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The Major Premises of Premillennialism in the Light of Scripture

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**THE MAJOR PREMISES OF PREMILLENNIALISM
IN THE LIGHT OF SCRIPTURE**

**A Thesis Presented to
The Faculty of Concordia Seminary
Department of Systematic Theology**

**In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirement for the Degree
Bachelor of Divinity**

**by
William F. Siefkes**

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Approved by

J. E. Meyer
John Theodore Mueller

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THE MAJOR PREMISES OF PREMILLENNIALISM IN THE LIGHT OF SCRIPTURE

Throughout the ages men have dreamed of an age when righteousness and peace would be triumphant. Indeed, it seems to be an innate conviction of mankind that in a world governed by a good and righteous God there must come a time when goodness will prevail in the earth, the time of a "Golden Age." The Jews already in the period preceding the birth of Christ waited expectantly for the establishment of an era of righteousness and peace, of earthly splendor in which they, as a nation, would be especially blessed by their God, Jehovah, who would set up His Son, Christ, as their earthly sovereign. The Hebrew people were to be His favored subjects, and all other nations would be brought under their feet. There would be peace, joy, and concord. In the prophecy of Isaiah, for example, they find the glowing pictures of a redeemed world in which there shall be peace among the forces of nature, the creatures of the animal world, and the human race.

Not only the Jews but also many Christians of the first century looked for a golden age and expected it to be inaugurated in the immediate future, even in their own day. Many of them doubtless seized upon Revelation where in the 20th chapter the term, a "thousand years", is used six times, and during that period peace and blessedness are to

reign. All these promises were taken literally to mean that there would come a period of one thousand years, in some way distinctly set off from the rest of history, in which the Son of God Himself would come down from heaven and rule the earth bringing peace and happiness to men. This belief has persisted down through the centuries to modern times and is propounded especially by those who call themselves literalists and fundamentalists. They take all passages which speak of the blessedness and peace of Israel and the nations to refer to a specific time here on earth. That period they hold to be the Millennium or the thousand years spoken of in the book of Revelation.

All millenarians assert that during this period the Church of Christ, which now leads a troubled existence, will reign with Christ here on earth. It will no longer be a kingdom under the cross but a kingdom of glory, ruling over all nations, either converting or subduing all enemies of Christ, abolishing all wars and implements of war, and peace and liberty will reign supreme.

The name, "Millennialism", is given to this belief because of its tenet of a thousand years which in Latin is "mille", "a thousand", and "annus", "a year". Hence the term "millennium." There are two main schools of millennial thought, postmillennialism and premillennialism which differ greatly in their basic concept as to the time of the Millennium in respect to the coming of Christ. According to the postmillenarians the advent of the Savior is a far distant event, a mysterious and undefined something which is to transpire at some remote point in the revolution of the ages, long after the progress of Christian knowledge, the developments of science, and the march of intellect have

made the world universally pious, just, and happy. In other words, they hold that through Christian agencies the Gospel will gradually permeate the world and bring about political peace and welfare among the nations; that all Jews will be converted; Anti-christ destroyed, Satan cast out, and all the relations and occupations of men purified, regulated and enobled with justice. At the end of this Utopian period there will be a brief falling away from the faith, followed by a dreadful conflict between Christians and evil forces; and that finally and simultaneously there will occur the visible coming of Christ, the resurrection of all the dead, and the judgment of all men, after which the world will be destroyed and a new world created. The postmillenarians accept just the one visible reappearance of Christ, and only one general resurrection of all the dead both of which will occur at the close of the Millennium. Hence it is the Millennium which is to usher in the coming of Christ.¹ It might be added here that prior to World War I the postmillenarians were asserting that the world was truly approaching the beginning of the millennial era, that the advances in the field of science, the high standard of living, and general well-being of the nations all pointed to the speedy advent of the Millennium. Just how mistaken they have been has never been more clearly seen than in the light of the present world chaos and disorder.

On the other hand, premillenarians, as the name implies, hold that Christ's coming will usher in the Millennium. Christ will appear first and then will follow the thousand years of peace and concord. Christ's second visible appearance will be sudden and announced by no signs of peace and harmony in the world, but rather preceded by war

1. Robert Patterson, "Second Advent not Premillennial", Presbyterian Review, vol. 4, pp.257-251

persecution, and world wide wickedness. The Church of Christ will be afflicted, wronged, and oppressed until relieved by the coming of the Savior to judge the world in righteousness. The premillenarians look not for the reign of art, science, human culture, or free government nor for the universal triumph of Christianity, but for the personal, visible reign of Christ here on earth when all nations shall be converted not by means of the Gospel as we have it today but by the immediate working of heavenly powers among the Jews and unbelievers. In this way "all peoples, nations, and languages, will serve Him." Then when Christ returns to earth for His saints all believers both living and dead will be caught up to heaven and will return to earth a short time later to reign with Christ; all Israel will acknowledge Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah; Satan shall be bound and locked during that period. After the Millennium he will be loosed and will make a final, but vain attempt to destroy Christ's kingdom. After this attempt Satan, his angels, and all unbelievers who are then raised from the dead will be judged and hurled into the lake of fire to suffer eternal torment. Hence, unlike the postmillennialists, the premillennialists believe in the double resurrection, one of the believers at the inception of the Millennium and the final resurrection of the unbelievers at the end of the millennial period. ²

The signs of the times, according to the premillennialists, show that the hour of Christ's return is near. The "Rapture," or taking away of the saints to meet the Lord in the air, may occur at any moment, for the body of Christ may be completed at any time. The church is fast approaching her end; already the great apostasy is showing itself.

The world is on the edge of its abyss of infamy and the World War proves it.³

So much for the basic concept of premillennialism.⁴ The major premises of this doctrine will be discussed at length in the body of this paper, and we shall confine ourselves exclusively to the teachings of this particular branch of millennialism.

Eschatology, the doctrine of those things which are to occur at the end of the world is the very heart and center of premillennialist teaching. They place the emphasis not on what will happen in heaven, nor so much on how we are to attain eternal salvation but stress rather the conditions and events which are to occur during the Millennium here on earth. As a result of this they read all of Scripture in the light of Rev. 20 upon which the whole doctrine of a thousand year period of earthly blessedness really rests. Yet it is the claim and unwavering contention of all thoroughgoing premillennialists that the teaching of the Millennium or the kingdom of Christ in a visible form here on earth can be found already in the Old Testament. Feinberg asserts that if we cannot find the Millennium already in the Old Testament

3. Louis Bauman, Light from Bible Prophecy, p. 134

4. One other group which belongs to the general class of premillennialists are the Dispensationalists who also hold that Christ's second advent will occur prior to the Millennium. Their program is much like that of the plain premillennialists differing in this that they have a more elaborate system. They hold that the history of the world is divided up into seven aeons or dispensations of which the present age or church age is the sixth and the Millennium will then be the seventh and final dispensation. The church age, they hold, is merely a parenthesis in God's plans for the Jewish nation. God has, as it were, stopped the clock until this age is completed and then the watch will begin to tick once more when Christ returns and all Jews are converted. For a complete exposition of dispensational teaching see C.T. Allis, Prophecy and the Church.

then we have no basis upon which to expect that it will be found in the New Testament.⁵ He finds proof for the earthly reign of Christ already in Gen. 3, 15, the Protevangelium. The claim is that after God had placed man in the Garden of Eden, he was put to the test of sole and unfeigned obedience to God. And after man fell there was one gleam of hope given him and that was the announcement of Gen. 3, 15. The serpent would bruise the heel of the woman's seed, namely Christ, and the woman's seed would bruise the serpent's head. The word "shuf", "bruise", Dr. Feinberg translates "to lie in wait for" suggesting the idea of long conflict with the element of expectancy. Here we have then two contending forces, Satan on the one side and Christ on the other, and when Christ comes to earth at the second advent to establish his earthly kingdom the head of Satan will be crushed and he will be cast into the lake of fire.⁶ Certainly this is nothing more than piecemeal exegesis. Joseph Seiss reiterates the same argument in this manner: "Satan had assailed our first parents and overcome them. By that victory he became the reigning prince of this world, and to this day he holds the dark supremacy in nearly every department of the earth. The crushing of the serpent's head can mean nothing less than the demolition of Satan's empire and the establishment of the woman's seed in its place. And if Christ as the Son of man is to displace Satan and rule over the nations as Satan now rules over them nothing short of a literal, real, and universal empire can be the result."⁷

5. Charles Feinberg, op. cit., p.53.

6. Ibid, p.54

7. Joseph Seiss, Last Times, p.113.

The argument then is this. Since Satan has dominion over the nations of the world it is necessary that Christ establish an earthly reign to manifest His complete triumph over the devil. Feinberg admits that Christ's great redemption is the story of the Word of God but that fault is that he seeks to go even farther in saying that the rule is not complete until Christ's earthly reign is established.⁸ He fails to understand that already at the time when Christ suffered and died on the cross that He had crushed the head of the serpent, the devil, and had destroyed his power even as the serpent was bruising His heel. This is shown us in Col. 12, 15; "And having spoiled principalities and powers He made a show of them openly triumphing over them in it." Peter also makes reference to this when he says that Christ went and preached to the spirits in prison. "In this way He descended into hell and showed Himself the Victor over the devil and his angels. Finally John in his first epistle declares: "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil." Here we have plain words of Scripture declaring that already at the time of His suffering and death Christ won complete victory over the devil and through Christ and His redemptive work all those who believe have the power to resist the devil and to reach eternal life thus defeating the purpose of the devil which is to drag all men down to condemnation. There is no necessity nor is there any intimation in Gen. 3, 15 or elsewhere that Christ will establish an earthly kingdom in order to show Himself complete victor over Satan. Scofield in

8. Feinberg, op. cit., p. 53.

a note to Gen. 3, 15 also admits, " the chain of refernces which begin here, (Gen, 3, 15) includes the promises and prophecies concerning Christ which were fulfilled in His birth and works at His first advent." ⁹

Hence a noted premillennialist and dispensationalist admits that the work of conquering the devil had already been accomplished by Christ by His redemptive work at the time of His first coming. Even he finds no allusion to an earthly kingdom in this text, nor could anyone else were it not for the fact that their ideas have already been preconceived and they are willing to use almost any passage which points to the coming of Christ as a reference to His second advent and a consequent earthly reign.

