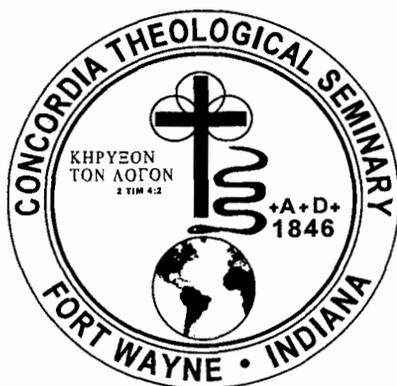


# CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL QUARTERLY



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# **Pietism and Mission: Lutheran Millennialism in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries**

**Lawrence R. Rast Jr.**

## **Introduction**

A noted historian of Christianity in the United States assessed the influence of pietism in the following sweeping terms: "There is no area of American life which is free from our pietistic concern; none in which the pietistic attitude is not a significant factor."<sup>1</sup> Pietism is part of the atmosphere Americans breathe. Believing that style does, in fact, inform substance, it is not too much to say that pietistic practice has significantly formed the theology and practice of American Christianity.<sup>2</sup> As a distinctly American church, The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod has also been formed in fundamental ways by pietism. While students at Leipzig University, the Walther brothers, Theodore Buenger, and Theodore Brohm, gathered together in what amounted to a pietistic conventicle to build one another up in the Christian faith. Unfortunately, they tried to do so on the basis of the law and only drove themselves to despair.

The less a book invited to faith and the more legalistically it insisted upon contrite brokenness of heart and upon foregoing complete mortification of the old man, the better a book we held it to be. Even such writings we usually read only so far as they described the griefs and exercises of repentance; when a description of faith and comfort

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<sup>1</sup>William G. McLoughlin, "Pietism and the American Character," *American Quarterly* 17 (Summer 1965): 178. McLoughlin also says (164): "It was this dynamic, sectarian form of pietistic perfectionism which lies at the basis of American civilization."

<sup>2</sup>F. Ernest Stoeffler, editor, *Continental Pietism and Early American Christianity* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1976); Randall H. Balmer, "Eschewing the 'Routine of Religion': Eighteenth-Century Pietism and the Revival Tradition in America," in *Modern Christian Revivals*, 1-16, edited by Edith L. Blumhofer and Randall H. Balmer (University of Illinois Press, 1993).

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for the penitent followed we usually closed the book, for, so we thought, this is as yet nothing for us.<sup>3</sup>

It was Martin Stephan's preaching of the gospel that finally pulled these desperate young men out of their pietistic self-absorption and moved them toward a biblical understanding of justification by grace through faith. There are no few comments by Walther throughout the years of his ministry, and by his students into the twentieth century that warn of the evils of pietism. Such admonitions, however, have been cast to the wind in The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. In places pietism is held up as the model of Lutheranism. Not coincidentally, this move toward pietism has in large part taken place at the same time our church has anglicized. Where before there was a healthy concern over the errors of pietism, now we are directed toward pietism as a means of bridging the gap between Lutheranism and the American Evangelicalism. Pietism is a natural "touchpoint" between Evangelicalism and the LCMS because the LCMS has been "characterized" by "intense pietism" and "strict Lutheran orthodoxy."<sup>4</sup> Luecke claims that the twentieth century is characterized by a rigid orthodoxy expressed in a narrow liturgical practice that, in fact, does violence to the broader character of LCMS doctrine and practice. He hopes to "restore the balance," for pietism's "experiential contact has repeatedly shown its worthiness as a wellspring for new church life. It is

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<sup>3</sup>C. F. W. Walter cited in D. H. Steffens, *Doctor Carl Ferdinand Wilhelm Walther* (Philadelphia: Lutheran Publication Society, 1917), 42.

<sup>4</sup>Luecke unfortunately bases this claim on the familiar thesis of Abdel Ross Wentz, long-time historian at Gettysburg Seminary and biographer of S. S. Schmucker. The thesis is simply that pietistic Lutheranism is *the* historical form of Lutheranism in the United States. Confessionalism of the type associated with the Missouri Synod is the late-comer to the scene as is therefore something of an aberration. Schmucker was unduly condemned by Midwestern Lutherans in the mid nineteenth century. Wentz's thesis is stated clearly in his *The Lutheran Church and American History* (Philadelphia: United Lutheran Publication House, 1923), and emerges as well in his *A Basic History of Lutheranism in America* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1955). Abdel Ross Wentz's son, Frederick, recently repeated this thesis in his "Birthright Americans: The Shape of the Muhlenberg-Schmucker Tradition," *Seminary Ridge Review* 1 (Summer 1999): 12-27. One may see Sydney Ahlstrom for a thoughtful, yet gentle, critique of the Wentz thesis. "The Lutheran Church and American Culture: A Tercentenary Retrospect," *Lutheran Quarterly* 9 (1957): 321-342. For a brief resume of Schmucker's theology and its contemporary influence, one may see Lawrence R. Rast Jr., "The Triumph of 'Schmuckerism,'" *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 62 (April 1998): 148-151.

a style that has a rightful place in Lutheran theology and history."<sup>5</sup> Luecke conveniently fails to note Walther's stinging criticism of pietism mentioned above, which implicitly argues that pietism compromised the article of justification. Advocates of pietism in our midst have yet to come to grips adequately with the theological maladies of pietism.

### Historical Background and Chief Characteristics

While the term "pietism" has its roots in the seventeenth century, it was in the middle nineteenth century that historians became seriously interested in the historical development of pietism as a movement. In 1863, H. F. F. Schmid of Erlangen produced a history of the movement where he restricted the use of the term to the Lutheran communion.<sup>6</sup> He identified Johann Arndt as the proto-pietist or the grandfather of pietism, and the movement's official beginning was dated to the publication of Philip Spener's *Pia Desideria* in 1675.<sup>7</sup> Other interpreters noted the emergence among certain Lutherans of themes characteristic of the Roman Catholic mystical tradition and the *Theologia Deutsch*.<sup>8</sup> Finally, certain historians noted that a similar movement was materializing simultaneously with Arndt in the Reformed tradition and that Spener appeared to have been significantly influenced by this particular

<sup>5</sup>David S. Luecke, *Evangelical Style and Lutheran Substance: Facing America's Mission Challenge* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1988), 86-92.

<sup>6</sup>F. Ernest Stoeffler, "Pietism: Its Message, Early Manifestation, and Significance," *Covenant Quarterly* 34 (1976): 4. One may also see Albrecht Ritschl, *Geschichte des Pietismus in der lutherischen Kirche des 17. Und 18. Jahrhunderts* (Bonn: Adolph Marcus, 1880-1886). There is vigorous ongoing historiographical dispute regarding the origin of pietism. Stoeffler, the foremost English-speaking historian of the movement, largely finds pietism's roots in the Reformed tradition. For a different perspective, one may see Kurt Aland, "Philipp Jakob Spener und die Anfänge des Pietismus," in *Pietismus und Neuzeit*, Band 4 - 1977/1978, 155-189 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1979).

