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# Lutheran Synod Quarterly

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ISBN 0360-9685

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# LUTHERAN SYNOD QUARTERLY

Theological Journal of the  
Evangelical Lutheran Synod

Edited by the faculty of  
Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary  
6 Browns Court  
Mankato, MN 56001

Editor . . . . . Pres. Gaylin Schmeling  
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Book Review Editor . . . . . Prof. John Moldstad, Jr.  
Layout . . . . . Paul Fries, Terri Fries  
Printer . . . . . Corporate Graphics International, North Mankato, MN

Subscription Price: \$10.00 U.S. per year

*Send all subscriptions and other correspondence  
to the following address:*

BETHANY LUTHERAN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY  
ATTN: LUTHERAN SYNOD QUARTERLY  
6 BROWNS CT.  
MANKATO, MN 56001

## Foreword

In this issue of the *Quarterly* we are pleased to share with our readers the 1999 annual Reformation Lectures, delivered on October 28-29 in Mankato, Minnesota. These lectures were sponsored jointly by Bethany Lutheran College and Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary. This was the thirty-second in the series of annual Reformation Lectures which began in 1967. The format of the Reformation Lectures has always been that of a free conference and thus participation in these lectures is outside the framework of fellowship. The views of the presenters do not necessarily represent the position of the *Quarterly*.

This year there were three presenters. The first lecture was given by Dr. Charles Arand of St. Louis, Missouri. He received his S.T.M. and Th.D. degrees at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, where he was called in 1989. Here he currently serves as Chairman of the Department of Systematic Theology and Associate Vice-President of Academic Affairs. In addition to numerous articles on topics relating to the Lutheran Confessions, he authored *Testing the Boundaries: Windows into Lutheran Identity* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1995) and translated the Apology of the Augsburg Confession for the new edition of the *Book of Concord* due from Fortress Press in early 2000. This past summer he finished volume one of a projected two-volume commentary from Concordia Publishing House on Luther's Small and Large Catechisms. The first volume is entitled *That I May Be His Own: An Overview of Luther's Catechisms*.

The second presenter was Dr. Stephen Minnema of Mankato, Minnesota. He received a Master of Divinity degree from the Harvard Divinity School in 1976. Since that time he has served as pastor of churches in Houston, Minnesota; Waunakee, Wisconsin; Wheeling, Illinois; and Mankato, Minnesota. In 1990 he completed the Doctor of Ministry degree at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary in Evanston, Illinois.

Professor John Brenner of Mequon, Wisconsin, was the third presenter. Since 1991 he has taught church history, the Augsburg Confession, and education at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, and is currently the dean of students. He has studied at Saginaw Valley State University, the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, and is finishing his Ph.D. program in Historical Theology at Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He edited Prof. John P. Meyer's *Studies in the Augsburg Confession* and is the author of *Not by My Own Thinking or Choosing: A Study of Conversion* in the People's Bible Teachings series by Northwestern Publishing House.

The topic of the lectures was "Eschatology: The End Times." The first lecture presented by Dr. Charles Arand, was entitled "Luther and the Confessors on Eschatology." Here the eschatological thinking of the Lutheran confessors was discussed. The second presenter, Dr. Stephen Minnema, explained "Calvin's Views on Eschatology." This presentation pointed to Calvin's eschatology and its meaning for Christians in evil times. The final lecture, "American Lutheran Views on Eschatology," was presented by Prof. John Brenner. This lecturer gave an excellent summary of American Lutheran views on eschatology and how they relate to American Protestantism.

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The 32nd Annual Reformation Lectures

# **Three Lectures on Eschatology**

**Dr. Charles P. Arand,  
Dr. Stephen W. Minnema,  
and  
Prof. John M. Brenner**

Bethany Lutheran College  
S. C. Ylvisaker Fine Arts Center  
Mankato, Minnesota

October 28 and 29, 1999

Looking toward the 21st Century

# Lecture One: The Eschatological World of the Lutheran Confessions

by Charles P. Arand

The topic that you have chosen for your Reformation Lectures is most timely. Over the past thirty years, our evangelical friends have fostered nearly limitless speculation on the apocalyptic signs of the Last Times from Hal Lindsay's *Late Great Planet Earth* to the bestselling book by Tim Lahaye, *Left Behind*. The eve of a New Millennium can't help but fuel further preoccupation with the topic. These opportunities to reflect on the last times also highlight a deficiency in the eschatological outlook of many people. I bring this up because the last two decades have been periods of unprecedented prosperity. I recently read that America has now produced the first mass upper-middle class in the history of recorded civilization. Unlike periods of war, depression, epidemic, or famine, there does not appear to be a pressing need on the part of most Americans to hope for a better life in the world to come. After all, we have an awfully good life in this world here and now. Indeed, one could argue that Americans no longer live with a view to the past or the future, we simply live in the constantly vanishing present tense. The past does not exist. The future is now.

## *Vertical and Linear Eschatology*

Before delving into our topic, it might be helpful to distinguish between the doctrine of the Last Things and the theme of eschatology. The doctrine of the Last Things entails a study of those events that the Bible describes as happening

when God brings the current age to a close. It focuses on topics like Christ's return, the final judgment, signs of the impending end, the resurrection of the body and the like. As such, the topic stands as one locus among the various articles of the Christian faith. Eschatology, by contrast, expresses an outlook or perspective on life that is "forward looking and forward moving."<sup>2</sup> Eschatology has to do with "living in the present in light of a known past and a hoped for future."<sup>3</sup> Viewed in this way, eschatology is a perspective or outlook that permeates and suffuses the whole of Christian proclamation.<sup>4</sup> The knowledge of Christ's death and resurrection (rooted in the past) paves the way for our hope on the Last Day. The Christian hope regarding the Last Things in turn shapes the way in which we view our present life. Two types of eschatological outlooks will be considered here. Both are biblical and confessional, but both have also been shaped at times by external influences, the one by Platonic dualism, the other by Jewish apocalypticism.

The first is a vertical eschatology. It is so called because the future hope is spoken of as a place that lies above or beyond this world rather than a hope for a new creation that lies in the future. One may see it reflected in the way people talk about the death of their loved ones as "passing away" or "going to be with Jesus." Countless numbers of children pray every night, "Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep. If I should die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take." Any judgment that occurs involves an appearance at St. Peter's gate. Vertical Eschatology can be distorted into an individualized and spiritualized eschatology. It is individualized in that the future hope is addressed primarily to individuals rather than to the entire church or even to all of creation. It is spiritualized in that the future hope is given to an "I" or a "self" that is whole and complete without a physical body. Generally, we picture the person who has died as a disembodied spirit (e.g. Family



Circus cartoons or movies such as *Ghost* and *Ghost Dad*).

Linear eschatology by contrast is future oriented. It looks to the last times, more specifically, the consummation of the cosmos, the end of the world as we know it and the creation of a new age. It picks up the themes of Christ's Second Coming, the final judgment, and the resurrection of the body. Unlike vertical eschatology with its emphasis on the individual, future eschatology generally focuses on the church as a community (whether it be the nation of Israel in the OT or the body of Christ in the NT). It includes the travails and battles that the church must endure prior to the final judgment. Again, unlike the spiritualized dimensions of vertical eschatology, linear eschatology focuses much attention on the resurrection of the body and not just the translation of the soul into heaven. On the down side, it often tends to foster intense speculations on predicting the exact time it will occur (everyone of which for the past two thousand years has been proven wrong). It also often gets carried away with attempts to pin down the signs of the impending return of Christ by identifying the fantastical monsters and demonic beasts that seek to overthrow God.

Both of these eschatologies find support in the Biblical texts. Neither one is necessarily in conflict with the other. If anything, they are mutually dependent upon one another. Nevertheless, as is often the case, one of these tends to eclipse the other in terms of capturing our attention. Generally, I would argue that what little eschatology Americans possess might best be characterized as a vertical (or present oriented) eschatology rather than a linear (future oriented) eschatology. Americans have exhibited an almost insatiable preoccupation with endless questions and speculations regarding the nature of life after death. It takes something like the new millennium to force reflection upon the end times. The Lutheran Confessions, by contrast, show remarkably little interest in the question of what happens immediately upon

dying or with questions regarding the intermediate state of a person between his death and the resurrection. Instead, it is a linear or future oriented eschatology that shapes his outlook on life in the present world and is exhibited in his theological formulations.

***The Last Day:  
A Time of Separations and Divisions***

Given the Confessions' primary interest in a future oriented eschatology, we first must inquire about their view of the Last Day. What is their eschatological hope? On this topic, the Confessions may not appear to say as much as many today might like. Indeed, they basically reaffirm the three ecumenical creeds. They contribute relatively few new insights of their own to the topic, although when placed into the context of justification, the Last Day takes on a new hue. Still, the Creeds and Confessions stand out as radical counter-cultural challenges for our own day inasmuch as we are also heirs of the western philosophical tradition. For the most part, I will confine myself to an examination of the creedal statements along with their explications in Luther's catechisms. Now when one thinks of the Last Day in the creeds, it is natural to turn our attention to the end of the Third Article. It is more proper, however, to begin with the Second Article on Christology. This, as we shall see, gives a soteriological thrust to the entire topic of eschatology. The two critical events of the Last Day include the final judgment and the resurrection of the body.

***Second Article:  
Return for Judgment, that is, Salvation***

In the Second Article of the Apostles' Creed we confess that Jesus Christ "ascended into heaven, sits at the right hand

of God the Father Almighty, from whence he will come to judge the living and the dead.” These three clauses link together the past, the present, and the future. He ascended into heaven (past), currently sits at the right hand of God (present) and will come to judge the living and the dead (future).<sup>5</sup> The ascension brought to a close Jesus’ earthly history and opened up the age of the Spirit<sup>6</sup> while looking forward to Christ’s return. Note, for example, the Angel’s response to the disciples upon his ascension into heaven: “This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven” (Acts 1:11). The expectation that Christ will return quickly became a fundamental tenet of the apostolic faith. The earliest writings in the NT testify to the longing for Christ’s return. Maranatha!—“Our Lord, come!”—is one of the oldest prayers of the Christian church.”<sup>7</sup>

But the Creed speaks not only of Christ’s return but of Christ’s return for a very specific purpose, namely, for judgment. There are few subjects more offensive for the post-modern mind than the assertion of a final judgment—perhaps for good reason.

For a good portion of the church’s history people viewed the return of Christ on the Last Day for judgment primarily, if not exclusively, as the day of wrath (*dies irae*). In the Middle Ages Christian piety was dominated by contemplation of “that day, that day of wrath.” It was an alarming, even terrifying prospect. One can find this theme vividly and gruesomely depicted in a variety of art forms from music to paintings. The old Roman Requiem Mass, when accompanied by the music of Mozart, Verdi or, more recently, Andrew Lloyd Webber, presents this “judgment as unrelied tragedy.”<sup>8</sup> The day of wrath in Jonathon Edwards’ classic sermon, “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God,” evokes remorse by striking fear into the hearts of its hearers. As such, the Last Judgment sounded an ominous and frightening theme.

To focus on the Last Day exclusively or even primarily as a day of wrath would appear to conflict with, or create dissonance with, the preceding elements of the Second Article—a context that should assist our interpretation. Namely,

it occurs at the end of the Second Article as one of a series of events that are part and parcel of the saving history of Jesus. In the Apostles' Creed the second article includes those elements of Christ's life that are deemed to be the keys for understanding the significance of Christ's person and work. Hence it deals with the three foci of Christ's life, his incarnation and birth, suffering and death, resurrection and exaltation. In these it perceptively and accurately captures the main emphases of the Gospels and Paul's epistles. Christ's return for judgment is included as an essential component of the mission of Christ. The Second Coming consummates the work of Christ accomplished through his First Coming!

The last judgment emerges as the culmination of his destiny in time and space. The Nicene Creed brings out this purpose most vividly with the clause, "who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven." While referring to the first coming of Christ at Christmas ("became man"), it certainly refers to his Second Coming on the Last Day as well. In other words, Christ is the one who for us men and our salvation will come down again from heaven. This in itself may seem rather surprising. But it captures the OT theme that God will judge the nations and thereby save his people. The judgment of Christ thus "represents the triumph of God's divine plan over his adversaries (Mt 8:29; Lk 4:34) and the vindication of Jesus' work." The judgment is good news for us! It results in the separation of the goats and the sheep, believers and unbelievers. These separations will provide the key to the sixteenth century confessors' eschatological outlook. Sometimes the creeds and confessions will focus only on the destiny of those who are saved. This tends to be true in the catechetical writings. In other instances they will emphasize the destiny and experience of both groups.

The Apostles' and Nicene Creeds stress the Last Day as a day of deliverance and do not mention the fate of the damned. They do not bring out a symmetrical correspondence

between “the two sides”—heaven and hell. The focus is on the benefits for the believers of being separated from the wicked. Luther follows suit in the Small Catechism (and Large Catechism), in which he emphasizes this separating from beginning to end. It is Christ who rescues me from sin, death, and the power of the devil in order that I might be his own. The entire narrative is a movement of being separated from Satan’s kingdom and being brought to live under Christ in his kingdom. In the Large Catechism Luther paints this theme in the starkest colors. He concludes his explanation by affirming that, as a result of Christ’s exaltation, the devil and all powers “must be subject to him and lie beneath his feet until finally, at the last day, he will completely divide and separate us from the wicked world, the devil, death, sin, etc.” (LC II, 31). In the Third Article of the SC, he maintains the asymmetry when he stresses “On the Last Day He will raise me and all the dead, and give eternal life to me and all believers in Christ.” The Large Catechism likewise looks forward to dying to the world and all evil and finally being made perfectly and eternally holy (LC III, 62). No mention is made about the fate of the damned.

The Athanasian Creed, by contrast, stresses that those who have “done good will enter eternal life, and those who have done evil will go into everlasting fire.” Article XVII of the Augsburg Confession and its Apology follow suit. The latter affirms that Christ “will appear and raise all the dead, granting eternal life and eternal joys to the godly but condemning the ungodly to endless torment with the devil.” Luther’s Confession of 1528 stressed that the wicked together with the devil and his angels shall perish eternally (*ewiglich sterben*). The Schwabach Articles speak of Christ punishing the ungodly and condemning them eternally together with the devils. While the expressions may differ, their common bond is the belief of an eternal separation between the believers and the ungodly. “This is the article’s main point. It is further demonstrated by the

condemnation of the Anabaptists, who maintained a worldly kingdom and had revived the ancient doctrine of apocatastasis.”<sup>10</sup>

This teaching of apocatastasis can be traced back to the third century theologian, Origen (d. 253), who denied the eternity of hell. He believed that the idea of everlasting punishment would frustrate God’s plan of universal salvation and contradict the notion that God is love. The central point in his system is the restoration of all things (*ἀποκατάστασις παντῶν*) in Christ. “At death the souls of sinners enter a purifying fire, but gradually all souls, even those of the devils, are ultimately cleansed and restored to the good state they were in before entering the material world.”<sup>11</sup> In the sixteenth century some Anabaptists took up a similar position, that the devil and condemned men will not suffer eternal pain and torment. Most theologians today also tend to loathe the notion that God would sentence anyone to eternal damnation, arguing that it contradicts God’s infinite mercy and the freedom of human beings. If anything, it is a scandal to the American mind.

