

APPENDIX I

The Time and Extent of the Coming World Dissolution

It is commonly taught by orthodox Protestant theologians of about every variety of millennial persuasion, that before the final age begins there shall be drastic changes in the present natural order.

Several texts are thought to relate to such a change, but, without controversy, the most graphic is II Peter 3:10. In order to clarify some of the Biblical material relating to the consummation of the ages and to round out some details of my own premillennial views, this discussion of the subject matter of II Peter 3:10 is added. As originally prepared in a monograph, these lines extended to over one hundred pages. I have tried to compress and condense the material as much as possible here.

The passage follows as it appears in the American Standard Version: "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up."

It should be observed that the A.S.V. margin renders the last part of the verse "shall be discovered (*eurethesetai*) instead of "shall be burned up" (*katakaesatai*). The oldest manuscript evidence is for the marginal reading, though the exact text is not fully certain.

A bit later Peter writes: "According to his promise, we look for new heavens and a new earth" (II Peter 3:13). The promise to which he refers can hardly be any other than that of Isaiah 65:17 and 66:22, wherein a new heavens and a new earth are twice predicted.

THE PROBLEMS INVOLVED

Two main problems are involved in interpreting II Peter 3:10 and these related texts: (1) When does this event (or when do these events) occur--at the beginning of the Millennium or at the close of it? and (2) What are the extent and nature of the changes involved--are they an annihilation or a renovation, and if renovation, how drastic are the changes involved?

Most readers will be acquainted with the fact that the majority of modern Premillennialists have identified (or at least synchronized) this conflagration with the judgment of the great white throne described in Revelation 20. Amillennialists and Postmillennialists, generally, merely associate the event with the second advent of Christ and with the so-called "general judgment."

The view advocated herein is that as to *time* the new heavens and new

earth anticipated by Peter and the other prophets are to appear at the beginning of the Millennium, and that in *nature* and *extent* the conflagration which introduces the new heavens and new earth shall consist of a strictly limited renovation rather than annihilation of the existing natural order. The recent Premillennialists who advocate this view are not numerous. However, George N. H. Peters, whose exhaustive work (entitled *The Theocratic Kingdom* etc.) sets forth his views, is a notable advocate of it. To him the present writer owes a debt of thanks for suggesting many of the arguments now to follow.

THE TIME OF THE CONFLAGRATION

To conserve space and words, the views of the writer with the evidence for them will be briefly stated. The reader will kindly attribute what may seem to be excessively terse or dogmatic forms of statement to the present desire to conserve space, words, and the reader's time.

The time of the great conflagration is to be at the beginning of the Millennium, during the period immediately adjacent to that aspect of the second coming of Christ known as the revelation.

Evidence for this statement follows:

1. *The Old Testament prophets uniformly declare that a judgment of fire, similar to the one Peter describes, shall immediately precede the establishment of the future Messianic Kingdom.*

One is faced with a problem in selecting only the plainest passages, they are so very numerous. Joel 2:30,31 is an example: "And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke...before the great and terrible day of Jehovah cometh."

Another of this type is Malachi 3:1-3: "...and the Lord, whom ye seek will suddenly come to his temple....But who can abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap."

A third is Malachi 4:1: "For, behold, the day cometh, it burneth as a furnace; and all the proud, and all that work wickedness, shall be stubble; and the day that cometh shall burn them up."

This scriptural evidence renders it certain that when Peter wrote of the coming Day of the Lord with its attendant fiery judgments, he was broaching no new subject--as is indicated by his words: "seeing that ye look for these things." The Jews had been looking for such consuming fire to presage the coming kingdom of Messiah since the days of the Old Testament prophets.

2. *The Old Testament repeatedly states that disturbances in the material heavens, of a type identical with those described by Peter, shall transpire*

immediately before the establishment of the kingdom. What has just been shown to be true of the "fire" of Peter's prophecy is now shown to be true also of the heavenly disturbances--"the heavens shall pass away with a great noise."

A good representative of passages on this subject is Isaiah 34:4 in a context clearly associated with the beginning of the coming Messianic Kingdom: "All the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll," etc. Such words as these are frequent in the Old Testament. The astonishing thing is that Premillennialists generally unite in applying them to events at the beginning of the Millennium without seeing any connection with II Peter 3:10 or considering their possible relation to the new heavens and new earth of Revelation 21 and 22. Other passages are Haggai 2:6,7; Joel 3:16; Isaiah 13:13; Isaiah 51:6.

If anyone should argue that some of the passages speak of disturbances at the beginning of the Millennium and others of disturbances at its close, he should read Hebrews 12:26 (quoting Hag. 2:6), in which the Lord distinctly promises, "Yet once more [not twice] will I make to tremble not the earth only, but also the heaven."

Thus the Old Testament (dispensational and prophetic charts and teachers notwithstanding) places the coming cosmic disturbances at the beginning of the coming kingdom, not at some point one thousand years along the course of it.

3. *New Testament writers are just as definite in placing a judgment of fire at the inception of the kingdom as are the Old Testament writers.* Most convincing is Paul's testimony: "And to you that are afflicted rest with us, at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with the angels of his power in flaming fire, rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus" (II Thes. 1:7,8). Another is Revelation 16:8,9, which portrays a fiery judgment under the fourth vial. Most Premillennialists of today feel that this event transpires in a period shortly before the inception of the Millennium. No one can read these plain words with an unprejudiced mind, it seems to me, and not feel that the New Testament predicts a judgment of fire at the commencement of the coming Kingdom.

4. *The Bible declares that the coming kingdom shall occupy a regenerated earth from its beginning; therefore the purifying effects of this prophetic dissolution must be at the beginning, rather than at the close of the Millennium.* The two most important passages are Isaiah 65:17-25 and 66:22-24.

The first begins with a presentation of the new heavens and earth: "For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth." Then follows a description which Premillennialists almost unanimously unite in saying to be Millennial.

The second is similar. It begins, "For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I make, shall remain before me, saith Jehovah." Then, again, follows a Millennial scene, *viz.*: "so shall your seed and your name remain. And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith Jehovah. And they shall go forth, and look upon the dead bodies of the men that have

transgressed against me," etc. Hold in mind that this is all related to the new heavens and new earth. It was this same which Peter expected "according to his promise" (II Peter 3:13).

I do not see how the conclusion can be avoided that the Spirit of prophecy in Isaiah intended that the impression be conveyed that the coming Messianic Kingdom shall occupy from the first "new heavens and [a] new earth."

