

# THE TWO MODES OF HUMANITY PART 1: THE VIEW DELINEATED AND SUPPORTED

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Throughout the ages, mankind has longed for immortality and speculated about how to achieve it. This deeply rooted desire may be explained by an insight inferred from Genesis 1 and 2, namely, that God intended mankind to live forever in a natural and innocent state (i.e., in non-glorified bodies, able to reproduce and also to suffer injuries, yet sealed in a state of innocence such that they never would sin). Could God's original plan for natural humanity ever be restored?

Some dispensational premillennialists, from the 19th century to the present, have taught that it will be. They believe there will be two modes of humanity in the eternal state. The first mode will be that of a sanctified but natural humanity, who will marry and have children, and will continue to populate the new earth. The second mode will be that of a sanctified and glorified humanity, who no longer marry or reproduce, among whom will be "overcomers" who will rule with Christ over the new heaven and new earth and the capital city, New Jerusalem.

Some interpreters have strongly objected to these conclusions. Many find such ideas to be shocking, and not a little controversial. It certainly does not comport with the mainstream of Christian tradition (i.e., among non-Dispensationalists). Nevertheless, it bears further examination. Hence, this paper

will explore the Biblical and theological support for the view of two modes of humanity in the eternal state.<sup>1</sup>

## II. SUMMARY OF THE TWO MODES VIEW

Despite slight variations among its proponents, a survey of the supportive literature yields several main areas of agreement concerning the idea of two modes of humanity in the eternal state.

All agree that the Millennial Kingdom will have believers from previous dispensations in resurrected/glorified bodies who no longer sin. These people will not marry and will not have children.

There is also agreement that the Millennium will also include people who survived the Tribulation and so entered into the Millennium in their natural bodies. Consequently, Dispensationalists have long taught and believed that during the Millennium people will marry and have children. As F. S. Elmore explained "... two peoples of God as to mode of existence will continue through the millennium. This is a necessity of premillennial interpretation."<sup>2</sup> The question is, while this may be true of the Millennial period, is it possible the two modes of existence will continue into the Eternal Kingdom?<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>This is the first article of a three-part series. The second article will survey the supportive tradition beginning with John Nelson Darby and continuing with George N. H. Peters, J. A. Seiss, Clarence Larkin, Herman A. Hoyt, Robert L. Thomas, and many others. The third article will explore objections to the view from some interpreters such as John Walvoord, Craig Blaising, Tony Garland, David L. Turner, Floyd S. Elmore, and Joseph Dillow.

<sup>2</sup>Floyd Sanders Elmore, "A Critical Examination of the Doctrine of Two Peoples of God in John Nelson Darby" (Th.D. Diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 1990), 309.

<sup>3</sup>Editor's note: I personally do not consider the Millennium to be a separate kingdom from the eternal kingdom. I understand Daniel to be saying, for example, that the fifth and final world kingdom, the kingdom of Messiah, will be one kingdom, not two (cf. Dan 2:44; 7:27; 9:24; 12:12-13). The Millennium is the first thousand years of the eternal kingdom. Peter says as much in 2 Pet 1:11: "for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." Peter calls the Millennium "the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." Hence in my view the question should be whether the existence of two types of humans in the first thousand years of the everlasting kingdom will continue as that kingdom moves to the new earth.

Lewis Sperry Chafer appeared to raise the possibility that it may. In a statement in his *Systematic Theology*, he said this about the Gentiles of the Kingdom in the eternal state,

A peculiar and distinguished group of Gentiles are those of the last generation which appear before the throne of Christ's glory at the end of the tribulation, and on the basis of their ministry to Israel are received into the earthly kingdom. This kingdom, it is said by the King, is one prepared for these Gentiles from the foundation of the world. A purpose which thus originates in eternity past may well be expected to continue into eternity to come.<sup>4</sup>

The Eternal Kingdom will begin after the dissolution of the present creation and the reconstruction of a new heaven and earth. In the Eternal Kingdom, humanity will consist of glorified believers and the believers from the end of the millennial age who are brought over in natural bodies. Robert Govett put it this way, "Thus also among mankind as settled in the new earth, there are two great classes: the risen, and those still in the flesh."<sup>5</sup>

However, millennial age believers in their natural bodies will be transformed so as to be immortal and incapable of sin, yet still capable of procreation. Robert Vacendak commented, "They will be like Adam and Eve before they sinned, but without the ability to sin. As such, they will procreate..."<sup>6</sup>

These transformed people will make up the nations of the new earth spoken of in Revelation 21-22. They will marry and have children of the same transformed nature who will populate the new earth. As E. R. Craven wrote, "The nations will consist of men in the flesh, freed from sin and the curse, begetting a holy seed and dwelling in blessedness under the government of the

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<sup>4</sup> Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology* (Dallas Seminary Press, 1948), Volume IV, 416.

