics. This should give at least some level of comfort to the anxious. Historically speaking, we know that it was God Himself who established political orders. In Genesis 9:1-6, God gives an administrative command to Noah to multiply his descendants, spread out, and, “Whoever sheds human blood, by man his blood shall be shed, for in the image of God He made mankind,” (Genesis 9:7 NASB). This command to Noah, according to the New Scofield Bible:

“God delegated to him certain areas of His authority, in which he was to obey God through submission to his fellow man. So God instituted a corporate relationship of man to man in human government. The highest function of human government is the protection of human life, out of which arises the responsibility of capital punishment.”⁴⁰

But, as with each dispensation, this administration of God’s plan was subject to failure on the part of mankind. C.I. Scofield writes: “The dispensation of human government resulted, upon the plain of Shinar, in the impious attempt to become independent of God...”⁴¹ But one cannot contend with the fact that God cares for the establishment He, Himself brought into existence.

We also know God’s plan for government and nations did not end here. Rather, he elected the nation of Israel to function as His own holy nation (Exodus 19:6). God related to them through a Covenant which required administrative obedience to governmental laws which were to be enforced (Exodus 19:5). While that administration, like the administration previous, ended in failure (Matthew

⁴⁰ English, E. Shuyler, Notes on Genesis. “The New Scofield Study Bible.” (NASB, Paul S. Karleen et. al., eds., Oxford University Press: Oxford, UK). 1988. Print. Pg. 16.

⁴¹ Scofield, C.I. “Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth.” (Independent). 2014. Print. Pg. 6.

23:37-39), it is notable that God's work at this time was still primarily through the vessel of a law, a government, and a nation of people. And we also know that, one day in future, He intends to work through law, government, and nations for His glory again (Zachariah 14:9-21). Therefore, if we are to address political anxiety rightly we must understand that a desire for political processes to be just, and thereby glorifying to God, is not an immoral desire. It is a desire very much in line with God's own desire for the nations, which is not an anthropocentric desire for the nations to live in a "ho-hum" harmony, but rather that the nations worship and glorify God together (Zachariah 14:16).

Mark Saucy, a professor of systematic theology at Kyiv Theological Seminary, offers an important corrective to the views of non-dispensationalists, concerning political desires and anxieties.

He writes:

"I long for justice, peace and prosperity in this world and I long to be part of bringing it. Effectively, and finally, bringing it. I'm sick of evil's deceit and de-humanizing rot, and it is this passion for beauty and good that drives social-justice warriors of all stripes. It's the beautiful picture God made us for and that we all know deep down. And I submit that a Future Israel eschatology satisfies this call to our hearts better than its opposite."⁴²

⁴² Saucy, Mark. "Why Eschatology Matters." The Good Book Blog. Biola University.

<https://www.biola.edu/blogs/good-book-blog/2020/why-eschatology-matters>

Saucy identifies as a "progressive dispensationalist". That being said, as his statement above implies, he argues against Christ's current seat at the right hand of God as "fulfillment" or in any way connected to the Davidic Covenant promises in his book *The Kingdom of God in the Teachings of Jesus* (Saucy, 343-345). In so far as I can tell, in his singular published writing, as well as in other public writings like blogs (*The Good Book Blog*), he does not seem to use complementary hermeneutics either. Saucy's "progressive" stance more mimics the distinction perceived by Kenneth Berding between Progressive and "Classical" Dispensationalists ("What is Progressive Dispensationalism?" *the Good Book Blog*) in that he speaks of the indwelling Holy Spirit as a sort of "fulfillment". Therefore a sense in which a "spiritual" kingdom - as Berding puts it - is present; though Saucy himself uses the ideology and terminology of the "mystery" kingdom present in authors like C.I. Scofield ("Scofield Reference Bible," 1252), Clarence Mason Jr. (Eschatology 3 Notes, "The Thousand Year Kingdom Reign of Christ," ancientpath.net), and the New Scofield Bible (1342, 1351, 1667). Regardless, I feel Saucy's work in this case is appropriate for our study in its postponement-forward analysis of our political desires, which syncopates his theology with my own in this case, whatever other distinctions there may exist otherwise.

The desire for justice is not wrong. It is an inherent call to the purpose God gave to Adam (Genesis 1:28) and the purpose that God intends to restore through Christ (Revelation 2:26-27). The desire, though perverted into anxiety, for just and healthy societies is not something to be discouraged, but at its root is a desire which Christ intends to fulfill and satisfy. However, in our attempts to avoid dismissing a desire which is ultimately for Christ and for God's purpose for us, we must be sure not to elevate this purpose beyond its station in the present.

God instituted the Church as His steward in the present dispensation. With the closing of the dispensation of the Law, God imparted a specific mission to the Church as due worship through a reflection of Christ by pursuing the salvation and sanctification of the world (Matthew 28:19-20). And far too often, those who seek to legitimately address their desires, as well as encourage those with the same desire for justice, import commands from previous dispensations which do not have bearing on the present steward simply because they relate to their desires. Most often abused is the Administration of the Law under Israel. The commands of the decalogue given to Moses and the nation of Israel in Exodus 20 are often torn from their proper context, and the laws related to them, and applied to our current governments and to the Church herself. To this, Scofield offers a correction for application to both problems:

“Instead of pursuing her appointed path of separation from the world and following the Lord in her heavenly calling, she has used the Jewish Scriptures to justify herself lowering her purpose to the civilization of the world...”⁴³

⁴³ Scofield, “Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth.” 5.

