

Chapter 3. — The Millennium.

Let us now examine another line of evidence which has of late been very assiduously worked in support of the notion that there are in the sacred Scriptures direct references to the present war. Most of the articles, pamphlets, and books called forth by this discussion presume the correctness of the millennial theory. Their authors believe in a millennium. They are Chiliasts.

What is the true meaning of Chiliasm? — That question is difficult to answer. For there have never been, and there are not now, two Chiliasts agreeing in their views upon this subject. The points, however, in which all agree are the following: Christ must return in His glory, in order to establish a great kingdom on earth, and together with His saints, to govern the world during one thousand years, till the coming of the Last Judgment. At this period (or previous to it) the Jews also shall be converted *en masse*. From those thousand years the word Chiliasm is derived; for *chilia*, in the Greek language, signifies 1000; and Chiliasts, therefore, are persons who believe in the expected Millennium. This word also, being composed of the Latin *mille* (thousand) and *annus* (year), denotes Christ's supposed millennial reign.

There is, however, a great diversity of opinion among Chiliasts as to what is to be the condition of that Millennium.

notice draws the same kind of comfort from the Zionist movement. It should be noted, however, 1) that the Jews are far from giving their unanimous assent to the plan of colonizing the Holy Land with Jews. It is fathered principally by Reform Jews, who have given up their ancient religion. Orthodox Jews oppose the movement. 2) Louis D. Brandeis, Justice of the United States Supreme Court, is chairman of the Executive Committee for General Zionist Affairs. He writes in the *Outlook* (January 5, 1916): "Zionism is not a movement to transport all the Jews in the world to Palestine. That, indeed, would be impossible; for Palestine is only about the size of Massachusetts. There are 14,000,000 Jews in the world, and Palestine could not accommodate more than one-fifth of the number." This, from an authoritative source, ought to count for something.

The greater part of them contended, or still contend, that Jerusalem shall be the seat of government. They believe that the life of the elect will resemble a perpetual wedding-feast, and that milk and honey will flow in streams, and so forth. The Chiliastic Jews suppose that then all Gentiles, all who are not Jews, will be their slaves. Others have imagined that during the thousand years of Satan's imprisonment an unbroken peace, even among beasts, and tranquillity, unanimity, and spirituality would prevail throughout the world, and so on. In short, every Chiliast pictured his millennial Sabbath according to his inclinations as delightful as possible by ascribing to it characteristics more or less material or spiritual, sensual or intellectual, gross or refined. Most Chiliasts taught, or still teach, that, previous to the Sabbath-thousand of years, there "shall be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created unto this time, neither shall be." Chiliasts agree in teaching two resurrections: first, the resurrection of the saints, and one thousand years later, the resurrection of the wicked. Then the Judgment.

What year, will be asked, is stated to be the beginning of the Millennium?—Concerning this point also Chiliasts are not all agreed, because there are a hundred different chronologies, professedly Biblical, and the apocalyptic numbers of Daniel and John, by means of which Chiliasts have attempted to determine the epoch in question exactly, admit of a thousand different explanations. The Jews in the East, as is related by an eye-witness, Missionary Fjeldstedt, expected the Messiah and the beginning of the Millennium in 1810, since, according to the Hebrew Testament, the sixth year-thousand after Adam expired (?) in 1810. When Missionary Fjeldstedt asked those same Jews, ten years later, why their Messiah had failed to appear in 1810, they replied that the present Hebrew Bible must contain some chronological errors. The western Jews, as well as the learned Abarbanel, expected the Messiah, notwithstanding that, according to the Talmud, "all periods are past," in the year

1466. Furthermore, the commencement of the Millennium, prophetically announced in the Old Testament, was placed by Whiston in 1776, by Jurieu in 1785, by Bengel in 1836, by Miller in 1843, by Sander in 1847, by Schmucker in 1848, by the author of the *Periods of the Christian Church* in 1879 to 1887, by others in 1866, and 1868, and 1880, and so forth.⁶⁾

No two Chiliasts agree in their interpretation of prophecy with reference to the Great War. Broadly speaking, there is something like unanimity only on two points:—

Most Chiliasts to-day believe that previous to the thousand-year reign of Christ there will be a conversion of the Jews as a people. To this assumption a sufficient answer, I believe, has been given in these pages. Most Chiliasts agree in their expectation of a time of great affliction and sorrow to precede the ushering in of the Millennium. However, right here there is a sharp divergency of opinion among them. Some believe that the present war is the affliction of the "latter days," to be followed upon its conclusion by an earthly reign of Christ in glory. By far the greater number, however, hold that the last struggle is yet to come. They believe that the present war is significant mainly because it will lead to the "restoration" of Israel. Each of these positions, moreover, is supported by interpreters of prophecy who believe that it is possible to establish their respective views by chronological calculations based on the apocalyptic numbers of Scripture (Seventy Weeks, 1260, etc.).

