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## Notes on the History of Chiliasm

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with His "parusia" and how to be prepared for the same. Matt. 24 and 25; Mark 13; Luke 17 and 21. The apostles follow His lead when they say as with one voice: "The Lord is at hand"—thus St. Paul, Phil. 4:5; "The Judge standeth before the door"—thus St. James, chapter 5:8, 9; "It is the last time"—thus St. John, 1 John 2:18; "The end of all things is at hand"—thus St. Peter, 1 Pet. 4:7; "Behold, the Lord cometh"—thus St. Jude, v. 14. The last page of the Bible brings us once more the words of the true and faithful witness: "Surely, I come quickly," Rev. 22:20. Yet how easily the things of the present cause us to forget about the future and the end! How easily we forget that the day of the Lord will come as a snare upon all who live upon the earth! How sluggish we are in seeing to it that we be constantly prepared! For that reason it is impossible to remind ourselves too earnestly and too emphatically: *The Lord will come again, and that suddenly, as a thief in the night.*

This article as well as the succeeding ones, was written in German. For certain reasons it is here given in English. Pastor Rudolph Prange of Little Rock, Ark., has kindly done it into English at my request, which is hereby acknowledged with sincere thanks. L. FUEBRINGER

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## Notes on the History of Chiliasm

### Introduction

Amid the international upheavals and universal catastrophes we can expect a large-scale revival of chiliastic teachings. Chiliasm arose among a "have-not" people; it usually enjoyed a wide acceptance when nations had been disappointed economically and become unsound theologically; and whenever confessionism was at low ebb, emotionalism was substituted for the Scriptural teaching on eschatology. The time for a new assault by the forces of chiliasm is ripe. Therewith also the time for a restudy of the history of chiliasm has come.

### 1. Origin

Since the official publications of our Synod have repeatedly and at great length shown that chiliastic opinions are neither taught nor tolerated in Holy Scriptures, we shall in this article dispense with a negative approach and immediately ask, Whence did the Jews (vid. Augustana, Art. XVII) receive the suggestion of chiliastic doctrines, the revealed Scriptures of the Old Testament being eliminated as a source?

In a general way we may answer that the heart of natural man is inclined toward chiliasm. The desire for a heaven upon



earth (Adam and Eve), the demand for honor above others (Cain), the claim that the day of the Lord's wrath is afar off (people in the days of Noah), are innate to the human heart after the Fall and exemplified from the first days of the world's history. The Jews were addicted to the same soul ills as the rest of humanity and hence also to these chiliastic notions. More specifically, however, the Jews adopted their views of a millennium from the pagan Zoroastrians. While also other pagan philosophers, e. g., among the Egyptians, Babylonians, Greeks, and Romans, looked for some sort of future happiness,<sup>1)</sup> their expected blessedness must not be understood in an eschatological sense.<sup>2)</sup> We have no proof, nor is there much to suggest, that the Jews were influenced by the peculiar views of these other nations. The Zoroastrian influence was baneful enough.

After the Battle of Charchemish, 606 B. C., the vassalage of Judah was transferred to Babylon. This was the beginning of the seventy years' captivity. Daniel, his companions, and many others were taken to Babylon. When the captain of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuzaradan, had taken Jerusalem, 587 B. C., many of the inhabitants of the land were led into the Babylonian Captivity, there to remain until the decree of Cyrus, 536 B. C., or later. Thereby Israel was brought into the land of Zoroaster's followers and into close contact with his religion.

"During the very lifetime of Zoroaster—if we accept the traditional dates—the Jews were carried into captivity in Babylon, and their return from the exile to Jerusalem takes place less than a generation after his death."<sup>3)</sup> "The teaching of Zoroaster must have taken deep root in the soil of Iran at the time when the Jews were carried up into captivity at Babylon (586—536), where they became acquainted with the Law of the Medes and Persians which altereth not,"<sup>4)</sup> or "before Daniel came to interpret the ominous handwriting on the wall which the soothsayers failed to read."

We quote a few dates culled from the writings of Zoroastrians.

B. C. 606 Zoroaster is born.

B. C. 630 Beginning of the 10th millennium. Zoroaster goes forth to his conference with the "sacred beings."

B. C. 591 Avesta is written.

B. C. 583 Zoroaster is killed at the age of 77.

B. C. 573 Arrival of the religion is known in all the regions.

1) *The Millennial Hope*, Shirley Jackson Case, University of Chicago Press, 1918, p. 7.

2) *Die Religion des Volkes Israel*, R. Kittel, Leipzig, 1921, p. 89.

3) *Zoroaster, the Prophet of Ancient Iran*, A. V. Wm. Jackson, Macmillan, N. Y., 1899, p. 11.

4) *Op. cit.*, pp. 176 and 140.



The teaching of Zoroastrianism is many-sided, but the pertinent doctrines are expressed by Buch,<sup>5)</sup> himself evidently a follower of Zoroaster: "All good persons will obtain immortality and a final well-regulated constitution through the instrumentality of the will of the Lord Creator. . . . Along with this belief appear the ideas of final renovation, millennium, and resurrection."