The nature of the Church, as Scofield points out, is not a national purpose - even as a so-called “redemption” of national governance. This is a degradation of her purpose. Dr. Ryrie rightly noted as well that the Church, in distinction from Israel, is not a national body.⁴⁴ Rather, the Church is a people made up of all nations (Acts 1:8)! And its aims are notably not legal aims as those of previous dispensations, but aims to promote the grace of God given to all.⁴⁵ And rightly so, for it would be immature for the Church to go back within the progress of God’s revelation and attempt to live in an old framework of ordinance as though the Christ had not died and resurrected, established his Church and commissioned them (Hebrews 6:4-6; 9:1-28). The goals of the Church are firmly rooted in evangelism and discipleship as an international-spiritual community. And while both the administrative distinction and the distinction between prior stewards like Israel and the current stewardship of the Church may seem to discourage our desires at first glance, it is just this distinction which saves us from the crippling disappointment and anxiety wrought by attempting to find fulfillment of our political desires within the broken world system.

For the world system is a tainted one whose ruler is not in favor of the justice which our deep political desires long for. The world system is ruled over by Satan “the prince of this world” who “was within his rights” when he offered up the kingdoms of this world to Jesus in his temptation.⁴⁶ John tells us: “We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one,” (1 John 5:19). This transference of the governing nations under his power either came by the failure of

⁴⁴ Ryrie, Charles C. “Dispensationalism Today.” Chicago: Moody Press. 1971. Pg. 137-138.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 63.

⁴⁶ Ryrie, Charles C. Notes on Matthew. “Ryrie Study Bible.” (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2011) Print. Pg. 1159

Adam as Scofield suggests⁴⁷ or at the failure of the Tower of Babel by the abdication of the stewarding nations.⁴⁸ Either way, as Scofield says: “The present world system, organized upon the principles of force, greed, selfishness, ambition, and sinful pleasure, is his work...”⁴⁹ It is for this precise reason that we cannot place our political expectations upon this present age.⁵⁰ Satan has been given it until his appointed time, and so it is characterized by force, greed, selfishness, ect. It is little wonder that young Christians become filled with anxiety as their political desires are thwarted time and time again by the brokenness found in the world system and the outright malevolent influence of Satan.⁵¹

So then, keeping the administrative commands intact and contextualized within the progress of revelation, how does the Christian find satisfaction for these desires for societal justice? If the goals of the Church are evangelistic and discipleship oriented, which they most assuredly are, where do our

⁴⁷ Scofield, C.I. Notes on the Revelation. “Scofield Reference Bible.” (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1945) Print. Pg. 1350.

⁴⁸ A pattern may emerge when considering the reference in Revelation to the Jewish people as “a synagogue of Satan,” (Rev. 3:9) and to the apostate Church as the “whore of Babylon,” (Rev. 17:5) and of course to the whole of Adamic man as under the power of darkness in Johannine literature. Apostasy of the steward may lead to the institution being placed under Satan’s more direct control. However, this is the subject for some future study and cannot be discussed at length in this work.

⁴⁹ Scofield, C.I. “Scofield Reference Bible.” 1350.

⁵⁰ Baker, Bruce A. “Dispensationalism’s Evolving Theory of Political Interaction: How Roe v. Wade and Jerry Falwell Brought Dispensationalism from Rejecting Political Action to Embracing It.” Council on Dispensational Hermeneutics. 2020. Pg. 6-7.

Baker’s 2020 paper seems best to refer to here as he not only delineated the normative dispensational position on the kingdoms of this world, as more specifically referenced here, but he also expresses the shifting tides of the dispensational position as of late which have unfortunately led to some of the same dismissals or over-emphases even among dispensational interpreters whose framework should mitigate these issues.

⁵¹ Now, this is not to say that the Church in this present age has no place in justice within social arenas. However, it does mean that we address these arenas as the Church, not as a national body as Israel once was or as the Noahic Nations once were. Jesus calls for the visiting of the prisoner, whether falsely accused or otherwise, and calls for ministry to those who are poor (Matthew 25:36, 40; Luke 6:20; 14:13; 1 John 3:17). But at no point does Jesus advocate for these things as usurpations or collaborations with political powers (Mark 12:13-17; 1 Peter 2:13-14). Rather, the Church is called to address these ills within the sphere of their local congregations as expressions of “true religion” (James 1:27; 2:1-16). And throughout the New Testament there is no shortage of examples for how this can be done; though the most prominent is that of the establishment of the deacons (Acts 6:1-7).

desires for justice and participating in justice find their satisfaction? Here, the dispensational proposition of Premillennialism draws our attention to the future dispensation of the Kingdom.