The next plank upon which the premillennialists base their case from the Old Testament is the covenant made by God with Abraham. This covenant guaranteed to Abraham that he would be the father of a great nation; that his name would be made great; that in him all the families of the earth would be blessed. They find in this the three elements necessary for a kingdom—a land, a nation, and a seed. ¹⁰ Of the words of God to Abraham that his seed shall possess the gate of his enemies Seiss states that when it is said of Christ that "He shall possess the gates of His enemies and bless all nations, " we have before us the idea of a great, victorious, universal prince making Himself master and benefactor of the world." ¹¹ Moreover the premillennialists claim that when Abraham is told to view the land to the northward and to

9. Charles Scofield, Scofield Reference Bible, ad locum.

10. Feinberg, op. cit., p. 55. Feinberg further claims that the promise to Abraham was unconditional and such a promise must be literally fulfilled.

11. Seiss, op. cit., p. 114

the southward, and eastward and westward God means to say that the whole world in due time is to be ruled by the seed of Abraham. This they claim is a clear reference to their belief in the earthly, universal rule of Christ who is the seed of Abraham. The world, then, is to be the kingdom which Christ will rule. This same covenant is now reiterated to Isaac when God spoke to him in Gerar declaring that he would bless him and multiply his seed. Jacob too is assured of the covenant. The oath is confirmed to him in Bethel and again later when he came from Padan-aram, each time with the repetition of the key words, "thy seed." And finally on his death-bed Jacob speaks the words which designate the tribe of Judah as being the one from which the king will come when he says; "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah nor the lawgiver from between his feet until Shiloh come, and unto him shall all the gathering of the people be." Here the pre-millennialists claim is the king, namely Shiloh, referring to the Messiah. Here also is the scope of His kingdom, "the gathering of the people", or in other words, all nations. And finally the next verse speaks of the peaceful character of His kingdom and the plenty that will be present in it, "Binding his foal unto the vine and his ass's colt unto the choice vine; he washed his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes." ¹²

The whole approach to these passages and promises by the pre-millennialists is literalistic and atomistic. There is no exegetical reason to assume that these promises refer to Christ's second coming in which He will reign visibly on earth. It is true that the seed of Abraham shall possess the earth, that the gathering of the nations

12. Feinberg, op. cit., pp56 & 57.

shall be to Him, and in Him shall all the nations of the earth be blessed. But this blessing does not find its form in an earthly visible rule of peace and plenty, but in the fact that through this seed of David all those who come to Him in faith will find their eternal salvation in heaven. Gen. 49, 11 very evidently cannot refer to the second coming of Christ. Judah is promised rulership until Shiloh come. Shiloh refers to the Messiah as the premillennialists admit and when Jesus came to earth at His birth that rulership departed from Judah. Up to the time of the first coming of Christ Judah had at least had a governor of her own. Till the captivity, all along from David's time the sceptre was in Judah and subsequently the governors of Judea were of that tribe. But when Christ was born Judea became a province of the Roman government and the Jews expressly owned; " We have no king but Caesar." So in the first coming of Christ this prophecy was fulfilled. It does not and cannot refer to the second advent. And the gathering of the people shall be to Him not as an earthly ruler but as the only way to salvation.¹³

From I Chron. 17, 9-14 the premillennialists find further evidence for their claim of an earthly reign of Christ in the promise to David that his seed shall establish a kingdom and shall reign forever.

Also I will ordain a place for my people Israel and will plant them and they shall dwell in their place and shall be moved no more; neither shall the children of wickedness waste them anymore as at the beginning.....And it shall come to pass when thy days be expired that thou must go to be with thy fathers that I will raise up thy seed after thee which shall be of thy sons and I will establish his kingdom. I will be his father and he shall

13. Matthew Henry, Commentary, ad locum.

be my son and I will not take my mercy away from him as I took it from him that was before thee. But I will settle him in mine house and in my kingdom forever, and his throne shall be established for evermore.

Regarding this verse Seiss states that this evidently refers to Christ who is to be a great earthly prince since He is to occupy a throne and reign over a kingdom; and that throne and kingdom are identical with the throne and kingdom of David, his father. David had an empire in this world and reigned as a prince in this world and God says that His Son shall take David's place and establish David's throne forever. Hence it must refer to an earthly kingdom and reign identical with that of David.¹⁴

Feinberg declares that with the above passage we now have all the elements necessary for the kingdom; the land, the nation, the dynasty, the throne, the kingdom, and the king. And he asks; "Is it not supreme folly for those who oppose the doctrine of the millenium to claim that the doctrine is first gleaned, and that not legitimately from the laws of exegesis, from a single passage in Revelation and then read back into the rest of the Bible?"¹⁵ Yet as we survey these passages what other conclusion can we draw? It is true that the seed which is promised which will establish the throne of David undoubtedly refers to Christ, the Messiah. But the striking thing here is the fact that the eternity, the everlastingness of this kingdom is continually stressed. "But I will settle him in mine house and in my kingdom forever and his throne shall be established forever." We ask, how could this prophecy be identical with the realm and kingdom of David

14. Seiss, op. cit., p. 114.

15. Feinberg, op. cit., p.60.

if, as the premillennialists say, the kingdom of Christ is to be on earth only for a thousand years and this kingdom of David spoken of here is to be for eternity? Their answer is that after the thousand years on earth the believing members of that kingdom will be received into heaven and the kingdom will continue. But if this is their solution it would seem that they are being inconsistent in their interpretation, for if the kingdom of Christ is to be an earthly kingdom like unto David's with the express statement that it shall be forever and ever how then can the very nature of that kingdom change after a thousand years and still remain the same kingdom? Either the kingdom must be one thing or another, either an eternal earthly kingdom or else a divine heavenly kingdom for eternity. Since by a declaration of the premillennialists themselves the former is not so the latter must be true. Moreover it agrees with the whole analogy of Scripture.

Again, the premillennialists wish to stress that Israel will be gathered in this kingdom and will be at peace from all her enemies. They claim that the Jews are the greatest beneficiaries of Christ's visible reign on earth.¹⁶ Yet as we look at the very passages in the Psalms to which they refer to establish their claims further we find in the second, forty fifth, seventy second, and eighty third Psalms accounts of the greatness of the king.¹⁷ We would expect to find Israel constantly stressed as being God's particular chosen people but instead we find that the nations, all nations which accept Him are to be the beneficiaries of His righteousness and blessing. This is in complete accord with the spiritual interpretation of all

16. Feinberg, op. cit., passim

17. Ibid, p. 61.

these covenants. God's covenant refers not to an earthly reign, not to the Jews in particular, but to a heavenly reign in which Christ takes to Himself all those who believe in Him, who have entered His kingdom by faith. The universality and eternity of the kingdom as stressed throughout Scripture rules out any thought of a thousand years earthly reign, but refers to the Church of Christ which is gathered from all nations and all peoples which will indeed be eternal and constant.

Before leaving the Old Testament let us examine a few more passages from the prophets upon which the premillennialists base their claims. Isaiah describes the Messiah thus: "Unto us a child is born unto us a son is given and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." Seiss says:

No one misunderstands this. All (premillennialists) just as they are written without looking for some mystical or allegorical meaning. By what authority shall we reject the literal interpretation of what follows? "And the government shall be upon His shoulders. Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom to order it and to establish it with judgement and with justice from henceforth even forever more." What could more unequivocally describe the Messiah as a great prince reigning in David's place in this world? ¹⁸

Again, in Jeremiah the premillennialists find a supposed confirmation for their claims of an earthly kingdom of Christ. "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will raise up unto David a righteous branch and a king shall reign and prosper and shall execute judgement and justice in the earth. In His days Judah shall dwell safely and Israel shall be saved." According to Feinberg this is in conformity and in fulfillment with the word of God to David that he should never want a man to sit on his throne of the house of Israel.

