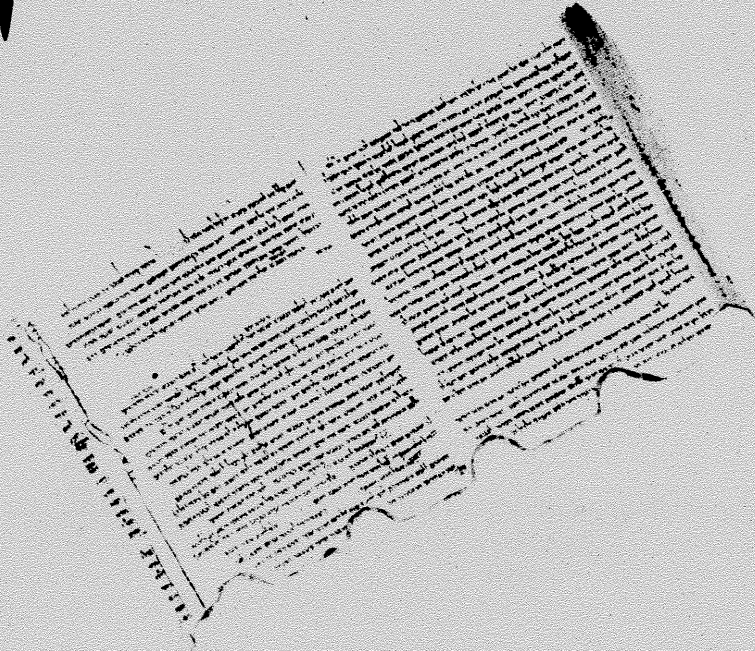




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SOME BACKGROUND MATERIAL FOR UNDERSTANDING
THE PROBLEM OF MILLENNIALISM AMONG LUTHERANS

For the last twenty or twenty-five years the topic of Millennialism has been more or less on the back burner of our theological cookstove, probably because the interest in the LC-MS 1938 Resolutions receded into the background, or at least that part which dealt with the Last Things, because we found it necessary to focus our attention on the more pressing problems of Revelation and Inspiration, the influx of Bultmannism, Neo-Orthodoxy and Demythologizing. Besides, at the close of World War II many tensions were relaxed in the world; we went about rebuilding the nation, increasing our material prosperity, and becoming the playboys of the Western world, with the resulting lack of time to devote to matters that seemed to lie in the somewhat distant future.

But during the last few years things have changed. People are much more aware of the future, the vanity of the things temporal, even though many in our culture may still not be too concerned about losing the things eternal. It has been commonly observed that in unsettled times people tend to direct their minds toward the eschatological and the occult. Our times are no different. There is a tremendous interest in prophecy. It is a common theme with the Jesus People. The Campus Crusade for Christ people have plugged Hal Lindsey's The Late Great Planet Earth (Zondervan) so that it is, as a book trade journal informs us, "a best seller you will not find listed on the opposite page" (See Christianity Today, June 23, 1972, p. 40). Billy Graham plugs with a "Foreword" and through his radio and television programs John White's Re-entry (World-wide publications), a book which eagerly looks forward to the "advent of the Millennium, a thousand-year reign of Jesus Christ and His Saints of all the ages over an earth which will

know unprecedented prosperity and peace", and which asserts that "peace and law can only happen when Christ comes again" (pp. 165, 166).

But even more significant, it appears to me, is the fact that last June, 1971, many conservative and scholarly evangelicals called together the "Jerusalem Conference on Biblical Prophecy" at Jerusalem, which was attended by 1500 people. Here, as an example of the millennialistic themes set forth at the Conference, one of the participants in the Conference (Charles Lee Feinberg, Dean of Talbot Theological Seminary) asserted that in Jerusalem a literal temple will be rebuilt "with a literal priesthood and sacrifices" which will occur "after the second advent of Christ and in the Millennial reign of the Son of David."¹ While a few of the addresses delivered at the Conference were a-millennial in point of view, the great bulk of them were, frankly, millennialistic.

Many of the scholars at the Jerusalem Conference are associated with Christianity Today, a magazine widely read among us because it is well written, informative and stimulating. Adherents of the millennialistic school write well on vital topics under fire in the present Lutheran Church, such as Inspiration and Revelation, Epistemology, Demythologizing and the Historical Christ, Apologetics, etc. Just to keep our balance and to alert ourselves as to how much all their theology may influence us, we must study again Eschatology in the light of the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions; hence the present study.

Since the term "Millennialism" or "Millennium" may possibly have as many definitions as there are advocates of it, I shall just, to begin with, give you a common dictionary definition as a point of departure: "Millennium, 1) a period of a thousand years; 2) in theology, the period of a thousand years during which Satan will be bound and Christ

will reign on earth (with the): Revelation 20:1-5; hence 3) any period of great happiness, peace, prosperity, etc.; imagined golden age" (NWD).²

I shall try to bring a little order out of the mountainous material by discussing the topic under four heads: I. The Historical Background, II. The Theological Claims and Position of Millennialists, III. A Theological Critique of Millennialism, and IV. An Examination of Some Recent Confessional Statements on Millennialism by Fellow-Lutherans.

I

Pastor V. A. W. Mennicke suggests that since the heart of natural man is inclined towards Chiliasm, one can find its expression almost at the beginning of mankind: the desire for heaven here on earth with Adam and Eve, Cain's demand for honors above others, the claim that the day of the Lord's wrath is afar off (people in the days of Noah).³ Be that as it may, in later Jewish history definitely Chiliastic interpretations of prophecy were prevalent among many Jewish teachers. Whether this came from Persian influences may be questionable, since the evidence for contact with the Eastern religions is rather slim. Mennicke thinks that the Jews adopted their Chiliastic notions from Zoroastrianism, which may have been an important factor in leading many postexilic Jews to misinterpret the great spiritual prophecies of the Old Testament. By giving these prophecies a temporal meaning, the Jews looked for a Messiah to free them from foreign domination (pp. 192-197).

Be that as it may, there can be no doubt that even some of Christ's disciples were afflicted with Chiliastic notions. Millennialism seems to have this characteristic that quite often it is held together with other views that have divine

approbation. Not only did the Pharisees imagine that the Kingdom of God would be a kingdom of external power and glory (Luke 17:20-21), but even James and John, cousins of the Savior, harbor similar thoughts. Jesus promised His disciples that in the renewal of the creation, when there is a new heaven and a new earth, they would rule with Him in glory because as an act of faith they had forsaken all and followed Him (Matthew 19:28). Sitting on these twelve thrones caught the imagination of James and John, so much so, in fact, that when Jesus prophesies His suffering, death and resurrection, they have visions of Christ engaging His enemies in mortal battle, triumphing and then setting up an earthly kingdom in which they would have the highest possible rank in the affairs of the government. They get their mother to put in a good word with Jesus so they can get a little leverage over the rest of the disciples. When Jesus answers them it is to remind them that His Kingdom is not a kingdom of glory in this world but a kingdom of the cross and that the road to glory passes through suffering and shame (Matthew 20:17-28; Mark 10:32-45). It should be noted that the Apostles, after Pentecost to the end of their lives, held to the revealed truth that one must through much tribulation enter into the Kingdom of God and that one's real glory is the glory of everlasting life.

It is indeed true, however, that among some of the early Christians millennial concepts and hopes are found, and today many advocates of the millennial point of view direct us to these statements of the early Fathers. We might do well to look at a few of them. Papias (d. 163), whose works are lost except for extracts which have been preserved in the works of Irenaeus and Eusebius, and who was apparently on intimate terms with some who had known Christ and the Apostles and was possibly (according to Irenaeus but denied by Eusebius) a hearer of the Apostle John, said "that

there will be a millennium after the resurrection from the dead when the personal reign of Christ will be established upon this earth." How much weight is to be given to these statements of Papias is difficult to state. Papias declares that they had come to him from unwritten tradition, and he further states that they are among the "instruction of the Savior". But then, one should note, that Papias' Chiliasm borders on the grotesque as he sets out to describe a millennial horticultural paradise that might bring envy to the heart of the chief author of the modern "Green Revolution", Norman Borlaug: "Vines will have ten thousand branches, each branch ten thousand twigs, each twig ten thousand shoots, each shoot ten thousand clusters, each cluster ten thousand grapes, each grape yielding twenty-five metretres of wine."⁴

There is no question that many of the theologians in the Patristic Church set forth Millennialistic views. To mention a few: Justin Martyr; Irenaeus, whom Walther calls a crass Chiliast but concerning which designation Mennicke isn't so sure, since he thinks it possible that the quotations are nothing more than free quotations from Papias and Justin Martyr (see Mennicke, p. 199); Tertullian, who looked for a mundane kingdom of God (See Froom, Vol. 1, p. 258 ff.).

There were others, however, who were opposed to Chiliasm. Mennicke gives a list of them (p. 200): Dionysius, Bishop of Alexandria (d. 265); Gregory of Nyssa (d. 400); et al. And, of course, there was Origen.

What can one make of this divergence of confessions among the early Church Fathers? First of all, one must be pretty careful before he decides to cast his complete dogmatical lot with a particular church Father. Tertullian is a great church Father who opts for millennialism and who

has written excellent things on Pauline theology and was the first to use the word "Trinity"; but he denies original sin and he is a Montanist. Origen, on the other hand, takes a strong stand against millennialism but then he denies the resurrection of the body. It has been suggested that Origen's opposition, both to millennialism and to the resurrection of the body doctrine, stems from his Platonism which spiritualized Christian doctrine. Now it is indeed true that arguments against millennialism in part show that the literalistic fulfillments looked for in the prophecies of the Bible are incompatible with the way the New Testament declares that their fulfillment took place (e.g., Cf. Amos 9:11 with Acts 15:15-16), but that is not to say that the opposition in the early church was influenced by Platonism. As G. C. Berkouwer points out, the Early Church did confess the resurrection of the body but it turned its back on Chiliasm, and he concludes: "So there was apparently a factor other than anti-spiritualism that led to the church's rejection of Chiliasm."⁵ The other factor is that the doctrine of the Millennium finds no support from Scripture.

In passing, it should be noted that Augustine and Jerome were a-millennialistic in their doctrinal positions.

I shall pass over the ensuing centuries to the time of Luther and the Reformation.