5. *The immediate context of II Peter 3:10 indicates that Peter had in mind something which would occur at Christ's second coming, and not in a period still remotely future at the revelation of Christ.* A hasty reading of the third chapter of II Peter brings to one's attention several significant expressions demonstrating this proposition. They follow: "Where is the promise of his coming?" (v. 9); "...comes as a thief" (v. 10); "...ye look for these things" (v. 14). These brief notices indicate that Peter did not question the possibility that people whom he then addressed might live to see the inauguration of the very things he describes in verse 10. How inconsistent such statements are with the view that verse 10 describes events known to be at least a thousand years away needs only to be noted to be appreciated.

6. *A perpetual and continuous kingdom such as is repeatedly promised demands that no such destruction as is often urged be placed at the end of the Millennium to interrupt the continuity of that kingdom.* It should be remembered that even though a change in the mediation of rulership of that kingdom is predicted (I Cor. 15:23-28), an abolition of the earthly realm is nowhere promised--unless II Peter 3:10 be the exception. Contrariwise, the perpetuity of the kingdom is repeatedly asserted in the most positive terms, as follows:

(1) The angelic announcement to Mary, the human mother of the Messianic King, carefully specifies that "of his kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke 1:32,33).

(2) The saints of the Lord are commonly associated with Christ in an eternally enduring kingdom, as, for example, in Daniel 7:18, "The saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever."

(3) The scriptures further specify the perpetual continuity of the kingdom itself *per se*. Daniel 2:44 states: "And in the days of those kings shall the God of Heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, nor shall the sovereignty thereof be left to another people...but it shall stand forever" (cf. also Dan. 7:14).

(4) The limit of a thousand years, which is by premillennial interpreters of Revelation 20 frequently attached to the "kingdom" as such, is not a limit on the reign of Christ or of His saints, but rather the limit of the imprisonment of Satan and of the period between the resurrections.

7. *Christians are exhorted on the basis of this predicted dissolution, as if it were something they should expect to see if they should live to the*

end of the present age rather than as if it were something at least a millennium away. The entire third chapter should be read to appreciate this fact. The most significant portions are the phrases in verses 11-14: "looking for and earnestly desiring the coming...beloved, seeing that ye look for these things," etc. Is this not the same hope of the second coming of Christ with the same attendant moral lessons as those set forth in Mark 13:32-37, Matthew 24:42-51, and Luke 21:25-36? The inquiring reader will be rewarded by comparing these chapters with the third chapter of II Peter.

For these reasons I am convinced that the great prophecy of II Peter 3:10, and many other predictions of the coming dissolution with the resultant new heavens and new earth refer to events at the inauguration of Messiah's kingdom. That there may be further changes at the conclusion of the thousand years, perhaps in connection with the judgment of the great white throne (Rev. 20:7-15) is entirely possible. However, if so, the Bible seems to be silent about it. This view is not without its difficulties, but I believe that many of them are dissipated as proper consideration is given the question of the extent of the predicted dissolution and the nature of the new heavens and new earth.

THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF THE COSMIC CHANGES

If the coming conflagration is to be at the time of a "general judgment," certain possibilities exist--possibilities which no one will expect to find explained and defended in this premillennial treatment of eschatology. If it is to come at the end of the Millennium, certain others exist. And if it is to come (as I have sought to show) at or near the beginning of the millennial period, then still other possibilities appear.

Briefly, as I have considered the possibilities, it seems that--*the cosmic disturbances described in II Peter 3:10 shall consist of a limited renovation involving the death of all living wicked men at the revelation of Christ and such changes in the realms of inanimate material, of vegetable, animal, and human life as are necessary to produce conditions which the prophets declare shall prevail during the coming kingdom age.*

All this is best described, to use Jesus' own word for it, as a "regeneration."

This statement may be reduced to four propositions.

1. *The prophetic dissolution shall consist of a renovation, rather than an annihilation.*

(1) In proof is the fact that nowhere in the Bible, unless II Peter 3:10 be treated as an exception, is the annihilation of the cosmos taught.

(2) Further, the words of II Peter 3:10 do not in any sense require annihilation. "Shall pass away" translates *pareleusontai*, the root of which is

parerchomai. The Authorized Version translates this come, come forth, go, pass, pass over, transgress, and past. The standard lexicons offer about the same shades of meaning. Never does it mean annihilate, so far as I have been able to determine. The meaning is rather to pass from one position in time or space to another. And, even granting the most destructive ideas as the meanings of *luthesetai* (be dissolved) and *katakaesetai* (be burned up, if we adopt the *Textus Receptus*), the words certainly do not describe annihilation.

2. *The prophetic dissolution is by Scripture confined to a strictly limited renovation, affecting certain aspects of the cosmos only.*

(1) In the first place, to insist that the materials of earth must be cremated to remove sin is to insist on an erroneous doctrine of sin--that the seat of sin is in matter rather than in the spirits of free agents.

(2) Further, the Bible declares categorically that so long as the earth remains, the order of nature will stay constant and without interruption. I cite Genesis 8:22: "While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease" (cf. also v. 21).

(3) The several passages in the Bible which seem to require or imply absolute dissolution of the earth or destruction of the order of nature are in every case limited by the context to less drastic changes. An example is Genesis 6:17 (see also 6:7,13), "And I, behold, I do bring the flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh...*everything that is in the earth shall die*" (italics mine). Yet the context shows that eight human beings and a ship loaded with animals and provender, and of course, specimens of all water life, escaped. (Similar phenomena occur in Deut. 32:22; Nah. 1:5; Micah 1:4; Isa. 13:9-14; Isa. 24:19,20; Amos 9:9, and others.)

3. *The future conflagration at the coming of Christ shall involve the destruction of Antichrist and his forces.*

II Thessalonians 1:7-10 predicts a fiery destruction of wicked men at the revelation of Christ. Fire is mentioned in connection with the destruction of Antichrist at our Lord's return (Rev. 19:20). There is no good reason for separating these things.

Is it possible that the Lord may destroy all wicked men at His appearing? It is asserted by Paul (II Thes. 1:7-10) that "at the revelation of the Lord Jesus...in flaming fire" He shall "render vengeance to them that know not God...who shall suffer...eternal destruction." These words promise a truly dreadful judgment. But if they are applied to the destruction of all men at our Lord's second coming, they prove too much. Amillennialists will be quick to ask, Who will populate the earth during the Millennium if at its inauguration the righteous are all glorified and the wicked are killed?

If one adopts the pretribulational view of the Rapture, he can suppose the formation of a new group of saved men during the tribulation to enter the Millennium in natural bodies and to propagate the race during the 1,000 years.

Many pretribulationists, however, postulate another "rapture" and resurrection for tribulation saints only at the end of the tribulation. This would still leave no people to live as natural men on earth during the Millennium.

If one adopts the posttribulational view of the Rapture, then there certainly would be no people to live as natural men on earth during the Millennium. The saved would all be in glorified bodies, in which condition Jesus said there would be no function of propagation. If the judgment on the wicked of II Thessalonians 1:7-10 is to be regarded as universal, then the wicked would all be dead.