<sup>5</sup> Robert Govett, *Govett on Revelation* (Miami Springs, FL: Conley & Schoettle Publishing Co., 1981, 1861, Originally published in London England, 1861, under the title *The Apocalypse: Expounded By Scripture*, under the pseudonym Matheetees), Vol. IV, 472.

<sup>6</sup> Robert Vacendak, "The Revelation of Jesus Christ" in *The Grace New Testament Commentary* (Denton, TX: Grace Evangelical Society, 2010), 1330.

New Jerusalem.”<sup>7</sup> Bob Bryant, pastor of Cypress Valley Bible Church in Marshall Texas, in a paper presented at the 2009 Grace Evangelical Society Conference agreed:

The nations on the earth are spoken of in Revelation 21:22–22:3. It seems that the people referred to as *the nations*, will be people in natural bodies, not glorified bodies; will be without sin, like unfallen Adam and Eve; will marry and have children who will populate the new earth...<sup>8</sup>

It is also possible these new human beings may go on to colonize other planets. Concerning this possibility Clarence Larkin wrote, “God intended the human race to populate the Earth, and when it became too thickly populated, to use the surplus population to colonize other spheres.”<sup>9</sup> Herman Hoyt concurred, “The creation of the new heaven may provide other habitable spheres just as will the creation of the new earth.”<sup>10</sup>

These transformed yet natural people of the nations will still have need of the restorative powers of the leaves of the Tree of Life:

In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations (Rev 22:2).<sup>11</sup>

Why would immortal people need *healing*? J. A. Seiss suggested that it will be for the enhancement of their lives: “Life-leaves are for the conservation and augmentation of Life-blessedness of

<sup>7</sup> John Peter Lange, *The Revelation of John*, Ed. Philip Schaff (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1960, Originally published by T. & T. Clark, 1870), 391. E. R. Craven was an editor who enlarged Lange’s commentary.

<sup>8</sup> Bob Bryant, unpublished GES 2009 Conference message manuscript.

<sup>9</sup> Clarence Larkin, *The Book of Revelation* (Glenside, PA: Rev. Clarence Larkin Estate, 1919), 206.

<sup>10</sup> Herman A. Hoyt, *The End Times* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1969), 230.

<sup>11</sup> This verse is obviously puzzling to those who do not believe that there will be people in natural bodies. Why would glorified saints need healing?

men on earth, as the Life-fruits are for the joy of the saints in heaven.”<sup>12</sup>

In contrast to these natural people, Christ and the resurrected/glorified overcomers of the previous dispensations will rule the new heaven and new earth with the New Jerusalem as the capital city. As J. A. Seiss commented, “But these glorified ones are to ‘reign to the ages of the ages’...and as they cannot reign without subjects, so nations on earth must last coequally with their regency.”<sup>13</sup>

In sum, there are certain common elements to the two modes view. These include belief that both glorified saints and natural survivors of the Tribulation will be in the Millennial Kingdom; that the survivors who enter the Millennium will continue to marry and have children; that marrying and childbirth may continue into the Eternal State; and that this state of affairs reaffirms God’s original plan for Adam and Eve in the Garden.

### III. SUPPORT FOR THE TWO MODES VIEW

Proponents support the view by referring to many Biblical texts and by making theological inferences. Let us go over each in turn.

#### A. BIBLICAL TEXTS

A survey of the literature shows that many Biblical texts support the idea of two modes of human in eternity. Here is a selection of ten such texts with brief explanations for each.

First, the creation account of Genesis 1-2 presents God’s original plan for sinless humanity to procreate, fill the earth, and rule over all creation. This plan was interrupted by the entrance of sin. George N. H. Peters in *The Theocratic Kingdom* developed the argument that a complete redemption would involve the restoration of the human race back to the state that was forfeited by sin. Proposition 152 is entitled, “This Kingdom is connected with the perpetuation of the human race.” In Observation 2 of that proposition he acknowledged, “Holding to

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<sup>12</sup>J. A. Seiss, *The Apocalypse: Lectures on the Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1900, 1977), 507.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 511.

a restoration of the race to that which was forfeited by sin, our opinion is guided mainly by the account preceding the fall.”<sup>14</sup>