The Second Article of the Nicene Creed concludes with the clause: “and his kingdom shall have no end.” We may take it for granted as a doxological statement. But it is important also historically and theologically. Historically it addresses Marcellus of Ancyra (d. 374) and his followers who flourished in modern Ankara (Turkey). Marcellus confessed the eternity of the Logos as such, but taught that at the consummation of the world Christ’s reign would come to an end and he would abandon the human nature that he had assumed for our sake. For Marcellus the kingdom was temporary. Once the forces of evil had been overcome, it would serve no further purpose and thus end. Cyril of Jerusalem asserted, “If ever you hear anyone saying that there is an end of the kingship of Christ, hate the heresy. It is another head of the dragon which has sprouted lately in the region of Galatia.”<sup>12</sup> Hence the Nicene Creed takes this wording directly from the Angel’s words to Mary in Luke 1:33. Luther picks up this theme in the Second Article of the SC, “that I may be his own, live under him in his kingdom, and serve him in everlasting righ-

teousness, innocence, and blessedness, even as he is risen from the dead, lives and reigns through all eternity.”

### *Third Article: Resurrection of the Flesh*

In the Third Article of the Creeds we again confess the Last Judgment, but this time less as a Christological theme and more as an anthropological theme, namely, we confess it in terms of our resurrection of the flesh and life everlasting. Yet even here the confession of our resurrection remains rooted in Christology, namely, the resurrection of Christ himself. “The resurrection of Jesus is not just an historical event; it is *the* eschatological event, which in biblical language means the ‘final’ event.”<sup>13</sup> This singular event has universal consequences. 1 Corinthians 15 brings this out most clearly in the New Testament by describing Christ’s resurrection in terms of first fruits. Christ’s history becomes our history, Christ’s destiny becomes our destiny.

With the affirmation of the resurrection of the flesh, the Creed makes a radical counter-cultural confession for its day and, for that matter, our day as well. It produced an uproar in the intellectual circles of the early church. Christians with Gnostic leanings saw it as going too far in opposing the spiritualizing tendencies of the faith. It provoked scornful comments from those outside of the church who saw in it a resurgence of a peculiarly primitive or barbaric way of thinking. In many ways it still runs counter to the prevailing views of our day. For example, it was not too long ago that Krister Stendahl edited a book with the subtitle *Death in the Western World: Two Conflicting Currents of Thought*<sup>14</sup>. These were the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the body. The Christian confession regarding the resurrection of the flesh is pitted against the commonly accepted and rather profound alternative regarding the idea of the immortality of the soul. It is this that has most often

distorted a genuine understanding of Christian eschatology.

In some ways the idea of the immortality of the soul is rooted in the oldest traditions of mystical religious thought. But under the influence of Plato it became the paramount form of philosophical hope in the face of death. Plato's thinking on the soul appears in *Phaedo*, the book in which Socrates, faced with imminent death, discourses on immortality. According to the anthropology that underlies the immortality of the soul, human beings are composite beings: in addition to the corporeal element—the body—there is also another element that is different in kind, namely, the soul, which is incorporeal and immaterial. In this system, body and soul are essentially alien to one another. The soul existed prior to becoming somehow incorporated or even imprisoned in a body. The soul is the principle of one's life, identical with one's identity. Since the soul "is simple—that is, not constituted by parts—it is indissoluble; since it is incorporeal and immaterial, it is indestructible—immortal."<sup>15</sup> The soul grasps the ideal forms of the True, the Good, and the Beautiful. But as long as it is confined within the body its movement is restricted and thus it is unable to live according to its own nature.

With Plato's idea, certain aspects of our lives are considered a priori as significant and valuable while other aspects are classified a priori as unimportant and worthless. What passes away in the "onset of death is only the outward physical aspect of our human life—which is an impediment and antagonist anyway to that which is the real essence of the human being, the soul."<sup>16</sup> In this context, death is seen as something positive. It demolishes the walls of our corporeal prison and sets our captive souls free. Thus death posed less a threat to the human being as the exterminator of life than a metaphysical liberator. After all, death cannot destroy the soul. According to Plato, "the soul can no more die than snow can be hot or fire cold. That being so, it was believed that only children can really be afraid of death." The philosopher, the thinking person, faces death calmly and expectantly. This was exemplified above all else in Socrates' calm demeanor upon



the eve of his death.

The idea of the immortality of the soul and the metaphysical framework within which it works has shaped the thinking of western civilization for several millennia. At times it found its way into the idea of a vertical eschatology as it appeared in Christianity, particularly after the second century when the Parousia appeared to be delayed indefinitely. The subsequent history of Christianity shows that theologians also at times yielded to the pressure of accepting as Christian doctrine the immortality of the soul. Influenced by Plato's thought they adopted the belief that the human being was a composite being of matter and spirit that live together in tension. Thus theologians like Augustine, who defined the soul as a "substance endowed with reason and fitted to the body," saw the soul as the dominant element in the composite; the relationship between soul and body is a relationship between ruler and ruled."<sup>17</sup>

The Creeds give the Christian hope a very different foundation. "For the Creed, Christian hope rests not on general anthropological (body-soul dichotomy) and metaphysical assumptions (eternity of the immaterial realm) but on the faithfulness of God in the history and destiny of Jesus Christ. Jesus is not portrayed as the immortal one but as the crucified one who is also risen.<sup>18</sup> In line with Paul, the Creed affirms that life without a body is not a true human life. Redemption involves the rescue of the entire body and person. Thus the confession of the resurrection of the flesh expresses the completeness and all encompassing nature of the Christian hope. Justin Martyr, a second century Apologist with a strong interest in philosophy, expressed it well: "God has called to life and resurrection the whole person, not just a part, but the whole being—body and soul."<sup>19</sup> This is where a vertical eschatology is insufficient by itself.

The teaching on the resurrection of the body rejected Gnosticism, the greatest threat to Christianity in the second cen-

ture. St. Irenaeus, in whose theology the doctrine of the resurrection was a theme of prime importance, introduces us to these Gnostic-minded persons who, believing that matter is essentially evil, deny the physical resurrection.

Salvation, they plead, belongs to the soul alone, and the body, derived as it is from the earth, is incapable of participating in it. His own rejoinder is to insist that “salvation belongs to the whole human being, that is, soul and body. This is the universal Catholic teaching.”<sup>20</sup>

The creeds champion this marginalized realm of the physical creation. They make us take death seriously. In light of the resurrection, death contradicts the view of God as a God of the living. It is a destructive force that threatens the very existence of creation. “The gospel writers make no distinction between the body and soul: the whole person experiences death.”<sup>21</sup> Yet it is because of Jesus’ death that we have hope. His victory over death was not that he escaped death, but destroyed it.

This led many church fathers to extol the character of the resurrected body. Luther was no exception. He speculated that everything that belongs to this fallen, mortal bodily life, like eating and drinking, urinating and excreting, bearing and rearing children, will be left behind. Albrecht Peters summarizes his view:

The body and its extremities, all the senses, skin and hair, flesh and blood and all the bodily members will remain at the resurrection. But they will be freed of all scars from the wrath of God and from every disfiguring mutation and oppressive earthly difficulty. It will be in the form that is in accordance with the completely mature person in Christ. Luther also believed that like the marks of the nails and the spear [in Christ’s body], the glorified bodies of his followers will display what they have endured. In other words, that which the Spirit of

God produced in us through daily sanctification is not erased, rather, it is purified through the fire of judgment and thus shines for all eternity before the throne of God.<sup>22</sup>

Ultimately, though, the resurrection of the body entails a renewed heart and conscience, free from every accusation of the law, redeemed from all doubt and confusion into the fullness of life and blessedness in the divine presence. This perfect spiritual flesh will be governed, from head to toe, by each person's internal enjoyment of God, which will be found only in the presence of God (WA 28:1963-7; WA 36:593-594).

### *The Nature of the End Times and the Last Day*

So, when will all this take place? In addition to comments on the Last Judgment and resurrection of the body, the distinctively Lutheran Confessions do say a number of things about the characteristics of the End Times and what will happen on the Last Day. Here the Confessions do share concerns with a number of other groups. Indeed, throughout the sixteenth century and well into the seventeenth century people were convinced that they were living "at the extreme edge of time." It was like the experience of expecting a storm or a tornado in the late afternoon of a very hot day. "We all know the signs; a gradually darkening sky, a great stillness, lightning flashes, growling thunder in the distance. We fasten things down and prepare to take shelter. Everyone in the community can see it coming. There is a consensus concerning the coming storm."<sup>23</sup> So it was in the 1500s. Political, religious, and social conditions menaced and threatened. Strife was found everywhere. The measure of wickedness was full.

## *The End Times*

Above all else, the End Times are characterized by a growing weariness of the world. Melanchthon observes in the Apology, “We see that these are the last times, and just as an old man is weaker than a young man, so the whole world and nature is in its last stage and is fading” (Ap XXIII, 53). Again, “The world is growing old and man’s nature is becoming weaker” (AC XXIII, 14). These sentiments imply strongly that the world is growing “worse.” Again, “Sins and vices are not decreasing but increasing daily” (Ap XXIII, 53). In other words, resistance to vices is waning. Offenses against the divine commands are increasing and becoming more monstrous daily. The Confessions cite the condition before the Flood and the vices in Sodom and Gomorrah as an “image” of the revolt of the last times, shortly before the end of the world (Ap XXIII, 54). Just as an old person cannot admit that his end is coming, but steadfastly denies it, and resists the end with one last gasp of energy, so also the world rouses itself to violent deeds in its final gasp before the end. This all will end in one “final grandiose revolt against God.”<sup>24</sup> The confessors viewed their own world in precisely such a light, particularly in light of Rome’s resistance to the Gospel.

An eye cast to the future judgment can be found on the first and last pages of the Book of Concord. The second paragraph of the preface of the Book of Concord opens with the words, “In these last times of this transitory world. . .” (Tappert, 3).<sup>25</sup> This view was reinforced by the darkness that had obscured the Gospel under the papacy. Similarly, the last paragraph of the Book of Concord concludes with the remarkable affirmation (at least by today’s standards) that this “is our teaching, belief, and confession in which by God’s grace we shall appear with intrepid hearts before the judgment seat of Jesus Christ, and for which we shall give account” (FC, SD, XII, 40). This eschatological conviction gave the task of confessing its *gravitas* [seriousness]. Convinced that they would be held accountable by God for what they

taught, they could in no way treat theology or doctrine as relative. In the meantime they must struggle to maintain it against all assaults and attacks. Unlike our day when the attacks have been more subtle and we have become accustomed to speak in language such as “in my opinion,” “from my perspective,” etc., the confessors assert clearly and unequivocally, “With the heart we believe, and with the mouth we confess.” They are willing to bequeath their teaching to their children and descendents (how unlike our day when we hear parents say, “I’ll let my children grow up and make their own decision about which religion they would like to embrace.”)

### *The Anti-Christ*

This brings us to the kingdom of the anti-Christ. For most people in the sixteenth century, this was a topic of great interest and frequent discussion. The briefness of time left before the end made it imperative to be watchful, “not in order to avoid suffering, but in order to be able to identify the deceivers whose coming has been predicted for the Last Days.”<sup>26</sup> The Antichrist stood as a harbinger of the end, of “the violent struggle between Christ’s kingdom and the devil’s kingdom which is rushing headlong to its finish.”<sup>27</sup> To that end, there was a great deal of interest in identifying potential candidates for the title of “Anti-Christ.” Again, this was nothing new. There had been a virtually unbroken interest in identifying the Antichrist for nearly a millennium. Various candidates stepped forward. At times, the German Barbarians, the clergy, the Pope, the Turks, and even Luther (from the Anabaptist perspective), had been identified as the Antichrist. The Confessions identify two leading candidates, namely, the Turks and the Papacy. Sometimes both were included together. The Turk was the body of the Antichrist while the Pope was the soul of the Antichrist. But while the Confessions acknowledge the possibility of the Turks, it is really the Papacy that they judge to be

the Antichrist. From this there arose a wide array of claims and identifications.

In general, the Confessors exhibit an unwillingness to identify or calculate the precise time of the Last Day. This explains the appearance of various statements in the Confessions about the identity of the Anti-Christ that resist final dogmatic harmonization. In most statements (especially the Treatise and Smalcald Articles) on the subject, the confessors identify the Pope as the Anti-Christ. In other occasional statements they name Mohammed and his followers. Beyond that, heretics as such are antichrists (Ap VII, 48). “We should avoid ungodly teachers because they no longer act as the person of Christ but are antichrists.” (Ap VII, 48). Thus no specific person or specific pope is called the Anti-Christ, but the papacy as such is the Antichrist.<sup>28</sup> The Treatise also lines up the “marks of the Antichrist to coincide with those of the pope’s kingdom and his followers.” Edmund Schlink concludes, “All this leads to the conclusion that the eschatological judgments of the Confessions, in spite of all distinctness, are made still in the cautious groping and questioning of the time regarding the scripturally attested signs of the Last Day.”<sup>29</sup> The confessions take seriously the Lord’s directive to look in the present moment of every age for the harbingers of the end.

Beyond this, the confessions do not have much to say about specific omens or identifying the events in their day that immediately presage the Last Day. All they know is that the drama of the war between Christ’s kingdom and Satan’s kingdom is progressing “cataclysmically along a single line and in breath-taking acceleration.”<sup>30</sup> In view of this, they have little time for a comfortable contemplation of the details. They have no patience for any kind of millennial optimism. Hence they reject the opinion that “before the resurrection of the dead, saints and godly men will possess a worldly kingdom and annihilate the godless” (AC XVII, 5). This may also explain

another feature that seems odd to us. The confessions say very little about the state of the human being between his departure from this world and the resurrection. At most, the SC teaches us to pray that “when the hour of death comes, he may grant us a blessed end and graciously take us from the world of sorrows to himself in heaven” (SC III, 20). The confessions clearly reject the Roman teaching on purgatory.

### ***An Eschatological Outlook: Distinctions Without Separations***

These two events that take place with the Second Advent of Christ on the Last Day, namely, the final judgment and the resurrection of the body to eternal life, shape the eschatological yearnings regarding the distinctions in doctrine and life that await the separations in the life to come. Indeed, the Lutheran confessors possessed an eschatological pattern of thought that is revealed in the many paradoxes and tensions that they caution cannot be resolved in this life. Instead, we live in the in-between time when we must distinguish between certain tensions, but not separate them. Yet in the very act of distinguishing them while holding them together in the here and now, we anticipate a time when the paradoxes are resolved, the tensions eliminated, and the antinomies are separated. Here is how we are to live in the meantime!

### ***Distinguishing the Creaturely from its Corruption***

First, the Last Day is already anticipated and attested in the distinction between creaturliness and corruption. The Confessions maintain the biblical tension that the human being is at the same time God’s creature (hence good) and fully corrupted by sin. “His creaturliness and his corruption conceal each other in

their totality from empirical observation.”<sup>31</sup> In this life we cannot separate out one element apart from the other. Article One of the Formula of Concord makes this abundantly clear in its rejection of the Flacian heresy which obscured God’s creation, and in its rejection of the synergism of Strigel which minimized sin’s corruption of the human creature. In the act of distinguishing and yet refusing to separate the two, they give witness to judgment and resurrection on the Last Day.<sup>32</sup> “No one except God alone can separate the corruption of our nature from nature itself. This will take place wholly by way of death through the resurrection. Then the nature which we now bear will arise and live forever without original sin and completely removed...from it...” (Ep I, 10).