According to Zoroaster's teaching "the bad [after death] fall over into the Gulf of Duzahk, where they are tormented by the daevas. The duration of the punishment is fixed by Ormazd, and some are redeemed earlier by means of the prayers and intercessions of their friends, but many must remain until the resurrection of the dead."<sup>6)</sup> This period was to last three millennia. As a result of terrific catyclisms the earth is to be consumed in a general conflagration. But a thousand years before this, Ormazd will send his prophet (Sosiosch, Messiah) and bring about the conversion of mankind, to be followed by a general resurrection. During this final millennium the righteous will walk about "as in warm milk." They will be "with laughter on their lips, rejoicing over a victory so well won." Upon earth "there would be no more mountains or deserts or wild beasts or savages."<sup>7)</sup>

While modern Parsees are universalistic, Zoroaster pictures his millennium to be of a national character.

This teaching of Zoroaster, especially when established in his home country and sealed by his blood, spread rapidly throughout the neighboring countries. Inasmuch as Zoroaster's activity falls between the closing years of Median rule and the rising wave of Persian power, it was spread far and wide.

Within a century after the period of the seven sages of classical antiquity (ca. 600 B. C.) "tradition asserts that the ancient sacred writings of Iran, the quintessence of all knowledge, were translated into Greek."<sup>8)</sup>

Hamzah al-Isfahni (eleventh century A. D.) writes: "He (Gushtasp) not only embraced the religion himself but also sent messengers to the Greeks in behalf of this faith and invited them to adopt it."<sup>9)</sup>

Cyrus (553—529 B. C.), who returned some of the Jews to their homeland, was a follower of Zoroaster. Darius (521—486 B. C.) is called the "pious Mazda-worshiper, Darius." Mazda was the

5) *Zoroastrian Ethics*, M. A. Buch, p. 194. *The Gaekwad Studies in Religion and Philosophy*, IV. Baroda, I. V. 1919. *This Believing World*, L. Browne, Macmillan, 1927, p. 206.

6) *Ten Great Religions*, J. F. Clarke, Boston, 1876, p. 200.

7) *This Believing World*, L. Browne, Macmillan, 1927, p. 206.

8) *Vid. Note 3*, p. 142.

9) *Vid. Note 3*, p. 199.



god proclaimed by Zoroaster. Artaxerxes Longimanus (466—425 B. C.) "was an ardent Zoroastrian ruler," who "made the religion current in the whole world." Meanwhile the Zoroastrian religion had become the national religion of Iran.<sup>10)</sup>

The tremendous influence exerted, even if for the bad, by Zoroaster upon his contemporaries and subsequent peoples is attested to by ancient pagan as well as Christian writers.

That the postexilic eschatological views of the Jews, where they departed from, and went beyond, the Scriptures, were influenced by the prophet of the Land of the Lion and the Sun, is borne out by the extant correspondence carried on between the Jewish Rabbis and the Persian Magi during the closing centuries of the era before Christ,<sup>11)</sup> e. g., Rabbi Hanan Bar Tahlifa wrote Rabbi Josef he had received an epistle from a former Persian laborer. This manuscript had formed part of the Persian archives. Among other things it claimed that God would renew the world, but not until it had existed 7,000 years. According to Parsism the Savior, Ausetar, would appear 7,000 years after the creation of the material world.<sup>12)</sup>

Theopompos (ca. 350 B. C.) calls the postexilic eschatology as current among the Jews "a concept of the Magi."

Persian thought shows itself in the extra-Biblical apocalyptic expressions among postexilic Jews. According to the model of the Zoroastrians, Rabbi Eliezer listed twelve ages of man. With the conclusion of the twelfth the Messiah would appear whose kingdom would endure 1,000 years, whereupon the future world would have its inception.

Even a twofold resurrection idea some Jews borrowed from Zoroaster's followers. At first they accepted the idea that those who had died first should be raised first; later, to suit the national conditions, they said that the Jews in Palestine should be raised first. The period between the first and second resurrection is variously listed as from 100 to 214 years.<sup>13)</sup>

In the carnal features of the idea of a total renovation of the world as taught by some Jews, Zoroaster's influence can be seen.<sup>14)</sup> Shortly before the birth of Christ, when Zoroastrianism became universalistic, some Jews followed it, claiming that all Gentiles

10) *Vid.* Note 3, p. 134.

11) *Geschichte der Alttestamentlichen Religion*, Ed. Koenig, 1912, pp. 439—455.

12) *Die Altpersische Religion und das Judentum*, J. Scheftelowitz-Koeln, Toepelman in Giessen, 1920, p. 178, Note 1.

13) *Entdecktes Judentum*, Eisenmenger, 1700, Fol. II, col. 902.

14) *Op. cit.*, p. 208.



would be converted to Judaism and thus be saved, while Abraham would redeem all Israelitish sinners out of hell.<sup>15)</sup>

Medieval tradition,<sup>16)</sup> Christian as well as Jewish and Moham-  
medan, identifies Baruch, the scribe of Jeremiah, with Zoroaster.  
Thus they accounted for the prevalence of Zoroastrian doctrine, in-  
cluding a worldly millennium, in Jewish teachings. Now, while it  
is true that during the immediate postexilic period also the Persian  
religion was influenced by certain Jewish views,<sup>17)</sup> no proof for  
the fantastic Baruch theory has been produced.

So baneful was the teaching of the Prophet of Iran upon Jewish  
religion that in certain sections early Jewish converts to Chris-  
tianity had to anathematize both Zoroaster and his prayers.

