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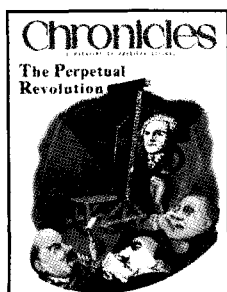
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## POLEMICS & EXCHANGES

### On Millennia

Aaron D. Wolf's ranting and caustic assault on premillennarians and dispensational premillennarians ("Apocalypse Now," *Views*, April) is making some of us wonder what kind of an agenda *Chronicles* has. These are issues over which Christians have a variety of viewpoints, and a modicum of civility might be helpful. The fact is that most of the Church Fathers were chiliasts (premillennial), among them Irenaeus, Tertullian, Papias, Hippolytus. That Christ's literal rule on earth reflects a "deficient Christology and soteriology" would be news to Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Moody Bible Institute, Dallas Seminary, etc.—all of which are committed to historic premillennialism.

The dispensational thrust in the United States was launched in the 19th century by Dr. C.I. Scofield (a Congregationalist), Dr. James Brookes (a Presbyterian), William E. Blackwell (a Methodist), and Dr. James Gray (an Episcopalian). Augustinian amillennialism is losing out today because of its status by negation and because many see in Romans 11 something very special for ethnic Israel in the wrap-up of human history (even Karl Barth, D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, and C.E.B. Cranfield, to speak of but a few). Even on dispensationalism, Mr. Wolf does not get his facts straight—the seventh dispensation is Christ's Kingdom on earth ("the Millennium") according to the Scofield Bible.

I do not think that diatribes in *Chronicles* or the rabid *Christian Century* on the issue of Christian Zionism are very helpful. Many will still choose to stand with Joachim of Fiore, the Puritans, and the Pietists on this issue. The sharp poke against revivalism and its champions such as Charles G. Finney, Billy Sunday, and Billy Graham raises a false dichotomy—either doctrinal orthodoxy or a "heart religion." Many of us reasonably believe that Christianity can be both. I had hoped for a more judicious and thoughtful analysis of these issues on which Christians hold differing views.

—David L. Larsen  
Deerfield, IL



### Mr. Wolf Replies:

Dr. Larsen, who teaches at my *alma mater*, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, is right: The fifth (not the sixth) dispensation is the one called "Law," and the sixth is "Grace," the Church Age.

The "caustic" language of my article is directed not toward evangelical Christians but toward the neoconservative Republicans and some Israeli nationalists who offer them false friendship in order to gain power.

And there is plenty to "rant" about when it comes to the shameless apocalyptic marketing tactics of the likes of Timothy LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins, the now-fabulously wealthy authors of the *Left Behind* series. Following in Hal Lindsey's footsteps, they have captured the imaginations of millions of evangelicals, leading them away from the glorious icon of Christ presented in the Book of Revelation: "And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth." All theology (so the Lutheran saying goes) is Christology, and that includes eschatology, the study of last things. The word is singular: It is the Book of the *Revelation* of Jesus Christ, not of the adventures of reporter Buck Williams, who romances Chloe Steel while fighting Antichrist Nikolae Carpathia.

My article dealt with the most popular view of last things among evangelical Christians: dispensational premillennialism. It is true, however, that another form of premillennialism exists: *historic premillennialism*, sometimes called *chiliasm*. This view, which disavows the trappings of the seven dispensations and somewhat deemphasizes the notion of a unique role for national Israel in the last days, is popular mostly among evangelical scholars, many of whom have shrunk away from the fantastic claims of dispensationalism. At places like Trinity, for example, you will find representatives of both kinds of premillennialism. (Their bookstores always carry the latest *Left Behind* book, however, and I do not think that it is accurate to say that Trinity, Moody, or Dallas Theological Seminary—the epicenter