

6-1-1935

Notes on Chiliasm

Th. Engelder

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/ctm>



Part of the [Religious Thought, Theology and Philosophy of Religion Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Engelder, Th. (1935) "Notes on Chiliasm," *Concordia Theological Monthly*: Vol. 6 , Article 48.

Available at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/ctm/vol6/iss1/48>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Print Publications at Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. It has been accepted for inclusion in Concordia Theological Monthly by an authorized editor of Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. For more information, please contact seitzw@csl.edu.

Concordia Theological Monthly

Vol. VI

JUNE, 1935

No. 6

Notes on Chiliasm.

(Continued.)

Chiliasm is a *vicious delusion* in its demands and a *strong delusion* in that it can enforce its demands; it must therefore be banned from Christian theology. The first count of this grave indictment specified the chiliastic treatment of Holy Scripture, as developed in the two preceding articles of this series. It has been shown there that chiliasm flatly denies plain teachings of Scripture and commits numerous acts of violence against Scripture-texts in the interest of such denial. Clearly it is a *strong delusion*. Chiliasm has the power to compel its adherents to shut their eyes against the clearest texts and close their ears against the plainest statements. It goes without saying that, if Scripture had meant to say that all men will be raised on the day of final Judgment and that the Christians must be daily prepared for its coming, it could not well have used other words than those set down John 5, 28 f., etc., and Mark 13, 35 ff., etc. Still, under the spell of chiliasm, because of the necessity of finding room for the chiliastic kingdom, these words must not mean what they say.

It is the more remarkable in that chiliasm has drawn, not a few individuals or small groups of Christians, but countless numbers of them within all churches under its influence. The great majority of present-day theologians, even of the positive group, many of them within the Lutheran Church too, have succumbed to its influence, among them men who in erudition and acumen are second to none. Nor may we say—and we have no intention of saying it—that these men are consciously, deliberately, maliciously, rejecting words of Scripture. Of those who teach that in the last days God's people will obtain an earthly kingdom many are outside the Christian Church, such as the Jews and the Russellites; but there are also many within the Christian Church, members of the Christian Church. They are fully persuaded that Scripture teaches chiliasm. Many

of them believe in the supreme and sole authority of Scripture, such as the chiliasts among the Fundamentalists. We are not surprised to hear Christian Scientists, Russellites, Mormons, etc., denying plain teachings of Scripture and to see them distorting Scripture-texts to make them fit into their dreams. For these people do not believe that Scripture is the Word of God. But the Fundamentalist believes it, honestly. We are not surprised to see the Roman Catholic theologian twist the Scriptures to suit his dogmas. For he does not believe in the sole and supreme authority and the clarity of Scripture. The Fundamentalist does. And still he will deny what Scripture affirms and make Scripture affirm what his particular species of chiliasm requires. The thing is unnatural. It is uncanny. The forces back of this are the same forces that were back of the delusion which had captivated the Galatians, the same forces that are back of any false teaching. "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you?" Gal. 3, 1. One who is bewitched honestly believes in the illusion which the Satanic spell has cast over him. It is a strong delusion which can force men to deny plain teachings of Scripture and still persuade themselves that they are in harmony with Scripture. And when a man has once come under the full fascination of chiliasm, it seems he cannot check his fancies; and whatever his fancy, he is convinced that he has Scriptural authority for it.¹⁾

1) Here is the tract *The Mark of the Beast*, declaring: "If you have a new dime, look at it carefully, and you will see that you have the emblem of Rome, the mark of Rome, the emblem of the Fascisti party on your United States dime—the *fascies* instead of the eagle. Investigate the other side. It is Mercury, the Roman god of commerce. On one side we have the emblem of Rome, and on the other side we have the god of Rome. You ask, Do you think Mussolini is the Beast? Do you think he is the Antichrist? I say, No. Who is he then? I believe he is the John the Baptist of the Antichrist." Here we have *The King's Business* (July, 1933), writing on "Hitlerism: Is it a presage of the 'time of Jacob's trouble'? . . . Antichrist will allow no man to buy or sell without his mark, Rev. 13, 16, 17. Hitler has his mark, the swastika, and while as yet he may not have branded it on any one's hand or forehead, yet 650,000 German Jews can testify that no one in Germany can buy or sell without his permission. . . . Every student of the Bible knows that the sun of this present age is to set in a sea of Jewish blood—the 'time of Jacob's trouble,' Jer. 30, 7." Here we have Fundamentalists identifying the Beast as the NRA. Gen. H. S. Johnson complains, in his story of the Blue Eagle: "Some evangelical commentators in the Tennessee hills said the Blue Eagle was the Beast of the Apocalypse and affected to prove it by counting the serrations of his wings. I immediately ran for Holy Writ, but I could not count that way." Here we have the House of David identifying the 144,000 of Revelation with the adherents of Benjamin Purnell. Here we have the Dowieites (Zion City, Ill.) describing the times of the Antichrist thus: "The Federation of Churches, which is ecclesiastical Babylon, will ride the League of Nations, which is political Babylon, for three years and one half." (See *Luth. Wit.*, 40, p. 103.) Here we have the Russellites interpreting Rev. 3, 16 thus: "I will spew thee out of My mouth," that is, organized Christianity, the Catholic and Protestant religions." (*Popular Symbolics*, p. 417.) And Ezek. 7, 23 predicted the coming of the chain