Two live possibilities appear as solutions. One is to interpret this statement in II Thessalonians 1:7-10 in a limited sense, applying it only to Antichrist, his armies, and possibly other incorrigible rebels against the Lord. A number of passages (Zech. 12-14 especially, Matt. 25, etc.) appear to fall in line in support of this view. Another possibility suggested by a recent writer is that the eye of Paul, here functioning as a "seer," is including a whole series of events in his line of prophetic vision and has included elements of the final judgment after the 1,000 years. This has strong appeal, though proof is lacking.

Whichever of these possibilities is adopted (and the present writer prefers the former), the possibility of a Millennium remains. The proposition affirming the destruction of Antichrist and his forces at Christ's coming is true in either case.

Perhaps the advance of Biblical studies in the hands of reverent scholars will give us more certain light at this point. Problems like this one should give all prophetic interpreters "humble pause" as they seek to teach the Bible.

4. The renovation of the cosmos at the coming of Christ will involve such changes in the realms of inanimate material, of vegetable, human, and animal life as are necessary to produce conditions which the prophets declare shall prevail during the coming kingdom age.

The Old Testament prophets (especially Isaiah) are replete with predictions of the beauty and perfection of that coming age. The whole of nature and of society is to be restored as it was (or would have become) before the fall. There is not space here to treat those prophecies, save to say that society will be full of joy and gladness. Sin and rebellion are said to be repressed till the close of the thousand years, when (according to Rev. 20) it will be interrupted for a short time, after which earth, entirely cleansed of every vestige of sin, shall continue in uninterrupted peace forever.

However, it is also predicted that the introduction of these improvements will be attended by numerous unusual supernaturally superintended physical wonders in the earth (earthquakes, etc.) and in the heavens (stars falling, etc.)--all directed toward moral ends. That is, these natural wonders (described, I think, in much detail in Revelation 6 to 19) shall be judgments on men living at that time, and constitute what is called the Indignation.

Now, if Peter's great prophecy is to be fulfilled at the beginning of the Millennium, then it must have reference to these phenomena. "The heavens shall pass away with a great noise" must refer to the same event as Isaiah 34:4, a clear millennial passage, "And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll; and all their hosts shall fade away."

"The elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat" is more difficult to understand because of questions about the meaning of "elements" (*stoicheia*). If, as the A.S.V. margin suggests and a host of commentators likewise, it refers to heavenly bodies, then it may have reference to the same heavenly changes set forth in the preceding clause. However, this word is used five times in the New Testament outside of II Peter 3. In every one of these it has clear and unquestionable reference to false moral and spiritual principles, and hence is also translated by our word "rudiments." If this is the meaning in II Peter 3:10 and 12, then it would seem to refer to the coming judgments on false religion, false philosophy, etc., as set forth in Revelation 17, 18, and 19.

If the word has reference to the actual elements of the matter of terrestrial earth, it could be applied to the widespread physical changes which shall precede the establishment of the kingdom.

Which of these three meanings (all of which have precedents in classical Greek literature) is the correct one does not seem possible to determine finally. It is not necessary to determine. All that is incumbent on us is to show that it is nothing more than the prophets frequently affirm will take place at the inception of Messiah's coming kingdom. This, I think, has been done.

The "works" which shall be "discovered" are undoubtedly the works of man: literature, art, architecture, etc., all of which will be subject to the searching discrimination and judgment of the Son of God when He shall come.

It is quite remarkable that the same Peter who made this prophecy spoke definitely of this subject on another occasion, and in a fashion which fully harmonizes with the interpretation just now placed on his words in the epistle. I refer to his words to the Jews at the temple, as recorded in Acts 3. After calling for repentance and referring to the second coming of Christ, Peter says: "Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, whereof God spake by the mouth of his holy prophets that have been from of old." Christ will remain in heaven until He comes again, when He will restore all things which the Old Testament prophets predicted. I think there can be small doubt, indeed, that Peter (in Acts 3:21 above) had reference to the very changes which the prophets indicate shall introduce the coming kingdom, and that he was referring to the same in II Peter 3:10 and 12.

4. Finally, *this whole affair is best described and integrated by the name "regeneration," the word which our Lord Himself used of it.*

Jesus used this word of His coming kingdom when He told the apostles:

"Verily I say unto you, that ye who have followed me, in the regeneration [Gr. *palingenesia*] when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matt. 19:28). The word means new birth. A standard lexicon says it is "that signal and glorious change of all things (in heaven and earth) for the better, that restoration of the primal and perfect condition of things which existed before the fall of our first parents, which the Jews looked for in connection with the advent of the Messiah, and which the primitive Christians expected in connection with the visible return of Jesus from heaven" (Thayer, *Greek English Lexicon of the N.T.*).

Observe that Paul uses the same word of the believer's new birth (Titus 3:5), that in reference to the same fact he also speaks of it as a "new creation" (II Cor. 5:17), and further specifies that old things have passed away, and that all things have become new.

Everyone knows, though, that even after new birth the believer still has sin in him. This will be removed completely at death or at the rapture of the saints (I The. 3:13).

This comparison is at once an answer to those who object that if the new heavens and new earth begin at the inauguration of the kingdom, then there can be no sin at all in it, as is described in Revelation 20.

These things are well summed up by Paul, when he writes: "For the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to vanity, not of its own will, but by reason of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God" (Rom. 8:19-21).

Will the reader permit a restatement of the main propositions as a summary?

The time of the great coming conflagration is to be at the beginning of the Millennium, during the period immediately adjacent to that aspect of the second coming of Christ known as the revelation.

The great cosmic disturbances described shall consist of a limited renovation involving the death of all living wicked men at the revelation of Christ and such changes in the realms of inanimate material, of vegetable, animal, and human life as are necessary to produce conditions which the prophets declare shall prevail during the coming kingdom age. All this is best described, to use Jesus' own word for it, as a "regeneration."

APPENDIX II

Interpretations of the Millennium

REVELATION 20:1-7

Throughout this treatise I have sought to conserve the reader's time and to retain his interest by excluding discussion of matters not precisely germane to the points under discussion.

Nevertheless, in the interests of fairness to opponents, and in order to demonstrate more fully the truth of my proposition that "the Millennium is specifically (1) the period of time between the resurrection of the just and of the unjust, and (2) the period of Satan's imprisonment," this appendix is added.

It becomes more evident, after examination of many treatments of Revelation 20:1-7, that the literal interpretation is self-evidently the only acceptable one. And this is said with due respect to the names of many great men in the field of Biblical exegesis who insist, on the contrary, that little or nothing in these seven verses is to be taken literally--some of whom insist even that there is no numerical notation in the entire Book of Revelation which is to be taken literally.