Second, God promised Abraham, “I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven” (Gen 26:4; see also 15:5; 22:17). The fulfillment of the promise suggests an ever-expanding population of Abraham’s descendants through time and perhaps into the eternal state. In Gen 17:7 God specifically stated, “I will establish My Covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant...” The promises would be more than just figures of speech but part of an everlasting covenant for innumerable offspring. Alexander Patterson concluded,

But here in this eternal view is the literal fulfillment of the promise upon which the covenant to Abraham was based. It is not rhetoric. It is not hyperbole. It is actual certitude...the population of the universe would be as innumerable...as the sand of the sea or the dust of the earth.<sup>15</sup>

Third, the language of Ps 102:25-28 refers to a new heavens and new earth where, “The children of Your servants will continue, and their descendants will be established before You.” The implication is that these servants of God would continue to have children in the new heavens and new earth.

Fourth, in the prophecy of Isa 9:7, we read, “There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace...from then on and forevermore.” The ongoing increase of this government suggests an ever-expanding population. This would begin on the new earth and then continue on into the heavens. Because there is no end to this increase, this government will continually grow in territory and population.

Fifth, Isa 65:17-25 and 66:22 describe the creation of “the new heavens and the new earth,” its people, their children, and their descendants. From his vantage point, Isaiah appears to see both the Millennial Kingdom and the Eternal Kingdom. It could be inferred that aspects of the natural state may carry from one

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<sup>14</sup> George N. H. Peters, *The Theocratic Kingdom* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1884, Reprinted with *Preface* by Wilber Smith by Kregel Publications, 1952), 537-38.

<sup>15</sup> Alexander Patterson, *The Greater life and Work of Christ: As Revealed in Scripture, Man and Nature* (Fleming H. Revell Company, 1896), 400-401.

to the other. There may be a continuation of the Gentile nations and Israel in a perfected natural state capable of procreation of godly offspring in the new heavens and the new earth.<sup>16</sup>

Sixth, Ezek 37:24-28 uses “forever” language concerning the land and the prince,

...and they will live on it, they, and their sons and their sons’ sons, forever; and David My servant will be their prince forever. I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant with them. And I will place them and multiply them, and will set My sanctuary in their midst forever...

The literal fulfillment of this promise seems to require the multiplication of the people “forever” in the land, with sons begetting their own sons, and so on.

Seventh, Jesus said in Mark 10:14, “Permit the children to come to Me; do not hinder them; for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.” It can be argued that at least part of what the Lord is saying is that God wants to see children forever in His kingdom. Bob Wilkin wrote,

God loves children and will want to see children forever (but there would be no babies, toddlers, and small children on the new earth if everyone was a glorified person)...Jesus said that the kingdom is for children...<sup>17</sup>

Eighth, Matt 22:30 has led many to conclude that the Lord Jesus definitely stated that childbearing will end after the Millennium. There the Lord was responding to a test from some Sadducees about Levirate marriage. He said that they did not understand the Scriptures or the power of God, “For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven.”

It is often assumed that the only possible interpretation of those words is that in eternity future on the new earth there will be no marrying and hence no childbirth. Yet that interpretation is far from obvious. The words “in the resurrection”

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<sup>16</sup> See Peters, prop 152 obs. 6, 547.

<sup>17</sup> Robert N. Wilkin, *The Ten Most Misunderstood Words in the Bible* (Denton, TX: Grace Evangelical Society, 2012), 81.

are key. The Sadducees, who did not believe in bodily resurrection, were asking about whose husband a woman would have in eternity since she had had seven. The Lord's point is that *resurrected* people won't be married (and hence won't have children either). To conclude from that verse that there will be no marriage or children *at all* begs the question. Will there also be *non-resurrected* people on the new earth? Matthew 22:30 certainly does not exclude that possibility. And there are many texts in Scripture, as we have seen, which imply that there will indeed be childbearing forever in Christ's kingdom. Simply put, the teaching of Christ in Matt 22:30 that "in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven" applies to glorified humanity, not to natural sanctified humanity.

The same is true of what Paul says in 1 Cor 15:50: "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." *Flesh and blood* is here related to *inheriting* the kingdom. It applies to the glorified humanity that will reign with Christ during the Millennium and on the new earth (from the New Jerusalem). It does not refer to natural sanctified humanity on the new earth. The residents of the New Jerusalem (Heb 11:16; 12:22-23) will be a glorified/resurrected humanity. Seiss stated of the occupants of the City,

All these are there, not in flesh and blood, not returned to an earthly corporeal life, but in resurrection transfiguration, made like to the angels, like to their Redeemer now in glory, and having their homeplace and palace in the Golden City...<sup>18</sup>

And as Peters observed,

Should the inquiry be started, by what principle of justice these elect saints are so highly honored above the righteous of the Millennial and succeeding ages, the answer is given in the Word in the principles announced, and in the difference of the dispensations...<sup>19</sup>

He explained that these saints were trained through trial, suffering, and obedience like their Lord. The people of the

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<sup>18</sup> Seiss, 491.