18. Seiss, op. cit., p.115.

But where does he find in this passage a reference to an earthly reign of Christ? In Dan. 7, 13 & 14 we read: " I saw in the night visions and behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven and came to the Ancient of Days.....And there was given Him dominion, glory, and a kingdom that all people, nations, and languages should serve Him: His dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."

From this Seiss believes we must conclude that Christ's reign is to be a visible and terrestrial kingdom for "nations" are mentioned as its subjects.¹⁹ But it is evident that this coming to the Ancient of Days to receive a kingdom was fulfilled when Christ ascended into heaven on a cloud and took His seat at the right hand of the Father as recorded in Acts 1, 9.²⁰ It is entirely true that the nations are subject to Christ but where do the premillennialists find proof for the assertion that because the nations are the subjects that this must undoubtedly refer to an earthly, visible reign of Christ? Christ, indeed, rules over all nations from His session at the right hand of God where all power is given unto Him and all nations and peoples shall bow to Him either willingly in faith or unwillingly. Moreover we have here once again the reiteration that this kingdom of Christ's shall be an " everlasting dominion" it "shall not pass away". This can truly be said of Christ's reign from heaven. That power which is given to Him shall never again pass from Him. How can the premillennialists reconcile this with their teaching of a limited period of a thousand

19. Seiss, op. cit., p.113.

20. Matthew Henry, op. cit., ad locum Dan. 7, 13.

years here on earth? Here again it takes logical acrobatics on the part of the premillennialists to reconcile the eternity of the reign of Christ and the thousand year period which they hold. They must be forced to admit that after the thousand years were up it would be necessary, if this kingdom were to be eternal, to take Christ's kingdom in the sense of His reign in the hearts of men and in heaven.

Let us examine one more passage from the Old Testament, namely Zechariah 14. If this were taken to mean the earthly visible reign of Christ as the premillennialists take it then this reign would have to be established as a result of war and bloodshed. But Seiss himself says that the kingdom of Christ is not to be built up by war and force and he appeals to the passage when Christ speaks to Pilate and says: "My kingdom is not of this world else would my servants fight that I should not be delivered to the Jews."²¹ So by the assertion of an eminent premillennialist Christ's kingdom is not to be established by force of arms. Obviously then this would not refer to Christ's earthly reign even if we were to admit for the sake of argument that there were to be a visible, earthly reign of Christ.

Hence as we examine the Scriptural basis for the premillennialist claims we find that all are based upon one main error of interpretation. They insist upon taking all references to a king, to a kingdom, and to a reign as being literal and material. Every reference to David and his seed which shall sit upon the throne is taken to mean that Christ, the seed of David, will sit on an earthly throne at Jerusalem and will rule over the Jewish nation and the world in general. The spiritual

21. Seiss, op. cit., p. 121.

significance of all these passages is completely ignored by the premillennialists. Nowhere in any of these passages is the time period of a thousand years mentioned. Rather, as has been pointed out, the eternity of this kingdom is always being stressed by the holy writers. The duration of the premillennial kingdom is gleaned entirely from Rev. 20, the only place in Scripture where a thousand year period is mentioned. Moreover, from the time of the very first Messianic prophecy in Gen. 3, 15 it is evident that God is referring to a spiritual rule of Christ. When Adam sinned in the Garden of Eden a Savior was promised to him. The whole purpose of this Savior was to make payment and atonement for this sin of Adam and for the sins of the whole world, never to establish an earthly kingdom. And throughout the passages of the Old Testament the throne of David, and the Israel which is to be ruled by the seed of David is the true Israel composed of all the believers and only of the believers. Even Feinberg admits that the seed of Abraham no doubt refers to those "whose faith is counted to them for righteousness" even as it was with Abraham.²²

Very evidently the New Testament cannot contradict the Old Testament, and throughout the New we can plainly see that this kingdom to which Christ refers in the Old Testament is to be a spiritual kingdom. Christ Himself said: "My kingdom is not of this world." He makes it plain that His kingdom is to be a spiritual one in nature when He said to Nicodemus: "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God", John 3,3.

22. Feinberg, op. cit., p. 82.

The blessings of this kingdom are not earthly blessings of peace and plenty in the worldly sense but are purely spiritual consisting in forgiveness of sins, sanctification, and eternal life, as we read in Col. 1, 13 & 14: " God hath delivered us from the power of darkness and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son in whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins." From this it is evident that even now the believer is a member of Christ's kingdom, "hath translated us", we are already members of His kingdom for the kingdom of Christ is in the heart of every believer. We need not wait for some period in the far distant future to become members of a mythical earthly kingdom of Christ.

Thus the premillennialists, ignoring the whole analogy of Scripture, base their exegesis on a literal and atomistic interpretation of the Holy Writings. They have taken Rev. 20 as their original foundation and have then gone back throughout the Old Testament interpreting passages in such a way as to make them conform with the conception of an earthly rule of Christ in which the Jews are to be Christ's favored people. In this manner they are able to make the assertion that a visible reign of Christ is found taught already in the Old Testament.

Thus far we have treated only the Old Testament passages which the premillennialists use in the attempt to prove their claims. When premillenarians turn to the New Testament they use exactly the same procedure. All passages which do not refer directly to the first advent of Christ are set aside and declared to refer to His

second advent and the establishment of an earthly kingdom. In the Gospel of St. Matthew the many references to the kingdom of Christ are all taken to mean a visible reign. They make much of the fact that the Jews of Christ's day including even the disciples held the mistaken notion that Christ had come to set up an earthly, visible kingdom in which the Jews would be the rulers, the blessed ones. They assert that since Jesus nowhere corrected this conception it must necessarily have been the correct one. But as we read the Gospels we find that Christ made every effort to impress His disciples with the fact that He was not intending to set up a kingdom in this world. He refused the efforts of the Jews to make Him a king or to involve Him in conflict with the Roman rulers. Even at the last day of His earthly ministry, just before His ascension, those disciples asked Him when ^{He} was going to restore the kingdom to Israel. The Lord proceeded at once to tell them that they were on the wrong track and that they should have power enough when the Holy Spirit came upon them to induce them with the energy and understanding to become witnesses for Him in all parts of the earth. And we know that the message which the disciples preached on that first Pentecost and after that wherever they journeyed was not that Christ would set up an earthly kingdom in the future, but rather that through this Christ whom they were serving all men were to have forgiveness of sins and life eternal if they would but believe and accept Him.

John the Baptist, the great forerunner of Christ proclaimed the Messiah not as ^{He} who would set up an earthly kingdom of glory and power, but rather his message was in harmony with Isaiah's

description of the Suffering Servant. John said twice: " Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." The stress from the beginning was placed on the suffering of Christ and the spiritual benefit which we were to derive from it, namely, the forgiveness of sins and the reign of Christ in the heart of the believer.

Thus as we view Scripture in its entirety, placing passages in their logical connection we can come to but one conclusion, namely, that Christ had no intention of establishing an earthly visible kingdom, but that His kingdom was to be entirely spiritual. His kingdom is to be found in the hearts of men. Lenski too brings out this fact with great clarity in his exposition of Matt. 3, 2 when he says:

We have the kingdom before Christ looking toward His coming, and the kingdom looking back to Christ after Christ - the promise and fulfillment to be followed by the consummation - the kingdom as it was in Israel, as it now is in the Christian Church the *Una Sancta* in all the world, and as it will be at the end forever.

With this understanding of the kingdom that where the king is and rules with His power and grace there the kingdom is to be found, we see what the Baptist means when he says, "the kingdom has come near." Jesus was approaching and by the revelation of Himself with power and grace as the Messiah and by the completion of His redemptive work ^{He} would stand forth as the king of salvation from heaven and would by faith enter into the hearts of men, making them partakers of His kingdom. The one and only way to do this is to repent, to turn from sin, self-righteousness, and worldly security by the power of grace in the Baptist's Word and Sacrament to the King and His kingdom with its pardon, peace, and joy. 25

The purpose of Christ's coming into this world was to redeem all men from their sin by His suffering and death on the cross. It is always the cross which is in the center of Christ's consciousness, never

the thought that He had come to set up a temporal rule on earth. There is to be no earthly kingdom of glory this side of heaven. St. Paul tells us: "Your life is hid with Christ in God; when Christ our Life shall appear then shall ye also appear with Him in glory," Col. 3, 3. Again in Phil. 3, 20-21: "For our conversation is in heaven from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ who shall change our vile bodies that they may be fashioned like unto His glorious body." Indeed, Christ's kingdom is already a present reality in the hearts of all believers but it is not evident, that is, not an outward thing that men may point to it and say, "here is the kingdom of Christ." But as St. Paul says in the above passage, when the last day comes and Christ appears in all His glory then we too shall be taken to heaven and we shall appear with Him in glory.