It will not be convenient to classify the views of the "thousand years" or Millennium simply as Postmillennial, Premillennial, or Amillennial. Nor will a division be made solely between the figurative (or spiritual, topical, metaphorical, or nonliteral) and the literal interpretations, though, so far as the thousand years is concerned, such classification is feasible. The method to be followed will be to classify the different views according to the specific interpretation given the Greek words *chilia etee*, translated "a thousand years" in the English versions. Then, in connection with each of these views of the thousand years, the variations in interpretation of the details of the prophecy will be added. I have excepted the Premillennial interpretation from treatment in this appendix, inasmuch as this view is adopted and explained in the entire book.

Without pretending to have exhausted the number of variations of interpretation of the "thousand years" of Revelation 20 advocated since John wrote the words on Patmos, at least seven distinct views besides the Premillennial view are to be discerned. That is, there are at least these seven which have important differences and have been held by able orthodox Christian theologians. The views of Swedenborgians, Russellites, Seventh Day Adventists, and other groups not usually regarded as orthodox do not come within the limits of this survey.

It would be a hopeless task to attempt exhaustive description of every variation of a view. Therefore the course followed will be to name, state, and describe each view as set forth by its leading advocate or advocates. The effects of the view of the interpretation of the rest of the passage will be

presented also. Most of the refutation is reserved for a brief treatment of the linguistic arguments at the close.

For want of any more descriptive term, I label the simplest, and probably least acceptable, of all views as

1. *The Agnostic View: The "thousand years" are an unintelligible hieroglyph.*

This view has been unconsciously adopted by the many preachers and writers who either explicitly or implicitly pass by the entire Book of Revelation as if it were totally incomprehensible. However, at least one has specifically adopted this, in a formal way, as his view of the Millennium.

After surveying the Biblical support for the Chiliastic doctrine, he admits that "there are...passages, which, if interpreted strictly and exclusively according to the letter, afford some ground for the millenarian doctrine" (art. "Millenarianism, Millennium," C. A. Semisch, Schaff-Herzog *Ency. of Rel. Knowledge*, third ed. revised and enlarged). He adds, "It cannot be disputed that the Book of Revelation (20:4 sqq.) contains the fundamental characteristics of millenarianism." Then, after rejecting the views of Hengstenberg and of Augustine, he states his own view as follows:

In view of the difficulty of separating figure from real fact, we conclude that the millenarianism of the Book of Revelation is a hieroglyph whose meaning has not yet been satisfactorily solved (*ibid.*).

The writer recently heard a very learned gentleman from New Zealand give a lecture¹ in which he asserted that probably the Book of Revelation was a "cryptic letter" from the "concentration camp" on Patmos, and that as read to the seven churches of Asia was furnished with some sort of key to the symbols-- a key which unfortunately has been lost and is probably beyond recovery. In the lecture he did not apply this theory to the text now under consideration, but it may be presumed that if the occasion arose he would do so. His view, probably shared by others, seems to be essentially agnostic so far as the symbolism goes.

There is something to commend about this view. There is certainly more in the Book of Revelation, and specifically in 20:1-7, that any one interpreter is likely to discover. Yet there is nothing essentially esoteric or cryptic about the passage as it stands. The problems are no greater than those which prevail in most apocalyptic and predictive sections of the Bible. It is not likely that many will care to associate themselves permanently with Semisch's agnosticism.

2. *The Postmillennial View: The "thousand years" are a literal period of time at the latter part of the present age, to be terminated some time before the second advent of Christ.*

¹ I have since seen a small work by this writer, Mr. E. M. Blaiklock, in which his view is rather fully set forth (*The Seven Churches, An Exposition of Revelation*, chapters two and three. Marshall, Morgan, and Scott, London: n.d.)

An explanation must be offered quickly. Though all Postmillennialists agree that the "thousand years" of Revelation 20 refer to a literal period of time, they do not all agree that there will necessarily be one thousand literal years of it. That is, some suppose the the "thousand years" stand figuratively for a long period of time.

Postmillennialism is of comparatively recent origin. Several of the best advocates of the view attribute its origin to Daniel Whitby (1638-1726), an English Arminian theologian who near the end of his life adopted Arian views of the Godhead. A. H. Strong, for example (*Systematic Theology*, 1014), writes: "Our own interpretation of Revelation 20:1-10, was first given, for substance, by Whitby."

The best known statement of the Postmillennial position is probably that of A. A. Hodge (*Outlines of Theology*, 450 ff.). With his customary force, skill, and brevity, Mr. Hodge has presented the case as follows:

What is the Scriptural doctrine concerning the millennium?

1st. The Scriptures, both of the Old and New Testament, clearly reveal that the gospel is to exercise an influence over all branches of the human family, immeasurably more extensive and more thoroughly transforming than any it has ever realized in time past. This end is to be gradually attained through the spiritual presence of Christ in the ordinary dispensation of Providence, and ministrations of His church.²

2nd. The period of this general prevalency of the gospel will continue a thousand years, and is hence designated the millennium.

3rd. The Jews are to be converted to Christianity either at the commencement or during the continuance of this period.

4th. At the end of these thousand years, and before the coming of Christ, there will be a comparatively short season of apostasy and violent conflict between the kingdoms of light and darkness.

5th. Christ's advent, the general resurrection and judgment, will be simultaneous, and immediately succeeded by the burning of the old, and the revelation of the new earth and heavens.

Hodge, then, seems to feel that the "one thousand years" are a literal period of one thousand years, and that they will run their course in the latter portion of this present age.

However, David Brown, certainly the most voluminous writer in support of Postmillennialism, has taken a slightly different view. He writes:

One remark, however, I must request the reader to bear in mind....I attach no importance, in this argument, to the precise period of a *thousand years*. It occurs nowhere in Scripture but in one solitary passage. There are reasons for taking it definitely and literally; but to some these reasons appear slender. They think it means just a long indefinite period; agreeing with us, however, as to its being yet to come (*The Second Advent*, 27,28).

There are variations in the minor points among Postmillenarians but most

² I have omitted Hodge's lengthy list of Scripture references.

would agree on the general scheme of Hodge above. Another orthodox and scholarly advocate of Postmillennialism was A. H. Strong. I cite his views as characteristic of most orthodox Postmillennial doctrine.

The binding of Satan is presumably the restraint put on the devil by the ultimate prevalence of Christianity throughout the earth--when Jew and Gentile alike became possessed of Christianity's blessings (*Systematic Theology*, 1008).