<sup>7</sup>Johann Arndt, *True Christianity*, translation and introduction by Peter Erb (New York, Ramsey, and Toronto: Paulist Press, 1979); Johann Arndt, *True Christianity: A Treatise on Sincere Repentance, True Faith, the Holy Walk of the True Christian, Etc.*, translation and introduction by Charles F. Schaeffer (Philadelphia: The United Lutheran Publication House, 1868); Robert A. Kelly, "True Repentance and Sorrow: Johann Arndt's Doctrine of Justification," *Consensus* 16 (1990): 47-69.

<sup>8</sup>Christian Braw, *Bücher im Staube—Die Theologie Johann Arndts in Ihrem Verhältnis zur Mystik*, *Studies in Medieval and Reformation Thought*, volume 39, edited by Heiko Oberman (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1985); *The Theologia Germanica of Martin Luther*, translation, introduction, and commentary by Bengt Hoffman (New York, Ramsey, and Toronto: Paulist Press, 1980).

trajectory of the Reformed tradition. It remained for historians in the twentieth century to make the connections explicit. Among English speaking historians, the bulk of the work proceeded from the pen of F. Ernest Stoeffler and, later, C. John Weborg and Ted Campbell, thereby shifting the historiographical tradition.<sup>9</sup> Stoeffler and others have helped us to understand the multifaceted character of pietism by distinguishing a five-fold division in the movement: 1) Spener-Halle; 2) Moravian (Zinzendorf); 3) Württemberg; 4) Reformed; and 5) radical pietism. What they have also helped to demonstrate, although they would be unlikely to accept my strong assessment, is exposing pietism for what it is – an intrusion of Reformed and Mystical theology and practice into the Lutheran communion.

### The Character of Pietism

Stoeffler identifies four characteristics of pietism: 1) the radical religious renewal of the individual expressed in the *praxis pietatis*; 2) the biblical understanding of the living God as an ever-present and never-failing reality in the midst of man's problems; 3) the human support for the renewed life experienced in the context of the Christian *koinonia*; and 4) a sense of deliberate distinctiveness as over against not only the "world," but also the general membership of the churches of the day, whose attitudes and conduct were regarded as being often motivated by the spirit of the "world."<sup>10</sup> While a good start, Stoeffler's definition is incomplete. It requires the addition of at least fifth and sixth points. Pietism was also distinguished by a vigorous sense of mission. The story of the modern missionary movement has its roots in the narrative of pietism. Spener, August Herman Francke at Halle, Nicholas Ludwig von Zinzendorf, and Heinrich Melchior Muhlenberg all shared a central commitment to the spread of the gospel to those apart from Christ.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>John Weborg, "Pietism: 'The Fire of God Which . . . Flames in the Heart of Germany,'" in *Protestant Spiritual Traditions*, 183-216, edited by Frank C. Senn (New York and Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1986); Ted A. Campbell, *The Religion of the Heart: A Study of European Religious Life in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1991).

<sup>10</sup>Stoeffler, "Pietism: Its Message," 10. One may also see F. Ernest Stoeffler, *The Rise of Evangelical Pietism* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1965); and F. Ernest Stoeffler, *German Pietism in the Eighteenth Century* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1973).

<sup>11</sup>One may see, for example, Arthur James Lewis, *Zinzendorf the Ecumenical Pioneer: A Study in the Moravian Contribution to Christian Mission and Unity* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962); Leonard Riforgiato, *Missionary of Moderation: Henry Melchior*

Secondly, some of the most vigorous millennial scholarship has its roots in pietism's "hope for better times" for the church.<sup>12</sup>

Valentin Ernst Löscher, in his complete *Timotheus Verinus*, captured the nature of the threat of millennialism as mediated through pietism.

Wherever zeal for piety has been misused and pushed without Christian discretion, millennialism has always broken out. By millennialism is meant not only the imagination of some blissful events which the church will still experience, but also the imagination of a very great essential change; they think that the kingdom of the cross . . . and the church militant in this life will cease. . . . [Millennialists teach] that baptism, the Lord's Supper, and the kingdom of the cross will cease before the day of judgement.<sup>13</sup>

This paper will build on Löscher's critique and argue that his assessment of pietism was correct, namely, that by compromising the theology of the cross, millennialism of a pietistic stripe compromises the distinctive Lutheran doctrine of justification by grace through faith. It will do so by first briefly examining the development of millennialism within pietistic Lutheranism. It will then look at two concrete examples of Lutheran millennialism, Johann Georg Schmucker and Joseph Seiss. It will then conclude with some observations on millennialism's ongoing attack against the church.

### Pietism and Millennialism

While Spener had expressed a "hope for better times" in the church, other Lutheran interpreters took the issue much farther. In 1692 Johann Wilhelm Peterson "astonished his fellow Lutherans with an apocalyptic alarm,"<sup>14</sup> arguing that "the dawn of the gospel of the Kingdom is

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*Muhlenberg and the Lutheran Church in English America* (Lewisburg, Pennsylvania: Bucknell University Press, 1980).

<sup>12</sup>K. James Stein, "Philip Jakob Spener's Hope for Better Times in the Church-Contribution in Controversy," *Covenant Quarterly* 37 (August 1979): 3-20.

<sup>13</sup>Valentin Ernst Löscher, *The Complete Timotheus Verinus*, part one (1718) translated by James L. Langebartels; part two (1721) translated by Robert J. Koester (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1999), part 1, 144, 147. One may also see Hans-Martin Rotermund, *Orthodoxie und Pietismus: Valentin Ernst Löschers "Timotheus Verinus" in der Auseinandersetzung mit der Schule August Herman Franckes* (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1959).

<sup>14</sup>Stoeffler, *German Pietism*, 103.

breaking through with its shining splendor."<sup>15</sup> Johann Anastasius Feylinghausen and Joachim Lange both published significant enough works to draw the attention of Löscher. However, the greatest Lutheran proponent of millennialism in the eighteenth century was Johann Albrecht Bengel.