SIGNS TO PRECEED THE ALLEGED MILLENNIUM ²⁴

WORLD TURMOIL:

In the preceding section we have discussed, at length, the pre-millennialist claim that Christ is to return to this earth to establish a visible, temporal kingdom. They continue now with the assertion that the great Millennium is in the not far distant future and they compare the present disturbed condition of the world with the prophecies of Scripture for confirmation of their claims. They hold that all the prophecies of Scripture which speak of world conditions must be literally fulfilled and then will Christ appear and establish His kingdom of peace and joy. ²⁵

24. To aid the reader to grasp the rapid sequence of events which are to follow, short headings will be placed before each new topic.

25. Seiss, op. cit., p. 43-45.

Premillennialists seem to stand solidly on Scripture as regards this point for they refer us to Matt. 24 which gives a description of those events which are to transpire prior to the coming of Christ, namely world wars, famine, pestilence, and earthquakes in diverse places, false prophets and great iniquity. Premillennialists point out that world conditions today are fulfilling these prophecies of Scripture. ²⁶ We agree that the world turmoil today, indeed, seems to be a fulfillment of Matt. 24 and other portions of Scripture which give us a record of the events of the last times. However, where we find fault with the premillenarians is in this; they assert that these are signs of the end of the Gospel Age, this present dispensation whereas we hold that these signs proclaim, not merely the end of this dispensation and the beginning of the Millennium, but rather the end of all things, the end of the world.

The question naturally arises; how can the premillennialists claim that these signs refer only to the end of the Gospel Age when in Matt. 24, 30 we are told that immediately following the tribulation of those days the Son of Man shall appear and Matt. 25, 31 states that at that time shall be the judgment? The premillennialists answer that there is not one, but two judgments and the judgment spoken of in Matt. 25 31 & 32 is the first judgment which occurs prior to the Millennium. Pettingill puts it thus:

Let us avoid confusing this Judgment of the Nations with the Judgment of the Lost Dead, described in Rev. 20:11-15. Both of these accounts are often headlined, "The Last and General Judgment," but there is no such thing as a general judgment known to Scripture. The Judgment of the Lost Dead follows the Millennium, but the judgment of the Living

26. Bauman, op. cit., p. 89.

Nations precedes the Millennium. ²⁷

This judgment, Pettingill goes on to say, will deal with the "Nations," that is, the Gentiles and they will be judged upon the basis of how they have treated the Jews who have been concerted prior to the Millennium and have gone out to preach to other peoples. ²⁸

Briefly, then, the premillennialist argument is this that all passages which refer to the "end" and to the judgment which follows it speak of the end of the Gospel era and the Judgment of the Nations. Only the judgment before the Great White Throne of Rev. 20, 11-15 is the last judgment. But this is not a general judgment since only the lost dead, the unbelievers, will be judged at this time since all the rest have been already judged and separated.

But what do clear, unmistakeable Scripture passages tell us of the Judgment? John 5 speaks of the fact that Christ is given the authority to execute judgment and we read in vs. 28-29: "Marvel not at this for the hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice and shall come forth: they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation." Pettingill expressly states that the Judgment of the Nations includes only those Gentiles living at the time the Judgment is to take place. Very evidently, then, he could not claim that the judgment spoken of in John 5 is the Judgment of the Nations. It must therefore be the judgment at the Great White Throne. Yet this passage clearly states that some will be saved and

27. Pettingill, God's Prophecies for Plain People, p. 129

28. Ibid, p. 133.

others will be damned. This is not in accordance with the pre-millenarian view that only the lost will be judged at the Great White Throne. In John 6, 40 we read: " And this is the will of Him that sent me that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up on the last day." This passage too speaks of believers, those who will be saved, and they are to be raised on the last day and having been raised will stand before the throne of God. No one can say with conviction that this "last day" refers to the end of the Gospel era. It is in no way qualified, it must refer to the end of the world.

Hence from clear words of Scripture we find that there is but one general judgment of both the righteous and the unrighteous which will take place at the last day. Clearly then, the signs which are to precede the judgment must refer to the final judgment and the end of the world.

It might be well to mention here one other sign to which the premillennialists attach great importance in declaring that the Millennium is near. That sign is the Zionist movement. This movement was founded in Basle in August 1897 under the inspiration of a pamphlet by Dr. Theodore R. Hertzl in which he proposed that Palestine should be secured for an autonomous government of the Jews. Their aims as set up by the first Congress are as follows: 1. Zionism strives to procure for the Jews an openly recognized and legally assured home in Palestine, 2. With a view to the realization of this object, one of the means the Congress contemplates using is the

centralization of the entire Jewish people by means of a general institution agreeable to the laws of the land in which they are now dispersed, and to strengthen in them patriotic sentiments and a Jewish national self-consciousness. As a result of this movement there were in 1940 some 425,000 Jews in Palestine compared to not more than 10,000 in 1867.

This movement, say the premillennialists, is a fulfillment of all those passages which speak of Israel returning to Jerusalem and to Mt. Zion. Here again they insist on the literal interpretation, when these passages evidently refer to the spiritual gathering of those who have accepted Christ in faith. All such shall, indeed, be gathered to Zion. That is, all those who have come to faith have returned to Zion, they have joined the Gospel Church, the Una Sancta. But to use the argument of the premillennialists themselves we find that this return is always spoken of as occurring at the same time when Israel shall repent and believe. Certainly the Zionist movement finds no such action on the part of the Jews as its complement. Many Jews, in fact, are opposed to the Zionist movement for they feel it is against the ordinance of God to thus try to establish Jerusalem and Palestine as the center of their nation at this time. They prefer to wait until the time when the Messiah Himself shall come and lead them back. Also we find the movement has its greatest popularity in those countries where persecution of the Jews is rampant. Hence it is quite evident that it is not a desire on the part of the Jew to return to Palestine to await

the coming of the Lord that prompts him to go but rather for the purely earthly motive of avoiding persecution.

THE RAPTURE:

Proceeding now to the events immediately preceding the Millennium itself we find the first occurrence, according to the premillenarians, to be the Rapture of the Church. "Rapture", according to the dictionary, means "to be caught up." Bauman states it thus:

There will be a time coming when Christ will return to take His saints with Him to heaven. At a time that we know not, all those who are believers in Christ, who were members of the Church on earth and have died will be raised from their graves and will be translated to heaven. Likewise all those are living at that time who are believers will be caught up into heaven in the twinkling of an eye. Their bodies will be changed from fleshly bodies to spiritual bodies and they will disappear from sight into heaven. Now this coming of Christ for His saints will not be observed by all. No one will know of it except His chosen saints who are members of His Church here on earth. 29

This doctrine is allegedly based upon the passage of I. Thess.

4, 13-18:

But I would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep that ye sorrow not even as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not precede them which are asleep. For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

Before we proceed one point in this connection should be made clear. Premillennialists use the terms "Rapture" and "Revelation"

29. Bauman, op. cit., p. 141.

to denote two separate occurrences. The "Revelation" is the term given to that event when Christ will appear visibly to all men to take up His reign on earth during the Millennium. In other words the "Revelation" is the real beginning of the Millennium itself. This is not to be confused with the "Rapture" which occurs prior to the great tribulations of the last times. At this time Christ will come to take His saints, both living and dead, to heaven with Him. As has been stated above this occurrence will not be recognized by all people. In the strict sense it is not an appearance of Christ at all for only the saints who are taken will know that Christ has come. All others will be unaware of it while at the "Revelation" all men will know that Christ has come for He will come openly and in glory. The premillennialists press the point of comparison in the text which tells us that Christ will come as a thief in the night saying that it refers to the Rapture with the thought that no one will know of His coming.³⁰ However, just how so many people (all believers at the time of the Rapture) could suddenly disappear without notice has not been fully explained by the premillennialists.

The Rapture does not refer to the general resurrection of all the dead, but only to the just ones, those who are members of the Church here on earth. Pettingill wants to bring this out when he says of Luke 20, 35 that it means "from amongst the dead."³¹

30. Bauman, op. cit., p. 139.

31. Pettingill, op. cit., p. 19.

In other words only a part of the dead are to rise at the time of the Rapture otherwise there would be no point in making this distinction. This same view is held also by Bauman who distinguishes between the resurrection "from the dead", or the resurrection of the saints at the time of the Rapture, and the "resurrection of the dead" or the resurrection of all the rest of the dead, namely the lost dead at the end of the Millennium. Hence the premillennialists teach a two-fold resurrection. It is not our purpose here to refute this claim at this point in our discussion, but merely to set forth the doctrine of the Rapture and the first resurrection. We shall take up the objections to this belief in our treatment of the twentieth chapter of Revelation where there is direct mention of the first and second resurrection, and examine what is meant by these statements.

Between the Rapture and the visible appearance of Christ a number of events will occur, according to the premillennial view, which Bauman lists as follows:

1. The Revelation of the Anti-christ.
2. The refusal of the Jews to worship Anti-christ who will then seek their extermination.
3. The judgement of Gog and his allies.
4. The War of Armageddon. ³²

We shall take up each of these events separately in a moment.

Bauman goes on to say:

The period of time between the Rapture and the Revelation during which these events take place is believed to be a period of seven years. This is gleaned from a study of Daniel's great prophecy of the seventy weeks, (literally, seventy ev sevens of years). Daniel was told that "seventy weeks are determined upon thy people" - the Jews.