Thus the "Jewish opinions" concerning a "kingdom of un-  
troubled happiness" did not come by prophetic revelation from  
Jehovah, but like a miasma from the pit.

The rapid absorption of Zoroastrian Chiliasm by some Jews  
after the Exile into their eschatology is evinced by several quota-  
tions found in the Apocrypha.

2 Esdras 7:28 ff. pictures the Messiah as coming into the world  
with His saints. Together they are to dwell upon the earth 400 years  
in sublime happiness. After these 400 years Christ is to die and  
redeem mankind. All shall die thereupon. Resurrection and judg-  
ment by another divinity are to follow.

According to 2 Esdras 14:11 the world's history is divided into  
twelve parts. Of the tenth of these a part is passed. Two and  
a fraction remain. V. 16 says: "Yet greater evils than these which  
thou hast seen happen shall be done hereafter."

All these thoughts: a twofold resurrection; twofold appear-  
ances of Messiahs, the ruler of the millennium being a different one  
from the final judge; a kingdom of God of this world; a world  
history divided into twelve parts, of which the tenth had its incep-  
tion some time earlier; the suppression of the world through evil;  
all find their counterpart in earlier Zoroastrian eschatology. They  
were found among the Jews only after their contact with the Magi  
of Iran, whence they received them. These thoughts are so foreign  
to Scriptural Old Testament theology that Luther refused to trans-  
late 1 and 2 Esdras.<sup>18)</sup>

On 2 Esdras 7:28 the Churfuerstenbibel says: "This does not  
agree, for the angel Uriel is speaking, . . . and that is the Son of  
God. How can he call himself his own son? These 400 years can in

15) *Op. cit.*, p. 213.

16) *Vid. Note 3*, pp. 165 and 166.

17) *Christologie des Alten Testaments*, E. W. Hengstenberg, ed. II,  
Vol. I, Berlin, 1854, p. 8.

18) *Vorrede auf das Buch Baruch*, Luther, St. L. ed., Vol. XIV:81.



no manner be calculated correctly, and you can find neither beginning nor end thereof."

On 2 Esdras 14:11 it says: "Also this division has no basis in Holy Scriptures."

Nor are these isolated instances. Throughout the postexilic literature of the Jews as contained in the non-canonical writings the hope is expressed that a new kingdom of the Jews is to be established on earth. While the prophets of old had spoken of the spiritual kingdom of Christ as being without end, the apocryphal authors presented the Messianic kingdom as of limited duration—400 to 1,000 years. In the Book of the Secrets of Enoch the doctrine of the millennium is crystallized and distinctly formulated. The Haggadist commentary on Genesis, The Book of Jubilees, which followed it, assumed that the new age had even then begun. Members thereof were to live a thousand years. The new age was to be inaugurated with a wide-spread study of the Law. It was to be an age free from the influence of Satan, and judgment was to come at the end of this Messianic period.<sup>19)</sup>

Zoroastrian chiliasm may have been an important factor in leading many postexilic Jews to misinterpret the great spiritual prophecies of the Old Testament. By giving these prophecies a temporal meaning, the Jews looked for a Messiah who would free them from foreign domination and finally extend their kingdom over all the earth in a reign of peace and glory. When Jesus did not fall in with their notions, great numbers of those who had followed Him turned against Him, and the rulers of the Jews caused Him to be crucified.

People may say what they will about the sublime ideas of chiliasm, the fact remains incontrovertible that chiliasm, gross or fine, "Christian" or otherwise, has had its origin not in the merciful councils of our loving Father in heaven but is and remains the product of Satan.

Born in the soul of pagan fanatics, chiliasm was absorbed by certain Jews and molded so that even today it is preeminently a "Jewish opinion."

## 2. Development of Chiliasm

### a. Pastristic Period

Chiliasm as it developed through the centuries has this one characteristic that it regularly has been held in common with other religious errors. A survey of the teachings propounded by chiliasts will bear out this fact. It proves, generally speaking, that those teaching chiliastic doctrines either did so out of weakness and,

19) *The Messianic Hope in the New Testament*, Shailer Mathews, Chicago, 1905, p. 40 ff.



when they were better instructed, disavowed them or were enmeshed in other serious errors, which even many chiliasts do not like to follow.

The Epistle of Barnabas seems to accept the doctrine of a millennium.<sup>20)</sup> The author is not Barnabas, the coworker of Paul. Eusebius says: "Among the rejected writings must be reckoned also the extant Epistle of Barnabas."<sup>21)</sup> The epistle is so extreme in allegorizing and so cabalistic in its method of interpretation that it is altogether an unsafe guide.<sup>22)</sup>

The so-called Second Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians 12:5 says the millennium is to be expected when all sexual desire has been suppressed so that, "when a man looks upon a woman, he does not see the female in her and she not the male in him."<sup>23)</sup>