Johann Albrecht Bengel was born June 24, 1687 at Winnenden in Württemberg, the son of a Lutheran pastor.<sup>16</sup> He died on November 2, 1752. Bengel was enormously influential and is best known for two integrally related and mutually reinforced elements in his thought and practice: his work on the text and exegesis of the New Testament and his eschatology. Bengel was one of the first to organize manuscripts into "families," such as the African and the Byzantine. He also articulated a well-known textual critical principle: *Proclivi scriptioni praestat ardua*, "the more difficult reading is to be preferred to the more simple." His most famous exegetical work was his *Gnomon* (pointer), which was published in 1742. It was his intent to show from "the original meaning of the words (*ex nativa verborum vi*) the simplicity, profundity, harmony and salubrity of divine revelation."<sup>17</sup>

Another of Bengel's principles was: "Import nothing into Scripture, but draw everything out of it and overlook nothing."<sup>18</sup> One of the ways that he sought to "overlook nothing" was to turn his attention very carefully to the topic of eschatology. Bengel's writings on eschatological themes included his interpretations of the Apocalypse, *Erklärte Offenbarung* (1790), *Ordo Temporum* (1741), *Cyclus* (1745), and *Weltalter* (1746). In these volumes, as well as in the *Gnomon*, Bengel gave himself over to flights of millennial speculation, culminating in his prediction in the *Ordo* that the Christ would return in 1836 or 1837.<sup>19</sup> While worthy of more serious study, we make only a passing note of Bengel in order to show that there

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<sup>15</sup>Löscher, *Timotheus Verinus*, part II:73.

<sup>16</sup>A fine, though brief, treatment of Bengel is Jaroslav Pelikan, "In Memoriam: Joh. Albrecht Bengel June 24, 1687 to November 2, 1752," *Concordia Theological Monthly* 24 (November 1952): 785-796. Much of the biographical detail in this section is drawn from this article.

<sup>17</sup>Adolph Spaeth, "Bengel, Johann Albrecht," in *Lutheran Cyclopaedia*, edited by Henry E. Jacobs and John A. W. Haas (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1899), 47.

<sup>18</sup>Konrad Gottschick, "Bengel, Johann Albrecht," in *The Encyclopedia of the Lutheran Church*, edited by Julius Bodensieck, three volumes (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1965), 1:205.

<sup>19</sup>Pelikan, 790.

was, by the middle of the eighteenth century, a pronounced stream of millennial expectation and exegesis in pietistic circles. The popularity of his work, especially the *Gnomon*, provided an exegetical program for Lutheran pietism that would bear especially rich fruit in the United States. It is to two lesser-known Lutheran exegetes that we now turn, in order to discern the deep-rooted nature of pietism's influence on American Lutheranism in the nineteenth century.

### A Dive into Futurity: The Eschatology of J. George Schmucker

Johann Georg Schmucker was born August 18, 1771 in Michaelstadt, Germany, the son of Johann C. Schmucker. In 1785 the family emigrated to the United States, finally locating permanently in the area of Woodstock, Virginia. Interested in the work of the ministry early on, he began his ministerial studies in 1789 under the noted theologian and missionary, the Reverend Paul Henkel of New Market, Virginia. In 1790 he moved to Philadelphia and studied classics at the University of Pennsylvania and theology under J. H. C. Helmuth and J. Friedrich Schmidt. In 1792 he joined the Lutheran Pennsylvania Ministerium and served congregations in Hagerstown, Maryland and York (town), Pennsylvania. He was elected to the presidency of the Ministerium several times, and served the Ministerium in a number of other capacities. He took a significant leadership role (along with his son, Samuel) in the founding of the General Synod (1820) and the seminary at Gettysburg (1826). He edited *Lutherische Magazin*, authored a number of articles, and published several books. Among his books, the most significant is his commentary on the Revelation of Saint John, which was published in German and eventually found its way into an English translation.<sup>20</sup> He died on October 7, 1854.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>John George Schmucker, *Die Prophetische geschichte von den siegen Christi und Seiner Kirche* (Baltimore: J. F. Zetzener, 1843). The full title in English translation reads *The Prophetic History of the Christian Religion Explained, or, A Brief Exposition of the Revelation of St. John : According to a New Discovery of Prophetical Time: By Which the Whole Chain of Prophecies Is Arranged, and Their Certain Completion Proved from History Down to the Present Period: With Summary Views of Those not Yet Accomplished* (Baltimore: Schaeffer and Maund, 1817-1821).

<sup>21</sup>James L. Haney, "John George Schmucker and the Roots of His Spirituality," in *Lutheranism and Pietism, Essays and Reports 1990*, Lutheran Historical Conference, volume 14 (Saint Louis: Lutheran Historical Conference, 1992): 40-66; Beale M. Schmucker, "Schmucker, John Geo., D. D.," in *Lutheran Cyclopedia*, 432.

Schmucker's conviction of the near coming of Jesus provided the impetus for his eschatological work. With the tumultuous events of the French Revolution and Napoleon, along with his belief that the Order of the Illuminati were now running world affairs, providing the immediate context, Schmucker observed that "So corrupted is the present state of the world; so panting the vitiated heart of man for liberty, to follow its depraved inclinations without restraint or remorse." "The christian world has arrived at a very portentous period, full of great and alarming events . . . the end of the present form of civil and ecclesiastical economy is near."<sup>22</sup> Schmucker's pietism becomes quite evident when he articulates the goal of this study. The purpose is to teach what human beings need to do in order to be found obedient at the day of the Lord's return. It is every Christian's duty to read and study the prophetic portions of the Scriptures, but beyond that they must put the duties outlined there into practice.

We are there also provided with particular instructions, annexed to each prophecy, by which believers may know their duty in every state of trial and discipline to which they may be exposed. . . . It is therefore incumbent on the people of God, with the faithful Boereans, to search the Scriptures, that they may know the signs of the times, and observe the particular instructions given for each period. . . . The secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us, and to our children forever that we may do them.

While recognizing that he is in a long line of interpreters of the Revelation of Saint John, Schmucker notes that older explanations were necessarily in error due to the fact that "the signs of the times had not yet appeared."<sup>23</sup> Thus what sets Schmucker's work apart is the fact that it appears at the due time; that moment in prophetic history when the historic prophecies have been fulfilled and their interpretation has become clear. To put it another way, Schmucker has found the long-missing key to the interpretation of Revelation. That key will unlock that most elusive of human dreams "knowing the time when the end will come." However, Schmucker anticipates the criticism of certain interpreters who would adduce the words of Jesus, "But of that day and

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<sup>22</sup>Schmucker, *Prophetic History*, 5, 3.

<sup>23</sup>Schmucker, *Prophetic History*, 7.

hour knoweth no man" (Mark 13:32). He argues that the words of the Lord in this respect do not refer to the second advent of Christ, but instead to the end of the world. These two events will be separated by the glorious millennium, and therefore, it is possible, with the appropriate prophetic hermeneutic, to determine the timing of Christ's return, though not the end. The unique contribution, then, of Schmucker's work is his prophetic chronology, which will reveal the very year during which the Lord's second advent will occur.

