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AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF
PROPHECY

BY LEWIS SPERRY CHAFER, D.D., LITT.D.

Author's Note: The material contained in this introduction is selected as a special article in the Centennial Number of *Bibliotheca Sacra*. In the succeeding issues the regular series on Systematic Theology which have been present in past numbers will be resumed. *Angelology* having been completed, the next theme in order will be *Anthropology*, or the doctrine of man.

Eschatology, the last major division of Systematic Theology, is concerned with things to come and should not be limited to things which are future at some particular time in human history, but should contemplate all that was future in character at the time its revelation was given. The word *now* is ever moving and things yet future at the present time will soon have passed into history. A worthy *Eschatology* must embrace all prediction whether fulfilled or unfulfilled at a given time. In other words, a true *Eschatology* will attempt to account for all of the prophecy set forth in the Bible.

The neglect of the prophetic Scriptures on the part of theologians is all but complete, except for a limited survey of the intermediate state, the resurrection of the body, a passing reference to the second advent, and the eternal state. Theological writers, in some instances, have confessed their lack of preparation to deal with Bible prediction. In the opening of his treatise on the second advent,¹ Dr. Charles Hodge states: "The subject cannot be adequately discussed without taking a survey of all the prophetic teachings of the Scriptures both of the Old Testament and of the New. This task cannot be satisfactorily accomplished by any one who has not made the study of the prophecies a specialty. The author, knowing that he has no such qualifications for the work, purposes to confine himself in a great measure to a historical survey of the different schemes of interpreting the Scriptural prophecies relating to this subject." To the same end, Dr. B. B. Warfield in an article on the millennium,²

¹Vol. III, p. 790.

²*Princeton Theological Review*, 1904, pp. 599-617.

builds his argument on the untenable idea that there is no reference to such an age anywhere save in the "very obscure passage"—Revelation, chapter 20, without the slightest recognition of a covenanted kingdom for Israel with the fulfillment of every earthly promise. When, how, and where will these covenants be experienced? To Dr. Warfield the present blessing of saints in heaven is the millennium. He writes: "The thousand years, thus, is the whole of this present dispensation, which again is placed before us in its entirety, but looked at now relatively not to what is passing on earth but to what is enjoyed 'in Paradise.'"¹ To him, also, Satan bound and then loosed again is a present experience concurrently progressing: "But while the saints abide in their security Satan, though thus 'bound' relatively to them, is loosed relatively to the world—and that is what is meant by the statement in verse 3c that 'he must be loosed for a little time.'"² According to this idea, Satan being bound in relation to believers cannot reach them; yet the Apostle declares, "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Eph. 6:10-12). Thus this greatest of authorities on certain aspects of theology evinces an incomprehensible inattention to the most elementary prophetic revelations. Similarly, Dr. Dabney, the honored theologian of the South, when asked by a former student whether certain interpretations of prophecy were correct replied, "Probably you are right. I have never looked into the subject." It is needless to point out that the attitude of these and many other theologians has been an insuperable barrier to the so-called *educated ministry* which precludes any attempt on their part to investigate the field of Biblical prophecy. It is natural to conclude that a truth is of little importance if the great teachers of the church

¹Biblical Doctrines, p. 649.

²Op. cit., p. 656.

ignore it. However, even the teacher himself reflects his own training with its determination to disregard all else than that peculiar to the Reformation. Over against this is the statement by Dr. Dorner: "There can be no doubt that Holy Scripture contains a rich abundance of truths and views, which have yet to be expounded and made the common possession of the Church."¹

Indifference or resistance is hardly justified in the light of the fact that over one-fourth of the books of the Bible are avowedly prophetic, and, in the actual text of all the Scriptures, at least one-fifth was prediction at the time it was written.

In His Upper Room Discourse, the Savior, having announced the peculiar teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit in the present age, goes on to declare what precise truths the Spirit will teach (John 16:12-15), and places "things to come" as first on that list of themes. It is safe to say that no modern teacher of the Bible, be he even an extremist in his disproportionate emphasis on prophecy, would assume to place "things to come" as first among those so important themes, and many theologians would not include this subject at all. The supreme emphasis which Christ places upon this aspect of truth should not be overlooked. Incidentally, Christ has implied in His statement that none will comprehend prophecy who are not taught by the Holy Spirit. This seems to be true to a large degree in Christian experience. Similarly, the Apostle Paul, it is disclosed, taught the deeper and more intricate aspects of prediction to his young converts. This is demonstrated in his ministry in Thessalonica where he was permitted to remain but four weeks and to which place he evidently was never able to return. In the limited time of his stay in that city he was confronted with heathenism, but was able to contact individuals and not only to lead them to Christ but to teach them enough truth that he could afterwards write the two Thessalonian epistles to them with the expectation that they would understand them. In the second

¹*History of Protestant Theology*, Vol. II, p. 4.

epistle, having referred to the "falling away," the Man of Sin who will sit in the restored Jewish temple declaring himself to be God, and the destruction of the Man of Sin by the glorious appearing of Christ, Paul declares, "Remember ye not that, while I was yet with you, I told you these things?". Assuredly no clearer evidence could be desired to establish the truth that both Christ and Paul gave to the right understanding of prophecy a foremost place. There is no license granted here for a teacher to be a faddist in prophetic truth, nor is there any permission granted to men to ignore the field of prophetic revelation.

It is common practice with some theologians to brand chiliasm as a modern theory, not remembering that, in its restored form, even justification by faith is comparatively a modern truth. Both justification by faith and chiliasm are taught in the New Testament and were therefore the belief of the early church. These doctrines, like all other essential truths, went into obscurity during the dark ages. The Reformers did not restore all features of doctrine and along with justification by faith some of them retained the Romish notion that the church is the kingdom, fulfilling the Davidic covenant and appointed to conquer the world by bringing the world under the authority of the church. This idea has prevailed in spite of the clear, uncomplicated testimony of the New Testament that this age must end in unprecedented wickedness.

Precisely what was involved in the sealing of prophecy until the time of the end as was announced to Daniel, "And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words *are* closed up and sealed till the time of the end" (Dan. 12:9), may not be wholly understood. However, it is significant that the knowledge of prophecy has been increased in the past half century.

The plea that the prophetic portions of the Bible present problems over which men disagree is not a worthy release from their claims. There are no more problems in *Eschatology* than in *Soteriology*. It happens that owing to the central place accorded *Soteriology* by the Reformers and in subsequent theological writings, that it has had a measure of con-

sideration not given to prophetic truth. Disagreements as divergent as Calvinism and Arminianism have never been urged as a reason for the neglect of *Soteriology*, but disunity of the slightest degree among teachers respecting *Eschatology* has been seized as a reason for its neglect.

In the field of prophecy, as in all the Word of God, there is need to study that one may be approved unto God and not ashamed (2 Tim. 2:15). What is declared in the Scriptures respecting prophecy is as creditable as those portions which are historical. The language is no more complex, nor is the truth any more veiled. It is recognized that it is a greater strain upon a feeble faith to believe and receive that which is mere prediction—as especially when unprecedented events are anticipated—than to believe and receive as true what has assuredly taken place. It is this unavoidable and requisite faith in God that He will do precisely what He has promised to do which proves to be lacking in many. In introducing his monumental work on *The Theocratic Kingdom*, George N. H. Peters states: "The history of the human race is, as able theologians have remarked, the history of God's dealings with man. It is fulfilling of revelation; yea, more: it is an unfolding of the ways of God, a comprehensive confirmation of, and an appointed aid, in interpreting the plan of redemption. Hence God himself appeals to it, not merely as the evidence of the truth declared, but as the mode by which we alone can obtain a full and complete view of the Divine purpose relating to salvation. To do this we must, however, regard *past, present, and future* history. The latter must be received as predicted, for we may rest assured, from the past and present fulfillment of the word of God, thus changed into historical reality, that the predictions and promises relating to the future will also in their turn become veritable history. It is *this faith*, which grasps the future as already present, that can form a decided and unmistakable unity." It is precisely this unity of divine purpose set forth in the Scriptures which is lost by those who delete the whole field

*Vol. I, p. 13.

of prophecy. The very diversity in antagonistic exegesis is not only deplorable because of its unfortunate testimony to the world but is evidence that something is fundamentally wrong. Rothe is quoted as saying, "Our key does not open—the right key is lost; and until we are put in possession of it again, our exposition will never succeed. The system of biblical ideas is not that of our schools." This is a frank confession and more than one would venture to assert that until the whole Bible is considered in its unity there will be no remedy for the failure. It is not a matter of impossible barriers; it is simply and only a matter of giving attention to the things God has said, and said in understandable terms. The Bible terminology is always the simplest of any literature. Where symbolism is employed in the text, it will, almost without exception, be so indicated.