According to Jesus in his statement to the Church at Thyatira:

“Nevertheless what you have, hold fast until I come. 'He who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, TO HIM I WILL GIVE AUTHORITY OVER THE NATIONS; AND HE SHALL RULE THEM WITH A ROD OF IRON, AS THE VESSELS OF THE POTTER ARE BROKEN TO PIECES, as I also have received authority from My Father; and I will give him the morning star.” (Revelation 2:25-28)

From a premillennial dispensational perspective, it is within the future reign of Jesus Christ that our desire for justice finds its fulfillment. But this fulfillment is not a benign extinguishing of our desires, as some may describe. Rather, it is a fulfillment that takes the flames of desire and gives them purpose within the context of our unification with Christ in His reign. Though often overlooked, even among dispensationalists, Christ offers the promise of sharing in His rulership. As Paul so harshly expounded to the Corinthians: “Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more matters of this life?” (1 Corinthians 6:3). While other positions, as Saucy notes: “are left trying to answer this human heart cry either in this Age—an epic Non-Starter against the increasing accounts of Christian martyrdom—or with some insipid picture of a rule in or from Heaven,”⁵² the dispensational position looks forward to a day when our desires are sanctified and directed toward active participation in justice upon the earth. The dispensational eschatology, “says we get to fulfill our calling against evil in Christ’s millennial kingdom where we will rule evil, bring justice, peace, generosity and prosperity to

⁵² Saucy, “Why Eschatology Matters.” The Good Book Blog.

the nations of the world.”⁵³ In the dispensational eschatology, and only in the dispensational eschatology, can the desires of our whole selves, including our political-social selves, find an answer which does not dismiss the desire nor direct it to a flawed presentism.

However, there remains the question of the present longings which we have. While it is important to understand the eschatological fulfillment of our desires, how we handle these desires now remains important. To what do we focus ourselves upon in collaboration with our good desires - such that we do not simply wistfully long for some future day. In what manner do we participate now in the justice we so long to have?

Firstly, we must focus our minds upon the patience of God within the present dispensation. Peter grounds our eschatological longings wholesale when he says: “The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.” (1 Peter 3:9). In the present dispensation, God is extending grace out to all people. The fulfillment of these desires is slow because God is gracious and merciful to those who have not yet heard. And speaking of that same fulfillment as Peter, though concerning the nation of Israel, Paul writes: “For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery -so that you will not be wise in your own estimation -that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in;” (Romans 11:25). And so, if we are to see our desires fulfilled in the reigning Christ at His return, our focus should be on evangelism. And so we arrive back at the very purpose of the Church which God has called us to. For while we have no comprehensive idea what a “fullness” of

⁵³ Ibid.

the Gentiles might be, it is not until that fullness enters that the fulfillment of our desires can arrive. Therefore, if we are to claim to take seriously the issues of justice in our time, we must adamantly pursue the purpose of the Church in making disciples of all nations. That is our present expression of our desires until our desires can be fulfilled by participation in the reigning Christ.

Through drawing out dispensational propositions we can capably address the anxieties of young people without dismissing their desires or casting them upon a fruitless effort; instead reorienting our desires to both participation in our present mission in the Church and our future participation in Christ's reign. Each step is imperative, as are the hermeneutics by which these propositions naturally arise.⁵⁴ For this reason, no other perspective but one which is firmly dispensational can properly address the political anxieties of young people. It is necessary to understand the doxological purpose of God in every sphere of the creation, including the political-social sphere. It is also imperative that administrations/stewardships frame our thinking such that we acknowledge God's care for national justice as evidenced in His past dealings and future dealings in which we will participate while avoiding application of our desires to a presentist attempt at God-less-utopia within the fallen world system. Lastly, it is important to acknowledge the present means by which we progress toward that reality, namely: faithfulness to the present administration of God's plan. With a single piece missing or misunderstood, anxieties are easily fed and established in any heart. Because without an understanding of God's purpose, past dealings, and plan for the Church in both

⁵⁴ Ryrie, Charles C. "Dispensationalism." (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995) Print. Pg. 85.

the present and future, there can only be anxiety at the hopeless state of present affairs which we can neither wholly repair nor ignore.

Dispensational Propositions and the Environment

Dispensationalism is also unique in its addressing of environmental anxiety in that it confesses God's express purpose for the environment beyond functioning as a backdrop for the "human story". Though some have mishandled or misunderstood God's expressed environmental teleology, and therefore addressed the anxieties of young people with dismissal, dispensationalism's proposals provide a distinct role for the environment, not in the story of man, but in the story of God and His plan for the future. God cares about the environment distinctly and not only in its effects on humans.

Christopher Cone, in his book *Redacted Dominionism*, explains:

"Yet redacted dominionism results in a doxological rather than an anthropocentric model, recognizing that all things exist to glorify God, and this function is not a responsibility only of humanity. Being doxological and decidedly non-anthropocentric, redacted dominionism asserts that all creatures only have instrumental value as determined by their Creator. As such, human and non-human beings share the same kind of value, and simply express that valuation within varying roles defined by their Creator."⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Cone, Christopher. "Redacted Dominionism: A Biblical Approach to Grounding Environmental Responsibility." (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers. 2012) Print. Pg. 26.

"Redacted Dominionism" represents what I would say is the normative dispensational perspective on the dispensation of innocence; that Adam's roles were dispensational in character and following his failure, they were redacted; as opposed to perspectives which would posit a continuous responsibility on the part of human beings to "multiply", "fill the earth", and "subdue it". Ironically, this position *further enables* our care for the environment rather than hindering it.

