Millennialism and the Early Church Councils: 

Was Chiliasm Condemned at Constantinople?  

by Francis X. Gumerlock  

Saint Louis University  

The Role of History in the Debate on Millennialism  

In the area of millennial studies, the number of positions on the interpretation of the thousand years of Revelation 20:1-8 seems to be expanding. A few decades ago, a theological discussion of the major viewpoints regarding the millennium consisted of usually two or three positions, premillennialism, amillennialism, and sometimes postmillennialism.  

Robert Clouse’s 1977 book, The Meaning of the Millennium, expanded the discourse to four views—amillennialism, postmillennialism, and two premillennial positions, that of historic premillennialism and dispensational premillennialism.  

This ‘four views’ approach was followed by Stanley J. Grentz in his 1992 work, The Millennial Maze.  

More recently, Gary D. Long’s Context: Evangelical Views on the Millennium Examined analyzed six millennial positions within evangelicalism alone, adding to Clouse’s categories the millennial views of progressive dispensationalism, and a position distinguished from amillennialism called “new covenant non-premillennialism.”  

To these views can be added militant millennialism, termed not so much for its temporal relationship to Christ’s second coming as much as
for its violent method of bringing about earthly utopia,\textsuperscript{6} and secular millennialism, a view characterized as secular for its humanistic vision of a new period of world history.\textsuperscript{7}

Despite this expansion of millennial views, the main locus of debate in Christian scholarship is between premillennialism and amillennialism. Premillennialists profess that when Christ returns there will be a literal thousand-year reign of Christ as king on earth. For amillennialists, Christ’s thousand-year reign is a present reality, the number ‘one thousand’ being interpreted as a synecdochic figure of speech. In other words, the limited number of a thousand conveys totality, similar to when the psalmist proclaimed that the Lord owns “the cattle on a thousand hills” (Ps 50:10).

While the main playing field for debate between premillennialists and their opponents is holy scripture, scholars seem to be increasingly employing Christian history in their polemics.\textsuperscript{8} For example, K. Neill Foster and David E. Fessenden arranged their 2002 publication, \textit{Essays on Premillennialism}, so that its first four essays are historical considerations of the premillennial position. Advertised as “a modern affirmation of an ancient doctrine,” the book begins with a study by Paul L. King on the antiquity of premillennialism in an article entitled “Premillennialism and the Early Church.” King cites at least fourteen early church fathers from the first four centuries of Christian history who were adherents of chiliasm, a term used for early belief in a literal earthly millennium.\textsuperscript{9} He concludes that “the earliest church overwhelmingly maintained a premillennial viewpoint.”\textsuperscript{10} In his assessment that premillennialism was the dominant viewpoint of early Christians, King echoes a host of contemporary premillennial authors, both popular and academic.\textsuperscript{11}
Amillennialist Charles E. Hill’s *Regnum Caelorum*, whose second edition was published in 2001, is devoted entirely to the early history of millennial positions. In this study, Hill rebutts the claim that there was a premillennial consensus in the early church, and shows that there was much more variety on the millennium in the early church than premillennialists are letting on. In the second century, he notes, Justin Martyr had referred to many “pure and pious” Christians who did not hold chiliast views. Hill gives them names and faces, identifying at least ten major Christian writers of the second and third centuries as non-chiliast. Their statements, Hill concludes, “enable us to say with little or no hesitation that all [of those whom he identified] held amillennial expectations of the return of Christ.”

Early Church Councils on the Millennium

Hill’s work is significant because a great deal of literature touting premillennialism as “the” position of the early church, for the most part, had remained unchallenged by Christian scholars. Now if one places the number of chiliast early church fathers side by side with the number who were amillennial, the result is more or less a draw. Amillennialists, formerly on the defensive when it came to demonstrating the antiquity of their position, now seem to be turning the tables. Some, in an attempt to strengthen their position and disparage the validity of premillennialism, have focused upon early church councils, citing several that have allegedly opposed chiliasm. On the surface these historical citations appear to be trump cards demonstrating the doctrinal superiority of amillennialism. But upon closer scrutiny, the claims suffer from a severe lack of substantiation.
For example, several writers have asserted that the Council of Ephesus in 431 condemned belief in an earthly millennium as a heretical superstition. In making this claim, however, none of the writers had cited a canon or decree associated with that council upon which the assertion could reasonably be deduced. Norman P. Tanner’s 1990 reference work, Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils, provides the Greek and Latin texts of all the documents associated with the Council of Ephesus, with English translations. Not only is there not one statement from this council condemning belief in an earthly millennium, there is not one hint that the subject of the millennium even came up at the council as a topic of discussion. The claim is totally groundless.