The millennialists are so fully convinced of the truth of their illusion that *they* stigmatize the contrary teaching—the Scriptural teaching—a delusion. J. W. Petersen, superintendent of Lueneburg, said in 1715 that “nobody denies the millennium except those whose torments will begin with its coming” and that “the veil blinding the eyes of the antichiliasmists is heavier and the hardening of their hearts deeper than that of the Jews.” (*Lehre und Wehre*, 6, 213.) Bengel:

stores. (See *Pastor's Monthly*, 1934, p. 653.) And on Ezek. 4: “The booklet *Food for Thinking Christians*, which set forth the doctrine of the second coming of Christ and the fundamental truths that had long been obscured by the unfaithfulness of ‘organized Christianity,’ began, in 1881, the public witness work. That was exactly three hundred and fifty years after Jehovah began to bear with the iniquities of the Catholic wing of ‘organized Christianity,’ and forty years thereafter exactly corresponds with the three hundred and ninety days that Ezekiel lay on his left side in the mimic siege. . . . This foreshadows that God would bear with the iniquity of Protestantism for a period of forty years from and after the beginning of that period, to wit, the year 1881, as above stated. Forty years added to 1881 marks the year 1921, at which time the forty-year period of forbearance of Jehovah with Protestantism would end.” Computations by J. F. Rutherford, *Vindication*, p. 51. (We have not the space to list more samples from the literature of the *time-setting* division of the chiliasmists.) And here we have the ravings of two chiliasmists in Germany: Antichrist, the communistic world president, will attack Jerusalem with airships. (My ice man insists that Japan is the Antichrist and that, so the prophet predicted, he will run his airships without gasoline.) Jesus, appearing on a white horse, burns the airships. In the kingdom then established the believers fill the presidential and other high administrative offices. All churches practise fellowship. The Pope is converted and is acknowledged as head of Christendom. Sanitary conditions are ideal. Men live centuries. The wild beasts are harmless. Everybody owns an auto and a villa (*Ev.-Luth. Freikirche*, 7. Juli 1929.)—Our premillennialists cannot plead that sober and sane chiliasm repudiates such extreme teachings and ultra-arbitrary interpretations. For, in the first place, where is the line to be drawn between sober, sane and non-sober, non-sane chiliasm? You would certainly put Th. Zahn into the group of clear thinkers and sober, mater-of-fact exegetes. And what has he to say on Rev. 21, 1: *καὶ ἡ θάλασσα οὐκ ἔστιν ἔτι*? This: The fact that the ocean, which comprises 72 per cent. of the surface of the earth, thus leaving only 28 per cent. of *terra firma*, will disappear, relieves the interpreter of a great bother (*entlastet ihn von einer grossen Sorge*). He need no longer worry to find space for the many millions of Christians who died during the past 1900 years and also for those who live to see the second coming of Christ and the thousand years of their rule with Christ. Besides, there is the prophecy (Rev. 21, 24—27) that during the millennium also heathen peoples and kings who do not live permanently in the Holy City have free access to it and appear there to bring presents to the 144,000 Christians of Jewish descent, their brothers.—Is this sober or less sober? (I did not trust my eyes when I came upon this passage and similar ones. A colleague to whom I appealed, assures me that Zahn wrote these words and seems to mean what he says.) And, in the second place, the chiliasmists in general cannot dismiss these extravagances of particular chiliasmists as mere excrecences. They are a natural growth. They are a legitimate development of chiliasmistic principles. They do not transgress any canon of chiliasmistic hermeneutics. The sanest form of chiliasm is based on imagination and arbitrariness in interpretation. All forms of chiliasm are cast in the same matrix.