Millennialistic ideas are not to be found in Luther. Luther's theology is Pauline to the core. "The forgiveness of sins, life and salvation" -- these words sum up the theme of his writings. The second and third articles and the seventh petition (both Catechisms) pretty well summarize Luther's eschatological convictions. Christ has redeemed me "that I may be His own, and live under Him in His Kingdom, and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, even

as He is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity." "In which Christian Church He forgives daily and richly all sins to me and all believers, and at the last day will raise up me and all the dead and will give to me and to all believers in Christ everlasting life." "At last, when our last hour shall come, grant us a blessed end and graciously take us from this vale of tears to Himself in heaven." The Large Catechism as quietly but as firmly leaves no room for any millennialistic hopes. Christ "finally ascended into heaven and assumed the government at the Father's right hand, so that the Devil and all powers must be subject to Him and lie at His feet, until finally, at the last day, He will completely part and separate us from the wicked world, the Devil, death, and sin, etc." (Trig., p. 687). Note that Christ in Luther's theology has already conquered, lives in full glory, and will return on the last day. Luther is certain that Christ by His birth, life, death, and resurrection has done great things by putting down the mighty from their seats, that He already has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, and that for the Christian, being found in Christ and having His righteousness and knowing the power of His resurrection, to live is Christ and to die is gain. In Luther's theology there is no room for millennialism.

After summarizing the various influences Scriptural injunctions had on Luther, Köstlin also speaks of "the inward and spiritual nature of his view of Christian salvation, in consequence of which the theory that this earth is yet to become the scene of an outwardly victorious kingdom of Christ had no attraction for him."⁶

Luther often expressed the confident hope that the day of judgment itself might be near at hand. According to Köstlin, Luther thinks that he has found evidence for this in the Book of Daniel,

where he found the two great tyrants and dragons who were to appear before the day of judgment as being the Pope and the Turk. In keeping with this thought, Luther sees the thousand years of Revelation 20 as beginning with the time the book was composed or at the time of the incarnation. But he warns against attempting precise reckoning and prying to discover the exact time of the great event of Christ's return to judgment. Also, according to Köstlin, Luther in the Church Postils expresses an expectation of a great general conversion of the Jews before the end of the world and hopes that it may be near at hand (on the basis of Matthew 23:39; Deuteronomy 4:30 ff.; Hosea 3:4 ff.; and Romans 11:25). He had, says Köstlin, "thought that the new light of the Gospel might now win many of them." Köstlin also remarks that one finds no traces of such expectations in Luther's later writings (Köstlin, pp. 575, 576).

The Lutheran Confessional writings carry no hope of a millennium but, on the contrary, Article XVII of the Augsburg Confession expressly rejects it: "Also they teach that at the consummation of the world Christ will appear for judgment and will raise up all the dead; He will give to the godly and elect eternal life and everlasting joys, but ungodly men and the devils He will condemn to be tormented without end.

"They condemn the Anabaptists who think that there will be an end to the punishment of condemned men and devils.

"They condemn also others who are now spreading certain Jewish opinions, that before the resurrection of the dead the godly shall take possession of the kingdom of the world, the ungodly being everywhere suppressed".

Article XVII of the Apology is even shorter since the adversaries received it without exception.

It, too, confesses that at the consummation of the world Christ shall appear and raise up the dead, give the godly eternal life and condemn the ungodly. I shall discuss the implications of this Article in more detail in Part IV but now call your attention to the fact that Article XVII confesses Christ's return at the end of the world for judgment and that it rejects explicitly the idea that before the resurrection of the dead the godly shall take possession of the kingdom of the world.

There were at Luther's time Chiliasts of the gross type. They were found among the Anabaptists. They not only yearned for economic improvement for the peasants but they also expected the coming of the millennium which was to right both religious and economic wrongs. In 1534 some of them took over the city of Münster and "there inaugurated the reign of the saints, of which Thomas Müntzer had dreamed."⁷

As is well known, the Lutheran Pietists of the 17th Century took into their theology millennialistic opinions. Leaders such as Philipp Jacob Spener (1635-1705) and his most important disciple, August Hermann Franke (1663-1727), according to Mennicke (See p. 205) favored a "'refined' type of Chiliasm", looking for external peace from the Devil and a fuller measure of divine grace, power, and light unto sanctification.

But it was Johann Albrecht Bengel who made the great impact on Lutheranism with his millennialistic teaching. He has been called the "prince of Lutheran exegetes," and I can personally testify to his keen exegetical skills; forty years ago I got from my father's library an English translation of his Gnomon of the New Testament. And since then his short epigrammatic explications have opened tremendous vistas for me in the New Testament, although I have been well aware from his exposition of Revelation that he is a millennialist, almost

obsessed with esoteric calculations of Biblical numbers and dates. His English translator, the Rev. Andrew R. Fausset, tells us that when Bengel was called to the theological seminary in Denkendorf (1713), he was given a year's leave of absence to prepare himself for the post. After spending some time at Heidelberg, he went on to Halle (the seat of Lutheran Pietism) where conversations with a disciple of Spener "led his mind into that train of thought, the fruit of which appears in his Expositions of the Apocalypse."⁸ Colleges and universities indeed exert an extraordinary influence on their students!

I believe that Bengel is a thought-provoking example of how even a good Lutheran exegete, one with a keen mind and the ability to discern the decay in the external Lutheran church of his time and the coming growth of naturalism and skepticism, can get himself all confused when he undertakes to explicate the book of Revelation without keeping in mind the other clear passages of Scripture. His study of the book of Revelation convinced him that in 1837 the Millennium would come. He describes the Millennium as being "distinguished by a new, great, pure, and long continued exemption from internal and external evils, since the authors of these evils are removed, and by an abundance of varied happiness, such as the church hitherto has not beheld: (Vol. 5, p. 365). Bengel found a double thousand years in Revelation 20, the first thousand on earth, during Satan's imprisonment; the second, a distinct thousand, of the risen saints in heaven, extending to the general resurrection. Fausset, his biographer and fellow millennialist, admits that "his assigning 1836 as the year of the conflict of the Beast out of the Bottomless Pit with the people of God (Chapter 19: 11-21) has proved a mistake: (Vol. 5, p. xxii). But it is instructive for us to note that Bengel, writing almost a century before his translator, was so sure that his calculations and schematic arrange-

ment of Revelation 20 was the only correct one, that he said, "He must deny the perspicuity of Scripture all together who persists in denying this, and endeavors to refute it" (Vol. 5, p. 365). Bengel could well have followed Luther who made some guesses about the end of the world, suggesting that it might come during the middle of the Sixth Millennium, but, as K^ostlin says, "He warns expressly, meanwhile, against more precise reckoning and prying to discover the exact time of the great event" (K^ostlin 2, p. 576).

Ever since this period there have been Lutherans who have been millennialists. The list is somewhat impressive, and they are fairly conservative (I would guess probably because a liberal Lutheran thinks that all of revealed Christianity is a product of man's imagination): Vilmar, Zoekler, Hofmann, Delitzsch, F. H. R. Frank, Zahn, etc. That is not to say there were no European Lutherans of stature (not to mention American) who rejected millennialism, but more of that later.

In this country there have always been those within what is now the LCA who have been millennialists, millennialists in varying degrees. Foremost in reputation would be Dr. J. A. Seiss.⁹ He was of the General Council. The ULC has had other theologians who were millennialists but probably not as far to the gross side of the spectrum as Seiss. It is noteworthy to consider in this connection, however, that the LCA has produced some of the strongest opponents of millennialism over the years (Could this be because the close contact with millennialists caused them to see that a thousand-year kingdom is incompatible with the Lutheran way of expressing the Kingdom of Christ?): H. E. Jacobs, Joseph Stump, J. L. Neve, C. H. Little. Years ago the Augustana Synod had a streak of millennialism in it, but I haven't heard anything about it lately. I would again guess that St. Peter and Rock Island are now so imbued

with neo-orthodoxy that their Eschatology is pure Bultmann. One of the old Augustana Synod theologians, E. E. Lindberg, polemicalizes against millennialism in his Christian Dogmatics.

Among the Norwegians there has always been some Millennialism, especially among those connected with the Haugean Pietistic Movement. Hallesby of the past generation, and a professor at the Free Seminary in Oslo, was a millennialist. And his influence in this country has been considerable. Fifteen years ago (1957), the current president of the LC-MS, J. A. O. Preus, asserted in his A Closer Look that "another error tolerated within the ELC (presently ALC) is pre-millennialism", and specifically pointed to two teachers at the ELC seminary (p. 19). Again, it might be hard to visualize old-fashioned millennialism being taught at Luther Seminary, St. Paul, what with its advanced Bultmannian ideas.

But it was chiefly through the acceptance by the LC-MS in 1938 of the ALC Declaration that our attention was again called to the problem of Millennialism.¹⁰ The Declaration of the ALC, chiefly authored by Dr. M. Reu, with respect to the Last Things, asked for toleration on four points: Anti-Christ, Conversion of Israel, Physical Resurrection of the Martyrs, the Thousand Years of Revelation 20. The Declaration wanted to restore these to the position of "open questions": "We expect no more than this, that the honorable synod of Missouri will declare that the points mentioned there are not disruptive of church fellowship." The Old Iowa Synod Millennialism had come from Germany through Loehle, the great missionary. It had a strong foothold in the Iowa Synod and it had been a source of dispute between Missouri and Iowa in the 1850's, when Missouri refused to regard Millennialism as an open question, even severing relations with one of its own pastors, Schieferdecker, because of his millennialistic stand.

When Schieferdecker gave up his millennialism he again became a member of the Missouri Synod in 1875.

II

As I have previously indicated, Millennialism is found in many varieties and in many places. The Mormons are millennialists; so are the Seventh Day Adventists; likewise the Holiness Groups. There are "dispensationalists"; then there are those who believe in a "Rapture", "secret" or otherwise. Some have divided the types of Millennialism into "gross" and "fine" millennialism, the latter being less colored with materialistic conceptions. I shall consider this latter since it is the type that, for the most part, appears in the Lutheran Church and in some of the Christianity Today associates. But one must finally address himself to the question that Dr. Theodore Engelder raises as to the differences between sober, sane Chiliasm and non-sober and non-sane. He concludes that "the sanest form of Chiliasm is based upon imagination and arbitrariness in interpretation. All forms of Chiliasm are cast in the same matrix."¹¹

Assuming that in general the Millennialists at the Jerusalem Conference promote a fine Chiliasm,¹² we find the following positions advocated by them: Revelation 20:1-4, the Golden Era of Christ's reign on this earth with His saints, prophesies a literal thousand years and is yet in the future (Harold Ockenga, p. 302); Revelation 20 anticipates an earthly kingdom which will be a time of universal justice and peace (C. F. H. Henry, p. 181); Christ will come to judge the world, establish His kingdom and introduce a reign of righteousness (Merrill C. Tenney, p. 66); the place of Christ's return is locatable, since He is to come back to the same place from which He

ascended, Zech. 14:4 (Arnold T. Olson, President, Evangelical Free Church, p. 131); after the second advent of Christ and in the Millennial reign of the Son of David a literal temple with a literal priesthood with literal sacrifices will be constructed, Ezek. 40-48 (Charles Lee Feinberg, p. 96); Israel as a nation will gloriously return to Zion and will never be scattered again (Amos 9), and there are prophecies which require Israel to be back in the land at the time of the end, a situation which was not true until our generation, and this present occupation of a portion of the Holy Land is the first stage of the final re-gathering of Israel which will have its culmination when Israel's Messiah returns to the earth in power and glory to reign (John F. Walvoord, pp. 337, 338).