In this endeavor Schmucker is in no way alone. In fact, his perspective is in large part driven by the work of Bengel. Bengel's widely accepted chronology provided Schmucker with the authority to produce his own. In Schmucker's mind, Bengel has rightly pointed to chapter thirteen as the chronological key to the book. Where other exegetes of the Apocalypse have taken "a day in the Revelation to signify a year," Schmucker follows Bengel in distinguishing between "prophetic time" and "natural" or "common time."<sup>24</sup> Yet, Bengel's chronology is also flawed. Rather, argues Schmucker, one must rightly distinguish the times. Verse five in chapter thirteen (the forty-two weeks) speaks of prophetic time, while verse eighteen (the 666) refers to natural or common time. In other words, "if forty-two months give six hundred and sixty-six lunar years" then we can calculate exactly the length of a prophetic hour, day, week, month, and year (666 years of natural time equal forty-two months of prophetic time). Thus we end up with the following chronological key:

<i>Prophetic Time</i>		<i>Common Time</i>
½ an hour chap. viii. 1.	=	about 4 days.
1 hour chap. xiv. 15.	=	8 days.
1 day . . . . .	=	196 days.
1260 days chap. xii. 6.	=	677 years, 97 days.
1 month chap. ix. 15	=	13 years, 318 days.
5 months . . . . .	=	79 years. 19wks. 1 day.
1 year . . . . .	=	196 years 117 days.
1 h. 1 day, 1 m. 1 year	=	212 years 275 days.

Thus, if one then proceeds from the appropriate starting date, one can come to the correct conclusion regarding the time of Christ's return.

<sup>24</sup>Schmucker, *Prophetic History*, 19, 22.

Again, Schmucker criticizes his predecessors, noting that they have proceeded from an erroneous date, namely A.D. 96, the time of John's writing of the Revelation. In fact, argues Schmucker, the proper date is A.D. 72, the year of the destruction of Jerusalem. At this point we already anticipate an error in Schmucker's calculations, given that he has the date of the destruction wrong. But he offers a disclaimer of sorts, arguing that, given the fact that our calendars are of some little inconsistency among themselves, and, therefore, his calculations could be from six to ten years off. That, however, does not stop Schmucker from adducing a date for the return of Christ: 1850.

Given Schmucker's unusual interpretive key to the Revelation and his bold prediction of a date for the return of Christ, we must now turn to the character of that return. Schmucker turns first to the "hallelujah" of the great choir in Revelation 19. Here, again, his pietism comes to the forefront. This choir, he argues, is composed of a special rank of believer, those who have "advanced to a higher degree of felicity and knowledge, by obtaining a more enlarged view of the government, measures, purposes and kingdom of the Messiah." Participation in this choir is not predicated, however, on a faithful affirmation of a particular confession. In other words, what one believes is not the basis for this advanced place in the divine choir. Rather, "this choir consists of a select number of Christians, from all denominations in all parts of the world . . . who are far advanced in holiness." Thus, those deemed worthy of the preeminent worship of the Lamb are those who have progressed the furthest in their walk of faith. Their works receive due reward from the Lord, for "they receive a special call from heaven, and an extraordinary out pouring of the spirit of Christ, by which they are animated and encouraged, to proclaim the commencement of his *Millennial reign*." They are the models of what the true Christian is, and they embody the biblical order of salvation; for they have heard the summons of Christ and have responded by giving themselves to the Lord who demands their obedience by their "free agency." "Christ espouses every individual member of his Church, when they first forsake the world, sin and Satan, and turn unto him by a thorough change of heart, upon which they receive many tokens of his loving kindness."<sup>25</sup> Here we see pietism in its most crass form. Justification is conditioned on the repentance and obedience of the individual who is confronted with the law of God.

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<sup>25</sup>Schmucker, *Prophetic History*, 517, 519, 529, 521.

Sanctification, too, is a matter of human willing and distinguishes the advanced Christian from the nominal Christian. That is, while many profess to be Christians, only those who have progressed satisfactorily in their walk of obedience will receive the superadded gift of the Spirit and the right to sing in the millennial choir. He concludes:

The bride of the Lamb then, is not the whole visible Church of Christ; nor any particular sect, party, or religious community in the world; nor even all who possess vital godliness and experimental religion. . . . It is a great number of a *certain christian character*, selected from all churches, who are particularly qualified for the Lord's secret and special purposes. This chosen number of saints are the bride, who is said to have prepared herself for her husband. . . . In a spiritual sense this figure may indicate the faithful and loving endeavours of the bride of the Lamb, to revive and exercise all her christian graces, in confident expectation of the Lord's second Advent, that she may be acceptable in his sight.<sup>26</sup>

Note well what Schmucker argues here. Human beings are acceptable to God not by the imputed righteousness of Christ applied to the sinner through word and sacraments. He explicitly rejects this notion. "Some have explained this as referring to the robe of Christ's righteousness imputed to us by faith, . . . But this cannot be the true sense here." Rather, argues Schmucker, humans are "qualified" on account of "a certain Christian character"; "that all who are here numbered with the bride of the Lamb, are truly experienced Christians, advanced in holiness." These Christians are like the five wise virgins of Matthew 25 who are the Lamb's "spiritual kindred" and "friends." What makes them advanced in holiness? Pietism's program predominates: for the true Christian participates in "Bible societies, Missions among the Heathen, Tract-associations, . . . Sunday schools, and revivals of religion," and they include "Itinerant preachers." No small component is their attentiveness to the word of prophecy. What has happened to Christ and his atoning work? In other settings Schmucker will talk about Christ's atoning death, but the benefits are always conditioned on the voluntary action of the willful subject in choosing to make the benefits of Christ his won.

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<sup>26</sup>Schmucker, *Prophetic History*, 523 (Emphasis added).

Schmucker implicitly rejects Lutheran christology and sacramentology; that is to say, he has compromised the article of justification.<sup>27</sup>

At Christ's visible return the world will be revitalized (changed), though it will not be without sin. Schmucker's millennium is a 1,000 years of progress. It is a time when the mass of humanity will have the opportunity to advance in the holiness program of the pietists.

All obstacles to the promulgation of the gospel among the Heathen will cease in great measure, and the grace of God connected with his word and ordinances, will have a free course, and develop [sic] its whole power and celestial beauty among the children of men. All saints will be more perfect, and virtue shall shine forth in her genuine lustre, and meet with deserving recommendation. Plans and enterprises, for the happiness of man and the glory of the Lord, will meet with more general support and suitable sacrifices from the citizens of Christ's kingdom and never want for divine tokens of approbation and success.<sup>28</sup>

While a theocracy will be established, Christ will invest the most qualified of His people with the superintendency and general responsibility for running the affairs of the millennial kingdom.