"This period itself, of a thousand years, is distinguished by a new, great, pure, and long-continued exemption from internal and external evils, since the authors of these evils are removed, and by an abundance of varied happiness, such as the Church hitherto has not beheld. . . . *He must deny the perspicuity of Scripture altogether who persists in denying this and who endeavors to refute it. . . .*" (Quoted and italicized by Weidner, *Annotations of Rev.*, p. 278.) Present-day chiliasts also apply the terms "blindness," "madness," to antichiliasm. Such an attitude need cause no surprise. It is common to all errorists. And it does not go to show that Scripture is, after all, ambiguous, permitting contradictory interpretations. It rather exemplifies the strength of the delusion inherent in false teaching.²⁾

We incriminate chiliasm furthermore as a *vicious* delusion. Its treatment of Scripture results in great harm. First, Scripture itself suffers greatly as a result of the chiliastic manipulation of it. We are referring just now not so much to the wrong done to Scripture by subjecting it to human interpretation, by setting arbitrary judgments above the judgment of Scripture, as rather to the low opinion men must form of Scripture under the exegetical method of chiliasm. General Johnson is not going to think much of the clarity of Holy Writ if he must believe that Scripture identifies the Blue Eagle as

2) A few words on the authority and perspicuity of Scripture as applied to the present discussion are in place here. 1) For the truth of the teaching of the general resurrection and the imminence of the second, the final, coming of Christ we appeal to the clear statements of Scripture to that effect. If Scripture does not convince the millennialists of their error, the matter is at an end. 2) The prophecies concerning the end, particularly in Daniel and Revelation, contain portions whose meaning will not be clear to us before the fulfilment. Here there must be no quarrel among Christians on the basis of divergent glosses, always provided, of course, that the gloss does not conflict with other clear statements of Scripture. 3) Where Scripture itself interprets a prophecy, a contrary interpretation is a falsification of the prophecy. Amos 9, 11 ff. is interpreted Acts 15, 13 ff. Amos 9, 11 is now a clear passage. The rebuilding of the tabernacle of David takes place in the building of the Church. Insisting that Amos has predicted the building of a physical Temple at Jerusalem, the chiliasts are rejecting the authority of Scripture. 4) Why did the prophets use figurative language? Is not such a manner of presentation misleading? Think the matter through. No other method was possible. If the prophets had presented the matter in New Testament terms their words would have been *utterly* meaningless at that time. These old canons on the interpretation of the prophecies are based on self-evident truths: "*Prophetæ regnum Christi spirituale depingunt vocabulis rerum terrenarum ex statu ecclesiæ sub V. T. usitato petitis.*" (Gerhard, *De Cons. Sac.*, § 90.) "By one of the most essential of these principles the predictions of the future continually took the form and image of the present or the past. . . . The New can be conceived of only under the aspects of the Old. . . . It was quite natural and, in a sense, necessary that the prophets should speak of the better things to come in language and imagery derived from such as were known and familiar to their minds." Patrick Fairbairn, *The Prophet's Prospects of the Jews*, pp. 147—153.)

the Beast. We would not blame him if he said: If Scripture cannot speak for itself, I will have none of it. Men will lose all respect for the Bible, as they lost respect for the Delphic oracle, if its statements are made as ambiguous as those of the pythoness, if John 5, 28 f. bears a hidden meaning, if "all nations" means representatives of some nations, if "quickly" means "after a long time." When one has read a few volumes of chiliastic literature and finds strange meanings continually put into Scripture-texts and the Bible made to speak a new language, 1 Cor. 14, 23 comes to mind: "If there come in those that are unlearned or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad?" Is Scripture really such a confused, cabalistic, contradictory writing? Let the premillennialists beware! They are weakening the authority of Scripture. Scripture does not mean much under the Papacy. There it is "like a waxen nose." What becomes of it under the chiliastic treatment? To apply the chiliastic method of interpretation "is to introduce absolute confusion and surrender the prophetic field to the caprice of individual feeling or the shifting currents of popular opinion." (Fairbairn, *op. cit.*, p. 154.)

The chiliastic attitude towards Scripture is, in the second place, fraught with grave danger to the spiritual life. The denial of plain teachings of Scripture is not a light matter. The heart of every Christian protests against any brushing aside of Christ's words. Where this is done, either consciously or unconsciously, the integrity of the Christian faith suffers. When Hengstenberg, after stating that Chiliasm is in direct conflict with the teaching of the Lord in the gospels and of the epistles, declared that the matter does not endanger the spiritual life in its inner nature, *Lehre und Wehre* replied: "*Wir meinen, durch das Festhalten irgendeines Irrtums, der die 'Aussprüche des Herrn usw. gegen sich hat,' komme das geistliche Leben in Gefahr.*" (6, 211.) The reference here is not to those who consciously, deliberately, and persistently reject words of Christ. Such an attitude destroys the Christian life without fail. The reference is to those who are not conscious of being in opposition to Scripture, who have deluded themselves into thinking that they are fighting, not against Christ's Word, but for it, but who are in fact denying plain teachings of Scripture. Such men are in grave danger. They are doing violence to their faith. Faith is alive to God's Word. Faith clings to the words as they are uttered by God and will not consent to the rejection of plain teachings of Scripture. Faith is sincere and accepts without questioning every word of Scripture. The chiliast therefore is clinging to his opinion against the persistent protest of his Christian faith. He is doing that of which his faith disapproves. He is engaged in a dangerous business.