I can perhaps summarize the position of contemporary Lutheran Millennialists by following the outline of M. Reu's Lutheran Dogmatics.¹³

1) Reu's first point is that "before the Kingdom of God will be consummated, the Gospel must be preached in the whole world for a testimony unto all nations". Reu, however, also states that "the victorious course of the Gospel is by no means identified with a universal conversion of mankind"; it is just a testimony to them which is either accepted or rejected.

2) "The proclamation of the Gospel among all nations is followed by the conversion of Israel." Reu translates Romans 11:25-26 as follows: "A partial hardening has come upon (the people) Israel to last until that point of time when the fullness of the Gentiles has come in, and then all Israel shall be saved." Reu believes that "Israel as a nation -- though not all the Jews -- would be restored to its place as the people of God."

3) Other events which according to the Scriptures shall take place during the final period are the general apostasy within Christendom and the appearance of the Anti-Christ. Reu suggests that "this apostasy will probably occur within the Gentile Christian portion of Christendom" and that "from this apostasy there will emerge the Anti-Christ, who, in conjunction with the false prophets, will most seriously undertake the work of leading all believers astray." Reu holds that "unquestionably the Anti-Christ is an individual, one person", and that "all the hostility against Christ which exists anywhere in the world finds its personal culmination in him." He does not feel that his view "can be invalidated by a reference to Luther's well-known statement in the Articles of Smalcald", because it is "possible that one finds the Biblical marks of the Anti-Christ to be the characteristics of the Pope of Rome and still expects the culmination of Anti-Christianity in an actual person of the last days. Whether this actual person proceeds from the institution of the Papacy or whether he is a secular ruler is hard to define beforehand, especially since the Pope has strong aspirations for secular power."

4) "Anti-Christ will be vanquished by Christ who will also cause the first resurrection." According to Reu's conception of these events, "when the afflictions of the Christians have become most grievous and Anti-Christ's presumption has reached its peak, then Christ will intervene and terminate Anti-Christ's rule." He will go forth to war against Anti-Christ and his ally, the False Prophet, and cast them both into the Lake of Fire (i.e., damnation) and bind Satan, the old serpent, who is the power behind both of them, for a period of one thousand years. Reu acknowledges that "according to the last discourses of Christ, however, the return of Christ appears as the very last event in the present era, followed immediately by

the resurrection of all men and the last judgment." So, he suggests two possibilities by which this can be accommodated within his system: II Thessalonians 2:8 and Revelation 19 describe a special deed of power but not the actual return of Christ which will occur at a later time, namely, immediately before the universal resurrection and the judgment. The other possibility, according to Reu, is that Christ's words on the Last Judgment might be understood in the sense that this intervention for the purpose of vanquishing Satan is the real return of Christ and that the final defeat of Satan (Revelation 20:7) is to be understood as a special, miraculous deed of Him who has already returned: "I do not know; but I regard the former of these two views as more probable."

At any rate, according to Reu, the "First Resurrection" follows immediately upon the overthrow of Satan. But Reu will have no part in construing "this resurrection in a spiritual sense", but he also finds this physical first resurrection corroborated by Paul (Romans 11:15, 25). Reu does not believe that it will be a resurrection of all the believers that will occur at this first resurrection but rather that "it will be most advisable to abide by what is stated in Revelation 20, namely, the resurrection of the martyrs." Reu seeks to harmonize this first physical resurrection of the martyrs before Judgment Day with a universal resurrection in this way: "The universality of the resurrection which is definitely asserted in the Gospel, does not necessarily require its absolute simultaneousness; hence in assuming a first resurrection one does not contradict the analogy of faith and of the Scriptures; cf. more-over, Matthew 27:52 ff."

5) "The overthrow of Anti-Christ and the First Resurrection are followed by the preliminary consummation of the Kingdom of God, the millennial

reign of the saints with Christ." Those who had part in the first resurrection will reign with Christ the King as predicted in Revelation 20:1-4. The text does not state in what this royal rule will consist -- but inasmuch as Christ since His ascension governs the world and His church, "this reign must at all events represent a still higher form of rule", and since believers are from the moment of their justification priests and kings, "the royal power which they now exercise conjointly with Christ must likewise be a higher form than they have enjoyed so far." Reu is not certain whether this reign will be established in heaven or earth, and he suggests that "the state introduced by Christ's overthrow of Anti-Christ embraces two phases: one occurs in heaven, the other simultaneously on earth. In distinction to the other dead, the martyrs are raised, endowed with the resurrection body and enter into heaven in order to take part in Christ's reign which now begins with special power. At the same time, Satan is bound on earth, i.e., he does not possess the same freedom of action and power of temptation and cannot in his accustomed manner arouse the nations' hatred against the church. That Satan is bound is very likely an effect of Christ's majestic reign." Reu suggests that at this time the believers would carry on great missionary activities, using the Word and Sacraments, but not all would be converted since "sin and death will still exist and many hearts will resist the Word of God."

Reu is convinced that this picture of the future which he has painted is "toto coelo different from the Jewish dreams of the Millennium and also from present-day liberalism's view concerning the development of Christianity."

6) "The Millennium is followed by the final crisis through which the Church passes to actual perfection." Reu develops this thesis more explicitly by saying: "According to the will of

God, Satan will be loosed once more (Revelation 20:7), and thus the last assault of Satan against the Kingdom of God is begun. He thinks that this is psychologically credible because a spiritual power that has been suppressed by external force without having been inwardly overcome will eventually break forth with even greater vehemence. He is of the mind that now Satan will gather for this final onslaught those who resisted the influences brought to bear upon them during the Millennium. Gog and Magog in Revelation "probably designate those who during the Millennium were crowded away from the center into the outlying districts, as it were, and were unable to carry out their wicked plots and designs." But these last enemies of the Church of God are destroyed by fire coming out of heaven (Ezek. 38:22; 39:6; Revelation 20:9). "And now follows the ultimate consummation of the individuals and of the church."

III

What is one to make of such a presentation of eschatology? It is certainly different from that presented in our circles. Does it present more closely the Scriptural view of the Last Things than the one to which we are accustomed? It not, is this view at least compatible with the Scriptures or allowable within the limits of interpretation of the Scripture?

At the outset one should remember that we are dealing with future events and it is indeed possible that our conception of these future events may in details be different from what will actually happen. One indeed needs to be humble when he approaches such momentous events as the last ones of this earth, and he should honestly try to discover what God actually has revealed in His Word.

First of all, we have to do with the matter

of hermeneutics and the clarity of Scripture. Dean Feinberg is certain that there will be a literal rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem because he is going to "interpret prophecy as we do other didactic and narrative portions of the Bible in a literal manner" and he is not going to "proceed according to a spiritualizing or allegorical canon." His interpretation, he insists, is a grammatical interpretation according to the plain and ordinary sense of the words, the construction and form of sentences, and the distinctive idiom of the language.¹⁴

Now Lutheran exegetical principles, too, similarly assert that Scripture is clear and that one derives the meaning from the text. Ralph Bohlmann has summarized Lutheran hermeneutics.¹⁵ Lutheran principles of interpretation view the Holy Scriptures as a unit; one is not to read his own opinions into the text; one is to interpret the Scripture as a literary document, and one derives the meaning of the text through a study of the words and the grammatical structure of the sentence. Every passage has but one sense (Bohlmann, p. 89). Scripture interprets Scripture because of its unity and clarity (Bohlmann, p. 99); hence passages dealing with the same subject matter may be used to explain or corroborate each other. The less clear are to be considered in the light of the clearer (Bohlmann, p. 101). This principle is fundamental in considering the Last Things. To be sure, every passage has but one sense, but the Biblical authors do not always speak in literalistic terms (Bohlmann, p. 93). The Bible is a literary document and it does employ figures of speech as a matter of fact because it is a literary document; all the resources of language are available to the Sacred Writers.

It is here where the millennialistic schools charge the a-millennialists with being "allegorizers". But millennialists do employ an untenable

literalism in the interpretation of prophecy. When millennialists get to the book of Revelation, they seem to refuse to recognize that Scripture is also a literary document which at times employs figures of speech, allegories, and symbolic language. After reading several millennialistic works, Dr. Engelder came with this rather harsh but factual judgment: "In order to think Chilias-tically, one must be able to apply the most violent exegesis and be willing to subject Scripture to the most arbitrary interpretation. The iron-clad rule that one must never depart from the sensus literalis is put aside when the particular theory of a particular school demands it and the distinction between the sensus literae and the sensus literalis seems to be unknown. We depart from the sensus literae when Scripture tells us to do so. The pre-millennialist clings to the sensus literae or departs from it as his fancy dictates."¹⁶ I would be remiss if I did not point out that here is one of the cruxes and one must approach this problem sensitively since one must be careful not to lay himself open to the charge that he is "demythologizing". Some millennialists almost appear to think that if one takes a high view of the inspiration and authority of Scripture one must be a millennialist. We take an equally high view of Scripture, but our principles of interpretation do not allow us to be millennialists because we follow the clear passages of Scripture. Luther-anism recognizes that the Scripture is a literary document which uses historical language, alle-gories, imagery, and figurative language.

Let me examine some of the millennialistic interpretations. Ezek. 40-48, as I have already noted, is to be interpreted literally in the mil-lennium as a rebuilding of the Jewish temple. But in the New Testament Jesus disparages the view that the true worship of God depended upon an ex-ternal building: "Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain,

nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father" (John 4:21). Rather, according to the New Testament all believers in Jesus Christ grow together into "an holy temple of the Lord" where God dwells through the Spirit (Eph. 2:13-22). Hence these New Testament words must shed light on the words of Ezekiel, and point the way as to how we should interpret them.

