

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF REPRESENTATIVE AMILLENNIALISM
AND NON-DISPENSATIONAL PREMILLENNIALISM

By

Peter W. Buller

A.B., Goshen College

A Thesis

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for
THE DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF SACRED THEOLOGY

in
The Biblical Seminary in New York

New York, N. Y.
April 1949

18382

BIBLICAL SCHOOL OF
THEOLOGY LIBRARY
HATFIELD, PA.

TH 18382

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

A. Subject Defined	ii
1. Amillennialism	ii
2. Non-Dispensational Premillennialism	ii
B. Subject Delimited	iii
C. Subject Justified	iv
D. Method of Procedure	v
E. Sources	v

CHAPTER I

THE AMILLENNIAL VIEWPOINT OF JOHN CALVIN

A. Introduction	2
B. Interpretation of the Old Testament Prophets	2
1. General Approach to the Prophets	2
2. The Use of Isaiah	3
3. The Use of Ezekiel	7
4. The Use of Daniel	8
5. The Use of Joel	13
6. The Use of Amos 9:11-15	14
7. The Use of Zechariah 14	15
8. Conclusion	16
C. Interpretation of the Apocalyptic Passages of the Gospels and Acts	16
1. The Use of the Olivet Discourse	16
2. The Use of Other Passages in the Gospels	21
3. The Use of Acts	23

27832

May, 1950

4.	Conclusion	24
D.	Interpretation of the Apocalyptic Passages of the Epistles	25
1.	The Use of Various Passages	25
2.	Other Relevant Passages	30
3.	Conclusion	30
E.	Summary of the Amillennial Viewpoint of John Calvin	31

CHAPTER II

THE VIEWPOINT OF REPRESENTATIVE NON-DISPENSATIONAL PREMILLENNIALISM

A.	Introduction	34
B.	Interpretation of the Old Testament Prophets	34
1.	The Use of Isaiah made by Lange	34
2.	The Use of Daniel made by Pusey	39
3.	The Use of Joel made by Pusey	41
4.	The Use of Amos 9:11-15 made by Pusey	43
5.	The Use of Zechariah 14 made by Pusey	43
6.	Conclusion	44
C.	Interpretation of the Apocalyptic Passages in the Gospels and Acts	44
1.	The Use of the Olivet Discourse made by Lange	44
2.	The Use of Other Passages in the Gospels made by Lange	51
3.	The Use of Acts made by Alford	52
4.	Conclusion	53
D.	Interpretation of the Apocalyptic Passages in the Epistles	54
1.	The Use of Romans made by Lange	54
2.	The Use of Corinthians made by Godet	55
3.	The Use of Thessalonians, Timothy, and Peter made by Alford	56
4.	Conclusion	58

E.	Interpretation of the Revelation of John	59
1.	The Basic Approach	59
2.	The Use of the Various Passages made by Lange	60
3.	Conclusion	67
F.	Summary of the Viewpoint of Representative Non-Dispensation- al Premillennialism	68

CHAPTER III

AN EVALUATION OF AMILLENNIALISM AND NON-DISPENSATIONAL PREMILLENNIALISM

A.	Introduction	71
B.	Evaluation of the Interpretation of the Old Testament Prophets by Calvin, Nagelsbach, and Pusey	71
1.	The Use of Isaiah made by Calvin and Nagelsbach	71
2.	The Use of Ezekiel 37:1-14 made by Calvin	74
3.	The Use of Daniel made by Calvin and Pusey	75
4.	The Use of Joel made by Calvin and Pusey	76
5.	The Use of Amos 9:11-15 made by Calvin and Pusey	77
6.	The Use of Zechariah 14 made by Calvin and Pusey	77
7.	Conclusion	78
C.	Evaluation of the Interpretation of the Apocalyptic Passages in the Gospels and Acts by Calvin, Lange, and Alford	79
1.	The Use of the Olivet Discourse made by Calvin and Lange	79
2.	The Use of Matthew 10:23 made by Calvin and Lange	81
3.	The Use of John 5:25-29; 6:39-40 made by Calvin and Lange	81
4.	The Use of Acts 3:21; 17:31 made by Calvin and Alford	82
5.	Conclusion	82
D.	Evaluation of the Interpretation of the Apocalyptic Passages in the Epistles by Calvin, Lange, Godet, and Alford	83
1.	The Use of Romans made by Calvin and Lange	83
2.	The Use of I Corinthians 15 made by Calvin and Godet	84

3.	The Use of the Thessalonians by Calvin and Alford . . .	85
4.	The Use of II Timothy 3:1 made by Calvin and Alford . .	85
5.	The Use of II Peter 3:13 made by Calvin and Alford . . .	86
6.	The Use of Revelation 20:4 made by Calvin	86
7.	Conclusion	86
E.	Evaluation of the Interpretation of Revelation made by Lange	87
1.	The Importance of Revelation 19:11-21:15	87
2.	The Basic Problem of Interpretation	88
3.	The Implication and Strength of Lange's Position	88
4.	The Critique of Lange's Interpretation of Revelation 19:11-20:15	88
5.	Conclusion	94
F.	Suggestions for a Sound Interpretation of the Millennial Problem	94
1.	Suggested Interpretation of the Crucial Millennial Passage	94
2.	Basic Eschatological Truths	96
3.	Conclusion	97

CHAPTER IV

GENERAL SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

A.	Summary	100
B.	Conclusion	100

BIBLIOGRAPHY	104
--------------	-----

TABLE OF CHARTS

Chart I	Amillennial Eschatological Viewpoint of John Calvin	32a
Chart II	Representative Non-Dispensational Premillennial Eschatology	69a

INTRODUCTION

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF REPRESENTATIVE AMILLENNIALISM
AND NON-DISPENSATIONAL PREMILLENNIALISM

INTRODUCTION

A. Subject Defined

1. Amillennialism

Amillennialism is the school of eschatological interpretation which denies that there will be before the final consummation a millennium of one thousand years duration. Those who hold to this view are assured that Christ shall return, at which time there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust. The universal judgment which follows Christ's coming will be followed by the new heaven and the new earth wherein eternal righteousness shall dwell.¹ The nomenclature of this point of view is based upon a spiritual, as opposed to a literal, interpretation of Revelation 20. Amillennialists hold that the millennium of Revelation 20 refers either to the church age or to the final state.

2. Non-Dispensational Premillennialism

All premillennialists take the millennium of Revelation 20 to be a literal period of time during which Christ shall reign upon the earth subsequent to the second advent and its accompanying first resurrection. Following this reign will be a second resurrection of the wicked and a final judgment which shall usher in the eternal state. The premillennialism designated as non-dispensational in the title of

.

1. George L. Murray, *Millennial Studies*, pp. 87-88.

this study is to be distinguished from the dispensational premillennial view as popularized largely in the Scofield Reference Bible by its emphasis upon the dispensations in the divine plan of history and theories of the future fulfillment of the seventieth week of Daniel 9. Non-dispensational premillennialism might be called "historic premillennialism" since it represents a development of the historic premillennial view held by the Church through the centuries prior to the rise of dispensationalism in the second quarter of the nineteenth century. Though historic premillennialists differ in details, they adhere to the basic definition of premillennialism given above.

B. Subject Delimited

It is not the purpose of this study to explore the whole field of eschatology as it is found in the eschatological systems which are to be examined. The field of individual eschatology which includes physical death, the immortality of the soul, and the intermediate state cannot be discussed here. It is the area of general eschatology with which this thesis will concern itself, and even here there must be selectivity. The millennial aspect is seen to be basic in the very nomenclature of the systems under consideration. This study will be concerned with a comparison of the two representative systems with special reference to their effect upon the credibility of belief in a literal earthly millennium.

An inherent limitation to the scope of the whole field covered in this study lies in the fact that the views to be considered are those of specific men. No attempt will be made to synthesize their interpretations with those of others holding to the same general system. Therefore, the significance of the word "representative"

in the title of this study must be given due consideration when an attempt is made to evaluate its contribution.

C. Subject Justified

The world-shaking events of the first half of the twentieth century have caused both ministers and laymen to become actively conscious of the importance of eschatology. Yet it is in this field of systematic theology that there exists a great deal of confusion and tension even between groups of Christians who are warmly evangelical and orthodox. The dispensational premillennialists have tended to identify their particular brand of eschatological interpretation with orthodoxy.

Roland R. Westervelt, a graduate of the Biblical Seminary in New York, in his degree thesis¹ has examined dispensationalism in the light of Henry Alford's Greek Testament commentary. Alford is a leading historic premillennialist, and Westervelt demonstrates the sanity of Alford's eschatological view as against the unreliable interpretation of dispensationalism.² Due to the fact that dispensationalism dominates the present-day premillennial field, amillennial writers, who defend their position, do so largely by contrasting their interpretations with the dispensationalism which is so prevalent today. Thus, there is need for a review of the relationship between amillennial and historic premillennial interpretation.

Justification for this study is found in that: 1) There has been a revival of interest in eschatology in recent years, 2) One pre-

.

1. Roland R. Westervelt, Representative Modern Dispensationalism studied in the Light of the New Testament Commentary of Henry Alford,
2. Ibid., p. 94.

paring for the ministry will need to clarify his own convictions on the subject to enable him to help others, 3) A comparison of historic premillennialism and amillennialism has been neglected by present-day interpreters of Scripture and doctrine.

D. Method of Procedure

The method of procedure will be to study the major eschatological passages of Scripture in the order in which they appear. In the first chapter there will be considered an amillennial approach to, and interpretation of the passages. In order to make possible a comparison, the second chapter will be an examination of the interpretations of much the same passages from a representative non-dispensational premillennialist point of view. An attempt will be made at the end of each chapter to synthesize the eschatological systems studied therein to bring before the reader their basic elements. This will be facilitated in part by recording them in chart form. The third chapter will concern itself with a critical evaluation of the two eschatological viewpoints discussed in the preceding chapters. It is hoped that these evaluations will make possible the statement of basic considerations necessary for a sound interpretation of the millennial problem and the second coming of Christ.

E. Sources

The sources used in this study will be for the most part primary ones. John Calvin is recognized to be one of the fathers of Reformation theology, and amillennialists point back with pride to the

fact that Calvin was of their number.¹ His interpretation of Scripture is recognized to have had a profound influence over those that followed him. Therefore, the commentaries of John Calvin will be used as the source material for the first chapter.

Louis Berkhof lists among the representatives of the non-dispensational premillennial viewpoint among others, F. Godet, John Peter Lange, and Henry Alford.² These men, together with E. B. Pusey and Carl Nagelsbach, will be used as representatives of the historic premillennial view presented in the second chapter.

The material for the final chapter will consist largely of the findings of the first two chapters, since it will be an evaluation of the positions presented.

1: Murray, op. cit., p. 199.

2. Louis Berkhof, Systematic Theology, p. 709.

CHAPTER I

THE AMILLENNIAL VIEWPOINT OF JOHN CALVIN

CHAPTER I

THE AMILLENNIAL VIEWPOINT OF JOHN CALVIN

A. Introduction

The commentaries of John Calvin will furnish the primary source material for this chapter. The procedure will be to go through these commentaries recording Calvin's interpretation of major apocalyptic passages in both the Old and New Testaments. Because of limitations of time and space it will be necessary to be selective in the passages which are examined. The first section of the chapter will concern itself with some major apocalyptic passages found in the Old Testament. Then will follow a section dealing with the apocalyptic passages in the gospels. A closing section of this chapter will devote itself largely to the passages of the same nature found in the epistles of Paul. Reference will also be made to passages in other epistles and in the book of Revelation. Calvin did not write a commentary on Revelation and his references to it in his major works are rare. The chapter will close with an attempted synthesis of the eschatological viewpoint of John Calvin.

B. Interpretation of the Old Testament Prophets

1. General Approach to the Prophets

Calvin says that the basic duty of the prophet of Israel was to interpret faithfully the law, sanctioning its authority. The prophet did not make any additions to the law. The visions which the prophets had were peculiarly their own and predicted future events. Their purpose was an immediate one of applying the promises and threat-

enings of God to the use of the people and to declare to them more fully the will of God. An example of this is seen in Leviticus 26:36 where Moses warns the nation of disaster for disobedience. The prophets further explicated this same passage as they foretold the Assyrian invasion and captivity for Israel. Our duty, Calvin says, is to apply the advices, reproofs and consolations which the prophets spoke for their time to our own day.¹

2. The Use of Isaiah

a. Isaiah 2:2-5

This passage proclaims the day when the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of the mountains and all nations shall flow to it for worship. Calvin applies this prophecy to the gospel age. Isaiah here is speaking of the Kingdom of Christ. Though it is true that the fulness of days mentioned in this passage began at the coming of Christ it must be observed that it shall flow on in uninterrupted progress until Christ shall appear at the second time for our salvation. Calvin sees a partial fulfillment of this prophecy in Ephesians 2:19 where those who were formerly strangers and foreigners agree with Israel on religion. God gathers a Church from all nations who have with one consent embraced the covenant of eternal redemption. The outgoing of the law from Zion was fulfilled when the preaching of the Gospel began from Jerusalem. God began to reign over the whole world after the coming of Christ who was God manifest in the flesh. However, the fulfillment of this prophecy must not be looked

...

1. John Calvin; Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Isaiah, Vol. I, pp. xxix-xxx.

for in its fullest sense as taking place here on earth. Here one experiences only the beginning as the Kingdom of Christ leads men, through kindness, to become reconciled to one another.¹

b. Isaiah 11:10-16

This passage is one of a number in Isaiah which foretells the day when there shall be a great restoration of the remnant of God's people. According to Calvin this passage has a primary reference to the deliverance which took place under Zerubbabel as related in Ezra 2:2. However, the prophet looks far beyond this event because at that time the Israelites were not brought back from Egypt, Ethiopia, and the other countries listed. This prophecy then must be viewed as referring to the Kingdom of Christ under whom this promised deliverance was obtained through the preaching of the gospel. The Church knows, then, that God is always able to restore her to her ancient glory as he did in the days of the deliverance from Egypt and Babylon.² Calvin says further that it may be argued that the peace referred to in verse 13 has not yet come but that the world has, even after the preaching of the gospel, suffered wars, commotions, and dreadful persecutions. It is true, too, that the Church has had little peace inwardly. This objection is answered in the fact that Isaiah includes the whole of Christ's kingdom and not just a single age or century. A time is coming when these promises shall be fully realized, for in this world one tastes but the beginning of Christ's kingdom.³

.

1. Ibid., pp. 91-102.
2. Ibid., p. 390.
3. Ibid., p. 392.

c. Isaiah 49:14; 51:2-3; 52:1-4

These passages contain messages of comfort and restoration for Zion, who is languishing in captivity. Calvin's comments on these passages indicate how fully he identifies Zion with the Church. He makes no distinction between the Old and New Testaments but uses the term Church to apply to the people of God in both dispensations. Regarding 49:14 he says:

Let each of us therefore beware of indulging or flattering ourselves in this matter; for the Lord contends with the whole Church, for uttering speeches of this kind which proceed from the fountain of distrust.¹

In commenting on 51:2-3, Calvin points out that God, as He did in the past, will always people His Church by unknown and wonderful methods. Paul applies the same doctrine to each Christian when speaking of the faith of Abraham in Romans 4:18-21. Zion or the Church is laid waste and desolate due to man's sins. God will completely change this situation by His power and man as a member of the Church is exhorted to gratitude and thanksgiving to God when he has had experience of His goodness.² In his interpretation of 52:1-4, though Calvin sees an application exhorting the whole Church in all ages to rejoice in a reconciliation to God, he is careful to point out that the basic reference is to the deliverance out of Babylon.³

d. Isaiah 61:3-11

In this passage which promises a restoration of the Jewish nation, Calvin notes a threefold application of its message. There is

.....

1. John Calvin, Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Isaiah, Vol. IV, p. 30.
2. Ibid., pp. 68-69.
3. Ibid., p. 96.

the primary application in which the prophecy of the passage is fulfilled by the restoration from Babylon. But the restoration of the Church came to the fullest extent in the coming of Christ in which He consecrated all believers to the priestly office. Yet, Calvin says that the passage awaits a final fulfillment at Christ's last coming. Regarding verse 11, where the prophet promises that the Lord will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all nations, Calvin writes, "He again shews that the boundaries of the Church shall no longer be as narrow as they formerly were, for the Lord will cause her to fill the whole world."¹

e. Isaiah 65:17; 66:22

In both of these passages Isaiah foretells the establishment of a new heaven and a new earth. In interpreting the first passage, Calvin applies it first to the restoration of the Church as applied to the restoration from the Babylonian captivity. Secondly, he says it applies to the restoration of the Church as manifested in the coming of Christ. Yet the final fulfillment will not be until it is accomplished in the last resurrection. "The prophet has in mind the whole reign of Christ down to its final close," says Calvin, "which is also called the day of renovation and restoration."² In commenting on the second passage, Calvin makes it plain that the inspired writer does refer to a literal restoration of the earth in his primary meaning. Calvin says:

Here he promises that the restoration of the Church shall be of such a nature that it shall last for ever.³

.....

1. Ibid., p. 317.
2. Ibid., p. 399.
3. Ibid., p. 437.

In a word, he explains what he had formerly said about renewing the world, that none may think that this relates to trees, or beasts, or the order of the stars; for it must be referred to the inward renewal of man. The ancients were mistaken when they thought that these things related absolutely to the last judgment; and they had not sufficiently weighed the context of the Prophet or the authority of the Apostle. Yet I do not deny that they extend as far as to that judgment, because we must not hope for a perfect restoration before Christ, who is the life of the world, shall appear; but we must begin higher, even with that deliverance by which Christ regenerates his people, that they may be new creatures.¹

3. The Use of Ezekiel

Calvin's commentary upon Ezekiel covers only the first twenty chapters of that book, and these chapters have little apocalyptic matter in them. In his Institutes of the Christian Religion, he does comment on two passages of apocalyptic importance which will be considered.

a. Ezekiel 37:1-14

This passage reports the vision of the resurrection of the valley of dry bones. Calvin says that this vision was given to the prophet to prove to Israel that there was a certainty of their restoration from the Babylonian captivity. The Israelites saw how their dispersion resembled death. They could only believe that the prophecy of Ezekiel was a mere fable, and they considered their restoration as likely as that putrid carcasses should be restored to life. Thus the passage foretells no future restoration of Israel at the close of the gospel age, but is to be interpreted in the light of the historical situation that faced the prophet. Nor is the passage prophetic of any literal resurrection either future or past, though its inspired imagery gives proof of a time of resurrection.²

.

