“William Watson plows new ground in researching the history of eschatological thought prior to the nineteenth century. He has uncovered previously undiscovered sources from the English Reformation who were wrestling with the same issues which John Nelson Darby later formulated into classical dispensationalism. His research resets the discussion of eschatology in its proper historical context. To put it simply, Darby did not invent the pre-tribulational rapture idea.”

Ed Hindson, D.Min., D.Phil.
Dean & Distinguished Professor of Religion
School of Religion, Liberty University

“William Watson’s comprehensive research in Dispensationalism before Darby demonstrates the historical fallacy in the frequent claim that elements of dispensational theology, such as a pretribulational rapture, only came into existence in the early 1800s. Dealing with the Reformation and post-Reformation era, particularly English sources from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Watson marshals a large amount of information in the original writings to give historical perspective to the debate. Within twenty years, the argument that dispensationalism is a “Johnny-come-lately” theology may completely vanish in light of the growing research of which Watson’s work is a part. In this way, the methodological and theological issues will be resolved where they need to be resolved—in the exegesis of the Bible itself. Watson’s work is well worth the read.”

Mike Stallard, Ph.D.
Dean and Professor of Systematic Theology
Baptist Bible Seminary
Moderator, Council on Dispensationalism

“William Watson has done the spadework, researching post-Reformation eschatology beliefs in the English-speaking world. He reveals their wide-spread belief in premillennialism and developing views of the rapture. Anyone interested in such issues will need to read Watson’s groundbreaking work.”

Thomas D. Ice, Ph.D.
Executive Director
Pre-Trib Research Center
THE
Great Allize:
OR,
Day of JUBILEE,
Delivered
In Four SERMONS
ON
Rev. Ch. 26. Ver. 12, 13, 14, 15
Whereunto are annexed,
Two SERMONS upon the
First Chapter of the Canticles, ver. 6, 7.
The last Impression carefully
Corrected by the Author,
SAMUEL SMITH.

Isaiah 55. ver. 3.
Hearken and your Soul shall live.
Dispensationalism before Darby: Seventeenth-Century and Eighteenth-Century English Apocalypticism

William C. Watson
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Preface

My primary motivation for beginning the research that culminated in this book stemmed from an exchange with a colleague at Colorado Christian University, Dr. Johann Kim, professor of New Testament studies. Dr. Kim and I were debating the ideas of dispensationalism and Christian Zionism before a large audience in the spring of 2007 when he declared that these ideas were developed 150 years ago in the mind of John Nelson Darby. Having spent decades digging through archives and databases of pre-Victorian English literature published material in conjunction with other studies, I had regularly encountered apocalyptic material that seemed similar to Darby’s, and I decided after that debate to dedicate my time to studying them. Since informing colleagues of my work, I have received responses similar to those James Robertson received in the early eighteenth century while writing on the book of Revelation:

Some are not ashamed directly to flout at, and spit Contempt upon these that meddle with the Exposition of this Prophecy; which is an indirect Battering of a great Part of the Word of God. Thus Dr. South, in one of his Sermons, affirms, That none but a Madman will meddle with the Revelation; or, if he has wits at the Beginning, before he has done they will be cracked. … And Davies, a Welsh bombastic Barrister, has the Impudence to insult a learned and reverend Prelate, yet alive, because he consumed two full Years and more on this Prophecy; and adds … that when he had done, … he was ashamed to make them publick. … [N]or do I doubt but that learned Man’s Endeavours may see the Light, to the Shame of his Adversaries.¹

The study of eschatology and Bible prophecy has always attracted more than its fair share of scoffers.

The method I followed in this work was to spend four years studying only primary sources before reading the historians and theologians. This was made

¹ James Robertson, *Kaina kai Palaia, Things New and Old: or, an Exposition of the Book of the Revelation* (Edinburgh, 1730), vi.

vii
possible by using the search engines of Early English Books Online (EEBO) and the Eighteenth-Century Short Title Catalogue (ESTC/ECCO). Only later did I check my conclusions with that of other writers, historians, and theologians.