Last spring at the Jerusalem Conference, Harold Ockenge declared that God had promised to restore Israel to Palestine and to restore Jerusalem to Israel and that since 1967 this promise had been fulfilled. Among the host of Old Testament passages he quotes as being fulfilled by these events, he cites Amos 9:11-12.¹⁷ Yet, if one holds to the axiom that Scripture interprets Scripture because it is a unit and because it is clear, one finds clear light in the New Testament on how to interpret this and similar Old Testament passages. Scripture interprets this prophecy by telling us that the Lord's promise to return and raise up the tabernacle of David took place in the building of the Holy Christian Church, a spiritual tabernacle. When Paul told the Jerusalem Council how the Gentiles were being brought to faith, James arose to say that now the prophecy of Amos had been fulfilled: "To this agree the words of the prophet, as it is written: (Acts 15:13-17).

As can be seen from Part I of this paper, millennialists postulate a "millennium" and then center around this certain events such as Christ's return, the vanquishing of Anti-Christ, the physical resurrection of the martyrs, the universal conversion of the Jews, and the establishment of some kind of millennial kingdom. In the final analysis, everything hinges on Revelation 20. Millennialism stands or falls with it. Basically, it is supposed to be the text that sets forth the doctrine that saints will be raised from the grave at the beginning of the Millennium and the wicked

at the end of that period. This view makes a separation of time between the coming of Christ, the resurrection of all the dead, and the judgment in the end of the world.

But the New Testament certainly does not connect the second coming of Christ with an earthly kingdom, having its center in an administration from Jerusalem (Matt. 25:31-46). Further, Revelation 20 does not say that the "first resurrection" comes to pass as a result of Christ's second coming. It is just not in the text. Revelation 20 does, however, speak of the "thousand years" (six times) and of the "first resurrection", and the "binding of Satan". How are these to be understood? The millennialist wants to give as literalistic interpretation as possible to Revelation 20, but even he will not be one hundred percent literalistic; he isn't, as far as I can see, thinking in terms of a large iron or brass "key" or a "great chain" that would make, for example, the Queen Elizabeth's anchor chain look like a watch chain. To even a casual reader it is evident that the book of Revelation is saturated with figurative expressions, full of visions, and that it is prophetic in nature. It is indeed a difficult book to understand, but one who accepts all of Scripture as a unit and confesses its fundamental clarity, will have Scripture serve as its own interpreter. This means that he will use clear passages of Scripture dealing with the same subject matter to clarify the other passages.

In view of this, I would suggest that serious consideration be given to what Dr. C. H. Little says in the Foreword of his Explanation of the Book of Revelation regarding "methods of interpretation" of the Book of Revelation: "Three methods of interpreting the prophecies in Revelation have been proposed. The first of these regards the prophecies as already fulfilled in the past. The second regards them as attaining fulfillment only at the

end of the world, in close connection with Christ's Second Advent. The third looks upon the prophecies as being progressively fulfilled during the history of the present dispensation. This last method is the one adopted by the vast majority of Protestant commentators. This, as adhering most closely to the text, is the only proper method of interpretation."¹⁸ It appears to me that in view of the particular type of literature Revelation is and in view of the other clear passages of Scripture and the facts of the unity of Scripture, this is "the only proper method of interpretation".

In keeping with this view, the thousand years "actually cover the whole New Testament dispensation from the incarnation and enthronement of the Son of God (12:5) to the final casting of Satan into hell (20:10)." (Little, p. 201). The binding of Satan and casting him into the abyss "means that he cannot prevent the heralding of the Gospel throughout the world for a testimony to all nations" (Little, p. 204). "The first resurrection" has reference to the "souls of all the departed saints, or all the souls saved during the present dispensation. The whole purpose of this vision is to reveal the royal exaltation and power of every martyr and faithful believer when at his death his soul enters into heaven. . . . Accordingly, the resurrection of which John here speaks is a resurrection pertaining to souls. The term is not here used in a literal, but in a symbolic sense, signifying a quickening and raising up as in Ephesians 2:6" (Little, pp. 205, 206).

In view of the clear passages of Scripture, this is the only way in which to interpret Revelation 20. Those who place the thousand years into the future, during which Christ physically returns and rules with certain resurrected saints before the Day of Judgment and the General Resurrection, are hard-put to fit this in with Christ's picture of the Final Judgment given in Matthew 25:31-46

and 24:30-41. The millennialist abolishes the idea of a general resurrection and divides the resurrection into two parts separated by a thousand years, placing the resurrection of the just at the beginning of the thousand-year reign and the resurrection of the unjust after the thousand years have been completed. But the words of Christ which we read in our funeral liturgy before the open grave are compellingly clear: "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation" (John 5:28.29). After the graveside service is finished one might ask some unbelieving relative of the departed what Christ said!

And then, as if to underscore the futility of the millennialist's position that the just will be raised a thousand years before the unjust, Christ specifically declares: "And this is the will of Him that sent me, that everyone which seeth the Son and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:40). Reu's attempt to escape the force of these words is noticeably weak: "The universality of the resurrection, which is definitely asserted in the Gospels, does not necessarily require its absolute simultaneousness; hence, in assuming a first resurrection one does not contradict the analogy of faith and of the Scriptures; Cf. moreover Matthew 27:52ff." Indeed! How could the simultaneousness be more forcibly put?

Looking at it also from an exegetical point of view, the millennialist by the insertion of a thousand-year period delays the Last Day. Scripture teaches that the Last Day is imminent: James 5:9, 1 Peter 4:7, 1 John 2:18, Mark 13:35 ff. This Scriptural truth, early confessed by the Christians, that Christ is coming at any moment

to judge the quick and the dead, no doubt was a factor in creating in Luther and the fathers of the Lutheran Confessions a strong disinclination against going into detail in eschatological projections. For them the resurrection of all the dead and the Last Judgment are synchronized with the Lord's return. It does appear that the millennialist is in effect saying: "My Lord delayeth His coming to judge all that are in the graves for at least a thousand years"! Let it be noted that the arguments against the a-millennial position all arise from the refusal to accept the symbolical nature of the Book of Revelation.

Another exegetical problem that has to do with the millennium and the events supposed to accompany it is the universal conversion of the Jews, a doctrine thought to be found in Romans 11: 25,26. As far as I know, present-day Lutheran millennialists do not, as some of the conservative Evangelicals, hold to a literal rebuilding of the temple of Jerusalem, but they do hold to a "conversion of Israel" (Cf. Reu). According to Kantonen, a special feature of the evangelization of the world is "the conversion of the Jews, Romans 11:25,26." He suggests that the Zionist Movement, the establishment of the State of Israel, etc., "cannot fail to suggest the fulfillment of prophecy."¹⁹

Time doesn't permit me to go into detail with reference to the exegesis of Romans 11, but I do want to call attention to some general points of significance and refer you to some material for further study. Besides Bengel, another commentator whom I picked up from my father's library is Philippi.²⁰ While theologians, as far as I know, are not noted for the frequency with which they reverse their field on certain points, Philippi did on Romans 11:25,26. In the first two editions of his commentary he supposed "the Apostle expressly to foretell an ultimate conversion of Israel as

an entire nation after the entrance of the Gentile pleroma" (p. 237). But in the third edition (in an "Appendix") he unequivocally gives it up and adopts a different view: "This mode of interpretation (i.e., in this way, namely, that out of the people but partially hardened a great gathering of believers continually goes on until the end of days -- in this way the whole Israel really meant by the Old Testament Word of God as the prophetic passage directly quoted proves, shall be saved) now appears to us for the reasons stated in this Appendix to deserve the preference over the theory advocated by us hitherto and defended in the exposition of Chapter 11." (p. 246). Philippi points out that "only after Spenser's days has the theory advocated by us (i.e., in his first two editions), partly, no doubt in the interest of Chiliastic inclinations and tendencies, won its way to general acceptance" (p. 238). One needs to keep this in mind when he studies the millennialistic reconstruction of the Last Things because one of its characteristics is to insert thoughts into the text that just don't seem to be there.

After Philippi had made his re-study of this portion of Romans, he concluded that "the entire drift of the 9th chapter is directly opposed to the idea of a promise of salvation given to natural Israel as an entire nation. . . . Thus all depends upon faith, and the believing Jews along with the believing Gentiles, form the one great family of God, the true seed of Abraham, the spiritual Israel, which was always meant, pointed at, and included in God's Word of election and promise. Consequently this Word of God, rightly understood, has already received its perfect fulfillment in spite of the apostasy of Israel after the flesh. It cannot be denied that it would be very strange for an exposition of this character to run at last into its very opposite, namely, that the Word of God at the end of the days is yet to

receive a fulfillment in the case of the entire Israelitish nation" (p. 238). Philippi also concluded that the fact that God has left for Himself a remnant according to the election of grace (Romans 11:5) "cannot prove that all Israel will be partakers in the charis but merely this, that God has not so absolutely abandoned His people that He will utterly refuse henceforth to draw His spiritual children from them as from the Gentile world" (p. 239). He is convinced that pas Israel cannot be applied to the entire body of the people of Israel descending in the course of nature from Abraham, and he takes the term to apply to the "elect portion of the Jews" (p. 243), because, among other reasons, "with this view alone agrees the subjoined prophetic passage, which according to the original text, expressly promises salvation only to those turning from apostasy in Jacob. Had the Apostle promised the salvation of the whole people of Israel, he would not directly have quoted a passage limiting salvation to those who repent" (p. 244).

In reading Philippi, both the commentary and the Appendix, one will probably find most of the pros and cons for the two views on this disputed text. One should, however, ponder Philippi's concluding words in the Appendix: "That compassion for the lost sheep of the house of Israel and missionary zeal on behalf of Israel, is not diminished by this (i.e., his "Appendix" view) is self-evident, just as little as it was diminished in the Apostle, although he only hoped to save tinax ex autoon. The conversion of a greater proportion of the Jewish people of itself is by no means impossible. Only, this is not expressly taught in the present passage" (p. 247).