1. Ibid., pp. 437-438.

2. John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, Vol. II, p. 205.

b. Ezekiel 48:21-22

This passage deals with the division of the land of Canaan, which is to be accomplished in the restoration. The larger context of this passage includes chapters 40-48 in which is given a detailed vision of the restored temple, the land, and its elaborate worship. Calvin's interpretation of this specific portion in chapter 48 can well be applied in principle to the whole context. Regarding the verses under consideration, Calvin says:

We read in Ezekiel of a very ample portion of land being assigned to the kings, in which passage, though the prophet is describing the spiritual kingdom of Christ, yet he borrows the model of it from the legitimate kingdoms of men.¹

4. The Use of Daniel

Daniel stands foremost among the apocalyptic books of the Old Testament. Attention will be centered on the visions of chapter 7, 8, 9, and 12. The vision of the king's dream of the great image found in chapter 2 will not be treated, since it largely parallels that of the four beasts of chapter 7. Calvin interprets the kingdom of 2:44 as being fulfilled in the coming of Christ and the establishment of His Church whereby He rules the world.

a. Daniel 7

Calvin shows that the lion represents the Chaldean empire, the bear the Medo-Persian empire, the leopard the Macedonian empire, and the fourth beast the Roman empire. Regarding the ten horns of the fourth beast he says, "I follow a simple and genuine opinion, namely, the prophet means this Empire to belong to more persons than one."²

.....

1. Ibid., p. 647.

2. John Calvin, Commentaries on the Book of the Prophet Daniel, Vol. II, p. 24.

The number ten signifies many and refers to the various proconsuls or praetors who ruled like kings in the empire. Calvin rejects the idea of assigning an interpretation to the little horn which comes up among the ten horns that would indicate its fulfillment in an age later than about the first Christian century. He states that the little horn can be neither the pope nor the Turkish empire. It is wrong to think as some do that the Holy Spirit wishes to show in this vision the perpetual state of the church to the end of the world. Rather, the vision was given so that all God's people might realize what severe trials would befall them before the first advent of Christ. Calvin says:

Daniel then does not proceed beyond the promised redemption, and does not embrace, as I have said, the whole kingdom of Christ, but is content to bring the faithful to that exhibition of grace which they hoped and longed for.¹

The little horn is fulfilled in Julius Ceasar and his successors such as Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, Nero, and others. Thus, the little horn, making war upon the saints, represents the Roman persecution of Christians. The coming of the Ancient of Days in 7:22 is a figurative way of stating that God would preserve his Church through the period of early persecution.²

b. Daniel 7:9-11

Calvin says that though God here appears in the character of a judge, there is no reference to the second advent of Christ. Here Eternal Deity ascends the throne of judgment. This applies to the first coming of Christ, for in it God displayed His supreme power. However, the first coming of Christ is not limited to his thirty-three years of life in the world but includes His ascension and the preaching

.

1. Ibid., p. 27.
2. Ibid., p. 57.

of the gospel which ushered in the kingdom. The fact that the books were opened refers to the preaching of the gospel and its effect in revealing the whole truth of God.¹

The sequel to this vision in which the Son of man comes to the Ancient of Days is referred by Calvin to the ascension of Christ and His consequent rule through His Church. The reference here again is not to the final consummation. The eternity of Christ's dominion signifies the endurance of His Church to the end of the world when God's people shall be gathered together to a happy life and an eternal inheritance.²

c. Daniel 8

Calvin takes the ram to represent the Medo-Persian empire and the goat as representing the Macedonian empire of Alexander. The notable horn between the eyes of the he goat is Alexander. The four notable horns rising after the death of Alexander represent the division of his kingdom. The little horn which comes from one of the notable horns is fulfilled in Antiochus Epiphanes and is to be distinguished from the little horn of chapter 7. The 2,300 days refers to the historical period of time in the days of the Macabees during which Antiochus oppressed Israel.³ Calvin is careful to point out that the Antichrist of chapter 11 does refer to Antiochus Epiphanes but to the Roman powers ^{not} up to the time of Christ. "Hence He predicts by His angels the sufferings to be endured by the Church until Christ was manifested in the flesh."⁴

.

1. Ibid., pp. 31-38.
2. Ibid., p. 46.
3. Ibid., p. 109.
4. Ibid., p. 346.

d. Daniel 9

In order to clarify this passage in the mind of the reader, it will be best to quote the crucial section of the vision:

24. Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city 25. Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. 26. And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. 27. And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.¹

Calvin says the seven weeks and the sixty-two weeks mentioned in verse 25 include the years from the edict of Cyrus to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the baptism of Christ when the gospel began to be promulgated. The death of Christ is then referred to in the first part of verse 26. Then, in the rest of verse 26 follows the assurance that the nation shall be judged for killing Messiah. This was fulfilled in the coming of Titus and the Roman army to destroy Jerusalem in about 70 A.D. A complete overthrow of the Jewish city and national polity with a withdrawal of God's favor is indicated by the closing phrases of verse 26.²

Calvin says that verse 27 returns to speaking about Messiah. Christ assumed for Himself the kingly office and the character of a leader when He published the grace of God. In confirming the covenant, Christ showed the greater excellency of His work over the Old Testament legal and ceremonial laws. The fact that He should make the sacrifices

.

1. Daniel 9:24-27.

2. John Calvin, Commentaries on the Book of the Prophet Daniel, Vol. II, pp. 195-223.

cease in the midst of the week refers to the resurrection of Christ after which He put an end to sacrifice and all the rites of the law. A further statement describing the total destruction of Judaism and Jerusalem as a national punishment for rejecting the Messiah is seen by Calvin in the last phrases of verse 27.¹ It is seen here that Calvin does not follow out the chronology of the seventy weeks of years literally in his interpretation of the passage. Verse 27 is then not necessarily subsequent in time to the first part of verse 26 since it is clear that Messiah confirms the covenant before He is cut off.

e. Daniel 12:1-2

Calvin says that the angel in verse 1 is no longer relating future occurrences in a special way, but rather he proclaims that God is the guardian of His Church, preserving it wonderfully amidst many difficulties and profound disasters of darkness and death. This standing up of Michael is to be taken as applying to the whole Church period, both in the Old Testament and in the present Church age. But in verse 2, the prophet very suddenly refers to the final resurrection and the second coming of Christ.² It is evident that Calvin sees the end of the Church age as culminating in one resurrection of righteous and wicked, which ushers in the glories of eternity and the damnation of the lost.

f. Daniel 12:11-12

Calvin refers this prophecy to the final destruction of Jerusalem mentioned in 9:26. The period which shall follow that destruction mentioned in these verses is symbolic of a long period of

.

1. Ibid., p. 224.
2. Ibid., p. 367.

time and is not to be literally interpreted. This corresponds to the time designation of a time, times, and a half time. The time and times are to show length, and the half time is to indicate limit for the encouragement of the saints in that time of distress. This is connected by Calvin with the shortening of the days mentioned in Matthew 24:22. Verse 12, which adds 45 days to the time period stated in verse 11, implies: "God will not put off the deliverance of His Church beyond six months, and yet ye must be strong and of good courage and persevere in your watchfulness."¹

5. The Use of Joel

a. Joel 2:29-3:2

This passage predicts the pouring out of God's Spirit on all flesh, the appearing of great cosmical disturbances, the regathering of Israel to Jerusalem, and the assembly of all nations in the Valley of Jehoshaphat. Calvin identifies the pouring of the Spirit with the founding of the New Testament Church. The cosmical disturbances refer not to the coming of Christ, but to the judgments of God which are continually poured out on men throughout this age. The prophecy of the regathering of Israel has a primary reference to the deliverance from Babylon, but its fulfillment lies finally in the redemption given the Church in Christ. The gathering of all nations in the Valley of Jehoshaphat is a figurative way of stating that God will always protect His Church.²

.

1. Ibid., pp. 389-390.

2. John Calvin, Commentaries on the Twelve Minor Prophets, Vol. II, pp. 91-116.

b. Joel 3:7

In commenting on this passage Calvin asks what is meant by a collection of Israel, since it is evident that such an ingathering has never truly occurred. He concludes that the prophet refers to a spiritual gathering. The Church of God has been joined together by the band of faith since the appearance of Christ, and it is primarily of this that the ingathering consists. Not only are the Jews gathered in one, but the Gentiles also have been collected into one body. Thus, what the prophet says has been spiritually fulfilled.¹

6. The Use of Amos 9:11-15

The prophet Amos catalogues the sins of Israel and foretells the destruction of the nation with the accompanying dispersion. However, he ends his prophecy with a promise of a restoration of the Davidic kingdom to its former glory. Calvin says that this prophecy is doubtless fulfilled in the advent of Christ, and the restoration of the kingdom is the reconciliation of the Church to God through Christ. But that this kingdom awaits a final fulfillment is seen by Calvin when he declares:

This then is the right view of the subject: for Christ at length appeared, on whose head rests the true diadem or crown, and who has been elected by God . . . and now sits at the Father's right hand, and his throne shall not fail to the end of the world; nay, the world shall be renovated, and Christ's kingdom shall continue, though in another form after the resurrection . . . and yet Christ shall be really king forever.²

Calvin is aware that there may be objection to his interpreting the passage allegorically instead of literally. But he says that it is the method of Scripture to set the blessed spiritual state before our

.

1. Ibid., p. 124.
2. Ibid., p. 406.

eyes in terms of the conveniences of the present life and earthly blessings. The prophets accommodated their style to the capacities of a weak and rude people to whom they spoke.¹

7. The Use of Zechariah 14

Calvin recognizes that there are different interpretations of this chapter. He refuses to assign its interpretation to any one specific event such as the time of Antichrist, the last day, or the destruction of the city which happened in the reign of Vespasian. What is meant here in the prediction of destruction is that there were to be a continued series of evils from the beginning of the rebuilding of the city and the temple until the coming of Christ. The prophecy in verse 2, that all nations shall be gathered against Jerusalem, is said by Calvin to predict generally the opposition which faced the Jewish church in the coming years and centuries. The promise that the Lord shall go forth and fight against those nations is one of assurance to the Church until the end of the world, that God shall sustain the righteous under all trials. Nothing literal is meant in verse 4 where it is said that the Lord's feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives. Calvin says that the point is that God's deliverance in the behalf of His Church is here shown to be so remarkable as though God were manifested in physical form and directed the battle.² Calvin's refusal to circumscribe the interpretation of this chapter by limiting it to a given time in God's plan is seen when he declares:

Some have wrested the passage and applied it to the last coming of Christ, but this is inconsistent with the subject in hand. At the same time I allow that the kingdom of Christ, according to the prophetic mode of writing, is here described from commencement to its end Whenever then the Prophets speak of perfection under the reign of Christ, we ought not to confine what they say to one

.

1. Ibid., p. 413
2. John Calvin, Commentaries on the Twelve Minor Prophets, Vol. V, pp. 406-411

day or to a short time, but we ought to include the whole time from beginning to the end. Hence when Christ appeared in the world, then began to shine the splendor of which Zechariah now speaks: but the Lord will go on until that shall be completed which now makes continual progress.¹

8. Conclusion

John Calvin in his interpretation of the Old Testament apocalyptic passages sees foretold there the following events: 1) Deliverance of Israel from the Babylonian captivity, 2) Rise and fall of world empires prior to the establishment of the Kingdom of Christ, 3) Tribulation for the Jews for three and one half years under Antiochus Epiphanes, 4) First advent of Christ accompanied by His public ministry, death and resurrection, 5) Spiritual gathering of Israel with the Gentiles to form the Church, a complete body of Christ, 6) Destruction of Jerusalem at 70 A.D., 7) Continual evil and oppression exercised against the Church until the second coming of Christ, 8) A simultaneous resurrection of the righteous and the wicked dead at the second coming of Christ, 9) Culmination of the Redemption of the Church at the last day when it shall reach its happy and eternal state.

C. Interpretation of the Apocalyptic Passages of the Gospels and Acts

1. The Use of the Olivet Discourse

The Olivet discourse which is found in Matthew 24 and 25, Mark 13, and Luke 21 is the great apocalyptic passage of the gospels. In his commentary on a harmony of the gospels, Calvin treats the three gospels simultaneously, centering his attention on Matthew which is the longest and no doubt the most complete version of the discourse. Though

.

1. Ibid., p. 454-455.

Calvin does not synthesize his divisions of the discourse, he makes it clear that he regards chapter 24:1-28 as referring primarily to the destruction of Jerusalem and the course of the gospel in this age, while chapter 24:29-51 refers more directly to the second coming of Christ. He treats chapter 25 according to its natural division by content. In this study, Calvin's commentary on the discourse will be discussed using his groupings of the verses.

a. Matthew 24:1-8

The question of the disciples was prompted by the superstition of an earthly kingdom and a failure to realize that what they wished to enjoy on earth should be enjoyed in heaven. Jesus' answer to them in verses 4-8 refers to the whole Christian era though it has special reference to the time leading to the destruction of Jerusalem. The warning against deception is meant to indicate that the Church shall always be exposed to the evils of false teachers and prophets as well as physical and social disturbances. The gospel is not a gate to a life of ease. Verse 6, which mentions wars and rumors of wars, refers especially to the commotions which rose up in Judea early in the Christian era, while verse seven indicates the negative response of the nations to the gospel throughout the age.¹

b. Matthew 24:9-14

These verses predict a testing of faith which is to be the portion of the saints throughout the Christian era unto the second coming of Christ. The "end" spoken of in verse 14 has a partial reference to the coming destruction of Jerusalem. However, Calvin's

.

1. John Calvin, Commentary on the Harmony of the Evangelists, Vol. III, pp. 114-122.

conclusion is: "This is improperly restricted by some to the destruction of the temple, and the abolition of the service of the law; for it ought to be understood as referring to the end and the renovation of the world."¹

c. Matthew 24:15-28

These verses are said by Calvin to apply directly to the destruction of Jerusalem as foretold in Daniel 12:11-12. Regarding the great tribulation of 24:21, he says that the greatest plague inflicted on the Jews was the extinguishing of the light of heavenly doctrine among them and their utter rejection by God, the severity of which they realized in the chastisement accompanying the destruction of Jerusalem. The coming of the Son of man in 24:27 does not refer to the second coming of Christ, but is a figurative prediction of the spread of the gospel throughout the world following the desolation of Judea.²

d. Matthew 24:29-31

Calvin applies the verses from chapter 24:29 to the end of the chapter more directly to the second coming of Christ. The redemption which the disciples sought will arrive in due time after many distressing events. Since the disciples were in danger of losing heart because the prophetic predictions were not gloriously fulfilled at the commencement of the Christian kingdom, Christ shows that the prophet's predictions about the miraculous shaking of heaven and earth should not be restricted to the commencement of redemption because the prophets embraced the whole course of it, till redemption should arrive at per-

.

1. Ibid., p. 129.

2. Ibid., pp. 130-144

fection. The tribulation of verse 29 refers not to the destruction of Jerusalem, but is a general recapitulation of the evils of which Christ had previously spoken. Christ promises that there shall be an end to distresses when the day arrives at which the majesty of the Church shall be illustriously displayed. Calvin does not attempt to say how the sun will be darkened in the closing day. The falling of the stars is not to be taken literally for the main thing is that all the creation will act as a herald to summon men to a final tribunal of judgment. In 24:30 Christ describes His personal coming for our salvation in which He will appear openly at His last coming and being surrounded by the heavenly power will turn the eyes of the whole world upon Himself.¹

e. Matthew 24:32-36

Calvin says that the parable of the fig tree does not mean that there shall be an evident sign that Christ's coming is nigh, just as we know the coming of leaves heralds summer. Christ by it means to point out that though manifold tribulations soften the Church, its strength and vigour is not impaired, just as the softening of the branches in the spring does not indicate that the tree is about to die. If the Church is weak and frail we ought not to conclude that it is dying, but we ought rather to expect the immortal glory for which it has been prepared by the cross and afflictions. In stating that the generation shall not pass away till all these things be fulfilled, Calvin says Christ meant that before a single generation was completed they would learn by experience the truth of what He said. Christ meant to

.

1. Ibid., pp. 144-149.

impress upon His disciples that the prophecy which He gave did not relate to distant evils which should befall posterity after many centuries but evils which were ready to become a reality in their generation.¹

f. Matthew 24:37-51

In verses 40 and 41, Christ predicts that in different social situations one shall be taken and the other left. Calvin takes these in their natural meaning in harmony with his interpretation of the preceding verses; namely, that at the time of the second coming of Christ couples will be divided. Calvin feels that the stress in the interpretation must not be laid upon the idea of being left. Rather, the warning is an encouragement for men not to wait in preparing to meet Christ because of social relationships lest it be too late. Likewise, the parable of the watchful servant warns that, though the last judgment be long delayed, it hangs over us always and should keep us from a state of spiritual sluggishness.²

g. Matthew 25:1-13

The main design of the parable of the virgins is to confirm believers in perseverance, since it is human nature to grow weary after a lapse of time. The time of the parable applies to the second coming of Christ which, it is evident, Calvin sees as the final consummation when he says:

True, indeed, our Lord cries daily, that he will come quickly, (Rev. xxii.20) but at that time, the whole frame of the world will resound with the cry, and his dreadful majesty will fill heaven and earth in such a manner, as not only to awaken those who are asleep, but to bring the dead out of their graves, (John v.28)."³

.....

1. Ibid., pp. 150-151.
2. Ibid., pp. 155-164.
3. Ibid., p. 172.

h. Matthew 25:31-46

Calvin says that this scene is the final judgment at the second coming of Christ at which time He establishes the eternal kingdom. By the sheep he understands the believers, and by the goats, the wicked. Thus, this is not a judgment of nations as such but of individuals. Christ uses the term "nations" to show to the disciples the superior excellency of the kingdom which He came to establish when compared to their limited earthly Jewish conception.¹

2. The Use of Other Passages in the Gospels

A few other passages in the gospels deserve attention. These, taken from Matthew and John, will be presented in the order in which they appear.

a. Matthew 10:23

Christ here tells his disciples they shall not have gone through the cities of Judah till the Son of man be come. Calvin says that it is too far-fetched to refer this to the destruction of Jerusalem. He sees it as indicating such a progress of the gospel that all will know Christ as actually reigning and about to restore the Davidic kingdom. By the power of His Spirit Christ will shed about His reign such lustre that the disciples shall see the glory and majesty they had formerly been unable to perceive.²

b. Matthew 16:27,28

Calvin takes verse 27 as referring to Christ's final coming

.

1. Ibid., p. 175-182.

2. John Calvin, Commentary on the Harmony of the Evangelists, Vol. II, pp. 458.

to judge the world. In verse 28 Jesus promises the disciples that there are some standing there who will not taste death till they see the Son of man coming in His kingdom. In this coming of the kingdom, Calvin understands a manifestation of heavenly glory which began at Christ's resurrection and was made more full by the sending of the Holy Spirit and the doing of miracles. In those things, He gave His people a taste of the heavenly life and an assurance that He was seated at the right hand of God, the Father.¹

c. John 5:25-29

In verse 25, Jesus promises that the hour is coming when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and those that hear shall live. Calvin holds that verses 25-27 do not refer to a physical resurrection but to a rising from spiritual death. This is shown to be so by the fact that the time is qualified by the phrase "and now is." Verses 28-29, however, refer to a physical resurrection of the righteous and wicked at the last day. Calvin refers to this as the last resurrection which includes the whole human race--the elect and the reprobate.² It is evident that Calvin thinks here of the resurrection in terms of one event including both the righteous and the wicked, which event is not complicated by any intervening millennium between their resurrections.

d. John 6:39-40

In these verses Jesus promises to raise believers at the last day. Here, again, Calvin sees only one resurrection which shall occur

.