As dispensationalism centers upon the doxological purpose of God in all things,⁵⁶ dispensationalists see the creation within its telos as a fellow worshiper of God through its proper functioning, rather than as a non-expressive entity to be exploited. And with this, Scripture resounds in its truthful proclamation that nature, in its proper functions, glorifies God. Psalm 19, for example, proclaims:

“The heavens are telling of the glory of God; And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands. Day to day pours forth speech, And night to night reveals knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words; Their voice is not heard. Their line has gone out through all the earth, And their utterances to the end of the world. In them He has placed a tent for the sun, which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber; It rejoices as a strong man to run his course. Its rising is from one end of the heavens, And its circuit to the other end of them; And there is nothing hidden from its heat. The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul; The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.” (Psalm 19:1-7)

Furthermore, Paul’s epistle to the Romans echoes out the reflective character of nature by which it proclaims His nature (Romans 1:20). And so if we confess, as any Christian rightly does, that God is most concerned for His own glory, we must confess He is uniquely concerned for His creation.

God shows His unique care for creation throughout the Scriptures; and within the very narrative of the Bible, we can see a unique care for creation shown throughout. God created the earth “good” as a collaborating worshiper under the stewardship of man (Genesis 1-2); but when man fell into sin, the creation itself was subject to futility and “slavery to corruption,” (Romans 8:20). God however, did not cease looking after creation despite the abrogation of man from his stewardship. God protected the wildlife from the judgment against man through Noah and preserved its biodiversity

⁵⁶ Ryrie. “Dispensationalism Today.” 46.

through selection of every kind of animal (Genesis 6:19-20). God also protected the creation in His Law, given to Moses at Mount Sinai. For within the Law was the provision of the sabbath for the land as well as the Year of Jubilee (Leviticus 25). When Israel did not celebrate these sabbaths and Jubilees, as well as failing to observe God's other commandments, He exiled them from the land: "to fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed its sabbaths. All the days of its desolation it kept sabbath until seventy years were complete." (2 Chronicles 36:21). Therefore, God clearly not only purposed the creation for a specific end, but made provision for the land while it suffered under the futility of Adam.

The desires of young people concerning the protection of creation, therefore, are good desires. The desire to see a creation freed from the troubles being brought on by mankind's disobedience and sinfulness is a good desire. It is a desire to see God glorified by the proper functioning of the ecosystems across creation. James Johnson rightly reminds us: "Appreciating and conserving biodiversity as Noah once did makes perfect sense for biblical creationists."⁵⁷ If we confess that God created the earth to act as a worshiper through the proper functioning of its ecosystems and natural orders, it is only natural that we would desire for creation to function in that manner. In fact, it is even natural to want to mitigate destructive human factors by which the creation is being subjected to even

⁵⁷ Johnson, James J.S. "Should Creationists Brook Loss of Trout?" Institute for Creation Research. ICR.org. 2021. <https://www.icr.org/article/should-creationists-brook-loss-of-a-trout>
Also see James Johnson's presentation on God's value of biodiversity presented at the 2022 Chafer Theological Seminary Pastors' Conference. Also worth review is the following:
Johnson, James J.S. "God Fitted Habitats for Biodiversity." Institute for Creation Research. ICR.org. 2013. <https://www.icr.org/article/god-fitted-habitats-for-biodiversity>

further torment and futility.⁵⁸ However, we must not elevate these desires to levels of priority beyond their current application in our administration.

In the present administration, God has begun a stewardship in the Church made up of Jews and Gentiles with the responsibility of making disciples. This administration is distinct from the previous administration under the stewardship of Israel and their responsibilities under the Law. While in the previous administration, God used the Law to mitigate human sinfulness and its effects,⁵⁹ which includes environmental and ecological ramifications, in the present administration God has given freedom from the Law and its requirements as they have now served their purpose. The greater purpose of that Law was not permanent nor temporary mitigation, but to show the necessity of Divine intervention in reversing the state into which Adam placed us, and the creation (Galatians 3:24). In light of the present dispensation and the revelation of redemption through Jesus Christ, we must remember that ecological damages, like all consequences of sin, cannot be legislated away or mitigated out of existence - for this was the very thing the Law proved in Israel (Galatians 3:22). Instead, it must be met head on by the One who is capable of reversing the consequences of sin, atoning for all disobedience, and giving resurrected life and restored doxological capability to both man and the created order alike.

However, this does not mean, that God's doxological purpose with Creation has simply been set aside. Shawn Lazar rightly reminds us:

⁵⁸ Johnson. "Should Creationists Brook Loss of Trout?"

⁵⁹ Showers, Ranald. Lesson 4. "Dispensational Theology." Lectures. BBN Bible Institute. <https://bbn1.bbnradio.org/bbnbienglish/course/29/>

“Did you know that salvation is not just about God rescuing individuals but also rescuing creation? The prophets spoke about that. For example, Isaiah looked forward to the time when God would remake heaven and earth (cf. Isa 65:17; 66:22), when the deserts would blossom with flowers (Isa 35:1), and when predators would live in peace with prey (Isa 11:6). The prophets understood that salvation is cosmic.”⁶⁰

And to this, the New Scofield Reference Bible affirms: “Adam brought down into his ruin the old creation, of which he was lord and head. Christ will bring into moral unity with God, and into eternal life, all of the new creation of which He is Lord and Head (Eph. 1:22-23). Even the animal and material creation, cursed for man’s sake (Gen. 3:17), will be delivered by Christ.”⁶¹ This eschatological restoration of the earth as well as mankind is the very Adamic promise, the first promise of the Redeeming Seed - that the futility brought on by Satan’s deception would be reversed and the snake himself destroyed (Genesis 3:15). And it is this same promise that the creation itself is looking forward to - “For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God... that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God,” (Romans 8:19; 21).