### *Distinguishing Law and Gospel*

Second, the last day is witnessed in that most important of all Lutheran distinctions, namely, the distinction between Law and Gospel.<sup>33</sup> Distinguishing between Law and Gospel is the most important duty of Christians within this world. It is the key to pastoral care (the glory of Christ and the comfort of troubled consciences). It is the key for unlocking all of Scripture (Ap IV, Jonas).<sup>34</sup> At the same time, while it is of utmost importance to distinguish Law from Gospel, one must not dare separate them in this life. That separation threatened to happen in the First Antinomian controversy when Agricola objected to the Visitation Articles in which Melancthon insisted that the Law (in its second use) must also be preached to Christians.<sup>35</sup> This threatened to happen again in the Calvinistic teaching on limited atonement and double predestination (in which the Gospel does not pertain to those predestined to eternal wrath). In this world Christians and pagans will always stand under Law and Gospel at the same time.

Distinguishing Law and Gospel also requires the Chris-



tian to maintain the proper order, namely, the direction in which the believer turns when interrogated by the Law. The act of faith in the word of forgiveness always occurs in the knowledge of the Law and away from the Law, “but the Gospel faces us about and directs us away from the Law to the divine promises” (Ap IV, 159). This act in which the sinner, condemned by the Law, grasps the Gospels is an eschatologically oriented act; it is the course from time into eternity.”<sup>36</sup> The Law stands over the regenerate only until the Last Day. The Gospel by contrast extends its gifts to the Christian into eternal life through the resurrection.

“By teaching the distinction between Law and Gospel, but forbidding their separation, the Confessions acknowledge the Last Day, in which Jesus Christ will separate men. Then he will condemn some on account of their sins without pardoning them, and will save others in spite of their sins without condemning them.”<sup>37</sup> Only in the resurrection will Law and Gospel be separated and cease to apply. In the resurrection the baptized will “no longer require either the preaching of the law or its threats and punishments, just as he will no longer require the Gospel. They belong to this imperfect life” (FC, SD, V, 24).

### *The Dialectic of Justification and Sanctification*

From the distinction between Law and Gospel emerges the distinction between the Christian as sinner and saint simultaneously. While the Christian is completely forgiven, he is still partially obedient, reborn and yet partially reborn, living forever yet dying daily, freed from the devil, yet assailed by the devil. This dialectic, too, is filled with eschatological yearning. Since “holiness has begun and is growing daily, we await the time when our flesh will be put to death, will be buried with all its uncleanness, and will come forth gloriously and arise to complete and perfect holiness in a new, eternal life. Now we are only halfway pure and

holy. The Holy Spirit must continue to work in us through the Word, daily granting us forgiveness until we attain to that life where there will be no more forgiveness. In that life there are only perfectly pure and holy people, full of goodness and righteousness, completely free from sin, death, and all evil, living in new immortal, and glorified bodies” (LC II, 57ff). Here it is necessary to hold together two things in Luther’s thinking. On the one hand, there is the totality of the conflict between the old and the new person, and on the other hand, there is the partiality of sanctification as the Christian grows into the maturity of faith.<sup>38</sup> This insight into the continuation of sin is not to tempt us to give up the fight against it and accept sin into our hearts. Whoever wants daily forgiveness without continual sanctification, has denied Christ and fallen into judgment. This fights against a simplistic or fatalistic Libertinism. Continual growth in holiness is not based upon the personal power of the one who has been renewed by the Spirit. It grows out of the daily acquittal of the guilt that ensnares us.

This double structured character of forgiveness and sanctification as the two-fold dimension of Christian existence corresponds to the two-fold work of Christ. First, Christ has solved the question of our guilt because he has quieted the holy wrath of God and opened for us free access to the Father’s heart. Second, he has solved the question of our powerlessness because he has delivered us from the forces of corruption and, through his Spirit, protects us from these forces’ continual surprise attacks. As it does in the Second Article, for Luther, the question of the power of sin receives its proper importance primarily through the matter of guilt and is resolved with it. Sanctification is based on forgiveness—as the “power question” is based on the “guilt-question,” not the other way around. Luther’s treatment of the Third Article in the Large Catechism is particularly instructive. Luther suggests that the *Spiritus Sanctus* is the *Spiritus Sanctificator*, “he who has sanctified and still sanctifies us” (LC II, 36). At the outset, Luther appears to define sanctification in terms that we usually associate with justification. “Therefore to sanctify is nothing else

than to bring us to the Lord Christ to receive his blessing, which we could not obtain by ourselves” (LC II, 39). But he then goes on to stress that what now appears to be contrary to fact empirically will be a reality in the resurrection.

### *Now-Not Yet Character of Salvation*

To speak of the last day and the judgment seat of Christ draws attention to the fact that our entire life comes down to a simple question, “how do we stand in the presence of God?” This basic *coram deo* perspective pervades the entire thought world of the Lutheran confessors. When they discuss sin, it is always from the standpoint of the First Commandment, that is, a *coram deo* vantage point. They define it in terms of doubting God’s wrath, expressing jealousy that others do better than we do, being impatient with God’s answering of prayer. When they critique Rome’s position on justification it is from this standpoint too. Rome made the mistake of minimizing sin by focusing on the second table of the law to the exclusion of the First Table of the law.

The language of justification itself likewise conjures up images of a divine courtroom in which the judge announces his verdict. Indeed, Melancthon utilizes a rich vocabulary in the Apology to depict that event. God imputes (*imputare*), repute (*reputare*), pronounces (*pronuntiari*), and justifies (*iustificare*). In this event, the future last judgment breaks into the present and takes place in the here and now. It breaks into the present by means of God’s two words and works, namely, the Law and the Gospel, the threats and the promises of God. The threats announce the eternal wrath of God, the promises deliver the benefits of Christ who endured the judgment of God upon the cross.

Those who have been justified on account of Christ through faith alone have, in one sense, passed out of the future judgment. The future result is assured. The uncertainty of

what will happen has been removed. But this in turn gives rise to a potential problem or misuse of the Gospel that can sound much like vertical eschatology described a little earlier. If we have already been judged by God and declared righteous, given eternal life, and forgiven on account of Christ, can it lead one to take for granted the future judgment and the end times? After all, it's a *fait accompli*. As soon as I die, I know that I will go to heaven on account of God's grace in Christ. Case closed. Why then is there a need to think about and focus on a future eschatology. Perhaps our appropriate focus on the certainty of salvation in Christ has resulted in the unintended effect of leaving a gap in the future eschatology in the minds of many Christians. To be sure, the former focus receives the greatest amount of attention in our confessional writings.

Here it is perhaps better to speak of justification in terms of an inaugurated eschatology than a vertical eschatology. On the one hand, it declares that we have survived the judgment of God. On the other hand, we await its final manifestation. It possesses a now-not yet character. Oscar Cullmann drew the comparison of this Christian eschatology with D-Day. On the one hand, once the allies established their foothold on the Normandy beaches in France, the war was for all intents and purposes won. At the same time, many battles were to be fought before the allies could take possession of Berlin. It is this inaugural eschatology that attempts to hold together both a vertical and a future oriented eschatology. It is here that the confessions have much to offer, especially as a corrective to the common impressions of the end times in popular culture.

### ***The Distinction between the Church proprie and large dicta***

The confessions witness to the separations of the Last Day also in their discussion of the church. On the one hand, the church consists of the assembly of believers among whom the

Gospel is preached in its purity and the sacraments are administered according to the Gospel. It is “truly the kingdom of Christ, is... distinguished from the kingdom of the devil” (Ap VII, 17). On the other hand, unbelievers are mixed in with believers in the outward gathering of the church. While the church is distinguished from the devil’s kingdom, one cannot empirically discern in this life those who belong to Christ’s church and those who do not. This leads the confessors to distinguish between the *ecclesia proprie* and *large dicta*, “between the congregation of true believers and participation in the outward signs, between the church as Christ’s kingdom and the mixture of living and dead members” gathered in the church. The Confessions oppose all attempts to separate them in this life and all efforts by the church to cleanse itself from all wicked people and hypocrites. Instead, the confessors look to the future when the returning Lord “will cleanse his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the granary, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire” (Matt. 3:12; Ap VII, 19).

### *The Distinction between the Church and Civil Rule*

In the distinction between the power and roles of the church and civil government, the confessions attest to the temporal character of the latter. The power of civil government over physical life and temporal death through the power of the sword is intended only for this life. The spiritual authority of the church through the Word produces eternal death and eternal life. “The function of civil government is the preservation of the fallen creatures in spite of sin and under death and the devil. The function of the spiritual office is the liberation of the sinner from sin, death, and devil; through the Gospel the sinner becomes a new creature.”<sup>39</sup> Thus in the midst of this old world, the new creation begins, hidden under the old world, but still real. In this life both realms are bracketed together. The spiritual proclaims the

dignity of the civil office, and the incumbents of the civil office cannot really know of their dignity without the proclamation of the spiritual office. But one must distinguish them. And with this distinction on earth one is left to look for the return of Christ. Only on the Last Day will the distinction between the two come to an end. Then the gap between temporal death and eternal death, temporal life and eternal life, come to an end. Christ will do away with the old once and for all. God will no longer preserve the wicked.

### *The Distinction between the Presence of Christ and the Return of Christ*

The Gospel is not only the promise of forgiveness, but the application of it, not only the prospect of a future acquittal, but the acquittal itself. The force of “the statements in the present tense is especially impressive in the doctrine of the sacraments.”<sup>40</sup> Thus in the Lord’s Supper the Confessions affirm in unequivocal terms that the very body and blood of Christ are present, distributed and received. In his body and blood he himself is present with his eschatological gifts. At the same time, the confessions affirm that he is present in a sacramental or illocal mode of presence. He is not present in his sacraments in the so-called local mode of presence. That belongs to his return on the Last Day. In some ways, that is the distinctive characteristic of his coming to us in glory and also defines the nature of life eternal. We will then see him face to face and live forever in his presence.

### *Conclusion*

An eschatological outlook to life involves learning how to live in the present in light of Christ’s work in the past and in light of a hoped for future. The Confessions’ eschatology may be better expressed as a linear or future oriented eschatology than a vertical eschatology. They do not reject the latter, but it may be better

described as penultimate than ultimate in character. That is why it is often referred to as an “intermediate state” rather than the final state of our existence. After all, when a person dies, his body has not yet been raised. One might even say that the saints in heaven await in eager expectation for the moment when their bodies will be raised from the dead and they will be reunited and made whole. Baptism is a death and resurrection that initiates the rhythm of dying and rising throughout our life and is brought to completion only with our bodily death and bodily resurrection. Thus it is a future oriented eschatology centered in the events of the last judgment and the resurrection of the body that shape the confessors’ view of their present existence and life.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> I am grateful to my colleague Joel Okamoto for putting me on to this distinction in a paper that he gave at the Theological Symposium on the campus of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, September 1999.

<sup>2</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, trans. James W. Leitsch (London: SCM Press LTD, 1967), 16.

<sup>3</sup> Walter Klaassen, *Living at the End of the Ages: Apocalyptic Expectation in the Radical Reformation* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1992), 1.

<sup>4</sup> Biblical scholars in particular have stressed how an eschatological hope is central to both Testaments. See Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979).

<sup>5</sup> In the Nicene Creed we confess, “ascended into heaven, and is seated on the right of the Father: he shall come again with glory to judge the living and the dead.” The Athanasian repeats the wording of the Apostle’s Creed nearly verbatim.

<sup>6</sup> Jan Milic Lochman, *The Faith We Confess: An Ecumenical Dogmatics*, tr. David Lewis (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 164.

<sup>7</sup> Lochman, 171.

<sup>8</sup> Bernard Marthaler, *The Creed: The Apostolic Faith in Contemporary Theology* (Mystic, CN: Twenty-Third Publications, 1996), 202. The *Dies irae*, of medieval origin, consists of seventeen three-line verses to which four others were added later. It consists of two parts, greatly different from each other in tone and content. The first (verses 1-7) is a majestic and awesome description of the Last Judgment; the second is a passionate appeal to Christ’s mercy. The text weaves together references to both the Old and New Testaments with allusions to classic literature and medieval apocalyptic literature. See NCE 4:863-864.



<sup>9</sup> Marthaler, 206.

<sup>10</sup> Leif Grane, *The Augsburg Confession: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1987), 179. For accounts of the eschatological views of the Anabaptists, see Walter Klaassen, *Living at the End of the Ages: Apocalyptic Expectation in the Radical Reformation* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1992). Also see Klaus Deppermann, *Melchior Hoffman: Social Unrest and Apocalyptic Visions in the Age of Reformation* (Edinburgh: T& T Clark, 1987).

<sup>11</sup> Marthaler, 208.

<sup>12</sup> Marthaler, 217.

<sup>13</sup> Lochman, 235.

<sup>14</sup> *Immortality and Resurrection. Death in the Western World: Two Conflicting Currents of Thought* (New York: MacMillan Co. 1965).

<sup>15</sup> Marthaler, 351.

<sup>16</sup> Lochman, 237.

<sup>17</sup> Marthaler, 351. In Aristotle the death of the body also means the death of the soul. Soul is the “form” that animates the body. Immortality of the soul and resurrection of the body are rooted in two very different anthropologies.

<sup>18</sup> Lochman, 237.

<sup>19</sup> Justin, *De resurrectione*, 8. Quoted in Lochman, 238.

<sup>20</sup> Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer*, I, 10, 1; 5, 20, 1 (cited from Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, York: D. McKay Co., 1927, 164).

<sup>21</sup> Marthaler, 361.

<sup>22</sup> Albrecht Peters, *Kommentar zu Luthers Katechismen*, 5 vols., ed. Gottfried Seebaß (Göttingen: Verlag Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1990-1994), 243-46.

<sup>23</sup> Klaassen, 20.

<sup>24</sup> Edmund Schlink, *Theology of the Lutheran Confessions*, tr. Paul F. Koehneke and Herbert J. A. Bouman (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1961), 280.

<sup>25</sup> *The Book of Concord*, ed. Theodore Tappert (Philadelphia:

Fortress Press, 1959).

<sup>26</sup> Klaassen, 21.

<sup>27</sup> Schlink, 284.

<sup>28</sup> Schlink, 282.

<sup>29</sup> Schlink, 283.

<sup>30</sup> Schlink, 284.

<sup>31</sup> Schlink, 271.

<sup>32</sup> Schlink, 272.

<sup>33</sup> Melancthon defined this arrangement in his *Loci Communes*, 1521 (E. T.: p. 70-71). There he distinguished law and gospel with respect to their function (killing and making alive) and explained that both Testaments contain law and gospel.

<sup>34</sup> Jonas adds the words: “which is especially useful for the clear, correct understanding of the entire Holy Scriptures, and alone shows the way to the unspeakable treasure and right knowledge of Christ, and alone opens the door to the entire Bible.”

<sup>35</sup> See Timothy Wengert’s book, *Law and Gospel: Philip Melancthon’s Debate with John Agricola of Eisleben over Poenitentia* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998).

<sup>36</sup> Schlink, 273.

<sup>37</sup> Schlink, 272.

<sup>38</sup> This theme is developed well in Albrecht Peters, *Kommentar zu Luthers Katechismen: Band 2: Der Glaube* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991).

<sup>39</sup> Schlink, 275.

<sup>40</sup> Schlink, 276.

## Lecture Two: Longing for Heaven While Living with Hitler: A Look at Calvin's Eschatology and Its Meaning for Christians in Evil Times

*by Dr. Stephen W. Minnema*

It was last April when I received the invitation to make this presentation here today. The specific request was that I try to shed some light on "John Calvin's Eschatology and his Relationship with the Anabaptists." I had four initial reactions.

First, I was deeply honored. To be asked to study something and share the fruits of that study with others is not an everyday occurrence. I was delighted with the invitation.