1. Ibid., p. 307.

2. John Calvin, Commentary on the Gospel According to John, Vol. I, pp. 205-209.

at the end of the world when Christ returns as judge, following what Calvin calls the "last resurrection."¹

e. John 14:3

Calvin says that Christ's stating He will come again must not be interpreted as referring to the coming of the Holy Spirit, though it is true that Christ does dwell in believers by the Spirit. Calvin states:

. . . here he speaks of the last day of judgment, when he will, at length come to assemble his followers. And, indeed, if we consider the whole body of the Church, he every day prepares a place for us; whence it follows, that the proper time for our entrance into heaven is not yet come.²

3. The Use of Acts

The book of Acts contains a few passages of apocalyptic importance. Three of them shall be used in this study.

a. Acts 1:11

Here we read that Jesus shall come in the same way the disciples saw Him go up into heaven. Calvin says that Christ went to stay in the heavens until such a time as He should come to judge the world. When He shall come again He will come as redeemer to take us with Him to blessed immortality, but it shall also be for the wicked a time of dread, horror, and fearfulness when they shall see Him upon His tribunal seat.³

b. Acts 3:21

This passage says that the heaven must receive Christ until

.

1. Ibid., p. 253.

2. John Calvin, Commentary on the Gospel According to John, Vol. II, p. 83.

3. John Calvin, Commentary upon the Acts of the Apostles, Vol. I, p. 51.

the restitution of all things as promised by the prophets. Calvin states that the kingdom of God is but begun and awaits perfection at the last day. The restoration includes a restoration from the relics of sin which hang upon us. Christ will appear when the warfare of the Church is complete, the time of which we must not undertake to anticipate. No literal interpretation of the things promised in a kingdom foretold by the prophets should be expected, for the prophets spoke mainly of the coming of Christ.¹

c. Acts 17:31

This passage states that God has appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness by Jesus Christ. Calvin interprets this as a picture of the last judgment when all men shall be raised either to life or to death.²

4. Conclusion

A summary of John Calvin's interpretation of the apocalyptic passages of the Gospels and Acts shows the following elements and events to be foretold: 1) The spiritual resurrection of the saints at their reception of Christ, 2) Manifestation of Christ's heavenly glory throughout the earth by the Church, the expression of His Kingdom, 3) Destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. accompanied by great tribulation, 4) Continual tribulation of the Church throughout the Christian era, 5) Immanence of the return of Christ, 6) Personal universally-visible return of Christ at the end of this age, 7) Simultaneous resurrection of the righteous and the unrighteous at the return of Christ, 8) The final judgment of

.

1. Ibid., p. 153.

2. John Calvin, Commentary upon the Acts of the Apostles, Vol. II, p. 177.

the righteous and the wicked at the second coming of Christ, 9) Renovation of the earth and a restitution of all things with a climatic spiritual fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies of the glories of the Messianic Kingdom.

D. Interpretation of the Apocalyptic Passages
of the Epistles

1. The Use of Various Passages

a. Romans 2:5

The apostle warns those who treasure up unto themselves wrath against the day of wrath and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God. It is evident that Calvin views this day as the day of the final judgment coinciding with the judgment of the righteous when he states:

The day of the last judgment is called the day of wrath, when a reference is made to the ungodly; but it will be a day of redemption to the faithful Hence whenever the scripture mentions the approach of the Lord, it bids the godly to exult with joy; but when it turns to the reprobate, it proclaims nothing but dread and terror Farther, by adding the word revelation Paul intimates what this day of wrath is to be,--that the Lord will then manifest his judgment: though he gives daily some indications of it, he yet suspends and holds back, till that day, the clear and full manifestation of it; for the books shall then be opened; the sheep shall then be separated from the goats, and the wheat shall be cleansed from the tares.¹

b. Romans 8:18-23

In this passage Paul predicts a future time when creation will be set free from the bondage of decay unto the glorious liberty of the children of God. Calvin says this will be done in the eternal age at the end of the world. He refuses to speculate as to exactly what is meant and as to whether or not all kinds of animals will be immortal.

.

1. John Calvin, Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans, p. 89.

The main point is that God will restore to a perfect state the world, now fallen, together with mankind.¹

c. Romans 11

This chapter is devoted to the rejection of Israel as a result of their rejection of Christ. The heart of the chapter is found in verses 25 and 26 in which the apostle declares, first of all, that blindness in part has fallen upon Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles comes in. Then he goes on to say that all Israel shall be saved. Calvin takes Israel in verse 25 to refer to the Jews whose refusal of the light of the gospel made it possible for the Gentiles to receive it. He does not take the phrase "until the fulness of the Gentiles" to be temporally conditioned and as specifying progress or order of time, but suggests that it is best rendered "that the fulness of the Gentiles." The "fulness" is to be taken as representing a great number in comparison with the few proselytes who joined the Church under the old dispensation. In verse 26, Calvin shifts the reference of "Israel" to mean not the Jews but all the people of God, both Jew and Gentile. He bases this interpretation upon the fact that he feels Paul here intends to set forth the completion of Christ's kingdom which includes the whole world and is not confined to the Jews. Calvin paraphrases Paul's meaning as follows:

When the Gentiles shall come in, the Jews also shall return from their defection to the obedience of faith; and thus shall be completed the salvation of the whole Israel of God which must be gathered from both" ²

d. I Corinthians 15:20-24; 51-53

Apart from the resurrection of Christ, Calvin sees in these

.

1. Ibid., p. 305.
2. Ibid., p. 437.

passages only one general resurrection which shall include both believers and unbelievers, though he is aware of and places emphasis upon the fact that the Holy Spirit here is talking of the rising of saints. The time of the resurrection will be the day of the revelation of Christ and will introduce the "end" when Christ shall have delivered up the kingdom of God.¹ Regarding the last trump of verse 52, Calvin writes:

As therefore a commander, with the sound of a trumpet, summons his army to battle, so Christ, by his far sounding proclamation which will be heard throughout the whole world, will summon all the dead The whole world will be summoned to the tribunal of God.²

e. I Thessalonians 3:13

In this passage Paul speaks of the coming of Christ with all His saints. Calvin simply takes it to mean that Christ will come with His saints at the time when they shall stand before His judgment seat unblameable in holiness.³

f. I Thessalonians 4:13-17; 5:1-6

According to Calvin, Paul's basic design in this passage was to tell the Church, which had apparently lost its emphasis upon a belief in the resurrection, that they should not mourn except with moderation for their departed Christian loved ones. Calvin considers the reference of verse 14 to be to the final resurrection of both the righteous and wicked. He points out that Paul does not mention the resurrection of the wicked in this context, since he ". . . does not here touch upon anything but what is suited to his present design."⁴ Paul further

.

1. John Calvin, Commentary on the Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians, Vol. II, p. 26.
2. Ibid., p. 59.
3. John Calvin, Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians, p. 271.
4. Ibid., p. 281.

wishes to correct the false impression that only those alive at Christ's last coming would share eternal life. Therefore, he says that the dead in Christ shall rise first. An archangel will summon both the dead and the living to the tribunal of Christ. The living saints shall instantaneously put off the quality of the mortal body and receive resurrection bodies. Calvin points out that verse 17 abundantly refutes the reveries of the chiliasts who limit both the reign of Christ and His saints to 1000 years.¹ The day of the Lord in 5:2 refers to the same time as does the resurrection of the preceding chapter--namely, to the last judgment.

g. II Thessalonians 2:1-12

As to the design of the apocalyptic section of the second chapter of II Thessalonians, Calvin states in his introduction to the epistle:

In the second, (chapter) a vain and groundless fancy, which had gotten into circulation as to the coming of Christ being at hand, is set aside by him by means of this argument--that there must previously to that be a revolt in the church, and a great part of the world must treacherously draw back from God, nay more, that Antichrist must reign in the temple of God.²

The Antichrist of chapter 2:1-12 is definitely identified with the Papacy and the Roman Church, though Calvin would not limit the interpretation to Rome alone, considering the broad scope of history. The Antichrist must not be limited to one individual but is a kingdom which extends through many ages; I John 2:18 mentions the existence of Antichrists in that ancient day.

.

1. Ibid., p. 284.
2. Ibid., p. 309.

h. II Timothy 3:1

Paul tells Timothy that in the last days there shall be perilous times. Regarding this verse, Calvin writes as follows:

Under 'the last days' he (Paul) includes the universal condition of the Christian Church . . . for many imagined some sort of condition that would be absolutely peaceful, and free from annoyance. In short, he means that there will not be, even under the gospel . . . a state of perfection"¹

i. II Timothy 4:1

In this passage, Paul gives Timothy a charge in view of the fact that Christ will judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom. Calvin says that by the "living and the dead" is meant those who are alive at the Lord's coming--both saved and lost, and those who have died at Christ's coming--both saved and lost. The writer thus underscores the certainty of universal judgment. The terms "appearance of Christ" and "His kingdom" are to be equated. Though Christ already reigns in both earth and heaven, His reign is yet to be clearly manifested; it is now hidden under the cross and assailed by enemies. The kingdom will be established at the time of His appearance, when He shall vanquish His enemies, remove all opposing power, and display His majesty.²

j. II Peter 3:10-13

In this passage the apostle states that Christians look for a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwells righteousness. Calvin believes this passage teaches that at Christ's return heaven and earth are to be purged by fire so that they shall correspond with the perfect kingdom of Christ.³

.

1. John Calvin, Commentaries on the Epistles to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon, p. 236.
2. Ibid., p. 252.
3. John Calvin, Commentaries on the Catholic Epistles, p. 420.

2. Other Relevant Passages

There are other minor passages in the epistles which are of less apocalyptic importance, such as: Philippians 1:6; 3:20-21; Colossians 3:4; Hebrews 9:28; Titus 2:13; Jude 14,15. Calvin's interpretation of all of these passages shows that he regards them as indicating that the Christian age shall end in a final judgment at which the whole world shall appear before the tribunal of Christ, following which the eternal state shall be a reality.

Calvin did not write a commentary upon the book of Revelation, and his references to it in the Institutes are mostly incidental. However, he does refer to Revelation 20:4 which speaks of the millennial reign of Christ with the souls of them that were beheaded for the testimony of Jesus. He speaks strongly against those saying that children of God have but 1000 years to enjoy the inheritance of the future life. Calvin states:

Nor does the Revelation, which they quote in favour of their error, afford them any support; for the term of a thousand years, there mentioned, refers not to the eternal blessedness of the Church, but to the various agitations which awaited the Church in its militant state upon earth.¹

Thus, it is seen that Calvin refers the millennium of Revelation 20 as in some way coincident with the church age.

3. Conclusion

John Calvin's interpretation of the major apocalyptic sections of the New Testament epistles contributes the following events to his apocalyptic view: 1) Perilous times for the Church throughout the gospel age, 2) Salvation of both Jew and Gentile that the whole

.....

1. John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, Vol. II, p. 206.

Israel of God may be saved, 3) Apostacy of a great part of the world previous to the second coming of Christ, 4) The reign of Antichrist in the temple of God previous to the second coming, 5) A personal universally visible second coming of Christ, 6) A general resurrection of believers and unbelievers and the immediate transformation of living saints to their immortal resurrection state, 7) A universal judgment of the righteous and the wicked at Christ's coming, 8) The restoration and renovation of the heavens and the earth, 9) The inauguration of the eternal age in which the righteous shall eternally live with Christ.

E. Summary of the Amillennial Viewpoint of John Calvin

The purpose of this section is to gather together the basic events and ideas found in John Calvin's interpretation of the major apocalyptic passages of the scriptures, stating them in a concise form. The events as listed will not be wholly chronological, since there is a necessary overlapping of time in contemporaneous events. The following is a synthesis of Calvin's scheme as found in the preceding sections of this chapter:

1. The restoration of Israel from its captivity in Babylon.
2. The rise and fall of world empires prior to the establishment of the Kingdom of Christ.
3. The tribulation of the Jews at the hands of Antiochus Epiphanes.
4. Christ's first advent accompanied by His ministry, death and resurrection.
5. The Olivet prediction of the fall of Jerusalem, the course of this age, and His second coming.
6. The spiritual resurrection of the saints upon their acceptance of Christ.

7. The preaching of the gospel throughout all nations and the spiritual reign of Christ through His Church; salvation of both Jew and Gentile that the whole Israel of God may be saved.
8. Apostacy from the faith for a great part of the world previous to the second coming of Christ.
9. Tribulation for the people of God throughout the Christian era till the time of the second advent; opposition to the gospel throughout this age.
10. The reign of Antichrist in the temple of God previous to the second coming of Christ.
11. The personal, universally visible return of Christ to this world to be followed by the final consummation.
12. The resurrection of the wicked and righteous dead at the second coming of Christ and the transformation of the saints to resurrection and immortality.
13. The one great general judgment of the righteous and wicked.
14. The renovation of the heavens and the earth and the ushering in of the eternal state.

In this chapter John Calvin's interpretation of the major apocalyptic passages of the scriptures has been examined. The method of procedure was to record his interpretation of the apocalyptic passages of the Old Testament prophets, of the Gospels and the Acts, and of the epistles of the New Testament. His views were then set down in a concise synthesized form. This chapter shows that Calvin is amillennial in his interpretation of the scriptures in that he does not include in his eschatological scheme a literal 1000 year reign of Christ on this earth after His second coming preceding the final judgment.

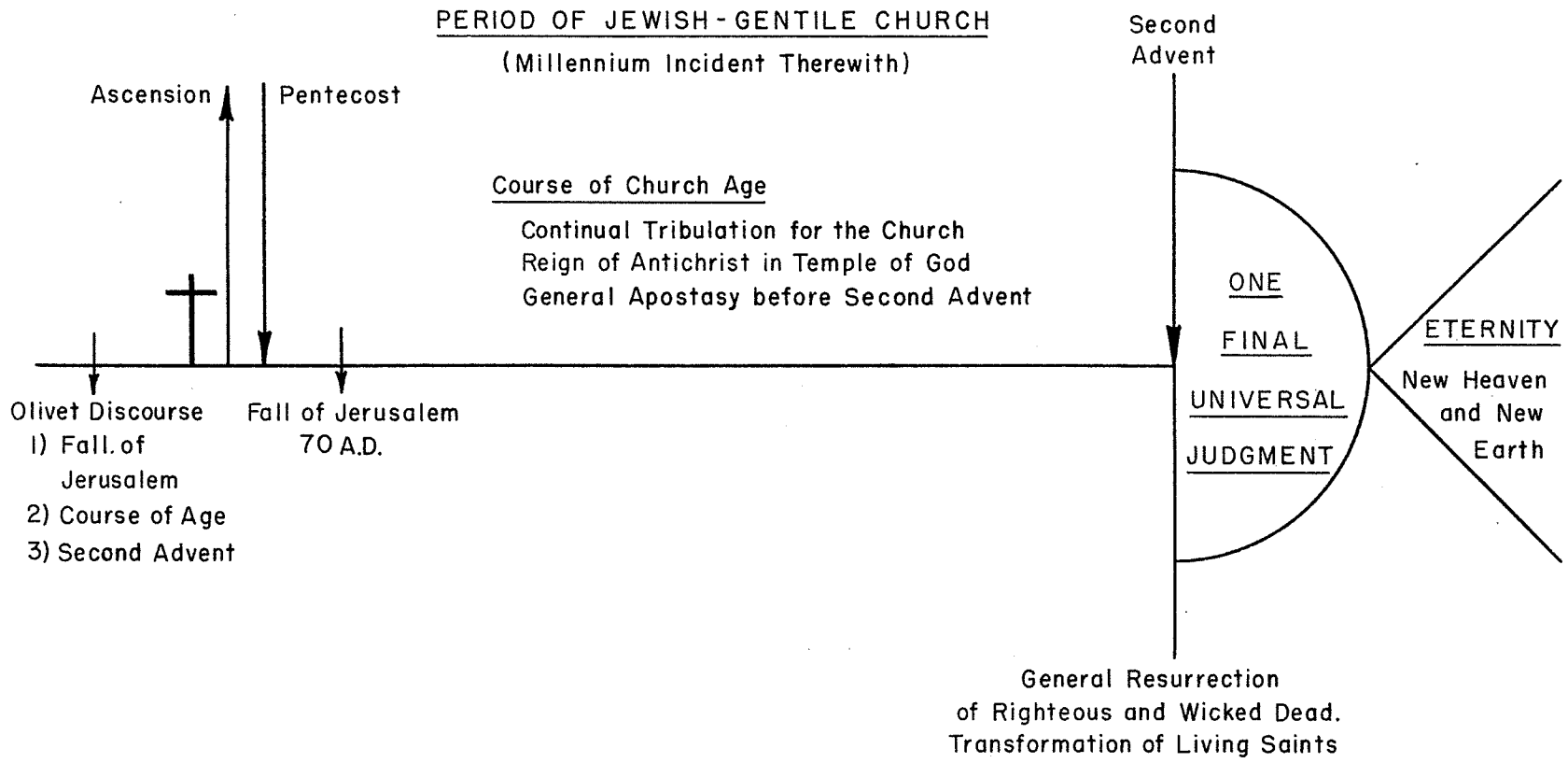


CHART I - AMILLENNIAL ESCHATOLOGICAL VIEWPOINT OF JOHN CALVIN

CHAPTER II

THE VIEWPOINT OF REPRESENTATIVE
NON-DISPENSATIONAL PREMILLENNIALISM

CHAPTER II

THE VIEWPOINT OF REPRESENTATIVE NON-DISPENSATIONAL PREMILLENNIALISM

A. Introduction

This chapter will record the interpretation of basically the same apocalyptic passages as were presented in the preceding chapter, using various non-dispensational premillennial writers as sources. The work of Carl Nagelsbach in Lange's Commentary will be used for the book of Isaiah. For Daniel and the Minor Prophets, the works of E. B. Fusey will be used as the source. John Lange has written commentaries on Matthew, John, Romans, and Revelation, which will be used in the interpretation of these books. Frederic Godet's work on I Corinthians will be used for that book. For Acts, the Thessalonians, Timothy, and II Peter, Henry Alford's Greek Testament will be used as the source. This chapter will be divided into sections corresponding to those in chapter I, with an added section on the interpretation of Revelation. To place before the reader the main events in the eschatological viewpoint of historic premillennialism, the chapter will close with a general synthesis of the views presented in the various sections.