The first resurrection (Rev. 20:4-6) is

not a preliminary resurrection of the body, in the case of departed saints, but a period in the latter days of the church militant, when, under special influence of the Holy Ghost, the spirit of the martyrs shall appear again, true religion be generally quickened and revived, and the members of Christ's churches become so conscious of their strength in Christ that they shall, to an extent unknown before, triumph over the powers of evil both within and without (*ibid.* 1013).

Strong feels that the release of Satan (Rev. 20:7) for "a little season" indicates that

at the close of this millennial period, evil will again be permitted to exert its utmost power in a final conflict with righteousness. This spiritual struggle, moreover, will be accompanied and symbolized by political convulsions, and by fearful indications of desolation in the natural world (*ibid.* 1009).

Thus the "little season" is the great tribulation period.

The destruction of Satan, Gog and Magog, the general resurrection and the general judgment of the great white throne are held to be at the second advent, some time after the close of the millennium.

It should be seen that Postmillennialists have not generally held that the second advent closes the Millennium, for by Strong's view, the "little season" is said to intervene. It is after the Millennium--but how long after is not declared.

It needs to be added that many advocates have felt that neither the church nor the world may be conscious of either the beginning or the close of the Millennium. Brown makes this clear:

Let no one suppose I expect that the beginning and end of this period will be so clearly discernible as to leave no room for doubt on any mind. On the contrary, I think there can hardly be a doubt that it will follow the law of all Scripture dates in this respect--of Daniel's "seventy weeks," and of the "twelve hundred and sixty days" of Antichristian rule. The beginning and end of the former of these periods is even yet a matter of some controversy, etc. (*op.cit.*, 28).

The period during which Postmillennialism was at its height of acceptance

was the latter half of the nineteenth century and during the first quarter of the present [twentieth] century. Among the great theologians of this era, Strong, C. A. Hodge, A. A. Hodge, C. A. Briggs were Postmillennial. Postmillennial writers of the more popular sort were Albert Barnes (*Commentaries on the New Testament*) and David Brown, to mention only a couple. Snowden (*The Coming of the Lord*, 1919) and Carroll (*The Book of Revelation*, 1916) are among the most recent thorough-going Postmillennial orthodox writers. During the "golden age" of American Protestant Modernism, which came to an end with World War II, Modernists adopted a kind of Postmillennialism to which earlier advocates would have given no approval (e.g., Rall, *Modern Premillennialism and the Christian Hope*). It was based more on the theory of evolution and humanism than on any interpretation of the Bible, and need not occupy our attention here. The present heirs of Modernism, the Neo-orthodox and Neo-liberal people, are scarcely more optimistic about the course of the present era than Premillenarians, and so are not inclined to Postmillennialism.

Postmillennialism has no strong, vocal present-day advocates. But it is not likely that it is dead. It seems probable that any period of prolonged peace in the world would provide the climate in which a revival of Postmillennialism might take place.

3. *Augustinian Amillennialism: The "thousand years" are probably a literal designation of the length of the present age, to be closed by the second advent of Christ. The reference is to the course of the church on earth during this period.*

Note the word "probably." I think Augustine would have approved the use of this word in this connection. As will be seen, he had a wholesome restraint in stating his views on some features of Bible prophecy which could well continue to be emulated.

Augustine's views on eschatology, among many other subjects, are set forth in *The City of God*, the result of thirteen years of labor (A.D. 413-426). The part which relates to the Millennium is Book XX, chapters 6 to 15. This will be found in "The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series," volume II, translated by Marcus Dods. It is safe to assert that until this section of Augustine's great work is mastered, one cannot fully appreciate the millennial discussions which have followed since his day. It is almost, if not wholly, true that all Amillennial and Postmillennial systems have been postscripts to *The City of God*.

Having just now read the entire section in *The City of God* again several times, I do not feel that it can be positively asserted that Augustine was convinced that the thousand years should be taken literally. He seems to say so, but he is not unequivocal. His nearest approach is in chapter 10. There he seems to say that the Millennium may be either the last one thousand years before the consummation, into which the present age falls, or it may be the entire period of the world's history, called one thousand years because one thousand as the cube of ten would be "the number of perfection to mark the fulness of time" (*ibid.* XX, 6). He seems to lean toward the first of the two possibilities. But, in either case, whether he thought the one thousand years

to be literal or a figure, he believed the term stood for a real period of time, whether one thousand years or six thousand years.

At any rate, he believed the whole present age to be in the Millennium and that the termination of the present age and of the Millennium would be approximately synchronous. It also appears that he followed the Septuagint chronology (it is believed that he did not know Hebrew) and thought the sixth thousand years of human history to be well in progress when the present dispensation began. He also evidently believed that at the end of six thousand years of history, Christ would come again and end the current age (*City of God*, XX,7). He specifically rejects the idea that the Millennium is a future age after the close of the present dispensation.

Later on, he makes it clear that he feels the Millennium refers to the course of the church in the world, and the reign of saints to be a present situation on earth, except insofar as the unity of the church living and dead involves a secondary reference to the saints in heaven as well.

His basic position on the Millennium is clarified as he goes on to give his views on the rest of Revelation 20.

"The first resurrection" (Rev. 20:4-6) he holds to be a spiritual resurrection--the same as that "resurrection" or "regeneration" described in John 5:26,27. It is the same as personal salvation. It is participated in only by the saved, as he says, "in the first resurrection none have a part save those who shall be eternally blessed" (*ibid.* XX, 6).

The second resurrection described in Revelation 20 is a physical resurrection of all men, according to Augustine. He speaks of it as a resurrection "of judgment" (XX, 6) almost as a Premillennialist, but he goes on to clarify his statement and show that he means only that the saints, all of whom participate in spiritual regeneration (first resurrection), shall not be "judged" (damned) in this second or physical resurrection at the consummation, even though they do participate in the resurrection.

He concludes:

So are there these two resurrections,--the one the first and spiritual resurrection, which has place in this life, and preserves us from coming into the second death; the other the second, which does not occur now, but in the end of the world, and which by the last judgment shall dismiss some into the second death, others into that life which has no death (*ibid.* XX, 8).

On the binding of Satan, he asserts that it has regard to the nations (as Rev. 20 says) but that this means "no doubt, those among which the church exists." Later he clarifies this to mean that Satan will not be able to seduce the elect of the church militant. This binding took place at the beginning of the present age when Christ first bound the "strong man" in order that he might "spoil his goods" (he cites Mark 3:27). This binding he seems to conceive of as a judicial act of God rather than of some specific historical event such as the death of Christ, the founding of the church, the work of the first

missionaries, etc.

On the loosing of Satan, he writes that it refers to revived ability of Satan to seduce the nonelect of the church visible. He seems to relate the Biblical references to a final great tribulation, the great apostasy, and the Antichrist to the "little season" during which Satan is to be loosed. This he places at the end of the present age but before the consummation (*i.e.*, before the "general resurrection" judgment, etc., *ibid.* XX, 8). He leaves the problem as to whether the "little season" is within the one thousand years or immediately afterward an open question (*ibid.* XX, 13).