My apologies to readers for quoting at length so many passages from the primary sources; my intent is to satisfy any speculation that the passages have been taken out of context or that my own interpretations have been imposed on the sources. This is not a popular work expressing eschatological speculation, but an academic endeavor, an attempt to discover what was believed centuries ago. My conclusion is that the ideas of philo-Semitism, premillennialism, and even pretribulationism were more prevalent before the nineteenth century than many have supposed. Further, many of those revered by contemporary preterists—such as Westminster Assembly divines, Anglican bishops, and renowned Puritans on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean—were actually premillennialists. While preterists claim that premillennialism is new, it is actually preterism that was considered an innovation in the early eighteenth century.

I have used more than 350 primary sources, most of which have not been read (much less cited) for centuries. This is due largely to the fact that the writings are either unfamiliar or previously inaccessible to many researchers. My hope is that other scholars will build upon my research, refining and correcting any oversights. For the sake of accuracy, the archaic spellings of the original sources have been retained, even though doing so makes slower reading of the text by present-day readers. Italics are used within a quote, a practice common at the time, when the author of the quote is citing the Bible.
Acknowledgments

I am thankful to Early English Books Online (EEBO) for its collection of more than 100,000 titles published in English from the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries, made easily accessible to the public. Thanks also to the following archives: the Huntington Library, the British Library, the Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, and the National Library of Wales. Additional thanks to Talbot Theological Seminary, where I was rooted in the Scriptures, and to the University of California Riverside, where I studied under some of the finest scholars of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century English history and received a fellowship to study in England. While a graduate student at UCR, I participated in the compilation of the Eighteenth-Century Short Title Catalogue (ESTC), the American branch of which was headed up by my dissertation chair Dr. Henry Snyder. The ESTC, now the Eighteen-Century Collection On-line (ECCO), is the eighteenth-century equivalent of EEBO, which covers the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries. Thanks as well to Oxford-Brookes University, which provided me a fellowship where I began the research for this book.

Thanks to Colorado Christian University, which pays my salary and financed research trips to the UK. I owe special thanks to all those who promoted my research and corrected oversights in this work. I especially thank Tim LaHaye, Thomas Ice, Ed Hindson, H. Wayne House, Timothy J. Demy, Rachael Wilson, Amy Cole, Amy Landheer, Stephen Rost, Jeff Shaw, and Kathy Decker.
“[S]ome say it is novelty, and thereupon dislike it, but its ancieneter than Justin Martyr, its an Apostolical truth.”
Increase Mather
Chapter 1

Concepts of Dispensations and a Millennium Prior to the Reformation

It is often claimed that dispensationalism and Christian Zionism are of recent origin and that the ideas were developed in the Victorian era.\(^1\) I have trouble accepting this claim, because though not labeled as such, I have continually encountered these ideas during decades of research on seventeenth- and eighteenth-century English clergy. No one doubts the existence of millenarians in the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century but they sprung from the radical Anabaptist fringes. They were also numbered among the Puritans of the seventeenth century. Most Puritans were historicists, believing they were in the midst of apocalyptic events that they traced through Church history.

The consensus of those who study the history of biblical prophetic interpretation holds that futurist premillennialism (believing that apocalyptic events

are in the future), especially dispensationalism (holding the expectation that a rapture, a great tribulation with a literal Antichrist and battle of Armageddon, will culminate in the return of Christ to rule on earth for a thousand years) and Christian Zionism (holding that the Jewish people are still God’s uniquely chosen people, God’s promises to them are still in effect, they have a role to play in apocalyptic events, and they will return to the land God gave them with Jesus Christ later returning as their Messiah to rescue them from annihilation), are recent theological developments dating only from the 1800s.

It is my intent to show that the ideas of dispensationalism and Christian Zionism (known at the time as Restorationism) existed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, long before John Nelson Darby who is considered the father of modern dispensationalism and Theodore Herzl (the father of modern Zionism) articulated them. The ideas espoused by Darby were present in earlier British theology dating back to English Puritanism long before Darby set them within a framework that subsequently arose as a system in the 1800s.

One American scholar has insisted that the “traditional criterion of classifying millennialism … is virtually meaningless for the emerging systems prior to 1800.” And Crawford Gribben, a current leading scholar on apocalypticism, warns that modern categories of premillennialism, postmillennialism, and amillennialism “should not be retrospectively projected onto older material.” However, that is exactly what I intend to do. These terms may have been of later origin, but the ideas (or at least their precedents) existed centuries earlier in a nascent form. With such an understanding, it is appropriate and useful to use the modern terms when classifying and discussing the earlier ideas. What unified Puritan thoughts regarding eschatology was their historicism. Whether they were what we would understand to be amillennial, premillennial, or postmillennial, almost all of them were historicists until mild forms of preterism began to emerge in the 1600s out of historicism.

