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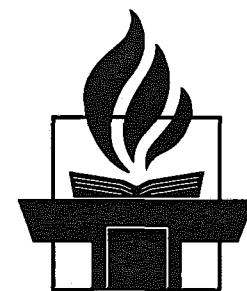
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# Reformation & Revival



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# *Reformation & Revival Journal*

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1. To encourage *reformation* in the local Christian churches worldwide,
2. To promote the cause of *revival* and spiritual awakening through prayer and the provision of resources to aid Christian leaders.

## Information

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**The conviction of the staff and editors of the *Reformation & Revival Journal*** is that awakening, of the kind seen in the First Great Awakening in America, wedded to the doctrinal concerns of the historic Protestant Reformation as expressed in the terms *sola scriptura*, *sola gratia*, and *sola fide*, is needed in our generation.

**The views expressed in this publication** should be considered as the personal opinions of the authors and are not to be taken as an official editorial perspective.

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## *Editor's Introduction*

John H. Armstrong

The subject of "the future" has always interested humans. Indeed, one might say this interest is clearly one, among many, which distinguishes humans from other life forms on our planet. We, unlike any other species, have a *profound desire* to know about "the end."

Plainly, men and women have wondered about the end of the world since time immemorial. They have discussed how and when the end will come. They have speculated, argued and predicted. As much as modern science has been taken up with explanations of the earth's beginning, so modern doomsayers and spiritual guides are seemingly compelled to consider the fate of this amazing planet and its inhabitants.

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From Greek mythology through the time of Noah and Abraham, to the Montanists in the second century who fully expected the New Jerusalem to descend literally from heaven onto Phrygian soil, people have been intensely interested in the end. Even the great theologian Tertullian wrote of a walled city seen in the sky above Jerusalem early every morning for forty days. Like people throughout the world, and down through history, the great Tertullian was swept along in eschatological excitement. Augustine, the greatest theologian of the church fathers in the West, observed the fall of the Roman Empire and thus gave himself to the development of important prophetic writings. People have always discussed the end of history. Moderns are no exception.

For Christians the subject of last things has always, to varying degrees, been one rooted in the interpretation of certain texts of Holy Scripture. Yet the myriad of ways in which Christians have understood the related texts displays the radically different ways in which they have interpreted the Bible. The issue is not, generally speaking, one in which one view holds to the Bible while the other is "liberal" or rejects the authority of the written Word.

In all of this one thing is certain: since the first century Christians have agreed that Jesus Christ is coming back at the end of this age. What has never been profoundly clear, and what has caused significant disagreement, is *how* and *when*. Devout believers, who have a high view of the sufficiency and authority of the Scriptures, have argued that “the Millennium” passage (Rev. 20:1-6) must be taken literally and nonliterally. Among those who take the “literal” view—that this passage refers to an actual 1,000 years of history—some have held that this period must come before Christ’s return at the end of this age, while others have insisted that the coming of Christ must precede the 1,000 years. In addition to this debate regarding the Millennium, other Christians have argued that the coming of Christ has two “stages” (or parts), with Christ coming “for the church” and then later coming “in judgment” upon the world. They separate the coming of Christ by a significant time period (e.g., seven years, three-and-a-half years, or some months prior to God’s wrath being poured out, etc.).

All of this confusion and disagreement between the various schools, or systems, of interpretation regarding “end times” tend to make the average Christian, and even the average evangelical minister, run away from Eschatology. After all, he begins to think to himself: “Why should I get involved in this debate? I will only offend someone if I do.” This has produced, in recent years, a kind of ministry that stays as far away from future things as possible. The serious problem with this approach is that the Scriptures are filled with the doctrine, and at every point the teaching has in view the holiness and preparedness of true believers. We cannot, indeed we dare not, ignore this most vital theme.

It is imperative that we assert the simple fact that there are four last things that are truly significant to the living of a holy life which Christians have historically agreed upon, in the main points—death, judgment, hell and heaven.