These are the main features of Augustine's view. It bears repeating that his views are of utmost importance to present-day millennial discussions, for about every orthodox Amillennial or Postmillennial view since Augustine has embodied some of the main features of his view. Indeed, the very passages of Scripture which Augustine used in support of his arguments appear often in contemporary amillennial literature.

To recapitulate the main features of Augustine's view: The thousand years is an expression, whether figurative or literal he is not certain, standing for a literal period of time. The Millennium relates to the present age--either this age is the Millennium or is contained in it; the present age and the Millennium terminate approximately synchronously. The reign of the saints is during this age and it is on earth through the appointed leaders (clergy, etc.) of the visible church. The first resurrection is spiritual and is the regeneration of the individual believers whereby they become members of the body of Christ, that is, of the kingdom of God. The second resurrection is physical and refers to the resurrection of all men at the consummation. The binding of Satan consists of Satan's being deprived of any ability to seduce the elect. The loosing consists of revived ability to seduce the nonelect. The "little season" will come at the end of the current age when Antichrist, the great tribulation, the apostasy, etc., will come. This will be followed by a general resurrection and a general judgment.

It remains to be added that in the main Augustine's view is, and has been, the view of the Roman Catholic church.³

4. *Modern Amillennialism, the Modified Augustinian School: The "thousand years" is a figurative expression designating the course of the present age from the death of Christ to the second advent. The reference is to the reign of the saints with Christ in heaven.*

It will be seen at once that this is the Augustinian view with one major change and a few minor ones. The major change is that the reign of the saints in the Millennium is said to take place in heaven rather than on earth, as in the view of Augustine. An important minor change is that recent Amillennialists have clearly broken with the idea that the Millennium is to be

³ A footnote in the official Roman Catholic Bible in English (*The Holy Bible Douay-Rheims Version*) on Rev. 20:3 reads: "...the souls of the martyrs and saints live and reign with Christ in heaven, in the first resurrection, which is that of the soul to the life of glory."

taken as a literal designation of the literal length of time. Instead of setting any particular date, precise or approximate, for the end of the Millennium, the length of the Millennium is simply conceived to be the length of the present age. Some adjustment of this kind was inevitable in Amillennialism when once A.D. 1000 was passed.

An able contemporary representative of the school is Hendriksen, whose views are set forth in a recent book (*More Than Conquerors, an Interpretation of the Book of Revelation*). Following the "recapitulation" or "parallelistic" method of interpreting the Apocalypse, he believes that with Revelation 20 the prophecy returns to the beginning of the present age. The "order of events" has the following "sequence." He says, "Christ's first coming is followed by a long period during which Satan is bound; this in turn is followed by Satan's little season; and that is followed by Christ's second coming, that is, His coming unto judgment" (page 222). Concerning the binding of Satan, he writes: "This work of binding the devil was begun when our Lord triumphed over him in the temptations in the wilderness." Then, after citing and discussing Matthew 4:1-11, Luke 4:1-13, Luke 10:17,18, John 12:20-32, Colossians 2:15, and Revelation 12:5 ff., he asserts that the "binding and casting out or falling of Satan is...associated with the first coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." He feels that it consists of reducing Satan's power to keep the nations from the light of divine revelation and the saving gospel--almost unrestricted till Jesus came. Satan has been so bound that Christ may, in this age, draw men of every nation unto Himself (*ibid. in loco*).

This school dissociates itself completely from the Postmillennial optimism which expects a kind of literal Millennium in this age. Hendriksen makes it clear that he believes the binding of Satan is only in certain limited respects. The imprisonment (or binding) has respect to earth and living men; the reign of saints has respect to heaven and dead believers.

The first resurrection is the "translation of the soul from this sinful earth to God's holy heaven" at the death of the believer (Hendriksen, *ibid. in loco*). The second resurrection is the resurrection of the bodies of all men at the consummation.

Some of the recent writers who hold this modified Augustinian view of the Millennium, though disagreeing somewhat on details, are A. T. Allis, G. L. Murray, Floyd Hamilton, W. Hendriksen. There are many others whose expressions are friendly to this view but who, to the knowledge of the present writer, have not made published statements specifically upon interpretation of the "thousand years."

5. *Modern Amillennialism--B.B. Warfield School: The "thousand years" is a figurative expression signifying the "intermediate state." It is a kind of literary figure of speech whereby the present age is viewed from the standpoint of its enjoyment by the dead saints in glory.*

Warfield's views are set forth in the last chapter of a posthumous collection of his writings entitled, *Biblical Doctrines*. On account of his importance in twentieth century theology, and because there are some distinct

features in his Amillennialism, his view deserves special classification. I have called Warfield an Amillennialist because he denies any connection of the "thousand years" with a reign of Christ or His saints on earth, either after Christ's second coming or before it. It may be true, as former students of his classes have told me, that he regarded himself as a Postmillennialist.

While his theories are ingenious, they are not convincing. I know of no prominent writer who has heartily endorsed and adopted his views of Revelation 20. A system such as his which makes both a "little season" and "a thousand years" stand for the present age is not impressive to most minds. Likewise, having declared that the one thousand years stand for the *condition* of the disembodied saints in glory, he presently has the same expression stand for the *duration* of the present age also. Except that this view was expressed by a noted scholar, whose expositions of Christian doctrine in some other areas are justly famous, it is doubtful that his view of the Millennium would have made any impression on the Christian public.

6. *Modern Amillennialism--William Milligan School: The "thousand years" is a figurative designation of the idea of completeness or perfection. This perfection has reference to the salvation of the saints in their present state on earth, and to the present binding of Satan.*

Milligan's views are rather well known and generally highly regarded even among those who disagree with him. The fact that he is the writer on Revelation in the commentary on the Scriptures known as *The Expositor's Bible* has served to give his views great currency. His views were adopted by A. Plummer, who cites and quotes Milligan at some length in his exposition of the Book of Revelation in the commentary set known as *The Pulpit Commentary*. It should be noted that in *The Expositor's Bible*, Milligan presents his view as suggestive rather than dogmatic. His words are as follows:

The thousand years mentioned in the passage express no period of time. They are not a figure for the whole Christian era, now extending to nearly nineteen hundred years. Nor do they denote a certain space of time, longer or shorter, it may be, than the definite number of years spoken of, at the close of the present dispensation, and to be in the view of some preceded, in the view of others followed, by the second Advent of our Lord. They embody an idea; and that idea whether applied to the subjugation of Satan or to the triumph of the saints is the idea of completeness or perfection. Satan is bound for a thousand years, that is, he is completely bound. The saints reign for a thousand years, that is, they are introduced into a state of perfect and glorious victory" (*The Expositor's Bible*, Revelation, 913).