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Schools of Eschatology

1. Idealism/Spiritualism/Symbolism: prophecies should be taken allegorically, not literally.

2. Preterist Postmillennialism and Amillennialism: apocalyptic events took place in the past; the millennium is usually seen as the success of Christianity, starting with Constantine, and the Church will bring in a utopia.

3. Historic Millennialism: we are in the midst of apocalyptic events traced through church history; in the 17th and 18th centuries, most historicists put themselves in Revelation 11 and expected a later millennium.

4. Futurist Premillennialism: apocalyptic events are yet future.
   
   a. Dispensationalism: futurist premillennialism with an expectation of a future rapture, great tribulation, literal Antichrist, and battle of Armageddon, culminating in a return of Christ to rule on earth 1000 years.

   b. Christian Zionism (known originally as Restorationism): the Jews are still God’s people, they have a major role to play in apocalyptic events, they will return to the land God gave them, and Christ will return as their Messiah.

Before 1948, many Jews, and even some Christians, expected a return to the Promised Land that they believe God has given to the Jews as recorded in the biblical text. Since 1948, these same Jews and Christians have been avid supporters of the modern state of Israel.

Dispensationalism, the most common school of futurist premillennialism, is based on a literal reading of prophetic passages in the Bible and divides history into periods (dispensations) wherein the relationship between God and humanity changes. The practice of recognizing historical periods was common from the 1600s through the 1800s and was especially a feature of historicism. However, some quit doing this as a reaction to it being an important feature of modern dispensationalism. The dispensations usually include a patriarchal period (governed by pre-Mosaic law), a Torah period (when the law of Moses was in effect), the present Church age (one of grace), a future tribulation (a seven-year period when the Antichrist rules), and a millennium (one thousand years of peace with the Messiah ruling on earth). Implicit in both dispensationalism and Christian Zionism is the idea that God is not finished with the Jews and that they will play a vital role in the events of the Last Days.

Millennialism, and its idea of the coming of a Messiah to rescue Israel from oppression, was a common notion at the time of Jesus, as evidenced by the wealth of apocalyptic texts found in the Dead Sea Scrolls. Proponents and detractors of
Christianity acknowledge that early Christians expected an impending apocalypse.\textsuperscript{4} According to one seventeenth-century millenarian Puritan:

\begin{quote}
[I]t was the constant opinion of the Church, in the very next age to the Apostles, that there should be a resurrection before the general rising of the last day, and an happy condition of the faithful upon the earth for C10. yeeres. This we may learnne from Tertullian \textit{[contra Marcion]}, and Ireneaus \textit{[Tractat contra omnes bereses]}: And Justin the Martyr \textit{[Dialog cum Tryphone Iudeo]}. … \textit{[B]ut what Christian soever in his time were in all respects Orthodox, maintained the same. … It seemed the Heretiques of those times, especially, or indeed onely, believed it not.}\textsuperscript{5}
\end{quote}

The early church fathers overwhelmingly believed in the return of Christ to set up an earthly millennium. One of the foremost church historians of the Victorian era, Philip Schaff, wrote of this early belief even though he rejected it:

The most striking point in the eschatology of the ante-Nicene age is the prominent chiliasm, or millenarianism, that is the belief of a visible reign of Christ in glory on earth with the risen saints for a thousand years, before the general resurrection and judgment. It was … a widely current opinion of distinguished teachers, such as Barnabas, Papias, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Methodius, and Lactantius …. The Jewish chiliasm rested on a carnal misapprehension of the Messianic kingdom, a literal interpretation of prophetic figures, and an overestimate of the importance of the Jewish people and the holy city as the centre of that kingdom.\textsuperscript{6}

Even in a recent book critical of dispensationalism, a non-dispensational evangelical scholar has acknowledged:

Future eschatology came largely to be replaced by otherworldly eschatology and mysticism the closer one got to the Middle Ages. The grip of imminestent eschatology on believers gradually