B. Interpretation of the Old Testament Prophets

1. The Use of Isaiah made by Nagelsbach

a. Isaiah 2:2-5

Nagelsbach suggests that the law which shall go forth out of Zion is the divine doctrine in the highest and most complete sense, which so truly satisfies that it irresistibly draws all men. Thus,

the beginning of the fulfillment of the prophecy began when, according to Luke 24:47, there was preaching of repentance and the remission of sins in the name of Christ to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. Yet the prophet himself says that the fulfillment shall follow in the last time. Nagelsbach makes a point of the fact that the element of fulfillment is by no means a closed transaction, even though the coming of Christ in the flesh and the founding of His kingdom was an element therein. In speculating as to its final fulfillment, we must guard both against taking the words too "coarsely" and "outwardly", and against a one-sided spiritualizing. The prophet himself was not thinking of heaven, and it should be remembered that plows and pruning hooks have as little to do with heaven as swords and spears. Nor has the high place of Mount Zion anything to do with heaven. The passage speaks for the view that a time is coming here upon earth when the Lord Himself shall appropriate the kingdom, suppressing the world kingdoms, and bringing about a condition of peace and glory. The result will be that the outward will conform to the inward. Yet we should confess our ignorance as to the exact way and means by which these particulars will be realized.¹

b. Isaiah 11:10-16

The return of the remnant mentioned here by the prophet had only a faint beginning in the return to the land at the time of Zerubabel. Nagelsbach takes this passage to refer to a last glorious return of Israel at the appearance of the Messiah. This return of Israel shall follow the conversion of the heathen. The remnant of Israel is not to be determined only by fleshly descent from Abraham. The basic criterion

.....

1. Carl Wilhelm Eduard Nagelsbach, The Prophet Isaiah, p. 57

for belonging thereto is a personal return to God Almighty. Thus, the restoration of Israel in the last days is not necessarily universal. Yet this return of Israel shall be universal in that the remnant shall come from whatever land they may dwell in. The Church of the new covenant will see Israel rise into view. The fact that it will be known as a nation among nations also argues for their literal return to the land of Palestine, since it is impossible for the nation to resume its place among nations if the people are not in their land. The heading which Nagelsbach gives this section in his commentary reads: "The return of Israel takes place only when the Messiah has appeared and the heathen have gathered to Him."¹

c. Isaiah 49:14; 51:1-8; 52:1

In these passages Nagelsbach maintains a two-fold emphasis. The fact that he sees in the prophecies concerning Zion a fulfillment in the Church is evident from his comments on chapter 49:14. This passage predicts that Israel who has been forsaken will be built afresh from the Gentiles. The conversion of the Gentiles will result in a spiritual Israel which is the eternal core of the fleshly Israel. The prophecy presupposes the final judgment of Israel after the flesh, and describes how a new Israel will arise out of its ashes.²

But Nagelsbach makes it clear in commenting on chapter 51:1-8 that Israel as a people is not written out of the prophetic picture when he states:

Here therefore is a hint of that conflict in which Israel stood after the appearance of the Servant, and still stands: either to

.

1. Ibid., p. 164-166
2. Ibid., p. 539.

cleave to the gospel with the Gentiles and thereby to disappear as a nation, or to reject the gospel and thereby to be themselves rejected, yet to be preserved as a nation for the time when . . . the kingdom of God shall appear as the kingdom of David, and will still be one flock under one Shepherd.¹

The prophecy of 52:1 which foretells the restoration of Jerusalem, the Zion of God, awaits fulfillment, for the true Jerusalem is not complete without the city, nor is the city complete without the people. The completion of this prophecy of restoration, though its fulfillment began with the restoration from Babylon and the founding of the Church, is yet future and awaits the time when Christ will come again visibly to realize His inward and outward complete dominion on earth.²

d. Isaiah 61:1-11

This prophecy of a future restoration of Israel is not fulfilled by the return under Zerubbabel and Ezra, since that poor beginning does not do justice to the picture presented in this passage. Nagelsbach indicates his belief in the national identity of Israel in this future restoration when he states: "Israel appears here as the priestly nobility, and the Gentiles . . . have to perform the hard work."³ In this passage there is predicted a future restoration of the earth in its final eschatological significance. Nagelsbach says regarding verse 4:

When hereafter the city will be on earth in which there will be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying, nor pain, in which, too, there will be no temple, for the Lord God Almighty is Himself its temple-- then will the earth itself, which is the oldest ruin, be restored to what it originally was, to be the soil and ground which bears the tabernacle to God with men (Rev. 21:3).⁴

-
1. Ibid., p. 552.
 2. Ibid., p. 562.
 3. Ibid., p. 660.
 4. Ibid., p. 662.

e. Isaiah 55:17

In this passage Nagelsbach sees a prediction of a literal restoration of the earth at the end of this age. He entitles this chapter in which this passage is contained: "The New Life in its Outward Manifestation."¹ There are three distinct stages in this restoration of the heavens and the earth, though the prophet looks at them in one perspective with the result that those in the background, which are seen only through intervening spaces, all appear to be on the same plane. These are the return from the exile by Israel, a judging of godless Israel, and finally a climactic renewal of the heavens and the earth in which the entire creation will live together in peace and harmony, with even a renovation of the animal world. Nagelsbach makes no attempt to refer the restoration foretold here to the Christian era, but sees it as having ultimate eschatological significance.

f. Isaiah 66:15-24

Nagelsbach sees in this passage a summary of the whole course of events leading to a final consummation. The leading features are brought out, but the intervening spaces of time are not regarded. These events summarized are: 1) A sign is set in Israel, the Messiah, 2) The sign is rejected by the nation and the visible theocracy is destroyed in the judgment on the earthly Jerusalem, 3) The heathen Gentile world turns to Jehovah, 4) The Gentiles bring back to Jehovah the scattered members of Israel that had been visited in judgment, 5) God makes both Jew and Gentile priests and unites them to make a new race of men which stands on the new earth and under the new heaven eternally before God,

.

1. Ibid., p. 695.

6) The wicked are excluded from the society of the blessed and are sent to eternal judgment.¹

2. The Use of Daniel made by Pusey

a. Daniel 7

Pusey identifies the vision of the great image of Daniel chapter 2 with that of the four beasts in chapter 7 in respect to the world empires mentioned. Thus, in chapter 7 the lion represents the Chaldean empire, the bear the Medo-Persian empire, the leopard is the Macedonian empire, and the fourth beast represents the Roman empire and its ultimate development. Pusey believes that the fourth beast pictures the history of nations up to the end of the age, for in it the prophet sees not only characteristics, but a history embracing these four distinct periods: 1) The time until its division, symbolized by the ten horns, 2) The period of the ten horns, 3) The period in which the little horn holds sway. This will be the Antichrist who shall come before Christ returns, and is to be identified with the man of sin spoken of by Paul, 4) The period after the destruction of the little horn and of the whole fourth kingdom. That Pusey feels we are now living in the second of these periods is seen when he says:

This was characteristic for the relation of the immigrating nations to Rome; they did not found a new kingdom, but continued the Roman. And so it continues to the end of all earthly power, until its final ramification into ten kingdoms. To attempt now to mark out these would be as misplaced as to fix the Coming of Christ, (with which they stand connected) tomorrow or the next day.²

The visions in chapters two and seven each issue finally in the estab-

.

1. Ibid., pp. 706-707.

2. E. B. Pusey, Daniel the Prophet, p. 69.

lishment of the Kingdom of God. Pusey conceives of this Kingdom in both the temporal sense as manifested by church history, and in the ultimate eschatological sense.¹

b. Daniel 7:9-14

The vision of the Ancient of Days corresponds to the stone which smashes the giant image in chapter 2. However, the stone represents the beginning of the Kingdom of God, while the vision of the Ancient of Days speaks of the Kingdom in its final triumph. Here is the picture of the subjugation of the last rebellion of man to the Kingdom of God. Pusey says that at present we can not point out its fulfillment since the end is not yet, but we can at least recognize its harmony and oneness with the Gospel.² The vision ends with the end of time, the destruction of all human power, and the establishment of the everlasting Kingdom of Christ.

c. Daniel 8

In contrast to the preceding visions, the vision of chapter 8 has no connection with the Kingdom of God, the coming of Christ, or the end of the world. Pusey takes the ram to represent the empire of Medo-Persia and the he-goat as representing the Macedonian empire. The notable horn between the eyes of the he-goat prefigures Alexander the Great. The division of Alexander's kingdom is represented by the four notable horns which arise after the destruction of the first large horn. There then arises a little horn from one of the four notable ones. This is fulfilled in Antiochus Epihanes, who is quite separate from the little

.

1. Ibid., p. 64.

2. Ibid., p. 84.

horn of chapter 7, as well as from the Antichrist in chapter 11. This latter Antichrist still awaits a final fulfillment and is partially described by Paul in II Thessalonians, chapter 2.¹

d. Daniel 9

Pusey states that the time at which to begin counting the seventy weeks of years is at the commission to Ezra in the seventh year of Artaxerxes Longimanus, 457 B.C. The seven weeks of years plus the sixty-two weeks of years add up to a total of 483 years. The baptism of Christ at 27 A.D. would correspond to the end of the 483 years, which is the time of Messiah the Prince. The beginning of Jesus' public ministry marks a confirming of the covenant. Pusey believes that Jesus' public ministry lasted for about three and one half years. Thus Messiah was cut off after the sixty-nine weeks, and it was in the midst of the seventieth week that Christ caused the sacrifice and the oblation to cease at His death. The remaining three and a half years of the seventieth week mark the time, perhaps, during which the Jews heard the Gospel before the beginning of the preaching to the Gentiles which showed that the Gospel embraced the world. Pusey holds that verse 26b refers to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 A.D.

3. The Use of Joel made by Pusey

In his introduction to the Book of Joel, Pusey says that the prophecy of Joel extends from his own day to the end of time. This is indicated in chapter 1:4, where it is said that judgment shall follow judgment. Pusey takes this as referring to the successive judgments

.

1. Ibid., pp. 88-96.

which shall follow each other until the end of the world.¹

a. Joel 2:28-3:2

The pouring out of God's Spirit was fulfilled at Pentecost, and the establishment of the Church. Regarding the cosmic disturbances which are foretold, Pusey says that each revelation of God prepares the way for another, until that last revelation of His love and of His wrath in the Great Day.² These signs were partially fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem at which time cosmic signs are related by Josephus. Yet, they await a final fulfillment at the second coming of Christ. Regarding chapter 3:1, Pusey says:

It is certain . . . that there shall be a complete conversion of the Jews, before the end of the world, as indeed has always been believed. This shall probably be shortly before the end of the world, and God would say here, 'When I shall have brought to an end the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem, i.e. of that people to whom were the promises, and shall have delivered them from the bondage of sin and from blindness to light and freedom in Christ, then will I gather all nations to judgment.'³

The gathering of all nations in the valley of Jehoshaphat may refer to Christ's coming for judgment at His second coming. This valley is overshadowed by the Mount of Olives, and Pusey suggests that it may be there that we shall meet the Lord in the air.

b. Joel 3:7-8

This prophecy of a return of the children of Judah and Jerusalem from captivity is interpreted by the fact that the utterance is directed against Tyre and Sidon. Thus, it refers to a historical situation. There were different times in history when these nations car-

.

1. E. B. Pusey, The Minor Prophets, Vol. I, p. 146.
2. Ibid., p. 196.
3. Ibid., p. 200.

ried away captive the Jews. The return of the Jews and the promised punishment of Tyre and Sidon is seen in the history of the Old Testament times.¹

4. The Use of Amos 9:11-15 made by Pusey

Pusey refers the promise of the Davidic restoration to the establishment of the Church at the coming of Christ. Verse 12 indicates that the restored Israel of the future is to include Gentile as well as Jew, but in this passage no earthly kingdom is meant. The promises of agricultural plenty are to be taken as the great spiritual blessings under the Kingdom of Christ, when all shall be above nature. The restoration of Israel promised in verse 14 speaks not of their literal return to Palestine but of their spiritual redemption in Christ.²

5. The Use of Zechariah 14 made by Pusey

Pusey regards Zechariah 14 as a part of the book which speaks of that period which begins after the founding of the Church till the final conversion of the Jews and Gentiles. Regarding the chapter as a whole, he states:

It seems then probable that, like the kindred prophecy of Joel, it relates chiefly to the time of the end, and that as our Lord unites the destruction of Jerusalem with His coming in the Day of Judgment, so here are united that first destruction with the last rebellion of man, in the times of Anti-Christ.³

Verse 2 speaks of a universal strife which is to take place at the end of the world. God fighting the nations, is a picture of the triumph of righteousness which is to come when the power of evil is sunk into Hell and the liberty bought by Christ through conquest of the enemy is

.

1. Ibid., p. 206.

2. Ibid., pp. 336-340.

3. E. B. Pusey, The Minor Prophets, Vol. II, p. 447.

made perfect. Verse 4 means that possibly our Lord shall come to judge this world at the same spot from whence He arose. The rending of the Mount of Olives may or may not be literal. The escape of the Christians to Pella at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem is a slight image of the deliverance effected in this prophetic view of the end of the age.¹

6. Conclusion

A study of the interpretation of selected Old Testament apocalyptic passages by historical premillennialists reveals that the following events are foretold: 1) The rise and fall of world empires prior to the coming of the Messiah; their continuation after His coming, 2) Return of Israel to Palestine from the Babylonian captivity, 3) Tribulation of the Jews under Antiochus Epiphanes, 4) First advent of Christ, including His public ministry, death, and resurrection, 5) Establishment of the New Testament Church, the preaching of the Gospel, and the conversion of the Gentiles, 6) The fall of earthly Jerusalem after the Jewish rejection of Christ, 70 A.D., 7) The rising of the Antichrist before the return of Christ, 8) Last glorious conversion of Israel at or before the second coming of Christ, and their literal restoration to Palestine, 9) The visible coming of Christ upon the earth for judgment and the establishment of His righteous Kingdom, 10) Complete restoration of the earth so that it becomes again the tabernacle of God with men.

C. Interpretation of the Apocalyptic Passages in the Gospels and Acts

1. The Use of the Olivet Discourse made by Lange

Lange says the intent of the whole discourse is to reveal to

.

1. Ibid., p. 450.

the disciples the signs of the approaching destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the world, as well as the signs of His own glorious coming. Using an apocalyptic style, Christ pictures the coming judgments in a series of three cycles, each of which pictures the whole future but in such a way that each successive cycle approximates more closely the final catastrophe. Thus, chapter 24:4-14 pictures the whole course of the world as to its general characteristics up to the end. Verses 15 to 28 of chapter 24 picture the destruction of Jerusalem, which prefigures the final judgment itself. Finally, in chapter 24:29-44, the end of the world and the final judgment itself is described. The remainder of the discourse is devoted to a number of parables and similitudes in which Christ pictures the judgment as it unfolds in an organic succession of acts. Chapter 24:45-51 pictures the judgment upon the clergy, while chapter 25:1-13 shows the judgment upon the Church. The judgment upon the individual Church members is described in chapter 25:14-30. Finally, chapter 25:31-46 pictures the universal judgment of the world.¹

a. Matthew 24:1-14

This section is a sketch of last things to the end of the world. The disciples asking their question in verse 4 were sure that Christ's coming would issue in the end of the world, but they failed to realize that the destruction of Jerusalem as foretold by Jesus was itself a sign of the coming of Christ. This distinction should be kept in mind in interpreting the entire chapter. The coming of which the disciples ask refers to the period of His last coming in glory. This "parousia" corresponds to the "epiphaneia" of II Thessalonians 2:8,

.

1. John Peter Lange, The Gospel according to Matthew, p. 418.

both of which are in antithesis to the times of the hidden influence of Christ's reign through His Church. In the "end", Lange sees the germ of the expected millennarian Kingdom which was more fully developed in Revelation 20. The fact that the "end" should come suddenly does not keep it from embracing a period, the stages of which are clearly intimated in this and other apocalyptic passages.¹

In verse 5, the reference is not to specific signs of the destruction of Jerusalem but to general ones of the end of the world. The false Messiahs which are predicted appeared both before and after the destruction and included any who pretended to assume the place of Christ, even though they did not claim to be Christ Himself. So also the wars and rumors of wars must refer to all wars down to the end of the age, of which there are many. The end referred to in verses 6, 13, and 14, is the end of the world.²

Verse 7 speaks of the political revolutions in the world of nations, migrations of nations, risings, judgments, blendings, and new formations of peoples, which characterize the whole Gospel dispensation. The verses which follow, 8-12, predict the greater internal woes that are to be experienced throughout the Gospel age. It will be characterized by a dying out of true religion with the result that the love of the greater majority of Christians will grow cold. After the Gospel has been preached for a testimony to all nations, the end of the world proper will take place.³

b. Matthew 24:15-28

These verses Lange considers as giving signs forewarning the

.

1. Ibid., p. 422.
2. Ibid., pp. 422-423.
3. Ibid., p. 424.

end of the world. Verses 15-22 deal directly with the destruction of Jerusalem, while verses 23-28 speak of the New Testament era of restrained judgment. In the abomination of desolation (verse 15), Lange sees a prediction that the hated Roman eagles shall be set up about the holy city. This was to be a signal for flight from the city. This flight was historically fulfilled in that a group of Christians fled to Pella in Peraea. Verses 16-20 describe fully the necessity for flight before the terrible destruction of Jerusalem. Regarding the shortening of the days (verse 22), Lange says:

. . . the destruction of Jerusalem signified and was the actual beginning of the end of the world, inasmuch as it was the judgment upon the Jewish people, which forms the counterpart of the world's judgment upon Christ, and because the heathen world was involved in the guilt and in the punishment of the Jewish world. Then those days are the days of the destruction of Jerusalem, as the days of the great preliminary judgment. Those days are, as days of judgment, represented as shortened Thus, then, the days of the New Testament dispensation, are, under the judicial point of view, or with reference to the judgment as already begun, modified days of judgment--a season of grace. To this points the conclusion, 'no man would be saved!' Shortened--that is, in the divine counsel.¹

The "tote" of verse 23 points to the interval between the first century destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the world, making the remainder of this section refer to the New Testament period of restrained judgment hinted at in the shortened days of verse 22. The false prophets predicted throughout the Church age are all who announce a new development or reform in the doctrine and life of the Church which is contrary to the teaching of the Word of God. Verse 26 points out that Christ is not identified with any party or sectional interest, nor is He to be found in an external Church with its temporalities and

.

1. Ibid., pp. 425-426.

glory. Lange says that the lightning of verse 27 refers to the final appearing of Christ when He will manifest Himself by an unmistakable brightness, radiating over the whole earth. Not only the suddenness of the coming is meant but rather also His unmistakable, fearful visibility.¹

c. Matthew 24:29-44

These verses deal with the appearance of the end of the world itself. But in speaking of them as dealing with the "appearance" of the end of the world, Lange is careful to point out that it is only the beginning of the end which is the "parousia" or advent of Christ. The tribulation (verse 29) is that which occurred during the days of restrained judgment under the Gospel dispensation. The verse further lists great cosmological disturbances which are to be taken literally and which prepare the way for the sign of the Son of Man. The coming of the Son of man and the sending of His angels refers not to the final judgment but to His coming when He will establish His millennial reign upon the earth (vv. 30,31). Lange points out that the gathering of the elect refers to the first resurrection, as seen also in I Thessalonians 4:16-17.²

The parable of the fig tree is meant to state that when the cosmological revolutions mentioned in the preceding verses appear, the Lord will soon appear. The generation of verse 34 refers simply to those who are alive to know and discern the signs of His coming. The verses that describe one person being taken and the other left are to be explained by verse 31, where the angels gather the elect at the out-

.