Like Warfield, Milligan feels that the "little season" is the whole Christian age, when, as regards the nations, Satan is loosed. This is quite contrary to the more common Amillennial view that during this period he is bound as regards the nations. With minor differences, Milligan's views on other details are pretty much the same as the common Amillennial view.

7. *Modern Amillennialism--Preterist School: The "thousand years" is a figurative expression signifying (according to Swete) a great epoc in human history." The reign of saints has reference to the triumph of Christianity*

which began with the victory of the church over paganism in the Roman Empire and continues to the present.

This view was advocated notably by Henry Barclay Swete (*The Apocalypse of St. John*, second ed., 1907) and more recently in this country by Albertus Pieters (*Studies in the Revelation of St. John*, 1943, 1950) among orthodox scholars.

Most of our contemporary Amillennialists draw a sharp break between chapters 19 and 20, but, like the Premillennialists, the advocates of the Preterist View recognize that the first resurrection, the binding of Satan, and the one thousand years follow the defeat of Antichrist related in chapter 19. In respect to most of the details of the prophecy, the views are similar to the Postmillennial scheme. Details of interpretation are very similar to those of David Brown and B. H. Carroll, Postmillennialists. In fact, except that this system finds the fulfillment of the prophecy of the binding of Satan and the first resurrection in the past, it would have to be called Postmillennial.

Swete thinks that the Millennium began with the breakup of the Beast ("Roman world power") and the False Prophet ("pagan system of priestcraft and superstition"). This is followed by a long period of "Christian supremacy during which the faith for which the martyrs died would live and reign;" the war with God and Magog to follow is the recrudescence of evil at the end of the present age (*op.cit.*, 266).

"The binding of Satan is the divine restraint put upon the devil so that he was unable any longer to 'deceive the nations,' that is, to bring about a restoration of that paganism" (Pieters, *op.cit.*, 307).

"The three and a half years stand for the period of struggle with paganism, and the thousand years for the succeeding period of uninterrupted triumph of Christianity over it" (*ibid.* 307).

To my mind, this is the most satisfactory of all views, except the Premillennial interpretation. It has the least inconsistency and has regard to the place of Revelation 20 in the order of events in the Book of Revelation.

Yet it has in it all the weaknesses of the various varieties of the Augustinian view, and for that reason is to be rejected.

In concluding this survey, let it be observed that all of these views reject the possibility of a future reign on earth of Christ and/or His saints lasting one thousand years. It bears repetition that many advocates of these views admit that, taken literally, the chapter does teach such a doctrine. Let it be observed also that even though some of those described accept a literal meaning for "one thousand years," not one of them attempts an interpretation which could be called "literal." No one, of course, feels that every last word is to be taken literally. The "key" and "chain" of verse 1 are self-evidently figures of some kind. So, as Dr. Albertus Pieters says:

...the most prominent line of cleavage among interpreters is between

those who, with due allowance for figures of speech, take the vision literally, and those who consider it a symbol. The former see here a description of events that must come to pass substantially as written, at some future time: The latter understand it to be a symbolical presentation of some spiritual truth, or of events that happened long ago (*op.cit.*, 282).

Thus, with allowance for some oversimplification, it can be said that on the one side are the nonliteral or symbolical interpretations and on the other the literal interpretations. Some Post- and Amillennial writers have held to a literal one thousand years, while holding to a figurative interpretation of the remainder of the details, and for that reason must be classed as advocates of a figurative interpretation.

Most of the really significant arguments against the literal interpretation and in favor of various figurative ones relate to five expressions in the passage before us. Besides these, there are numerous subsidiary arguments, given different emphasis by different writers. However, these five, which are generally supposed to find foundation in the language of the passage, appear over and over again in the literature on the subject. These must now be treated briefly.

1. *The use of the word 'soul' (psyche) in Revelation 20:4.*

John writes that following his vision of the binding of Satan he "saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark on their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years" (Rev. 20:4).

Many of the Amillennial writers argue from the use of the word "soul," as does Hamilton, [that]

...the first resurrection is the new birth which reaches its culmination and consummation when the soul of the believer leaves the body and goes to reign with Christ in heaven. The deliberate choice of the word "soul," which almost universally means soul as distinct from the body, as applying to the believers now reigning with Christ in glory, seems to make it plain that the first resurrection is just that (*The Basis of Millennial Faith*, 132).

The answer to this will not be in denial that the word "souls" does probably refer to disembodied souls. The obvious connection with Revelation 6:9-11 where disembodied souls is clearly meant makes it very likely that the same is meant here. Rather, the answer will be found in determination of the relationship of these "souls" to the group who are said to have "lived and reigned."

Observe that whoever the "souls" are, the ones of whom it is said at the end of verse 4, "they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years," [they] are obviously the same persons of whom John says in the beginning of verse 4, "I saw thrones and they sat on them, and judgment was given unto them." Who

are these? Who are the ones entered as subject of the verb *ekathisan* (they sat) and who must be the antecedent of the pronoun *autois* (unto them)? They are not the devil (20:2) or the angel (20:1) or the slain beasts and their armies (19:19-21). They can hardly be other than those described in 19:14 as follows: "the armies which are in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and pure." Commentators unite in recognizing these as the redeemed of the ages. The clear necessity for some antecedent to the pronominal subject of the first verb, and to the pronoun "them" in verse 4, is the reason why the "recapitulation" theory cannot be adduced to make a break between chapters 19 and 20. So whoever the "souls" are, they are certainly not the total of participants in the first resurrection. They are mentioned only by way of eminence, to show the fulfillment of their prayer for deliverance and vindication before their enemies (6:10).

This argument is not only without force but easily becomes an occasion for a true understanding of a better explanation of the Book of Revelation.

2. *The use of "resurrection" (anastasis) in Revelation 20:5.*

After relating the events above, John adds that "the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished" and then, evidently referring to those before who "lived and reigned with Christ," says, "This is the first resurrection" (Rev. 20:5).

Now, say those who interpret figuratively, this resurrection is that of the soul spiritually dead in trespasses and sins unto spiritual life in Christ, that is, the first resurrection is essentially the new birth, followed by spiritual exaltation with Christ at death.

This argument is discussed in chapter I. This much only I add here. The word *anastasis* (resurrection) is never elsewhere in the New Testament used of anything except physical resurrection, except Luke 2:34, in which the context furnishes another meaning. The word appears forty-two times in the New Testament. Of the thirty-nine appearances outside this chapter, thirty-eight have clear reference to physical resurrection. It will surely require overwhelming evidence to establish spiritual resurrection as the meaning of the word *anastasis* in Revelation 20. A few who accept the literal physical resurrection view suppose that John described a physical resurrection but intended it as a symbol of a spiritual resurrection. But the burden of proof rests with these. If this view is taken, the argument will have to be supplied from some source other than the idea of resurrection or the word *anastasis*.