⁶⁰ Lazar, Shawn. “God Will Save Creation (Romans 8:19-25).” Grace In Focus Blog. Grace Evangelical Society. <https://faithalone.org/blog/god-will-save-creation-romans-819-25/>

I would like to acknowledge that, very recently and after this paper had been completed, Dr. Shawk Lazar is said to have made comments which amount to a denial of Christian orthodoxy on the issue of the exclusivity of Christ’s promise. I have not been able to personally verify these claims due to the fact that video and audio records of these alleged comments have been removed from online platforms. While these comments would be regrettable and my sincere desire would be for Dr. Lazar to deny or recant these claims, on the issue of cosmic salvation in relation to the redemption promised to Eve and separately related in Romans, Dr. Lazar offers sound insight. It is also insight I have been able to find nowhere else. His perspective in this case reflects his traditional dispensational position well, despite the possibility of his departure concerning other imperative matters.

⁶¹ Schuyler, English. Notes on Romans. “New Scofield Reference Bible.” 1599.

Premillennialism, and most particularly dispensational premillennialism, is necessary in order to have hope beyond current circumstances to the day when creation will see its restoration. As Dr. Ryrie notes: “the glory of the God who is sovereign in human history must be seen in the present heavens and earth... the covenant view which sees the course of history continuing the present struggle between good and evil until terminated by the beginning of eternity, obviously does not have any goal within temporal history and is therefore pessimistic.”⁶² The dispensational Christian is encouraged to look forward to the Kingdom restoration, which is not the termination of present affairs but the restoration of the present creation and reversal of the curse in time, at the return of our Messiah. This in confirmation of the promise given to Adam that *this present creation* would be restored under the Seed of the Woman, not obliterated for the presentation of an entirely other creation. As Lazar again notes: “God intended humanity to live as physical beings in a physical universe. So to save us, God must also save creation.”⁶³ John Walvoord then further explains:

“The world in general will be delivered from the unproductiveness which characterized great portions of the globe in prior dispensations. Widespread peace and justice, spiritual blessing, and abundance of food will result in a general era of prosperity... the many factors which produce poverty, distress, and unequal distribution of goods will to a great extent be non-existent in the millennium... the curse which creation has endured since Adam’s sin will be in part suspended as even animal creation will be changed.”⁶⁴

⁶² Ryrie. “Dispensationalism.” 18.

⁶³ Lazar. “God Will Save Creation (Romans 8:19-25).”

⁶⁴ Walvoord, John. “The Millennial Kingdom.” (Findlay: Dunham Publishing Company, 1968). Print. Pg. 318.

For the desires of so many young people to see creation respected, restored, and the sin-inspired ecological destruction permanently terminated, the Bible points toward the Messiah who is able to reverse environmental disaster as well as restore responsibility and capability to those who subjected the creation through disobedience.

At the present time, however, there remains a work given to the Church which does contribute to the restoration of the environment. Though perhaps we do not see it as such, the call to evangelism and discipleship is itself a means by which God, at the present time, is progressively enacting His plan of cosmic restoration. Once again, just a few chapters on from Paul's declaration that the creation "waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God," (Romans 8:19), he relates the timing of the restoration of Israel, which coincides with the restoration of the creation (Isaiah 35:1-4). Paul explains that the restoration will not occur until the "fullness of the Gentiles has come in" to salvation (Romans 11:25).⁶⁵ Therefore, though the number and nature of this revelation remains difficult to understand, we must be diligently seeking to make disciples of all nations in keeping with the administration given to the Church. For by doing so, we continue to move toward our restoration and the restoration of creation for which we long.

The anxieties of young people concerning the environment are not misplaced desires. God desires an innocent environment which functions in accordance with its nature in order to glorify Him. God also has preserved the natural order throughout Scripture, with the intention of providing a restoration for the environment itself. However, these desires should not become untamed anxieties

⁶⁵ Perhaps a parallel expansion of the "revelation of the sons of God" mentioned in 8:19.

which elevate our environmental dilemmas to standards of obedience God does not require of our administration. Such elevation only leads to hopelessness or pride, as any observance of law tends toward. The environment remains under the curse and our efforts cannot reverse this futility, but the affairs of the creation are not hopeless. The Scriptures are clear, Christ, at His return, will begin the process of lifting the curse and the environment will have its deliverance alongside God's people. Therefore, in the meantime, our desires should compel us to work toward that end - bringing all people to a knowledge of Christ and discipling them to obey Christ. Only in a dispensational perspective can this environmental hope be maintained.