Claims Concerning the Council of Constantinople

A second early church council brought into contemporary Christian discourse on the millennium is the Council of Constantinople held in 381. Attempting to undermine premillennialism, several writers have stated that this council, also known as the Second Ecumenical Council, long ago condemned the belief that in the eschaton Christ will reign with his saints on earth for a thousand years.

For example, Alexander Mileant, a bishop of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, recently wrote,

Chiliastic views in antiquity were spread chiefly among heretics. The Second Ecumenical Council in 381 A.D., condemning the heretic Apollinarius [sic], condemned his teaching about the thousand-year kingdom of Christ. To put a stop to further attempts at introducing this teaching, the fathers of the Council inserted into the Creed the words about Christ: “His kingdom shall have no end.”
In 1995, Averky Taushev wrote similarly, saying, “One should be aware and keep in mind that chiliasm was condemned by the Second Ecumenical Council in the year 381; and therefore to believe in it now in the twentieth century, even in part, is quite unforgivable.”\textsuperscript{17} Again,

To hold Chiliasm even as a private opinion was no longer permissible after the Church, at the Second Ecumenical Council in 381, condemned the teaching of the heretic Apollinaris concerning the thousand-year reign of Christ. At the same time this was confirmed by the introduction into the Symbol of Faith of the words ‘of His kingdom there will be no end.’\textsuperscript{18}

In 1992, Columba Graham Flegg asserted likewise. “In 381 the Second Ecumenical Council (Constantinople I) condemned the millenarian teaching of Apollinarius [sic] together with his Christology, and introduced into the Creed the words, ‘And His Kingdom shall have no end.’”\textsuperscript{19}

In summary these authors claim that the bishops gathered at the Council of Constantinople in 381 specifically condemned the chiliast teaching of Apollinaris of Laodicea (d. 390); and in order to curb his teachings about a thousand year reign of Christ, they inserted into the creed the words “His kingdom will have no end.”

**Christology not Chiliasm Condemned**

That the Council of Constantinople condemned Apollinarians is evident from the first canon of the council, but did the council ever condemn the millenarian teaching of Apollinaris? The council did insert the phrase “His kingdom will have no end” into the Nicene creed, but whether the phrase was introduced in order to stop the spread of millenarianism is worthy of investigation. Ascertaining the purpose for which the council was convened will assist in providing answers to these questions.
The Council of Constantinople was called because of issues related to the Trinity, Christology, and Pneumatology. In 325, the Council of Nicea condemned Arianism, which denied that the Son was not of the same substance as the Father. But for much of the mid-fourth century Arians controlled the episcopacy in Constantinople, especially during the reign of the emperor Valens. After the death of Valens in 378, the tide began to change in favor of those who held the Nicene faith, i.e. belief in the full divinity of Christ. The next year the new emperor Gratian made his former general, Theodosius, a joint emperor. One of the first orders of business for Theodosius, who was an adherent of the Nicene faith, took place in 380. He summoned bishops from different parts of the East to come to Constantinople. The purpose of this gathering, which is now recognized as the Second Ecumenical Council of 381, was to secure the triumph of the Nicene faith over Arianism and its offshoots, including some who were denying the divinity of the Holy Spirit. Canon 1 of the council shows that the one hundred and fifty bishops in attendance adopted the Nicene creed and anathematized various heretics whose Christological views opposed the Nicene faith. This anathema included Apollinarians. It reads:

The profession of faith of the holy fathers who gathered in Nicaea in Bithynia is not to be abrogated, but it is to remain in force. Every heresy is to be anathematized and in particular that of the Eunomians or Anomoeans, that of the Arians or Eudoxians, that of the Semi-Arians or Pneumatomachi, that of the Sabellians, that of the Marcellians, that of the Photinians and that of the Apollinarians.