3. *The binding of Satan in Revelation 20.*

Amillennialists point out that Satan had deceived all the nations, except Israel, previous to our Lord's first coming, and had them in his power. After Christ came, the gospel came to the nations and they began to be freed from his power in the sense that members of all nations become Christians.

The Amillennialists' basic text in explaining the binding of Satan described in Revelation 20, and in equating it to these historical facts, has

been Mark 3:27. Other passages speak of Satan's "falling" (Luke 10:17,18), his being "cast out" (John 12:31), of Christ's "despoiling" Satan (Col. 2:15). All these are properly associated with the first coming of Christ. Thus the reasoning is, to use the words of Hendriksen:

Hence, in close harmony with all these Scriptural passages--and our exegesis must always be based upon the analogy of Scripture!--we conclude that also here in Rev. 20:1-3 the binding of Satan and the fact that he is hurled into the abyss to remain there for a thousand years indicates that throughout this present Gospel Age, which begins with Christ's first coming and extends nearly to the second coming, the devil's influence on earth is curtailed so that he is unable to prevent the extension of the church among the nations by means of an active missionary program (*op.cit.*, 226).

It must be readily admitted that the analogy of Scripture cannot be ignored in interpretation. However, it has a limited bearing on interpretation. For example, the "lion of the tribe of Judah" (Rev. 5:5) can hardly have any connection with the fact that the devil is described as the "adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion" (I Pet. 5:8). Where there are strong reasons for believing that analogy exists, it helps us; otherwise not. In a chapter like Revelation 20, where the binding of Satan is placed after a chapter describing the second coming of Christ with the saints of heaven following, and where there is no intrinsic evidence for a break in consecution, the analogy hardly applies. The stubborn fact remains that the binding of Satan in Revelation is placed in an eschatological setting wherein the resurrection of the dead takes place, especially of the persecuted and martyred dead. This cannot fit into the Amillennial scheme of things. Furthermore, the chain in the hand of the angel, the "key," and the "seal," all speak of an absolute binding, as even Milligan declares. That Satan is absolutely so bound at the present time, even in the sense advocated by Hendriksen and his company of commentators, both the present world situation and the Bible deny. Well down into the course of this "Gospel Age" Satan was still free to deceive the nations to the limit of his ability, for Paul writes: "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the eyes of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them" (II Cor. 4:3,4).

4. *The statement that "they...reigned with Christ" (Rev. 20:4).*

Those who adopt a symbolical interpretation of these words claim that the Scriptures speak of the reign of the saints with Christ as prevailing now, not in the future after Christ's second coming. Passages frequently cited are Romans 5:21 ("even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life"), which is thought to make that eternal life in Christ the one and only reign of the saints, and II Timothy 2:12, I Peter 2:9, and Colossians 1:17.

My comment and answer must be brief--and I do not intend to be curt. Certainly there is such a present relationship with Christ as "reigning with him" which does exist. But that does not prove that such was what John was talking about. As noted elsewhere in this book, I do recognize that there is

an important sense in which the saints of this age do now participate in Christ's present kingdom. That this is the precise equivalent of the reign of the saints in Revelation 20, or in the numerous passages in the Old Testament (*vide*. Dan. 7:14,22,27) in which the saints of God are promised universal and eternal dominion, must be specifically denied (see my comments on Daniel 7 in chapter VI). There is nothing in Revelation 20 or elsewhere which requires such a view.

5. *The statement that "they lived (ezesan)...with Christ."*

It has been frequently pointed out by those who interpret this passage in a figurative way, that the word "lived" is a form of the Greek word *zao*, which means "to live" rather than to be resurrected or to live again. Such being the case, it is argued that the word is very fitting for spiritual exaltation rather than physical resurrection. Barnes (*Commentary, in loco*) argues at length for a spiritual significance for the word, as do others.

It must be readily admitted that the Greek word does sometimes, even in the book of Revelation, have such a meaning, for example, "Thou hast a name that thou livest and art dead" (Rev. 3:1). The same *may* be true of the same word in Revelation 7:17, and some think also in 13:14. Yet in other passages physical life is meant (*e.g.*, Rev. 19:20; 16:3). So, as far as the general use of the word is concerned, it may be used either of physical or of spiritual life.

In my opinion, both literal and symbolical interpreters have generally erred in treating this word. The evidence does not prove (as some Premillennialists think) that the word means to *live again*. When Jesus spoke of the impartation of eternal life ("and they that hear shall live," John 5:25), He used this word. But He did not mean "live again," for natural men have never been alive spiritually. He meant that they would come into possession of spiritual life. It might be better to say that the state of being alive came to pass for them. Thus the word essentially means to be alive, not to become alive. If this were not the case, John would not write, using the same word with *achri* "again", that "the rest of the dead lived not again" (Rev. 20:5).

Now, in Revelation 20, John sees the hosts who return with the Son of God alive and reigning with Christ. It is true that he makes no reference to their "becoming alive." It makes no difference that he did not; it is necessary that a resurrection shall have taken place, as the statement in verse five that certain others, in contrast with these, "lived not again" until after the Millennium, shows. And, in the case of the martyrs at least, beheaded and dead, resurrection would be necessary (see following).

Consider also that where a bit later it is said that "the rest of the dead lived not again" until after the Millennium, that physical resurrection is necessarily understood. They are the wicked dead, and hence spiritually as well as physically dead. Since they never had spiritual life, they cannot be said to live "again" spiritually.

So, though the word *ezesan* (they lived) does not specify resurrection of the body, it certainly does not militate against it.

The following facts may be admitted to show that the resurrection of the bodies of the righteous dead is involved in verse 4. (1) *ezesan* (they lived) is a form of the word that is used at least twice in the Revelation of our Lord in His resurrection body--"I am he that liveth, and was dead; and behold I am alive forevermore" (Rev. 1:18, cf. also 2:8). (2) In each of these cases the word *ezesan* is parallel with the expression in Greek "became dead" (*egeneto [or egenouen] nekros*), which suggests that His being alive was the result of "becoming" also. (3) Most importantly, what "they" who live and reign do is "with Christ" and presumably in the same sense. In the same sense that Christ is alive, they are alive. In His case it is in the resurrection body, and, therefore, in their case the same. All recognize that resurrection of the body is eschatological. We may expect that the events of this verse, then, are likewise eschatological.

There are other arguments used by those who reject the literal interpretation--some rational, some Biblical. It is beyond the scope of this effort to treat them more than they have been treated in the main body of the book. With this, therefore, I close.