Second, I realized that I have a personal stake in this topic that my inviters probably knew nothing about. First of all, I am a Dutchman from Grand Rapids, Michigan, where my fellow Hollanders have erected both a college and a seminary named after Calvin. Among the Dutch, as we will see today, honoring Calvin is understood to be as worthy a pastime as growing tulips.

But there is more. My last name, Minnema, has the literal meaning in Dutch of "Son of Menno." And the Menno whose distant son I am was none other than Menno Simons, one of the leading Dutch Anabaptists of the Reformation period. In fact, Calvin once said of Simons: "Nothing can be more conceited than this donkey..."<sup>1</sup>

What a dilemma, my father in the faith verbally assaulting

my father in the flesh! Sorting it all out might just make a contribution to my peace of mind.

My third reaction was to welcome the opportunity for Lutheran/Reformed dialog. A lot of people do not realize it but, although Calvin and Luther never met, they were important to each other and each valued the other's opinion. Once, when Calvin thought Luther to be displeased with him for something he had written, he wrote a friend and said, "Even if Luther would call me a devil, I would yet honor him and call him an illustrious servant of God."<sup>2</sup>

Following his example, if, when I am done today, you all call me a devil, I will still honor you and consider you illustrious servants of God.

But, finally, my last reaction to this invitation was: will anyone really be interested in "Calvin's eschatology and his relationship with the Anabaptists?"

With that question in mind, I started my search. And very early on I discovered something that interested me enormously, something that I hope will also interest you. What I discovered was that in this century one of the few book-length treatments of our topic is found in a work called *Calvin's Doctrine of the Last Things*, which was written by a German named Heinrich Quistorp and published in English in 1955.<sup>3</sup>

Now that fact alone is not what grabbed and kept my attention. What fascinated me was what Quistorp tells us in his preface about the origin of his book. You see, his interest in the topic began in 1934 in Bonn, Germany, where he and a group of other Christians who were deeply troubled by the rise of the National Socialist regime gathered in the home of Professor Karl Barth to discuss "the eschatology of John Calvin!" That study was never completed, for the Nazis suspended Barth's professorship. Quistorp himself went on to serve illegally as a curate of the Confessing Church which made its stand against Hitler and all for which he stood.<sup>4</sup>

But I want you to think about this Bonn gathering with

me. Here were people struggling with momentous issues such as:

how to maintain the freedom of the Christian conscience in a threatening and dangerous environment; how to offer a faithful resistance to evil even though that question brings conflict among Christians; and how to keep hope alive, both for the individual in the face of suffering and death and for the creation as a whole.

Yet in the midst of struggling with such issues, these people turned to consider what John Calvin had to say about the future!

Maybe their interest can stimulate ours. In fact, I want to go further. I want to propose that we look at Calvin through their eyes and put his ideas to the test of their experience and their needs. How does what he teaches about the future help us to find freedom of conscience in ominous times, to offer a faithful resistance to evil and to keep hope alive? If Calvin's eschatology can pass such a test, its value for us may be easier to see.

As a way of getting us introduced to Calvin's thinking about "the last things," I want to make use of Quistorp's broad outline. And the first thing to be said is that Calvin was mainly quite traditional in his development of eschatological themes. For instance, he rejected the attempts of many people of his time (including especially the Anabaptists) to date the second coming of Christ or to describe in detail the stages preceding its arrival.

As an aside, you might be interested to know that there were some people in Calvin's time who had figured out from the Book of Daniel that Christ would return in the year 2000! Calvin accused them of "trifling in their own speculations."<sup>5</sup>

But here's how Quistorp begins the first of his three main subsections: "If we call Luther the theologian of faith, we may, even with exaggeration, characterize Calvin as the theologian of hope."<sup>6</sup> He then goes on for the remainder of this part of his book to describe how Calvin saw hope as an essential element of Chris-

tian experience.

Perhaps a short sampling of Quistorp's quotes from Calvin will help us to appreciate this point. "Faith," says Calvin, "is the foundation on which hope rests, hope feeds and supports faith."<sup>7</sup> Or try this: "Whosoever therefore wishes to persist in the course of a sanctified life must hold fast to hope in the return of Christ."<sup>8</sup> Or this: "Believers should realize that their hope of the heavenly inheritance rests solely upon the fact that because of their implantation into Christ they are by grace viewed as righteous."<sup>9</sup> Or, finally, this: "Hope and patience belong together for we wait in patience for that which is the object of hope."<sup>10</sup>

This last quote reminds me to mention that Calvin is at great pains to let us know how well he understands what we might call "the great disconnect" between what Christians hope for and what they see and experience in the world. "Our happiness," Calvin declares, "is already stored up in heaven...but we are at present imprisoned in the bondage of flesh as slaves and thus far removed from free Lordship over heaven and earth."<sup>11</sup> And while we are imprisoned here, there is no doubt in Calvin's mind that bearing the cross is going to be a large part of our daily experience: "Christ has exalted us to fellowship with himself," Calvin writes, "on condition that we should be sharers of His life and be content in this world to die with Him."<sup>12</sup>

So hope is central to Calvin's understanding of the Christian life. It sustains us in all the faithful suffering and dying we are called to undertake. But for what do we hope?

The next section of Quistorp's book deals with Calvin's understanding of the immortality of the soul. It is not a subject I am inclined to pursue at length. But I do need to make two brief points with regard to it.

First, Calvin did believe that the human soul is an immortal substance distinct from the mortal body and separated from the body at death. In fact, Calvin's first work of

theology was a book called *Psychopannychia* in which he argued against the Anabaptist notion of “soul sleep” and maintained that the soul after death “truly lives, being endowed with both sense and understanding.”<sup>13</sup>

Second, although Calvin’s understanding of the soul does show the continuing influence of Greek philosophy on his thinking, it is important to recognize that he allowed the Bible to qualify this doctrine in several ways. First, he affirmed, contrary to the Greeks, that the immortal soul with which we have been endowed was at a particular moment in time created by God. And second, he also affirmed that our continuing enjoyment of immortality is completely dependent on Christ’s resurrection from the dead and His ability to resurrect us when He returns. (If you sense any contradictions here, you will not get an argument from me.)

So now let me describe “the rest of the story.” There is no doubt that for Calvin the single most important eschatological event is the return of Christ. “As Christ has now appeared,” he writes, “no other attitude is possible for believers but to await constantly in keen vigilance His second coming.”<sup>14</sup>

I have already mentioned that Calvin does not describe a sequence of events leading up to Christ’s return. But neither does he describe in sequential fashion what follows that momentous event. For Calvin, Christ’s return includes, almost simultaneously, a number of eventualities. First, the dead are raised. All the dead. And to be raised means for Calvin that the immortal soul is reunited with the now transformed body. Second, judgment follows with God’s elect gaining their acquittal through the mediation of Christ and the damned being banished forever from the presence of God. Third, God’s enemies are put down. And, finally, the reign of God is consummated with the perfecting of believers, of the church, and of the world.

Now I know that this is a very broad sketch and that

much more could be said, but I want to get back to Quistorp and to his assessment of Calvin so that we can begin to see if Calvin's thinking about the future can pass the test we put for it earlier.

It is clear from reading Quistorp that his deep appreciation for Calvin coexists with serious reservations. On the one hand, Quistorp was convinced that Calvin's commitment to grounding his eschatology in scripture had rescued this dimension of the church's faith from the morass of fantasy and speculation into which it had fallen. Second, Quistorp deeply appreciated the way in which Calvin tied his teaching about the future to the experience of hope in the Christian's life, hope which made possible real progress in sanctification, in becoming, through the experience of cross bearing, more like Christ. And, finally and most importantly, Quistorp was clearly grateful for the way in which Calvin connected his eschatology to his Christology. For Calvin the single necessary key to the Christian's future is his or her connection to Christ.

And let me just throw in an aside here to echo Quistorp's gratitude on this matter. For me personally, a favorite expression of this dimension of Calvin's thought is the first question of the Heidelberg Catechism which was written in 1562 under the strong influence of Calvin. To the question "What is your only comfort in life and in death?" comes the reply: "That I belong—body and soul, in life and in death—not to myself but to my faithful Savior, Jesus Christ..."<sup>15</sup>

But, on the other hand, Quistorp's reservations are nearly as deep as his appreciation. To put it briefly, Calvin's eschatology is for him overly concerned with the fate of the individual and more oriented toward life in heaven than life on earth. As far as Calvin went in making his eschatology scriptural, he did not, in Quistorp's opinion, go far enough. What Quistorp misses in Calvin is a description of the future reign of Christ which compels Christians even now, in this life, to oppose the reign of evil and to show in their own



lives, in their communities and, yes, even in their politics, a better way.

So we would have to conclude that for Quistorp Calvin only partially passes the test we set for him. By stressing the authority of scripture and the priority of the believer's relationship with Christ, Calvin does provide a foundation for the freedom of the Christian's conscience. And there is no doubt that Calvin's system of thinking offers the individual a well-grounded hope in the face of suffering and death. But in the final analysis Quistorp does not find much in Calvin to help with keeping hope for the creation alive in evil times nor with guiding Christians in the stance they should take toward that very present evil.

But did Quistorp do justice to Calvin? In the years since his book was published in English, a number of authors (some of whom, of course, are Dutch people published in Grand Rapids, Michigan!) have come forward to raise some real doubts about that.<sup>16</sup>

So, in 1970 Charles Hall published a book called *With the Spirit's Sword: The Drama of Spiritual Warfare in the Theology of John Calvin*.<sup>17</sup> In that work Hall argues that Calvin's eschatology needs to be seen as the final, and in many ways anticlimactic, act in a four-act drama of warfare between God and God's enemies. Act one is described in the Old Testament and depicts the success of Satan in establishing his dominion over human life. Act two introduces Christ, "the divine invader," who wins a decisive, though not final, victory over Satan, sin and death. Act three is the period of the church as it seeks to carry on "the good fight," living by the memory of Christ's victory in Act two and the hope of its completion, at His return, in Act four. In this "good fight" the church's only real weapon is "the Spirit's Sword," that is, the gospel proclaimed in the power of the Holy Spirit.

From this perspective, Hall suggests, Calvin's eschatology is always brought to bear on the present moment

and on all of the challenges that the church must face within it. And, as a prime illustration, Hall describes Calvin's own eschatologically informed interpretation of his own life work. Thus, Calvin understood himself to be opposed to the spirit of the Antichrist which he saw in the office of the papacy. And though he did not predict the nearness of Christ's return, he clearly believed that his own ministry was a form of anticipation of Christ's second coming to the degree that it succeeded in dispelling the darkness of error around him.

The point is that, contrary to what Quistorp implies, Calvin's eschatology is not otherworldly; in fact, it compels him to discern what Luther once described as "the little point where the battle rages"<sup>18</sup> and there to unsheathe the Spirit's sword.

Another perspective is provided by David Holwerda, who edited a book entitled *Exploring the Heritage of John Calvin* and himself contributed a chapter called "Eschatology and History: A Look at Calvin's Eschatological Vision."<sup>19</sup>

Holwerda begins by reminding us that in the judgment of many historians one of the great legacies of John Calvin was a new and dynamic sense of history. Before Calvin history had a static "going nowhere special" feel to it. After Calvin, history acquired a sense of movement and purpose. Holwerda's question is concerned with how much Calvin's eschatology contributed to this new sense of historical dynamism. And his answer is "A lot."

Calvin's main focus, according to Holwerda, is on the life of the Christian and the church in the time between Christ's first advent and His return. In His first coming, through His death and resurrection, salvation was brought to earth and "the whole world was renewed and all things restored to order."<sup>20</sup> In his second coming, "all things shall be most completely restored."<sup>21</sup> But in the meantime, the Christian is, by faith, in relationship to the ascended Christ and from Him can expect to see in her or his life and in the life of the church at least

a partial fulfillment of the promised renovation which has already begun but is not yet completed. "For we now begin to be reformed to the image of God by God's Spirit so that the complete renewal of ourselves and the whole world may follow in its own time."<sup>22</sup>

In other words, history acquires its dynamic quality from the fact that Christ has entered it, has revealed its goal, and continues to work in the lives of His followers to invite others to join them in the journey toward that goal.

So, not only is Calvin not otherworldly, as Quistorp alleged. He is also not overly preoccupied with the fate of the individual. The present work of Christ in His people is for the sake of their witness to the world.

So both Hall and Holwerda suggest that Calvin's eschatology might have had more to say to the Confessing Church in Germany than Quistorp seemed to hear. But how, really, can we come to any final conclusions about this? In a volume of writing as large as Calvin's it is hardly surprising that people hear a lot of different things, depending, we might suspect, on what they are inclined to hear.

And yet I want to try to make one more assault on our problem. It is prompted for me by the work of yet another Dutchman, William Bouwsma, who wrote a wonderful portrait of Calvin<sup>23</sup> in which he basically argued that we have to think of "two Calvins"<sup>24</sup>, the one a philosopher whose goal was to systematize and harmonize ideas, and the other a practical preacher whose goal was to address specific situations in helpful ways.

The people I have been talking about have mostly dealt with the philosopher Calvin and, even more particularly, with his ideas. As I bring this talk to a close, I want to introduce you to the practical preacher and describe several instances in which he brought his understanding of the future to bear on specific present challenges. My suspicion—and hope—is that in these particular cases we may see, even more clearly than we

have thus far, what the great reformer might have meant for those Christians gathered at the home of Professor Barth in 1934.

I want to begin with a story that suggests what Calvin might have to offer to the Christian's freedom of conscience in a threatening and dangerous environment. The year was 1539. John Calvin was thirty years old. For over three years he had been in exile from his native France, where the Catholic king Francis I was literally roasting his protestant subjects. Immediately upon leaving France, Calvin had found himself in Geneva, where friends prevailed upon him to stay and assume the role of pastor. But only two short years later, he had been forcibly removed from the pastoral office for insisting to the wrong crowd that reforming the church included reforming one's personal conduct. Leaving Geneva, Calvin went to Strassbourg where he served as pastor to the French exiles of that city.

But the Roman church saw in all of this an opportunity. So they prevailed upon an eloquent cardinal by the name of Sadolet to write a letter to the leaders of Geneva inviting them back into the catholic fold. Receiving it, the Genevans recognized two things: first, it was well argued; and second, they did not know what to say to it. So guess whom they asked to respond? You are right: Calvin. And the result was Calvin's letter to Sadolet which is rightly regarded as one of the great treatises of the reformation.

But here's what intrigues me. Before attacking Calvin's integrity and smearing the Protestant leaders in many other ways, Sadolet devoted much of his letter to a flowery description of life in heaven accompanied by frequent insinuations that the Genevans would clearly have a better shot of getting there if they stayed on good terms with the pope and the Roman church.

And so as Calvin begins his reply he says: I do not know why you have spent so much time on this subject but "it is not very sound theology to confine a man's thoughts so

much to himself, and not to set before him as the prime motive of his existence zeal to show forth the glory of God.”<sup>25</sup>

Now think about this. Calvin is addressing a situation here in which people are being tempted by their own anxiety and by a powerful human institution to exchange their freedom to protest for the assurance that they will make it to heaven. (Totalitarian institutions always make just such an offer: give up your liberty and leave your destiny with us.) Calvin’s reply is that it is the duty of every Christian “to ascend higher than merely to seek and secure the salvation of his own soul.”<sup>26</sup> In fact, “zeal to show forth the glory of God” is not only our highest motive; it is also the one sure path to continuing freedom of conscience. Only with our minds set on God’s glory can we remain free to protest whenever any pretender seeks to usurp God’s place, be he king, or pope, or Führer.