Dispensational Propositions and Afterlife Anxiety

When addressing issues of afterlife anxiety and assurance, few often understand the theological implications of an assurance-less or assurance minimal position. What we believe about the promise of salvation issued by God and how it operates speaks intimately to how we understand God Himself. C.E.B. Cranfield, speaking of God's promise to Israel in his Romans commentary, draws out this issue well. "The very reliability of God's purpose as the ground for Christian hope is called into question by the exclusion of the majority of Jews. If the truth is that God's purpose with Israel has been frustrated, then what sort of a basis for Christian hope is God's purpose?"⁶⁶ If God's promises are frustrated by human failure or only become effective by some other means than their stated means, God becomes impotent. Robert Witmer draws out these implications yet further when speaking of Romans 9 -

⁶⁶ Cranfield, C.E.B. "Romans: A Shorter Commentary." (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company) 1985. Pg. 215

“Paul here discussed God’s sovereign choice because of a practical problem. The Jews gloried in the fact that as Israelites they were God’s Chosen People. But now in God’s program of salvation in the church, Jewish involvement was decreasing... Had God, then, abandoned the Jewish people?”⁶⁷

The problem of assurance thus is double: doubting God’s promise either calls into question His sovereign ability to fulfill the promise or His reliability and trustworthiness in fulfilling the promise. A proper view of assurance is therefore vital; any view which calls into question God’s promise as one which besmirches God’s glorious character.

It is also right that one would desire to have assurance of their afterlife. Hell is a real locale, as is the Lake of Fire, and the punishments contained within both are terrifying (Revelation 9:1-11; 19:20; 20:10). An existential fear of the Lake of Fire is healthy and natural (Matthew 5:29-30). To desire eternal torment outside of fellowship with God would be wholly unnatural and depraved in the deepest sense. Attempts to delegitimize the desire to escape judgment are ridiculous to say the least. All people have an innate knowledge of their lawlessness and proclivity for error (Romans 1:18-19); as well as an understanding that their lawlessness must be met with justice (James 2:10). Enn’s dismissal of judgment⁶⁸ goes against the innate understanding we have concerning law, punishment, and our own natures. Young people are entirely justified in desiring to be assured that their afterlife experience will not be one of eternal conscious torment.

⁶⁷ Witmer, Robert. “God’s Righteousness Revealed in Sovereign Choice.” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*. Edt. Walvoord, John and Roy B. Zuck. 1984. Pg. 476

⁶⁸ See footnote 31.

Throughout the Scriptures, we see God intentionally interacting with His stewards to provide assurance of His promises to them. Unlike other administrative distinctives, God throughout the Scriptures has acted in grace concerning salvation and promises of restoration through the Messiah.⁶⁹ One such example of God's continued assurance to His stewards is in His interactions with Abraham. Despite Abraham's continued disobedience, God continuously meets Abraham's failures with restatements that the promise will be fulfilled (Genesis 13:14-18; 15:1-21; 17:1-27; 18:10, 17-19; 22:16-18). Abraham's actions have no bearing on the assurance of God's promises to him, rather Abraham's failures and God's faithfulness in response merely magnifies God's glorious character as promise keeper. We see similar interactions throughout the Old Testament, most especially in the writings of the prophets, in which God means to reassure His people of their promises despite their failures and the resulting exile.⁷⁰ God clearly desires His people to have assurance in the promises He has made to them; the promise of everlasting life to those who believe is no different (John 3:16; 1 John 5:13; Revelation 2:7; 11; 3:5).

The question of many young people, especially Christian young people, is where one looks for assurance. Grant Hawley notes that, in distinction from non-dispensational perspectives, "the belief that assurance should be found in looking to Christ and His promises alone and never to works was

⁶⁹ Ryrie. "Dispensationalism Today." 123.

⁷⁰ Too many examples exist to adequately list them here. A small sample would be: Isaiah 9:1-7, Isaiah 11, Jeremiah 31:1-26, Jeremiah 33, Ezekiel 36 (most especially 22-25), Ezekiel 37:11-28, Ezekiel 40-48, Daniel 12:13, Hosea 11:8-11, Hosea 13:9-14:9, Joel 2:18-27, Zephaniah 3, Zechariah 12:10-14, Zechariah 14.

The prophets contain numerous reaffirmations of the Abrahamic Covenant, the Palestinian ["Moabitic"] Covenant, and the Davidic Covenant.

nearly universally held among the early Dispensationalists.”⁷¹ Hawley points to the writings of several dispensationalists who defend a christocentric assurance, such as James H. Brookes who writes:

“It is my earnest desire and effort to turn your thoughts entirely away from yourself to the Saviour, for it is the most melancholy business that can engage even a redeemed sinner to be probing into his own soul to find some assurance that he is saved. You can never find it there, but only in the word; and, thank God! having once seen it in the word, you can see it every day and every hour, and as often as you read and believe what Jesus says.”⁷²

The proper response to a lack of assurance is not to attempt to drum up assurance from subjective experience or assessment of goodness; rather, it is in surveying the work of Christ by which the promises are assured to us. This is precisely Paul’s argument regarding the promise of everlasting life -

“And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied. But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead.” (1 Corinthians 15:17-21)

Paul’s assurance for the resurrection of the dead into eternal life is the historical fact that Christ has been raised. And conversely, if the dead are not raised then Christ has not been raised and there is no