Our investigation will include an appraisal, in detail, of the arguments advanced for both of these basic contentions—of the arguments advanced for identifying the present war with certain conflicts foretold by prophecy, as well as of the arguments for another final struggle, subsequent to the war. However, before these lines of proof are taken up in detail, it will help to clear our vision if we, first of all, investigate the proposition on which all these views concerning the war are based, the proposition that before

6) G. Seyffarth, *Chiliasm Critically Examined*, p. 1 ff.

the end of the world Christ will reign on earth with His saints in glory for one thousand years. Briefly, then, the question is this: Does the Bible teach a Millennium?

The passage upon which the Chiliast contention rests is Rev. 20, herewith reprinted entire:—

THE TWENTIETH CHAPTER OF REVELATION.

“1. And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. 2. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, 3. and cast him into the 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. 4. And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them. And I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus and for the Word of God, and which had not worshiped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. 5. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. 6. 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 of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years. 7. And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, 8. and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. 9. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city; and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. 10. And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night forever and ever. 11. And I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, from whose

face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. 12. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. 13. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. 14. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. 15. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."

Now observe,

1) That there is no mention here of any restoration of the Jewish race and their general conversion to Christianity. If there is such an intimate connection between Israel's "restoration" and the "Millennium" as Chiliasts insist upon, then why is no Jewish "restoration" here even so much as hinted at?

2) This is the only passage in Scripture which applies the term "one thousand years" to the duration of the Messianic kingdom.

3) The description of the "Millennium" as a period when all wars will cease on earth, when there will be a universal reign of the "Golden Rule" among men, when the "kingdom of God" will extend over all the earth,—all these elements of the Chiliastic construction are not found in this chapter, the only one in the whole Bible which speaks of a "thousand-year" rule of Christ. This must be kept in view. The burden of proof rests upon the Chiliasts, that the Old Testament passages which are constantly quoted as referring to the "Millennium" of Rev. 20 actually stand in such a relation to this passage.

4) This chapter in Revelation employs elaborate imagery. It mentions an angel having a key and a chain in his hand. Was this a real, material chain, made up of heavy iron links? There is mention of a dragon. Was this a real animal with claws and tail, which was cast by the angel into a real pit

dug somewhere on the earth? Was a real, material seal fastened to the lid of this pit? Every reader will admit that the key, chain, and seal symbolize power and authority, that the dragon is Satan, and the pit, hell. Now when we accept, as we must, these terms as being used figuratively, why can we not accept "1000" in a figurative sense as signifying a long period of time? You might not go so far as to say that "1000" *must* be taken figuratively; but you cannot deny that "1000" *may* be taken in a figurative sense, since the other descriptive elements of the passage are so evidently symbolical and figurative.

5) No matter whether you believe that "one thousand years" in this passage means one thousand years of 365 days each, or whether you accept these words to signify "a long period of time," the chapter may be interpreted in harmony with other passages of Scripture which foretell the reign of Christ in the Christian Church from Pentecost to the end of all things. Dr. Milton S. Terry, in his *Biblical Hermeneutics*, says: "We understand that the Millennium *is now in progress*. It dates from the consummation of the Jewish age. It is a round definite number used symbolically for an indefinite aeon [period]. It is the period of the Messianic reign. Since the dawn of Christianity the powers of darkness have been repressed" (Satan has been chained); "yet there is nothing in the Scriptures to warrant the idea that the entire period is to be one of uniform and unclouded blessedness and glory," as the Chiliasts teach.⁷) There have been orthodox interpreters who accept the words "one thousand years" in the literal sense, and yet reject Chiliasm, lock, stock, and barrel. Hence it is not true that the entire Chiliastic view—the reign of Christ in visible form on earth with all converted Jews and the resurrected saints, when all sin shall be wiped out—must be accepted if we take "1000" in the literal sense. Those ideas have been

7) A simple, evangelical exposition of this chapter can be found in Rev. F. C. G. Schumm's *Essay on Revelation 20*. (Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Mo. Price, 12 cents.)

added unto Rev. 20 by Chiliastic interpreters, but are not found there.