Papias (d. 170), of whose writings only quotations remain, is listed as a chiliast. This Papias had not received his teaching directly from the apostles,<sup>24)</sup> but only by hearsay.<sup>25)</sup> His chiliasm boards on the grotesque and is materialistic in the extreme. He claimed: "The days will come in which vines shall grow, each having 10,000 branches and in each branch 10,000 twigs and in each (true) twig 10,000 shoots and on each shoot 10,000 clusters and on every cluster 10,000 grapes, and every grape, when pressed, will give five and twenty metretres of wine."<sup>26)</sup> Eusebius says: "He appears to have been of very limited understanding."<sup>27)</sup> To this statement A. C. McGiffert remarks: "A perusal of the extant fragments of Papias's writings will lead any one to think that Eusebius was not far wrong in his estimate of the man."<sup>28)</sup>

Justin Martyr (d. 166) was an outspoken chiliast.<sup>29)</sup> Here chiliasm was in suitable company. Justin was more philosopher than theologian. According to his notion Socrates, Heraclitus, et al., were Christians in fact, if not in name. To him Christianity was essentially a new law. Of sin and grace he had no proper conception.<sup>30)</sup>

Nepos, the spiritual father of Coracion, was a chiliast. He

20) *Die Schriften der Apostolischen Vaeter*, tr. by Scholz, Guetersloh, 1865, p. 22 f. *Die Epistel St. Barnabae*, chap. 15.

21) *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, N. Y., 1890, Vol. I, p. 156. Eusebius, *Church History*, III, 25, 4. For detailed argument cf. *Lehre und Wehre*, XVIII, 1872, p. 69 ff.

22) *Vid.* Note 20, chap. 9, p. 14.

23) *Neutestamentliche Apokryphen*, ed. Edgar Hennecke, Tuebingen, 1904, p. 177.

24) *Eus., Ch. H.*, III, 39, 170.

25) *Op. cit.*, p. 172.

26) *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*. Tr., Vol. I, p. 563. New York, Scribner, 1899. *Irenaeus, Against Heresies*, V, 33, 3.

27) *Eus., Ch. H.*, III, 39, 13.

28) *Ibid.*

29) *Vid.* Note 26, p. 239.

30) *Concordia Cyclopaedia*, St. Louis, 1927, *sub voc.* Justin Martyr.



fostered a loveless and schismatic religion.<sup>31)</sup> He caused entire congregations to separate from other Christians in a most un-brotherly manner.

In the latter part of the third century the foremost defender of chiliasm was Coracion, a bishop in Egypt. As a follower of Nepos, he was drawn into a debate with Dionysius of Alexandria, who showed him the error of chiliasm. Then "Coracion, in the hearing of all the brethren that were present, acknowledged and testified to us that he would no longer hold this opinion or discuss it nor mention nor teach it, as he was fully convinced by the arguments against it."<sup>32)</sup>

Irenaeus, the soundest theologian among the ante-Nicene fathers, has been accused of being a crass chiliast.<sup>33)</sup> A casual reading of the closing chapters (31-36) of his fifth book of *Against Heresies*<sup>34)</sup> would seem to substantiate that claim. A critical investigation, however, leads us to believe that the chiliastic statements ascribed to Irenaeus are nothing more than free quotations from Papias and Justin Martyr,<sup>35)</sup> some of whose Christological ideas he used against the Gnostics, without necessarily endorsing their chiliasm. Those passages which can be proved to be his own<sup>36)</sup> contain no trace of chiliasm.<sup>37)</sup>

Tertullian (d. 220) accepted the theory of a millennium. He looked for a mundane kingdom of God. This was to last for a thousand years and be centered in a new Jerusalem let down from heaven. During these thousand years the saints are to be raised, some earlier, some later, according to their works. As one of the leading proofs for his notion he mentions a series of evident *fata morganas* seen by pagans in Palestine; as another proof he gives "a special revelation."<sup>38)</sup> This same Tertullian denied original sin,<sup>39)</sup> and as an advocate of Montanism, which stood for the rankest chiliasm, he was a schismatic enthusiast.<sup>40)</sup>

31) *Allgemeine Geschichte der Christlichen Religion und Kirche*, Neander, Hamburg, 1843, II, 1126.

32) *Eus., Ch. H.*, VII, 24, 309.

33) *Lehre und Wehre*, St. Louis, 1857, 3, p. 300.

34) *Vid. Note 26*, p. 563 ff.

35) *Theophilus von Antiochien adversus Marcionem, etc.*, Fr. Loofs, 1930, Leipzig, p. 334.

36) *Vid. Note 14*, p. 341.

37) *Handbuch der Kirchengeschichte*, Guericke, 8th ed., Berlin, 1855, Vol. I, p. 299. Cf. Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.*, III, 4. *Vid. Note 25*, p. 416. Cf. Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.*, I, 10. *Vid. Note 25*, p. 323.

38) Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem*, I, III, c. 17; *opp. per Rhenanum*, ed. Basil., 1539, fol. 243.

39) *Lectures by Dr. E. A. W. Krauss*, St. Louis, 1920, in manuscript form, p. 38.

40) *Repetitorium der christlichen Kirchen- und Dogmengeschichte*, Fuerth, 1847, p. 10.