Whatever the prophetic message may be, it is dependent upon language—simple terms known to all—for its conveyance, and he who tampers with or distorts those terms cannot but reap confusion. The plan of God respecting future things has broken upon the mind of many worthy scholars when they have determined to let the Bible's simple prophetic terminology bear the message that it naturally conveys. At once the entire story of the future becomes clear and free from complications. It is not implied that there are not difficult situations to be confronted; but it is asserted that humble acceptance of the declarations in the natural meaning of them will yield a right understanding of the all but complete prophetic message.

Having spoken of the importance in Biblical interpretation of giving to language its reasonable and grammatical meaning, Mr. George N. H. Peters goes on to say: "On a proposition which has brought forth many volumes in its discussion, we desire simply to announce our position, and assign a few reasons in its behalf. Its import is of such weight; the consequences of its adoption are of such moment; the tendency it possesses of leading to the truth and of vindicating Scripture is of such value, that we cannot pass it by without some explanations and reflections. We unhesitatingly

plant ourselves upon the famous maxim (*Eccl. Polity, B. 2.*) of the able Hooker: 'I hold for a most infallible rule in expositions of the Sacred Scriptures, that where a literal construction will stand, the furtherest from the letter is commonly the worst. There is nothing more dangerous than this licentious and deluding art, which changes the meaning of words, as alchymy doth, or would do, the substance of metals, making of anything what it pleases, and bringing in the end all truth to nothing.' The primitive Church occupied this position, and Irenaeus (*Adv. Haer. 2, C. 27*) gives us the general sentiment when (in the language of Neander, *Hist. Dogmas*, p. 77) 'he says of the Holy Scriptures: that what the understanding can daily make use of, what it can easily know, is that which lies before our eyes, unambiguously, literally, and clearly in Holy Writ.' However much this principle of interpretation was subverted, as history attests, by succeeding centuries (not without protests), yet at the Reformation it was again revived. Thus Luther (*Table Talk, 'On God's Word,' 11*) remarks: 'I have grounded my preaching upon the literal word; he that pleases may follow me, he that will not may stay.' In confirmation of such a course, it may be said: if God has really intended to make known His will to man, it follows that to secure knowledge on our part, He must convey His truth to us *in accordance* with the well-known rules of language. He must *adapt Himself to our mode* of communicating thought and ideas. If His words were given to be understood, it follows that He must have employed language to convey the sense intended, agreeably to the laws grammatically expressed, controlling all language; and that, instead of seeking a sense which the words in themselves do not contain, we are primarily to obtain the sense that the words obviously embrace, making due allowance for the existence of figures of speech when indicated by the context, scope, or construction of the passage. By 'literal' we mean the grammatical interpretation of Scripture."

Since prediction is incorporated in the Sacred Text to

¹*Op. cit.*, p. 47.

such a large degree and since the preacher is appointed to declare the whole counsel of God, there is no escaping the responsibility of knowing and expounding the prophetic Scriptures. Let the one who avoids this great theme in his pulpit ministrations ask himself what his relation to the Holy Spirit is in view of the truth asserted by Christ that the primary teaching of the Spirit is to "show you things to come" (John 16:13). The pastor and teacher is a specialist in the knowledge of the Word of God and there is no intimation that the declaration of prophecy is excepted from his responsibility. Timothy was to be recognized as "a good minister of Jesus Christ" provided he put the brethren in remembrance of certain predictions (cf. 1 Tim. 4:1-6).

There is no proper approach to the Synoptic Gospels other than to see them as the fulfillment of the Old Testament prediction respecting the Messiah. Similarly, the book of Revelation is the terminal, like trunk lines running into a union station, of the highways of Biblical prophecy. The Bible presupposes that the reader, when reaching the last book of the Bible, will have in mind all that has gone before; and, to the same degree, these highways of prophecy are incomplete until traced to their end in that incomparable prophetic book. This serves to emphasize the truth that the whole Bible in all its parts is an interrelated and interdependent message, and that the student who does not have as clear a grasp of prophecy as he has of other features of revelation is, by so much, disqualified to interpret any portion of the Word of God.

Knowledge of Biblical prophecy qualifies all Christian life and service. By it the believer comes to know the faithfulness of God to His Word. It is assuredly the desire of God that His own who are in the world shall know what He is going to do. He said, "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" (Gen. 18:17). This statement is a fair representation of His attitude toward all who are saved. Abraham, though the friend of God, is not as near to God's heart as those who are of His household and family and who are members in the body of His Son (cf. 2 Chron. 20:7; Isa.

41:8; James 2:23). Many tasks which Christians undertake would not be assumed if God's program and its future aspects were better known. He has given no commission to convert the world and enterprises based on that idealism are without His authority. Likewise, the knowledge of prophecy yields poise to the believer in times of crisis, as well as comfort in the time of sorrow. Having declared the truth that Christ will return, the Apostle goes on to say: "Wherefore comfort one another with these words" (1 Thess. 4:18). All parts of the Bible have a sanctifying effect (John 17:17), but none more than the realization of the fact that Christ may, as promised, return at any time. Such expectation becomes a purifying hope. The Apostle John writes: "Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (1 John 3:3).

Lastly, the Scriptures present but one system of truth. Men may not comprehend it, and of those who disagree respecting interpretation one or both sides of the controversy may be wrong; but both cannot be right. The Word of God does not lend itself as support to postmillennial, amillennial, and premillennial schemes of interpretation at the same time. It is for the student to weigh these claims and to be convinced as to that which is Biblical.

The future is but a part of God's plan, and He alone knows what it comprehends. That portion of His knowledge which He desires men to possess is set forth in the Sacred Text and nowhere else. The opinions of men are of value only as they conform to the Scriptures. The hermeneutical canon of the Reformers was "to interpret and illustrate Scripture by Scripture."⁸ No influence is more abroad than that of creeds; yet these creeds make no pretense at superseding the Word of God. On the place of creeds Mr. Peters declares: "Creeds, etc., valuable as they are in many respects, can only, at best, give their testimony as witnesses to the truth; and they can only *testify to as much of it* as the framers themselves have seen and experienced. Professing to

⁸Hagenbach, *History of Doctrine*, Vol. 2, Sec. 240.

give evidence in favor of the Bible, or to state what the Bible teaches, that evidence or statement is only proper, consistent, and available in so far as it *coincides* with the Holy Scriptures. Knowledge, therefore of the satisfactory character of the confessional statements, is only attainable by bringing them to the crucial test, the Word of God. It is a bad indication when, in any period, men will so exalt their confessions that they force the Scriptures to a secondary importance, illustrated in one era, when, as Tulloch (*Leaders of the Reform.*, p. 87) remarks: 'Scriptures as a witness, disappeared behind the Augsburg Confession.'"⁹ Mr. Peters also quotes Barnes in his commentary as saying. "We learn 'that the traditions of men have no authority in the church, and constitute no part of the foundation; that nothing is to be regarded as a fundamental part of the Christian system, or as binding on the conscience, which cannot be found in the "prophets and apostles;" that is, as it means here, in the Holy Scriptures. No decrees of councils; no ordinances of synods; no "standard" of doctrines; no creed or confession, is to be urged as authority in forming the opinions of men. They may be valuable for some purposes, but not for this; they may be referred to as interesting parts of history, but not to form the faith of Christians; they may be used in the church to *express* its belief, not to *form* it. What is based on the authority of apostles and prophets is true, and always true, and only true; what may be found elsewhere may be valuable and true, or not, but, at any rate, is not to be used to control the faith of men.'"¹⁰ Melancthon in his *Apology* states: "Here is, as I think, the sum of the controversy. And now I ask you, my masters, has the Scripture been given in such a form that *its undoubted meaning* may be gathered without exposition of Councils, Fathers, and Schools, or not? If you deny that the meaning of Scripture is certain by itself, without glosses, I see not *why* the Scripture was given at all, if the Holy Spirit was unwilling to define with certainty what he would have us to believe. Why do the apostles invite us at all to

⁹*Op. cit.*, p. 124.