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{5} Translator’s Preface in Johann Alsted, \textit{The Beloved City or, the Saints Reign on Earth a Thousand Years} (London, 1643), iv.
\end{thebibliography}
loosened after the first century A.D. This is as true of Jewish as of Christian literature. A futurist eschatological outlook explains much about Jesus, about the early Christians’ belief system, and about the belief system of the author of Revelation.\(^7\)

When Justin Martyr was asked, around A.D. 150, whether he believed that “Jerusalem … shall be rebuilt; and [whether he expected his people] to be gathered together, and made joyful with Christ and the patriarchs,” he responded, “I and many others are of this opinion.”\(^8\)

Similarly, around A.D. 170, Irenaeus claimed it was an “indispensable part of orthodoxy to believe that these things shall indeed come to pass on this earth.”\(^9\)

Around A.D. 180, Tertullian claimed that he saw the heavenly Jerusalem about to descend to earth and that Christians should “expect Christ to appear in Jerusalem.” Some early Christian sources—notably, *The Shepherd of Hermas*, Pseudo-Ephraem, and *The Apocalypse of Elijah*—even hint at a pretribulational rapture.\(^10\)

The exception is the metaphorical Alexandrian school (Clement of Alexandria and Origen in the early third century), strongly influenced by neo-Platonism.\(^11\) It was not until the Roman Empire converted to Christianity in the fourth century that there was a move away from a belief in an impending apocalypse. In part this is because while one looks for a Messiah when oppressed, when Christianity became widespread there was perceived to be little need for an imminent-returning Messiah. According to eighteenth-century Huguenot émigré Pierre Jurieu, “The afflicted church seeks for consolation: where can she find it,


\(^8\) Justin Martyr, Dialogue with Trypho, chapter LXXX.


\(^11\) Ibid., 29. Increase Mather recognized this in *Dissertation Concerning the Future Conversion of the Jewish Nation* (1709), 1.
but in the promises of God? When the present prospect is sad and woeful, we must search for it in what is future.”\(^{12}\)

By the fourth century, Eusebius of Caesarea and Jerome had begun to attack the idea of a future millennium, preferring to believe that the growing power of Christianity would bring in a present millennium. Augustine of Hippo followed suit, although he admitted he had once held to the futurist millennial views like many others.\(^{13}\) He later rejected a future thousand years, believing they were currently in the millennium. In his own words: “[T]he Church could not now be called His kingdom or the kingdom of heaven unless His saints were even now reigning with Him.”\(^{14}\) Many began to see Christ’s kingdom and earthly rule as presently existing in the person of the bishop of Rome, the Vicar of Christ on earth. According to seventeenth-century Puritan Robert Maton, “after the 320. Yeare of our Lord … many a truth and error did change titles each with other, as popish ignorance, superstition and idolatry grew.”\(^{15}\) Puritan Increase Mather believed that “the Chiliad [the millennium] was not denied until Antichrist began to reign.”\(^{16}\) One historian of apocalypticism has summarized the history of early prophetic interpretation stating, “after Augustine no one in the West believed in millennialism until Joachim of Fiore,” for it “remained a marginal phenomenon until the Reformation.”\(^{17}\) As the Church became more Roman,

\(^{12}\) Peter Jurieu, *The Accomplishment of the Scripture Prophecies, or the Approaching Deliverance of the Church* (London, 1687), 3.

\(^{13}\) Augustine admitted that he once held the millenarian view, that after 6000 years of human history there would be a bodily resurrection, and that the Saints would reign bodily with Christ on earth. *City of God*, Book XX, chapter 7. He later rejected a literal thousand years, believing they were currently in the millennium: “the devil was thus bound not only when the Church began to be more widely extended among the nations beyond Judea, but is now …bound till the end of the world, when he is to be loosed. Because even now men are … converted to the faith from unbelief in which he held them.” *City of God*, XX, 8.

\(^{14}\) Augustine, *City of God*, book XX, chapter 9; is titled “What the reign of the saints with Christ for a thousand years is, and how it differs from the eternal kingdom.”

\(^{15}\) Robert Maton, *A Treatise of the Fifth Monarchy or, Christs Personal Reign on Earth, One Thousand Years with his Saints* (London, 1655), “An Answer to Mr. Petries Preface”, page before D.