6) The passages from the Old Testament quoted as descriptions of the Millennium either describe the blessedness of membership in the kingdom of God (the Christian Church), or they plainly refer to the bliss of the saints in heaven. Not a single one of the passages so frequently quoted from Isaiah, Ezekiel, and other Old Testament writings as referring to the Millennium so much as mentions "one thousand years."

7) When Christ was asked by His disciples to describe the last world-age, so they might know when to expect His coming, He does not, in His reply, so much as hint at a reign in glory on earth before His final coming to Judgment. On the contrary, when He returns, the end is at hand, Matt. 24, 3; compare 1 Cor. 15, 23, 24 (next page).

8) We are taught that Judgment Day will come as a thief in the night, like a fowler's snare, like lightning, etc. No one but God knows when it will come (Mark 13, 32). If there preceded a Millennium, the entire Christian world would know one thousand years in advance when "our Lord will come to Judgment." At the coming of the Lord the earth will be destroyed, 2 Pet. 3, 10. Hence there will be no *place* for a Millennium.

9) The age preceding the end of all things is described by our Lord and His apostles (compare also Rev. 20, 7, 8) as an age abounding in wickedness. Unbelief, false doctrine, false prophets, much sorrow and affliction, wickedness mounting steadily, until, if it were possible, even the elect would be lost,—such are the marks of the last world-age. This is in absolute contrast to the picture painted by Chiliasm. The description which our Lord gives of the Latter Days leaves no *time* for a Millennium. Wickedness abounds until He comes, and then there is the End.

10) There will not be an interval of one thousand years between the resurrection of the just and the resurrection of the wicked. All will be raised on the last day of the world:—

1 Cor. 15, 22—24: "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the first-fruits; afterward they that are Christ's, at His coming. *Then cometh the end*, when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power."

John 5, 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."

On the strength of these Scripture-passages the Christian Church, in all its confessional writings, consistently teaches one resurrection, not two. The Lutheran Confessions distinctly reject Chiliasm as false doctrine, *Augsb. Con.*, Art. 17.

We conclude that there is no warrant for the Chiliastic assumption in Scripture, and, hence, that *all interpretations of prophecy with reference to the Great War which are based on the Chiliastic idea must of necessity be false and unscriptural.*

In view of the fact that the bulk of Prophecy-and-the-War literature is based upon the idea of a Millennium, this is a very important conclusion. It really makes unnecessary any further investigation of the arguments by which Chiliasmists point out the relevancy of prophecy to the great conflict. However, our millennialists have succeeded in diverting the interest of many Christians to the study of certain prophecies which are supposed to bear some relation to the great world struggle, and even, it is believed by some, to give a clue to its final issue. There are those who believe at least that certain nations involved in the war are distinctly and specifically pointed at by the finger of inspiration. Others believe and endeavor to prove that the apocalyptic numbers of Scripture not only indicate this war as foretold by prophecy, but render it possible to say exactly when all Israel will be converted, when the governments of the world

will be abolished, and when the Lord will appear to usher in the Millennium. The results obtained by such computations are, as a rule, very fantastic, sometimes altogether absurd. One Chiliast believes, and demonstrates to his own satisfaction, that a socialistic state will be established in 1925; another confidently expects the defeat of the Allies because England is the Gog of Ezek. 38, whose downfall is foretold. These and other results of literal interpretation are announced with great assurance, and there are even now thousands of Christians who accept these wild surmises as articles of Christian faith which only a skeptic should dare to reject as unscriptural. The answer to the question, "Who is Gog?" is in some circles regarded as a shibboleth of true Bible-Christianity, while others would gauge our spiritual life by our acceptance or rejection of certain dates which result from their calculations. A Chiliastic wave is gaining momentum every day as it sweeps across the country; clergymen of Chiliast leanings in all denominations gather in conference to discuss the war in the light of prophecy; such papers as the *Christian Herald* open their columns to the spokesmen of Chiliasm, thus adding immeasurably to the confusion; even the county papers are beginning to take notice of Armageddon and Gog's Defeat, and Christians are turning to their Bibles everywhere with an indefinite feeling of disquiet, lest they grieve the Spirit of God which is now revealing to His saints the hidden wisdom of Daniel, Ezekiel, Zechariah, and John. It is well that we look into the evidence, and observe how far these interpretations accord with the sacred Word, and on what historical proof they rest their claim for a respectful hearing.

Chapter 4. — Gog and Magog.

As the prophecy in Ezekiel concerning Gog is the basis of much that has been written about the war, chapter thirty-eight, in which this prophecy is found, is herewith, for convenient reference, reprinted entire: —

"1. And the word of the Lord come unto me, saying,