Strange as it may seem, nearly one century later another noted New Testament exegete reversed his field in his explication of this text. G. C. Berkouwer recounts that Herman N. Ridderbos, who

holds the chair of New Testament at Kampen, The Netherlands, changed his exegesis in his commentary on Romans (Berkouwer, p. 346). At first Ridderbos understood Romans "as dealing with a great religious conversion of Israel in its entirety in the Last Day". But later he concluded that Paul was talking about "those in Israel who, through the proclamation of the Gospel, repented and turned to the Lord during the course of history"; in other words, a pleroma that represents the whole nation. And he asserts that on this interpretation Romans 11:26 does not predict "a sudden revelation of a Chiliastic mystery."

A year ago, Prof. Ridderbos attended the Jerusalem Conference on prophecy in Jerusalem, where he gave a short paper on "The Future of Israel", which was a-millennialistic in contrast to John F. Walvoord's millennialistic "The Future of Israel". In accordance with his changed view, this well-known modern exegete of the Reformed Faith says: "I cannot find any Scriptural guarantee for the national restoration and glory of Israel as the people of God. . . . Romans 11:26 proclaims that all Israel will be saved; I understand this to mean the pleroma of believers in Israel; by God's grace all those who believe will be gathered into His kingdom, together with the pleroma from all other nations." (Prophecy In the Making, p. 320).

But at the conclusion of his paper, Prof. Ridderbos raises the point that has to do with all millennialism, a point which we might say is more of a doctrinal nature than an exegetical one. It has to do with the millennialist's concept of the Gospel and the Kingdom of Christ, and to a certain extent with the essence of Christianity. Ridderbos confesses to the assembled conference that he is embarrassed reading his paper in the city of Jerusalem in 1971, and that he is embarrassed with the whole prophetic conference. He and his fellow conference members are speaking about the future of

Israel, but are they speaking to Israel, too? He then poses the question that if as Christians they were then to speak to the Jews in Jerusalem would they say: "Our Lord is coming, and when He comes there will be a great future also for you and your land and your temple. Therefore believe in Him" (p. 322). A question such as this brings us face-to-face with the question as to the contents of the Gospel, to the doctrinal question of what God has done and still does for us in Christ, and whether this is vitiated when a millennialistic system is imposed upon it. What is essentially the Christian hope?

Reu asserts that when the Anti-Christ has been overthrown and the millennial reign of the saints has taken place, "Christ's reign begins with special power", and "that Satan is bound is very likely an effect of Christ's majestic reign." T. A. Kantonen holds: "That God will manifest this restraining power still more fully before the drama of history comes to a close is the aspect of the Christian hope contained in the idea of the millennium" (Kantonen, p. 65). The idea is that God's Kingdom hasn't really fully come here on earth until Christ's final triumphant reign in history has led to a spiritual renewal which will permeate all areas of social and cultural life (Kantonen, p. 68). Kantonen also puts it this way: "The New Testament too holds forth the hope that the present world will not come to an end before the triumph of Christ over the forces of evil and destruction will have become manifest" (Kantonen, p. 52).

The question is: Does this really have anything to do with the Christian hope?

Christ by His atoning death has already put an end to the lordship of Satan, as the poet sang: "My Jesus died triumphantly, And Satan's arrows broken lie, Destroyed hell's direst weapon"

(Hymnary, 329). Pieper puts it this way: "As He enters upon His Passion, Christ Himself interprets its significance, saying: 'Now shall the Prince of this world be cast out' (John 12:31; 16:11)."²¹ Christ has destroyed principalities and powers and made a show of them openly (Col. 2:15). Christ was born to set His people free. The goal has been attained. Now there is liberation, light in darkness, redemption from the enemy because the Lord God "hath visited and redeemed His people" (Luke 1:68-79). When Christ in the synagogue at Nazareth read from Isaiah 61, which specifically says that the Messiah was to preach deliverance to the captive and to set at liberty them that are bruised, our Savior closed the book and added: "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears" (Luke 4:21). The promised Messiah by His incarnation has already fulfilled this Scripture, bringing liberty to the captives, opening the prison to them that are bound.

For the individual the devil is bound when a man is brought to faith in the Gospel. The Christian's hope and glory is the assurance of the forgiveness of sins. All those who believe in the redemption in Christ's blood and the forgiveness of sins have been delivered from the power of darkness and have been translated into the Kingdom of God's dear Son (Col. 1:13,14). The Gospel of the forgiveness of sins is the Christian's chief joy, his spiritual one and all, and intimately connected with that assurance is the hope of the future heavenly inheritance. The Christian does not take his eyes off the heavenly glory. Once again, the Christian's hope is "the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation." The Apostle Peter sums up the Christian's hope in these great words: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not

away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last times" (1 Peter 1:3-5). This is what we tell our people when we stand before the open grave quoting John 5:28,29 and then ending with 1 Peter 1:3. This is Scriptural eschatology and we should let nothing enter which will becloud our glorious Christian hope.

Werner Elert is a present-day Lutheran theologian who has dealt with the doctrinal aspect of the claim of the millennialists that Christ's victory and reign must in some way be demonstrated here in this world when "God's creative power can once more flow into the world without restraint and the new creation has begun" (Kantonen, p. 77). I shall quote Elert at some length since he puts his finger on a vital spot: "The consummation of the church and the Kingdom of Christ; the hope of resurrection by virtue of the connection with Christ, who is the Head of the Body; the end of the world -- all this is universal eschatology. Early Lutheranism, however, unanimously and logically rejected every form of Chiliasm -- open and disguised, courageous and cowardly. Chiliasm would like to assure the halo for itself without paying the necessary theological price for it. The conception of a 'thousand-year kingdom' within the framework of the present cosmos -- even if the cosmos is freed from its demonic tormentors -- was totally incompatible with the Lutheran way of expressing the idea of the Kingdom of Christ. . . . But even every diluted form of Chiliasm is impossible here. A diluted form is to be found where in an increasing improvement of world affairs -- especially of the position of man, his regulations, arrangements, views, and ambitions -- one sees an approach to the perfection that is promised to the Kingdom of Christ. It has been shown that this presupposes a conception of the kingdom that is at variance with the Gospel. Here the question is

whether the consummation of the kingdom is the end of an immanent development. That the kingdom is in a state of progress is clear from its activity in time (Cf. The Kingdom of Christ). But it wins its victory in those who become righteous -- become righteous in the sight of God, not in the sight of men. . . . For man belongs to this kingdom (i.e., Kingdom of Christ) always only as a sinner to whom sin has been forgiven. . . . For Luther the fact that the Kingdom of Christ and its progress are concealed is essential. 'Thus', he says where he speaks of the hope of the future, 'our eyes are closed to the worldly, visible things; and their hope is directed toward the eternal, invisible things. Grace does all this through the cross into which the godly life that is intolerable to the world brings us' (W. A., x, I, 43, 19). . . . Luther, Melancthon, and early Lutheranism as a whole shared the aforementioned view and expectation. The theology of the Enlightenment broke with it. . . . The history of the world is not the judgment of the world. In the history of the world the wicked are mingled with the good. They are not separated until the end has come. And they are separated as only Christ can separate. 'The Kingdom of Christ is victory over death' (W. A., 49, 767, 6)."²²

IV

It remains for us to examine how the Lutheran Confessions deal with Millennialism. I have already quoted the Augsburg Confession, Article XVII in full (See p. 8).

Reu, in his Lutheran Dogmatics probably is representative of those Lutheran millennialists who hold that Millennialism, or at least their brand, per se is not rejected by the Augsburg Confession. Reu appends a final "Note" at the completion of his system: "Not a few of the points

discussed in this chapter pertain to the realm of Open Questions, i.e., questions which need not disrupt church fellowship. These problems, when so termed, are not thereby stamped as negligible things, even though they are not of central significance and much less essential than the doctrine of the way of salvation; for they are problems which concern the proper interpretation of the Word of God, and this is never an irrelevant matter. But the term conveys the idea that on the one hand one may be a member of the Lutheran church and yet reject the above-given presentation of the preliminary perfection, and that on the other hand he must be recognized as Lutheran who feels that his conscience is bound by the Scripture texts and therefore defends and upholds the views presented in this chapter. . . .If someone on the basis of Augustana XVII, rejects as un-Lutheran the above presentation, we answer that we accept, without qualifications, condemnation of 'juedische opinionones', but we demand that those words be made to express no more than they actually do express." Reu then quotes from Melanchthon's Variata of 1540, but I must confess that I do not see how this sheds any light on the matter.

Now the Augsburg Confession, Article XVII, does admittedly say: "They condemn also others who are now spreading certain Jewish opinions that, before the resurrection of the dead the godly shall take possession of the kingdom of the world, the ungodly being everywhere suppressed" (My emphasis). Did the Confessional Fathers thereby want to leave the door open for some kind of Millennialism but close the door only on Thomas Muntzer's type of Chiliasm, or did they reject all Millennialism and, to exemplify this in general, take the example closest at hand? It certainly appears to be the latter, for in the opening sentence they declare: "Also they teach that, at the consummation of the world, Christ will appear for judgment, and shall raise up all the dead" (My

emphasis). The natural interpretation is that Christ is returning on the last day to judge the quick and the dead, and then comes the end. There is no time here for any kind of a Millennium. I showed from K^ostlin that Luther made no allowances for a Millennium. Prof. E. Lindberg seems to be stating the facts of the case when he says: "At the time of Luther there were no conservative Lutherans who expected a period of triumph for the church before the second coming of Christ."²³ The reformers found their "peace on earth" in the Gospel which is "the Gospel of peace" (Eph. 6:15).

Kantonen is considerably less than convincing when he says: "The reformers, in general, were too engrossed in the central spiritual content of the Gospel to give much thought to the earthly side of the Christian hope" (p.66). I have already summarized what the Gospel meant to the reformers. They did, however, study and write about the whole counsel of God, but they just didn't find any millennialistic ideas there. Luther and his fellow reformers wrote volumes but none of it about the Millennium.