\(^{16}\) Increase Mather; *The Mystery of Israel’s Salvation* (n.p.[Boston or New Haven], 1669), Author’s Preface.

belief that a Messiah would establish an earthly paradise came to be seen as “an old Jewish fancy.”

In the mid-second century, Justin Martyr spoke of different programs of God in different dispensations, and Ireneaus mentioned different dispensations of God, especially of the current Church dispensation. In the late second century, the Montanists expected Christ’s return to Phrygia to take place at any time; and as the movement spread throughout the Roman Empire, even the church father Tertullian joined its ranks. In the third century, Clement of Alexandria taught seven ages: Adam to Noah, Noah to Abraham, Abraham to Moses, Moses to Christ’s first coming, Christ’s first coming to His second coming, and the millennium. Even Augustine of Hippo, considered the father of amillennialism, which dominated Christian theology throughout the medieval period, taught that there were various dispensations throughout sacred history:

The divine institution of sacrifice was suitable in the former dispensation, but is not suitable now. … [God] is the unchangeable Creator of mutable things, … the dispensations adapted to each successive age … changes of successive epochs without any change in Himself. … [T]he exchange of the sacraments of the Old Testament for those of the New had been predicted by the voices of the prophets … all those things which He assigns according to their variety to the several ages. … [T]hat which was for one age rightly ordained may be in another age rightly changed, the alteration indicating a change in the world, not in the plan, of Him who makes the change … [T]he ages succeed each other.

Additionally, other eschatological themes continued throughout the early medieval period. The hordes of the Antichrist were seen in the invasions of the Huns,


19 Justin Martyr, Dialogue with Trypho, LXXXVII.

20 Ireneaus, Against Heresies, V, xxviii, 3.

21 Cohn, The Pursuit of the Millennium, 25.

22 Clement of Alexandria, To Marcellinus, CXXXVIII, 5, 7; in Charles C. Ryrie, Dispensationalism (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995), 63-64.

Magyars, Arabs, and Turks. Various itinerant preachers bewailed the wealth and laxity of the medieval clergy whom they called a false church. It was common throughout the medieval period, long before the Reformation, to believe that the Antichrist was the Church of Rome. Conversely, those who attacked Rome were called antichrists by the established church.

Joachim of Fiore, a twelfth-century Cistercian monk, revived the idea of millennialism after eight centuries of amillennialism and was the first after the early church to divide history into different ages or dispensations of God’s grace: a past age of the Father (Old Testament), the current age of the Son (from Christ to A.D. 1260), and a coming age of the Holy Spirit (when God’s love would cover the earth). Fiore’s teachings were later condemned by Thomas Aquinas and declared heretical in 1263 (three years after his date-setting proved false). However, many sixteenth-century Reformers and seventeenth-century Puritans would have had little problem with Fiore’s threefold division, that of the Law, the Church, and a coming millennial age. (Interestingly, Dante placed Joachim of Fiore in paradise, while he placed in hell the pope who declared him heretical.)

The Apostolic Brethren, an unofficial and persecuted monastic order in late thirteenth- and early fourteenth-century northern Italy, believed in a doctrine of the rapture that was recorded in 1316 by a notary in Vercelli:

> Antichrist was coming into this world. … [A]fter he had come [the Brethren] would be transferred into Paradise, in which are Enoch and Elijah. And in this way they will be preserved unharmed from the persecution of Antichrist. And that then Enoch and Elijah themselves would descend on the earth for the purpose of preaching [as the two witnesses in Revelation 11 against] Antichrist. … [W]hen the Antichrist is dead … his preserved followers will descend on the earth, and will preach the right faith of Christ to all, and will convert those who will be living then to the true faith of Jesus Christ.

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25 Ibid., 80-84.
Denys van Leeuwen, a fifteenth-century Dutch Carthusian monk, believed in a “pre- or mid-tribulational rapture, a resurrection of lyf” that took place “sodenly” and by surprise, yet in the midst of “dangers to come” and “greet tribulation”:

In a moment in ye twynklyng of an eye in the sownyng of the last trumpe shal be the Iugement. That shal be the verray daye of Wrath tribulacion. … The daye of our lorde shal come. … O howe blessed and how happy shal he be that nowe entendeth to the poure langwysshyn gedy peple. For in that harde Iourney our Lorde wil deliuere them therfore from alle daungier. … [T]hey that haue doone wele: shal go in the Resurrection of lyf. … [T]he daye of our lorde shal come by nyght as a thef. And whenne men shal thinke them self assuredly in peas He shal come sodenly and take them. … Rest not in the synne of wretchednesse Leest that daye suprize you sodenly as a thef. Surely we be all the children of daye and the sones of light. Then let vs not slepe as other do. But let vs awake and be sobre … able to flee all the daungers that be to come. … [W]hen by ye almyghty power of god the sowle of euery man & woman shal retourn eageyn & be reioyned to their owne bodyes appering before the hyghe Iuge. … thou wilt defende me from hell and hide me till thy furour be past. … Ther shal be then greet tribulacion and so greet yn sythens the begynnyng of the world til now.28

The sixteenth-century Reformation encouraged a more literal approach to the Bible, which brought on a revival of apocalyptic fervor.29

Luther himself was quite apocalyptic, although in his eschatology he did not depart to any great extent from the teachings of medieval Roman Catholicism.30 Whereas some medieval authors referred to individual popes as antichrists, Luther was first to declare the entire papal system as the Antichrist. Roman Catholic authors reciprocated by calling Luther the Antichrist. Several of Luther’s associates wrote detailed studies of Daniel and Revelation, following

28 Denys van Leewen, Corden, Whiche treteth of the four last and final thinges that ben to come (1479).


Luther’s interpretation. The same held for Calvin; Roman Catholic apologists called him the Antichrist, and he called the pope the Antichrist.

Apocalypticism was even more extreme in radical sects such as the Anabaptists. Melchior Hoffman (ca. 1495-ca. 1543) believed that Christ would return in 1533 to set up His millennial kingdom in Strasbourg on the upper Rhine. The following year, fellow Anabaptist Jan Matthys (also spelled Matthijs, d. 1534) claimed that he and Hoffman were the two witnesses of Revelation 11 and declared Münster in northwest Germany as the New Jerusalem. When Matthys died leading a sortie out of the besieged Münster, leadership of the Anabaptists was assumed by Jan of Leyden; before joining the “saints” at Münster, Leyden had run naked through his hometown declaring the coming of the awesome Day of the Lord. After the fall of Münster, the corpses of Matthys and Leyden rotted in a cage hung on the façade of Münster’s city hall for more than fifty years. In response to the social instability caused by this premillennialism, the Augsburg Confession of 1540 decided to “condemn also others who are now spreading certain Jewish opinions, that before the resurrection of the dead the godly shall take possession of the kingdom of the world.” This condemnation was followed by similar proclamations by Anglicans in the Forty-two Articles of 1552 and Calvinists in the Second Helvetic Confession of 1566. All major Protestant groups declared that ideas concerning a coming earthly kingdom were “Jewish opinions,” or merely concocted fantasies of ignorant enthusiasts.

According to eighteenth-century Anglican Bishop of Bristol, Thomas Newton:

In short the doctrin of the millennium was generally believed in the three first and purest [centuries]. ... Afterwards this doctrin grew into disrepute for various reasons. ... It hath suffered by misrepresentations of its enemies [who have] charged the millenarians with absurd and impious opinions which they never held. ... Besides wherever the influence and authority of the church of Rome have extended, she hath endeavoured by all means to


33 Augsburg Confession (1530), xvii.

34 Jeffrey Jue, Heaven Upon Earth: Joseph Mede (1586-1638) and the Legacy of Millenarianism (Dordrecht: Springer, 2006),126; Gribben, Evangelical Millennialism, 3, 16.
discredit this doctrin [which] lay depressed for many ages, but it sprung up again at the Reformation, and will flourish together with the study of the Revelation.\footnote{Thomas Newton, \textit{An Abridgement of Doctor Newton, Bishop of Bristol’s Dissertations on the Prophecies} (Kilkenny, 1798), 84-85.}

Although it is beyond the scope of this work to recount the entire history of prophetic interpretation during Christianity’s first sixteen centuries, it is notable that there were majority and minority interpretations—there was not simply one view of prophecy even though one view, amillennialism, prevailed during many of these centuries. Bishop Newton correctly recognized that premillennialism was the dominant view in the first centuries of Church history, amillennialism was dominant in the next thirteen centuries, but premillennialism was making a comeback, especially in Puritan circles.