<sup>19</sup> Peters, *The Theocratic Kingdom*, Prop. 154, Obs. 10, 590.



millennial age are not subject to the same privations and temptations, and those of the ages to follow have suffering removed and aid and strength supplied by this very rulership.

Ninth, Eph 2:7 and 3:21 refer to Christ showing the exceeding riches of His grace toward those who believed in this age to all generations in the ages to come, forever and ever. This implies continuing generations of humankind in the ages to come alongside the glorified/resurrected humanity of this age. Seiss commented,

Paul speaks with all boldness of '*the generations of the age of the ages.*' (Eph. 3:21) After the termination of the present Aeon, he contemplates many more Aeons...and those interminable years he fills up with generations and generations.<sup>20</sup>

Tenth, some might say that there is no direct statement in Revelation 21-22 (the material dealing with the new earth), that indicate there will be children and childbearing in the eternal state. Of course, it doesn't say that there won't be, either.

The people of Rev 21:3-4 could be a natural sanctified humanity on the new earth. They would consist of believers brought over into the eternal state from the millennial period in now sinless natural bodies. There is no reference in Revelation 20-22 to the resurrection of millennial believers. The first resurrection of 20:4-6 is completed prior to the Millennium. The second resurrection of Rev 20:11-15 is for non-believers.

The nations on the new earth in Rev 21:24, 26 would likewise be composed of a natural sanctified humanity, and be distinguished from the residents of the New Jerusalem. They walk by the light of the New Jerusalem and bring their tribute to it. Seiss drew the implication,

And if by '*kings of the earth*' we are to understand sub-kings belonging to unglorified humanity, the statement implies that the homage and gratitude of earthly royalty will then devote everything of greatness and glory that it possesses to the service and honour of that city.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Seiss, 486.

<sup>21</sup> Seiss, 501.

Robert Thomas wondered, “The change of character of the nations and the kings prompts an investigation regarding their identity.”<sup>22</sup> He considered nine possibilities and concluded,

None of the earlier proposals has any direct support. In fact, this is an issue on which the text of Revelation is silent, but there is one further theory which seems to satisfy the available criteria best.<sup>23</sup>

This theory is that “the nations” are saved people who survive the millennial kingdom and who are transformed and brought over into the eternal state as un-resurrected human beings who will be ruled over by God’s resurrected saints.

The leaves of the tree for the healing of the nations in Rev 22:2 would be for the use of the natural sanctified humanity. In the words of Seiss,

The meaning is not that the nations are full of sicknesses and ailments; for these remains of the curse are gone then, though it may be from the virtue of these leaves. The meaning rather is the preservation of health and comfort, and not that maladies then exist to be removed.<sup>24</sup>

Thomas surmised that this healing,

must connote a promoting of the health of the nations...This agrees with the identification of the nations proposed in the discussion of 21:24 above. Those who have entered the new heaven and the new earth in an un-resurrected state will have a means for perpetuating their health.<sup>25</sup>

## B. THEOLOGICAL INFERENCE AND THEODICY

Some theologians, such as Peters, Seiss, and others, have argued that complete redemption requires the perpetuation of the human race into the eternal state.<sup>26</sup> That is because redemp-

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<sup>22</sup> Robert L. Thomas, *Revelation 8-22 An Exegetical Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995), 476.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 478.

<sup>24</sup> Seiss, 507.

<sup>25</sup> Thomas, 485.

<sup>26</sup> See Peters, Prop 152 obs.1, 535; Seiss 483.

tion must include a restoration of the things lost by sin, such as God's command that Adam and Eve be fruitful and multiply (i.e. fill the earth with children). It is believed that God still plans to carry out His original design of making the race holy in its natural capacity, so as not to leave Satan victorious in any way. This is a possible theological inference concerning the unchangeableness of God's original creative purpose.<sup>27</sup>

The ultimate fulfillment of God's original creative purpose suggests an eternal distinction between the two modes of humanity.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, an eternal state with two modes of humanity would be dynamic and expanding as compared to a static view that locks in all who arrive at the eternal state into a mode of humanity which precludes the propagation of the race.