32. Bauman, op. cit., p. 139

Sixty nine of these seven years ended with the Messiah being cut off. Christ was crucified exactly 483 (sixty nine sevens) years after the going forth of the commandment to restore and rebuild Jerusalem. ”

After the crucifixion of Christ the Church was brought into being which, according to the premillennialists, carried on the work of Christ upon earth during that time in which He was in heaven. At the Rapture or first resurrection the Church Age will be completed. The Church will be taken from earth and then comes the final week of the seventy in which the events listed above will occur.

REIGN OF SATAN AND ANTI-CHRIST:

Dunham gives a fairly complete picture of what the premillennialists expect to occur in the seventieth week. Near the beginning of the Tribulation, that is, in the earlier part of the seven year period which makes up the seventieth week as prophesied in Daniel, Satan will be cast out of heaven and will become angry with God and with the nations; Rev. 12, 12: "Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea for the devil is come down unto you having great wrath because he knoweth that he hath but a short time." Satan who is a real personal being has long been the "prince of the power of the air", but when he is cast out of heaven and becomes mad with wickedness, with wrath and anger his reign of terrorism will work desolation until the nations groan under his cruel and bloody hand. At this time when Satan is cast down from heaven he will endue Anti-christ with great powers, and Anti-christ will appear as the ruler and prince of the world. He will rise to world rulership and dictator-

ship. His kingdom will be general. " And power was given to him over all kindreds and tongues and nations," Rev. 13, 7. ³⁴

Satan will give Anti-christ all the power and glory that he offered the true Christ in the temptation. The power of Anti-christ will hold people in such sway that they will not only obey him as ruler, but will worship him as God, Dan. 11, 36: " And the kings shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself and magnify himself above every god and shall speak marvelous things against the God of gods and shall prosper until the indignation be accomplished."

Dunham proceeds to tell us that Israel will suffer especially at the hands of Anti-christ. A remnant who have been regathered in Palestine and have reestablished the temple worship in Jerusalem will apparently flourish until the midst of Daniel's seventieth week when Anti-christ will break his covenant with them, and instead of allowing the temple worship to continue as agreed in the covenant he will set himself up in the temple as God and demand that the people worship him. The man of sin will be revealed, " the son of perdition; who opposed and exalteth himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped: so that he, as God, sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God," II. Thess. 2, 4-5. And when Israel refuses to worship Anti-christ as God he will pour out all his wrath upon them and make them desolate as we are told in the ninth chapter of Daniel. ³⁵

³⁴. T. Richard Dunham, The Great Tribulation, p. 34.

³⁵. Ibid, p. 52.

To state the whole matter briefly, then, according to the premillennialists, the Anti-christ will be revealed at the beginning of the seventieth week which follows immediately after the Rapture of the Church. All power will be given to Anti-christ to rule the earth. At this same time a number of Jews will have returned to Palestine and have set up the temple worship once more, and even they will be subject to the rule of the Anti-christ and will make an agreement with him by which he promises to allow the Jews to continue the worship of God in the temple. But in the middle of the last week Anti-christ will break his promise and will set himself up as God and demand glory and worship. The Jews will refuse to worship him as God and he will wreak vengeance on them. This will usher in the "Great Tribulation."

THE GREAT TRIBULATION:

By the term "Great Tribulation", the premillennialists mean a period of special trouble and affliction which shall befall Israel, all unbelievers, and all hypocrites who profess to believe in God but in actuality do not. They admit that the word "tribulation" is used in a general sense in Scripture denoting any type of trial or trouble as St. Paul uses it in Romans when he states that we should glory in tribulation since it is conducive to patience. But in addition to this Feinberg states: "Scripture evidently uses the term in a specific and well-defined sense also."³⁶ Dunham puts it thus:

"The Great Tribulation" is the precise term used in the book of Revelation where it is written that one of the elders said unto John concerning an innumerable company different from the raptured saints and the sealed of the twelve tribes of Israel: "These are they which came up out of the Great Tribulation."

³⁶ Feinberg, op. cit., p. 125.

It is not merely an experience but a specific period of time, an era in which the experiences of those upon whom it will come can scarcely be described by human tongue. It will be a time of unprecedented and almost unthinkable tribulation such as "never been nor ever shall be," Dan. 12, 1, "That day is great so that none is like it; it is even the time of Jacob's trouble," Jer. 30, 7. Such Scriptures as these cannot be misunderstood. They declare that there can be only one such time for if a time is so unique in nature that there has never been such a time nor ever shall be afterward, there can be but one such time: hence the Great Tribulation is a definite, specific period of time and unique in that it is unequalled in nature. "There will be world wide woe, universal distress and unheard of anguish." ³⁷

Feinberg says; "It will, no doubt, be a period of trial, sorrow, calamity, spiritual darkness, wickedness, and catastrophe such as the world has never seen or imagined." ³⁸

CAUSES OF THE TRIBULATION:

Why does God afflict the world with such terrible trials? Dr. Norman B. Harrison notes in his work on the return of the Lord a three-fold cause for the Great Tribulation. 1) The failure of Israel to accept her Messiah, 2) the complete moral failure on the part of Gentile nations and professing Christendom will bring about the period. 3) It will be occasioned by the increase in power and influence of Satan in preparing for the time when he shall reveal his man of sin as the god of the age as mentioned above. And it is a part of God's plan to set His King on His holy hill of Zion. ³⁹ By methods which we need not enter upon here the premillennialists have asserted that this period will take place in the latter half of the seven year

37. Dunham, op. cit., p. 16.

38. Feinberg, op. cit., p. 132.

39. Norman B. Harrison, His Sure Return, quoted in Charles Feinberg, op. cit., p. 128.

period or seventieth week and the Great Tribulation will then last just three and one half years.

SUBJECTS OF THE TRIBULATION:

Those upon whom this great judgement of God is to come are divided by the premillennialists into four main groups. First of all Israel will suffer the horrors of the Tribulation because of their rejection of the Messiah at the time of His first advent. Secondly all those who do not profess to be subject to God or render any allegiance to Him will be punished in the Great Tribulation. All those who profess to be Christians but or in actuality nothing but hypocrites and apostates will form a third company. Finally there will be a tribulation remnant of Israel, that is, certain of the Jews who have accepted Christ before this time and have also suffered during this period. Rev. 20 states that there will be 144,000 sealed from the nation of Israel to be found in heaven together with the great multitude of all nations and kindreds and tongues which came out of the Great Tribulation. Feinberg declares: " We conclude concerning the 144,000 sealed ones that when the church is caught up to be with the Lord that God will call a remnant of His people- He has ever had a true witness unto Himself among His people even in the darkest hour of their apostasy and declension-to proclaim the Gospel of the kingdom." ⁴⁰

END OF THE GREAT TRIBULATION; THE BATTLE OF ARMAGEDDON:

Finally the Great Tribulation will come to an end with the

40. Feinberg, op. cit., p. 130

Battle of Armageddon mentioned above. Christ will return visibly and in glory, conquer the nations, and set up His throne in Jerusalem. The premillennialists take Rev. 16 in all literalness, especially vs. 13-16:

And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils working miracles which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world to gather them to battle of that great day of God Almighty. Behold I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments lest he walk naked and they see his shame. And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue, Armageddon.

Armageddon is the name of a small hill in the plain of Jezreel west of the river Jordan. Pettingill says: " In the eternal counsels of God this place, Armageddon, has been predetermined as the future scene of the world's most awful battle." ⁴¹

At this time the unbelieving Gentile nations of the world which have submitted to the Anti-christ will gather themselves together to utterly wipe Israel from the face of the earth. Their purpose will be to destroy the Jews. Armies will come up against Jerusalem. Part of Jerusalem will be taken and great will be their tribulation, but only half of the city will fall for Christ will intervene. He will cause madness to fall upon the enemies of the Jews, and Christ Himself will descend from heaven and completely destroy all enemies of the Jews from the face of the earth. The Beast and the False Prophet will be cast into the lake of fire burning with brimstone, and Satan will be cast into the bottomless pit, and Christ will reign supreme

41. Pettingill, op. cit., p. 103.

over His people Israel, and will reestablish their kingdom. ⁴² These are the events which will occur between the Rapture of the Church and the Second Advent of Christ visibly and in glory, according to the premillennialist viewpoint.

NATURE OF THE MILLENNIAL KINGDOM

THE BINDING OF SATAN:

As we continue our examination of the premillennial system we find the first official action of Christ as earthly ruler to be the binding of Satan, Rev. 20, 1-3: " And I saw an angel come down from heaven having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent which is the devil and Satan, and bound him a thousand years. And cast him into a bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years should be fulfilled; and after that he must be loosed a little season." Pettingill says of this: " there is no struggle, no difficulty about it all, one lone angel acts as a policeman, and all by himself he puts Satan under arrest and shuts him up in prison. For the whole thousand years of the millennial kingdom this world will be free from the wiles of the devil, free from the subtle deceptions of the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." ⁴³ Their point is that Satan, during the Millennium, will have no power whatsoever since he will be bound. Milligan takes these words of Rev. 20 in a figurative sense. The key signifies the power to open or close at will the bottomless pit. The chain that will be

⁴². Ibid, p.104

⁴³. Ibid, p.151

sufficient to bind Satan is probably the will and decree of Almighty God.⁴⁴ Yet if the premillennialists wish to be consistent they would have to say that the key and the chain are to be taken literally as a real key and a real chain.