¹⁰*Op. cit.*, p. 126.

the study of the Scripture, if its meaning is uncertain? Wherefore do the fathers desire us to believe them no farther than they fortify their statements by the testimonies of Scripture? Why, too, did the ancient councils decree nothing without Scripture, and in this way we distinguish between true and false councils, that the former agree with plain Scripture, the latter are contrary to Scripture? . . . Since the Word of God must be the rock on which the soul reposes, what, I pray, shall the soul apprehend from it, if it be not certain what is the mind of the Spirit of God? To all this there will be some general agreement by pious minds; yet, there remains the slavish disposition on the part of many to be distressed by uncertainties when thus left alone with the Word of God."

Chiliasm, so named from χίλιοι—meaning one thousand—, refers in a general sense to the doctrine of the millennium, or kingdom age, that is yet to be; and as stated in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* is "the belief that Christ will return to reign a thousand years." The distinctive feature of this doctrine is that He will return *before* the thousand years and therefore will characterize those years by His personal presence and by the exercise of His rightful authority, securing and sustaining all the blessings on the earth which are ascribed to that period. The term *Chiliasm* has been superseded by the designation *Premillennialism*, and naturally, since Premillennialism is now confronted by both Postmillennialism (only in its literature) and Amillennialism—neither one of which opposing systems could be expressed by the use of the title *Chiliasm*—, more is implied in the term than a mere reference to a thousand years. It is a thousand years which is said to intervene between the first and second of humanity's resurrections (Rev. 20:4-6); which resurrections are named in 1 Corinthians 15:23-26 as "they that are Christ's at his coming," and "the end" (resurrection). In the Corinthian passage, as in Revelation 20:4-6, these resurrections are separated by a kingdom reign when Christ, according to the Corinthian passage, before delivering this kingdom to the Father, shall have put down all rule, and authority,

and power, and shall have put all enemies under His feet—even death, the “last enemy,” shall be destroyed and that, evidently, by the resurrection of all that have ever lived and died (John 5:25-28; Rev. 20:12-15). In this thousand years, not only are these transformations completed, which evidently reach to angelic realms, but every earthly covenant with Israel will be fulfilled—all, indeed, that belong to the Messianic Kingdom. It has been the practice of the opponents of Chiliasm to contend that Chiliasm is based on Revelation 20:4-6 and that, if this passage can be so interpreted as to assign it to the past, or as now fulfilled, the entire structure of Chiliasm is dissolved. Great, indeed, is the misapprehension of truth which such a notion discloses, and, were they to undertake exposition enough to confront the problem at all, they would realize the burden they impose upon themselves. The entire Old Testament expectation is involved with its earthly kingdom, the glory of Israel, the promised Messiah seated on David’s throne in Jerusalem. When these are applied to the Church, as too often they are, there is not so much as an accidental similarity on which to base that application. It may be well restated that such incongruity in doctrine as is developed by confusing Judaism with Christianity can exist only because of the failure to consider the issues involved. This is not to charge opponents with dishonesty; it is rather to call attention to their failure, as pointed out before, to study these great themes. This failure is clearly exposed in the fact that such schools of interpretation have never produced a constructive literature bearing on prophecy. The history of Chiliasm may be approached under seven general time periods:

1. *The Period Represented by the Old Testament.*

In a previous discussion it has been made clear that Israel and her kingdom with her Messiah on David’s throne in Jerusalem is the hope which characterizes the Old Testament. A mere reference to all that has been presented must suffice at this point; but the student should not, through inattention, be unconvinced of the truth that a literal, earthly kingdom is

the justifiable hope of Israel as a nation. Being a Greek word, *Chiliasm* is not an Old Testament term. The present time features respecting the oncoming kingdom were not disclosed until the New Testament revelation was given.

2. *The Messianic Kingdom Offered to Israel at the First Advent.*

No more exact terms could be employed than are used to report the earthly ministry of Christ as addressed to Israel exclusively and concerning their kingdom as "at hand." The evidence is complete respecting the fact that Israel's kingdom was offered to that nation by Christ at His first advent.

3. *The Kingdom Rejected and Postponed.*

It is failure to recognize the rejection and postponement of the Messianic Kingdom that has turned the course of many theological dissertations into confusion. Because of their failure at this point, theologians have related the kingdom to the first advent rather than to the second and to the dispersion of Israel rather than to their regathering. The doctrinal errors which are engendered by this misapprehension remain uncounted—errors which not only distort the real objective in the first advent—the out-calling of the Church—; but errors which assume to substitute a human idealistic, spiritual kingdom—unknown to either Testament—for the kingdom described at such length in the Word of God. This supposed spiritual kingdom assumes that the Jews, and, of necessity, their inspired prophets, were mistaken in anticipating a literal kingdom and that Christ rebuked them for this unworthy ambition. The idea of such an error on the part of the Jews, or that Christ rebuked them, is without Biblical support. On the contrary, when after His death and resurrection and after forty days' ministry in teaching His disciples regarding the kingdom of God (Acts 1:3), Christ in His answer to the question, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?", said, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power" (Acts 1:6, 7; cf. 1 Thess. 5:1, 2). There is no rebuke here to these Jewish disciples because of their reverting to

the national hope of Israel. That hope will be fulfilled in God's "times" and "seasons." However, these disciples had yet to learn that a new enterprise had been introduced and of that new enterprise Christ went on to say, "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). This program of testimony will eventually be terminated by the return of Christ, for it is added, "And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1:9-11).

It seems unreasonable that systems of theology, commentaries, histories of doctrine, works on the life of Christ, and some exegetical undertakings should perpetuate the Romish and Whitbyan theories respecting the kingdom, and this in spite of the insuperable problems which such theories create. Only the binding power of tradition and the human trait of clinging to a religious idea—good, indeed, in its place—can account for these tendencies. A method of interpretation which is free to spiritualize or overlook important revelations in doctrine has led the way for others to deny the authority of Scripture. It is but a short step from the perversion of truth, however sincere, to the denial of it. It seems not to be a question of scholarship. It is the problem of breaking with an idealism of Romish order, handed down from generation to generation, but not the willingness to transmit only that which the apostles and early fathers declared. The fact that the majority have followed this course, though impressive so far as it goes, proves nothing finally.

4. *Chiliasmic Beliefs Held by the Early Church.*

At least two lines of proof sustain the claim that Chiliasmic

beliefs were held by the early church. First, that the whole Bible is harmonized only by the Chiliastic interpretation. This dogmatic statement is easily demonstrated. It follows that the early church believed the Bible and held its right interpretation since their doctrine was given them by the very apostles who, under God, wrote the New Testament. Second, in many passages the belief of the early church is either directly or indirectly revealed. Two notable passages may be cited at this point:

Acts 15:1-29.

This context reports the occasion for the calling of the first council of the church and its findings. The problem before the assembly which was wholly Jewish, was created by the fact that this new gospel message had leaped all bounds and reached to Gentiles with the same power and blessing which it had bestowed upon believing Jews. Such a move placed it wholly outside the bounds of Judaism. In the light of Israel's separation from Gentiles—a fact determined by God Himself concerning His elect nation—there had to be a solution found for this strange abandonment, by evident divine authority, of one of the most fundamental features of Judaism. The question must be answered as to what had become of the unchangeable divine covenants respecting the sacred nation. Following the testimony of Peter, Barnabas, and Paul in which they asserted that with the same Pentecostal power the Gospel was reaching to Gentiles as it had reached the Jews, James declares what was evidently the answer to the problem and that accepted by the church as a whole. "And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men *and* brethren, hearken unto me: Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: that the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called,

saith the Lord, who doeth all these things. Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world" (Acts 15:13-18).