L. Coelius Lactantius Firmianus (d. 330), private instructor of one of Constantine's sons, taught a chiliasm worthy of a Mussulman's heaven.<sup>41)</sup> Appropriately, the edition of his works we consulted was dedicated to the Baron von Muenchhausen.<sup>42)</sup>

Apollinaris, bishop of Laodicea, taught "Jewish ideas concerning the resurrection," expected a millennium centered at Jerusalem and the Christians to be converted to Judaism.<sup>43)</sup> This same bishop impaired the doctrine of the humanity of Christ by denying Him a rational soul,<sup>44)</sup> and in his views on the Trinity he approximated those of Sabellius.<sup>45)</sup>

Victorin of Pettau (ca. 290) is said to have expected a heavenly Jerusalem to come down on earth at the beginning of the millennium. A critical examination shows that, like Irenaeus, he is presenting quotations from Papias.<sup>46)</sup>

The Ebionites, who rejected the epistles of Paul and denied the deity of Christ, were rather crass chiliasts.<sup>47)</sup>

In our catalog of patristic chiliasts we have included those who are commonly appealed to by present-day chiliasts to prove the orthodoxy of their views. These brief remarks establish that during the early centuries of the Christian Church chiliasm was ever in poor company. Even in those early days it was a characteristic of chiliasm that it seldom appeared except in the company of other errors.

Before we conclude this chapter, two remarks may be allowed. Chiliasm was definitely condemned in the testimonies of Dionysius (Bishop of Alexandria, d. 265), Hieronymus (d. 420), Gregory of Nyssa (d. 400), John of Damascus (d. 760), and Theophylact (d. 1107). Epiphanius (Bishop of Salamis on Cyprus, d. 403) and Philastrius (Bishop of Brixia, d. 390) list the chiliasts as heretics. At the synod of Rome, 373, the Bishop Damasus condemned the error of chiliasm.<sup>48)</sup>

Then, too, chiliasm became discredited more and more when the Church had been recognized by the state through Constantine.<sup>49)</sup>

41) *C. Lactantii Firmiani Opera Omnia* (Lib. Baroni de Mvncbhavsen devotissime consecrat I. L. BVNEMANNVS) Lipsiae, 1738. Divin. institut. VII, 24: "Terra vero aperiet fecunditatem suam, et uberrimas fruges sua sponte generabit; rupes montium mella sudabunt; mundus denique ipse gaudebit, et omnis rerum natura laetabitur."

42) *Vid. Note 37, p. 340.*

43) *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, 2d series, N. Y., 1895, Vol. VIII, St. Basil, p. 302 f., Letter CCLXIII, 4.*

44) *Op. cit., p. 276, Letter CCXXXVI, Note 5.*

45) *Op. cit., p. 266, Letter CCXXIV, 2.*

46) *Vid. Note 35, p. 337.*

47) *Vid. Note 39, p. 34.*

48) Gerhardi, *Loci Theologici*, Berlin, 1863, ed. Preuss, Vol. IX, c. VII, p. 186.

49) *Christian Dogmatics, C. E. Lindberg, Rock Island, 1922, p. 536.*



Augustine of Hippo wrote: "Let us not expect anything temporal or transitory in the divine promises of grace. . . . Let us not hope for a kingdom of Christ upon earth for 1,000 years in which the saints are to rule in sensuality."<sup>50</sup> Over against chiliasm Augustine taught that "Satan was bound at the first advent of Christ; by the first resurrection is meant the spiritual resurrection; the thousand years are the Kingdom of Grace upon earth."<sup>51</sup> And yet even Leo the Great (440—461), the great champion of papal primacy, in writing to the Emperor Theodosius, expressed the hope that the kingdom of Christ supplant the kingdom of this world to the end that universal mundane peace be established on earth.<sup>52</sup>

#### b. The Mystics of the Middle Ages

During the scholastic period, theologians did not greatly occupy themselves with investigations concerning the millennium. The Church of Rome had its "kingdom of God" on earth in the visible form of its ecclesiasticism and for that reason was hostile to any future kingdom to be founded here. The whole system of the Romanists was centered in bringing people into the Roman Catholic Church, and not into any other economy. Those, moreover, in the Church who were dissatisfied because of its corruption were equally disinclined to look for a millennium. Bernhard of Clairveaux, e. g., expressed serious concern that the Gospel was not being spread out like in former days.<sup>53</sup> Together with others, he felt that wickedness and corruption had so far gained the upper hand that the end of the world would come immediately. The frightful Black Death (1347—1353), wiping out two thirds of Europe's population, served to leave this same impression.

Yet, also during this period chiliasm showed itself on various occasions.

The *Catholic Encyclopedia* tells us: "The monastic movement had its origin in Asia Minor. The expectation of an early advent of the celestial Jerusalem upon earth, which it was thought would appear in Phrygia, was immediately joined in the minds of the Montanists with the idea of a millennium."<sup>54</sup>

During the earlier part of the Middle Ages we frequently find the former chiliastic expectations embodied in new visions of those eschatological hopes and apocalyptic fancies expressed by the

50) *De Eccl. Dogm.*, quoted in *Lehre und Wehre*, Vol. 4, 1858, p. 177.

51) *Vid.* Note 49.

52) *Dichtung und Volkstum*, Stuttgart, 35. Band, 1. Heft, 1934, Julius Petersen—Berlin: *Die Sehnsucht nach dem dritten Reich in deutscher Sage und Dichtung*.

53) *De Consideratione*, III, 1, p. 3, quoted in G. Goesswein, *Offenbarung St. Johannis*, St. Louis, 1900, p. 271.

54) *Catholic Cyclopedia*, special ed., N. Y., Vol. 10, p. 308.



monks and laymen of that time.<sup>55</sup>) Soon, however, Scholasticism dealt chiliasm the knock-out blow.