It is our contention, however, that this binding of Satan is not to be taken in a literal sense as though an iron chain were wrapped about the devil for it is not possible to keep a spirit in check in this manner. The binding of Satan must be taken in a spiritual manner. The very first promise of a Messiah makes mention of this very thing, that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. Isaiah 61 says of the Messiah that He shall proclaim liberty to the captives and the opening of the prison to them that are bound. Satan, the prison keeper, has already been overcome by Christ. In Hos. 13, 14 we read: "I will ransom them from the power of the grave, and I will redeem them from death. O death, I will be thy plague; o grave, I will be thy destruction." There is no doubt as to who had the power of death and the grave, namely Satan.

The first thing that Jesus did after His baptism was to manifest His superiority and power over the devil whose temptation for once completely failed when Jesus said; "Get thee hence, Satan," and again in Luke 13, 32 Jesus said: "Behold, I cast out devils", I John 3, 8: "For this purpose the Son of Man was manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil," and again in Col. 2, 15: "He spoiled principalities and powers. He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them." Jesus said, John 12, 31: "Now is the judgement

44. E. M. Milligan, Is the Kingdom Age at Hand, p. 183

of this world, now shall the prince of this world be cast out. We are expressly told in Heb. 2, 14 that by His atoning sacrifice Christ destroyed the power of the devil forever. " That through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." And finally in Rev. 3, 10 we read: " Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world to try them that dwell upon the earth." From this we see that Christ prevents Satan from deceiving those who believe and keep His Word.

Now is this binding of Satan peculiar to a thousand year period just before the end of the world. What we have here in Rev. 20 tells us nothing over and above that which is common to all the Messianic time with Christ's victory and the almighty protection vouchsafed unto His saints. In all Scripture the church of Christ has been exhorted to give thanks unto the Father "who hath delivered us from the power of darkness and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son." This same thought is expressed in Eph. 2, 5-7; 5,8; and Acts 26, 18. And that deliverance was won for all men when Christ died on the cross and has been effective throughout the ages.

GENERAL CONVERSION OF THE JEWS:

One of the basic claims of the premillennialists which is in keeping with their Hebraistic interpretation of Scripture is this, namely that all the Jews shall be converted to faith in Christ and shall be gathered once more to Palestine, their native land.

Jerusalem shall become the capital of the world from whence Christ will reign over His regathered people, Israel. It is a contention of Feinberg that after the Great Tribulation or as a result of it the scales will fall from the eyes of the Jews and they will recognize Him whom they have pierced as the Messiah which had been promised them and which they had rejected.⁴⁵ Mark well that this is not to be accomplished by the preaching of the Gospel, but through a miraculous occurrence within a very short space of time. For support of this claim they quote such passages as Zech. 12, 10: "I will pour upon the House of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of grace and of supplication and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced." In the New Testament they regard Rom. 11, 25-26 as their main stronghold for St. Paul there declares that: "All Israel shall be saved." But how are we to understand these passages in the light of other statements of Holy Writ?

God says by the prophet Isaiah: "Though thy people Israel be as the sand of the sea yet a remnant of them shall be converted." This is repeated by St. Paul who writes: "Esaias also crieth concerning Israel: though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved." In the Old Testament God promised: "In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen and I will build it as in the days of old," Amos 9, 11. And in the New Testament He declared that this very prophecy is being fulfilled in the conversion of the Gentiles, God taking out of them

45. Feinberg, op. cit., p. 146

a people for His name, thus building His Church. As a whole the nation of Israel has been rejected and this rejection will continue until the end of the world as the Lord says in Luke 21, 24-27:

" Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles until the time of the Gentiles shall be fulfilled and then shall they see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory." The times of the Gentiles are the times in which the Gentiles are called by the Gospel, the time of grace, and these times continue unto the end as the Lord assures us in Matt. 24, 14: " This Gospel shall be preached in all the world and then shall the end come." But concerning the Jews as a nation God tells us by St. Paul: " The wrath is come upon them to the uttermost," that is, unto the end.

Now then what is meant by the " House of David"? That is the spiritual Israel. They are, indeed, God's chosen people even as the Jews of old were God's chosen people but only those who believe and accept Christ can call themselves the children of God or God's people, hence it refers to all believers. Promises such as Zech. 12, 10 began to be fulfilled on Pentecost day and are still being fulfilled in the gathering of the remnant of Israel as well as in the gathering of all them that afar off even as many as the Lord shall call. The House of David comprehends all the children of the son of David, and in the same sense the " inhabitants of Jerusalem" are all the citizens of the Holy City, the Church of Christ. This gathering of the elect of Israel during the time of the New Testament is indicated in the words of Isaiah 11, 11: " The Lord shall set His hand again the second time to recover the remnant of His people." After they had

broken the first covenant God promised them a second proof of His grace in sending the Messiah, thereby establishing the "new covenant" Jer. 31, 31-33, and calling them by the Gospel. All true children of Abraham, Rom. 4, 11, will accept and keep this new covenant but that includes only a remnant of Israel. For we read in Isaiah 4, 2-3: "The branch of the Lord shall be beautiful and glorious....for them that are escaped of Israel....he that is left in Zion shall be called holy even every one that is written among the living. Note that Isaiah does not say "the whole Jewish nation."

Let us now consider the passage which the premillennialists quote as the chief basis for their claims of a general conversion of the Jews, Rom. 11, 25-27 which reads as follows:

I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery lest ye should be wise in your own conceit that blindness in part is come upon Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in and so all Israel shall be saved, as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob; for this is my covenant unto them when I shall take away their sins.

Here we must point out a grave error of the premillennarians. They take the adverb of manner "so", as an adverb of time, in the sense of "then" or "thereafter". The first meaning of the Greek word according to Thayer is "in the manner spoken of" or "in this manner". Especially when it is used as in this passage followed by "kathoos" it refers to the manner described.⁴⁶ This then is the accepted translation when the word is used in this connection. Moreover the premillennialist translation is inadmissible for it not only changes the meaning of

46. Joseph H. Thayer, Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, ad locum.

the text, but also makes the Holy Ghost contradict Himself, saying something here which is at variance with other passages of "is holy Word, namely, that not all Israel is to be saved. Certainly Paul does not deny what he has said in the whole section composing Rom. 9, 1-11, namely, that not all Israel according to the flesh, but only a remnant of Israel is to be saved, " according to the election of grace." Furthermore the purpose of this section is to prove that the promises of God concerning Israel are being fulfilled, that they have not become void even though not all Jews are saved. St. Paul directly states: " Not as though the Word of God had taken none effect for they are not all Israel which are of Israel." St. Paul makes a clear distinction between "all Israel" and those which " are of Israel". The same distinction he makes in Rom 2, 28: " He is not a Jew which is one outwardly, but he is a Jew which is one inwardly."

In the light of such clear definitions we are compelled to take the phrase "all Israel" in our text as denoting all true Israel, all such as are genuine children of Abraham according to the spirit. This is expressly stated in the promise quoted by St. Paul in v.26 from Is. 59, 20 where we read: " The Redeemer shall come out of Zion and unto them that turn from the transgression in Jacob, saith the Lord." Hence, not all such as trace their natural descent from Abraham, but all Israel, according to the spirit, all "who turn from the transgression in Jacob," who believe in the promised Redeemer, shall be saved. Thus by bringing in the fulness of the Gentiles all Israel is, indeed saved. There can be no doubt that God never said nor meant that all Israel, according to the flesh, should be

saved, but according to the spirit, all those who truly comprise Israel, who are believers in Christ will, indeed, be saved.

THE MILLENNIUM:

Immediately following the regathering and reconversion of the Jews, the premillennialists hold that Christ will return in company with the saints which He took to heaven with Him during the Rapture and Christ and His saints will then reign in Jerusalem over the whole world. This is to be the culmination of God's promise to Israel that He would restore the Jews to their homeland and that Christ would reign over them in peace and righteousness. This is the great Millennium. This kingdom is to last for exactly one thousand years. According to Feinberg, this number, used six times in Rev. 20 must be taken literally.⁴⁷ Milligan, on the other hand, states that it is of no great importance whether or not we take this figure as meaning exactly one thousand years or not.⁴⁸ But Feinberg insists that a consistent premillennialist cannot do otherwise, and that is quite true. If the premillennialists insist on a literal interpretation of Scripture in all matters which is the case, then it would be rank inconsistency on their part to admit that this number could be taken to mean anything else than an actual thousand years. As to what is really meant by the thousand years mentioned in Rev. 20 we shall discuss in a moment.

