

The Catholic Catechism, 676, Note 57

Denziger-Schönmetzer 3839: Decr. S. Officii, 19. (21.) Iul. 1944.

Auctor huius systematis “Millenarismi mitigati” est sacerdos Manuel de Lacunza y Díaz, qui sub pseudonymo Juan Josafat Ben-Ezra cc. a.1810 scripserat opus *Venida del Mesías en gloria y majestad* (a S. Officio proscriptum 6. Sept. 1824). Contra hanc opinionem denuo suscitata S. Officium decisionem Decreto infra posito simillimam dederat 11. Iul. 1941 (ex sess. 9. Iul.) in *Ep. ad archiep. José M. Caro Rodríguez urbis S. Iacobi Chilensis* (ed. PerRMor 31 [1942] 166s): “. . . Systema Millenarismi etsi mitigati—docentis scl. secundum revelationem catholicam Christum [etc. *ut infra*] . . . iustorum resurrectione, corporaliter in hanc terram regnandi causa case venturum—tuto doceri non posse.”—Ed: AAS 36 (1944) 212.

De millenarismo (chiliasmo)

3839/2296 *Qu.*: Quid sentiendum de systemate Millenarismi mitigati, docentis scilicet Christum Dominum ante finale iudicium, sive praevia sive non praevia plurium iustorum resurrectione, visibiliter in hanc terram regnandi causa esse venturum.

Resp. (cfirm. a S. P'ce 20. Iul.): Systema Millenarismi mitigati tuto doceri non posse.

Decree of the Holy Office, 19/21 July 1944 (Ford's translation)

The author of the system of Moderate [mitigated] Millenarianism is the priest Manuel de Lacunza y Díaz who, around the year 1810, published under the pseudonym Juan Josafat Ben-Ezra, a work entitled *Venida del Mesías en gloria y majestad* (condemned by the Holy Office on 6 Sept. 1824). The Holy Office again issued a decree on 11 July 1941 (in a session held on 9 July) which reached the same conclusion in a letter sent to Archbishop José M. Caro Rodríguez in Santiago, Chile: “. . . it is not possible to safely teach systematic Millenarianism, even if moderated— namely that it is Catholic revelation that ‘Christ (*etc.*; see below) . . . at the resurrection of the just will return to reign bodily on this earth’”—Ed: AAS 36 (1944) 212.

About Millenarianism (also known as chiliasm)

Question: What is thought about a system of moderate millenarianism in which it is taught that Christ the Lord, before the last judgment and either before or after the resurrection of the many just, will return to reign visibly on this earth.

Answer (confirmed by the Roman Pontiff on 20 July): The system of mitigated millenarianism cannot be safely taught.

from the *New Catholic Encyclopedia*:

LACUNZA Y DÍAZ, MANUEL DE, Chilean theologian and Scripture scholar; b. Santiago, Chile, July 9, 1731; d. Imola, Italy, July 18, 1801. On Sept. 7, 1747, he entered the Society of Jesus and in 1755, he was ordained. On the expulsion of the Jesuits from Spain and its colonies in 1767, he went to Italy, where he led a retired life dedicated to meditation and study. This resulted in a book that later became famous, *Venida del mesías en gloria y majestad*, finished in 1790. It circulated in manuscript form before it was published in Cádiz, Spain, in 1812. It was later published in London, Mexico, Paris, and elsewhere, and translated into various languages. Lacunza used the pseudonym Juan Josephat Ben Ezra. The book had, even among the Jesuits, fervent admirers as well as strong opponents. It was finally banned by the Holy Office on Sept. 6, 1824, and again on July 11, 1941, this time with specific reference to the book's moderate *millenarianism. This was considered a fatal blow to the book among Catholics, although many of them, like Menéndez Pelayo, believed before 1941 that the condemnation did not refer to millenarianism per se but rather to statements against an Curia or statements offensive to the Fathers of the Church or in praise of Judaism. Among Protestants the book has become a symbol for some adventist sects. Lacunza's good faith and proper intentions cannot be doubted, although his mental health is questionable. His great reputation in Chile is based upon the depth of his thought, expressed in a polished style.

Bibliography: A. F. VAUCHER, *Une Célébrité oubliée: Le padre de Manuel Lacunza y Díaz* (Collonges-sous-Salève, Switz. 1941). F. MATEOS, “El padre Manuel de Lacunza y el milenarismo,” *Revista chilena de historia y geografía* 115 (1950) 134–161.

[F. MATEOS]