1. Ibid., p. 426.

2. Ibid., pp. 427-429.

set of the millennial reign.¹

d. Matthew 24:45-25:46

Lange divides this section into a series of four judgments which follow upon the appearance of the end of the world, or the second coming described in 24:29-44. Regarding these judgments, he states:

This series of judgments points to a period of the royal administration of Christ upon earth, which in the fuller eschatological development of Rev. xx. is represented in the symbolical form of a thousand years kingdom. Thus, as the great crisis of the destruction of Jerusalem unfolds itself into a period which closes only with the appearance of Christ, so again the crisis of the appearance of Christ is the germ of a period which is consummated in the general judgment and the end of the world. But the millennial kingdom, is, in its totality, the great last day of separation and cosmical revolution, out of which the present world will issue in heavenly glorification.²

(1) The Judgment of Church Leaders

Matthew 24:45-51 shows that judgment at the coming of Christ will begin upon those in office in the Church. Though the parable of the good and wicked servants applies to Christians generally, its context shows it to belong to eschatological instruction, as it introduces the series of specific judgments leading to the ultimate end.³

(2) The Judgment of the Church as a Body

The parable of the virgins in Matthew 25:1-13 is a picture of the judgment of the Church as a body. The Church in her aggregate ideal is the bride, and the members in their separation from the world are the virgins of Christ. The leading idea of the parable is the readiness of the Church for the coming of Her Lord, and verse 13 makes it clear that the emphasis is not on the blessedness of endurance to the end. The

.

1. Ibid., pp. 429-430.
2. Ibid., p. 428.
3. Ibid., p. 435.

division of the virgins into two classes signifies that at the time of the second coming part of the Church will be alive and part of it dead. The sleeping of the foolish virgins represents their entanglement with the world with its spirit of carnal security.¹

(3) The Judgment of Individual Christians

The parable of the talents in Matthew 25:14-30 indicates the retribution which will come upon individual Christians at the time of the second advent.²

(4) The Final Judgment

Matthew 25:31-46, the last passage in this series foretelling four judgments, predicts a final judgment upon all nations. The judgment here described follows a general resurrection at the close of the millennium. The passage forms the conclusion of the Lord's coming. With this judgment the full and perfected judicial age of the millennium is brought to a close. Lange says:

Thus, as the first parable (ch. xxiv. 45) must be placed at the beginning of these thousand years, and the second and third exhibit the further development of the kingly, judicial administration of Christ, this last judgment forms the great conclusion as it is exhibited in I Cor. xv. 24 and Rev. xx. 9.³

Lange holds that the judgment spoken of here is both of Christians and non-Christians. However, he is not clear as to whether there will be people who will become Christians during the millennium. He does point out, however, that this section presupposes the nominal evangelization of the world which will necessarily follow from the second advent of Christ, since it will force all nations into submission to His rule.

.

1. Ibid., pp. 437-439.
2. Ibid., p. 442.
3. Ibid., p. 447.

2. The Use of Other Passages in the Gospels made by Lange

a. Matthew 10:23

Lange says that in interpreting this passage we must not forget that it refers to a particular mission on which the disciples were sent. Therefore, the passage is not basically eschatological but might be interpreted: "Till the Son of man shall overtake you." Yet the expression is also symbolical and applies to the Church, pointing forward to the second coming of Christ. It includes at the same time the idea that the work of the disciples will be cut short by the impending destruction of Jerusalem.¹

b. Matthew 16:27-28

Lange says that this coming of the Son of man refers to the second advent. This coming will involve His being the founder of a new world and the center and author of the new creation. His coming is not merely to execute judgment. In stating that some standing there should not taste death till they saw the Son of man coming in His kingdom, Jesus was referring to another phase of His advent--that which concerned the glory of His kingdom within the circle of His disciples. He spoke of the approaching victory of the resurrection which should issue from His passion.²

c. John 5:25-29

Verses 25-27 refer to a spiritual rising from the dead as evidenced by the fact that they are governed by the phrase: "and now is." But verses 28-29 speak of the future bodily resurrection of the

.

1. Ibid., p. 192.
2. Ibid., p. 304.

dead. The subject in this passage is the general resurrection. As such it would include the first resurrection of Revelation 20. Lange indicates that Christ here looks at the resurrection of the righteous and the wicked in terms of the general fact and does not indicate its two phases.¹

d. John 6:39-40

Jesus states that He will raise at the last day all that has been given Him. Here again Lange says that it is not specifically the first resurrection which is intended. By the "last day" Christ means the whole period of judgment and resurrection which extends from the second coming and its accompanying first resurrection to the general resurrection.²

e. John 14:3

This promise of Jesus to come again and receive unto Himself His own is interpreted by Lange in a comprehensive way, making the coming to include the work of Christ from the resurrection to the last judgment. The coming of Jesus includes a coming into the lives of the disciples by His Word, the Sacrament, and the Holy Spirit, a coming for them in receiving them into heaven at their death, and His final coming at the second advent. In all these ways Christ takes His people to be with Himself.³

3. The Use of Acts made by Alford

a. Acts 1:11

The promised return of Christ in the same manner in which He

.

1. John Peter Lange, The Gospel according to John, p. 192

2. Ibid., p. 220.

3. Ibid., p. 436.

ascended is to be taken literally and not merely as expressing certainty. Alford does not say when this coming of Christ shall occur.¹

b. Acts 3:21

The restoration of all things promised here refers to the period or time of the restoration and not only to the moment when it begins or is completed.² Thus, the passage might be said to refer to the total eschatological process following the second advent.

c. Acts 17:31

Alford does not elaborate as to when the judgment of the world foretold here will take place. He points out that the judgment consists in the judge, Jesus Christ, who is its vehicle and expression.³

4. Conclusion

A summary of Lange and Alford's interpretation of the major apocalyptic passages of the Gospels and Acts shows the following elements and events to be foretold: 1) The spiritual resurrection of believers at their acceptance of Christ, 2) The destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., a type of the end of the world, 3) Progress of the Church age with political and social upheavals, the dying out of true religion, and the arising of false Messiahs, 4) A time of tribulation in the period of restrained judgment of the Gospel era, 5) Great cosmological disturbances as signs of the second coming of Christ, 6) The personal return of Christ to the earth to set up His millennial Kingdom, 7) A time of judgment upon the total Church at the coming of Christ, 8) The final

.

1. Henry Alford, The Greek Testament, Vol. II, p. 5.

2. Ibid., p. 39.

3. Ibid., p. 199.

judgment following the general resurrection at the close of the millennium, 9) A restoration of all things in terms of the total eschatological process.

D. Interpretation of the Apocalyptic Passages
in the Epistles

1. The Use of Romans made by Lange

a. Romans 2:5

In this passage the apostle is warning against the wrath of God which is ready to burst forth upon impenitent men. Lange cites James 5:3 in this connection, where judgment is foretold for those who heap up treasures for the last days. Every catastrophic judgment which God gives succeeds a period of long suffering and is called a day of wrath. Each such act of judgment is a prelude to the last day of consummated wrath. Though God judges emphatically through all periods of time, His judgment has special times of unveiling. This passage speaks in the final analysis of the time of final judgment which shall be introduced beginning at the second coming of Christ.¹

b. Romans 8:18-23

The creation which shall be restored refers basically to the creature life which can earnestly groan and expect. The revelation of the sons of God shall be at the time of the coming of Christ. Just as there was a correspondence of nature and the human world in the state of fall and decay resulting from sin, so there will also be a corresponding deliverance. The physical world which suffered in man's fall

.

1. John Peter Lange and F. R. Fay, The Epistle of Paul to the Romans, p. 96.

must also share in his redemption. Just when in the divine program this redemption will be realized, Lange does not state. However, he does give as a cross reference Matthew 25:31, which in his system speaks of the last judgment at the end of the millennium.¹

c. Romans 11

Paul in this chapter deals with the problem of Israel's rejection of the Gospel. By the fulness of the Gentiles the apostle has in view an organically dynamic totality of the heathen world, that is, the totality of the Gentiles as nations, not as individuals.² Israel, taken literally as a nation, is yet to be saved. This means neither isolated examples nor total number without exception. Lange suggests that the main part of Israel as a nation may return to Palestine, but he definitely rejects the idea of the establishment of a special Jewish Church with Old Testament features.

2. The Use of Corinthians made by Godet

a. I Corinthians 15:20-24

Godet sees in this passage, aside from the resurrection of Christ, two other resurrections. In verse 23 the apostle speaks of a special resurrection in which only true believers will participate. The time of the advent of Christ will effect a division between true and false members of the Church, for only the true ones will be raised at Christ's coming. The "then" beginning verse 24 implies a period of time between the advent and the "end". The "end" here designates the end, absolutely speaking. Between the advent and the "end" will occur the millennial

.

1. Ibid., p. 286.

2. Ibid., p. 370.

reign of Christ upon the earth. The reign has as its object the destruction of all opposing powers remaining after the advent. This Messianic Kingdom will finally issue in a general resurrection which shall inaugurate the last judgment and the end.¹

b. I Corinthians 15:51-53

These verses give further information concerning the resurrection. Godet says that the resurrection here mentioned is that which will occur before the millennial Kingdom, and again includes only the righteous. Those that shall be changed are all believers alive at the time of the second coming.²

3. The Use of Thessalonians, Timothy, and Peter made by Alford

a. I Thessalonians 3:13

Alford says that the coming of Jesus with His saints mentioned here means that both angels and the spirits of the just will accompany Christ at His coming.³

b. I Thessalonians 4:13-17; 5:2

Alford shows that the Thessalonians were distressed about the state of the dead in Christ, supposing that the dead had lost the great opportunity of standing before Christ at His coming. Paul shows the Thessalonians that they should not be uneasy over those who had fallen asleep before the coming of the Kingdom. Verse 14 refers to the resurrection of the Christian dead, and none else. All these shall rise, after which the saints will rise to meet the Lord as He descends to the earth. Alford points out that this coming of Christ is to be followed

.

1. F. Godet, Commentary on St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians, Vol. II, pp. 356-364.
2. Ibid., p. 436.
3. Henry Alford, The Greek Testament, Vol. III, p. 267.

by His setting up the Kingdom upon the earth.¹ The day of the Lord mentioned in I Thessalonians 5:2 is the same as the coming of the Lord to set up His reign on earth described in chapter 4.

c. II Thessalonians 2:1-12

The Thessalonians were giving an undue emphasis upon Paul's teaching regarding the second coming, with the result that their minds were unsettled even to the extent of leaving their daily employments in anticipation of the coming reign of Christ. Alford says that Paul wrote this epistle to make it clear to the Thessalonians that though they should expect the day of Christ, they should realize that its coming awaited a course and development of events. Though this development was already in progress, the coming of the Lord would not take place until it was fully ripened.²

This prophecy of the coming of the man of sin awaits fulfillment in a personal Antichrist. Alford recognizes that such powers as the Roman empire, Mohammed, Napoleon, the Papacy, and the Roman Church prefigure the man of sin who is yet to come in a full prophetic sense immediately before the coming of the Lord. Just before the second coming there will occur the great apostacy which has had but partial fulfillment in the Papacy, Mohammedanism, Mormonism, and the like.³

d. II Timothy 3:1

Alford says that the period referred to in this passage which predicts bad times in the last days is that immediately preceding the coming of the Lord. Yet these last days even at Timothy's time are on

.

1. Ibid., p. 276.

2. Ibid., Prolegomena, p. 53.

3. Ibid., Prolegomena, pp. 67,68.

their way, with the premonitory symptoms already appearing.¹

e. II Timothy 4:1

Alford points out that Christ's appearing and His Kingdom must not be taken as referring to the same time. The appearing speaks of His coming at which we will stand before Him. It is in His Kingdom that we hope to reign with Him.²

f. II Peter 3:10-13

The formation of the new heavens and the new earth pictures the positive results for the Church in the day when the heavens will be dissolved and the elements will melt. Alford gives as cross references to this passage Matthew 24:29, which both he and Lange refer to the second coming, and Revelation 21:1, which both he and Lange believe speaks of the final new Jerusalem after the millennial reign.³

4. Conclusion

The interpretation of major apocalyptic passages in the epistles by historical premillennialists contributes the following predicted events: 1) The period of final judgment beginning at the second coming of Christ, 2) The salvation of Israel literally as a nation after the fulness of the Gentiles has come in, 3) The arising of a personal Antichrist at the close of the Church age, of whom there have been types throughout history, 4) The great apostacy prior to the second coming, of which there have been partial fulfillments in history, 5) The doctrine of two resurrections--one of believers at the second coming and

.

1. Ibid., p. 390.

2. Ibid., p. 398.

3. Henry Alford, The Greek Testament, Vol. IV, p. 418.

a second comprising the rest of the dead at the close of millennial reign, 6) The restoration of the physical world as it shares in the redemption of man, 7) The formation of a new heavens and a new earth.

E. Interpretation of the Revelation of John

1. The Basic Approach

Lange says that the basic theme of the Apocalypse is the near advent of Christ as the end of the world, which will reveal perfectly the Kingdom of God. The truths of the second coming are considered in such a way as to edify the Christian Church. The Revelation is developed as a great Divine week of a second creation, and thus its characteristic number is seven. There are seven churches, seven seals, seven trumpets, seven thunders, seven heads of Antichrist, seven vials of wrath, and a seventh Day which is the perfect revelation of the Seven Spirits in the glorified Christ. The apocalypse is divided into two parts: the course of the world to the end, chapters 1-11, and the course of the world in the end, chapters 12-21. Lange points out that the individual items of the septenary do not follow one another chronologically to form different historical periods. Rather, the individual visions are invariably pictures of the world's whole course and are characteristic of this course in its various aspects and dynamical relations. Even so, there is a continuous advance toward the goal of the coming of Christ. Thus, the seals are more eschatological than the seven churches; the trumpets are more eschatological than the seals, and so on.¹

.

1. John Peter Lange, The Revelation of John, p. 81.

2. The Use of the Various Passages by Lange

Lange's interpretation of the main centers of the Apocalypse will be stated. It should be noted that Lange places the material of chapters 11:15-13:18 under the septenary dealing with the seven heads of Antichrist, while chapters 14:1-20:15 are centered about the seven vials of wrath. Chapter 21 introduces the seventh Day.

a. The Seven Letters

Lange says that the letters to the seven Churches are not to be thought of as introductory to the Apocalypse. Rather, they are prophetic and constitute the first part of the book, forming a foundation for the prophecy. The pictures of the churches as presented are prophetic of the churchly conditions which shall be found to the end of time. Yet, there is a sense in which Ephesus does represent the apostolic church, and Laodicea pictures the church at the end of the age. Lange summarizes his view thus:

We can affirm with certainty that the seven life-pictures are continued side by side through all ages of the Church; now one, and now another, predominating; There have been illustrations of the figure of Jezebel in all ages. And were there no Philadelphia in the very last time, where would the Lord find His Bride?¹

b. The Seven Seals

The twenty-four elders in chapter 4 are the ideal representatives of the Old and New Testament theocracy. The book which is given to the Lamb in chapter 5 contains the history of the world. The seven seals which are opened by the Lamb represent the course of the world's history from the time of John until the end of the world. The first five seals are synchronous and not consecutive in the order of their

.

1. Ibid., p. 139.

unfolding. Seals one through four present the human history of the world. The first rider is Christ who supercedes and heads all history. The following three riders represent war, hunger, and death, which plague human history. The fifth seal shows that martyrdom is at the core of the world's spiritual history down through the Christian centuries. The opening of the sixth seal represents the beginning catastrophe of the final judgment in the second advent of Christ.¹

c. The Seven Trumpets

The key to the interpretation of chapter 7 is the fact that it is a part of a larger whole, chapters 7-9, which represent the essential form of the history of the Church in this world in respect to its spiritual aspect. The sealing of the 144,000 in chapter 7, and the gathering of the great multitude represent a "heaven picture" of the Church. These events should not be regarded as an episode in the structure of the book. The 144,000 are a picture of the Church of Christ militant throughout the Christian era. The great innumerable multitude represents the Church Triumphant in glory. There it increases every instant by the arrival of those who die in the Lord and are coming out of great tribulation.²

The trumpets, which follow the opening of the seventh seal, are divided into two groups. The first four picture the predominant spiritual sufferings of the Church throughout its history under the figure of sufferings of nature. The last three trumpets foretell the great demonic sufferings of the Church Militant by means of figures of nature perverted into unnaturalness.³

.

1. Ibid., pp. 165-167.
2. Ibid., pp. 182-184.
3. Ibid., p. 197.

d. The Seven Thunders

The section from chapter 10:1-11:14 is transitional to the second part of the book. The vision of the mighty angel of chapter 10 and that of the two witnesses of chapter 11:1-14 form a bridge leading to the consummation described in chapter 11:15-22:5. The seven sealed thunders betoken a new revelation and advance of the Kingdom of God, just as the thunders of Sinai indicated a great reform in God's dealing with men. The strong angel stands in the same relation to the second coming as the angel of the Lord in the Old Testament stood in respect to Christ's first advent. The little book which John eats is that of the world's end and the revelation of the events of the approaching end of the world.¹

The temple of chapter 11 represents the true Church whose pilgrimage is represented as forty-two months. The two witnesses represent the Christian Church and the Christian State, whose witness will be cut off near the end of the age by the forces of Antichristianity. Their resurrection symbolizes the gathering of the Bride of Christ from the unbelieving world, which shall take place at the second coming of Christ. The hour of their glorification becomes one of judgment on the world.²

e. The Woman and the Dragon

In the vision of chapter 12, Lange interprets the woman as being the Old and New Testament Church of God in undivided unity. The man child represents Christ who was exalted in His resurrection and ascension, a fact expressed in the figure of being caught up to the

.

1. Ibid., p. 217.
2. Ibid., p. 226

throne of God. The wilderness to which the woman flees is the renunciation of the world by the New Testament Church. The war in heaven represents the banishment of Satan from the inner spiritual life of the Church Triumphant and the consequent freedom of the invisible Church on earth. The 1,260 days represent a period of uninterrupted days of work.¹

f. The Two Beasts

In chapter 13, the beast which arises out of the sea represents the God-opposed, Antichristian world power. Lange states:

One-sided therefore, is the interpretation of the Beast as pagan Rome; and equally one-sided is the application of it to papal Christian Rome. The import of the figure, undoubtedly, does not gravitate backward to heathen Rome, but in accordance with its eschatological tendency, forward to Christian Rome.²

The beast from the earth represents personified hypocrisy, hollowness, and reprobacy, in religion. This master of false prophecy is yet to come.³

g. The 144,000

The 144,000 mentioned in chapter 14 present a proleptical celebration of the final judgment by the Church Triumphant. The Church is represented in a preliminary state of spiritual consummation, and Mount Zion represents the real state of God in its consummation. The harvest of the grain and the vintage which follow are two pictures of the actual judgment at the coming of Christ. Lange suggests that the harvest grain may represent the ingathering of the righteous, while the vintage represents the judgment of the wicked following that ingathering.⁴

.