Mark well: Faith, the soul of the spiritual life, lives solely and exclusively on the Word of God. It lives and moves and has its being

in Scripture. The chiliast, however, while he bases his faith as a Christian solely on the word of Scripture, bases his "faith" as a chiliast on the word of man, on human figments substituted for the Word of God. Chiliasm involves the Christian in a conflict between faith and enthusiasm. So far as, and as long as, he is engaged in chiliastic thinking, he is suppressing the voice and activity of faith, and he is keeping the source of all spiritual life from pouring out its full flood. And everything he thinks, speaks, and does in the interest of chiliasm is of an unspiritual nature. Its source is not the Word of God.

Finally, what of the attitude of indifferentistic toleration taken by many chiliasts? With respect to the conflicting teaching in *their own midst* they counsel forbearance. Dr. Frost says: "The reader should keep it in mind that there is much agreement among prophetic teachers concerning the major events connected with the return of Christ. Also, he should keep in mind that there is much disagreement concerning the minor ones. For the first we may give God thanks. . . . For the second, too, we may give God thanks; for the existing disagreement has the advantage of producing in us humbleness of mind concerning our own knowledge and charity of spirit concerning that of others, which are spiritual virtues greatly to be desired." (*The Second Coming of Christ*, Foreword.) Dr. Frost is convinced that his teaching of "The Coming Posttribulational" is the Scriptural teaching. He denounces the teaching of his antetribulational brethren as unscriptural. And still he thanks God that they take this view. And the antetribulationists accord him the same courtesy. *Bibliotheca Sacra*, which rejects Frost's teaching as unscriptural, says in discussing his attitude: "This is most gratifying; for it helps to maintain fellowship among those who agree in the main, but differ as to some of the details." And speaking of another posttribulationist, it says: "No one of course would deny the author the right to his view on this subject." (1934, pp. 373. 376.) The same forbearance is counseled and practised with respect to the *non-millennialists*. The *Lutheran Companion* says: "On this question [twofold resurrection, etc.] the Christian Church is divided into two schools of interpretation. . . . And they, as a rule, try to be fair and to respect one another's opinion as they continue to study the Scriptures for mutual edification." (1934, December 29.) Large sections of the chiliasts have been, and are, demanding that this whole matter be treated as "an open question," each side to hold to its view and tolerate the opposite view. "We plead for Christian courtesy and for the manifestation of the Spirit of Christ." (*Watchman-Examiner*.) How are we to evaluate this toleration? Dr. Frost calls it "a spiritual virtue." We abhor it as unspiritual. It is the result, with some, of the lack of assurance. When men are not thoroughly con-

vinced of the truth, the Scripturalness, of a doctrine, they are ready to concede that the contrary teaching may be true. But on the question in dispute between us and the chiliasts, Scripture leaves no room for uncertainty. The fact that men *remain* uncertain is due to their refusal to bow to Scripture. That is not a spiritual virtue. With others the case stands thus: they are convinced in their own mind that chiliasm in general or some particular point connected with it is Scripture-truth, and yet they are willing to have the contrary doctrine taught in the Church. That is an unspiritual, wicked attitude. No man has a right to his view when it contravenes Scripture. It is treason against Scripture to concede him that right.

The chiliastic treatment of Scripture justifies Dr. C. M. Zorn's verdict: "*Die SCHWAERMEREI der Chiliasten gehoert mit zu den geistlichen Plagen, von welchen die Kirche Jesu Christi geplagt wird bis an den Juengsten Tag.*" (*Die Offenbarung St. Johannis*, p. 342.) And there are other reasons why chiliasm must be branded as a plague.

2. *The chiliastic promise of earthly prosperity and glory perverts the Christian's outlook and hope.* That is the second count in the indictment against chiliasm. Scripture warns us against conceiving of the kingdom of God as a worldly realm, John 18, 36; Luke 17, 20. Again, the way set before us on this earth is the *via crucis*, Acts 14, 22; John 16, 33; Matt. 5, 3 ff.; Luke 12, 32. And finally, our hope is fixed on the bliss of heaven, Phil. 3, 20 f.; Titus 2, 13; Matt. 5, 12; Luke 12, 32, and our affection set on things above, not on things on the earth, Col. 3, 2. Chiliasm, however, craves for an outward, earthly glory of the Church and fixes the hope of men on the fictitious prosperity and rulership prepared for the Church in the millennium.³⁾