⁷¹ Hawley, Grant. “Free Grace and Dispensationalism: Intimately Linked Part 3.” Faithalone.org. Grace Evangelical Society. [pg. 25] <https://faithalone.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Hawley-1.pdf>

⁷² Ibid. [27]

James Hall Brookes. “Salvation: The Way Made Plain” (Philadelphia: American Sunday-School Union, 1871), 445. Available online at <http://books.google.com/books?id=aRgHAAAAQAAJ&pg=PP1#v=onepage&q&f=false>.

cause for Christian faith at all (1 Corinthians 15:16). But upon surveying the work of Christ in His resurrection, a resurrection promised time and time again, we can have assurance that Christ will keep his promise to also resurrect the believer into eternal life. Therefore, assurance is found just as Brooke said: “as you read and believe what Jesus says.”⁷³ For we know from the Scriptures that we ourselves are not sufficient, and so no genuine assurance can be based upon us. Instead, our assurance comes from the resurrection by which we have objective historical evidence of the validity of Christ’s promise. This may not seem propositionally dispensational, however dispensationalism remains distinct from other views in that God’s promises are assured in Christ and cannot be thwarted by mankind’s insolence.

For example, no view of assurance can rightly reflect God’s faithfulness despite our own faithlessness which does not confess the future, literal fulfillment of the promises made to the nation of Israel. As Robert Witmer noted, and even a non-dispensationalist like C.E.B. Cranfield confesses, Israel’s promises are linked to our own in that God will certainly not provide more assurance to the present steward than He has to previous stewards. Joseph Parle sums it up this way: “If God did not fulfill or maintain His covenantal promises to Israel, what gives us as the Church any confidence that He will do it for us?”⁷⁴ In order for any Christian to have assurance of the promise of God, one must confess God’s intention for the nation of Israel is the restoration of the people to the land, to the status of national supremacy, and to an everlasting kingdom under the Messiah. Confessing otherwise leads to a theology in which God is untrustworthy in what He claims, and therefore Christianity itself

⁷³ Hawley. “Dispensationalism and Free Grace: Intimately Linked Part 3.” 27.
James Hall Brookes. “Salvation: The Way Made Plain.” 445.

⁷⁴ Joseph Parle. “Dispensationalism Pt. 1: What is it with Dr. Cone, Dr. Parle, and Dr. Stallard.” Mar. 18th, 2021, The Learn the Word Podcast. Produced by Word of Life Bible Institute. Audio-Visual. 35:27.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SnGs3zpAj4g>

becomes untenable to maintain. After all, Christianity relies on God being trustworthy in what He claims. In order to properly address the afterlife anxiety of young people and provide any real assurance of God's promises, one must confess an assurance of Israel's promise as well.

Another example lies within the uniquely dispensational distinction between the Law and Grace. The Law itself served a dispensational purpose, not a salvific or assurance based one (Galatians 3:24-26). Scofield writes:

“Christ bore the curse of the law, and redeemed the believer both from the curse and from the dominion of the law. Law neither justifies a sinner nor sanctifies a believer. The believer is both dead to the law and redeemed from it, so that he is ‘not under the law, but under grace.’”⁷⁵

Where other views would see the Law functioning as an assuring and sanctifying agent, the dispensational position administratively distinguishes between Law and Grace, relieving the believer of association with that Law which has now served its purpose. Any position which postures that the Law remains operative in the life of the believer, especially as a means of assurance, unsurprisingly results in the person feeling condemnation rather than assurance in keeping with the actual function of the Law. The dispensational position is therefore poised to fully assure the anxious because it delineated between works of the Law and the Grace given in salvation on which assurance is built.

Dispensational Premillennialism also serves an important role in ensuring this assurance with consistency through a teleology of works as means of fellowship and justification at the judgment seat of Christ in distinction from the faith necessary in final justification at the Great White Throne.

⁷⁵ Scofield. Notes on Galatians. “Scofield Reference Bible.” 1245.

Hawley reminds the reader - “The Judgment Seat of Christ (2 Cor 5:10) as distinct from the Great White Throne Judgment of Rev 20:11-15 is a concept that is unique to Dispensationalism.”⁷⁶ And it is an important one for centering assurance on the work of Christ and not the work of the believer.

Hawley writes: “While every major aspect of Covenant Theology has a significant impact on soteriology, nothing has more of an impact than removing the Judgment Seat of Christ from the equation—a byproduct of kingdom-now millennial views.”⁷⁷ And he continues:

“When the Millennial Kingdom is removed from the equation—and the Judgment Seat of Christ with it—the non-Dispensationalist is presented with a difficult problem. Passages discussing kingdom inheritance (which is according to works) are equated with passages about the new birth (which is by grace through faith and apart from works).”⁷⁸

The dispensational premillennial position has no problem with such passages however because distinction is kept between the Judgment Seat of Christ which relates to works and the inheritance of rewards, and the Great White Throne where justification is freely given to those who believe. The authors of the New Scofield delineate these passages well stating: “In the N.T. Scriptures, God offers the lost, salvation; and the faithful service of the saved, He offers rewards. These passages are clearly distinguished by remembering that salvation is invariably spoken of as a free gift, whereas rewards are earned by works.”⁷⁹ While other positions elevate works to a factor of assurance, dispensationalism maintains an importance within the theology of good works, while maintaining their distinction from

⁷⁶ Hawley. “Dispensationalism and Free Grace: Intimately Linked Part 3.” [34].