Yet near the end of the Middle Ages there were mystics who showed some chiliastic tendencies. We may think first of the leader of the German, if not all the fourteenth-century mystics, the Dominican pantheist Meister Eckhart (d. 1327). "Not the Christ for us, not the historic Christ, who, having suffered once on earth, now lives in heaven forevermore, but Christ in us" was the concept<sup>56</sup>) around which all Eckhart's theology revolved. Eckhart, accordingly, was not so much interested in bringing souls to heaven as in bringing the divine image innate to us (*sein Ebenbild im Seelengrund*) to perfection in this life.<sup>57</sup>) To express it somewhat differently: Eckhart wrote, "All things are God." When this has been sufficiently emphasized, he taught, we shall have a kingdom of God on earth.<sup>58</sup>) This is millennialism without its usual eschatological features.

A modern American writer sums up the chiliastic aims of the mystics by stating: "The great Christian mystics strove to establish the kingdom of God on earth. . . . They endeavored to realize in themselves and in others a lofty social ideal."<sup>59</sup>)

The views of a much earlier chiliast, Scotus Erigena (ca. 847), the Irish philosopher, run much in the same channel as those which Eckhart followed. Erigena's system contained a threefold return to God: 1. the human nature to the divine, through the incarnation of God; 2. the material universe to a perfect spiritual state in this world; 3. finally, the elect to be united with God (in *Gott uebergehen und mit ihm eins werden*). (*De Div. Nat.*, V:39.)<sup>60</sup>)

This mysticism is concerned with the incarnation of Christ only in so far as by contemplating His example we and others may attain to a state of perfection in this life.<sup>61</sup>)

The Cistercian Abbot Gioachimo da Fiore in Calabria in his *Evangelium Aeternum* (ca. 1200) wrote: "The age of the Father in the Old Testament covenant was followed by that of the Son in the

55) *History of Dogma*, A. Harnack, tr. by James Miller, B. D., Vol. III, p. 9, Note 1. London, 1897.

56) *Lectures on Medieval Church History*, Trench, D. D., Archbishop of Dublin, N. Y., 1878, p. 362.

57) *Kirche und Kultur im Mittelalter*, Gust. Schnuerer, Paderborn, Vol. III, p. 177.

58) *Die Kulturwerte der deutschen Mystik des Mittelalters*, Martin Grabmann, 1923, Augsburg, p. 23.

59) *The Psychology of Religious Mysticism*, J. H. Leuba, 1926, N. Y., p. 317.

60) *Die Dogmengeschichte des Mittelalters*, Dr. Josef Bach-Muenchen, 1873, Wien, pt. 1, p. 313.

61) *Leitfaden zum Studium der Dogmengeschichte*, Fr. Loofs, Halle a. S., 1906, p. 629.



New Testament; but only the third cycle, with the sign of the Holy Spirit, will bring the fulfilment of the everlasting Gospel. . . . The fulfilment of the *civitas Dei* on earth will be a kingdom of freedom and of peace." The new period (third age) was to begin 1260. These views were adopted especially by the Spiritualists, a group of Franciscans.<sup>62)</sup>

The twelfth century mystic Hildegard of Bingen set forth a peculiar notion of a millennium. The basis for her belief was a supposed vision.

The Franciscan Gherardino di Borgo San Domino presented his chiliasm from the viewpoint of an evolutionist, claiming that the apostolic Christianity was only an imperfect step in religious evolution and that the climax would come in a millennium.

We are also told of a vision the emperor Sigismund was said to have had at Pressburg in 1403. A priest appeared who promised the emperor, despairing of restoring order by means of Popes and councils, that he would establish a golden age of peace on earth for those who were faithful to him.<sup>63)</sup>

Even the more conservative mystics did not entirely escape the taint of chiliasm; e. g., a book which Luther esteemed very highly during the early days of the Reformation (he was the first to have it published complete, 1518), *Theologia Teutsch*, smells somewhat of chiliasm.<sup>64)</sup>

At the time of the early Reformation period (1519) a Roman Catholic of Bavaria wrote a treatise in which he expressed hope of a threefold coming of Christ: 1. into the flesh; 2. for a reformation and the binding of the Antichrist; 3. to glory.<sup>65)</sup>

Thomas More, the later Lord Chancellor of England, advocated his own brand of millennialism in his *Utopia*. Despairing of achieving his purpose through the instrumentality of the clergy, whom he called "slie and wilie men," he felt that it could be established by drafting the services of the citizens and representatives of the populace under a "declaration of the politike government, and of all the good lawes and orders."<sup>66)</sup>

Frantic efforts were being made. Christopher von Grimmels-

62) *Lessings Werke*, ed. Bornmueller, Leipzig, 1884, Vol. V, note on p. 630.

63) *Dichtung und Volkstum*, Julius Petersen-Berlin, Stuttgart, 35. Band, 1. Heft, 1934, p. 33 ff.

64) *Teutsche Theologie*, ed. Jn. Arndt, Erfurt, 1745, I, p. 8; cf. chap. 3, p. 10; chap. 35, p. 35; chap. 53, p. 53.

65) *Loci Theologici Gerhardi*, ed. Preuss, Berlin, 1863, Vol. VII, p. 186.