The Council of Constantinople did condemn and reject the teaching of Apollinaris. However, all of the heretics mentioned in Canon 1 in some way contradicted the Nicene faith with respect to the doctrine of God, more specifically to the nature and
relationship of the Son and Holy Spirit within the Godhead. The Apollinarians were no exception, as they too were teaching doctrine contrary to the Nicene faith.

According to J. N. D. Kelly, the heresy of Apollinaris “consisted in his refusal to admit the completeness of the Lord’s humanity.” 22 Kelly continued,

At first he [Apollinaris] based himself on a dichotomist anthropology and taught that Christ’s human nature consisted simply of a body, the place of the soul being usurped by the Word. Later, becoming trichotomist, he admitted that Christ possessed an animal soul in addition to a body, but denied Him a human rational soul. 23

In response to this faulty Christology of Apollinaris, the council decided to add a phrase to its creed, a longer version of the Nicene Creed sometimes called the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed. 24 One difference between this creed and the shorter version of the Nicene Creed, especially relevant to the question at hand, is an expanded section on the person of Christ. To refute the teaching of the Apollinarians, the council did not add the words “His Kingdom will have no end”; it inserted the phrase “who came down and became incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary.” 25 With this phrase, the council was conveying that the Son was not only fully divine, but also fully human, a teaching that the Apollinarians were denying. 26

A letter associated with the Council of Constantinople demonstrates that the object of the anathema against the Apollinarians was their Christology. This letter, written in the name of the one hundred and fifty bishops of the council, was sent to Rome. After condemning the blasphemy of the Eunomians, Arians, and Pneumatomachi for dividing the substance of God, the bishops addressed the issue of the Apollinarians writing, “And we preserve undistorted the accounts of the Lord’s taking of humanity, accepting as we do that the economy of his flesh was not soulless nor mindless nor
imperfect.” The Council of Constantinople rejected Apollinaris’ teaching that Christ lacked a rational human soul. And it was his Christology the council rejected, not his eschatology.

Concerning Apollinaris’ eschatology, ascertaining his views is difficult because most of his literary works were destroyed. If Apollinaris did teach chiliasm, these views may have been recorded in his commentaries on the prophets, but these works are no longer extant. Sources external to his own writings, however, indicate that he probably held chiliastic sentiments. These include Apollinaris’ contemporaries, Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nazianzus, who accused him of “reintroducing a ‘second Judaism’ by espousing a chiliastic hope.” On the other hand, at least one of Apollinaris’ contemporaries, Epiphanius of Salamis, did not believe that he taught chiliasm.

Regardless of whether Apollinaris was a chiliast or not, from the records of the Council of Constantinople there is no evidence that Apollinaris’ eschatology was even discussed at the council, much less his alleged chiliasm the subject of condemnation. The facts are these: The Council of Constantinople rejected the teaching of Apollinaris, and Apollinaris was probably a chiliast. But the Council of Constantinople rejected Apollinaris’ Christology, not his chiliasm.

“His Kingdom Will Have No End”

Whether the council introduced the phrase, “His kingdom will have no end,” to stop Apollinaris’ chiliast beliefs from spreading is another question that deserves consideration. The Council of Constantinople did insert this phrase into the creed, but
according to the best patristic scholarship it had nothing to do with the millenarian teachings of Apollinaris. Rather, it was a reaction to the unorthodox Christology of Marcellus, a fourth century teacher from Ancyra in Galatia. The followers of his teaching were labelled “Marcellians” in Canon 1 of the council.

On the subject of the Trinity, Marcellus taught that the distinctions in the Godhead--the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit--were not eternal, but only temporal. In a recent study of Marcellus, Joseph Lienhard described the standard understanding of Marcellus’s Trinitarianism:

Most standard summaries of Marcellus’s theology follow the same pattern. God is a Monad. For the purpose of creation He expands into a Dyad, and is Father and Logos. At a particular moment in history the Logos became incarnate in Mary the Virgin and thereby also became “Son.” On Easter night Christ sent the Spirit, and God was now a Triad. At the end of time Christ will hand over the Kingdom to the Father, and God will be all in all, once again a Monad.

In other words, the Monad that expands by stages into a Triad and then contracts again into a Monad is taken to be the defining element of Marcellus’s theology. 33

To summarize, Marcellus believed that for the purpose of creation and salvation, the one God expanded into two, the Father and Son. God then later expanded into three. At the end of the world, after the Son delivers all things to the Father, the Son will be absorbed back into the Godhead, at which time God would be strictly one again. Marcellus based this erroneous belief in a temporal Trinity on I Cor 15:24-28, which says that the Son will deliver the kingdom to the Father, and God will be all in all.