The order of truth which this statement presents must not be ignored. A new divine undertaking has been inaugurated. God is visiting Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name. That it does not include *all* Gentiles is revealed; also, that Jews will have their part in it is assumed on the ground that God's blessings have always extended first to those people and, in fact, had already done so. The new divine purpose is the out-calling from Jews and Gentiles of a company peculiarly chosen for the glory of the divine Person (cf. Eph. 3:6). "After this," James asserts, the Lord will return and build again the tabernacle of David—David's kingly line and according to the covenant made with David (cf. 2 Sam. 7:1-17) set it up. Kingdom blessings will then be fulfilled for Israel and those from among the Gentiles upon whom the divine name is called. Much prediction declares the part Gentiles will have in the earthly kingdom. All this, so far from being accidental, was known unto God—though not revealed to men—from the foundation of the world. It is simply that the church is discovering the new divine purpose and recognizing the postponement of the earthly kingdom. This context goes on to disclose the fact that Gentiles within the Church are not under the Mosaic Law. The record of the findings of this council are given in the Sacred Text, not to uncover the supposed errors of those who concurred in the council, but as a constructive unfolding of the plan of God. From this it may be seen that a Chiliastic belief that Christ returns before the thousand-year kingdom was adopted by the church at its first council.

Romans, chapters 9 to 11.

The chapters, Romans 9 to 11, are demanded in the argument set forth in this epistle that defines the whole scope of the present salvation under grace, which reaches alike to Jew and Gentile (cf. 3:9; 10:12). The same question—large, indeed, to the Jewish mind or to anyone who has recognized

the bounds of Judaism as presented in the Old Testament—is as to what has become of oath-sustained Israelitish covenants. This epistle must answer that question to the end that the present purpose of God may not be confused with that earthly purpose which is expressed in all of God's dealings with Israel. One thing is crystal clear, namely, the Jewish covenants are *not* being fulfilled in the present age. What, then, has become of these covenants? Men who do not possess a Bible and who have no knowledge of the Scriptures in which Jehovah's purposes and promises concerning Israel are recorded, might, being blindfolded, make a guess that God had changed His mind and withdrawn the promises of an earthly kingdom for His chosen earthly people; or that Israel had no such promises really, since all that had been asserted in this respect was subject to a spiritual interpretation to be fulfilled in what is now in progress in the world. Such guesses not only ignore the Scriptures, but dishonor God.

The analysis of Romans, chapters 9 to 11, cannot be entered into here. The Apostle's conclusion may be cited, and that should be final to any devout and teachable person. Chapter 11 opens with the question, "Hath God cast away his people?" The inspired answer is, "God forbid." This does not indicate that Israel is either forsaken or mistaken with respect to her covenants, or that these covenants are realized in a spiritual way to the Church. Such ideas, when advanced, evince no understanding of these determining chapters or their relation to the entire epistle. In the end of the chapter, which is the end of the argument, the Apostle asserts that blindness has been imposed upon Israel as a nation which serves as a judgment upon them, which judgment continues *until* the Church—"the fulness of the Gentiles"—be come in (11:25; cf. Eph. 1:22, 23). It is then that "the Deliverer" shall "come out of Sion," and "turn away ungodliness from Jacob." All this is according to covenants made with Israel and occurs when Jehovah will "take away their sins" (11:26, 27). It is thus that "all Israel" shall be saved. It need not be indicated that "the fulness of the Gentiles," and "all Israel" are references to widely different peoples, or that there are

times and seasons for each. A very positive assertion is made in verse 29 to the effect that the gifts and callings of God respecting Israel are without repentance on His part.

Again, it is demonstrated, in harmony with all the Sacred Text, that the early church held the Chiliastic view. He who challenges this contention is obliged to dispose of these important Scriptures and to rearrange the whole Bible to conform to his scheme. The modern church is hardly in a position—even because of “great scholarship”—to repudiate that which the early church believed, which was received from the Apostles upon whom dependence must be placed for all revelation concerning these issues, and which is so evidently that to which the entire Bible lends its individual support.

5. *The Chiliastic Expectation Until the Roman Apostasy.*

Along with justification by faith and almost every other vital doctrine, Chiliastic expectation was lost in the dark ages. That it was held by the early church fathers is evident beyond doubt. Out of a mass of such testimony but one need be quoted here, and that by Justin Martyr. This testimony, like many others, being so direct and far-reaching, has been attacked by opponents of Chiliasm much as infidels are wont to attack the Word of God itself. Dr. George N. H. Peters' presentation of Justin's declaration is reproduced in full: “Our doctrine is traced *continuously* from the Apostles themselves, seeing that (Prop. 72, Obs. 3, note 1) the first Fathers, who present Millenarian views, saw and conversed either with the Apostles or the Elders following them. So extensively, so generally was Chiliasm perpetuated, that Justin Martyr *positively asserts that all the orthodox* adopted and upheld it. Justin's language is explicit (*Dial. with Trypho*, sec. 2); for after stating the Chiliastic doctrine, he asserts ‘it to be *thoroughly proved* that it will come to pass. But I have also signified unto thee, on the other hand, that many—even those of that race of Christians *who follow not godly and pure doctrine—do not acknowledge it*. For I have demonstrated to thee, that these are indeed *called* Christians; but are atheists and impious heretics, because that in all

things they teach what is blasphemous, and ungodly, and unsound,' etc. He adds: 'But I and whatsoever Christians *are orthodox in all things* do know that there will be a resurrection of the flesh, and a thousand years in the city of Jerusalem, built, adorned and enlarged, according as Ezekiel, Isaiah, and other prophets have promised. For Isaiah saith of this thousand years (ch. 65:17) "Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind; but be ye glad and rejoice in those which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem to triumph, and my people to rejoice," etc. Moreover, a certain man among us, whose name is *John, being one of the twelve apostles of Christ*, in that revelation which was shown to him prophesied, that those who believe in our Christ shall fulfill a thousand years at Jerusalem; and *after that* the general, and, in a word, the everlasting resurrection, and last judgment of all together. Whereof also *our Lord spake* when He said, that therein they shall neither marry, nor be given in marriage, but shall be equal with the angels, being made the sons of the resurrection of God.'"¹¹

There have always been those, as Justin Martyr testifies with regard to his day, who oppose the plain teaching of the Bible on the millennial question. Modern denials move in one of three directions. They belittle the Scriptures bearing on the theme; they belittle the subject itself; or they belittle the scholarship of those who defend Chiliasm. Some modern writers seem to realize but little that Chiliasm or premillennialism was the all-but-universal belief of the early church or the extent of that conviction in all centuries when any truth has been received at all. It is hardly worthy of any scholar to assert that this is a modern departure, or, if held in the early centuries, was looked upon as a heresy. It has been conceded that it was lost, along with other vital truths, at the end of the third century and remained hidden until the Reformation. It, like other truths, has had to be rediscovered

¹¹*The Theocratic Kingdom*, Vol. I, p. 480.

and restated; all of which requires much time and study. To quote further from Dr. Peters:

"*Obs.* 13. Since many of our opponents, in order to make an erroneous impression on those unacquainted with Eccles. History, *purposely mingle the later Fathers with the earlier* (as if they were *contemporary*), it will be proper to give the Fathers in *chronological* order, so that the ordinary reader can see for himself when they lived, and form his own judgment respecting their position in history. This decides the question of *priority*, and also that of the *later* introduction of opposing influences. We will, therefore, mention those that are *expressly named* by both ancients and moderns.