3) Earthly happiness and outward glory for the Church is the stock in trade of chiliasm. Dr. Frost deals extensively with it. "Man persists in looking forward to a time and place wherein his hope for a paradise on earth will be realized. And for once in human experience man's natural thought is in harmony with the divine purpose." (*Op. cit.*, p. 139.) "The Church as a whole will exercise authority over earthly Israel. 'Thousand years' on the face of it signifies temporal conditions and thus an earthly state."—"Christ promised His apostles that He would again sit with them in fellowship and dispense to them the wine, and this in an earthly kingdom." Isaiah foretells "the rejuvenation of the whole earth. . . . Man, when he returns with Christ in glory to reign with Him for a thousand years, will find himself in a new physical environment—the world transformed both spiritually and physically." (Pp. 75. 77. 144 f. 235.) Similarly Bengel, Seiss, Zahn, and others, as quoted on preceding pages. Also Weidner: "The reference [of Rev. 20, 4] can only be to a judicial rule over the nations on the earth. . . . Christ will glorify His Church before the world." And then in the words of Auberlen: "Christ and His saints will, by their spiritual rule, direct all external relations and circumstances. All poetry, all art, all science, all social life, will be Christian. . . . And this blessed state of general salvation will extend even to the kingdom of nature. The soil will bring forth with inexhaustible and ennobled fertility; the animal world be freed from murder and fury." (*Annot. on Rev.*, pp. 280—358.) "*Durch die mit der Wiederkunft Christi ver-*

It is a vicious delusion. Its effects are harmful in the extreme. In the first place, since the whole thing is an illusion, it engages the mind of the Christian with unscriptural thoughts. The Christian has no right to engage in thoughts that are not supplied by the Word of God. The devotion warmed by the expectation of an earthly realm of Christ and the Christian is not Christian devotion. The prayer for the coming of such a kingdom and the thanksgiving for such promises are not inspired by the Holy Spirit. And it is not safe to follow the guidance of your own spirit. Led by the spirit of enthusiasm (enthusiasm being the substitution of man's own thoughts for Scripture), you do not know where you will land. The *ignis fatuus* will lead you into a morass where there is no stability. There is no stability to chiliastic thinking. There is no limit to the flights of its diseased fancy. Cut off from Scripture, the phantasy of man runs wild. And it is a morass in another respect.

In the second place, these thoughts engendered by chiliasm are not harmless fancies, innocuous dreaming, but distinctly evil thoughts. They are the product of the flesh. They are carnal, evil thoughts. The chiliastic promise of earthly happiness, earthly glory, appeals to

bundenen topographischen, geographischen und kosmischen Veraenderungen wird eine Meerstrasse ueber Jerusalem das Mittelmeer und den Persischen Meerbusen verbinden." (Zahn says no; the ocean is turned into dry land.) "Dadurch wird Jerusalem die Metropole der Welt." (*Der Christl. Apologete*, 16. Juni 1915.) Evangelist W. Sunday: "Think of how glorious it will be to live a thousand years in this world with our blessed Master and be closely associated with Him; with bodies that will not wear out or grow old, no wrinkles or white hair, perfect health, and with faculties for enjoyment a thousand times greater than we possess now. Poverty, sickness, and war will be unknown." Donald G. Barnhouse: "When Christ is reigning upon the earth, it will be right to turn the other cheek. It will be right to follow a policy of pacifism before an unregenerate world. For in that day when the evil and selfish instincts of men break out against their neighbors, the one who is oppressed will be sure, in submitting, that in a flash some mighty angel will be there taking vengeance. . . . Some day that kingdom will be established. The King will be ruling over the world by means of His glorified saints. . . . To the one our Lord will give one city, to another five cities, to another ten cities." (*His Own Received Him Not. But* —, pp. 47. 73.) The chiliasm indulged in by the Russellites is of the same earthly, carnal character, with Russellite variations. "The followers of Russell will inherit the earth when the millennium begins, when there will be no starving for bread, no burdensome taxations, no distress of any kind. And this is to be expected very shortly; within the present generation 'Christendom' and the nations that rule therein shall be completely destroyed." (*The Kingdom*, p. 21; *Pop. Symb.*, p. 418.) — The chiliasts are dreaming again the dream of the Jews. The Jews dreamt, and are dreaming, of an earthly kingdom to be established by their Messiah. So do the chiliasts. They are spreading "Jewish opinions." (*Augsb. Conf.*, Art. XVII.) "*Aller Chiliasmus ist das unwiedergeborne, fleischliche Judentum und Heidentum in christlichem Aufputz.*" (G. Goesswein, *Offenb. St. Joh.*, p. 13.) He adds indeed, and properly: "*Es kann zwar einem bekehrten Menschen von diesem Unflat noch etwas anhaengen als ein Stueck seines Fleisches.*" But the thesis is true: chiliasm has adopted the Jewish thoughts — and even the Jewish