Several local councils in the fourth century rejected this teaching of Marcellus as contrary to the Gospel, and inserted statements into their creeds to specifically counter his
theology. By asserting that the Son was begotten of the Father before all ages, these local creeds already contained statements that the Son was eternal, in the sense of always existent in eternity past. However, to guard against Marcellus’ teaching, churches now deemed it necessary to provide a statement that the Son of God will also continue forever and remain God and King in eternity future. It is in this context that Council of Constantinople introduced the phrase “His kingdom will have no end.”

The historical development of this insertion can be traced back to the first and third creeds proposed at a synod in Antioch in 341, forty years before the Council of Constantinople. The first creed says, “(We believe) that He suffered, was raised from the dead, and returned to heaven; that He sits at the right hand of the Father, and shall come again to judge the living and the dead, and remains God and King to all eternity.” The third creed additionally professed that the only-begotten Son “will come again with glory and might to judge the living and the dead, and abides for everlasting.”

In these credal statements the focus of the anti-Marcellian phrases was the Person of the Son, and the firm belief that He will remain forever.

To counter Marcellus’ teaching, a patriarch of the church of Jerusalem in the mid-fourth century named Cyril made use the phrase in Luke 1:33—“His kingdom will have no end” (NASB). Cyril’s Catechetical Lecture 15 shows clearly that the introduction of this phrase had nothing to do with the teachings of Apollinaris, and everything to do with the unorthodox Christology of Marcellus. Cyril wrote,

And shouldest thou ever hear any say that the kingdom of Christ shall have an end abhor the heresy; it is another head of the dragon, lately sprung up in Galatia. A certain one has dared to affirm, that after the end of the world Christ shall reign no longer; he has also dared to say, that the Word having come forth from the Father shall again be absorbed into the Father, and shall be no
more; uttering such blasphemies to his own perdition. For he has not listened to the Lord, saying,

*The Son abideth for ever.* He has not listened to Gabriel, saying, *And He shall reign over the*

*house of Jacob for ever, and of His kingdom there shall be no end…* David also says in one place,

*Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever…*36

Cyril did not mention by name the person who taught the heresy, but he does say that he was from Galatia, the region in which Marcellus resided. To counter Marcellus’ doctrine of a temporary Trinity, in which the Son at the end of the world is absorbed into the Father, Cyril cited several Scripture passages affirming that the Son will remain forever. One of them was Luke 1:33. Several decades later, the ecumenical Council of Constantinople, drawing upon these local customs, also inserted the phrase from Luke 1:33, “His kingdom will have no end” into the expanded Nicene creed.

Several modern patristic scholars confirm that the council inserted the phrase in response to the theology of Marcellus, and not Apollinaris. John Voelker wrote that it was Marcellus that was forever remembered in the “pronouncement of the Niceno-

Constantinopolitan creed of 381, ‘and of His Kingdom there will be no end…. ‘”37

Similarly Rebecca Lyman noted that the phrase “was inserted in the creed to refute his [Marcellus’] interpretation of I Corinthians 15:24-28.”38

In summary, the Council of Constantinople did introduce the phrase “His kingdom will have no end” into the creed. However, it was not done to stop the spread of Apollinaris’ chiliasm. It had nothing to do with either Apollinaris or the millennium. It was inserted as a scriptural refutation of the unorthodox Christology of Marcellus, who taught that in the eschaton the Son would no longer exist.
Was Chiliasm Condemned at the Council of Constantinople?

It has been shown that in an effort to add historical arguments to their rejection of premillennialism, several contemporary writers have stated that the Council of Constantinople in 381 condemned the chiliast beliefs of Apollinaris and added to the creed “His kingdom will have no end” to counter belief in a literal thousand year reign of Christ. It has been demonstrated, however, that the council took issue with the followers of Apollinaris not because of their belief in an earthly millennium, but because of their faulty Christology. In Apollinarianism, the humanity of Christ lacked a full rational soul, and the bishops at the council saw this notion of Christ as inconsistent with the New Testament. Furthermore, the council’s insertion into the creed of the phrase from Luke 1:33, “His kingdom will have no end,” had nothing to do with Apollinaris’ chiliasm. Rather, it was a way for fourth-century Christians to guard against the false Christology of Marcellus of Ancyra, who erroneously taught that in the eschaton God the Son will cease to exist as a distinct Person of the Trinity.