"1. *Pre-Mill. Advocates of the 1st Century.*

"a 1. (1) *Andrew*, (2) *Peter*, (3) *Philip*, (4) *Thomas*, (5) *James*, (6) *John*, (7) *Matthew*, (8) *Aristio*, (9) *John the Presbyter*—these all lived between A. D. 1-100; John, it is supposed—so Mosheim, etc.—died about A. D. 100. (All these are cited by *Papias*, who, according to *Irenaeus*, was one of John's hearers, and intimate with *Polycarp*. John is also expressly mentioned by *Justin*. Now this reference to the apostles agrees with the facts that we have proven; (a) that the disciples of Jesus did hold the Jewish views of the Messianic reign in the first part of this century, and (b) that, instead of discarding them, they linked them with the Sec. Advent.) Next (10) *Clement of Rome* (Phil. 4:3), who existed about A. D. 40-100. (His Chiliasm, in the small remains left, is apparent from three particulars: (a) 'preaching the Coming of Christ;' (b) rebuking scoffers at the alleged delay of that Coming, and expressing the hope 'that He shall come quickly and not tarry,' (c) and occupying the Chiliasmic posture of 'every hour expecting the Kingdom of God.' Such sentiments only accord with the then prevailing Millenarian views; if opposed to it, as some too eagerly affirm because no detailed expression of eschatological opinions have reached us, how could he, when Jewish views were all around, thus employ language pre-eminently adapted to confirm Chiliasm, unless in sympathy with it?) (11) *Barnabas*, about A. D. 40-100. (Whether the Epistle is that of Barnabas who was with Paul, or of some other one, makes no material difference, seeing that all concede him to us, and admit that it was written quite early, and must be indicative of the views then held.) (12) *Hermas*, from A. D. 40 to 150. (We give this lengthy date to accommodate the dispute respecting the *Hermas* who is the author of the *Pastor*. Some who do not receive Chiliasm make him the earlier, mentioned Rom. 16:14; others, a later *Hermas*, who wrote about A. D. 150. All agree that he is a Chiliasm, and his location as to time is, probably, decided by our doctrinal preferences.) (13) *Ignatius*, Bh. of Antioch, died under Trajan, about A. D. 50-115 (some date his death A. D. 107). (His references, in the brief fragments, to 'the last times' and the exhortation in those times to 'expect Him,' is in correspondence with our doctrine.) (14) *Polycarp*, Bh. of Smyrna, a disciple of the Apostle John, who lived about A. D. 70-167. (In view of his association with Chiliasm, and, in the few lines from him, locating the reigning of the saints after the Coming of Jesus and the resurrection of the saints, has led Dr. Bennet and others to declare him a Millenarian.) (15) *Papias*, Bh. of Hierapolis, lived between A. D. 80-163. (His writings come chiefly through an enemy—*Eusebius*—but all concede him to be a Chiliasm, and declare that he was the disciple and pupil of St. John, and the companion of *Polycarp*.) This is the record of names

in favor of Millenarianism,—names that are held in honorable esteem because of their faith and works in Christ, extending to death.

"b. 1. Now on the other side, *not a single name* can be presented, which (1) can be quoted as positively against us, or (2) which can be cited as teaching, in any shape or sense, the doctrine of our opponents.

"2. *Pre-Mill. Advocates of the 2d Cent.*

"a. (1) *Pothinus*, a martyr, died aged 99 years (A. D. 177, Mosheim, vol. 1, p. 120), hence A. D. 87-177. (His Chiliasm is evident from the churches of Lyons and Vienne, over which he presided, being Chiliasm, from his associate Irenaeus being his successor, who describes the uniformity of faith, *Adv. Haeres.* 50, 1. 10.) (2) *Justin Martyr*, about A. D. 100-168 (although others, as Shimeall, give A. D. 89-165). Semisch (Herzog's *Cyclop.*) remarks on it: 'Chiliasm constituted in the sec. century so decidedly an article of faith that Justin held it up as a criterion of perfect orthodoxy.' (3) *Melito*, Bh. of Sardis, about A. D. 100-170, a few fragments alone preserved. (Shimeall, in his *Reply*, says, '*Jerome and Genadius* both affirm that he was a decided Millenarian.') (4) *Hegisippus*, between A. D. 130-190. (Neander, *Genl. Ch. His.*, vol. 2, pp. 430, 432, designates him 'a church teacher of Jewish origin and with strong Jewish prepossessions,' and an advocate of 'sensual Chiliasm.') (5) *Tatian*, between A. D. 130-190. (He was converted under Justin, and is designated by Neander as 'his disciple.') (6) *Irenaeus*, a martyr (being, Mosheim, *Ch. His.*, vol. 1, Amer. Ed., note, p. 120, 'born and educated in Asia Minor, under Polycarp and Papias,' must therefore be), about A. D. 140-202. (We frequently and largely quote from him.) (7) *The Churches of Vienne and Lyons*, in a letter A. D. 177 (which some attribute to Irenaeus and others to a Lyonese Christian—author unknown) has distinctive traces of Chiliasm in the allusion to a prior or first resurrection. (8) *Tertullian*, about A. D. 150-220. (We frequently give his views.) (9) *Hippolytus*, between A. D. 160-240. (He was a disciple of Irenaeus, and—according to Photius—he largely adopted Irenaeus in his work against Heresies, and in his *Com.* on Dan., fixed the end of the dispensation five centuries after the birth of Jesus.) (10) *Apollinaris*, Bh. of Hierapolis, between A. D. 150-200. (He is claimed by us, and conceded by e. g. Hagenbach, *His. of Doc.*, Sec. 139.) Nearly every witness is a martyr.

"b. Now on the other side, *not a single writer* can be presented, not even a single name can be mentioned of any one cited, who opposed Chiliasm in this century, unless we except Clemens Alexandrinus (see 3); much less of any one who taught the Whitbyan view. Now let the student reflect: here are *two centuries* (unless we make the exception stated at the close of the 2d), in which positively no direct opposition whatever arises against our doctrine, but it is held by *the very men*, leading and most eminent, *through whom we trace the Church*. What must we conclude? (1) That the common faith of the Church was Chiliasm, and (2) that such a generality and unity of belief could only have been introduced—as our argument shows by logical steps—by the founders of the Ch. Church and the Elders appointed by them.

"3. *Pre-Mill. Advocates of the 3d Cent.*

"a. (1) *Cyprian*, about A. D. 200-258. (He greatly admired and imitated Tertullian. We quote him on the nearness of the Advent, the Sabbatism, etc. Shedd, in his *His. of Doc.*, vol. 2, p. 394, says that 'Cyprian maintains the Millenarian theory with his usual candor and moderation.') (2) *Commodian*, between A. D. 200-270. (Was a de-

cided Millenarian. Comp. e.g. Clarke's *Sac. Lit.* Neander, *Genl. Ch. Hist.*, vol. 2, p. 448—censures him as follows: 'The Christian spirit, however, in these admonitions, which otherwise evince so lively a zeal for good morals, is disturbed by a sensuous Jewish element, a gross Chiliasm; as for example, when it is affirmed that the lordly masters of the world should in the Millennium do menial service for the saints.' Neander overlooks how early childlike piety might contemplate Ps. 149:5-9; Isa. 60:6-10; Mic. 7:16, 17, and kindred passages.) (3) *Nepos*, Bh. of Arsinoe, about A. D. 230-280. (Jerome, Whitby, Shedd, etc., make him a pronounced Chiliast.) (4) *Coracion*, about A. D. 230-280. (He is always united with *Nepos* by various writers, comp. Hagenbach's *His. of Doc.*) (5) *Victorinus*, about A. D. 240-303. (He is expressly called a favorer of *Nepos* and the Chiliasts by Jerome, *de Viris Ill.*, c. 74.) (6) *Methodius*, Bh. of Olympus, about A. D. 250-311. (Of whom Neander—*Genl. Ch. Hist.*, vol. 2, p. 496—says, he had 'a decided leaning to Chiliasm.' Conceded to us by Whitby, Hagenbach, and others.) (7) *Lactantius* (although his works were chiefly composed in the next cent., yet being contemporary with Chiliasts so long in this century, we include him), between A. D. 240-330. (We quote from him, although Jerome ridicules his Millenarianism. Prof. Stuart calls him, 'a zealous Chiliast.') Others, whom we strongly incline to regard as Millenarians, owing to their constant association with Chiliasts, etc., we omit, because the remains and the statements that we have are so meagre as to make it impossible to give a decided expression of opinion.

"b. In this century we for the first time, unless we except Clemens Alexandrinus, come to opposers of our doctrine. Every writer, from the earliest period down to the present, who has entered the lists against us, has been able only to find these antagonists, and we present them in their chronological order, when they revealed themselves as adversaries. They number four, but three of them were powerful for mischief, and speedily gained adherents (comp. Prop. 76). The first in order is (1) *Caius* (or *Gaius*), who is supposed, by Kurtz (*Ch. Hist.*), to have written about A. D. 210, or as Shedd (*His. Doc.*), in the beginning of the 3d cent. (Much that he is alleged to have said comes to us through bitter Anti-Chiliastic sources, and must be correspondingly received with some allowance.) (2) *Clemens Alexandrinus*, who succeeded Pantaenus (died A. D. 202, so Kurtz), as preceptor in the Catechetical School of Alexandria, and exerted a powerful influence (on Origen and others) as a teacher from A. D. 193-220. (He became a Christian under Pantaenus, after having devoted himself to Pagan philosophy, and only during the latter part of his life made the disciples, who so largely moulded the subsequent interpretations of the Church.) (3) *Origen*, about A. D. 185-254. '... *Origen assailed it fiercely: for it was repugnant to his philosophy; and by the system of biblical interpretation which he discovered, he gave a different turn to those texts of Scripture on which the patrons of this doctrine most relied*' (Mosheim, *Com. of the First Three Cen.*, vol. 2, sec. 38). . . . (4) *Dionysius*, about A. D. 190-265. (See next Prop.) There is no doubt but others were largely led to accept of Anti-Chiliastic teaching (seeing what an opposition sprang up in the 4th cent.), but these are the champions mentioned as directly hostile to Chiliasm. Now let the student carefully weigh this historical record, and he will see that the Church history indubitably seals our faith as the general, prevailing belief, for the most that can possibly be said respecting the opposition is, that in the closing years of the 2d century men arose who started an antagonism distinctively presented and urged in the 3d cent., and which culminated in the 4th and suc-