To sum up, their eschatological beliefs could be as simply set forth as Cunningham sets forth those of C. S. Lewis on the Second Coming: "Lewis considers Christ's teaching on His return to consist of three propositions: '(1) That He will certainly return; (2) That we cannot possibly find out when; (3) And that therefore we must always be ready for Him.' The doctrine should not be used to create fear or crises-feeling, or idle speculation, but it should always be taken into account, as though this present may be the world's last night. What should be kept in mind is not the picture of physical catastrophe, but the naked idea of judgment of an infallibly perfect verdict that will be passed on us all. Since we do not know when Christ will return, today is the time to choose the right side."²⁴

In making a study of Millennialism, especially within the context of fellowship, one must look at some of the more recent confessional documents of Lutheran church bodies. How do our brethren handle the doctrine of the Last Things? I examined four of these confessional statements: "The Brief Statement of the LC-MS" (1932); "The Union Theses Adopted by the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Old Prussia (Breslau Synod) and the Evangelical Lutheran Free Church (The Saxon Free Church)" (1948); "The Theses of Agreement of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Australia and the United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Australia" (1956); and the "This We Believe" of the WELS (1967). In general, I note that the Brief Statement and the WELS document are similar in their approach and wording while the Breslau-Saxon and the Australian documents are similar in their approach. I do believe that while these four presentations arrive essentially at the same doctrinal position on Millennialism, the two different methods of presentation are not equally satisfactory in dealing with this difficult subject. The Brief Statement carried the heading "Of the Millennium" (#42), and it began with a categorical statement that with the Augsburg Confession's XVII it rejects every type of Millennialism or Chiliasm, etc. One can immediately see that this interpretation of Article XVII is in disagreement with Reu's interpretation. The Australian Theses (VII), "Thesis on Eschatological Matters", also explicitly says: "With the Augsburg Confession, Article XVII, 5, we reject every kind of Millennialism or Chiliasm", etc., and basically defines it in the terms of the Brief Statement (Thesis 3). While the WELS statement does not make specific reference to the Augsburg Confession, it declares (IX, Jesus' Return and the Judgment): "We reject every form of Millennialism, since it has no valid Scriptural basis and leads Christians to set their hopes upon the Kingdom of Christ as an earthly kingdom" (Thesis 5). It does not define Millen-

nialism as the first two statements did, but it does make specific rejections. The Saxon-Breslau Theses (IV, "Of the Last Things") in the introductory paragraph states that Article XVII of the Augsburg Confession in condemning "certain Jewish opinions". . . "indicates the type of eschatology which dare not have a place in the Lutheran church", and gives the reason why, namely, that our Christian hope be not corrupted. Then in Thesis 1 they "subscribe without qualification Article XVII, 1-3, of the Augsburg Confession (trigl. 50). According to this thesis Chiliasm is rejected, that is the teaching of a two-fold return of Christ, a two-fold physical resurrection, and the view that prior to the resurrection the godly shall take possession of the kingdom of the world."

So, all four documents accept the Augsburg Confession as excluding all types of Millennialism, but the Saxon-Breslau document seems to give a more satisfactory presentation because it gives more detail.

To indicate how difficult it is to nail down antitheses on Millennialism (and yet not overstate the case), I call your attention to the fact that the Brief Statement and the Australian Theses reject "the false teaching that Christ will return visibly (my emphasis) to this earth a thousand years before the end of the world." Does this, or does this not, exclude the position that Christ will usher in a millennial reign by an invisible return or through His "invisible Lordship"? Kantonen, taking exception to J. L. Neve's insistence that the admissibility of millennialism depends on the rejection of three points, the first of which is the "visible appearance of Christ for a reign of a thousand years before the revelation of the Anti-Christ and Judgment Day", insists that the validity of the basic concept of the millennium does not depend on this consideration. Nor,

for that matter, he further declares, does it depend on the rejection of the other two points that Neve called for (an outwardly victorious kingdom of Christ upon earth, and the expectation, on this side of eternity, of a time when there shall be no struggle with the enemies of Christ, with sin, and when there shall be no cross to bear). Kantonen grants that "Scripture presents the visible appearance of Christ on earth only in connection with the final judgment", but he holds that the Millennium is associated with the end of history, not in the sense of finis, the last event, but in the sense of telos, "the fulfillment of the purpose of the invisible lordship of the risen Christ" (pp. 67,68).

Millennialists are quite candid in stating that "the only New Testament passage in which the Millennium is explicitly taught is Revelation 20: 1-6" (Kantonen, p. 65). Hence one would expect a present-day confessional statement to deal explicitly with this passage. The Brief Statement does refer to it only indirectly by rejecting the "opinion" that before the general resurrection on Judgment Day a number of departed Christian martyrs are to be raised again to reign in glory in this world, and it confesses on the basis of John 5:28 and John 6:39 and 40 that there will be but one resurrection of the dead.

The WELS statement also does not deal specifically with this passage but states that when Jesus returns "all the dead will arise", etc., on the basis of John 5:28,29. And then it rejects "every form of Millennialism". No specific reference is made to Revelation 20.

The Saxon-Breslau document, on the other hand, takes up this passage and deals with it, it appears to me, in a satisfactory way. It plainly states: "Revelation 20 cannot be adduced as an independent source for Christian doctrine, because

it uses figurative language. It dare not be misused to darken other clear passages in dealing with eschatology or the kingdom of Christ. Revelation 20 must be explained according to the clear passages with careful consideration of text and context. Though some would place the 'thousand years' into the future and not into the past, yet they dare not find in the thousand years a teaching which is contrary to the analogy of faith and the consensus of Christian doctrine or which would fix the date of Judgment Day." This statement sets limits as to how Revelation 20 is to be interpreted but yet allows for interpretations which may be different but are in keeping with the clear passages of Scripture. This is important because there are two or three interpretations of Revelation 20 current among us.

The Australian theses take pretty much the same tack: "Revelation 20, which is the chief passage adduced for Chiliastic teaching, dare not be interpreted so as to contradict clear passages dealing with eschatology. The question whether the 'thousand years' of Revelation 20 designates one thousand ordinary years or whether this term designates a period known to God only and fixed by him is not divisive of church fellowship. No interpretation of these 'thousand years' dare be given contrary to the analogy of faith" (Thesis 4).

I must confess that the WELS statement which seems to deal with this problem of interpretation is something of a puzzle to me as to its meaning and all its implications: "We reject as contrary to the clear revelation of Scripture all attempts to interpret eschatological passages in the New Testament (those that speak of the end of the world, Jesus' Second Coming, and the Judgment) symbolically or to see these eschatological events taking place not in the end of time, but concurrently with history" (all emphases are mine). I take it that this antithesis is undoubtedly aimed

at Bultmann's existential eschatology and against similar types of neo-orthodoxy. For Bultmann, eschatological events are only contemporary events that make our lives meaningful. Jesus was mistaken when he "expected a tremendous eschatological drama", when the Son of Man would come in the future (See, e.g., Kerygma and Myth, pp. 15-25 and Jesus and the Word, pp. 35-45). Rejection of neo-orthodox aberrations is necessary today in a confessional document, but it seems to me that this antithesis says too much with its extremely sweeping statements and that therefore it can cause confusion. It rejects as contrary to the clear revelation of Scripture all attempts to interpret New Testament eschatological passages symbolically. Now, I interpret Revelation 20 symbolically, convinced that to get the proper sense of this passage intended by the Sacred Author one must interpret symbolically (See Bohlmann, p. 93). The antithesis further rejects all attempts to see these eschatological events taking place, not in the end of time, but concurrently in history. I'm not certain that the paragraph spells out all the eschatological events and whether it is intended to refer to all eschatological passages, but I find Dr. C. H. Little's position on the interpretation of the Book of Revelation the only tenable one, which sees these "prophecies as being progressively fulfilled during the history of the present dispensation" (Little, p. vi). In other words, I interpret Revelation 20 as being fulfilled "concurrently with history". And I think that the WELS does also; at least Prof. John P. Meyer commended Little for his method of interpretation (See Quartalschrift, April 1951, p. 157). It would seem that some clarification is necessary here. The phrasing of this thesis also illustrates how difficult it is to pin down everything that has to do with eschatology. Hence it appears to me that the approach of the Saxon-Breslau and the Australian documents is more satisfying.

The Brief Statement rejects the "opinion" that "before the end of the world a universal conversion of the Jewish nation (of Israel according to the flesh) will take place." The WELS statement seems to be somewhat stronger: "We likewise reject as unscriptural any hope that the Jews will all be converted in those final days." Very properly these statements reject the universal conversion of the Jews as one of the features of the Millennium (Cf. Kantonen, pp. 82,83).

In distinction to the brief treatment found in the Brief Statement and the "This We Believe", the Saxon-Breslau and the Australian papers spell out the problems and solutions in more detail. The Saxon-Breslau statement in particular insists that the error that Israel as a nation will be reinstated as a chosen people "must be repudiated" because "it is contrary to Scripture and the correct doctrine of Christ's Kingdom (Luke 17:20-21; 1 Thess. 2:16; Romans 11:7)." It further asserts that the hope that before Judgment all Jews will be converted is based on misinterpretation of Scripture, especially of the Old Testament, and on carnal views concerning conversion and Christ's Kingdom. But it does grant that "the view held by many that a large number of Jews will be converted during the last times is in itself not contrary to Scripture, but cannot be supported by clear Scripture passages." The Australian document "admits the possibility that a greater number of Jews may be converted in the last times; however, the expectation that a time will come when all descendants of Abraham on earth, all the Jews, will be converted to Christianity and thus be saved has no foundation in Scripture." The Saxon statement explicitly declares that "all Israel" may mean the total number of elect in Israel or the total number of all elect, "not, however, all Israel according to the flesh." The Australian theses close (appropriately, it seems to me) with a plea to protest against the persecution of the

Jews, to proclaim the Gospel to the Jews, and to pray for them with the church of all ages.

In short, all four confessional statements correctly take the position that Article XVII of the Augsburg Confession rejects Millennialism (gross and fine), and they would not accept as an "open question" an eschatological reconstruction such as Reu has in his Lutheran Dogmatics, and which is probably representative of modern Lutheran Millennialism. The ALC Declaration of 1938 wanted to leave room for Millennialism of the Reu variety by the use of the term "until the return of Christ". Committee 16 of the LC-MS 1938 Convention was careful to close the loophole by using the phrase "the return of Christ for Judgment": "It (the Declaration) demands of those who place the thousand years in the future that they profess the truth that the church on earth until the return of Christ for Judgment will continue to be a kingdom of the cross and that Christians should be prepared for the coming of Christ at any moment." But, as can be seen from Part II of my paper, Reu was asking for something else, namely, the toleration of his system which calls for the conversion of the Jews, the vanquishing of the Anti-Christ, the first resurrection of the martyrs, their millennial reign with Christ, which is followed by a general crisis, and then the day of Judgment. In others words, Reu asked that one not be denied the hand of fellowship if there was a fundamental disagreement over the understanding of what is implied in Christ's return. This is the current position of the conservative Evangelicals who orbit around Christianity Today. L. Nelson Bell, father-in-law of Billy Graham and the recently elected moderator of the Presbyterian Church U.S., in his regular Christianity Today column, "A Layman and His Faith", recently set forth the same position (See Christianity Today, June 9, 1972, "The Second Coming is News", p. 869). He recognizes that the "amillenarians" and the

"premillenarians" have "strong convictions", but he thinks that they are "beclouding a transcendent and glorious truth by arguing over details of secondary importance." He would simply like to have Christians confess that "what is of paramount concern is the fact that Christ is coming back to this earth." The editors of Christianity Today picked up this article and wrote their chief editorial on it in the June 23rd issue (p. 922). They recognize that "some teach that the Lord may come at any moment, while others say certain events must take place first. But they plead that we simply confess that "the Lord is coming again. Let us stress that central fact rather than our differences over details."