1. Ibid., pp. 236-238.
2. Ibid., p. 265.
3. Ibid., p. 258.
4. Ibid., pp. 277,278.

h. The Seven Vials

The seven vials are a picture of the collective judgment of the world in general. This is the final judgment, and unlike that of the seventh seal and seventh trumpet, it does not lead to a new series of judgments. Lange does not interpret the plagues literally, but shows how they bring out the concept of a total judgment of the world. By the great city of chapter 16:19, Lange understands an ideal city which embraces all Antichristianity in both the occident and the orient.¹

i. The Harlot and the Beast

Lange regards the Harlot in chapter 17 as distinguished from the general Babylon of chapter 16:19 and yet related to it as a final expression of Babylon's last historical culmination. The beast in chapter 17 is identical with the Beast from the sea of chapter 13 and represents the Antitheocratic and Antichristian organ of Satan. The Harlot is further to be identified with the woman of chapter 12, and as such, she represents the fallen Church with especial reference to the papacy.² Whereas chapter 17 gives an ideal heaven picture of the fall of Babylon, chapter 18 describes that same fall proleptically as actual judgment taking place on earth.

j. The Second Coming

This passage of chapter 19:11-21 is divided into two sections. Verses 11-16 give an ideal heavenly picture of the victory over the Beast. There is an undefined period of time which elapses between the destruction of the Harlot and the second coming of Christ. Verses 17-21

.

1. Ibid., p. 303.

2. Ibid., p. 306.

give an earthly picture of the parousia of Christ for judgment upon and victory over the Beast. Thus, chapter 19 records the actual coming of Christ to set up His millennial reign.¹

k. The Millennium

Chapter 20:1-5 gives a picture of the millennial Kingdom and continues the earthly picture begun in chapter 19:17-21. Satan loses his foothold within the human race with the destruction of the Beast. The angel casts him into the abyss and entirely shuts off Satanic influences from men for the time of the thousand years. The purpose of shutting him up is that he shall not prematurely seduce the heathen which remain after the parousia and who constitute the old border of the new world that is in the process of becoming. The positive side of the millennial Kingdom has three features: 1) There is the first resurrection, which includes the martyrs of the last time and all the other saints of the ages as well as those alive who shall be changed at the parousia. 2) There is the first judgment of restitution. Regarding this, Lange says:

If we consider that the judgment upon the Antichristian host has already been held, and that the last judgment upon the last revolt . . . cannot be anticipated, there results, as a middle domain of judgment an instruction and discipline exercised by Heaven upon the human race, as extant at the parousia, and thus sharing in the cosmical metamorphosis.²

3) Finally, there is the first period of living and reigning with Christ in the glory of a spiritual life which organizes earth for its union with heaven. Lange believes that the saints will live upon the earth in bodily form.

.
.

1: Ibid., pp. 131-133.

2. Ibid., p. 345.

Lange regards the prophecy of the millennium as a great pearl of Christian truth in that it throws light on a series of difficult Christian conceptions. In the first place, it shows that the Last Day of scripture expands into a Divine Day of 1000 years in a symbolical sense as representing a specific aeon. Secondly, it gives us an understanding of the catastrophe which is to divide time and eternity--the world of becoming and the world of consummation. The contrast between time and eternity is harmonized by a transition period in perfect harmony with the laws of natural development. Furthermore, it mediates the fact of the resurrection by showing there is a first resurrection before the general resurrection. Believers are blossoms of the general resurrection, a whole age in advance of the remainder of mankind.¹

l. The Last Revolt of Evil

At the close of the millennial reign, Satan will be loosed to test the obedience and Christianity of the nations in a fiery test, after they have long enjoyed the blessings of the parousia of Christ. This is predicted in Revelation 20:6-10. These nations shall then go to battle against the saints, and thus, those who have partaken of the first resurrection will fight against foes belonging to this earthly life. The battle takes place about the beloved city, which Lange does not identify with the earthly Jerusalem. Heaven intervenes in behalf of the beleaguered city, and Satan is sent to his eternal doom.²

m. The Final Consummation

After the destruction of Satan, there follows the final con-

.

1: Ibid., p. 343.

2: Ibid., pp. 355-358.

summation foretold in chapters 20:11-22:5. There is a general resurrection of all the rest of the dead. These are judged, after which death and hades are destroyed. True Christians are not judged here, since by the first resurrection they are exempted from judgment. It is at this judgment that the old world ends and the new world appears in a heavenly development.¹ The wicked are sent to eternal damnation in the lake of fire, while the righteous inhabit eternally the renewed and purified earth. Lange takes the holy city in 21:9ff. to be a literal habitation of the redeemed on the renewed earth.²

3. Conclusion

A study of Lange's commentary on Revelation shows the following basic elements to be present in his apocalyptic scheme: 1) The description of the condition of the Church in the world throughout the Gospel era, 2) Prediction of the course of the world's physical and spiritual history up to the second coming, 3) Great suffering of the Church at the hand of secular and religious powers prior to the second coming, 4) The rise of great Antichristian powers before the second coming, 5) The second coming of Christ to set up His millennial reign on the earth; the first resurrection, 6) The millennium, a period symbolically expressed as 1000 years in which Satan is bound and Christ rules the nations of the earth, 7) A loosing of Satan at the end of the 1000 years; his last revolt and destruction, 8) The general resurrection and the last judgment of all the wicked dead, 9) The establishment of the new heavens and the new earth, the holy city of God, in which the redeemed shall dwell eternally.

.

1. Ibid., p. 360.
2. Ibid., p. 380.

F. Summary of the Viewpoint of Representative
Non-dispensational Premillennialism

The purpose of this section is to summarize the eschatological viewpoint of historical premillennialism as found in the apocalyptic passages which have been examined. The events foretold will be listed in a general chronological order, but consideration must be made for the overlapping of simultaneous events. The following represents a synthesis of the viewpoint presented in this chapter:

1. The restoration of Israel from Babylonian captivity.
2. The tribulation of the Jews at the hands of Antiochus Epiphanes.
3. The rise and fall of world empires prior to and subsequent to the first coming of Christ.
4. Christ's first coming, including His ministry, death, and resurrection.
5. The Olivet discourse on the fall of Jerusalem, the course of this age, and Christ's second coming.
6. The spiritual resurrection of believers at their acceptance of Christ.
7. The establishment of the New Testament Church, the preaching of the Gospel, and the conversion of the Gentiles.
8. A time of great tribulation for the Church before the close of the Gospel age.
9. The great apostacy from the faith previous to the second coming.
10. The arising of the Antichrist before the return of Christ.
11. The glorious conversion and national restoration of the Jews at or before His coming.
12. The second advent of Christ to the earth to set up His millennial reign.
13. The first resurrection, i.e., all dead believers are raised and liv-

- ing believers are changed; the judgment of all believers.
14. The millennial reign of Christ on earth, symbolically expressed as 1000 years. Satan bound, Christ rules the nations of the earth.
 15. The loosing of Satan at the end of the millennium, his rebellion and destruction.
 16. The general resurrection of all the rest of the dead for the final judgment and consigning of wicked to eternal punishment.
 17. The establishment of the new heavens and the new earth in which the redeemed dwell eternally.

In this chapter the interpretation of major apocalyptic passages of the Scriptures by historical premillennialists was presented. The method of procedure was to record the interpretation of selected passages in the Old Testament prophets, the Gospels and Acts, the New Testament epistles, and the Revelation. The basic prophetic events were then set down in a concise synthetic form to present a total picture of a representative historical premillennial view.

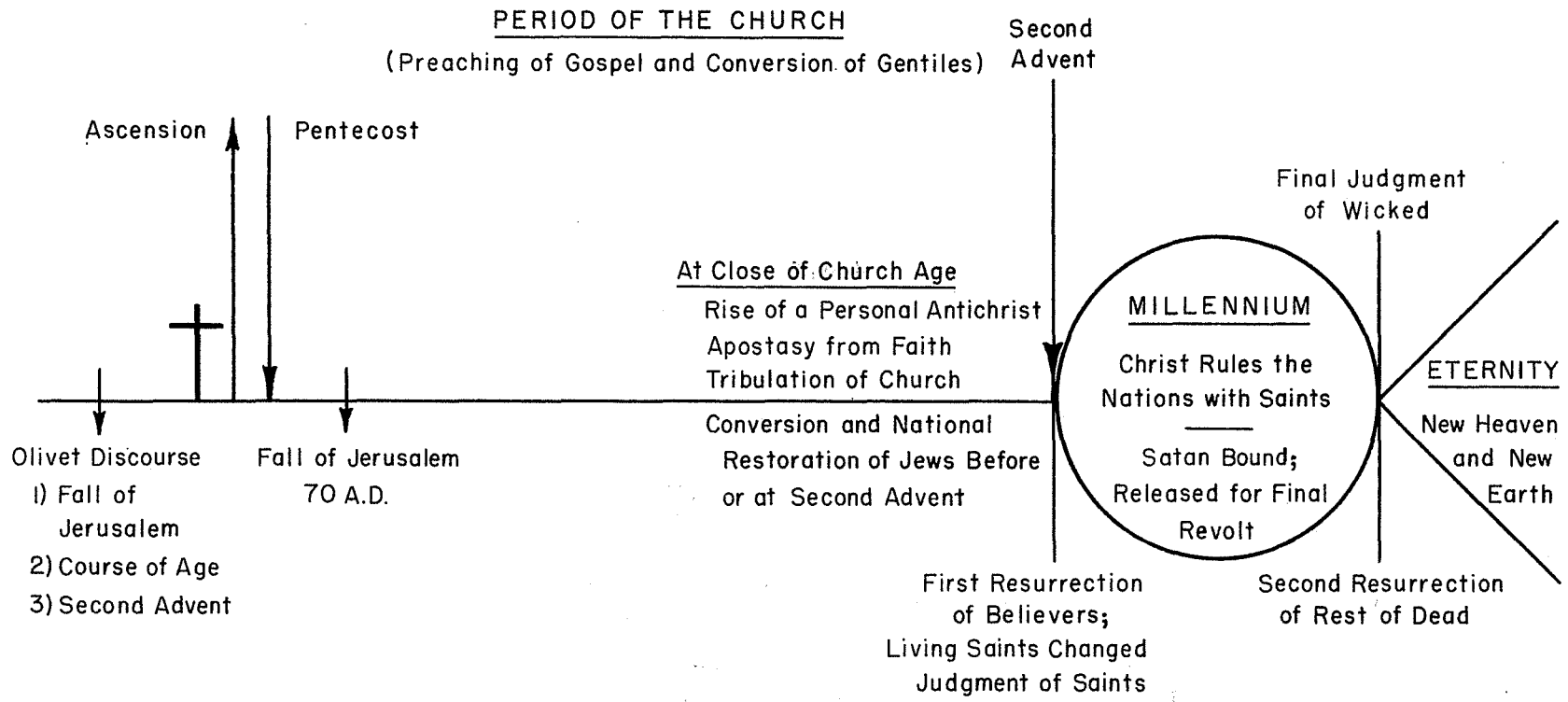


CHART II - REPRESENTATIVE NON-DISPENSATIONAL PREMILLENNIAL ESCHATOLOGY

CHAPTER III

AN EVALUATION OF AMILLENNIALISM
AND NON-DISPENSATIONAL PREMILLENNIALISM

CHAPTER III

AN EVALUATION OF AMILLENNIALISM AND NON-DISPENSATIONAL PREMILLENNIALISM

A. Introduction

The preceding chapters have presented the interpretation of the major apocalyptic passages of Scripture by John Calvin, an amillennialist, and by a group of representative non-dispensational premillennialists. The method of procedure in this chapter will be to compare the interpretations of the various passages as presented in the preceding two chapters, bringing out what seems to the author to be the strong and the weak points of each view under consideration. The findings of such a comparison should present a valid basis for drawing a conclusion regarding the acceptability of the basic eschatological views considered in this study.

B. Evaluation of the Interpretation of the Old Testament Prophets by Calvin, Nagelsbach, and Pusey

1. Use of Isaiah made by Calvin and Nagelsbach

a. Isaiah 2:2-5

According to Lange's interpretation of Revelation 20, the millennial age will end with a revolt against the rule of Christ in the form of a war. Nagelsbach hints that this passage awaits fulfillment on the earth before the eternal state. But this passage gives no suggestion that the age described will end in a great war. In fact, it specifically states that the nations shall learn war no more. The conversion of the nations in this passage is a deep spiritual experience,

a fact which would militate against their revolt at the end of the age described here. Calvin and Nagelsbach agree that the passage has its first fulfillment in the New Testament Church. The description of the new heaven and the new earth in Revelation 21 is in such literal terms that Calvin is not over spiritualizing the passage by seeing its fulfillment in the eternal state.

b. Isaiah 11:10-16

This passage speaks of both the "nations" and "Israel". Calvin's application of the passage to only the New Testament Church does not do justice to these terms in the passage. Nagelsbach's view that the passage speaks of a future salvation¹ of Israel as a nation is in harmony with this context. That a literal restoration of Israel to Palestine is predicted here is possible, especially in the light of world events in the last three years. But just as the literal restoration of Israel is possible in this age, so also is their salvation. The possibility of a future millennium is unrelated to the fulfillment of this passage.

c. Isaiah 49:14; 51:1-8; 52:1-4

Calvin again considers that there is no distinction between the Jew and Gentile in these passages, but that "Zion" covers them both. In Isaiah 51:5 the prophet makes it clear that he is talking to the

.

1. It must be made clear that by the salvation of Israel there is not indicated a national restoration to Palestine after which the Old Testament Levitical system of sacrifice is set up, and Israel shall once more become an Old Testament theocracy separate from the Christian Church. This is the interpretation of dispensational premillennialism and is to be totally rejected. In future references throughout this study to the salvation, restoration, or conversion of Israel all that is meant is that the Jewish nation shall yet accept Christ as their Saviour. It is true that there is only one Church of Christ, and Jew and Gentile are united in Him (Ephesians 2:11-22).

Jews as a nation and tells them that the isles, i.e., the heathen, will accept the law which shall go forth from God. But nothing is said of the Jewish nation accepting the Gospel. Thus, Nagelsbach seems to be correct in stressing the fact that the Jews, not having accepted the Gospel with the Gentiles, still stand in a unique relation to the Gospel. Whether Nagelsbach is correct in hinting that the union of Jew and Gentile in the Gospel awaits the time when God's Kingdom shall appear depends on the validity of the total premillennial interpretation. The emphasis in Isaiah 52 is on the spiritual side of Zion's salvation. Nagelsbach is perhaps over-literalizing the passage by suggesting a restoration of Jerusalem at the second coming of Christ.

d. Isaiah 61:1-11

Nagelsbach's interpretation that the yet future time of restoration of the Jews shall result in the Gentiles being in a state of servility to them is contrary to New Testament teaching. Romans 11:12 indicates that the future conversion of Israel will result in the greater riches of the Gentiles and not in their enslavement. Calvin is correct in stressing that the fulfillment of this passage is in the first coming of Christ, since Jesus quoted part of it at the beginning of His ministry. But again Calvin equates Zion with the total Church. This passage speaks of the nations and Zion in distinction of one another. To demand from this passage as Nagelsbach does that a literal city of Jerusalem shall be restored may be carrying the prophets point too far, but at least Nagelsbach has the core of truth when he maintains the identity of the Jewish Zion. Since the restoration from Babylon constitutes a partial fulfillment of this passage, one should be cautious in suggesting a further literal fulfillment. The things said

about the future conversion or restoration of Israel in the New Testament should be used as a touchstone in interpreting this passage and others like it.

e. Isaiah 65:17-24

Calvin's view that the passage has a first fulfillment in the restoration of the Jews from Babylon and the first coming of Christ has a valid basis, but it should not be overstressed. The final emphasis, as both commentators agree, must be its fulfillment at the end of this age. Nagelsbach interpretation again hints at a millennium. But the text says that ". . . the former things shall not be remembered, nor come to mind (verse 17)." This would hardly suggest a millennial reign which shall end with a final revolt of the Satanic power. The fact that the writer of Revelation makes evident use of this passage in describing the ultimate eternal state points toward the validity of interpreting these verses as referring thereto.

f. Isaiah 66:15-24

By referring the new heavens and the new earth to the inward renewal of man, Calvin shows his tendency to spiritualize concrete apocalyptic passages. Nagelsbach's summary of this passage is a sound reflection of its movement. Here he sees no indication of a millennium. Yet it is important to note that verses 22-23, which speak directly of the eternal state, do so in concrete literal terms.

2. Use of Ezekiel 37:1-14 made by Calvin

Calvin may be correct in saying that this passage does not refer to a future restoration of Israel at the end of the Gospel age. However, his implication that, therefore, there will be no final restoration of Israel does not follow. This passage simply does not

treat of the question.

3. Use of Daniel made by Calvin and Pusey

a. Daniel 7

Calvin may be right in referring the ten horns and the little horn to conditions at the birth of Christianity. However, one sees the weakness of Calvin's position in his interpretation regarding the vision of the Ancient of Days which follows. The picture there is obviously one of judgment. Such an opening of the books described there is clearly referred to in other apocalyptic passages in the New Testament. If, as Calvin suggests, this judgment refers only to the Kingdom of Christ through His Church, it is difficult to see how Calvin sees any more than that in Matthew 25:31ff. Calvin's spiritualization of this judgment vision is due in part to his failure to see in the fourth beast anything beyond the first coming of Christ. Pusey's view is much more satisfying. He takes 7:9f. to refer to the judgment at the end of the age at which the Kingdom of Christ is established. The verses preceding them naturally lead up to that judgment scene and cover the whole course of the Gospel age.

b. Daniel 8, 11

In their interpretation of Daniel 8, both Calvin and Pusey point out that the little horn is to be distinguished from the Antichrist of chapter 11. But Calvin does the same thing in regard to the Antichrist of chapter 11 as he did with the fourth beast of Daniel 7, limiting the fulfillment to conditions at the first coming of Christ. The description of the Antichrist in chapter 11 has a very personal reference to it, and the sense of the passage does not lend itself to

referring him to a general description of the Roman powers as does Calvin. Pusey, in speaking of the fulfillment of the Antichrist of Daniel 11 being yet future and awaiting the revelation of the man of sin, is certainly in keeping with the time sequence of the immediate context, chapter 12:1-2, which speaks of the end of the world.

c. Daniel 12:1-2

The first phrase of Daniel 12:1 connects the passage with the one describing the Antichrist in chapter 11. Calvin would be more consistent with his view of the Antichrist in chapter 11 if he applied the time of trouble in verse 1 to the destruction of Jerusalem. By applying that time of trouble to the whole Church, Calvin weakens the natural meaning of the passage which seems to refer to a special time of trouble when the Antichrist holds sway. While Calvin is correct in saying that verse 2 speaks of but one final resurrection, he makes a sudden break between verses 1 and 2 which, according to the text, seem to be closely related in time. If Pusey's interpretation of the Antichrist in chapter 11 as referring to the man of sin to be revealed at the end of this age is correct, it would seem only natural to interpret 12:1 as speaking of a great time of tribulation which shall precede the end. This would then lead to the final judgment foretold in verse 2.