However, let us first examine Feinberg's general description of this visible kingdom of Christ. As the first step, all Jerusalem

47. Feinberg, op. cit., p. 209

48. Milligan, op. cit., p. 138.

will be rebuilt and will become the political and religious center of the world, for it is from here that Christ will personally conduct His reign. Christ's reign will be undisputed and unhindered. There will be no false religions or cults. War will exist no more; all nations will be at peace under the rule and reign of the Prince of Peace. Nature will be rejuvenated, the curse will be removed from the ground. Animal creation also will experience a change in which animals of rapacious character will become meek and tame. And finally from Rev. 20, 4 the premillennialists conclude that the saints, including the Church, the Tribulation saints which we have explained above, and the Old Testament believers will reign with Christ in His kingdom and exercise authority and judgment. ⁴⁹

Let us examine now what is really meant by the period of a thousand years mentioned six times in Rev. 20. Thoroughgoing millennialists insist on the literal interpretation, for they hold that all Scripture is to be taken literally. Yet if such were the case they would be forced to interpret the first verses of this chapter in a literal sense also, taking the chain and the key mentioned there as real objects fashioned of iron and steel. This, however, they do not do, as has been explained previously. Likewise in the exegesis of other numbers mentioned in the Bible a literal interpretation would be demanded. For example the seventy weeks spoken of by Daniel would have to be literally seventy weeks, yet no one would admit that these prophecies were fulfilled in such a short period of time.

49. Feinberg, op. cit., pp.145-147

Therefore there is no exegetical reason why this number must be taken in a literal sense. But, on the other hand, Scripture definitely shows us that we can and must take this term in its figurative meaning. In a perusal of Scripture we find one period which agrees in every detail with the description of the events of the thousand years of Rev. 20. That period began with the coming of the Messiah to earth and the time of His first advent and which continues to the end of the world. When Jesus entered upon His public ministry He declared: "The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent ye and believe the Gospel." The one blessed time of which all the prophets had spoken was fulfilled when Jesus, the Messiah, was come and His reign began. To His disciples Jesus said, lest they fail to note the special season which had now begun: "Blessed are the eyes that see the things ye have seen; for I tell you that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see and have not seen them, and to hear those things which ye hear and have not heard them." Hence, if we make this period which John calls a thousand years to begin with the first advent of Christ we are in perfect agreement with the rest of Scripture while the designation of any other period is purely arbitrary.

We admit that in the kingdom of Christ there is complete peace and blessedness, but not as the premillennialists think of it. It is not an earthly peace in which all wars cease here on this globe, but rather a spiritual peace. Christ expressly stated: "My peace I give unto you, not as the world gives..." The peace which Christ gives is the peace between God and man. He Himself is, therefore,

called, " our peace who hath made both (Jew and Gentile) one, and hath broken down the partition between us, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances, for to make in Himself of twain one new man, so making peace, and that He might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby, and came and preached peace," Eph. 2, 14-17. Peace has been established "by righteousness," the righteousness which Christ has merited for the whole world. This peace on earth was proclaimed already by the angels at the birth of Christ. It was the peace which is now established between God and man through the coming of His Son, Jesus Christ. And this peace was won for us at the first coming of Christ when ^{He} suffered and died on the cross, and rose again to show that His sacrifice was acceptable to the Father. Premillennialists claim that there will also be a peace among nations, taking the promises of peace in a literal sense. But God nowhere makes such a promise to mankind. The peace which God declared was this very peace between Himself and man through Christ through whom we have forgiveness of sins. We do not need to await the second advent and a millennial reign for the Scriptures to be fulfilled. When Christ said, " My peace I give unto you, not as the world giveth give I unto you," He added, " Let not your heart be troubled neither let it be afraid." Even though we may find strife and enmity here in the world yet in our hearts we have already the peace of God which passeth all understanding which is of far greater worth than any peace which the world can give even though men and nations would cease from physical strife and warfare. Finally Paul says: " For the kingdom of God is righteousness and peace, and

joy in the Holy Ghost , "Romans 14, 17. It is therefore not a worldly or political peace, but a spiritual peace which no man enjoys until, by faith, he becomes a member of Christ's kingdom for " there is no peace, saith the Lord unto the wicked". But, according to the millennialists there will be wicked persons even in the Millennium and for them, then, there would not be peace, and the Millennium would not be a time of universal peace and blessedness, because for the wicked there is no peace. Outside of God there is no peace.

THE REIGN OF THE SAINTS:

Finally, how are we to look upon Rev. 20, 4 which states that the saints lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years? In this verse the premillennialists allegedly find proof for their claim that when Christ comes to earth at His second advent His saints which He took to heaven with Him at the time of the Rapture will also return and will rule with Him on this earth. ⁵⁰ But by what authority is the Apostle John here converted into a modern premillennialist? There is not a single word in this passage which indicates a visible return of Christ to earth, all it relates is this: " And they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years." We agree with Dr. Mueller when he says: " This passage does not teach a millennium at all since those who lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years ' are clearly described as the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus and for the Word of God,' so that the vision depicts not an earthly but a heavenly scene." ⁵¹ Christ reigns even now in heaven

50. Feinberg, op. cit., p.286

51. John Theodore Mueller, Christian Dogmatics, p. 623

and the saints which are His true believers, and which have suffered for His sake are already reigning with Him. Since, as we have already shown, it is against all Scripture to teach an earthly reign of Christ then, obviously, this passage cannot refer to Christ's saints reigning with Him on earth.

If the claim of the premillennialists were true it would be a strange situation, indeed. Eckman points out the incongruity of the situation.

Remember the unsaved are still there (on earth). They are marrying, giving in marriage. They are buying and selling, they are giving birth to children. They are dying. Alongside of them, if the saints have returned with their Lord, are people who have died and risen from the dead and will never die again. Is such a mixture of relationships credible? A part of the population are immortals who cannot die, and a part are mortals who must die, living together on the same planet. Surely, this is confusing the present age with the age to come in a most astonishing way, and is to thoughtful persons, unbelievable. 52

HOW MANY RESURRECTIONS?

Since v. 5 of Revelation 20 speaks of the first resurrection it would be well, at this point, to take up the premillennial claim that there will be two resurrections from the dead. We have already discussed earlier the contention of the millenarians concerning what they believe to be the first resurrection in connection with the Rapture of the Church. This Rapture is, in the minds of the premillennialists, synonymous with the first resurrection. At the time when Christ comes for His saints prior to the Great Tribulation all those who are believers in Him will be taken to heaven, both those that have died and those who are living when Christ comes at

the Rapture. This resurrection will include only the righteous. The second resurrection, on the other hand, will occur after the Millennium is completed, and at this time only the ungodly men will arise to receive the judgment of eternal condemnation. The sequence, according to the premillennialists, is this. In v.4 of Rev. 20 we are told that the saints lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years, hence they must have been raised before the beginning of the Millennium. Then in v. 5: " But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years are finished." All those are ungodly men.⁵³

We maintain, on the other hand, that Scripture speaks of only one bodily resurrection from the dead which will occur when the Lord returns on the last day to judge the quick and the dead. It is true that the Bible distinguishes between two resurrections, but not both of them are bodily resurrections. The first resurrection is the resurrection of the soul from spiritual death, and the second resurrection is the restoration of the body to life on the last day. By nature all men are spiritually dead: " But God who is rich in mercy for His great love wherewith ⁴e loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ and hath raised us up," Eph. 2, 3-6. Death is separation from, and absence of life, and the spiritually dead are separated from Christ, or Life. From this death we are raised by the grace of God when He created faith in the Savior within our hearts. And it is true that only the saints, the believers, have part in this resurrection. But both resurrections

⁵³. Pettingill, op. cit., p.136. For additional premillennial arguments for two bodily resurrections see Feinberg, op. cit., pp. 275-281

are sharply distinguished when the Lord says: " The hour is coming and now is when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that shall hear shall live." Here He speaks of the spiritual resurrection. Then He proceeds: " The hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice and shall come forth: they that have done good unto the resurrection of life and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation," John 5, 25-29. What is clearer than this statement? Scripture expressly states that when that hour which Christ has ordained is come then all will come forth from the grave, not just some, not just those just ones but all men both good and evil, the just to eternal life and the evil to eternal condemnation.

This same distinction is perfectly clear also in Rev. 20. There it is said of the souls of the dead martyrs that " they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years." But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years are finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection; on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and Christ and shall reign with Him a thousand years." Here the blessedness of those departed souls in heaven is described who had been made alive from spiritual death and thus were united with Christ; after their departure from this world they lived and reigned with Christ already during the thousand years, that is, during the time of the New Testament era. They had part in the first resurrection, the spiritual resurrection by faith, and therefore they are, indeed blessed and God accounts them holy

for Christ's sake. On them "the second death" has no power. This second death is described as the "lake of fire", that is, eternal separation from God and heaven. This interpretation is in entire agreement with the rest of Scripture. These saints have been raised from the dead, the spiritual death into which sin has placed them. And because, by their faith in Christ, they have been thus raised, the second death or separation from God will hold no terrors for them because they have been made one with God.