ceeding centuries. Hence, our Prop. is *abundantly confirmed* by the doctrinal status of the early Church; indeed, it is—if our line of argument respecting *the apostolic belief* remaining unchanged concerning the Kingdom is conclusive—the *very position* that the Church in its introduction *must occupy*. How illogical and unscriptural, therefore, for men to strive to weaken the testimony of those Fathers, and to apologize in their behalf, by making them ignorant, superstitious, sensual, etc., thus tracing the Church, established by inspired men and their selected successors, as though ignorant, superstitious, and sensual believers, until the learned, enlightened, and spiritual Clemens, Caius, Origen, and Dionysius arose and brought light which ‘*the consciousness of the Church*’ appreciated” (*op. cit.*, pp. 480, 494-497, 500).

Added to this is the admission of Daniel Whitby (1638-1726), an English theologian who, almost more than any other, opposed the Chiliastic view. Dr. Peters quotes him from his *Treatise on Tradition* as follows: “The doctrine of the Millennium, or the reign of saints on earth for a thousand years, is now rejected by all Roman Catholics, and by the greatest part of Protestants; and yet it passed among *the best Christians, for two hundred and fifty years, for a tradition apostolical*; and, as such, is delivered by *many Fathers of the second and third century, who speak of it as the tradition of our Lord and His apostles, and of all the ancients who lived before them; who tell us the very words in which it was delivered, the Scriptures which were then so interpreted; and say that it was held by all Christians that were exactly orthodox.*’ ‘It was received not only in the Eastern parts of the Church, by Papias (in Phrygia), Justin (in Palestine), but by Irenaeus (in Gaul), Nepos (in Egypt), Apollinaris, Methodius (in the West and South), Cyprian, Victorinus (in Germany), by Tertullian (in Africa), Lactantius (in Italy), and Severus, and by the Council of Nice’ (about A.D. 323). Even in his *Treatise on the Millennium*, in which he endeavors to set aside the ancient faith by his substitution of ‘*a new hypothesis,*’ he acknowledges, according to Justin and Irenaeus, that (ch. 1, p. 61) there were ‘three sorts of men: (1) *The Heretics*, denying the resurrection of the flesh and the Millennium. (2) *The exactly orthodox*, asserting both the resurrection and the Kingdom of Christ on earth. (3) *The believers*, who consented with the just, and yet endeavored to allegorize and turn into a metaphor all those

Scriptures produced for a proper reign of Christ, and who had sentiments *rather agreeing* with those heretics who denied, than those *exactly orthodox* who maintained, *this reign of Christ on earth.*"¹¹

When to the fact that the Bible in its predictions universally anticipates the return of Christ *before* the kingdom reign is added this overwhelming testimony of the early fathers, there can be but one conclusion respecting the priority, honor, and dignity which belongs to Chiliasm. Postmillennialists and amillennialists would certainly glory in their early history could they set up even a portion of such evidence in support of their contentions.

In view of the testimony of the early fathers—Barnabas, Clement, Hermas, Polycarp, Ignatius, Papias, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Cyprian, Lactantius, and 318 bishops from all parts of the earth placed themselves on record in the Nicene Council—who gave direct support to the Chiliasm belief, it may be well to note also the recognition by worthy historians of the place Chiliasm held in the early church. The following list with their declarations is taken from the pamphlet, "The History of the Doctrine of Our Lord's Return," by Dr. I. M. Haldeman:

"Eusebius, the early historian of the Church, admits that most of the ecclesiastics of his day were millenarians. That is—they believed in the coming of Christ before the millennium. Gieseler, 'Church History,' Vol. I, p. 166, says 'Millenarianism became the general belief of the time and met with almost no other opposition than that given by the Gnostics.' Dr. Bonar says, in his 'Prophetic Land-Marks,' 'Millenarianism prevailed universally during the first three centuries. This is now an assured historical fact and presupposes that chiliasm was an article of the apostolic creed.' Münscher says, p. 415, Vol. II: 'How widely the doctrine of millenarianism prevailed in the first three centuries appears from this, that it was universally received by almost all teachers.' Chillingsworth says: 'Whatsoever doctrine is believed

¹¹*Op. cit.*, pp. 482, 483.

or taught by the most eminent fathers of any age of the church, and by none of their contemporaries opposed or condemned, that is to be esteemed the Catholic doctrine of the church of those times. But the doctrine of the millenarians was believed, and taught by the most eminent fathers of the age next after the apostles, and by none of that age opposed or condemned, therefore it was the Catholic or universal doctrine of those times.' Stackhouse, in his 'Complete Body of Divinity,' says: 'The doctrine was once the opinion of all orthodox Christians.' Bishop Newton says: 'The doctrine was generally believed in the three first and purest ages.' Bishop Russell says: 'On down to the fourth century the belief was universal and undisputed.' Mosheim, Vol. I, p. 185, of his 'Ecclesiastical History' says: 'That the Saviour is to reign a thousand years among men before the end of the world, had been believed by many in the preceding century (that is, the second), without offense to any.' . . . Neander, the eminent church historian, says, page 650, Vol. I: 'Many Christians seized hold of an image which had passed over to them from the Jews, and which seemed to adapt itself to their own present situation. The idea of a millennial reign which the Messiah was to set up on the earth at the end of the whole earthly course of this age—when all the righteous of all times should live together in Holy Communion. . . .' Gibbon, the author of that immense work, 'The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire,' cannot be accused of sympathy with Christianity. . . . In the first volume of his work, p. 532, he writes: 'It was universally believed that the end of the world was at hand. The near approach of this wonderful event had been predicted by the apostles. The tradition of it was preserved by their earliest disciples, and those who understood in their literal sense the discourses of Christ Himself were obliged to expect the Second and glorious Coming of the Son of Man before that generation was totally extinguished.' And now, mark you what he says: 'As long as for wise purposes this error was permitted to exist in the church, it was productive of the most salutary effects on the faith and practice of Christians who lived in the awful ex-

pectation of that moment.' . . . 'The ancient and popular,'—note, I pray you, the ancient and popular—'the ancient and popular doctrine of the millennium was intimately connected with the Second Coming of Christ. As the works of creation had been finished in six days their duration in their present state, according to tradition, was fixed to six thousand years. By the same analogy it was inferred that this long period of labor and contention, which was now almost elapsed, would be succeeded by a joyful Sabbath of a thousand years, and that Christ with His triumphant band of the saints and the elect who had escaped death, or who had been miraculously revived, would reign upon the earth till the time appointed for the last and general resurrection.' 'The assurance of such a millennium . . . was carefully inculcated by a succession of fathers from Justin Martyr and Irenaeus, who conversed with the immediate disciples of the apostles, down to Lactantius, who was preceptor to the son of Constantine. It appears to have been the reigning sentiment of the orthodox believers and . . . it seems so well adapted to the desires and apprehensions of mankind that it must have contributed in a very considerable degree to the progress of the Christian faith. . . . But when the edifice of the church was almost completed the temporary support was laid aside. The doctrine of Christ's reign upon earth was at first heralded as a profound allegory, was considered by degrees as a doubtful and useless opinion, and was at length rejected as the absurd invention of heresy and fanaticism.' Kitto, in his encyclopedia of 'Biblical Literature,' under the head of article 'Millennium,' states that the millenarian doctrine was generally prevalent in the second century, and that it received its first staggering blow from Origen, followed by Augustine, Jerome, and others in the fourth century. In the 'Encyclopaedia Britannica,' under article 'Millennium,' the writer, a no less distinguished scholar than Adolf Harnack, D.D., Professor of Christian History in the University of Giessen, Germany, says: 'This doctrine of Christ's second advent, and the kingdom, appears so early that it might be questioned whether it ought not to be regarded as an essential part of the Chris-