It appears to me that contemporary Lutheran Confessions on the Last Things must spend considerable time laying out the Biblical principles of interpretation that should guide us, setting forth the exegetical material in some detail, and confessing the doctrinal aspects of the Kingdom of Christ and the Christian's hope. I believe that the Saxon-Breslau and Australian documents point out the right direction. The Australian document in its first introductory paragraph sets forth what the Christian hope really is by quoting in full 1 Peter 1:3-5. Curiously, none of the other three statements in setting forth the doctrine of the Last Things have a reference to this great passage. There needs to be emphasis on this aspect of our Christian hope because our whole approach to this matter of the Last Things will be conditioned by what we mean by "Christian hope".

In conclusion, let me revert to where I began: These matters are of great importance to us because of the general interest in them which we find today and because they deal with our Christian hope. If you are still using the old Norwegian Synod burial ritual, every time you stand before the open grave you set forth in clear language the

most important truths; you begin by quoting John 5:28,29 and you end by quoting 1 Peter 1:3. Are our people as fully aware as they could be of the meaning of these two momentous passages?

NOTES AND DOCUMENTATIONS

1. Henry, C. F. H. ed., Prophecy in the Making, Carol Stream, Ill.: Creation House, 1971, pp. 96,97.
2. Another term that is used is "Chiliasm". I cannot demonstrate it from a dictionary, but from my reading it occurs to me that this term is pejorative, indicating a strongly materialistic type of Millennialism. I would therefore suggest that today we use the word "Millennialism", especially when we refer to the positions of contemporary evangelicals. Millennialism has been customarily divided into "pre" and "post". "Pre-millennialism" believes that the Lord will appear before the Millennium to set up his reign on earth. "Post-millennialism" indicates the view that places the coming of Christ after the Millennium. This view holds that there will be a gradual improvement of conditions on earth brought about by the preaching of the Gospel, with the result that the power of God in the believers will triumph over the powers of evil; after this Christ will appear. This optimistic type of millennialism has pretty well passed out of the present-day church, developing into an optimistic, humanistic, evolutionary belief in the progress of man. But recently some of the moderate pre-millennialists sound a little like the old "post" when they describe the millennial period "in terms of a spiritual renewal which will lead to a permeation of all areas of social and cultural life by the Spirit of Christ: (Kantonen, p. 68). Since the old-

fashioned post-millennialism doesn't seem to have any adherents today so that only the pre-millennialists are discussed, I have used the term "Millennialists" having in mind the "pre-millennialists".

3. Mennicke, V. A. W., "Notes on the History of Chiliasm", CTM, March 1942 (XII,3), p. 192 ff.
4. These quotations can be found in the Ante-Nicene Fathers, The American Reprint of the Edinburgh Edition, Buffalo: The Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1885, Vol. 1, p. 154. Pastor Mennicke has them, and they are given in great detail with all the references in a four-volume work by a Seventh-Day Adventist, LeRoy Edwin Froom, The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers, Washington, D.C., Review and Herald, 1950. See Vol. 1, pp. 215,216.
5. Berkouwer G. C., The Return of Christ, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972, p. 310.
6. Kostlin, Julius, The Theology of Luther, Philadelphia: Lutheran Publication Society, 1897, Vol. 2, p. 574.
7. See Bainton's, Here I Stand, Abingdon, 1954, p. 378.
8. Bengel, John Albert, Gnomen of the New Testament, translated by Rev. Andrew R. Fausset, in 5 volumes, Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1860. See Vol. 5, p. viii.
9. J. A. Seiss (1823-1904) gave a series of lectures on the Revelation of Jesus Christ, with the title, The Apocalypse. These lectures were published in three volumes, which went into many editions; the Eighth Edition published by Charles C. Cook Co., N.Y., 1901. Volume 3 contains the lecture on Rev. 20.

Seiss has an elaborate time-scheme for the Book of Revelation; 1800-1900 indicates the time of Rev. 1-4; then the Parousia; then the second advent, Rev. 4-20; 1-3 (70 years ?); then the Epiphania -- Antichrist destroyed-Satan bound; then the Millennium, 1000 years (Rev. 20:4-6), etc.

10. See Aaberg, Theo., A City Set On a Hill, Mankato, MI: ELS, 1968, pp. 140-201, for a detailed study of these Resolutions and their development.
11. Engelder, Theo., "Notes on Chiliasm", CTM, March, April, May, June, July, 1935 (Vol. VI, No. 3-7); see page 403.
12. The Jerusalem Conference reported in Prophecy in the Making. Not all were millennialists, but the basic thrust of the program of essays was millennialistic.
13. The revised 1941-42 edition of Reu's Lutheran Dogmatics, Vol. 11, pp. 228-247 is reprinted in full in the Confessional Lutheran, Nov. 1942 (Vol. III, No. 11), pp. 113-122. This section is headed: "III. The Preliminary Perfection of the Kingdom of God." Pastor Paul Burgdorf has inserted his own comments, but they are clearly marked in the text with brackets. For part of Reu's material, I also had zeroxed copies of the 1951 edition. I saw no essential differences in these two versions; in a few instances the rather Germanic sentences of 1941-42 edition were somewhat clarified. As you study this section, you might keep in mind the "Four Points" of the 1938 ALC Declaration.
14. See Prophecy in the Making, p. 92 ff. In this connection one should read in the same volume Edmund P. Clowney (president of West-

minster Theological Seminary) on "The Final Temple", pp. 71-88, where he sets forth the thesis that on the basis of the conviction that the unity of the Bible is the unity of God's purpose, "the temple symbolizes the reality of God's presence with his people" (p. 72). Pres. Clowney's paper demonstrates the fundamental difference between Feinberg's type of exegesis and the a-millennialist's when he says: "The greatest promises of the Old Testament are fulfilled in the church -- we are a temple of the living God. Paul is not borrowing language when he quotes from Leviticus 26:12, Exodus 29:45 and Ezekiel 37:27. He is proclaiming fulfillment" (p. 84; my emphasis). Feinberg, it seems to me, would say that this is the work of "Spiritualizers" or "allegorizers". Also consider Hal Lindsey who says that in setting forth his millennialistic system, he has diligently sought to follow the method of interpreting prophecy proposed by David L. Cooper: "When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense; therefore, take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal, meaning unless the facts of the immediate context, studied in the light of related passages and axiomatic and fundamental truths, indicate clearly otherwise" (The Late Great Planet Earth, p. 50).

15. For a summary of Lutheran principles of Biblical interpretation, see Ralph A. Bohlmann's, Principles of Biblical Interpretation in the Lutheran Confessions (CPII, 1968), especially chapters 3, 5, and 6.
16. Theo. Engelder, "Notes on Chiliasm", CTM, March 1935, p. 166.
17. Prophecy in the Making, p. 308.

18. Little, C. H., Explanation of the Book of Revelation, St. Louis: CPH, 1950, p. vi.
19. Kantonen, T. A., The Christian Hope, Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1954, pp. 82,83.
20. Phillippi, Friedrich Adolph, Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, translated from the third Improved and Enlarged Edition, by Rev. J. S. Banks, in two volumes, Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1879. See Vol. 2, pp. 237-247 for his "Appendix to the Third Edition". See Pieper, Vol. 3, pp. 527-534, where he takes note of Philippi's "recantation".
21. Pieper, Franz, Christian Dogmatics, Vol. 3, CPH, 1953, p. 523.
22. Elert, Werner, The Structure of Lutheranism, tr. Walter A. Hansen, St. Louis: CPH, 1962, pp. 511-515.
23. Lindberg, E. E., Christian Dogmatics, Rock Island: Augustana Book Concern, 1922, p. 536.
24. Cunningham, Richard B., C. S. Lewis: Defender of the Faith, Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1967, p. 130.

B. W. Teigen

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BOOK REVIEWS

"THE LORD RULES -- LET'S SERVE HIM!" Meditations on the Psalms. By Leslie F. Brandt. St. Louis, Missouri. Concordia Publishing House. 1972. Paperback. No price listed.

This is the third and last volume of "contemporary psalms that are based on or patterned after the psalms of the Old Testament," as the booklet is described in the preface. Previously the same author had issued "Good Lord, Where Are You?" and "God Is Here -- Let's Celebrate." Selected psalms were treated in each of the three volumes, so with this booklet all of the psalms have been re-worked in the contemporary idiom with references apropos to our late 20th-century setting.

The author succeeds fairly well in making the psalms relevant to the 20th-century reader. He does not hesitate to use such up-to-date expressions as "ghettos," "polarized," and "boomeranged." He also achieves a poetic effect, something that is aided by the verse format of the psalms in the book.

Again, as in previous volumes, however, he often makes the meaning more obscure by using long words where a more basic vocabulary would suffice, and he tends to make abstract the passages that are concrete in the Bible. That is a shortcoming.

The most objectionable feature, however, is his treatment of the Messianic psalms. As in Volume I, he completely divests those psalms of their Messianic meaning. Since by the number of the psalm the author implies that what he is writing is a representation of the contents, it is a very serious matter to remove the heart and

center of the psalm from the exposition. In this volume, several of the psalms are Messianic psalms. We shall refer to only two in this brief review. A reading and several re-readings fail to discover any references to the promised Messiah, Jesus Christ, in either psalm. That is most unfortunate, because it is misleading, and it misrepresents the contents of the psalms under consideration.

Psalm 45 has throughout the centuries been regarded as a Messianic Psalm. Verses 6 and 7 (7 and 8 in the Hebrew Bible) are directly ascribed to Jesus Christ in Hebrews 1:8 and 9. The second stanza of "Beautiful Savior" is based on verse 2, and the hymn "Ride On, Ride on in Majesty" is based on verse 4. In the poem which purports to be a modern paraphrase of the psalm, however, one looks in vain for any reference to Jesus Christ.