But that leads me to my second story, one that speaks to the stance we Christians are sometimes called to take toward evil, even when the risk of conflict among us is great.

Throughout Calvin’s life he had to deal repeatedly with a group of people he called Nicodemites. To put it simply, these were Christians, often in France, Italy, or Spain who sympathized with the reformation but were unwilling to make a public break with the Roman Catholic church. Their patron saint, so to speak, was Nicodemus who, in the gospel of John, comes to Jesus at night so that his Jewish peers cannot find out about his new allegiance.

Calvin wrote many tracts to and about the Nicodemites, urging them to a more forthright stance relative to “the idolatrous worship of Babylon”<sup>27</sup> in which they were involved with the Roman church. But the one I want to tell you about was his “Excuse a messieurs les Nicodemites” of 1544.

According to George Williams, “Calvin’s basic argument is...that God is the Lord of the body no less than of the

soul of his elect and that the believer—mind, soul, and body—must honor God by public worship, by an upright life, and by abstention from idolatrous conformity to the Papal Church.”<sup>28</sup>

I find this quite astonishing. The very man whom Quistorp characterized as overly concerned with the life of the individual soul in the world to come is here, in this specific context, arguing that faithfulness to the God whose claim extends to all of life requires of Christians in this here-and-now a risky, public nonconformity.

You will pardon me if I hear echoes of Calvin when the Confessing Church of Germany in its Barmen Declaration declared: “We reject the false doctrine, as though there were areas of our life in which we would not belong to Jesus Christ, but to other lords...”<sup>29</sup>

Finally, Calvin was indeed, as Quistorp said, a theologian of hope. But he was able not only to think about hope and to write about hope; he was able to convey it in concrete contexts. So let me give the last word to Calvin the preacher, delivering a sermon in which he certainly had the martyrs of France in mind. But his words show what he might have also offered to the martyrs of Germany or of any generation.<sup>30</sup>

“We see tyrants let loose,” Calvin proclaims,

and thereupon it seems to us that God no longer possesses any means of saving us, and we are tempted to provide for our own affairs as if nothing more were to be expected of God. On the contrary, God’s providence... ought to be regarded by us as an impregnable fortress. Let us labor, then, to learn the full import of the expression, that our bodies are in the hands of Him who created them... If God permits tyrants to slay us, it is not because our life is not dear to Him, and held in a hundred times greater honor than it deserves... Let us know, therefore, that Jesus Christ must forget Himself before He can cease to think of us when we are in prison, or in danger of death for his cause; and let us know that God will take to heart all the outrages which tyrants

commit upon us, just as if they were committed on His own son.<sup>31</sup>

Does Calvin's eschatology pass the test we put to him? Certainly we can find some inconsistencies in his ideas. And we can share some of Quistorp's reservations about his emphases. But when he got down to cases, Calvin showed himself to be someone who knew precisely what was needed to keep the Christian conscience free, to challenge Christians to a public stance against evil, even if it provoked conflict, and to keep hope alive in the direst of times.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Donald D. Smeeton, "Calvin's Conflict with the Anabaptists," *Evangelical Quarterly*, (Ja.–Ma. 1982):46–54.

<sup>2</sup> Thea B. Van Halsema, *This Was John Calvin*, (Grand Rapids, MI, Baker, 1959): 122.

<sup>3</sup> Heinrich Quistorp, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Last Things*, (Great Britain, St. Anne's Press, 1955).

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>5</sup> David Foxgrover, "Calvin as a Reformer: Christ's Standard Bearer," (*In Leaders of the Reformation*, Susquehenna Univ. Press, 1984): p. 193.

<sup>6</sup> Quistorp, p. 15.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16. (Quoting Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, III, 2, 42)

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18 (Quoting *Institutes*, III, 2, 43).

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20. (Quoting *Institutes*, III, 13, 5).

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25 (Quoting Calvin's commentary on I Thessalonians 1:3).

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23 (Quoting Calvin's commentary on I John 3:2).

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34 (Quoting Calvin's commentary on II Cor. 4:10).

<sup>13</sup> John Calvin, *Psychopannychia*, printed in *Calvin, Tracts, III*, (Edinburgh, 1851): p. 419.

<sup>14</sup> Quistorp, p. 111 (Quoting Calvin's commentary on I Peter).

<sup>15</sup> *The Book of Confessions of the Presbyterian Church (USA)*, (The Office of the General Assembly, New York, 1983): 4.001.

<sup>16</sup> In addition to the two authors I discuss below, see David Foxgrover, "Calvin as a Reformer: Christ's Standard Bearer," in *Leaders of the Reformation*, ed. by Richard DeMolen, (Susquehenna University Press, 1984): pps. 178–210; and John Leith, *John Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life*, (Louisville, Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989): pps. 160–165.

<sup>17</sup> Charles A. M. Hall, *With the Spirit's Sword: The Drama of*



*Spiritual Warfare in the Theology of John Calvin*, (Richmond, John Knox Press, 1970)

<sup>18</sup> Douglas John Hall, *Thinking the Faith: Christian Theology in a North American Context*, (Minneapolis, Fortress, 1991): p. 108, quoting *Luther's Works*, Weimar Edition, letters, vol. 3, pp. 81ff. Hall makes much of this quote as an illustration of his contextual approach to theology.

<sup>19</sup> David Holwerda, "Eschatology and History: A Look at Calvin's Eschatological Vision," in *Exploring the Heritage of John Calvin*, (Grand Rapids, Baker, 1976): pp. 110–139.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 122, quoting Calvin's commentary on John 13:31.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 126, quoting Calvin's commentary on Isaiah 26:19.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 135, quoting Calvin's commentary on Luke 17:20.

<sup>23</sup> William J. Bouwsma, *John Calvin, A Sixteenth Century Portrait*, (Oxford University Press, 1988).

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 230.

<sup>25</sup> John Calvin, "Reply to Sadolet," in *Calvin, Theological Treatises*, (Philadelphia, Westminster, 1954):p. 228.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 228.

<sup>27</sup> George Hunston Williams, *The Radical Reformation*, (Philadelphia, Westminster, 1962): p. 603.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.* p. 603. I am here drawing on Williams' characterization of that tract.

<sup>29</sup> "The Theological Declaration of Barmen," 8.15, in *The Book of Confessions of the Presbyterian Church, (USA)*, (Office of the General Assembly, 1983).

<sup>30</sup> John Calvin, "Enduring Persecution for Christ," sermon on Hebrews 13:13, in *The World's Great Sermons*, (Funk and Wagnall's, 1908): pp. 205–234.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 229–231.

## Lecture Three: American Lutheran Views on Eschatology and How They Related to the American Protestants

*by Prof. John M. Brenner*

According to a recent publication there are more than 350 books on the apocalypse currently on the market. Most of these have been written within the last decade.<sup>1</sup> Some have become huge best sellers. John Walvoord's *Armageddon, Oil and the Middle East Crisis* has sold over a million copies, capitalizing on the Arab oil embargo of the early 1970s and the tensions with Iraq nearly two decades later.<sup>2</sup> Hal Lindsey's books have sold millions more.<sup>3</sup> The countdown to the new millennium has heightened interest in apocalyptic prophecy of both biblical and non-biblical sources.

Fascination with eschatology is nothing new in our country. Religion in America has been imbued with a millennial spirit from the time of the Puritans to the present. American civil religion has viewed our nation as "an elect people, a new Israel, providentially prepared for a redemptive historical role, bound in covenant with God faithfully to perform his will, and summoned to lead all the nations to a millennial fulfillment."<sup>4</sup>

Although Lutherans generally have not been in the forefront of millennial studies and the writing of apocalyptic literature, they have not been immune to the millennial impulse in America. The millennial hopes expressed by Lutherans in America have often had European roots, but these

views have also often been expressed as a conscious or unconscious reaction to the American religious environment.

In this study we will briefly examine “American Lutheran Views on Eschatology and How They Related to the American Protestants.”<sup>3</sup> First of all, we will survey the history of American Protestant millennial views. Secondly, we will briefly consider some of the sources of millennial thought coming from European Lutherans. Finally, we will give an overview of millennial views among Lutherans on this continent.

### *Defining Terms*

It may be wise for us at the outset to define some terms. We may divide the various teachings concerning Jesus' return into three main groups: amillennial, postmillennial, and premillennial. Amillennialism views the 1,000-year period described in Revelation 20 as figurative and referring to the period of time between Christ's first and second coming. Amillennialism rejects the idea of a political reign of Christ on earth and teaches that his second coming will be on Judgment Day and that He can return at any time. Most Lutherans have been amillennialists. Postmillennialism teaches that the church will enjoy a long indefinite period of peace and prosperity as the gospel permeates the world before Christ returns. Christ's return is in the distant future because the prophecies of the church's prosperity have not yet been fulfilled. Premillennialism teaches that Christ will return to inaugurate a literal, political reign for 1000 years on earth. Premillennialists can be historicist or futurist. Historicist premillennialists believe that the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation describe the entire history of the Christian Church in symbolic language. Futurists believe that none of the prophecies of the last days have been fulfilled. Futurist premillennialists

can be divided into pre-tribulation rapturists, mid-tribulation rapturists and post-tribulation rapturists. Modern dispensationalists are pre-tribulation rapturists.<sup>6</sup> They believe that believers will be secretly “raptured” before a seven-year period of tribulation. At the end of the tribulation period Christ will return visibly to begin his millennial reign. Millenarians can be either postmillennialists or premillennialists.

Chiliasm is usually used today as a synonym of premillennialism. Some Lutherans, however, have suggested a threefold division of chiliasm that includes both postmillennial and premillennial ideas: 1) grossest chiliasm, 2) gross chiliasm, 3) subtle chiliasm.

The grossest chiliasm anticipates a full measure of not only spiritual, but also carnal delights and pleasures in a future millennial kingdom on earth. Gross chiliasm teaches a future golden age and era of peace for the Church on earth, in which the Church, after a universal conversion of the Jews and the fall of Antichrist, will reign over the world for a thousand years and control also secular affairs. This chiliasm teaches two future visible returns of Christ and a twofold resurrection of the dead with or without the “establishment of the kingdom of Christ on earth” in Jerusalem and the Holy Land. Subtle chiliasm omits a twofold return of Christ and two resurrections of the dead and confines itself to a “hope of better times” for the Church, to set in before the end of the world.<sup>7</sup>

### *Millennial Hopes among American Protestants*

The Puritans who migrated to America had a sense that European Protestants in general, and the Anglican Church in particular, had failed to build on the Reformation and carry it through to its God-pleasing conclusion. The Puritans, therefore, came to America to set up a new Zion. They believed they had a

millennial mission to fulfill. Although there was often a blurring of the distinctions between postmillennialism and premillennialism in Puritan thought, there were notable premillennialists among them. Both Increase Mather (1639-1723) and his son Cotton (1663-1728) believed Christ's return to be imminent and saw apocalyptic meaning in the conflicts and challenges of the American frontier. Cotton Mather was also a date-setter. He predicted the parousia for 1697, then 1736, and finally 1716. The New Jerusalem, he believed, would be located in New England.<sup>9</sup>

Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) was influential in making postmillennialism the dominant eschatological view among evangelicals up to the Civil War. Edwards summarized his millennial hopes in his "Humble Attempt to Promote Explicit Agreement and Visible Union of God's People in Extraordinary Prayer" (1847).

It is evident from Scripture, that there is *yet remaining* a great advancement of the interest of religion and the kingdom of Christ in this world, by an abundant outpouring of the Spirit of God, far greater and more extensive than ever yet has been. 'Tis certain, that many things, which are spoken concerning a glorious time of the church's enlargement and prosperity in the latter days, have never yet been fulfilled. There has never yet been any propagation and prevailing of religion, in any wise, of that *extent* and *universality*, which the prophecies represent. It is often foretold and signified, in a great variety of strong expressions, that there should a time come, when all nations, through the whole habitable world, should embrace the true religion, and be brought into the church of God.<sup>10</sup>

Like many (if not most) Protestants of his day Edwards identified the Roman Papacy as the Antichrist and saw the fall of Antichrist as historically significant.<sup>11</sup> Edwards argued that the future advancement of the church would be brought on by the resolve of Christians in various towns and countries to join in vis-

ible agreement and resolve to seek this blessing of God through *extraordinary* prayer.<sup>12</sup> The church after Jesus' ascension was the instrument through which the plan of God is carried out. Though the church of Christ will suffer, it will increase and spread over the earth until Christ's kingdom is universal and his saints can be said to rule with him.<sup>13</sup> For a time Edwards believed that the conversions and religious fervor of the Great Awakening (1740-1742) were signs of the coming millennium. He wrote, "'Tis not unlikely that this work of God's Spirit, that is so extraordinary and wonderful, is the dawning, or at least a prelude of that glorious work of God, so often foretold in Scripture, which is in the progress and issue of it, shall renew the world of mankind."<sup>14</sup>

Postmillennialism was in the ascendancy in our country from the Revolutionary War until the Civil War. Postmillennial ideas of gradual progress toward a time of unparalleled peace and prosperity fit well with American pragmatism and can-do spirit, the American sense of destiny, and Enlightenment optimism based on trust in science and technology. In addition, in the early nineteenth century Postmillennialists saw the success of revivals and mission efforts as signs of the approach of the millennium. They took note of the decline of the influence and power of the papacy and the threats of Islam. The Second Great Awakening (mid 1790s to c. 1840) spawned movements aimed at ridding society of various evils so that the millennium might be realized. Postmillennialists believed that "the golden age would see the culmination of current reform efforts to end slavery, oppression, and war."<sup>15</sup> Social activism and political action were means by which Christians might bring about the realization of God's promises. The abolitionist movement, temperance movement, and women's movement flowed out of these postmillennial concerns.

Premillennialism, however, had not disappeared altogether in America. There continued to be areas of premillennial fervor, particularly in the area of Upstate New York known as the "Burned-Over District."<sup>16</sup> Joseph Smith, Jr. (1805-1844) and his Latter Day Saints, for instance, looked for a visible rule of Christ

on earth.

The best known premillennialist of the time, however, was William Miller (1782-1849). Miller, a Baptist lay preacher, was converted from Deism in 1816. He soon began a systematic study of the Bible to answer the challenges of rationalism and Deism. By 1818 he had concluded on the basis of his study of Daniel 8:14 that Christ would return around 1843. He did not immediately make his conclusions public, but carefully restudied his calculations. In 1831 he began to present his ideas publicly. He gathered a following and published his lectures in 1836 under the title, *Evidence from Scripture and History of the Second Coming of Christ, About the Year 1843*. Although Miller was somewhat reluctant to set specific dates, he finally said that Jesus would return some time during the period between March 21, 1843 and March 21, 1844. When these dates passed without fulfillment, some Millerites set October 22, 1844 (the Great Day of Atonement in the Jewish calendar) as the day for Jesus' return. Miller did not accept this date himself until the beginning of October 1844. The failure of this prediction has become known in American history as the Great Disappointment.<sup>17</sup> Many left the Millerite movement after Jesus failed to return on the day appointed by Miller. Ellen White and others reinterpreted his predictions and founded the Seventh Day Adventist Church.<sup>18</sup>

By 1859 postmillennialism was the "commonly received doctrine" among American Protestants almost to the exclusion of premillennialism.<sup>19</sup> The failure of the Millerite predictions had placed premillennialism in an unfavorable light. The optimism spawned by the conversions and fervor of the Second Great Awakening led many to believe that the millennium was almost at hand.