4. Use of Joel made by Calvin and Pusey

a. Joel 2:20-3:2

A comparison of Calvin's and Pusey's approach to this passage shows Calvin's tendency toward spiritualization in his interpretation. Pusey's view that the cosmic disturbances refer to the events surrounding the destruction of Jerusalem, which prefigures the events at the

second coming of Christ is much more satisfying than that of Calvin, who feels that the reference is generally to God's judgments upon men throughout this age. Here again Calvin confuses Israel and the Church. Nor does his interpretation of the gathering of all nations as referring to God's continual protection of His Church do justice to the passage. Pusey is standing on more solid ground when he sees the reference here as being to a Jewish conversion before the end of the world, followed by the second coming of Christ.

b. Joel 3:7-8

The context of Joel 3:1 also refers to Tyre and Sidon, and yet Pusey regarded that passage as referring to the final restoration of Israel, while here he mentions only a historical fulfillment. This may be due to the fact that Pusey's comments on the passage are very brief. In disregarding completely a reference to national Israel and applying the passage to the establishment of the Church, Calvin follows his usual pattern of spiritualization.

5. Use of Amos 9:11-15 made by Calvin and Pusey

Calvin evidences his usual lack of distinction between the Church and national Israel, in spite of the fact that the text in verse 12 speaks both of the Jews and the nations called by the name of Jehovah. Once Pusey admits that the agricultural blessings spoken of here are not literal but spiritual, it becomes increasingly difficult to say whether the passage refers ultimately to the spiritual blessings of a millennium, or of eternity.

6. Use of Zechariah 14 made by Calvin and Pusey

Calvin's view of this passage as describing in a general way the progress of the Kingdom of Christ no doubt has an element of truth

in it. But to do justice to the passage it seems more reasonable to follow Pusey. Though Calvin believes in a second coming of Christ, he spiritualizes the descent of the Lord as God's promise to sustain the Church. If such a passage does not refer to the second coming, it would seem impossible to interpret any passage of Scripture as having reference to the return of Christ.

7. Conclusion

An evaluation of the interpretation of major apocalyptic passages in the Old Testament prophets by representatives of the amillennial and non-dispensational premillennial schools leads to the following conclusions: 1) Calvin unduely spiritualizes passages dealing with Israel to make them refer to the Church and not to the Jewish nation. 2) Pusey and Nagelsbach are right in insisting on the conversion of Israel before or at Jesus' return. Nagelsbach has a tendency to over-literalize the national Jewish return to Palestine, and Pusey's view that there must be room for a certain spiritual fulfillment of earthly blessings promised is in harmony with sane interpretation. 3) Calvin limits the application of certain passages to the first coming of Christ which have a wider reference, as shown by Pusey, to the end of this age and the second coming. Calvin fails to see in these passages the rise of a personal Antichrist shortly before the second coming. 4) It is difficult, if not impossible, to refer any of the passages studied to a future millennial age to take place after the return of Christ, and preceding the eternal state. All passages which might be applied to a millennial reign speak of the established kingdom as final and eternal, with no hint of its end by a catastrophic rise and revolt of evil. 5) Yet such passages as Isaiah 2:2-5 indicate that a time is yet future

when God's reign over all the earth shall be vindicated and realized. Whether this shall be accomplished by a millennium following the second coming or by a final judgment and the establishment of the new heavens and the new earth, should be decided finally on the basis of New Testament eschatology.

C. Evaluation of the Interpretation of the Apocalyptic Passages in the Gospels and Acts by Calvin, Lange, and Alford

1. Use of the Olivet Discourse made by Calvin and Lange

a. Evaluation of Lange's interpretation

One can easily agree with Lange when he sees Matthew 24:4-14 as describing in a cyclical fashion the coming judgments of Christ, each approximating more closely the final end. So also the four pictures of judgment described in chapter 24:45-25:46 are readily recognized as descriptions of the various aspects of the judgment following or attending the second coming. But it is difficult to see where Lange finds a basis for interposing a millennial reign between chapter 25:14-30 and 25:31-46. There is no hint of such a period in the passage itself. The most Lange can say is that he sees the "germ" of the millennial Kingdom which is foretold in Revelation 20 in the term "end" (24:3). Lange's view that the "end" foretold in these verses refers to the whole process of the eschatological end of the age is correct. However, the question is whether the period shall be at least a thousand years in length and include a millennial reign. It is only on the basis of Revelation 20 that he can interpret the "end" as embracing such a long period. The correctness of Lange's view depends on whether Revelation 20 predicts such an earthly millennium.

It is also hard to understand why the four judgments in the

Olivet Discourse should point to an extended period of Christ's royal administration upon the earth. There seems little valid reason for suggesting, as Lange does, that the judgment upon church leaders shall be at the beginning of the thousand years, and the judgments upon the church as a body and upon the individual church member represent further development of Christ's kingly and judicial administration. Even in a pre-millennial scheme it would be more natural to take these three judgments involving Christians as occurring immediately at the second coming of Christ. Taking the account in Matthew simply as it stands, it would be more natural to take chapter 24:31 as referring to the same coming of Christ as does Calvin. The language is remarkably the same. Both passages speak of a coming of the Son of man in a setting of glory. In both passages the whole earth is aware of His coming. The first passage is followed by three judgments which apply especially to Christians, while chapter 25:31 is followed by a judgment which places greater emphasis upon the judgment of non-Christians. It should also be noted that the judgment of the individual Christian (chapter 25:14-30), which according to Lange represents a development of judgment during the millennium, results in the damnation of some of those judged, just as does the "last" judgment described in chapter 25:31-46. The view here suggested, that the passages following Matthew 24:31 and 25:31 refer to the same judgment only from different viewpoints, harmonizes with Lange's view of the cyclical nature of the Olivet discourse.

b. Evaluation of Calvin's Interpretation

Calvin's interpretation of this passage follows quite naturally since he approaches the passage simply on the basis of what its text contains. At no place need he read into the text a millennial

reign as does Lange. Aside from this, his interpretation agrees remarkably with that offered by Lange. He, too, sees chapter 24:1-28 as speaking of the fall of Jerusalem and the church age, while 24:24f. speak of the second coming of Christ. His view that chapter 24:31 and 25:31 both refer to the second coming of Christ is justified by the evident similarity of language in the two passages. Since Jesus is speaking very distinctly of the signs of His second coming, Lange's view that the generation spoken of in chapter 24:34 refers to those living at the time of the second advent is preferred. Yet, it is true, as Calvin suggests, that the events of the destruction of Jerusalem gave the disciples certainty regarding the words of Christ.

2. The Use of Matthew 10:23 made by Calvin and Lange

Calvin is perhaps more "far-fetched" in saying that the coming of the Son of man here refers to the progress of the Gospel, as are others who would see thereby the destruction of Jerusalem. Lange's interpretation of the phrase in the light of the actual mission on which the disciples were sent is based on the basic exegetical principle of harmony with context.

3. The Use of John 5:25-29; 6:39-40 made by Calvin and Lange

The validity of both Calvin's and Lange's interpretation of John 5:28-29 depends on whether or not other Scripture teaches a millennium. On the surface, taking the passage by itself, Calvin's view that these verses refer to one final resurrection of the whole race seems to be correct. Lange, in harmony with the premillennial view, says that both resurrections are included under the subject of a general resurrection.

One agrees with Lange when he says that the "last day" of

John 6:39-40 does include the whole period of judgment at the end of the age. Calvin would agree to that. But the question of the time extent of that last day must be decided on the basis of other Scripture.

4. The Use of Acts 3:21; 17:31 made by Calvin and Alford

Alford's caution in refusing to identify the exact time and place of the judgments these passages foretell is commendable. In saying that the restoration foretold in Acts 3:21 refers to the total eschatological process, Alford uses the same device as Lange does regarding the term "end" in the Olivet Discourse. In these passages, Calvin again interprets according to the natural sense of the text, seeing in them the one final judgment. But if Scripture teaches elsewhere the fact of a millennium, Calvin's interpretation is at fault.

5. Conclusion

An evaluation of the interpretation of the Olivet Discourse and other eschatological passages in the Gospels and the Acts by Calvin, Lange, and Alford leads to the following conclusions: 1) Calvin and Lange agree remarkably in their major divisions of the Olivet Discourse. 2) Lange must go outside the Olivet Discourse to find his basis for seeing in it a millennium. The "germ" of the millennium he sees in the text could as well be the germ of a much shorter period which could include the whole final judgment. 3) Lange's view that the series of judgments upon Christians foretold in the Olivet Discourse shall take place throughout the millennium is purely speculative, and appears to be his attempt to see in the passage a further basis for a millennium. 4) In the major points in which Calvin disagrees with Lange, Calvin's view is most natural on the basis of the text of Matthew, chapter 24 and 25. 5) In the passages of John which foretell the resurrection of all men,

Calvin's view that one general resurrection is suggested by the passage agrees with the natural meaning of the text. 6) However, if it can be conclusively shown that Scripture elsewhere teaches a millennium, then Calvin's interpretation must yield to that of Lange and Alford.

D. Evaluation of the Interpretation of the Apocalyptic Passages
in the Epistles by Calvin, Lange, Godet, and Alford

1. The Use of Romans made by Calvin and Lange

a. Romans 8:18-23

By inferring that the fulfillment of this passage awaits the last judgment and the eternal state, Lange agrees with Calvin in his interpretation. This is the correct interpretation, for it would seem doubtful that the millennial reign of Christ would result in such a sweeping renewal of nature and the world as this passage demands. A creation that is yet to witness a final apostasy and release of Satanic might after the millennium could hardly be said to have experienced a great redemption. Also, if the world were renewed during the millennial reign, it would mean that unredeemed mankind living during the period would share in the results of a redemption promised only to believers. Calvin's and Lange's interpretation of this passage stresses the fact that the future eternal state shall not be a nebulous existence, but that the heaven which awaits believers is so real and concrete that it can be described in terms of a transformed earthly existence.

b. Romans 11

To shift the meaning of the term "Israel" from referring to the Jews in verse 25 to meaning the Church in verse 26, as Calvin does, seems forced. In Romans 9-11 Paul deals very specifically with the problem of the Jewish rejection of Christ, and the natural way to in-

interpret this passage is followed by Lange when he says that Israel, taken literally as a nation, is yet to be saved. If Calvin would accept the translation of verse 25b as "until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in", his insistence upon interpreting "Israel" in verse 26 as meaning the Church would not necessarily mean that the Jews are not to be saved. But by translating verse 25 as saying ". . . a hardening in part hath befallen Israel that the fulness of the Gentiles be come in", Calvin eliminates fully the possibility that Paul here teaches the future salvation of the Jews.

2. The Use of I Corinthians 15 made by Calvin and Godet

Godet's comment that the "end" in verse 24 refers to the end absolutely speaking, i.e., the final judgment after the millennial reign, illustrates the difficulty which premillennialism presents in its use of terms. Lange says of Matthew 24 that the "end" speaks of the total eschatological process inaugurated by the second coming. It is granted that the term might be used in two senses, but a realization of this fact should make one cautious in defining its meaning. It is true that "then" (verse 24) is an adverb of time, but to say as Godet does that it implies a millennial period between the coming and the end does not necessarily follow. It would be just as valid on the basis of the text to say as Calvin does, that the resurrection shall introduce the end, i.e., the time when Christ, having abolished all authority and power, shall deliver up the Kingdom to God. It is true that I Corinthians 15:51-53 speaks only of the resurrection of believers. Depending upon the teaching of other Scripture it must be held as a possibility that Paul speaks here of a premillennial resurrection. But this passage proves nothing, for Paul is speaking of the glorious hope of the Chris-

tian, and it may be that he simply does not mention the resurrection of the lost in the passage.

3. The Use of The Thessalonians by Calvin and Alford

a. I Thessalonians 4:13-17

Alford's statement that verse 14 refers only to the resurrection of the Christian dead is not made on the basis of the text, but in view of the fact that he believes Scripture elsewhere teaches two resurrections. On the basis of such a belief, his interpretation is sound. Yet Calvin's statement that Paul only speaks of that which concerns the Thessalonian Christians may be a valid reason for rejecting Alford's assertion. Again, other Scripture becomes the deciding factor in deciding which interpretation is correct.

b. II Thessalonians 2:1-12

Paul speaks of the Antichrist in personal terms. Calvin generalizes the person of Antichrist by not looking for his appearance in terms of a personal enemy of righteousness shortly before the second coming. Alford agrees with Calvin to the extent of saying that the great evil powers of history prefigure the man of sin who is yet to make his appearance. The fact that Paul was warning the Thessalonians against an undue emphasis upon the return of Christ speaks for Alford's view that just prior to the second advent there will arise the supreme personal Antichrist of history.

4. The Use of II Timothy 3:1 made by Calvin and Alford

By saying that the "last days" refer to the whole age of the Church, Calvin generalizes a statement which Timothy would likely have interpreted as referring to the days immediately before Christ's return

--days in which he thought he was living. Alford interprets the passage so as to bring out this force of its effect upon Timothy.

5. The Use of II Peter 3:13 made by Calvin and Alford

It is hard to see how Alford can refer this passage to the second advent of Christ preceding the millennium, since at that time it is not expected that the earth and all its works shall be burned up. Rather than that, the nations shall live on this physical world for a thousand years much as before the second advent. But Alford also gives as cross reference to this passage Revelation 21:1, in which the new heaven and the new earth after the millennium appear. This also presents a difficulty. This would make Peter's warning to scoffers pointless. He would then be saying in effect: "You think the day of the Lord will never come, but it will burst upon you as a thief in the night--that is, after a thousand years of peace and righteousness!"

6. The Use of Revelation 20:4 made by Calvin

Calvin's comment on this passage is so brief that it is impossible to evaluate his interpretation. Further attention will be given to the passage in the following section.

7. Conclusion

An evaluation of the interpretation of the major apocalyptic passages in the Epistles by Calvin, Lange, Alford, and Godet leads to the following conclusions: 1) Except for three particulars which in no way effect the validity of his amillennial position, Calvin's interpretation of the passages studied is in keeping with good exegetical principles. Calvin fails in Romans 11:26 where he takes the term "Israel" in a sense unnatural to its context and applies it to the Church rather

than to the Jews. Calvin does not place a proper emphasis upon the appearance of a personal Antichrist shortly before the return of Christ. Calvin's interpretation of the "last days" in II Timothy 3:1 fails to bring out Paul's original meaning of it by making it refer to the whole Church age. 2) There is no mention of a millennium or a period comparable to it in the passages studied. In every case where such a period is seen by its advocates, it is brought to the passage. 3) The Epistles do not at any place teach two resurrections separated by a millennial period. I Corinthians 15:21-24 and I Thessalonians 4:13-17 mention explicitly only the resurrection of the saints. It is as fair to argue on the basis of these passages that the wicked shall rise at the same time as the saints as to say they shall rise a thousand years later. 4) The validity of the historic premillennial interpretation of the passages studied depends entirely upon whether Scripture elsewhere teaches that there shall be a millennium.

E. Evaluation of the Interpretation of Revelation made by Lange

1. The Importance of Revelation 19:11-21:15

Lange's interpretation of Revelation makes it clear that chapter 19:11-21:15 is crucial in his belief that a millennium will follow the second advent. At no place prior to that section does he find predicted the millennium. A change of his interpretation of this section would not effect his interpretation of the preceding sections of the book. In this evaluation special attention will be given to Lange's interpretation of this crucial millennial section since, as the preceding sections of this chapter have shown, it is the key to the validity of historical premillennial eschatology.

2. The Basic Problem of Interpretation

Lange approaches this crucial passage with the belief that it is chronologically developed and meant to be literally interpreted. In evaluating Lange's interpretation of the passage, the basic problem is whether the passage should be viewed as does Lange, or whether it is cyclically developed and is to be spiritually interpreted. It should be noted that Lange has interpreted other passages in Revelation spiritually where a literal interpretation could be insisted upon as consistently as in chapter 20. For instance, he sees in the 144,000 of chapter 7 a picture of the Church Militant throughout the Christian era. Also he does not consider Babylon a literal city.

3. The Implication and Strength of Lange's Position

If Lange is correct in his view that the passage is chronologically developed and literally meant, the premillennial position he holds must be granted, for this is the one passage in Scripture which speaks of a millennium. His interpretation has the advantage that it approaches the passage in what appears to be its most natural, literal meaning. Alford has stated the strongest argument for the premillennial view when he says:

If in a passage where two resurrections are mentioned . . . the first resurrection may be understood to mean spiritual rising with Christ, while the second means literal rising from the grave; then there is an end of all significance in language, and Scripture is wiped out as a definite testimony to anything.¹

4. The Critique of Lange's Interpretation of Revelation 19:11-20:15

a. Failure of Other Scripture to Substantiate View

Scripture must interpret Scripture. In no other apocalyptic

.

1. John Peter Lange, The Revelation of John, p. 352.

passages used in this study was there mentioned a limited period during which Christ and His saints shall reign over the earth, followed by a great revolt of the whole world against that reign. Likewise, in no passage of Scripture dealing with the resurrection of the righteous and the wicked was there an indication in the text that a period of time should elapse between the resurrection of these two groups. Thus, it becomes a question of whether Revelation 20 is the touchstone to interpret the rest of Scripture, or whether the rest of Scripture must interpret Revelation 20. The latter method would seem the soundest principle to follow. Yet it must be held as a possibility that the Holy Spirit withheld the revelation concerning the millennial Kingdom until the writing of the Apocalypse.

b. Difficulty of Two Exterminating Battles

Lange puts himself in a difficult position by maintaining that chapter 19:17-21 and 20:7-10 describe two distinct battles separated by a thousand years, in each of which the enemies of Christ are totally destroyed. Chapter 19 describes the utter annihilation of all mankind opposed to Christ. The kings of the earth and their armies as well as ". . . the flesh of all men, both free and bond, small and great" is left after the coming of Christ in judgment on the earth. Lange's position does not explain how it is possible to have a second battle mentioned in chapter 20 in which are engaged "the nations, the number of whom is as the sand of the sea." This difficulty vanishes if the two battles are interpreted as climaxing two visions independent of one another chronologically but referring to the same event in different figures.

c. Passage May be Cyclically Developed

Lange may be wrong in seeing Revelation 20:1-5 as a chronolog-

ical continuation of chapter 19:17-21. Elsewhere, as for instance in Matthew 24-25, Lange recognized the cyclical nature of apocalyptic literature. Chapter 19:17-21 is obviously a picture of the judgment of the beast and the false prophet with their followers. It would be quite in harmony with the apocalyptic style to consider chapter 20:1-10 as a separate vision depicting the doom of Satan, just as Revelation 19:17-21 foretells the end of the beast and the false prophet.

d. Possible Over-literal Interpretation of Second Coming

In different passages throughout Revelation Lange sees apocalyptic figurative representation of the coming of Christ for judgment. To fix the emphasis upon a literal interpretation of Revelation 19:11-20:10 is a questionable procedure. This passage is no less figurative than the one of chapter 14, where Christ's coming is represented in terms of a reaping of the grain and vintage of the earth. This, however, does not minimize the personal, visible, second coming of Christ.

e. Meaning of the Binding of Satan

If, as suggested above, Revelation 20:1-10 pictures the doom of Satan in a vision not chronologically following chapter 19:17-21, Lange's view that the binding of Satan represents an act of God after the second coming of Christ becomes unnecessary. Instead the passage becomes one grand climactic review of God's judgment of Satan.¹ This

.....