tian religion.' Sheldon, 'Church History,' Vol. I, p. 145, ch. 6, testifies that 'Pre-millenarianism was the doctrine of the Christians in the first and second century. The fathers expected anti-Christ to arise and reign, and meet his overthrow at the personal coming of the Lord. After which the Kingdom of Christ for a thousand years, would be established on the earth.' Crippen, 'History of Doctrine,' p. 231, sec. 12, says that 'the early Fathers lived in expectation of our Lord's speedy return'; on p. 232 he remarks: 'They distinguish between a first resurrection of the saints and a second or general resurrection. These they supposed would be separated by a period of a thousand years, during which Christ should reign over the saints in Jerusalem. . . . While the church was alternately persecuted and contemptuously tolerated by the Roman Empire, the belief in Christ's speedy return and his millennial reign was widely entertained. . . . When the Church was recognized and patronized by the state, the new order of things seemed so desirable that the close of the dispensation ceased to be expected or desired.' Smith, N. T. His., p. 273, says: 'Immediately after the triumph of Constantine, Christianity having become dominant and prosperous, Christians began to lose their vivid expectation of our Lord's speedy advent, and to look upon the temporary supremacy of Christianity as a fulfillment of the promised reign of Christ on earth.'"¹³

6. *Chiliasm Restored in the Reformation.*

The entire character of Biblical testimony was changed by Gnostic and Alexandrian influences, and, along with all vital truth, the church lost her conception of the purifying hope of Christ's return, and, eventually, under Constantine, exchanged the divine program of a returning Lord for a world-conquering church. Of this, Dr. James H. Brookes¹⁴ quotes Bengel as saying: "When Christianity became a worldly power by Constantine, the hope of the future was weakened by the joy over the present success." Similarly,

¹³Pp. 14-20, 24.

¹⁴*Maranatha*, p. 536.

Auberlen¹¹ has this to say: "Chiliasm disappeared in proportion as Roman Papal Catholicism advanced. The Papacy took to itself, as a robbery, that glory which is an object of hope, and can only be reached by obedience and humility of the cross. When the Church became a harlot, she ceased to be a bride who goes out to meet her bridegroom; and thus Chiliasm disappeared. This is the deep truth that lies at the bottom of the Protestant, anti-papistic interpretation of the Apocalypse."

No review of Rome's dark ages, nor of the Reformation itself, is required here. Suffice it to say that being suddenly set free from mental slavery and spiritual bondage and in danger of martyrdom, the reformers were groping about in matters of doctrine with an entire divine revelation to re-discover and organize as to system. The marvelous progress and achievement of the reformers is disclosed in their theological writings, and the writings of the following generations. Some of these leaders embraced the Chiliastic interpretation and some did not. Whatever the beliefs of the reformers, they did not accept the Whitbyan view. They were Augustinian in their doctrine and gave no support to the idea of a millennium prior to the second advent. Luther wrote: "*This is not true and is really a trick of the devil, that people are led to believe that the whole world shall become Christian. It is the devil's doing, in order to darken sound doctrine and to prevent it from being understood. . . . Therefore it is not to be admitted, that the whole world, and all mankind shall believe on Christ; for we must continually bear the sacred cross, that they are the majority who persecute the saints.*"¹² In another place Luther wrote, "I believe that all the signs which are to precede the last days have already appeared. Let us not think that the Coming of Christ is far off; let us look up with heads lifted up; let us expect our Redeemer's coming with longing and cheerful mind." So, also, Calvin: "*There is no reason, therefore, why any person should expect the conversion of the world, for at length—*

¹¹Daniel, p. 375.

¹²Walch, Luther, Vol. 2, cols. 1082-83.

when it shall be too late, and will yield them no advantage, they shall look on Him whom they have pierced."¹⁷ Calvin also declares in his *Institutes*, chapter 25, "Scripture uniformly enjoins us to look with expectation for the advent of Christ." To this may be added the testimony of John Knox: "The Lord Jesus shall return, and that with expedition. What were this else but to reform the face of the whole earth, which never was nor yet shall be, till that righteous King and Judge appear for the restoration of all things." Similarly, the words of Latimer: "All those excellent and learned men whom, without doubt, God has sent into the world in these latter days to give the world warning, do gather out of the Scriptures that the last days cannot be far off. Peradventure it may come in my day, old as I am, or in my children's days." The attitude of the reformers is reflected in the Augsburg Confession. As a condemnation of the Anabaptist beliefs, this confession in its Seventeenth Article states: "Condemn those who spread abroad Jewish opinions, that, *before the resurrection of the dead*, the godly shall occupy the kingdom of the world, the wicked being everywhere suppressed."¹⁸

An investigation of prophetic truth was not undertaken until later, and, being absent, largely, from the theological writings of the reformers—along with other important teachings, notably the Pauline *Ecclesiology*—, has not, like all later unfoldings, been given the consideration in systems of theology, which are based on the Reformation, that its vital importance demands.

The student is exhorted to bear in mind the facts related to the Reformation and the enormous task laid upon the reformers, and to remember that men then, as now, are for various reasons hardly ever of one mind to the last degree. Prophetic study had its devotees as well as its enemies then as now. All of this, however, does not change one word of revelation, and though it were true that no man comprehended the Sacred Text, that Text abides in its purity and is a challenge to the devout soul.

¹⁷Com. on Matt. 24:30.

¹⁸Müller, *Symb. Books*, p. 43.

7. *Chiliasm Since the Reformation.*

The record of the history of Chiliasm since the Reformation is a task for the historians. Unfortunately, existing ecclesiastical histories are, in the main, written by men trained in the Whitbyan interpretation and the essential facts of Chiliasm have been omitted or misstated; especially is this true of the estimation by these historians of the beliefs of the church in the first two centuries.

In estimating the views of Protestant theologians of near Reformation times, it will be well to note at least one outstanding American, namely, Cotton Mather (1663-1728), son of Increase Mather (1639-1723), who, in turn, was son of Richard Mather (1596-1669). All three of these men were Congregational clergymen of New England. Both Increase Mather (sixth president of Harvard University) and Cotton Mather might be quoted at length as well informed Chiliasts. One quotation from Cotton Mather may suffice: "It is well known, that in the earliest of the primitive times the faithful did, in a literal sense, believe the 'second coming' of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the rising and the reigning of the saints with Him, a thousand years *before*, the rest of the dead live again, a doctrine which, however, some of later years have counted heretical; yet in the days of Irenaeus, *were questioned by none but such as were counted heretics*. It is evident from Justin Martyr that the doctrine of the Chiliad was in his days embraced *among all orthodox Christians*; nor did this Kingdom of our Lord begin to be doubted *until* the Kingdom of Antichrist began to advance into a considerable figure, and *then* it fell chiefly under the reproaches of *such men* as were fain to deny the divine authority of the Book of Revelation, and of the Second Epistle of Peter. He is a *stranger* to antiquity who does not find and own the ancients generally of the persuasion. Nevertheless, at last men came, not only to lay aside the modesty expressed by one of the first Anti-Millenarians, namely, Jerome, but also with violence to persecute the Millenary truth as an heretical pravity. So the mystery of our Lord's 'appearing in His Kingdom' *lay buried*

in Popish darkness, till the light thereof had a fresh dawn. Since the Antichrist entered into the last half-time of the period allotted for him, and now within the last sevens of years, as things grow nearer to accomplishment, *learned and pious men, in great numbers, everywhere come to receive, explain, and maintain, the old faith about it.*"¹¹

It is significant that Cotton Mather testifies that "learned and pious men, in great numbers, everywhere came to receive, and explain the old faith about it"—meaning that held by the early church. Such declarations serve, at least, to silence that form of unlearnedness which contends that the premillennial interpretations are of recent development.

Theological thought has, since the Reformation, divided into three ideas respecting the millennium.