But the religious optimism of postmillennialism soon turned to pessimism. After the Civil War and the abolition of slavery American society did not become more godly. Charles

Darwin's theory of evolution and the various critical approaches to Scripture led to a loss of confidence in the reliability of the Bible and biblical prophecy. Things were not better; they were becoming worse in the eyes of many conservative Christians.

The old optimism of postmillennialism soon became secularized. Hope for the future became attached to technology, scientific investigation, and the social sciences rather than Christian preaching and prayer. The volunteer associations spawned by the Second Awakening for the purpose of removing social evils and inaugurating the millennium were co-opted by the religious liberals in American Protestantism and enlisted in the cause of the social gospel. The source of this new postmillennial optimism "was not the Scriptures but the merging of the eighteenth-century view of human goodness with the nineteenth century myth of progress."<sup>20</sup>

As postmillennialism began to fade among more conservative Christians after the Civil War, a new kind of premillennialism called dispensationalism came to America from England. The rise of modern dispensationalism can be traced to John Nelson Darby (1800-1882) and the Plymouth Brethren. Darby traveled and lectured in America between 1859 and 1872. The Niagara Bible Conferences beginning in 1875 and the American Bible and Prophetic Conferences beginning shortly thereafter helped to promote the new premillennial view.<sup>21</sup> Probably because of contacts with Darby the famous American evangelist Dwight Moody (1837-1899) began preaching premillennialism and "nearly every evangelist after Moody followed in Darby's train."<sup>22</sup>

Whereas William Miller's premillennialism had been historicist in approach to Revelation and the other prophetic books, dispensationalism was futurist in approach. Historicist premillennialism sees St. John's Revelation as describing various periods in the history of the church. This approach often makes date-setting a temptation. Dispensationalists see Revelation as describing events in the future. Dispensationalists look at the ninth chapter of Daniel and see a suspension of the chronology after Jesus' crucifixion in the 69<sup>th</sup> week (483<sup>rd</sup> year after Artaxerxes'



decree). During this suspension of the chronology God has turned his attention to the Gentiles. When he takes up the chronology of Daniel 9 again the church will be removed from this earth by a secret return of Christ and the rapture of all believers before the tribulation. Then God will proceed with his final plans for the people of Israel. In dispensationalism Israel and the church are not equated. In this approach prophecies about Israel cannot be applied to the church but must refer to the nation and people of Israel. After the tribulation Christ will return again, but this time publicly to set up his millennial rule.<sup>23</sup>

One of the most significant promoters of dispensationalism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in America was William Blackstone (1841-1935). His book *Jesus Is Coming* (1898) sold over a million copies and was translated into forty languages.<sup>24</sup> Since the Jewish people figured so prominently in his eschatological system, he became an early supporter of Zionism and the establishment of the nation of Israel in Palestine. His efforts included drawing up a petition signed by 414 prominent Americans urging President Benjamin Harrison to seek international support for making Palestine a haven for persecuted Russian Jews.<sup>25</sup>

Cyrus I. Scofield (1843-1921) was perhaps even more important than Blackstone in making dispensationalism the most popular form of millennialism in twentieth-century America. His major life's work was the *Scofield Reference Bible* published by Oxford University Press in 1909. Scofield divided all of human history into seven dispensations. In each dispensation God tested human beings in respect to obedience to some specific revelation of his will. According to Scofield the first dispensation was the dispensation of innocence (Genesis 1:28-3:13). The second was the dispensation of conscience (Genesis 3:23-7:23). The third was the dispensation of human government (Genesis 8:20-11:9). The fourth was the dispensation of promise (Genesis 12-Exodus 19:8): The fifth was the dispensation of law (Exodus 19:8-Matthew

27:35). We are currently in the sixth, the dispensation of grace. According to Scofield, at the conclusion of this dispensation the church will be raptured before the great tribulation. The seventh dispensation will be Christ's millennial kingdom in which God's plan for Jews, Gentiles and the church will be brought to fulfillment. Scofield's dispensational plan became the "standard theological framework for American Fundamentalism."<sup>26</sup> Probably most of today's best-known Evangelicals, including Billy Graham and Jerry Falwell, have been influenced by Scofield's work in one way or another. Hal Lindsey has done more than anyone else to bring dispensationalist premillennialism to the "nonevangelical popular culture" with his string of best selling books.<sup>27</sup> Dallas Theological Seminary has been the "academic and ideological Vatican" of dispensational premillennialism ever since its founding in the 1920s.

Modern premillennialists have claimed a vindication of their approach in such events of recent history as the establishment of Israel as a nation in the Holy Land in 1948 and the Israeli capture of Jerusalem in 1967. They claim that these events have set the stage for the unfolding of the fulfillment of the Bible's prophecies of the last times. They believe that the rapture of the church is imminent. Events in the Middle East always hold a fascination for premillennialists, but the collapse of the Soviet Union has been problematic because Russia figured prominently in their last times scenario. Pat Robertson has replaced the communist world conspiracy with his understanding of the *new world order* and his predictions of the role the United Nations will play in advances toward world government and the curtailing of individual rights, Christian evangelism, and the distinctive teachings of Christianity.<sup>28</sup>

Postmillennialism, however, has not vanished from the American scene altogether. The Princeton Theology of men like Charles Hodge and Benjamin Warfield was

postmillennial. Some of their students have followed in their footsteps. Perhaps the most convincing spokesman for postmillennialism in the mid-twentieth century was Loraine Boettner.<sup>29</sup> More recently some postmillennialists have aligned themselves with theonomy, the belief that world governments ought to be guided in their decisions by all the legislation of the Old Testament. Some believe that churches should pressure civil governments to carry out the death penalty for things like idolatry, witchcraft, the incorrigibility of children, homosexuality, and sabbath breaking as provided for in the Old Testament.<sup>30</sup>

### *Millennialistic Developments among Lutherans in Europe*

Philip Jacob Spener (1635-1705), the father of Lutheran Pietism, believed that there would be a future era of prosperity for the church. In his classic work, *Pia Desideria* (1675), Spener contended that in the future “if not all, at least a perceptibly large number of Jews who have hitherto hardened their hearts will be converted to the Lord.” He asserted, “In the second place, we can expect a great fall in papal Rome. Although Rome was given a decided jolt by the blessed Martin Luther, its spiritual power is still too great to permit us to claim that the prophecy in Revelation 18 and 19 has been completely fulfilled.” Spener urged the reform of the church because “the true church must be in a holier state than now” if the church’s life was to be a means for the conversion of the Jews. He reasoned that “if the Jews are converted in a manner in which it is impossible for us to foresee,” such a mass conversion would “be followed by a remarkable change and improvement in our church.” Spener believed that these things had been promised by God and must therefore come to pass.<sup>31</sup>

Spener taught what might be called a mild form of postmillennialism. Significantly for Lutherans, Spener’s eschatology turned attention from the expectation that Jesus could return in

glory at any moment to a longing for a future glory of the church followed by Jesus' return in a vaguely distant future.

The Wuerttemberg pietist and scholar, Johannes Albrecht Bengel (1687-1752), perhaps more than anyone else opened the door to chiliasm for Lutherans. Through his study of the Book of Revelation Bengel became convinced that the date of our Lord's return could be accurately determined. Following a rather elaborate chronological scheme, he set 1836 as the date of Christ's Second Coming, the binding of Satan, and the beginning of the millennial reign.<sup>32</sup> Bengel was an able linguist, careful scholar, and capable exegete. His reputation and academic stature gave premillennialism "scholarly standing in Germany" and paved the way for other academics to pursue millennial studies. Bengel's influence was felt by the Erlangen school and can be seen in the Zahn commentary.<sup>33</sup> In the nineteenth century there was a resurgence of premillennialism among biblical scholars in Europe including the Lutheran exegete Franz Delitzsch (1813-1890) and the Swiss Reformed exegete Frederic L. Godet (1812-1900).<sup>34</sup> A history of Christian doctrine produced in the nineteenth century also lists Karl Auberlen (1824-1864), Johann von Hofmann (1810-1877), Richard Rothe (1799-1867), and the Dutch Reformed theologian Johannes van Oosterzee (1817-1882) among European theologians who were advocating premillennialism.<sup>35</sup> Lindberg adds the names of Christoph Luthardt (1823-1902) and Franz Frank (1827-1894) to the list.<sup>36</sup> American Lutherans were aware of these European theologians. Some Lutherans emigrating to America brought these millennialistic views with them.

### *Samuel Simon Schmucker and "American Lutheranism"*

Samuel S. Schmucker (1799-1873) was a prime mover behind the founding of the General Synod in 1820 and served as professor and first president of Gettysburg Seminary. Schmucker, along with Benjamin Kurtz (1795-1865) and Samuel Sprecher

(1810-1906), was convinced that Lutherans must adapt their teachings to the American religious climate if Lutheranism were to have any hope of surviving, let alone prospering, in this country. Schmucker and Kurtz were proponents of the revivalistic techniques developed during the Second Great Awakening and opponents of Lutheran liturgical worship. In 1855 these "American Lutherans" sparked a controversy by issuing anonymously the Definite Synodical Platform which contained an American Recension of the Augsburg Confession. This recension removed from the Augsburg Confession the distinctive Lutheran doctrines that separated Lutherans from the generic sort of Protestantism that had developed in America. The "five errors" eliminated from the Augsburg Confession by these American Lutherans included (1) the approval of the ceremonies of the mass; (2) private confession and absolution; (3) denial of the divine obligation of the Sabbath; (4) baptismal regeneration; (5) the real presence of the body and blood of our Savior in the Lord's Supper.<sup>37</sup>

The rising tide of confessional Lutheranism in the United States in the mid-nineteenth century caused nearly every Lutheran Synod to reject the American Recension of the Augsburg Confession.<sup>38</sup> Nevertheless, Schmucker's willingness to adapt and change Lutheran doctrine to fit the prevailing religious and social climate in America remained in the spirit of much of Eastern Lutheranism.

Schmucker was also a proponent of the postmillennialism commonly held by many of the Protestants of his day. Schmucker rejected the premillennial view that Jesus "would in the latter day personally appear on earth, and establish a theocracy not unlike that of the Old Testament."<sup>39</sup> Like many American Protestants in the first half of the nineteenth century he taught that "the millennium will consist of an extraordinary and general diffusion of Christianity among all nations of the earth, effected through the increased application of the appointed means of grace in all their legitimate forms, by professing Christians, accompanied by effu-

sions of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>40</sup>

He believed that the millennium would be characterized by outward unity among the various denominations of the Christian Church. He predicted that “there will be an evergrowing unity of feeling and action, until Paul and Apollos and Cephas, and Luther and Calvin and Zuingle (*sic*) and Wesley are lost in the Redeemer, and Christ is all in all.”<sup>41</sup>

Although he recognized that the Word of God had not fixed a literal date for the beginning of the millennium, Schmucker offered his readers several possibilities, some of which seem to be his own calculations and one suggested by another student of the Bible. The dates ranged from 1859 to 1866 to 1882 and 2014.<sup>42</sup> While admitting that the precise date could not be determined, he saw many signs that the millennial dawn might be at hand. He noted the increased efforts in the cause of missions, the work of the various Bible Societies, the distributions of Christian tracts, and the establishment of Sabbath schools as signs that the millennium might be near.<sup>43</sup>

### *Joseph Seiss and Premillennialism*

Perhaps the best-known and most influential Lutheran premillennialist was Joseph A. Seiss (1823-1904). Seiss was a pastor in Philadelphia serving one of the largest Lutheran congregations in America. He was a prolific author writing books and articles on a variety of subjects. He served for a time as president of both the Pennsylvania Ministerium and the General Council. He also served as the president of the board of Philadelphia Theological Seminary from its founding in 1865 to his death. From 1867 to 1879 he was the editor of *The Lutheran*. He served as a co-editor of the *Lutheran Home Journal* and general editor of the *Lutheran and Missionary*.<sup>44</sup>

In his preparation for the ministry at Gettysburg College (he did not attend Gettysburg Seminary) Seiss received no instruction in the Lutheran Confessions. He reports that he did not see a copy of the Book of Concord until he had served five years in the ministry. His study of the Confessions led him to a position which he describes as “the middle ground between the extremes of unionistic laxity and an arrogant and bigoted exclusiveness.”<sup>45</sup> He was an opponent of the “American” Lutherans and the Definite Synodical Platform,<sup>46</sup> but was no fan of the Missouri Synod and the Synodical Conference because Walther and others strongly opposed his premillennial views and unionism.<sup>47</sup>

When he began his ministry Seiss was a postmillennialist, following that spirit of the times which had confidence in human progress and the gradual development of society into the promised millennium through missionary labors and Christian activities. When he examined the Millerite arguments and their use of Scripture he had difficulty refuting their teachings. A conversation with Pastor S. Sprecher, his predecessor at Shepherdstown, Virginia, made him a convinced premillennialist.<sup>48</sup>

Seiss published several volumes explaining and defending his premillennial views. Some of these received scholarly acclaim and public praise.<sup>49</sup> Seiss was a frequent contributor to a British journal, *The Quarterly Journal of Prophecy*.<sup>50</sup> He was also involved with producing the *Prophetic Times*, a magazine which, according to the byline of the first issue, was “devoted to the exposition and inculcation of the doctrine of the speedy coming and reign of the Lord Jesus Christ.”<sup>51</sup> For twelve years he served as the editor and chief contributor of this journal.<sup>52</sup> Seiss’ work was well enough known in his day that a contemporary, Henry Sheldon, used the summary of the premillennial views contained in Seiss’ book *The Last Times* (1878) as an example of the premillennial scheme.

1. That Jesus Christ, our adorable Redeemer, is to return to the world in great power and glory, as really

and literally as he ascended up from it.

2. That this advent of the Messiah will occur before the general conversion of the world, while the man of sin still continues his abomination, while the earth is full of tyranny, war, infidelity, and blasphemy, and consequently before what is called the millennium.

3. That this coming of the Lord Jesus will not be to depopulate and annihilate the earth, but to judge, subdue, renew, and bless it.

4. That in the period of this coming He will raise the holy from among the dead, transform the living that are waiting for Him, judge them according to their works, receive them up to Himself in the clouds, and establish them in a glorious heavenly kingdom.

5. That Christ will then also break down and destroy all present systems of government in Church and State, burn up the great centres and powers of wickedness and usurpation, shake the whole earth with terrific visitation for sins, and subdue it to His own personal and eternal rule.

6. That during these great and destructive commotions the Jewish race shall be marvelously restored to the land of their fathers, brought to embrace Jesus as their Messiah and King, delivered from their enemies, placed at the head of the nations, and made the agents of unspeakable blessings to the world.

7. That Christ will then re-establish the throne of His father David, exalt it in heavenly glory, make Mount Zion the seat of His divine empire, and, with the glorified saints associated with Him in His dominion, reign over the house of Jacob and over the world in a visible, sublime, and heavenly Christocracy for the period of "the thousand years."

8. That during this millennial reign, in which mankind are brought under a new dispensation, Satan is to be bound and the world enjoy its long-expected sabbatic rest.

9. That at the end of this millennial sabbath the last rebellion will be quashed, the wicked dead, who shall continue in Hades until that time, shall be raised and judged, and Satan, Death, Hades, and all antagonism to good, delivered over to eternal destruction.