1. The strongest argument against this is that in spite of the fact that Revelation is cyclically developed, it must be true that the visions of chapter 20 bring one nearer to the end than those of chapter 12. Therefore, it is argued that it is illogical to find a mention made again of the first coming of Christ (as in chapter 12) so near the closing visions.

begins with Christ binding him in the midst of the Church Triumphant as a result of the cross, with special reference to martyrs.¹ It climaxes with his ultimate destruction in the Antichristian revolt which breaks out shortly before the second coming. In that case, the idea here would be comparable to that in chapter 12, which begins the second division of the book. There Lange sees in the vision a picture of the atoning work of Christ which results in Satan's banishment from the inner spiritual life of the Church Triumphant, and the consequent freedom of the Church invisible on earth.

f. A Martyr Resurrection Only

Lange says that the premillennial resurrection includes martyrs of the last time and saints of all ages. But a consistently literal interpretation of the passage must recognize that the passage mentions only the resurrection of martyrs. It would be natural to expect a clearer statement of the identity of the participants of this first resurrection if this passage is to be interpreted as describing the setting up of Christ's Kingdom on earth, since this passage is entirely unique to Scripture. The text does not indicate that this reigning with Christ shall be upon the earth. Since only martyrs are specifically mentioned, Lange might be correct to see in chapter 20:4-6 a representation of the fact that Christians who suffer martyrdom share in the heavenly glory of Christ immediately at death. Such a view would be

.

1. Such an interpretation may be accused of not explaining how Satan is now bound so as to be unable to deceive the nations until the thousand years are finished as verse 3 declares. This objection would be answered by the interpretation that verse 3 is not meant as an absolute statement saying that all Satanic influence is taken from the earth as a result of Jesus' first coming. Rather than that, it would indicate that Satan could not deceive the nations due to the great witness of truth open to all men in the fact of the Gospel.

consistent with Lange's interpretation of the visions of the great multitude of chapter 7 and the 144,000 of chapter 14. In both of these passages he sees pictures of the Church Triumphant in glory before the second advent has occurred.

g. Resurrection of the "Rest of the Dead"

If Lange will carry through consistently his idea that Revelation 20:4 refers to a literal bodily resurrection of all saints who shall live on the earth, then according to verse 5 we must expect that the "rest of the dead" shall arise in like bodily sense at the end of the thousand year period. But no such a resurrection is mentioned. The general resurrection of verse 13 is pictured as including both the righteous and the wicked for the prophet sees "all the dead", not the living of a first bodily resurrection plus the "rest of the dead." If the passage speaks first of all of the spiritual resurrection of martyrs, it has been suggested by Albert Barnes that the "rest of the dead" refers to the rest of the Christian dead.¹ The meaning would then be that martyrs were given special recognition after death, and figuratively speaking, it was as if the others were not raised. Then the first resurrection (vv. 5b-6) would include both the resurrection of the martyrs and the rest of the Christian dead who shall live at the end of the thousand years. Such an interpretation would be in harmony with the fact that Revelation addresses itself especially to the encouragement of the faithful in a time of persecution.

h. Redeemed Again Subjected to Evil

Lange's view demands that the saints who were seen in chapter

.

1. John Peter Lange, The Revelation of John, p. 352.

7 as triumphant with Christ in glory shall once more live on this earth and be subject to witness the power of Satanic force at work in their society. In fact, this force shall finally endanger their very lives, for why should Satan's army march against the saints if there was no hope of overcoming them in battle. Maybe Lange is wrong in identifying the martyrs resurrected in verse 4 with the "saints" encamped in verse 9. The latter may refer to the Christians living at the time of the second advent. If that be so, the last revolt of Satan described in verses 7-10 might be another apocalyptic picture of the great apostacy and the coming of the man of sin shortly before the second advent.

i. Meaning of the Millennium

Lange says that the thousand years represents a middle domain of judgment upon the human race as extant at the parousia. It is a time of heavenly instruction and discipline upon the race as it shares in the cosmic metamorphosis. Yet Lange's millennial idea hardly does justice to such a lofty concept and makes it rather meaningless since it accomplishes nothing permanent. The nations living on earth during this time are not truly drawn to God during this time. A world which revolts against the rule of Christ after experiencing its blessing for a millennium can hardly be said to share in a cosmic metamorphosis. To draw the philosophical concept of a transition period between time and eternity from this passage, in which Charles Erdman says the meaning of the millennium is rather incidental to the doom of Satan,¹ is a questionable procedure. This is doubly true since this passage alone in Scripture may be interpreted as foretelling a millennium. The strongest

.

1. Charles R. Erdman, The Revelation of John, p. 144.

philosophical argument for a millennium might be that by having a period in which Christ reigned supremely over the nations, after which they still refused to yield to Him, the final doom of the wicked would be justified and God's judgment of sinful man would be fully vindicated.

5. Conclusion

An examination of Lange's interpretation of Revelation suggests the following conclusions: 1) The strength of his view lies in that it takes what appears on the surface to be the most obvious interpretation of Scripture. 2) If Lange is right in his interpretation that Revelation 19:11-20:15 is chronologically developed, his position becomes acceptable. 3) Lange takes the questionable procedure of making Revelation 20:1-10 the touchstone to interpret the rest of Scripture. 4) In insisting on a chronological development of Revelation 19:11-20:15, he does questionable justice to the cyclical nature of apocalyptic prophecy, especially since his view forms the basis of an interpretation which is not directly substantiated in all of Scripture. 5) Lange's literal interpretation of the passage should not be insisted upon due to the highly symbolic character of the Apocalypse. It results in conclusions which are hard to reconcile with other Scripture. 6) As a transition period of judgment, Lange's millennium is not very satisfactory philosophically since its results are quite transitory.

F. Suggestions for a Sound Interpretation of the Millennial Problem

1. Suggested Interpretation of the Crucial Millennial Passage

An evaluation of the interpretation of the major Scriptural apocalyptic passages by historical premillennial commentators lead repeatedly to the fact that the interpretation of Revelation 20 is critical in determining the acceptability of that eschatological view. The

critique of Lange's interpretation of Revelation has suggested an interpretation of Revelation 19:11-20:15 which will not violate the apocalyptic nature of the passage, and yet interpret it in harmony with other passages of Scripture which do not seem to indicate in their text a millennial reign of Christ on earth after the second coming. This interpretation in its major features is held by Charles Erdman¹ and William Milligan.² Calvin suggests its basic tenant when he says that the millennial period is concurrent with the present age of the Church. An acceptance of the interpretation of the millennial passage suggested here leads one to accept the amillennial position seen in the rest of Scripture by John Calvin, for the preceding study has shown that non-dispensational premillennialism must make its appeal for validity upon an interpretation of this passage.

A brief summary of the interpretation of the passage suggested by an evaluation of Lange's view thereof includes in it three movements. 1) Chapter 19:11-21 presents a first picture of the second coming of Christ to destroy the beast, the false prophet and his followers. The passage comprises a complete vision in itself. 2) Revelation 20:1-10 presents a second aspect of the coming of Christ, emphasizing the destruction of Satan. This vision does not follow chronologically the vision closing chapter 19 but is parallel to it. The destruction of Satan is presented in two stages. Verses 1-3 picture the binding of Satan accomplished by Christ at His first advent. Verses 4-5 present a parenthetical picture to comfort the martyr saints of the Christian era which is expressed symbolically as a thousand years. These saints

.

1. Ibid., pp. 139-153.

2. William Milligan, The Revelation of St. John, pp. 193-233.

reign with Christ in glory. The second and final stage in the destruction of Satan comes at the second advent when his last supreme revolt is crushed, vv. 7-10. 3) Chapter 20:11-15 presents a third picture of the judgment at the second advent. Though it speaks of the judgment of both the righteous and the wicked, the thought is centered on the doom of the wicked. The righteous are not actually judged here. Rather than that, their righteousness is vindicated in the sight of the whole universe. The passage speaks of a universal resurrection and results in the final destruction of death and its consequences, completing the triumph of Christ. The new heavens and the new earth then become a reality.

2. Basic Eschatological Truths

a. Events Preceding the Second Advent

The historic premillennialists used in this study place a proper Biblical emphasis and interpretation upon two events which shall precede the return of Christ. Israel as a nation shall yet accept salvation. Just how closely this is related to the second coming is difficult to say. This is a truth taught in both the Old and New Testaments which Calvin fails to see. A second event which shall precede the second coming of Christ is the arrival of a personal Antichrist. This, too, is a truth which Calvin fails to emphasize.

b. The Fact of the Second Coming of Christ

Both of the millennial views considered in this study make central the fact of the personal second advent of Christ at the end of this age. Neither Calvin nor the historic premillennialists studied in any way spiritualize this return, though Calvin does not do justice to it in some of the Old Testament passages used. It shall be personal,

physical, and visible and shall institute the final judgment. Jesus Christ shall once more break into human history in a personal way, and the Church must hold itself in constant readiness for that appearance and work with all its God-given power to evangelize the world to prepare men for that coming.

c. The Resurrection of the Body

Both of the eschatological views used in this study place a Biblical emphasis upon the resurrection of the body. Though the premillennial view may not be correct in its belief concerning a future earthly millennium, it at least places a special emphasis upon the great truth that the Christian's future eternal existence shall not be ethereal, bodyless, and vapor-like, as is so often imagined by earnest Christians. In the new heaven and the new earth which awaits believers, there shall be an existence in a resurrected spiritual body which is so real that it may be described in terms of temporal existence.

d. The Final Judgment and the Eternal State

The historical premillennialists as well as Calvin insist upon the coming of a final climactic judgment at the end of the world when all mankind shall see the vindication of the righteous judgment of God over both the righteous and the wicked. This judgment shall usher in the new heaven and the new earth in which the eternal Kingdom of God shall be a reality.

3. Conclusion

Both the amillennial and the non-dispensational premillennial views of the millennial problem doubtlessly raise difficulties of interpretation. A comparative evaluation of the exposition of the major

apocalyptic passages by representatives of these contrasting views lead one to the conclusion that basically Calvin's amillennial position is the more satisfactory and raises the least difficulty. The basic reasons upon which such a conclusion is based are found in the conclusions to the major sections of this chapter and need not be repeated here.

One must approach the millennial problem with an open, unbiased mind, and a determination to let the Scriptures speak for itself and interpret itself. To bring any preconceived ideas to a passage of Scripture will result in faulty exegesis. In a study of the millennial problem, it is not only a question in the final analysis as to whether Revelation 20 shall interpret the rest of scripture or whether the rest of Scripture shall interpret Revelation 20. The final question concerns the correct interpretation of that passage itself, for Revelation 20 must not be misinterpreted to correspond with the rest of Scripture.

This chapter has pointed out the differences between the amillennial eschatology of Calvin and the non-dispensational premillennial viewpoint presented by Nagelsbach, Pusey, Lange, Godet, and Alford. An evaluation of the interpretation of key apocalyptic passages by these men showed the strength and weaknesses of their views, and pointed toward the validity of Calvin's basic position. A final section of the chapter dealt with suggestions for a sound interpretation of the millennial problem.

CHAPTER IV
GENERAL SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

CHAPTER IV
GENERAL SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

A. Summary

The purpose of this study was to present the interpretation of the major apocalyptic passages of Scripture by representative amillennial and non-dispensational premillennial commentators with a view toward comparison of their interpretations. The technique was to list the important apocalyptic passages in both the Old and New Testaments and to record first the amillennial and then the non-dispensational premillennial interpretation of them. For the amillennial viewpoint, presented in the first chapter, the commentaries of John Calvin were used. The second chapter, which presented the non-dispensational premillennial viewpoint, included the works of such men as Carl Nagelsbach, E. B. Pusey, John P. Lange, F. Godet, and Henry Alford.

The third chapter contained a comparative evaluation of the interpretations presented in the preceding two chapters. It closed with a section in which considerations for a sound interpretation of the millennial problem were suggested.

B. Conclusion

This study has shown that the interpretations of both of the eschatological views presented have a contribution to make toward eschatological thinking. Historic premillennialism and amillennialism hold much in common. Both of them present the vital truths of Scripture regarding the second coming of Christ and the judgment of this world. Their one basic point of disagreement is as to whether or not the sec-

ond coming of Christ shall be succeeded by an earthly millennium during which Christ and His saints will rule the earth. A comparative examination of the passages interpreted indicated one major fault on the part of the historic premillennial school. With the exception of Pusey, they insisted in reading into the various passages of Scripture the concept of an earthly millennium in spite of the fact that the passage in question gave no indication in its text of such a millennial period. It was found that of the passages studied, the only one which truly had in it the possible concept of a millennium was Revelation 20. John Calvin, representing the amillennial viewpoint, interpreted the passages in their most natural way in regard to the possibility of a millennium. His greatest shortcoming was a tendency to spiritualize and generalize certain passages dealing with Israel and the coming of Antichrist.

Thus, it is true that the interpretation of Revelation 20 is the nexus about which a solution to the millennial question revolves. A study of Lange's interpretation of the millennial passage leads the author to feel that when Lange's interpretation is compared with the rest of Scripture, and considered in the light of the nature of apocalyptic literature, it fails to present a correct interpretation of the passage. Objections can certainly be raised to the cyclical-spiritual interpretation presented as an alternate to Lange's view. The individual will need to weigh the evidence for himself and make his own decision. The fact that the millennium is mentioned only in Revelation 20 must make even the historical premillennialist realize that his doctrine, if true, is one of minor import to eschatology, since only here in Revelation 20 is it mentioned. The information given regarding it is so limited that if one would develop the doctrine, he is driven to

speculation.

The writer feels strongly that the millennial question should never be used to divide the Church of Jesus Christ into two camps, each of which accuses the other of a dishonest approach to the Word of God. The solution to the problem lies in a spirit of tolerance and mutual understanding, with a realization that there are far greater issues facing the Church today than the problem of a future millennium. Our task lies in a positive emphasis on world evangelism, looking forward to the "blessed hope" of Christ's return when the Kingdom of God shall be perfected. Continued searching of the Scriptures regarding the whole question of eschatology may develop more of a spirit of tolerance than of dogmatism. That this is true is seen in the writings of Henry Alford. Commenting on his interpretation of Matthew 25 (in the sixth edition of his commentary), Alford breathes the gentle spirit of a true Christian and a thorough scholar when he states:

I thought it proper to state in the third edition, that I did not feel by any means that full confidence which I once did, in the exegesis, quoad prophetic interpretation, given of the three portions of this chap. xxv. But I had no other system to substitute: and some of the points here dwelt on seemed to me as weighty as ever. I very much questioned whether the thorough study of Scripture prophecy would not make me more and more distrustful of all human systematizing, and less willing to hazard strong assertion on any portion of the subject.¹

.

1. Henry Alford, The Greek Testament, Vol. I, p. 257.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Alford, Henry, The Greek Testament. Vol. I, Sixth Edition;
Cambridge: Deighton, Bell, and Co., 1868.
- _____, The Greek Testament. Vol. II, Fifth Edition;
Cambridge: Deighton, Bell, and Co., 1865.
- _____, The Greek Testament. Vol. III, Fourth Edition;
Cambridge: Deighton, Bell, and Co., 1865.
- _____, The Greek Testament. Vol. IV, Third Edition;
Cambridge: Deighton, Bell, and Co., 1866.
- ✓ Allis, Oswald T., Prophecy and the Church. Philadelphia: The Presby-
terian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1945.
- ✓ Berkhof, Louis, Systematic Theology. Third revision and enlarged
edition; Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing
Company, 1946.
- Calvin, John, Commentaries on the Book of the Prophet Daniel. Vol. II,
Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company,
1948.
- _____, Commentaries on the Catholic Epistles. Grand Rapids,
Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1948.
- _____, Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the
Romans. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing
Company, 1948.
- _____, Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the
Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians. Edinburgh:
Calvin Translation Society, 1851.
- _____, Commentaries on the Epistles to Timothy, Titus, and
Philemon. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publish-
ing Company, 1948.
- _____, Commentaries on the Twelve Minor Prophets. Vol. II,
Joel, Amos, Obediah, Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society,
1846.
- _____, Commentaries on the Twelve Minor Prophets. Vol. V,
Zechariah and Malachi, Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Soci-
ety, 1849.
- _____, Commentary on the Harmony of the Evangelists. Vol. II,
Matthew, Mark, and Luke, Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Soci-
ety, 1845.

- _____, Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Isaiah. Vol. I, Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1850.
- _____, Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Isaiah. Vol. IV, Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1853.
- _____, Commentary on the Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians. Vol. II, Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1849.
- _____, Commentary on the Gospel According to John. Vol. I, Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1847.
- _____, Commentary on the Gospel According to John. Vol. II, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1949.
- _____, Commentary upon the Acts of the Apostles. Vol. I, Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1844.
- _____, Commentary upon the Acts of the Apostles. Vol. II, Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1844.
- _____, Institutes of the Christian Religion. Vol. II, Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Christian Education, 1930.
- Erdman, Charles R., The Revelation of John. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1936.
- Godet, F., Commentary on St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians. Vol. II, Clark's Foreign Theological Library, Vol. XXX; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark,
- Jones, Russell Bradley, The Things Which Shall Be Hereafter. Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1947.
- Kromminga, D. H., The Millennium. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1948.
- Kromminga, D. H., The Millennium in the Church. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1945.
- Lange, John Peter, The Gospel according to Matthew. A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures, Vol. I of the New Testament, twelfth edition revised; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1915.
- Lange, John Peter, The Gospel according to John. A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures, Vol. III of the New Testament; New York: Charles Scribner & Co., 1871.
- Lange, John Peter, The Revelation of John. A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures, Vol. X of the New Testament; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1874.

- Lange, John Peter, and F. R. Fay, The Epistle of Paul to the Romans. A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures, Vol. V of the New Testament; New York: Charles Scribner & Co., 1869.
- Milligan, William, The Book of Revelation. New York: A. C. Armstrong and Son, 1902.
- Milligan, William, The Revelation of St. John. Second edition, The Baird Lectures; New York: Macmillan and Co., 1887.
- Murray, George L., Millennial Studies. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1948.
- Nagelsbach, Carl Wilhelm Eduard, The Prophet Isaiah. A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures by John Peter Lange, Vol. XI of the Old Testament; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1906.
- Pusey, E. B., Daniel the Prophet. Second edition, fifth thousand; Oxford: James Parker & Co., 1868.
- Pusey, E. B., The Minor Prophets. Vol. I, New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1889.
- Pusey, E. B., The Minor Prophets. Vol. II, New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1889.
- Westervelt, Rowland L., "Representative Modern Dispensationalism Studied in the Light of the New Testament Commentary of Henry Alford." Unpublished Bachelor's thesis, The Biblical Seminary in New York, New York, 1949.