the natural mind and stirs up the cravings of the flesh. The Christian is exhorted not to mind earthly things, Phil. 3, 19, not to set his heart on temporal happiness and external glory. But the flesh is set on just this. And chiliasm stirs up these carnal cravings. The statement of Bengel concerning the abundance of varied happiness in the millennium, the exemption from internal and external evils, quoted above, concludes with the words: "There is no error, much less danger, in maintaining that the thousand years are *future*, but rather in interpreting these years, whether future or past, in a *carnal sense*." But that is exactly what he is doing. He is describing the happiness of the millennium in terms that appeal to the flesh. We are not of course speaking of gross carnality, of blood-lust and lasciviousness, but of the subtle form. It is the flesh which minds earthly things, which cares not for the spiritual glory of the Gospel and heaven, but sets all store by the happiness that earth and time offer. Christ will have our hearts set on the hidden glory of His Gospel and of His Church, on the forgiveness of sins and the spiritual gifts connected

thought-forms. Large sections of the chiliasts insist that the Jews were not mistaken in their hope of earthly glory in the coming kingdom of the Messiah. The *Scofield Bible* does not hesitate to spread this Jewish opinion: "Israel as a nation always has its own place and is yet to have its greatest exaltation as the earthly people of God." (Note to Rom. 11, 1.) "According to the prophets, Israel, regathered from all nations, restored to her own land, and converted, is yet to have her greatest earthly exaltation and glory." (Note to Rom. 11, 26.) According to this weird postponement theory of the dispensationalists "Christ and His forerunner, when they announced that the kingdom of God was at hand, were thereby offering to the Jews the earthly kingdom of their grossly carnal expectations; that (astonishing to relate) the Jews *refused* what they most eagerly looked for when it was thus proffered to them; and that thereupon God withdrew the offer and 'postponed' the kingdom to another 'dispensation'" (Ph. Mauro, *The Gospel of the Kingdom*, p. 78; cp. p. 62.), the postponed kingdom coming up, as to its earthly glory, to the expectations of carnal Jewry. Dr. Frost has accepted the same postponement theory. "Conditions which prevailed when the kingdom was first in offering will prevail when it is again in offering." (*Op. cit.*, p. 179. — See other statements to the same effect quoted on p. 326 of this journal.) So also D. Barnhouse: "The Lord Jesus had come unto His own, the Jews, with the offer of the worldly kingdom, and His own received Him not." So the kingdom had to be "postponed for many hundreds of years. It is that which Christ will establish at His second coming. It is primarily Jewish, though it shall include of course all the inhabitants of the earth. But the promises of the kingdom were earthly and Jewish. . . . It will take the personal return of the Lord Jesus Christ, coming not as the meek and lowly Savior, but as the Lord of power and glory, to enforce righteous principles upon this earth. The earth will have Him as Dictator soon. . . . Desert places will become gardens. Poison shall disappear from the serpent, and the carnivorous animals shall lose their murderous instincts. . . . Remember the prophecy of Hosea: 'After two days will He revive us; in the third day He will raise us up,' 6, 2. 'Be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day (2 Pet. 3, 8). The 'two days' of Israel have almost run their course. Soon will the glorious third day dawn for the chosen people." (*Op. cit.*, 46, 87. 115, 167, 170.)

with it. He tells us that "the kingdom of God cometh not with observation," with outward show (margin), Luke 17, 20. "The Kingdom does not come like a magnificent procession, with bands playing, hosts marching, a glittering king at its head." (Lenski, *Interpr. of Luke*), with an angel smiting down the oppressor of the Christian with a flash, with the Church acclaimed and honored by mankind and ruling the nations. That view of the Kingdom appeals to the flesh, and that is the gospel of chiliasm. Chiliasm promises to remove the offense of the Church, and this promise breeds dissatisfaction with the present lowly estate of the Church. Chiliasm promises to win the world for Christ in the millennium with better instrumentalities than the simple preaching of the Gospel, and this promise breeds impatience with present conditions and tempts men to apply at once, as far as possible, the millennial instrumentalities for the furtherance of the Gospel. In general, the chiliastic promise and hope is not conducive to spirituality and a full Christian life. The Scriptural eschatology is here needed. The life of the Christian is a waiting for the Last Day. Justified by faith and made the heir of heaven, his heart is fixed with eager longing on the consummation at the Last Day, 1 Cor. 1, 7; Phil. 3, 20; Titus 2, 13. And this expectation gives the life of the Christian its Christian form, a life rich in good works, Matt. 25, 14 ff., denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, Titus 2, 12 ff.; 1 Pet. 2, 11, exhibiting moderation, Phil. 4, 5, and lifted above the cares and troubles of this life in the joyful expectation of the coming salvation, Rom. 8, 18; Luke 6, 23; 1 Pet. 4, 12 f.; 1 Thess. 4, 13—18. (Cp. F. Pieper, *Chr. Dog.*, III, p. 103 ff.: "*Das christliche Leben ein Leben in Erwartung des Juengsten Tages.*") "*Ohne Chiliasmus, und wenn es nur ein Quentchen waere, keine Ethik,*" declares Karl Barth (P. Althaus, *Die letzten Dinge*, p. 240), as before him Loehe insisted that the Church would receive the greatest blessing in the future from the millenarian reign and in the present from the proclamation of the millenarian hope. No, says Althaus; Barth's formula is wrong. "The right formula is: Without hope, without eschatology, no ethics." (*L. c.*) The admixture of but one dram of chiliasm into Biblical eschatology adulterates the invigorating tonic. The chiliastic hope does not invigorate; it intoxicates.