66) *Utopia*, by Sir Thomas More, in *Everyman's Library*, N. Y., 416, p. 48.



hausen, in his *Simplicius Simplicissimus*, proposed that the wisest men of the various cities of the nation be drafted to form a parliament which would establish universal peace and one religion which was to be proclaimed to the whole world in a festival of joy.<sup>67)</sup>

Spinoza in his *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* of 1670, finally, attempted to put the idle dreams of the mystics upon a practical philosophical basis.<sup>68)</sup> Thus another stream of chiliasm had run its natural course and arrived at its inevitable destination: a philosophical theory rather than a religious certainty.

### c. Neurotic Enthusiasts of the Reformation Era

"At the time of Luther there were no conservative theologians who expected a period of triumph for the Church before the second coming of Christ."<sup>69)</sup> The claim by Dr. Seiss that Luther was "a little chiliastic" simply is not true.<sup>70)</sup> <sup>71)</sup> For Luther any future "millennium" was impossible.<sup>72)</sup>

Carlstadt, Zwingli, and the "modern Anabaptist chiliasts," among whom must be mentioned Thomas Muenzer, Nikolaus Stark, Marcus Steuber, Martin Cellarius, and Thomas Marx,<sup>73)</sup> were thoroughgoing chiliasts, expecting an earthly kingdom which Christ was to establish with his saints before the Day of Judgment.<sup>74)</sup>

In 1534 the Anabaptists in Muenster, Westphalia, set up the new kingdom of Zion and advocated the sharing of property and women in common as a prelude to the new kingdom of Christ.<sup>75)</sup>

In Rothmann's *Restitution*, Oct., 1534, the Muenster chiliastic hope is expressed in § 13 in these words: "The people of Muenster know that in these times they shall see the fulfilment of those things which are foretold about the kingdom of Christ, and that they are to be expected here upon earth. Christ as the true King is to rule in glory upon earth."<sup>76)</sup>

The anticonfessional Bohemian and Moravian Brethren as well as certain groups in England at the time of Cromwell harbored

67) Grimmshausen, *Simplicius Simplicissimus*, ed. Will Wesper, Leipzig.

68) *Vid.* Note 63, p. 38.

69) *Christian Dogmatics*, C. E. Lindberg, p. 536.

70) *The Last Times*, Philadelphia, Seiss, 1863, p. 237.

71) Luther, Walch ed. (old ed.), VI:284 ff., on Micah 4:1-5; XI:1082; V:1400; Erlangen ed., XLV:110.

72) *The Theology of Luther*, by J. Koestlin, tr. by Hay, Philadelphia 1897, p. 423.

73) *Luthers Leben*, M. Meurer, 2d ed., Dresden, 1852, p. 281.

74) *Luthers Werke*, Erlangen ed., XI:85; XLV:110.

75) *Catholic Encyclopedia*, special ed., N. Y., Vol. 10, p. 308.

76) *Die Wiedertaeufer zu Muenster 1534-1535*. *Berichte, Aktenstuecke, etc.*, Jena, 1923, § 13.



chiliasmatic notions. A Frenchman by the name of Wilhelm Postl had set the time for an *apokatastasis* for the year 1556 and thereby ushered in the new era of setting the date for the appearance of Christ's millennium.<sup>77)</sup>

#### d. From Pietism to Atheism

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries several figures stand out in the Lutheran Church as favoring a "refined" type of chiliasm.

Foremost among them is the Pietist Ph. J. Spener (1635—1705). Spener expected not only that the Christian Church would be established throughout the world and that there would be external peace from the devil, but also looked for a fuller measure of divine grace, power, and light unto sanctification. To bring about this changed condition, he taught that it is not necessary that the present economy of Gospel and Sacrament be suspended or superseded.<sup>78)</sup>

J. A. Bengel (1687—1752) made peculiar calculations. He assumed that Satan would be bound a thousand years, which would be preceded by a thousand years in which the saints would reign upon earth. He therefore extended the millennium to a period of two thousand years. This period was to begin in 1836. But Bengel himself said that, if the year 1836 passed without any special change, there must be some radical fault in his calculations.<sup>79)</sup> Because of these views he has been termed "but a moderate Lutheran."<sup>80)</sup>

Partly under Bengel's influence the Sage of Wolfenbuettel, Lessing, in his *Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts* of 1780, advocated a kindly attitude toward chiliasm. He maintained that the enthusiasts of earlier centuries were not chasing will-o'-the-wisps in their promulgation of millennial hopes, but merely erred in expecting the date of its beginning too early. Unlike his precursors he refrained from the use of apocalyptic proofs, Bible-passages, mystical numbers, astrology, comets, meteors, and other omens. By sheer rationalizing he maintained that the moral autonomy in man must eventually become the power for good to bring about the ideal life.<sup>81)</sup> In this attitude assumed by Lessing

77) *Dichtung und Volkstum*, Julius Petersen-Berlin, Stuttgart, 1934, Vol. 35, Heft 1, p. 151.

78) *Theologische Bedenken*, Ph. J. Spener, Vol. I, p. 125. Halle, 1700.