At the end of Schmucker's millennium comes the judgment. Here his pietism takes a dreadful and anti-Christian turn. For Schmucker, as we have already seen, has already compromised the article of justification. Those who will be judged approvingly by Christ and the saints are "those who accepted the Gospel invitation to repentance and faith in the atonement and redemption of Jesus Christ, and abode in him." Thus one's eternal destiny is predicated on the voluntary act of faith, which is expressed in a life of obedience. In a perverse twist, though, Schmucker even undercuts his missionary program. For in discussing those human beings who have never had the opportunity to accept or reject the Christ through no fault of their own, Schmucker notes: "There can be no doubt that charitable, well disposed and virtuous Pagans, who no opportunity to hear the Gospel of Christ, or to enjoy the benefits of the christian dispensation, will find mercy and further instruction in the world to come, but their happiness will be far below that of true Christians." Also

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<sup>27</sup>Schmucker, *Prophetic History*, 524, 530.

<sup>28</sup>Schmucker, *Prophetic History*, 531.

included among those that are not of advanced holiness, yet qualify for the kingdom are children, the blind, deaf and dumb, Israelites and Jews, and, finally, Christians who have "long sinned against grace," that is, have not been sufficiently obedient. The millennium will supply the forum in which these may "acquire the necessary qualifications for the future theatre of action. These will there be placed in a state of moral improvement and discipline, in order to secure their constancy and mature their capacities for happiness."<sup>29</sup>

Christianity for Schmucker is a religion of obedience to the will of God. God's word legalistically provides the demands and conditions humans must fulfill, would they join the millennial choir that welcomes the returning Christ. Beyond the borders of the Christian faith, however, anyone who has, to the best of his ability, lived a life in accord with the will of God as revealed in the book of nature, qualifies for salvation. This is pietism taken to its extreme, and would very likely be rejected by the likes of Spener. Nevertheless, Schmucker purposefully claimed the pietist label as his own, and saw its practice as the true practice of Lutheranism.

#### **As the Light Increases, the Shadows Deepen: Joseph A. Seiss**

In 1892, Joseph Seiss reflected on the history of Lutheranism in the United States during the last half of the nineteenth century and summarized his role in that history as follows:

The last fifty years have seen many changes and revolutions. It has been an era of important alterations and modifications also in the condition and spirit of our Church in this country, especially in the line of the conservation of its historic faith and cultus. But desirable and salutary as those changes have been, they were not achieved without various severe and trying conflicts and contentions which have not yet ceased. There had crept in a creedless Rationalism; then a fanatical Pietism; then a pressure for a supraconfessional and harsh Exclusivism. All these, so alien to true evangelical religion, had to be encountered and resisted. Nor was it possible to displace them without wars of words and many battles. In some of these it was my lot to be thrown, so as to be compelled to take my stand on the issues in question, to defend my position, and to become the object of

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<sup>29</sup>Schmucker, *Prophetic History*, 565, 401-403

attack and criticism from those whose isms, prejudices and errors I could not accept.<sup>30</sup>

Indeed, as one considers particularly the controversies of English-speaking Lutherans from 1840 to the turn of the century, one will find Dr. Seiss in the midst of most of them.<sup>31</sup> The story of his life reads like a history of late nineteenth-century Lutheranism. As an author, there are few American Lutherans who published more than he did in the nineteenth century – perhaps none.<sup>32</sup> Controversy and creativity come together in Seiss's writings on the millennium, astronomy, and pyramidology. Dr. Seiss was a one of the early adherents in America of the dispensational premillennialist system. These works include *The Parable of the Ten Virgins*, *Voices from Babylon*, *Lectures on the Apocalypse*, *The Last Times*, *The Day of the Lord*, *History and Prospects of the Jews*, *The Lord at Hand*, *Millennial Concordance*, *The Gospel in the Stars*, or *Primeval Astronomy*, and *The Great Pyramid: A Miracle in Stone*.<sup>33</sup> In the *Prophetic Times*, which Seiss edited for more than a decade, he helped popularize an emerging eschatology – dispensational premillennialism.<sup>34</sup> According

<sup>30</sup>Joseph A. Seiss, *Notes of My Life*, transcribed by Henry E. Horn and William M. Horn (Huntingdon, Pennsylvania: Church Management Service, 1982), 274.

<sup>31</sup>The one arena in which he was not a major player was the Predestination Controversy. However, that is not particularly surprising or odd, because it did not primarily concern the Eastern Lutherans (both New and Moderate) nearly as much as those in the West (the Old Lutherans).

<sup>32</sup>Jens Christian Roseland, *American Lutheran Biographies; or, Historical notices of Over Three Hundred and Fifty Leading Men of the American Lutheran Church, from its Establishment to the Year 1890* (Milwaukee: Press of A. Houtkamp & Son, 1890), 706.

<sup>33</sup>Joseph A. Seiss, *The Parable of the Ten Virgins* (Philadelphia: Smith, English, and Company, 1862); Joseph A. Seiss, *Voices from Babylon; or, The Records of Daniel the Prophet* (Philadelphia: Porter and Coates, 1879); Joseph Augustus Seiss, *The Apocalypse. A Series of Special Lectures on the Revelation of Jesus Christ* (Philadelphia: Smith, English, & Company, 1865); Joseph A. Seiss, *The Last Times: An Earnest Discussion of Momentous Themes*, 1st edition (Baltimore: T. N. Kurtz, 1856); Joseph A. Seiss, *The Day of the Lord: A Lecture on 2 Peter 3:3-4* (1861); Joseph A. Seiss, *History and Prospects of the Jews: A Lecture Delivered in the First Lutheran Church of Cumberland, MD., on the Evening of Feb., 10th, 1851* (Gettysburg, Pennsylvania: Printed by H. C. Neinstedt, 1851); Joseph A. Seiss, *The Lord at Hand: An Advent Sermon* (Philadelphia: Lutheran Publication House, 1863); *Millennial Concordance: Mostly from Dr. Seiss's Last Times* (Philadelphia: To Be Had By Addressing the "Prophetic Times", n.d.); Joseph A. Seiss, *The Gospel in the Stars* (Philadelphia: E. Claxton and Company, 1882); Joseph A. Seiss, *A Miracle in Stone – The Great Pyramid* (Philadelphia: Porter and Coates, 1877).