Psalm 110 has been regarded by Christians from earliest times as a Messianic psalm. The reason, of course, is obvious: Jesus Christ applied it to Himself. Two verses of that psalm are quoted extensively in the New Testament: verses 1 and 4. In Matt. 22:41-46, Mark 12:35-37 and Luke 20:41-44, Jesus pointedly applied verse 1 to Himself. ("The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.") It is significant that the scribes and Pharisees did not take issue with Him in identifying the One who was to sit at the Father's right hand with the Messiah, for that was the common interpretation at the time. They may have questioned whether Jesus was the Messiah, but not whether Psalm 110 was Messianic. And verse 4 ("Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek") is repeatedly quoted and applied to Jesus Christ in Hebrews 5, 6 and 7 - in all, ten times. Yet in his booklet, Dr. Brandt paraphrases the psalm without a single syllable suggesting the Messiah King who is central to the entire psalm. In view of the fact that the paraphrase is longer than the psalm,

such an omission is inexcusable. His paraphrase of the first verse is evidence for that statement: "God spoke to me today. He broke through my childish doubts with words of comfort and assurance. 'Hang in there; sit tight; stick to My course for your life,' He said, 'I will not let you down.'" Read that verse once more in your Bible, and see if that is what it means.

Such a paraphrase of a Messianic verse that has been precious to Christians for centuries is not only inexcusable; it is deplorable, and is an example of such "wresting of Scriptures" as the Bible warns us against, for it changes the meaning of a passage that is clearly explained in the New Testament. For that reason this reviewer cannot recommend the book, but must suggest that, whatever the price of the book may be, it is too high.

Rudolph E. Honsey

The Old Testament -- Its Claims and Its Critics.

BY Oswald T. Allis. Grand Rapids, Michigan:
Baker Book House, 1972, pages xii--509.
\$9.95.

This book is the product of a long lifetime of devoted study and fruitful scholarship in the Old Testament. From his days as a student at Princeton Seminary over six decades ago until the present, Dr. Allis has been a champion in the vanguard of the conservative school of interpretation of the Old Testament. A student of the remarkable Dr. Robert Dick Wilson, well known for his writings against the higher critical schools of interpretation and for his staunch stand on the inspiration and authority of the Scriptures, Dr. Allis frequently acknowledges his debt to him and others from whom he learned, but also makes what this writer feels are some significant contributions of his own in this valuable book. He documents his statements well. One finds the 57

pages of notes (in fine print) very valuable.

Dr. Allis presents the information under six chief sections, varying in length from about 35 pages to about 135 pages. The concise table of contents in the beginning of the volume contain the following chapter titles: 1. The Old Testament from Within -- Its Facts and Its Doctrines. 2. The Old Testament from Within -- Its Literary Form. 3. The Old Testament from Without. 4. The Old Testament and Its Critics. 5. Comparing the Incomparable. 6. Chronology. Thereafter follow the notes, an index of subjects and persons, an index of authors, and an index of Biblical texts.

The author is surely committed to the inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible. His thoroughly Scriptural approach made it very difficult for this reader to find any passage with which he could take issue or exception. Any differences of opinion would be on trivial details, not on the essence of what the author is here presenting. The author upholds the uniqueness of the Old Testament and its God and religion, and sees them in sharp contrast to heathen books, gods and religion. With that view we must surely agree. This reviewer wholeheartedly recommends this book. It belongs on the shelf of a conservative Lutheran pastor or layman.

Rudolph E. Honsey

Noah's Ark: Fact or Fable? By Violet M. Cummings.
San Diego, California: Creation-Science Research Center, 1972, 352 pages. Available in paperback for \$3.95 and in cloth cover for \$5.95.

This book is exciting and adventurous. It gives credence to the adage, "Truth is stranger than fiction." When one reads this book he must feel he is on expedition with those who through the centuries, but particularly during the last

century and a half, have embarked on the challenging but usually disappointing trip up the slopes of Mount Ararat in quest of Noah's Ark.

To many, including also many confessing Christians, it would seem naive and unscientific to harbor any belief or hope that Noah's Ark may still be in existence in the deep-freeze that has been provided for it on Mount Ararat. As one reads this book, however, a person may become less skeptical and more inclined to leave the possibility open. Among those who have come to regard the possibility as a real one are people of high scholarly and scientific attainments. Dr. Henry H. Morris, of very high repute as a hydraulics engineer, confesses in the preface (page 11):

"Even though encountering various reports relative to the Ark over a quarter of a century, I had until recently remained skeptical that such a search was really practicable and even wrote a comment to that effect in THE GENESIS FLOOD (foot-note, pages 87-88) over a decade ago. The continuing research on this project, however, as reported in this fascinating new volume, has converted an intriguing possibility into a probability and what once seemed a dream into a scientific investigation of tremendous potential."

As one reads these interesting chapters, he soon learns that there have been many journeys up this mountain, the first given by name in the Bible, a name which it still carries. He also finds out that throughout the centuries the mountain had a special meaning to the people of the area: Jews, Christians and Moslems. And, although it appears that time and again something turned up to prevent those who claimed they saw the ark from giving convincing proof, the individual instances add up. They made this reviewer more convinced of

the probability of the presence of the ark on the mountain than he had been before.

The author, wife of Eryl Cummings, who has devoted many years of his spare time to expeditions in quest of the ark, tells this story well. The book is well worth buying and reading. All age groups will enjoy it.

Rudolph E. Honsey

Moses, The Servant of Yahweh. By Dewey M. Beegle. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972, 368 pages. \$7.95.

As the title indicates, the book is a biographical study of Moses. As such, it draws on the four books of the Bible that give us the account of his life and activity (Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy) as well as other ancient writings that may shed light on his life. The book is well-written and interesting. It contains a modest number of footnotes -- only about 90, a number sufficient to document the author's statements without unduly retarding the progress of the reader. A special feature of the book is a photographic map of the geographical region under consideration, including Egypt, Sinai and Israel, taken by an astronaut during the 26th revolution of the Gemini 11 flight on September 14, 1966, from a height of 259 miles. It is of far greater interest and value than any man-made map.

Perhaps the best way to give the reader an outline of the book is to repeat the titles of the twelve chapters as given in the table of contents. They are as follows: 1. Moses and History. 2. The Hebrews in Egypt. 3. Moses -- the Prince and the Fugitive. 4. Moses -- the Prophet. 5. "Let My People Go." 6. The Passover. 7. Through the Red Sea. 8. Bread from Heaven. 9. Commandments from Mount Sinai. 10. The Covenant Community at Sinai.

11. To Qadesh and Beyond. 12. In Sight of the Promised Land.

The author, who is Professor of Old Testament at Wesley Theological Seminary, acknowledges a debt of gratitude to one of his former teachers, the late Dr. W. F. Albright, whom he quotes frequently, and with whom he shares a position that might be described as middle-of-the-road -- neither extremely higher-critical nor committed to the inerrancy and inspiration of the Bible. Since he flatly denies the Mosaic authorship and the unity of the Pentateuch, Beegle expresses disagreement with the anti-higher critical writings of the Jewish scholar Umberto Cassuto and the Christian scholars Oswald T. Allis and K. A. Kitchen. And so it is only to be expected that his book is rather generously seasoned with the alphabet soup of Old Testament higher criticism, particularly of the J, E, D, P variety. Finding a certain delight in detecting and exposing the various strands that presumably underlie any given section of the Pentateuch, he skillfully pulls the strings as he sees and finds them, and informs the reader that certain verses or portions of verses belong to the E tradition, others to the J, still others to the P, and so forth. In this respect he reminds one of S. R. Driver and Gerhard von Rad. He also repeatedly speaks of the "editor" or "redactor," who adds the initial R to the alphabet soup.

One would be tempted to refer to many statements in this book, but space will permit only a few references. In giving some background history, Beegle assigns a fairly early date to Abraham, placing him some time between 2000 and 1800 B. C. (an earlier date than some modern scholars give him). He also defends the 430-year period of the sojourn of the Hebrews in Egypt, using both Biblical and archaeological evidence to support his case. Furthermore, he supports the view that the Egyptian dynasty at the time of Joseph was the

Hyksos dynasty, stating that "it is much easier to account for Joseph's rise to power if the king was a Hyksos and not a native Egyptian." (p. 39.) With this the reviewer would agree.

In addition to his preoccupation with the JEDP theory, the author expresses many viewpoints with which we would take issue. He assigns the late date (13th century) to the Exodus, and arbitrarily maintains that the Pharaoh of the Exodus was Ramses II, in spite of the evidence from 1 Kings 6:1. He also drastically reduces the numbers of the men of military age among the children of Israel as given in Numbers 1 and 26 by explaining "eleph" (a thousand) as meaning "clan," despite the totals given in Num. 1:46 and 26:51, which allow for only the interpretation of "eleph" as meaning "a thousand." In addition the author makes natural explanations for most of the ten plagues in an unwarranted manner, thus removing the miraculous element. Consistently he regards accounts in which there is repetition as a compilation of various documents, in spite of the fact that in ancient oriental literature, prose as well as poetry, repetition and recapitulation are prominent.

Beegle also denies the historicity of some of the incidents related in the Pentateuch. At times he contradicts the plain statements of the Bible, for example, in the incident of the Golden Calf. Through rather specious argumentation he arrives at the conclusion that the calf was made not of gold, but of sandstone. While he does not deny the historicity of that event, as does Martin Noth (whom he quotes more frequently than any other author, this time with disapproval), his conclusion is little better than a denial of its historicity would be. In his section on the giving of the Law at Mt. Sinai, he discusses a number of things, including the two names "Sinai" and "Horeb." On the numbering of the commandments, he follows the

Reformed order, including the last two (9th and 10th) as one commandment. Of interest, however, is his statement regarding the verb translated "covet:" "Yet the Hebrew verb involves more than 'desire.' It can mean 'the attempt to appropriate the possessions of others.' Accordingly, both the inner and outer aspects of coveting are included." (p. 232.)

While there are some worthwhile sections in this book, there are many passages which betray the higher-critical viewpoint of the author and are in conflict with the Scriptures themselves if they are read as the inspired Word of God. Unless the reader is constantly alert, he might easily be misled by statements in the book. This reviewer would therefore recommend the book only with reservations and as a specimen of a form of higher criticism which, though less extreme, may be more dangerous in some respects than the outright higher criticism of Wellhausen, Driver, Skinner and Robert Pfeiffer.

Rudolph E. Honsey