This is not to imply that the bishops present at the Council of Constantinople, all from the Eastern portion of the empire, were supportive of chiliasm, for this was not the case. While many church fathers of the second and third centuries held chiliast beliefs, by the late fourth-century chiliasm was generally looked upon with disfavor in the East. However, the fact that many Eastern church fathers considered belief in a literal millennium erroneous, is one thing. Saying that the ecumenical Council of Constantinople condemned chiliasm is another.

The learned seventeenth-century exegete, Cornelius a Lapide, who was not a premillennialist, said that he could not find any early council that condemned chiliasm as
More recently, Desmond Birch wisely distinguished between Apollinaris’ Christology, which was condemned at the Council of Constantinople, and Apollinaris’ millennial teachings, which were “not officially condemned” at the council. Did the Council of Constantinople condemn chiliasm? The answer is “No.”

Later Councils on the Millennium

As the patristic era came to a close, chiliasm fell more and more into disrepute. Most believed that its origins were suspect—that belief in a literal millennium had its derivation in Jewish apocryphal writings, the writings of the gnostic Cerinthus, or the unlearned church father, Papias. Others expressed disapproval, saying that chiliastic hopes were focused in the wrong direction, on the flesh and the world rather than on heaven and the world to come. They saw chiliasm, which held that in the millennial kingdom people will still eat, drink, marry, and propagate children, as contradicting Jesus’ teaching that there is no marriage after the resurrection (Matt 22:30), and Paul’s statement that “the kingdom of God is not a matter of food and drink” (Rom 14:17). Still others believed that chiliasm, with its notion of a future temple in Jerusalem complete with animal sacrifices, was a reversion to the practices of the Old Testament, shadows that had already been fulfilled in Christ.

In the early middle ages, several Christian writers associated chiliasm with heresy. Nevertheless, the hope of a millennial kingdom survived in the East in certain Syrian circles, and in the West in the belief that there would be a time of rest for the saints after the death of Antichrist. Chiliasm was revived in the late middle ages through the influence of the writings of the abbot Joachim of Fiore and his followers.
Later, certain Protestant exegetes of the seventeenth century popularized it in their respective communities of faith.\textsuperscript{46}

As for the early councils, none explicitly addressed the belief in an earthly millennial kingdom. This has already been shown in the cases of the Council of Constantinople I in 381 and the Council of Ephesus in 430. The Council of Constantinople II in 553 anathematized anyone who maintained that Christ’s kingdom would have an end, but like the earlier insertion of Luke 1:33 into the creed, this statement was not directed against chiliast beliefs.\textsuperscript{47} In this case it was directed against the Origenists’ cyclical concept of time and belief in the eventual absorption of all things into God. Origenists believed that God from all eternity created a succession of ages, and that this succession and return of new worlds would eventually result in a single world of “intellects.” Then God would be “all in all,” and all humans, angels, and even Satan would cease to be God’s enemies. Opponents of the Origenists believed that such teaching implied Christ’s kingdom would one day come to an end, and therefore, that the Son was inferior to the Father.\textsuperscript{48} Therefore, they included the aforementioned anathema. According to Elizabeth Clark’s study of the Origenist controversy, the anti-Origenists reasoned that “if Christ’s reign were to end, so would his divinity, and then he would cease to be one with God.”\textsuperscript{49} Like Canon 1 of the Council of Constantinople in 381, the focus of the anathema was faulty Christology.