<sup>34</sup>Lawrence R. Rast Jr., "Prophetic Times," in *Popular Religious Magazines of the United*

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to Seiss, however, this understanding of the end times was in no way innovative. Rather, he claimed that the orthodox church of the earliest periods held to the doctrines that the *Prophetic Times* confessed: the appearance of a personal Antichrist, the restoration of the Jews to Palestine, the material nature of the new heavens and new earth, and the translation of the saints.<sup>35</sup> Further, he argued for its legitimate place in historic Lutheranism, specifically in the persons of Luther, Spener, Bengel, and, notably, J. G. Schmucker. While he rejected Schmucker's date for the return of Christ, Seiss approved of Schmucker's overall perspective regarding the millennium. "His chronological reckonings are in many points untenable and defective, but his conceptions of the nature of the kingdom of God, and of the grand outlines of the purposes of God concerning it, exhibit an understanding of the Scriptures and penetration into the Divine revelations, from which much real instruction is to be derived."<sup>36</sup>

One of Seiss' primary objectives was to overcome what he called the "modern theory of the millennium," or what historians technically refer to as "postmillennialism." Postmillennialists believed that through the efforts of the church and society, the millennium would soon dawn, a 1000 years of relative peace would result, and that Jesus would come to gather His followers to Himself at the end of the period, which was interpreted both literally and figuratively. Seiss countered that the view that human society was ever improving and that, slowly and surely, through the influence of the gospel and human institutions, the millennium was preparing to dawn, was an antisciptural and unorthodox position. Often he cited the words of Jesus, "When the Son of Man comes will he find faith?" as proof of this position, but just as often he tested this doctrine on the basis of the thought of the early church and confessions of the Reformation. "There is not a respectable or acknowledged Creed in Christendom, ancient or modern, known to us, which either directly, or by implication, teaches the doctrine of the universal conversion of the world, or the intervention of a thousand years of general righteousness, liberty, and peace, prior to the resurrection of

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*States*, edited by Mark Fackler and Charles H. Lippy (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1995).

<sup>35</sup>Ernest R. Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism, 1800-1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 90 and following.

<sup>36</sup>J. G. Schmucker, "The Millennium," *Prophetic Times* 2 (February 1864): 24-26.

the dead. " Thus, Seiss concludes, "the Confessions of the Reformation not only do not contain it, but pointedly condemn it."<sup>37</sup> Seiss often cited Augsburg Cconfession XVII, "We condemn those who spread abroad Jewish opinions, that, before the resurrection of the dead, the godly shall get the sovereignty in the world, and the wicked be brought under in every place."<sup>38</sup>

It might seem somewhat disingenuous for Seiss to condemn the postmillennialists for their doctrine when it appears his position might also be condemned by AC XVII. The explanation lies in his interpretation of that article. Seiss chooses to stress the Augustana's emphasis on the word "before" the resurrection. Seiss claims that the Augsburg Confession condemns only that eschatological scheme that places the millennium before the return of Christ. But might not one argue that in the premillennial scheme the same weakness is present? After all, premillennialists believe that Jesus shall return to the earth and establish his millennial kingdom *before* the final resurrection and judgment.

So it might seem to the casual reader. But Seiss resolves the issue by introducing two of the distinctive tenets of dispensational premillennialism: the two (or more) stage second advent and the deathless rapture.

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<sup>37</sup>Joseph A. Seiss, "The Modern Millennium: Is It Orthodox?" *Prophetic Times* 4 (August 1866), 123-127. One may also see Joseph A. Seiss, *Millennialism and the Second Advent* (Louisville, Kentucky: Pentecostal Publishing Company, n.d.).

<sup>38</sup>Seiss, "The Modern Millennium," 123-124. Spener, and later Bengel, both claimed to be confessional Lutherans, that they accepted the Augustana as the *grundbekenntnis* of the Lutheran Church. Thus, what is one to make of AC 17? Spener and Bengel replied that AC 17 did not necessarily condemn all understandings of the millennium. Rather, what it rejected was a false belief regarding the nature of the millennium. John Weborg notes (C. John Weborg, "Pietism: Theology in Service of Living Toward God," in *The Variety of American Evangelicalism*, edited by Donald W. Dayton and Robert K. Johnson [Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 1991], 169): "For pietists there was another way to argue the case. If the doctrine of justification by grace through faith is used as a model, then the very monergism that brings about justification can bring about the kingdom. God will do it, and in the case of Spener, in a post-millennial form. Concrete fruit of the gospel, present and active in the lives of persons and churches, was intrinsic to God's prophetic program. Since God had promised better times for the church, any activity in that regard was not a human effort trying to usurp what was rightfully God's work. It was the obedience of faith, and it was faith active in love, first as love of God and his Word and then as love of neighbor. The millennium would be a period of maximum fruitfulness."

For Seiss, the second advent of Christ will take place in stages or parts. Just as the first advent of Christ stretched over a number of years, so also the second advent will be a series of events. "His first coming, including His birth and His resurrection, is foretold as *one event*. Even so His second coming, foretold in like manner as *one event*, is to consist of two or more great parts, acts, or stages." This twofold coming consists, argues Seiss, of Christ's coming *for* His church (the rapture) and Christ coming *with* His church.<sup>39</sup> The rapture is a kind of resurrection, and, therefore, the premillennial system does not compromise the Augsburg Confession.

In Rev. 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>, we also find a vision of certain saints in heaven, singing before the throne, and *already* crowned as the victorious subjects of final redemption; and yet the chapters chronologically subsequent to these describe earthly scene—wars, plagues, pestilences, wickednesses of men and nations, and administrations of judgment on the earth, extending through a period, on no system of interpretation, less than seven years in duration. And as we thus have men already redeemed and crowned in heaven (which crowning can only be in the glorified and post-resurrection state), and kings, nations, peoples, and orders of men, living, sinning, warring, and dying on the earth at the same time, it must needs be that at least some of the saints are taken, while yet the mass of mortals are for a time still left. *And as there is no resurrection of dead saints without a corresponding rapture of living saints*, it is impossible for these sacred pictures to be realized without just such a separation and experience as that described.<sup>40</sup>

Promises such as Romans 8:11 ("If the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also *quicken your mortal bodies* by His Spirit that dwelleth in you" — Seiss, emphasis) applies to the general resurrection of the dead, but even more specifically to the rapture.<sup>41</sup> In short, in the dispensational premillennial system there is a resurrection of the dead and a translation of the saints to heaven prior to Christ's establishment of His kingdom on earth. In other words, it is only after the resurrection of the dead that "the godly

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<sup>39</sup>Joseph A. Seiss, "The Difficulty Solved: Two Stages of the Advent," *Prophetic Times* 2 (October 1864): 157.

<sup>40</sup>Joseph A. Seiss, "The Deathless Rapture: A Sneer Answered," *Prophetic Times* 4 (September 1866): 141. Emphasis added.