10. That, under these wonderful administrations, the earth is to be entirely recovered from the effects of the fall, the excellence of God's righteous providence vindicated, the whole curse repealed, death swallowed up, and all the inhabitants of the world thenceforward forever restored to more than the full happiness, purity, and glory which Adam forfeited in Eden.<sup>53</sup>

Seiss believed that his views were not contrary to Article XVII of the Augsburg Confession. He insisted that the Augustana rejected only postmillennialism and the gross or carnal millennialism of the Anabaptists.<sup>54</sup>

### ***George N. H. Peters and Premillennialism***

George N. H. Peters (1825-1909) studied under Samuel Sprecher at Wittenberg College in Ohio. He was not as well known in his day as Seiss, but penned a massive three-volume work entitled, *The Theocratic Kingdom* in 1884. This work has been valued enough by twentieth century premillennialists that it has been reprinted by Kregel Publications in 1952, 1957, 1972, and 1978. Wilbur M. Smith in his preface to the 1952 edition writes,

While this work, *The Theocratic Kingdom*, may well be called the most exhaustive, thoroughly annotated and logically arranged study of Biblical prophecy that appeared in our country during the nineteenth century, its author lived and worked in an oblivion that seems almost mysterious, and experienced so little recognition at the time of the publication of the work that one must almost believe that there was an organized determination to ignore its appearance.<sup>55</sup>

Peters' premillennialism was similar to that of Seiss, but he offers no convenient summary of his own views. An analysis of the argumentation in the more than 2,000 pages of *The Theocratic Kingdom* is beyond the scope of this study.<sup>56</sup> Let it suffice

to say that Peters and Seiss are the preeminent premillennialists among Lutherans in America. No others even begin to match them in their literary efforts or influence.

### *The General Council and the Four Points*

The General Council was founded in 1867 by those who wanted a stronger commitment to the Lutheran Confessions than that offered by the General Synod. Eleven Lutheran synods became full participants in the General Council at its first convention in 1867. The Norwegian Synod and the Missouri Synod were not represented. The Ohio and Iowa Synods accepted the right to debate but not to vote.

The Ohio Synod was not willing to join without clarification as to where the General Council stood on four points: chiliasm, altar fellowship, pulpit fellowship, and secret societies. No doubt the presence of Joseph Seiss as a prominent member of the delegation from the Pennsylvania Ministerium caused Ohio's concern about chiliasm. The answer of the General Council on this point in 1868 affirmed the doctrine of the Lord's coming as set forth in the General Creeds and the Augsburg Confession and rejected fellowship with any synod tolerating the "Jewish opinions" or "Chiliastic opinions" condemned in Article XVII of the Augsburg Confession. The reply, however, left open investigation of the points on which the Augsburg Confession had not been explicit.<sup>57</sup>

Because the Council's replies left the type of premillennialism espoused by Seiss and others as an open question and were not satisfactory in regard to pulpit and altar fellowship, Ohio did not join. The Wisconsin Synod officially withdrew from the Council in 1869; Minnesota and Illinois withdrew in 1871. The Michigan Synod finally withdrew in 1888 over doctrine and practice related to the "Four Points."

There were other General Council theologians beside Seiss who adopted premillennialism. Emil Lindberg (1852-

1930), professor at Augustana Theological Seminary in Rock Island, Illinois, in his *Christian Dogmatics* offers eight arguments against the view that the millennium will precede the second coming of Christ. His seventh reason states, "The only chapter in the Bible which expressly presents the millennium places this period after events which specifically are connected with the second coming of our Lord." His eighth reason is that "The general view in the Apostolic Church was premillenarian."<sup>58</sup> Lindberg's approach to premillennialism, however, is quite cautious compared with that of Seiss.

Others in the General Council were opposed to premillennialism. Henry Eyster Jacobs (1844-1932), professor at Pennsylvania (Gettysburg) College, Gettysburg Seminary, and Lutheran Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, opposed certain aspects of the premillennial system on the basis of Article XVII of the Augsburg Confession. He wrote, "While it is true that this article was directed against the gross Chiliasm of the Anabaptists of the Reformation period, it clearly disclaims all responsibility for any teaching that separates between a resurrection for the godly and a resurrection for the ungodly by any long period of time, and which affirms that there are two comings of Christ in the future."<sup>59</sup>

Jacobs, however, looked for a time when the "hostility of the Jewish race as such to Christ would cease and it will be a Christian nation or race . . . within which there will be large numbers of truly believing spiritually-minded people."<sup>60</sup> Jacobs was also cautious about identifying the Antichrist too closely with the Roman Papacy. He contended that "it cannot be shown that everything is to be found in the Pope that is contained in the warnings against Antichrist . . . Antichrist may yet arise out of the Papacy, when all these premises are carried to their conclusions and embodied in some monster of wickedness."<sup>61</sup>

It is perhaps worth noting that the *Lutheran Cyclopaedia* of which Jacobs was co-editor contained two articles on

chiliasm. Joseph Seiss was the author of the first article. August Graebner (1849-1904), who taught at the Wisconsin Synod's Seminary in Milwaukee and also at Missouri's St. Louis Seminary, was the author of the second. Seiss presented most of the details of premillennialism as open questions which the church has never fully examined or formally decided. He suggested that these things were worthy of careful study. Graebner presented premillennialism as incompatible with clear Scripture and Article XVII of the Augsburg Confession. Graebner, however, suggested that "Spener's hope for better times in the Church, while also without foundation in Scripture and dangerous, is not heretical and only imperfectly called Chiliasm."<sup>2</sup>

### *The Synodical Conference*

The Synodical Conference, founded in 1872, was the leading voice of Confessional Lutheranism in the United States for nearly 100 years. The various synods of the Synodical Conference were historically amillennial and opposed to most forms of millennialism as unscriptural.

The Missouri Synod in the first decade of her history had to wrestle with the doctrine because of controversy that arose in her midst. Georg A. Schieferdecker (1815-1891) was a founding member of the Missouri Synod and was elected president of Missouri's Western District in 1854. Schieferdecker had caused a stir in his congregation by espousing chiliastic views in a sermon on Isaiah 60 and in private conversations. Two questions concerning chiliasm were formulated by Schieferdecker with his congregation's consent and placed before the 1856 Convention of Missouri's Western District.

1. What stand does the synod take with reference to Christ's second coming in regard to the universal conversion of the Jews, Christ ruling over all people and

kingdoms, the millennium, and other similar subjects?  
2. Does Synod consider holding such views divisive of fellowship?<sup>63</sup>

Schieferdecker was convinced that chiliasm was taught in the Bible.<sup>64</sup> He held the opinion that Christ's church would be victorious over her enemies in the last times. He held out the possibility of a double resurrection of the dead and a double return of Christ. The matter was taken up by the Missouri Synod in convention in 1857. After lengthy discussion it was decided Schieferdecker did not stand in the same faith as the Missouri Synod. The Missouri Synod consequently severed fellowship with him.<sup>65</sup> Schieferdecker joined the Iowa Synod<sup>66</sup> but renounced chiliasm in 1875 and rejoined the Missouri Synod in 1876.<sup>67</sup>

The Wisconsin Synod had to wrestle with chiliasm in the 1860s. As the synod moved toward an inevitable break with the unionistic mission societies in Europe, it began to establish relations with confessional Lutheran synods in this country. These efforts led Wisconsin into and out of the General Council and finally into fellowship with the Missouri Synod and charter membership in the Synodical Conference. For a time Wisconsin also had some discussions with the Iowa Synod. Prof. Adolf Hoenecke (1835-1908) of the Wisconsin Synod's seminary had been present for a colloquy between Missouri and Iowa in Milwaukee in 1867. He and others in the synod were in agreement with Walther and the Missouri Synod in the rejection of Iowa's position on open questions. At the Wisconsin Synod convention in 1867 representatives of the Iowa Synod were present for a discussion of their concept of open questions, including the teaching of chiliasm.

According to the proceedings there was a division in the synod over the issues, but only two pastors are personally mentioned as favoring Iowa's opinion that chiliasm was an open question.<sup>68</sup> One of these two was the founder and first

president of the Wisconsin Synod, John Muehlhaeuser (1804-1867). Muehlhaeuser was a product of the German mission societies and early in his ministry was willing to serve both Lutherans and German Reformed. To his credit he did not stand in the way of the trend toward a greater confessionalism in the synod he founded. His pietistic background can be seen in his response to statements on chiliasm by the Iowa representatives. The minutes record that “he cited a saying of Bengel—You chiliasts can subscribe to the confessions with a good conscience. The 1000 year reign is not in the Augustana, but it is in the Bible.”<sup>69</sup> Within the year Muehlhaeuser passed away and the Wisconsin Synod left the General Council in part because of the Council’s attitude toward chiliasm. Wisconsin also moved away from closer relations with Iowa.

Hoenecke’s dogmatics, published posthumously, rejects both postmillennialism and premillennialism. Analyzing Revelation 20:4-8 Hoenecke argues that there is nothing in the chapter to show that events occur on earth. Nothing is said of the bodily resurrection of the martyrs, but only their souls are referred to. The Greek text does not say that they came to life, but that they lived. All Scripture teaches not a visible kingdom of glory on earth, but “ruling” elsewhere describes the heavenly glory of the elect (2 Timothy 2:12, compare verses 11 and 12 with verse 10).<sup>70</sup>

### *The Iowa Synod*

The Iowa Synod was founded in 1853 by pastors sent to this country by Wilhelm Loehe (1808-1872) of Neuendettelsau. Men sent to this country by Loehe had been instrumental in founding the Missouri Synod, but Loehe had begun to question the Missouri Synod’s democratic or congregational church polity. When the disagreement between Loehe and Missouri could not be settled, those who held to Loehe’s position left Michigan, moved to Iowa, and there founded a new synod.

In 1858 Iowa addressed the question of millennialism because of Missouri's protest over Iowa's acceptance of Schieferdecker and another pastor whom Missouri had suspended because of their teaching of chiliasm. The Iowa Synod contended that Article XVII of the Augsburg Confession condemned "wild" millennialism, but left open further "theological elaboration" of the doctrine of the last things. The convention decided "that the eventual conversion of the Jews, a future personal Antichrist, the return of Christ to subdue Antichrist, the first resurrection (of believers), and a thousand year reign of Christ are correct elaborations on the theology of the Confessions."<sup>71</sup> The convention argued that these doctrines did not contradict the biblical concept of the nature of the kingdom of God, because the millennial reign would be part of the life of the church militant and not a kingdom of glory and perfection.<sup>72</sup> Iowa later made clear that these matters were "Open Questions," doctrines concerning which Lutherans might have different opinions without being divisive of fellowship.<sup>73</sup>

In 1873 the Iowa Synod issued the *Davenport Theses* to show the areas of disagreement with Missouri. In those theses Iowa rejected "every doctrine of a millennium which would rob the spiritual kingdom of our Lord of its character of spiritual kingdom of grace and the cross, and convert it into an outward, earthly and worldly kingdom," but declared that "the Church may tolerate the idea that the reign of Christ and His Saints for a thousand years, as prophesied in the twentieth chapter of the Revelation of St. John, is still a matter of fulfillment in the future and that this opinion is not an error necessitating exclusion from our church fellowship."<sup>74</sup> No other Lutheran synods came to Iowa's support in this matter after the theses were issued.<sup>75</sup>

Throughout its history Iowa remained consistent in its teaching that chiliasm, the conversion of Israel, the identification of the Antichrist, etc., were open questions.<sup>76</sup> The most notable Iowa Synod premillennialist was J. Michael Reu

(1869-1943). Reu taught at Wartburg Seminary and is best known for his scholarly work on the Augsburg Confession, homiletics, and catechetics. He also taught Lutheran dogmatics. His unpublished lectures include the following theses under the heading "The Preliminary Perfection of the Kingdom of God."

1. Before the kingdom of God will be consummated, the gospel must be preached in the whole world for a testimony unto all nations.
2. The proclamation of the gospel among all nations is followed by the conversion of Israel.
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 Antichrist.
4. Antichrist will be vanquished by Christ who will also cause the first resurrection.
5. The overthrow of Antichrist and the first resurrection are followed by the preliminary consummation of the kingdom of God, the millennial reign of the saints with Christ.
6. The millennium is followed by the final crisis, through which the church passes to actual perfection.<sup>77</sup>

### *The Twentieth Century*

The modernist/fundamentalist controversy and the increased use of the various critical approaches to Scripture undoubtedly made the premillennialism of men like Seiss and Peters, with their emphasis on the literal fulfillment of biblical prophecy, less intellectually attractive to Lutherans on the left. Nevertheless millennial views remained in scholarly circles. Some expressed a millennial hope for the improvement of society through spiritual renewal. T. A. Kantonen writes,

Whether the duration of this final triumphant phase is literally a thousand years and whether the temporal sequences of the events involved can be plotted out in



detail are matters of secondary importance. Nor does this final triumphant phase of the reign of Christ in history mean an “outwardly victorious” earthly kingdom in the sense that he will then resort to physical coercion and political domination, methods which are entirely foreign to his lordship. It is a victory for the way in which he has always established his rule in the hearts of men, the reconciling love. Bengel and Beck regard the millennial period as one of strong missionary activity during which the gospel is brought to all nations of the earth before the coming of the end.<sup>78</sup>

During the twentieth century doctrinal differences became less important for many Lutherans. By 1930 the Ohio Synod’s previous opposition to considering chiliasm an open question was overcome by an ecumenical spirit desiring closer relations with other Lutherans. Ohio merged with the Iowa and Buffalo Synods in 1930 to form the American Lutheran Church. The American Lutheran Church listed millennialism among the doctrines in which there might be a “wholesome latitude of theological opinion.” The “Sandusky Declaration of the American Lutheran Church” (1938) reaffirmed the old Iowa position that differences in teaching concerning a double resurrection, the conversion of Israel, and a future millennium were not divisive of fellowship.<sup>79</sup> The ALC Declaration caused concern for some members of the Synodical Conference when the Missouri Synod accepted it together with the “Brief Statement” (1932) as the basis for future church fellowship.<sup>80</sup>

During the twentieth century some Lutherans who were opposed to premillennialism were willing to back away from the confessional declaration that the pope is the very Antichrist. Joseph Stump (1866-1935), president of Northwestern Lutheran Theological Seminary, rejected chiliasm by declaring,

The New Testament knows only the present age and the age to come—the temporal era of grace in which the

Church is commanded to evangelize the world through the means of grace committed to her, and the eternal era inaugurated by the second coming of Christ, the resurrection of the dead, the final judgment, the administration of eternal awards and punishments, and the passing away of the old cosmic order to make way for new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.<sup>81</sup>

At the same time Stump looked for a massive conversion of the Jews in the future and a future Antichrist, arguing that Scripture's description of the Antichrist does not fit the papacy.<sup>82</sup>

The synods of the Synodical Conference, both before and after the demise of the Conference, generally continued to express opposition to premillennial schemes. Though these synods were not preoccupied with eschatology, they produced some commentaries on Scripture, doctrinal essays, and even a couple of books analyzing and opposing premillennialism. We mention only a few.

Prof. Theodore Graebner (1876-1950) of the Missouri Synod wrote a little book in 1918 entitled *Prophecy and War*. The book was written to analyze the claims of millennialists who were trying to connect the events of World War I with Old and New Testament prophecy. He revised the work in 1941 as a reply to premillennial claims connected with the outbreak of World War II. As Graebner explains in the introduction, "I shall endeavor to show that World War II as little as its predecessor has any specific relation to the prophecies whose fulfillment is so confidently asserted by most Fundamentalists today."<sup>83</sup>

Among the topics Graebner addressed are the return of Israel, the Antichrist, the Millennium, and how to read prophecy. He maintained the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine which seemed a probable outcome of the war was not a fulfillment of prophecy. He contended that "Israel

will remain hardened to the end, during the New Testament age only a remnant shall be saved, and the race will be scattered among the Gentiles until Christ returns unto Judgment. That 'Israel' of which Rom. 12:16 (*sic*-read Rom 11:26) speaks is the total number of elect out of the Jewish race."<sup>84</sup> Graebner argued that the Pope has been revealed as the Antichrist and that the persecutions of the saints during the Reformation and Middle Ages was a fulfillment of the prophecies of the Antichrist making war upon the confessors of truth.<sup>85</sup>

His study is as useful today in helping one understand the underlying errors of those who see the direct fulfillment of biblical prophecy in current events in the Middle East as it was in exposing similar errors in 1941.