In the eighth century during the iconoclast controversy, an ecclesiastical council met at Hierieia in 754. Convened by iconoclasts who opposed the Byzantine practice of depicting the saints in frescoes and statues, the council passed Canon 18. It reads,

If anyone does not confess the resurrection of the dead, and the judgment and the recompense, according to the merit of each, judged by the just scales of God, and [does not confess] that
punishment has no end nor does the kingdom of heaven, which is the enjoyment of God—"for the kingdom of heaven is not food and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit according to the holy apostle—\textit{anathema}.\textsuperscript{50}

Interpreting the purpose of this anathema, Stephen Gero suggested that to iconoclasts, the practice of their opponents of setting up lifeless images of the saints had negative implications upon eschatology. For example, if one were to think that the saints, with all of their virtues, could be depicted in a painting or statue, such belief is equal to denying the glory of the saints in the sight of God, in the resurrection, and in Christ’s heavenly kingdom.\textsuperscript{51} As in the case of the councils mentioned previously, chiliast beliefs were not the subject of attack at the Council of Heireia. However, of all of the decrees of the early church councils, its description in Canon 18 of the kingdom as endless spiritual enjoyment of God, rather than as a thousand-year earthly reign, is perhaps the closest that any have come to endorsing a position resembling amillennialism. But there certainly is no condemnation of chiliasm. The Council of Heireia was eventually overturned by the iconophilic Council of Nicea in 787, and as a result its canons had minimal influence in subsequent Christian history.

According to historical theologian, Jaroslav Pelikan, chiliast beliefs escaped official anathema by all of the early councils because they did not deny the creed.\textsuperscript{52} My investigation of the canons of the early councils similarly has uncovered no condemnation of chiliasm by them.

Christian scholars who seek to use the historic creeds and councils to disparage contemporary belief in a literal millennium will find a more promising reservoir of condemnatory remarks in sixteenth-century Protestant creeds, for example, in the Second Helvetic Confession of the Calvinists and in an early version of the Articles of Religion
of the Church of England. Pungent pronouncements against chiliasm have also been issued in the last century in several official Roman Catholic publications. But neither the Council of Constantinople in 381 nor any of the ecumenical councils of the ancient church explicitly condemned chiliasm.

1 A portion of this article was delivered as a paper entitled “Gospel Proclamation and the Millennium: Did the Council of Constantinople Condemn Chiliasm?” at the Midwest regional meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society held at Wheaton College, March 22-23, 2002.


7 Studies of secular millennial movements are included in Richard A. Landes, ed., Encyclopedia of Millennialism and Millennial Movements (New York: Routledge, 2000), and are frequently featured in the interdisciplinary Journal of Millennial Studies, a periodical published by The Center for Millennial Studies at Boston University.

8 On scriptural grounds, Kim Riddlebarger, A Case for Amillennialism: Understanding the End Times (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2003); Robert L. Thomas, “The Kingdom of Christ in the Apocalypse,” and

These include the author of The Epistle of Barnabas, Papias, Justin Martyr, Theophilus, Melito of Sardis, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Julius Africanus, Commodian, Lactantius, Nepos, Methodius, Victorinus, and Apollinaris.


Before Hill, Alan Patrick Boyd’s master’s thesis (“A Dispensational Premillennial Analysis of the Eschatology of the Post-Apostolic Fathers (Until the Death of Justin Martyr),” (Dallas Theological Seminary, 1977)] challenged the assertion that “premillennialism is the historic faith of the Church.” It concluded that “seminal amillennialism, and not nascent dispensational premillennialism ought to be seen in the eschatology of the period” (p.91). D. H. Kromminga, The Millennium in the Early Church (Grand
Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1945), 29-50] also argued against the claim that nearly the entire early church was premillennial.


21 Tanner, Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils, 1: 31. An English translation of Canon 1 is also in NPNF, 2nd series, 14:172.


26 The Council of Chalcedon (451) was even more explicit saying, “This selfsame one is actually god [sic] and actually man, with a rational soul and a body.” John H. Leith, ed., Creeds of the Churches, Revised ed. (Atlanta, GA: John Knox, 1973), 35-6.

27 Tanner, Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils, 1: 28.


Epiphanius of Salamis, Panarion 77.36.5 in Philip R. Amidon, trans., The Panarion of St. Epiphanius, Bishop of Salamis (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 346: “Others have claimed that the old man [Apollinaris] said that in the first resurrection we will complete a thousand-year period in which we will live in the same way as now, so that we will observe the law and the other things and all the usages which exist in the world, participating in marriage and circumcision and the rest. Now we do not believe for one moment that he taught this, but some have affirmed that he said this.”


Lienhard, Contra Marcellum, 196.