" The second resurrection" or the resurrection of the physical body is described in vs. 11-15 where it is said that " the dead small and great" that is, all the dead were standing before the Great White Throne; that the book of Life and other books were opened; that " every man" was judged; that " whosoever was not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire. If, as the pre-millennialists claim, the just had already been raised a thousand years before there would be no object in their standing once more at the Great White Throne. According to the millennial doctrine all those who stand before the Throne should be cast into the lake of fire for all those are the evil ones, if we accept their claims. Yet these verses plainly tell us that those who were not found written in the Book of Life were cast into the lake of fire. This definitely shows an eclectic action. Some of those standing there are saved while the rest are cast away. This is a general resurrection. Finally St. Paul says in I. Cor. 15, 51-52: " Behold, I show you a mystery. We shall not all sleep but we shall all be changed in a

moment in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump, for the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised incorruptible and we shall be changed, " John 6, 40 : " And this is the will of Him that sent Me that everyone that seeth the Son and believeth on Him may have everlasting life: and I will raise Him up on the last day." These clear passages cannot be mistaken or misinterpreted." The last trump" and "the last day" are in no way qualified as being the end of a particular age or era as premillennialists claim, but must obviously refer to the end, the last day that the world will be allowed to stand.

AFTER THE MILLENNIUM WHAT?

Rev. 20, 7-15 gives us an account of those events which are to take place when the thousand years are completed. Vs 7-8 speak of the activity of Satan during the time when St. John speaks of in the third verse of this chapter as "the little season." Satan is to be loosed from his prison and is allowed to go out and deceive the nations. The premillennialists, of course, accept this in its literal sense. They hold that the binding of Satan is a literal binding, that he is held in check just as a prisoner is held in a dungeon. So when the thousand years has expired he is loosed from that prison and allowed to make war against the nations and to deceive them. Yet here they suddenly make a change in their method of interpretation and admit that the battle which is referred to in v. 8 and alluded to in v.9 is not a real battle but must be taken in a spiritual sense. Our interpretation of this section is entirely consistent with that of the previous section of verse 1-3. Satan has been checked in

his power by God, he has, indeed, been conquered by Christ but now at the end of the Gospel era God will allow Satan to excite to hostile activity the enemies of the camp of the saints, "the beloved city," that is, the true Church. This assault is made by all the enemies of Christ, from Anti-christ who is sitting in the temple of God, that is, within the Christian Church down through all the false prophets and deceivers. Gog and Magog are evidently symbolic names or terms for all powers in the four quarters of the earth that are the enemies of the true Church of the living God, Ezek. 38,39. We are told that Satan shall go out "to deceive the nations". Deception has ever been one of the cunning devices of Satan to lure men into destruction and perdition and during the little season such deception will be even more widespread and intense. Speaking of the time of the end Jesus says: "There shall arise false Christs and false prophets and shall show great signs and wonders inasmuch that if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect," Matt.24,24. I Tim.4, 1-3 we read: "Now the spirit speaketh expressly that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils, speaking lies and hypocrisy having their conscience seared with a hot iron forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats which God created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth." It is thus that Satan makes war upon the believers.

As to the actual length of the little season we cannot say for Scripture does not tell us. We can only assume that it will be a short time as compared with the era designated as "a thousand years"

which we have shown to be a figurative number dating from the time of the first coming of Christ and the initiation of the Gospel era. Hence the thousand years seems to designate a long period of time and the little season compared with it, a very short period of time. Indeed, the period is shortened because the deception and evil is so great that for the sake of the elect God shortens this period.

Concerning this time little is said by the majority of the premillennialists even though they may carry a complete description of the Millennium and the glory to follow in heaven this little season is more or less ignored. It is repugnant to the millenarians to think of a period after the glorious Millennium when things will revert to an even worse state than they were preceding the Millennium. Moreover it seems extremely strange that if this period of the Millennium is to be one of such complete and blessedness that there should be so many thousands who are ready to follow Satan when he is loosed from his prison.

Although God allows the devil a free reign for a time on earth before the end He quickly brings that reign of terror to a close in an extraordinary manner. The devil, Anti-christ and their followers are overcome and cast into the lake of fire, namely hell, and there they shall remain forever.

Concerning the judgment of the Great White Throne and those who are to stand before it premillennialists assert that only the wicked, the unjust will be judged at this time since all the just ones have been judged already and live and reign with Christ.

Pettingill says: " The Judgment of the Great White Throne is the judgment of the lost dead who are raised from the dead for their final judgment." ⁵⁴ We have already shown where the premillennialists err in these points in our discussion of the resurrection and the judgments in the fore part of this paper. This is the only and final resurrection of all the dead and their judgment, including the just and the unjust.

EVALUATION OF THE PREMILLENNIAL DOCTRINE

Premillennialism is obviously a gross perversion of the Biblical doctrine of the Christian hope. The teaching of a future period of glory, welfare, and dominion of the kingdom of Christ here on this present earth misdirects the blessed hope of the Christian to earthly and temporal things. Of such earthly blessings we have no divine promises; on the contrary we are told by God in His holy Word that we must not expect and hope for earthly joys and pleasures, riches, power, and honor in this life. As long as this earth remains, the kingdom of God will be a kingdom under the cross. "If in this life only we have hope in Christ we are of all men most miserable," I Cor. 15, 19. In other words, if we, as Christians, look only for a glorious time here on this earth we are indeed, miserable for our hope is in vain. The blessedness of the Christian is found not in earthly good but within his heart, and finally after the last trump he will find complete peace and joy in the mansions above where we will live eternally with Christ. There will be no period of blessedness here on earth which will end after a time, but the true Christian hope is one of eternal blessedness in the world to come.

⁵⁴. Pettingill, op. cit., p. 181.

The emphasis throughout the premillennial doctrine is placed on eschatology rather than on soteriology. The main tenet of their belief is the period of blessedness here on earth. This is the hope to which their adherents are pointed. As a direct result of this misplaced emphasis we find that the premillennialists underevaluate church creeds, which of course, results in unionism and indifferent practices. And it cannot be otherwise, for instead of assuring the sinner of forgiveness of sins and future heavenly glory which is gained only through the blood of Christ and the grace of God they would have him expect a period of earthly grandeur. Christ and the salvation He won for us by His suffering and death are not the central facts of their theology. This is nothing less than an outright disparagement of the Gospel of salvation. ⁵⁵ Professor Feinberg denies this when he writes:

The next objection lodged against the premillennialists is a serious one, but one which cannot be sustained. It is claimed that the millennial view disparages the Gospel because it teaches conversion by means foreign to the Gospel, such as the wrath, judgment, or a display of glory. Premillennialists assuredly do not disparage the Gospel. It is true that Christ commissioned each believer to preach the Gospel to every creature, but that does not mean that everyone is automatically to be saved. We do not believe that the Gospel has any less power than do the amillennialists. It is the power of God unto salvation unto everyone that believeth whether Jew or Gentile. But the burden of proof rests with the amillennialists to show that it is the avowed purpose of God to save all in this age by the Gospel. In other words it is not a question of power but of purpose. ⁵⁶

Dr. Feinberg admits that premillennialism teaches conversion by a display of glory and power yet he denies that this teaching disparages

⁵⁵ Theodore Engelder, "Dispensationalism Disparaging the Gospel," *Concordia Theological Monthly*, vol. 8, pp. 649-666

⁵⁶ Feinberg, *op. cit.*, p. 219

the Gospel. Yet, how can it be otherwise? True, premillennialists preach Gospel in this age. But according to their teaching this is not the final age, there is a better one coming, namely, the Millennium. This era will have greater instrumentalities for conversion. In this age they admit the Gospel is the only means of conversion, but it is not sufficient to convert all men. But when the Millennium has come then by other means universal salvation will result. Moreover Feinberg makes the statement: " Israel was governed and will be in the millennial age by a principle wholly foreign to that which is in force in the Church age. The principle governing in the church age is that of grace. God does not have two mutually exclusive principles as Law and Grace operative in one period." ⁵⁷ Therefore the millennial period, since it is wholly different from that of the Church age, will be governed by Law since the Church age is governed by Grace. And this reign of the Law is to accomplish what the reign of grace could not accomplish, namely a universal conversion of all Jews. Certainly this is a disparagement of the Gospel of Christ and Him crucified.

Moreover this whole treatment of the means of conversion in the Millennium is Calvinistic for it is an irresistible grace. All Israel is to be converted by a display of glory and by the wrath of God. They cannot resist. This is Calvinism pure and simple. The free will of man is destroyed.

Finally, the whole approach of the premillennialists is

57. Feinberg, op. cit., p. 190.

Judaistic in that it gives to the Jew a preeminence inconsistent with the Scriptures, and in its emphasis on the material and secular nature of Christ's kingdom. Our "lively hope" is not an earthly blessing, but an "inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven," I Pet. 4, 9.

Upon the basis of these considerations we must echo the words of the seventeenth article of the Augsburg Confession and reject the teaching of the premillennialists as "Jewish fables" and a dangerous caricature of the Christian hope which God has promised us in His holy Word.

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