And in the third place, the chiliastic expectation displaces more and more the hope which Scripture sets before the Christian. The Christian chiliasts, to be sure, teach and believe that at the final consummation the believer will enter into the ineffable bliss and glory of heaven. But if they are the thoroughgoing chiliasts, they dwell more on the millennial happiness and glory than on the hidden present glory of the Church and its bliss in heaven. That is but natural. The former is more attractive to the natural mind, the flesh, than the latter. And if both are held out as legitimate objects of hope, the

flesh is given room to put its preference into first place. And so the thoroughgoing chiliast (and there is no telling how soon the moderate chiliast will turn into a radical) can see hardly anything else than his chiliastic hope.

He sees it almost everywhere in Scripture. "Christ will appear with them [the risen saints] and set up the Kingdom, whose promises run like golden threads through the entire Bible." (I. M. Haldemann, *A King's Penknife*, p. 101.) And Arthur Pink, going still farther: "There are more scriptures which treat of the millennium, or Kingdom, than perhaps any other subject in the Bible." (*23d Proceedings of Cal. and Nev. Dist.*, p. 35.) Where the prophets describe the glory of the New Testament Church and the apostles speak of the bliss the Last Day will bring, many chiliasts can see nothing but the millennium. In his chapters on "The Coming Personal, Literal, Visible, Glorious, Satisfying, Transforming" Dr. Frost heaps scripture upon scripture. And there is much scripture on this subject. But it is all referred to the millennium. Yes, and St. Peter's second epistle is made to end on the chiliastic note (see page 246 of the current volume of this magazine), and when St. Paul glories in the Christian hope, he is made to speak of the chiliastic expectation. Phil. 3, 11, says Weidner, refers to the first resurrection. (*Annot. on Rev.*, p. 361 f.) And what was in St. Paul's mind when he penned Titus 2, 13? The *Lutheran Companion*, November 18, 1933, says: "The 'times of refreshing and the restitution of all things' are briefly described in the Book of Revelation as a thousand years of the reign of Christ and His saints. . . . We are watching and waiting for the coming of Christ and the new world order. This expectation was the blessed hope of Paul, Titus 2, 13, and all the apostles and of the noblest spirits in all the Christian centuries."

Statements like these show what plays the prominent part in the hope of these chiliasts. They are so fascinated by the prospect which the chiliastic promise presents that they see less and less of that which constitutes the Christian hope. The Christian looks forward to this: "He will at the Last Day raise up me and all the dead and give unto me and all believers in Christ eternal life . . . in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness." But many a chiliast is so intent on admiring the Fata Morgana of the earthly happiness, earthly peace, earthly glory, in the millennium that he can hardly think of anything else. To illustrate: P. B. Fitzwater writes a book *Why God Became Man*, which contains a wealth of Christian thought. One reads with profit what he says on the nature and purpose of the Incarnation. But this is the final paragraph of the book, as to the purpose of the Incarnation: "Upon the ruins of the kingdoms of this present evil world will be established the Messianic kingdom. The Stone hewn out of the mountain will smite the image of

the Antichrist and pulverize it. When the dust thereof is scattered as the chaff on the summer threshing-floor, then will appear the kingdom of the Son of Man, Dan. 2, 44 f. Christ will then reign until He has put all enemies under His feet. This is the golden age of which the wise men of all ages have dreamed and which God's prophets have foretold. Peace will then fill the earth because righteousness and justice shall prevail. The knowledge of the Lord shall then cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. Sin and sorrow shall be no more. And then, when His mediatorial work shall have been completed, He will yield the kingdom up to God, and God will become all in all, 1 Cor. 15, 24—28. Hallelujah! Amen." And the last paragraph in Barnhouse's book reads: "To-day our Lord is in heaven. The new body, the Church, is being called out of the world. We wait for our Lord from heaven, who shall take us to Himself before returning to this earth to consummate every promise and plan which He has formed for His earthly people and to establish His kingdom, through power, over all the earth." In view of such utterances P. Althaus is right in asking: "*Was bleibt dann noch uebrig fuer die Endvollendung? Ist sie [von dem 'strengen' Chiliasmus] nicht so vorweggenommen, dass die Hoffnung auf das letzte notwendig verkuemmert, das endliche Reich der Herrlichkeit verblasst?*" And Klieforth, quoted by Althaus, declares: "*Weil ihre [der Christen] Christenhoffnung sich im Tausendjaehrigen Reich befriedigt, schweigen sie des regnum gloriae, weil sie keinen Inhalt fuer dasselbe behalten.*" (Op. cit., p. 304.)⁴⁾ — The Christian cannot harbor chiliastic thoughts without suffering great loss. Spiritual life springs from the Christian faith and hope, and to the extent that this hope is hindered from functioning the spiritual life languishes—and is endangered. The danger always threatens that the hope of the millennial glory will entirely displace the Christian hope. In that case Christ is lost. (Cp. Luther, XIV, 1056.)