<sup>41</sup>Seiss, "Deathless Rapture," 140.

shall get the sovereignty in the world, and the wicked be brought under in every place." Therefore, at least in Seiss's mind, the dispensational premillennial system harmonized with both Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions.

Critics charged that the premillennial system was pessimistic in outlook and led to a despairing passivism. Seiss, sensitive to this charge, responded by striving invariably to let the good news of the gospel message triumph over the more negative aspects of the doctrine. Further, he was aggressively involved in missionary work both in the General Synod and later in the General Council. "I support and advocate from the pulpit and platform, according to the ability given me, the cause of Bible, missionary, and tract societies, believing them to be the Lord's instruments in preaching or making known the Gospel."<sup>42</sup> As long as the Lord continued to spare the world from the tribulations to come, he stated, then all God's people should sing "Hosanna in the highest!" The offer of salvation remained open to all people, and the Savior maintained communication with His people through the word and ordinances. Most importantly, though, readers should daily expect the coming of the Savior, for in this expectation all believers will find comfort. "Is our religion after all so frail a thing, that faith must dread to take the very blessedness for which it prays and hopes! Nay, reader, sing Hosanna! Blessed is He that cometh! Hosanna in the highest!"<sup>43</sup>

It was his conviction of the near coming of the Lord and the manner in which that would energize people for mission and ministry that led to the publication of Seiss's commentary on the parable of the ten virgins.<sup>44</sup> One of the issues facing advocates of the new millennialism was the question of just who would be included in the rapture. For Seiss, the rapture is limited to specially committed and obedient saints. The interpretive key to the parable for Seiss is the oil – what it is and where to get it. For it is the oil that garners one the designation of being wise or foolish.

Notably, the ten virgins, argues Seiss, are all members of the church. They have faithfully confessed the Christ. However, not all are well prepared for the Lord's return. "There will be people saved who are not

<sup>42</sup>Joseph A. Seiss, "The Advent Doctrine," *Prophetic Times* 5 (August 1867): 119.

<sup>43</sup>Joseph A. Seiss, "The New Year," *Prophetic Times* 10 (January 1872), 16.

<sup>44</sup>Joseph A. Seiss, *The Parable of the Ten Virgins: in Six Discourses, and a Sermon on the Judgeship of the Saints* (Philadelphia: Smith, English, and Company, 1862).

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a part of Christ's bride, albeit they belong to his household."<sup>45</sup> There is a distinction to be made within the church between those who are well prepared for the Lord's return (the Bride) and those who are not (the household). In this picture of Christ's acknowledged people every one has the lamp of public profession, and that in the regular way of established custom and order.

All were true virgins; all had lamps; all went forth animated by the same faith and hope; all slumbered alike; all had their lamps lit and burning for a time; all were alike awakened by the cry, which they all alike understood; all fell to trimming their, by that time, dim and dull lamps; and the foolishness of the five consisted simply and only in not having sufficiently reckoned and provided for the full necessities of the case; attempting to remedy which, at that late moment, disabled them for a place at the marriage, and in that inner and privileged circle of the redeemed known as the Bride the Lamb's wife.<sup>46</sup>

What thus distinguishes the Bride is that they attain a higher level of Christian obedience:

A deeper and higher consecration than that which pertains to the ordinary Christian profession. The difference, therefore, between the wise and the foolish is, that the wise laid in above and beyond what the case seemed to require, and that to the utmost possible measure, whilst the others contented themselves with what appeared to be the ordinary necessities of the case.

Therefore, concludes Seiss, one of the main points of the parable is that "it sets forth the fact that not all true Christians are equally eminent in their attainments and sanctification."<sup>47</sup>

It does not leave a man, because he is sincere and earnest in his profession, securely to persuade himself that eternity's sublimest honors are for him. It was meant to teach us that we must give ourselves to the work of a sanctification, and pray and seek for a fulness of unction from the Holy One, which transcends far the

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<sup>45</sup>Joseph A. Seiss, "The Wise Virgins—Who Are They?" *Prophetic Times* 3 (August 1865): 157.

<sup>46</sup>Seiss, "Wise Virgins," 159-160.

<sup>47</sup>Seiss, *Parable*, 24.

ordinary average with which people are willing to remain content, if we would ever reach our Saviour's bosom, and share in his royal prerogatives.<sup>48</sup>

Seiss calls this higher Christianity "the church of the first born," which is open only to the saints, for it "requires more, even than chaste virginity of character and sincerity of faith and profession." It requires the addition of what Seiss calls "a wise discreetness, which never rest whilst there are positions of greater excellence and profounder consecration to be attained." Thus, the oil that fills the virgins' lamps is "the high resolve and deep-seated consecration which bring about such a surrender to God's will and service." Thus, where the wise virgins had a more than ample supply of oil, the foolish virgins "lacked in this fullness" of Christian commitment, an "all-sacrificing depth of devotion."<sup>49</sup>

Christ's desire is that all of His people be wise unto salvation, and so He uses a myriad of means to rouse his people that they may not find themselves lacking at His reappearing. These announcements will drive the dedicated Christian into a posture of self-examination that results in a striving to prepare for a worthy reception of their Lord. Seiss uses Matthew 24:28's and Luke 17:34-37's references to the carcass and the eagles as a means to generate such devotion. The carcass and body have the same referent.

We take both referring to Christ, who was dead, and is alive again forever. It was he who became a victim for us, having borne our sins in his own body on the cross. Our wants as sinners are satisfied in his death. He is really the body on which the saints feed. He gave himself to death for the salvation of his people, and has invited men to eat his flesh and drink his blood, declaring that unless they do this they have no life in them. . . . There is therefore a deep and blessed relationship between the once crucified Saviour and his people, which well corresponds to that of the eagle and the slain body on which it lives, and to which it ever seeks.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup>Seiss, "Wise Virgins," 160.

<sup>49</sup>Seiss, *Parable*, 24, 25.

<sup>50</sup>Joseph A. Seiss, "The Carcass and the Eagles," *Prophetic Times* 4 (February 1865): 27.

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Yet, for Seiss, Christ's gathering of His people refers not only to His atonement and the Lord's Supper, it is specifically eschatological in character. The eagles being drawn to the body has its ultimate fulfillment in the rapture of the church.