In response to the stir caused by popular writings of Hal Lindsey and others in the 1970s, Concordia Publishing House published a popular study of the last times by Aaron Plueger. The book includes a brief historical overview of millennialism, a critique of Lindsey's *Late Great Planet Earth*, an exposition of Revelation 20, a discussion of the conversion of Israel and other topics associated with premillennialism. In the final chapter Plueger offers these "safeguards" for understanding the last times.

It is bad to teach that he must come now. It is worse to teach that He cannot come yet. It is worst of all to teach that He will not be coming back. The following facts should keep one safe from the first danger named above (dispensationalism):

1. No salvation after Christ's return.
2. The rapture and the end are simultaneous.
3. The binding of Satan is not future
4. Christ is reigning now
5. An earthly millennium contradicts Christ, creeds, and all the Bible
6. Supposedly millennial Old Testament passages speak of "forever" conditions
7. Old Testament Israel has been replaced<sup>86</sup>

In 1989 the Missouri Synod's Commission on Theology and Church Relations issued a study on eschatology and millennialism. The study offers a reasoned examination and refutation of the basic tenets of premillennialism.<sup>87</sup> In 1972 Prof. Bjarne Teigen of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod provided much valuable information and insight in an essay read to the Doctrinal Committee of the ELS. Teigen's essay includes an evaluation of the doctrinal statements of certain Lutheran Synods in the twentieth century.<sup>88</sup> Prof. Wilbert Gawrisch delivered a series of Pastors Institute lectures at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in 1974 entitled, "Eschatological Prophecies and Current Misinterpretations." Gawrisch examined the key eschatological prophecies of Scripture, gave an historical overview of millennial teaching, and considered some of the current claims of men like Hal Lindsey and Salem Kirban.<sup>89</sup> Commentaries on the book of Revelation by Martin Franzmann,<sup>90</sup> Siegbert Becker,<sup>91</sup> Luther Poellot,<sup>92</sup> and Wayne Mueller<sup>93</sup> oppose a premillennial understanding of prophecy on the basis of careful exegesis. Franzmann suggests a question that Lutherans inclined to a post- or premillennial view might ask themselves. The question addresses a basic confessional Lutheran understanding of Christian hope that trusts divine providence in this life under the cross and looks for glory in eternity.

Those who cherish and foster the millennial hope (and these have included great and good men) need to ask themselves whether the desire to have and enjoy a visible victory before the final victory of the Crucified is not a subtle and unconscious form of objection to the Crucified who unseals the scroll taken from the hand of God; He in His wisdom and power keeps the church hidden under the cross, and He has promised to be with His church, under the cross, to the close of the age."  
(Matt. 28:20)<sup>94</sup>

## *Conclusion*

Lutherans in America have been influenced by and have reacted to the eschatological views of Protestant America. Those from a background of Lutheran pietism seem to have been more open to millennial views than others. Noteworthy among those who were influenced by the eschatological views and speculations of their day were the nineteenth century theologians, Schmucker, Seiss, and Peters. Only the latter two men are noted as significant in the cause of millennialism by those outside of Lutheran circles. As confessionalism gained strength in the mid nineteenth century through the immigration of confessionally minded Lutherans from Germany and the Scandinavian countries reaction against post- and premillennialism set in.

Lutherans in the General Synod, General Council, and Iowa Synod were willing to tolerate millennial views as not divisive of church fellowship. That attitude was carried over into the American Lutheran Church. In the twentieth century some who reject premillennialism have softened or rejected the confessional identification of the Roman Papacy as the Antichrist. As attitudes toward Scripture have been undermined by negative criticism, attitudes toward biblical prophecy have also changed. Doctrinal differences in the opinion of many Lutherans in America are less and less important.

The synods which at one time made up the Synodical Conference historically have opposed both post- and premillennialism as contrary to Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions. As the new millennium approaches they will do well to continue to point people to that glorious day when Christ will return, not to begin a reign on this earth, but to take us to rule with him forever in paradise.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Robert G. Clouse, Robert N. Hosack, Richard V. Pierard. *The New Millennium Manual: A Once and Future Guide*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999) p. 71.

<sup>2</sup> John F. Walvoord. *Armageddon, Oil and the Middle East Crisis*. Revised edition. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1990).

<sup>3</sup> Lindsey claims that his *The Late Great Planet Earth* (1970) has sold more than 40 million copies. Lindsey has penned thirteen more books with a millennial theme since 1970 including *Planet Earth: The Final Chapter* in 1998. See Clouse, Hosack, Pierard, *op. cit.*, p. 124-130.

<sup>4</sup> J.F. Maclear, "The Republic and the Millennium," in *The Religion of the Republic*, ed. by Elwyn A. Smith (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971) p. 183. See also Ernest L. Tuveson, *Redeemer Nation: The Idea of America's Millennial Role* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968).

<sup>5</sup> Because of time constraints we will limit our study of eschatology to the subject of Jesus' second coming and the events surrounding his return. We will not be discussing views of death, heaven, hell or eternity.

<sup>6</sup> See Timothy P. Weber, *Living in the Shadow of the Second Coming: American Premillennialism 1875-1982*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983) p. 9-12.

<sup>7</sup> Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics* St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1953) vol. III, p. 520. Pieper notes that there are many varieties of chiliasm and that individual teachers will manifest various differences even in the fundamental ideas.

<sup>8</sup> For a rather complete bibliography of millennial literature in America from 1798 to 1992 see Jon R. Stone, *A Guide to the End of the World: Popular Eschatology in America* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1993).

<sup>9</sup> Richard Kyle, *The Last Days Are Here Again: A History of*

*the End Times*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998) p. 78-79.

<sup>10</sup> Jonathan Edwards, "Humble Attempt to Promote Explicit Agreement and Visible Union of God's People in Extraordinary Prayer." *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol 5, *Apocalyptic Writings*, ed. by John E. Smith (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977) p. 329.

<sup>11</sup> Stephen J. Stein, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, Introduction to Volume 5, p. 23. For a rather complete overview of Edwards' eschatology see Stein's entire introduction, p. 1-93.

<sup>12</sup> Edwards, "Humble Attempt. . ." *op. cit.*, p. 314.

<sup>13</sup> Stein, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

<sup>14</sup> Jonathan Edwards, "Some Thoughts Concerning the Present Revival of Religion in New England," *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972) vol 4, p. 353.

<sup>15</sup> George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980) p. 49.

<sup>16</sup> See Michael Barkun, *Crucible of the Millennium: The Burned-Over District of New York in the 1840s*. (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1986).

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31-61.

<sup>18</sup> For a Seventh Day Adventist defense of Miller and Adventism see Francis D. Nichol, *The Midnight Cry: A Defense of William Miller and the Millerites* (Takoma Park, Washington DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1944).

<sup>19</sup> James H. Moorhead, "The Erosion of Postmillennialism in American Religious thought, 1865-1925," *Modern American Protestantism and Its World*, vol 4, *Theological Themes in the American Protestant World*, edited by Martin Marty (New York: K.G. Saur, 1992) p. 203.

<sup>20</sup> Clouse, Hosack, and Pierard, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

<sup>21</sup> Ernest R. Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism, 1800-1930* (Chicago: The University Chicago Press, 1970) p. 132-161.

- <sup>22</sup> Kyle, *op. cit.*, p. 104-105.
- <sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 102-104.
- <sup>24</sup> Clouse, Hosack, and Pierard, *op. cit.*, p. 95-96.
- <sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 96-97.
- <sup>26</sup> *Makers of Christian Theology in America*, ed. by Mark Toulouse and James Duke (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997) p. 360-362.
- <sup>27</sup> Kyle, *op. cit.*, p. 118-119.
- <sup>28</sup> Clouse, Hosack, and Pierard, *op. cit.*, p. 130-137.
- <sup>29</sup> Loraine Boettner, *The Millennium*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1957).
- <sup>30</sup> Robert P. Lightner, *The Last Days Handbook* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1990) p. 86-87.
- <sup>31</sup> Philip Jacob Spener, *Pia Desideria*, trans., ed., and intro. by Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964), p. 76-78.
- <sup>32</sup> See Bengel's comments on Revelation 12:6 in any edition of his *Gnomon Novi Testamenti*. The English edition I consulted has abridged his remarks on chronology because it was translated after 1836 when it was obvious that Bengel's calculations were wrong. In spite of the abridgement one can still follow his calculations. For more detail see Bengel's *Erklaerte Offenbarung Johannis* (1740) or his *Ordo temporum* (1741) or *Cyclus sive de anno magno consideratio* (1745).
- <sup>33</sup> D.H. Kromminga, *The Millennium in the Church*. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1945) p. 214.
- <sup>34</sup> Weber, *op. cit.*, p. 240.
- <sup>35</sup> Henry C. Sheldon, *History of Christian Doctrine* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1886) vol II, p. 389.
- <sup>36</sup> Conrad Emil Lindberg, *Christian Dogmatics and Notes on the History of Dogma* (Rock Island, Illinois: Augustana Book Concern, 1922) p. 537.
- <sup>37</sup> The text of the Definite Synodical Platform with the American Recension of the Augsburg Confession is included in Richard C. Wolf, *Documents of Lutheran Unity in America*.



(Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966) p. 100-104.

<sup>38</sup> See David A. Gustafson, *Lutherans in Crisis: The Question of Identity in the American Republic*. (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1993) and Vergilius Ferm, *The Crisis in American Lutheran Theology* (New York: Century Co., 1927).

<sup>39</sup> S.S. Schmucker, *Elements of Popular Theology* (New York: Leavitt, Lord & Co., 1834) p. 289.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 289.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 297.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 292-294.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 294.

<sup>44</sup> For a listing of the various positions Seiss held see his autobiographical work, *Notes of My Life*, transcribed by Henry E. Horn and William M. Horn (Huntington, Pennsylvania: Church Management Service, Inc., 1982) p. 267-270. His publications are listed on pages 254-266.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 175.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 76.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 274-275.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40-41.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 255, 257.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 254.

<sup>51</sup> Sandeen, *op. cit.* p. 94-95.

<sup>52</sup> Seiss, *op. cit.*, 254.

<sup>53</sup> Quoted by Sheldon, *op. cit.*, p. 389-390.

<sup>54</sup> Francis W. Monseth, *Millennialism in American Lutheranism in Light of Augsburg Confession, Article XVII*. ThD Dissertation, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis (1986) p. 63-65. Monseth offers perhaps the best overview available of millennialism among Lutherans in America.

<sup>55</sup> Wilbur M. Smith, Preface to George N.J. Peters, *The Theocratic Kingdom* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1978) vol I, no page number.

<sup>56</sup> A very brief analysis of a few of the major themes in Peters' work can be found in Monseth, *op. cit.*, p. 67-74.

<sup>57</sup> The text of the reply can be found in Wolf, *op. cit.*, p. 162. The General Council's replies to the questions concerning pulpit and altar fellowship and secret societies can be found on pages 163-165.

<sup>58</sup> Lindberg, *op. cit.*, p. 531.

<sup>59</sup> Henry Eyster Jacobs, *A Summary of the Christian Faith* (Philadelphia: General Council Publication house, 1919) p. 515. See p. 515-517.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 509.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 514. See p. 511-514.

<sup>62</sup> *The Lutheran Cyclopedia*, edited by Henry Eyster Jacobs and John A.W. Haas (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1899) p. 87-88.

<sup>63</sup> Quoted by August R. Suelflow, *Georg Albert Schieferdecker and His Relation to Chiliasm in the Iowa Synod*. A Thesis Presented to the Faculty of Concordia Seminary Department of Historical Theology, May 1946. p. 30.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 69-71.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 77.

<sup>67</sup> *Lutheran Cyclopedia*, edited by Erwin L. Lueker (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1975) p. 699.

<sup>68</sup> For a brief account of this meeting see J. P. Koehler, *The History of the Wisconsin Synod*, (St. Cloud, Minnesota: The Protes'tant Conference, 1970) p. 109-110.

<sup>69</sup> *Wisconsin Synod Proceedings, 1867*, p. 14.

<sup>70</sup> Adolf Hoenecke, *Ev. Luth. Dogmatik* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1909) IV p. 286-287. See also Hoenecke's "Theses on the Last Time," *Wisconsin Synod Proceedings, 1887*, p. 17-67.

<sup>71</sup> Fred W. Meuser, *The Formation of the American Lutheran Church* (Columbus: The Wartburg Press, 1958) p. 57.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57-58.

<sup>74</sup> Davenport Theses, Art. XI-XII, in Wolf, *op. cit.*, p. 211.

<sup>75</sup> Wolf, *op. cit.*, p. 208.

<sup>76</sup> See S Fritschel, "The German Iowa Synod," in the *Distinctive Doctrines and Usages of the General Bodies of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the United States* (Philadelphia: The Lutheran Publication Society, 1914) p.77-82..

<sup>77</sup> Reu's *Lutheran Dogmatics* was printed in 2 volumes for classroom use at Wartburg Seminary. His lectures on The Preliminary Perfection of the Kingdom of God were printed in *The Confessional Lutheran*, vol. III, #11 (November 1942) p. 113-120.

<sup>78</sup> T. A. Kantonen, *The Christian Hope* (Philadelphia: Board of Publication for the United Lutheran Church in America, 1954) p.68.

<sup>79</sup> Wolf, *op. cit.*, p. 396-398.

<sup>80</sup> See Edward Fredrich, *The Wisconsin Synod Lutherans* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1992) p. 198ff.

<sup>81</sup> Joseph Stump, *The Christian Faith: A System of Christian Dogmatics* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1942) p.398-399.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 396-397.

<sup>83</sup> Theodore Graebner, *War in the Light of Prophecy—"Was it Foretold"—A Reply to Modern Chiliasm.* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1941) p. IV-V.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 49.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57.

<sup>86</sup> Aaron L. Plueger, *Things to Come for Planet Earth: What the Bible Says about the Last Times* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1977) p. 94-95.

<sup>87</sup> *The "End Times" – A Study on Eschatology and Millennialism.* A Report of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, September 1989.

<sup>88</sup> B. W. Teigen, "Some Background Material for Understanding the Problem of Millennialism among Lutherans," *The Lutheran Synod Quarterly*, vol XII, #2 (Winter 1971-72) p. 1-47.

<sup>89</sup> These Pastors Institute lectures were published in the *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* in 1987 and 1988. See vol. 84 #2 p. 125-140; vol. 84 #3 p. 201-216; vol. 84 #4 p. 278-297; vol. 85 #2 p. 109-126; vol. 85 #3 p. 197-219.

<sup>90</sup> Martin Franzmann, *The Revelation to John* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1976).

<sup>91</sup> Siegbert Becker, *Revelation: The Distant Triumph Song* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1985).

<sup>92</sup> Luther Poellot, *Revelation: The Last Book in the Bible* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1962). The commentary was reprinted by Northwestern Publishing House in 1976.

<sup>93</sup> Wayne Mueller, *Revelation*, People's Bible (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1996).

<sup>94</sup> Franzmann, *op. cit.*, p. 133.



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