The theology of humanity's two modes may also help towards developing a theodicy, i.e., a defense of God's goodness and omnipotence in light of the problem of evil. In an insightful essay, Norman Geisler discusses how a dispensational approach helps to vindicate God's goodness and justice despite the presence of evil in the world.<sup>29</sup> It suggests why God permitted suffering for so long, and helps explain the problem of how men can be truly free in heaven while guaranteeing that evil will never break out again. Geisler, after summarizing the Scriptural support for the dispensations, writes:

Now if that is true, as the foregoing Scriptures would indicate, what does it prove? It seems to indicate exactly what every complete theodicy would like to show, namely, that God surely had just grounds before all His creatures to put away sin forever, because He has proved to all that it is never right to disobey His will. God has tried evil in every age and condition and has proved

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<sup>27</sup>The science of theology involves making inferences. For good discussions concerning theological inferences see "Rules of Affinity" by Paul Henebury at <http://sharperiron.org/tags/series-affinity> and "Theological Inferences" by Malcom Yarnell at <http://baptisttheologians.blogspot.com/2012/06/theological-inferences-be-careful-when.html> (accessed 11/27/2012).

<sup>28</sup>Though ultimately preferring the one eternal mode of humanity view, F. S. Elmore admits that both scriptural texts and theological inference suggest the two mode of humanity view, 310-311.

<sup>29</sup>Norman L. Geisler, "God, Evil and Dispensations" in *Walvoord: A Tribute*, edited by Donald K. Campbell (Chicago: Moody Press), 95-112.

how evil it is. Or, to put it another way, the only way to defeat evil is to permit it. The only way to defeat it completely is to try it completely. One cannot defeat an opponent unless he is willing to get into the “ring” with him. Hence, God allowed evil into the ring of human history for a seven-round (seven-dispensation) championship bout, winner takes all. It was in the sixth round that a knockout punch was given (by the cross and resurrection), and the staggered foe was floored forever at the end of the seventh round.

In this dispensational drama, God is the victor, and all good men are the benefactors. Evil is defeated, God is justified, and the universe is secured forever from another outbreak of evil. What makes it justly secure? God makes it secure. He is omnipotent, and He will not allow another outburst.<sup>30</sup>

A bit later Geisler continues,

Redeemed men are given the grace to overcome sin. They can overcome sin in this life progressively (sanctification) and will overcome it by God’s grace in the next life permanently (glorification). Likewise, God is overcoming evil in His universe both progressively (through seven dispensations) and permanently (in the new heaven and new earth, Revelation 22). God is doing that in order to secure the universe once and for all from all evil influence and to produce a permanent and greater good—all in accord with His eternal glory.<sup>31</sup>

Geisler does not address the matter of two modes of humanity in the eternal state. Nevertheless, the concept of theodicy may apply to the view. God would render both a glorified/resurrected humanity and a natural sanctified humanity incapable of sin in the eternal state. The justification for this would be that

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 105-106. Editor’s note: It is not clear what Geisler means by “good men” here. Is he speaking of overcoming believers? Is he suggesting that all believers are in some sense *good*? See the quote associated with note 31. He may simply mean *all regenerate men*, that is, men who *can overcome sin in this life*.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 109.

God permitted the full revelation of evil and fully and finally dealt with it in the “Great Rebellion.”<sup>32</sup> A glorified humanity would forever rule with Him over an ever-expanding natural humanity in a new heaven and a new earth free of all evil and kept from all evil. Along the same lines, Bob Bryant offers what could be understood as a theodicy:

God allowed for “The Great Rebellion” so that, for all eternity, He could be glorified for all that He is among an ever-expanding population of people. Resurrected people will be the special trophies of His grace who will bring glory to Him as God of creation, God of salvation, and God of resurrection.<sup>33</sup>

#### IV. CONCLUSION

From earliest times mankind has sought for immortality in a natural state. Perhaps this goes back to God’s original intention at the creation of man. The Fall brought death. Will God’s restoration of creation involve an eternal future for a natural perfected humanity?

Though controversial, the view of two modes of humanity in the eternal state is one that should be accurately represented, respectfully engaged, and humbly acknowledged as a possibility, in light of Biblical and theological evidence. Our attitude should be that of George N. H. Peters, who said, “So far as the ordering of God in the matter is concerned, we are willing cordially to accept of the same, whatever it may be.”<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> In his book, *The Omega Reunion*, Frank Carmical called the present era through the Millennium, “The Great Rebellion.” See, *The Omega Reunion* (Dallas: Redencion Viva, 1986). A review of the book can be found on the internet at <http://www.faithalone.org/journal/bookreviews/carmical.htm> (accessed 11/8/2012).

<sup>33</sup> Bryant, unpublished GES 2009 Conference message manuscript, conclusion.

<sup>34</sup> Peters, 538.