⁷⁷ Hawley, Grant. “Dispensationalism and Free Grace: Intimately Linked Part 2.” faithalone.org. Grace Evangelical Society. [93] <https://faithalone.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Hawley.pdf>

⁷⁸ *Ibid.* [94]

⁷⁹ English. Notes on 1 Corinthians. “New Scofield Reference Bible.” 1617.

eternal salvation which is by faith. Therefore, assurance of afterlife prosperity can depend wholly upon the work of Christ through faith, rather than on the subjective basis of assessing our own works. When the distinction between the judgments is dissolved, so too is the assurance of the believer as works necessarily enter the salvation equation.

In summary, while faith in Jesus Christ and assurance on the basis of his works and not our own should be considered a simply Christian conviction, it cannot be convincingly maintained outside of the dispensational perspective. Without the various distinctives of dispensationalism, the afterlife anxieties of young people cannot be properly addressed in any consistent manner. One will need to either dismiss their anxieties as unfounded, simply denying the innate sense of coming eschatological condemnation in people, or elevate existential anxiety as a vehicle for gaining some sort of meager assurance through works, resulting in either distress or arrogance. Only within dispensational propositions can the afterlife anxieties of young people be addressed in a manner that affirms God's glorious character as a faithful keeper of promises, affirms the desire to be assured, and provides the objective basis in Christ's resurrection by which assurance can be gained and maintained.

Conclusions:

Concerning the Anxieties of Young People and the Problem of Accessibility

Millennials and Generation Z, whether Christian or unchristian, are the most anxious generation on record; and in order to address these anxieties, we must present a full and whole understanding of God, our desires, and His plan in human history. The desires of young people which pervert themselves into anxiety are not unfounded or carnal wishes of a hapless people. Rather, they

are innate longings for political, environmental, and personal restoration under the reign of Christ whether the young person is aware of it or not. And in many ways their anxieties are not unwarranted, as for many of them they have not encountered satisfying answers which adequately address these desires - certainly not in the world, but also not within the Church. Far too often, these anxieties have either been dismissed or elevated in Christian communities both conservative and liberal. Through use of dispensational propositions however, the desires of young people for political justice, environmental restoration, and afterlife prosperity can be assured and adequately addressed by the introduction of God's doxological purpose; His proven progressive plan toward restoration within history counterbalanced by the distinctions between administrations and stewards within that plan; and through a consistent Dispensational Premillennialism which sets Christ in His coming as the fulfillment of every desire, promise, and administration. By this means, the young person is called to look upon Christ for fulfillment of their desires as the one who will bring political justice, edenic environmental restoration, and a sure prosperity in the resurrected afterlife.

The concern of this work has been for the one whom Jesus describes as: "the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful," (Matthew 13:22). Without a proper understanding of dispensational truth which is accessible and related to present concerns, more and more young people will be like the seed that falls on thorns, "choked out by the worry of the world." If we are to plant and develop fruitful believers on good soil, we must clear the thorns as we are able. Primarily, this is done through explicit evangelism and discipleship which is clear about God's

purpose with our world, His unfolding plan throughout every administration, the distinctions therein, and the Premillennial restoration which God has revealed in His Word.

Secondly, though perhaps lesser in concern, is dissemination of explicitly dispensational materials in public formats. Throughout this work, articles which dismiss or mishandle the anxieties of young people have been referenced which are public, postured by popular resource sites, and easily accessible online. Whereas, many of the works cited in rebuttal are obscure, older, and no longer easily obtained. Mediums like blog, Youtube video lectures, and podcasting are a few examples of distribution popularly frequented by young people. Publications and other written works, while helpful, are not so accessible to young people who often either do not feel they have the time to read lengthy works, nor the desire to expend monetary resources to obtain them. Online resource distribution is free, openly accessible, and abbreviated such that they appeal to the constraints felt by younger audiences. If we are to properly make disciples of all young people, we must adopt resource distribution methods which have as few barriers between the audience and the truth as possible.

And lastly, we must be sure to make these resources known to our congregations. Many sermons in Bible-believing, even dispensational churches, continue with quotes from a variety of sources without a single dispensationalist in the bunch. If we want to be intentional about relieving the anxieties of young people, we must familiarize them with the resources which stand the best chance of relieving these anxieties as opposed to those who will not. This includes not only those who have passed on to glory, but also most especially those who are currently alive and writing who can be contacted for further clarification on these matters. Congregants will seek out the resources they are

familiar with, not those of which they have never heard. Therefore, we need to make sure our people are explicitly introduced to dispensational theologians on these topics.

The problem remains that, for both young people within the Church, and young people outside of the Church, there is very little access to resources which relate these truths clearly and unambiguously in relation to their desires. So long as dispensational theology remains cloistered among the academics or as a private issue for which debate is not necessary, young people, both saved and unsaved, will continue to be disserved and resigned to a life of anxious longing. What is necessary is explicit dispensational teaching both evangelistically and as an essential part of our discipleship of new believers which grounds our desires in the imminent coming of our Lord to restore all things in accordance with His promise.