What we take as being referred to in this gathering of the eagles to the body is, therefore, the same as what is more literally described in the 4<sup>th</sup> of 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians. . . . It is to be a sudden flight. . . . While all are busy with the ordinary cares, pursuits and occupations of life; some in the field, some in bed, some at their common toil; and everything running on its accustomed course; suddenly, and quite unknown to the gay and godless world, here one, and there another, shall be secretly and mysteriously stolen away, "caught up," . . . . Invisibly, noiselessly, miraculously, they shall vanish from the company and fellowship of those about them, and mount up as eagles to that Lord by whom they live.<sup>51</sup>

Preaching is thus necessarily evangelistic and missionary in character, and its purpose is to point people to the atoning work of Christ and the necessity of the life of obedience. "To trim our lamps as Christians is to make a thorough examination of our condition; to look into what is wanting with a view to have everything in perfect order; . . . by fresh acts of appropriation, to fill our souls with the fulness [*sic*] of grace and the unction of the Holy Spirit." Here, then, is the tension in Seiss's idea of salvation. Seiss, on numerous occasions, stated that one is saved by grace alone through faith. But, he went on to say, faith is advanced through deeds of obedience to God's will. Thus, both the wise and the foolish virgins are Christians because both have been saved solely by the application of the benefits of Christ's vicarious atonement—both classes of Christians are saved by grace. They are, however, of different classes—there is a difference in "*degree*, not kind or quality." The foolish virgins had "oil," but "just not quite enough to be in a state of readiness" when the Bridegroom came. Thus, concludes Seiss, "The Royalties and Priesthoods of the world to come are not to be reached by the common orders of saintship. They are not reserved for such as never rise in their piety beyond the ordinary run of Christian attainment." Rather, in order to qualify for the heavenly kingdom, "there must be a fullness of self-sacrifice for Christ, a completeness of obedience, a thoroughness of

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<sup>51</sup>Seiss, "The Carcass and the Eagles," 27, 28.

sanctification, an ampleness in all the graces of the indwelling Spirit, and a meekness and fidelity under the cross, resembling that of Christ himself, or there will be no crowns, no thrones, no kingdoms. . . . We must be like Christ, and purify ourselves as he is pure, or we never can be with him and see him as he is." Seiss summarizes it in a rather pithy fashion: "To be *saved* is one thing; to be *rewarded* another. The one is through the grace of God only; the other is according to works and attainments only."<sup>52</sup> To put it Seiss's idea in its most crass form: those who do not achieve sainthood (foolish virgins) will indeed have mansions in Christ's kingdom – they simply will not be in the same neighborhood as Jesus and the saints (wise virgins).

And where is this "other side of the tracks" for the lesser Christians? It is the earth itself. Christ will take His saints to His "new home where [the bride] is to dwell with him." That new home is the heavenly Jerusalem, where they enjoy the direct presence of God. This is, of course, nothing other than the rapture of the church, where Christ comes to take His true followers home to Himself in heaven. The foolish virgins, however, are "left behind." They remain in that place "where they were before the Bridegroom came," and, notably, "where their generations continue forever." In other words, though left behind, mere confessing Christians would enjoy eternity in the very earth that had been their home during the normal course of their lives. Prior to that time of enjoyment, however, Christ would prepare this world for them by judging evil and throwing down the Antichrist, Man of Sin, the False Prophet, and "all them that have oppressed and afflicted earth." He will then establish a christocracy under which "the whole earth is then to be speedily converted to its rightful Lord" and there will be nothing "to hinder a universal revival of righteousness," which will lead to the restoration of the Jews. There will be a "great tribulation," but it applies to unbelievers—who must ultimately pass away. That ultimately leads to a world, under Christ, for "earth must be brought into equation with heaven." So even while many perish in unbelief and are judged, "the world and the race shall be restored." "From the moment that the sign of the Son of man is seen in the heavens, the empire of death is doomed. From that moment it shall decay, and wither, and dissolve, until every trace of it is at length

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<sup>52</sup>Seiss, *Parable*, 53, 67, 68-69, 120. One may also see Joseph A. Seiss, "The Present Dispensation," *Prophetic Times* 4 (July 1865): 105: "Those thus privileged are laid under the deepest obligations."

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expunged from the earth, and the beauty and glory of Eden put in its place. When this is achieved, then, and only then, redemption will be complete."<sup>53</sup>

In summary, then, Seiss hopes to invigorate his hearers to mission and ministry so that they may be prepared for the heavenly kingdom, not just the earthly one, when Christ returns. He sees a people who are vigorously watching and anticipating their Lord's near coming. To "watch" means to have a living faith that Jesus is soon to arrive; to be in constant expectation of this arrival; to make efficient preparation for it. In short, watching is work – the work of faith, and it consists of obedience to the will of God. "It lies in the very essence of saving faith to obey law, to make sacrifices, to submit to self-denial, and to work with the same fear and trembling and persevering earnestness as if [salvation] depended on us alone to achieve. . . . And he who counts that he is fulfilling the injunction of the text without laborious *work*, does but deceive himself, and is marching to a destiny of disappointment, mortification, and unavailing regrets."<sup>54</sup>

### Conclusion

The opening of this paper noted David Luecke's argument that pietism is a legitimate model of Lutheran belief and practice, particularly if we are to recapture a sense of balance in the LCMS and to reinvigorate our sense of mission. What I hope this paper has demonstrated is that pietism – at least in its expressions within American Lutheranism – cuts at the very heart of the biblical witness and the Lutheran confession. Seiss would even prove Löscher right by stating that in the millennial kingdom here on this earth there would no longer be any need for the administration of baptism, for Christ in Matthew 28 said we would baptize only "unto the end of the age." What it shows is that for pietism there is a different ecclesiology at work, and this ecclesiology has decided christological ramifications. Schmucker and Seiss both refer to the atoning work of Christ on behalf of mankind. They both affirm that it is through grace alone that one becomes a member of Christ's church. However, that church is an aggregate of individuals who have dedicated themselves to

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<sup>53</sup>Seiss, *Parable*, 101, 90, 91, 95, 112, 96, 97. One may also see Joseph A. Seiss, "The Earth Restored to the Brotherhood of the Heavens," *Prophetic Times* 4 (August 1866): 114: "God will not annihilate the earth, but will purify it."

<sup>54</sup>Seiss, *Parable*, 143-144.

a life of willful obedience. Put another way, the true church is defined and initiated by the works of its members—faithful response to Christ’s call—and maintained by their voluntary and intentional fulfillment of the law’s demands. The mark of the church, therefore, is the collective obedience of its consecrated members, not the word and sacraments.

Obviously, such an understanding departs radically from the Augsburg Confession’s clear testimony. Indeed, there is a perichoresis of pietism in American Christianity and thus also in the LCMS—the wonderful opportunity we have in such a context is to proclaim clearly that “men cannot be justified before God by their own strength, merits, or works but are freely justified for Christ’s sake through faith” and that “in order that we may obtain this faith, the ministry of teaching the Gospel and administering the sacraments was instituted.”