This, then, must be the verdict: "This hypothesis about the millennial kingdom of Christ does not kindle devotion, but extinguishes it or at least checks its flame. For by it men are turned

4) "*Wir erkennen mit Freuden an, dass Kliefoth es verstanden hat, stellenweise ganz vortrefflich und in nahezu musterqueltiger Weise den vulgaeren Chiliasmus und auch die damit zusammenhaengenden Gedanken einer allgemeinen Judenbekehrung zu widerlegen. Und doch wird seine Auffassung und Stellung dadurch wieder der chiliastischen bedenklich nahe gerueckt, dass er die naemlichen juedisch-fleischlichen Vorstellungen und Erwartung von Reiche Gottes anstatt mit den Chiliasten gewoehnlichen Schlages auf diese jetzige Erde ins Himmelreich verlegt, in welchem die Juden in Jerusalem, die Voelker drum herum wohnen sollen usw., ja wo alle irdischen und weltlichen Verhaeltnisse, sogar die Ehe, in verklearter Weise fortgesetzt werden sollen. Somit bewegt sich Kliefoth trotz seiner Polemik gegen ein Tausendjaehrigen Reich auch seinerseits in sogenannten 'realistischen,' das heisst, fleischlich-juedischen, Vorstellungen.*" (Lehre u. Wehre, 34, p. 73 f.)

away from a desire of the heavenly and spiritual blessings, which is the proper Christian desire, Rom. 8, 23; Phil. 3, 20. The chiliastic notions feed the carnal security of men because they make men feel justified in putting the Day of Judgment a long way off and teach them to live supinely (*in diem vivere*). These notions also make men eager for all sorts of new-fangled schemes," etc. (D. Hollaz, *Examen etc., De Extr. Jud., quaest. 15.*) "When chiliasm actually enters the heart, it diverts the heart and mind from the hidden spiritual glory of the Christian life, which consists in the assurance of the forgiveness of sins and of the future *heavenly* heritage, and puts in place of it the expectation of external and earthly grandeur. It voids these and similar grand and glorious words: 'Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you,' John 14, 27, and: 'These things I have spoken unto you that in Me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world,' John 16, 33. 'Behold, the kingdom of God is within you,' Luke 17, 21, — that does not satisfy chiliasm, which asks that the Kingdom come with observation, so that men can say: Lo here! or, Lo there! In short, Scripture does not *teach* chiliasm, but *warns* against it." (F. Pieper, *Chr. Dog.*, III, p. 592.)

(To be concluded.)

TH. ENGELDER.

Die Sündlosigkeit Jesu.

Die Sündlosigkeit (impeccabilitas) Jesu ist die Eigenschaft des menschengewordenen Sohnes Gottes, kraft deren er nicht nur die wesentliche Heiligkeit der göttlichen Natur besaß, sondern auch nach seiner menschlichen Natur gänzlich ohne Sünde war, so daß er auch über die Möglichkeit erhaben war, in Sünde fallen zu können (peccare non potuit).

Weil die Frage wegen der Sündlosigkeit Jesu hin und wieder etwas Schwierigkeit macht, sonderlich mit Rücksicht auf den Einwurf, daß die Versuchungen, die Christus erduldet, kaum ernstlich gewesen sein können, wenn der Ausdruck *peccare non potuit* mit Recht auf ihn angewandt wird, so ist es wohl angebracht, diese Lehre etwas genauer zu prüfen und abzuwägen, um sie recht verstehen und anwenden zu können.

Sehen wir uns zunächst die in Betracht kommenden Schriftstellen etwas näher an. Schon im Alten Testament lesen wir: „Wiewohl er niemand unrecht getan hat, noch Betrug in seinem Mund gewesen ist“ (לֹא חָמַס עָשָׂה וְלֹא כִרְמָה בִּפִּי), Jes. 53, 9, wodurch doch ganz klar die Sündlosigkeit des Messias gelehrt wird. Auch Dan. 9, 24 redet von der Salbung des Allerheiligsten (קֹדֶשׁ קֳדָשִׁים), wodurch wiederum niemand anders als der geweissagte Heiland