(1) *The Whitbyan Theory.*

This conception was originated by Daniel Whitby (1638-1726), an English theologian whose belief has never been recovered from a Socinian charge. Whitby contended that the millennium is yet future, but will be set up in the earth by present Gospel agencies. Thus he became the originator of what is known as postmillennialism—that is, the belief that the second advent is to follow the setting up of a man-made millennium. This theory appealed to theologians and until recent years has been promulgated in theologies and sermons. That the Whitbyan theory is dead now cannot be denied. It exists only in the limited literature which it created and with no living voice to defend it. Doubtless the stress upon Bible study of the present century has served to uncover the unscriptural character of this system. Its advocates have not been able to meet the challenge made to them to produce one Scripture which teaches a millennium before the advent of Christ, or that teaches an advent of Christ after the millennium. It has been characteristic of those theologians who follow Whitby to denounce premillennialism with great zeal and yet to confess that they have never given the subject the critical study that it demands.

¹¹Quoted from Peters' *Theocratic Kingdom*, Vol. I, pp. 541, 542.

(2) *Anti-Millennialism.*

This strange theory, the origin of which is traced to the Romish notion that the church is the kingdom, contends that whatever millennium there may be is being experienced in the present age. Its advocates interpret the book of Revelation as a description, or varied descriptions, of this church age. At the opening of this division of theology reference was made to the fact that Dr. B. B. Warfield embraced the Romish idea, common to all who defend the amillennial theory. His great learning and scholarship in other fields of truth have given him an influence over many who do not investigate any more than Dr. Warfield evidently did." In their unenviable attempt to fit all of the events anticipated in the Revelation into the history of this age, the amillennialists indulge in a form of speculation almost unsurpassed. Their abandonment of reason and sound interpretation has but one objective in mind, namely, to place χίλιοι (thousand) years—six times repeated in Revelation, chapter 20—, back into the past and therefore no longer to be anticipated in the future. The violence which this interpretation imposes upon the whole prophetic revelation is such that none would propose it except those who, for lack of attention, seem not to realize what they do. On the other hand, Chiliasm or pre-millennialism is not to be cited as indulging in things fanciful when it declares the future things set forth in the Bible in the exact and literal sense in which the Bible depicts them. There is no comparison here with that Romish notion—amillennialism—which proposes to place all of Revelation, chapters 6 to 20, in the present church age. In sheer fantastical imagination this method surpasses Russellism, Eddyism, and Seventh Day Adventism, since the plain grammatical meaning of language is abandoned and simple terms are diverted in their course and end in anything the interpreter wishes. To maintain that the main body of the Revelation is fulfilled in the present age, it must be contended that

¹⁰Note his article, "The Millennium and the Apocalypse," in the *Princeton Theological Review*, Vol. 2 (1904), pp. 599-617.

Satan is now bound. This Dr. Warfield asserts,¹¹ as do other amillennialists. The first resurrection is already past. The Beast is Nero, since the numerical value of the Hebrew letters which spell *Neron-Caesar* totals 666. But Satan is not bound, since he now goeth about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour and since all believers are wrestling against these principalities and powers (Eph. 6:10-12). The first resurrection is not past, for it is to be accompanied by the translation of the living saints (1 Thess. 4:16, 17). Nor is Nero the Beast, the Man of Sin, since that individual will be destroyed at the glorious appearing of Christ (2 Thess. 2:8-10). Added to this is the fact that the Beast with the False Prophet is to be cast into the lake of fire. Nero was not destroyed by the glorious appearing of Christ nor was he, by any Scripture authority, cast into the lake of fire. He, with all the wicked dead, will be cast into that lake at the final judgment (Rev. 20:12-15). But what may be said of seals, trumpets, vials, the seven dooms, the four horsemen, war in heaven, Satan and his angels confined to the earth, the 144,000 witnesses, the destruction of ecclesiastical Babylon and the destruction of political Babylon? Likewise, if all of Revelation, chapters 6 to 19, is fulfilled in the present age, when will Christ's prediction of an unsurpassed tribulation (Matt. 24:9-29), and that of Daniel (Dan. 12:1), and that of Jeremiah (Jer. 30:5-7) be fulfilled? One man's guess is as good as another respecting these vast issues and all will do well to ponder the Scriptures before venturing an opinion. As before stated, the one objective in all this torturing of the consummating book of the Bible is to get away from the prospect of a thousand years of Christ's glorious and righteous reign on the earth. The few amillennial writers, without exception, attempt to dispose of the sixfold reference to a thousand years with this one purpose in view and one, a professor of New Testament in a reputable seminary, closes his argument by assuming that his task is well done by "thanking God" for the "riddance."

¹¹*Op. cit.*

(3) *Premillennialism.*

Premillenarians have never organized or attempted to display their influence. They form no sectarian denomination; but are scattered through all Protestant churches. They do not practice separation from their brethren, nor have they maintained separate schools. However, half a hundred Bible institutes in America are all premillennial without exception; and, of late, several thoroughly qualified theological seminaries have been established which teach theology from a premillennial interpretation of the Scriptures. Added to this are unnumbered churches, both independent and denominational, which sustain only a premillennial testimony. Bible conferences, Bible-study courses, are multiplied on every hand, and these are largely working on premillennial lines. The great faith missions are premillennial as are the thousands of missionaries they have sent out. Great religious journals—great from the standpoint of their circulation and influence—are clearly premillennial as all evangelists are and have been almost without exception. Apparently, the next division in the orthodox body of believers will not arise over those theological differences which have separated denominations, but rather over the question of dispensational and premillennial interpretation of the Bible. After the first prophetic conference, which was held in New York City in 1879, Dr. Briggs of Union Seminary, New York, issued a warning to premillennialists that if they wished to preserve their ecclesiastical standing they must stop these Bible study conferences. He wrote: "It depends entirely upon themselves what the future is to bring forth. If they will *abandon* their organization, *disband* their committee, *stop* their Bible and Prophetic Conferences, we doubt not that there will soon be a calm again, and they will remain undisturbed in their ecclesiastical relations; *but if* they are determined to go on in their aggressive movement, they will have only themselves to blame *if the storm should become a whirlwind that will constrain them to depart from the orthodox churches, and form*

another heretical sect."³³ So, also, at the present time, there is abroad a similar sentiment, thinly veiled indeed, in which all liberals unite, which proposes to rid denominations of all who persist in teaching the second advent and its related doctrines.

Contained in Proposition No. 78 of Volume I of his colossal work, *The Theocratic Kingdom*—published in 1884 and unsurpassed either for completeness or for scholarship—, Rev. George N. H. Peters has listed by name the outstanding clergymen of the world in his day both as to country and denomination who were premillenarians. In the United States within eleven denominations he has named 360, a considerable number of whom were bishops, or doctors of divinity. Very many of America's honored expositors, editors, and preachers are entered in this list. Similarly, at least 470 widely known ministers and writers of Europe are also indicated by name. This register includes what seem to be the preachers and writers whose names have endured because of their achievements. It would be a satisfaction to reproduce these lists if space permitted. Fifteen men who have undertaken a commentary of the entire Sacred Text are also listed. These include the greatest of authorities—Bengel, Olshausen, Gill, Stier, Alford, Lange, Lillie, Meyer, Kurtz, Stark, Jamieson-Fausset-Brown, Jones, and Nast. At least fifty-nine writers are named who produced standard expositions of portions of the Scriptures. This group includes Keach, Bonar, Tait, Ryle, Seiss, Cumming, Fry, McIntosh, Wells, Demarest, Delitzsch, Ebrard, Mede, Goodwin, Ellicott, Cunningham, Darby and his associates.

Writers and teachers who are not aware of the history or the literature of premillenarianism—and there have been many who are not aware—are wont to dismiss Chiliasm with contempt, to assert that it is a modern idea, and to brand it as a heresy; whereas some of those who do not follow the Chiliastic interpretation are sufficiently informed and candid to acknowledge that "devotedly pious men who are highly

³³Quoted by Peters, *Theocratic Kingdom*, Vol. I, p. 481.

reputable scholars" are of the premillennial faith. In the light of the obvious truth that Chiliasm has produced the great missionaries, the great evangelists, and an uncounted number of honored expositors, the charge of heresy must arise either from ignorance or malice. It is of great significance that, though some have gone to extremes, instructed premillennialists are not only sound in doctrine but are awake to the God-appointed task of witnessing. It is equally significant that every unbeliever and every heretic throughout the entire church age has been anti-chiliastic.

It will be noted that the lists cited above represent conditions which existed sixty years ago and that the premillennial view of the Scriptures has made its greatest progress since that date and developed its greatest preachers and teachers, produced its greatest literature, and multiplied its followers many-fold.

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