Cornelius a Lapide, Commentaria In Apocalypsin S. Ioannis 20:1-2. In Cornelius a Lapide, Commentaria in Scripturam Sacram, Vol. 21 (Paris: Apud Ludovicum Vivès, Bibliopolam Editorem, 1875), 346. “And so this is the error of the Millenarians. I do not dare to say heresy because I have not uncovered any clear
Scriptures or Decrees of Councils in which this opinion is condemned as heretical.” Italics mine.


40 Birch, Trial, Tribulation & Triumph, lxi, note 30.


Epiphanius, *Panarion*, Preface, 64.


50 Quoted in Stephen Gero, Byzantine Iconoclasm During the Reign of Constantine V. Corpus Christianorum Orientalium 384 (Louvain: Secrétariat du Corpus SCO, 1977), 91-2.


53 Forty-Two Articles of Religion of the Church of England (1553): “XLI. Heretikes called Millenarii. They that go about to renewe the fable of heretickes called Millenarii, be repugnant to holy Scripture, and cast themselves headlong into a Jewish dotage.” Quoted in Bryan W. Ball, A Great Expectation: Eschatological Thought in English Protestantism to 1660 (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 244-5. Second Helvetic Confession (1566): “Moreover, we condemn the Jewish dreams, that before the day of judgment there shall be a golden age in earth, and that the godly shall possess the kingdoms of the world, their wicked enemies being trodden under foot; for the evangelical truth (Matt. Xxiv. And xxv, Luke xxi), and the apostolic doctrine (in the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians ii, and in the Second Epistle to Timothy iii. And iv.) are found to teach far otherwise.” Philip Schaff, ed., The Creeds of Christendom, 3 vols. (1877. Reprinted, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1993), 3:853.

54 Decree of the Holy Office (1944): “Millenarianism (Chiliasm). In recent times on several occasions this Supreme Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office has been asked what must be thought of the system of mitigated Millenarianism, which teaches, for example, that Christ the Lord before the final judgment, whether or not preceded by the resurrection of the many just, will come visibly to rule over this world. The answer is: The system of mitigated Millenarianism cannot be taught safely.” In Henry Denzinger, The Sources of Catholic Dogma (St. Louis, MO: B. Herder Book Co., 1957), 625. Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2nd ed. (1997): “The Antichrist’s deception already begins to take shape in the world every time the claim is made to realize within history that messianic hope which can only be realized beyond history through the eschatological judgment. The Church has rejected even modified forms of this falsification of the kingdom to come under the name of millenarianism, especially the ‘intrinsically perverse’ political form
Between Chiliastm and the charge of heresy stands the canonization of Justin the Martyr and Irenaeus. In another work on the history of millenarianism, under a subsection entitled The Church Turns Against Millenarians, Michael St. Clair makes no indication of any condemnation at the Council of Ephesus. Finally, Frederic J. Baumgartner appears to be in utter ignorance of any official condemnation. A perusal of works on the history of the ecumenical councils and the Council of Ephesus in particular reveals that a condemnation of Chiliastic is far from obvious and certainly not in the category of common knowledge, as would be, say, the condemnation of Arius at Nicea. In fact, a reading of the primary sources available on the Council of Ephesus reveals. Chiliastic has been condemned as a heresy in the East and West since A.D. 381. It is defended as a true doctrine of Christianity by several Christian denominations and literalist schools of biblical interpretation since the beginning of the Reformation. See 12 schools of interpretation and Millennium. See also Millenialism and the Early Church Councils: Was Chiliastic Condemned at Constantinople?, by Francis X. Gumerlock, Saint Louis University (francisgumerlock.com). Catholic Encyclopedia: Millenium and Millenarianism (newadvent.org). The Phantom Heresy: Did the Council of Ephesus (431) Condemn Chiliastic?, Michael Svigel. Catholic Encyclopedia: Second Council of Constantinople (553) Fifth Ecumenical Council (newadvent.org). Early Christian millennialism. Patristic and medieval millennialism. Millennialism from the Renaissance to the modern world. Millennialism, also called millenarianism or chiliastic, the belief, expressed in the book of Revelation to John, the last book of the New Testament, that Christ will establish a 1,000-year reign of the saints on earth (the millennium) before the Last Judgment. More broadly defined, it is a cross-cultural concept grounded in the expectation of a time of supernatural peace and abundance on earth. Perhaps in recognition of this appeal, church leaders compromised when dealing with those who remained deeply attached to hopes for a real millennium.