79) *Christian Dogmatica*, C. E. Lindberg, p. 537. *Erklaerte Offenbarung Johannis*, J. A. Bengel, 2d ed., Stuttgart, 1746, p. 937 ff. *Gnomon Novi Testamenti*, Bengelii, ed. tertia, Stuttgartiae, 1860, p. 1124 f. "Non in eo error est, nedum periculum, si mille annos dicas esse futuros, sed si vel futuros vel praeteritos ex sensu carnis interpretare."

80) *Introduction to Dogmatic Theology*, Weidner, Rock Island, 1895, 2d ed., p. 233.

81) *Lessings Werke*, ed. Bornmueller, Leipzig, 1884, Vol. V, p. 630, §§ 85—89.



we see a picture of the inevitable course taken by chiliasm. Chiliasm has never yet made stronger Christians, more conscientious believers, more staunch confessors out of the individual Christians nor, collectively, out of the various schools of thought (Richtungen) or churches. Developed to its natural conclusion, it ends in unbelief and apostasy. Chiliasm has never elevated and ennobled but rather degraded and debased theology as well as philosophy.

Thus Johann Gottlieb Fichte wrote: "It must yet happen, even on this earth, that God rule as a moral being, alone and universally, through free will and discernment and all people become true Christians and citizens of the kingdom of heaven." (*Staatslehre*, 1813). Alongside of this view he taught: "The absolute is not a personal God. It is rather the moral order of the world which works in and through the apparently separate striving selves."<sup>82)</sup> "We ourselves are this divine existence itself."<sup>83)</sup>

Chiliasmatic sonnets were the spiritual expression of the stage-director of Duesseldorf, K. L. Immermann.<sup>84)</sup> Every folly that came along seemed to be connected with the millennium. Thus Friedrich Glitza wrote *Das Tausendjaehrige Reich* in memory of the treaty of Verdun. The German historian Julius Petersen informs us in his *Sehnsucht nach dem dritten Reich*: "Even in the teaching of Marx is a chiliasmatic element, which was nourished by Jewish spiritualism."<sup>85)</sup>

### Conclusion

At the time of Luther the enthusiasts were willing to sacrifice most any Christian doctrine if only their chiliasmatic notions be allowed. Modern chiliasmists still hold their millennial views in the forefront.<sup>86)</sup> We ought to mention here the role of chiliasm in the teachings of modern Premillennarians or Dispensationists. And even where Christians attempt not to place their millennium hopes in the forefront, sanctification is normally emphasized at the expense of justification (cf. Pietists).

Chiliasm, moreover, is a secular religion (Diesseitsreligion); Christianity is a celestial religion (Jenseitsreligion). Appropriately the Athanasian Creed begins: "Whoever will be saved . . ." <sup>87)</sup>

82) *A Students History of Philosophy*, Rogers. Macmillan, 1925, p. 144.

83) *Mysticism, East and West*, Otto, tr. N. Y., Macmillan, p. 223.

84) *Encyclopaedie der deutschen Nationalliteratur*, Wolf, Leipzig, 1839, Vol. 4, p. 266.

85) *Dichtung und Volkstum*, Julius Petersen-Berlin, Stuttgart, 1934, Band 35, Heft 2, pp. 167 and 169.

86) *Symbolik*, Dr. Fr. Ad. Philippi, Guetersloh, 1883, p. 439.

87) *Concordia Triglotta*, St. Louis, p. 31.



Chiliasm, on the other hand, await the rapture, the rejuvenation of the human race, the rebuilding of Jerusalem, the visible reign of Christ, the exclusion of all ungodly men and unrighteous deeds, the freedom from the effect of sin; in brief, they expect a heaven upon earth. To that goal their attention is directed. If finally chiliasm mentions heaven, the teaching pertaining to it is a mere appendix, having only a remote connection with the chief body of doctrine.

Reeseville, Wis.

V. A. W. MENNICKE

## Luther: A Blessing to the English

### II. How Kaiser Karl V was Elected

"The Papacy excepted, the empire was the highest honor to which any potentate could aspire. Though little better than an empty title, though scarcely more than the shadow of a great name, destined speedily to become more visionary than ever, its ancient traditions made a deep impression on the romantic heart of the Middle Ages. Its half sacred, half secular dignity, shrouded by a mysterious and unsubstantial grandeur; its position as the military headship and supremacy of Christendom; its imperial bishops and regal princes; its sacred knights and Teutonic brotherhoods; its haunted forests and weird mountains; had all combined to captivate the imagination of men. Hoary with the frost of ages, it towered in gigantic proportions above all the monarchies of the world, and its head was lost among the clouds of heaven." So says J. S. Brewer.

Kaiser Maximilian I of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation in September, 1513, at Tournay fought under Henry VIII as a private and proposed to make the Englishman the duke of Milan in place of the rightful claimant, Francis Sforza, to resign the imperial crown and press it on Henry at Rome, make him the champion of Christendom and as his lieutenant fight under his banner. So wrote Sir Robert Wingfield on May 17, 1516. On the 12th Richard Pace had already written Wolsey: "Whilst we look for the crown imperial, we might lose the crown of England, which is this day more esteemed than the emperor's crown and all his empire."

Cuthbert Tunstal scoffed at the offer as chimerical, and to William Knight these things were "mere jokes." "But to the king the project did not appear so wild or so undesirable as their cooler heads would have wished or imagined. Nor is it surprising that Henry, in the vigor of his youth and the pride of his power,