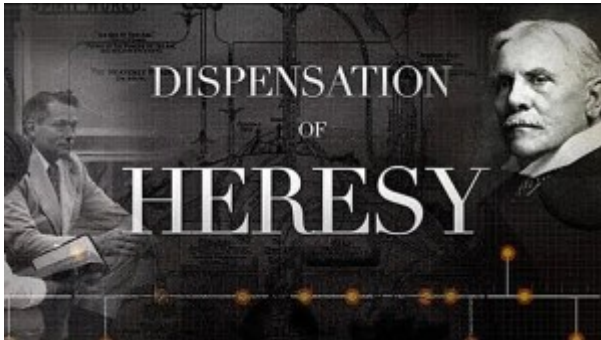


The Origin Of Dispensational Futurism And Its Entry Into Protestant Christianity



By H. C. Martin

Today many Protestants have departed from the Christian interpretation of the prophecies in the Book of Revelation, and many other passages in the Word of God. Church history has not left us in ignorance concerning the dispensational interpretation of the Book of Revelation. Every Protestant should know and spread the following startling facts.

Scholarly Dean Henry Alford (1870) informs us the Futurist school of prophecy can be traced to Jesuit Ribera (1590). It was invented for evil purposes e.g. "to protect the Papacy and to confuse the Protestants as to the true meaning of the Revelation. This scheme is not to be commended for obvious reasons.

The great Reformers opened up Revelation chapters 17 and 18 to all Europe and showed the people the great whore and the scarlet woman with disastrous results to the Papacy. In the Book of Revelation God foretold, exposed and denounced the works and doctrine of the great Apostate ecclesiastical system which would rise out of and succeed the wreckage of the Pagan Roman Empire. This apostate system was Papal Rome.

The Roman world had been ruled by Paganism until the 4th and 5th century AD, but now a change was destined to come to pass; this new found power being clearly symbolized in the Book of Revelation as a religious power by saying that it would be seen sitting in the Temple of God. That is to say in the Church itself swaying the lives of men and nations and ruling with great power from a self appointed pinnacle which it had set up (2 Thessalonians, chapter 2). This Papal power was to emerge after the Roman Empire was removed and would continue until it would be "consumed by the Spirit of His mouth and destroyed by the brightness of His Coming." (2 Thess 2:8).

As the darkness of the middle ages thereafter began to be lightened by the hard won labors of the Reformation all of the Reformers without exception, believed and taught that Papal Rome filled exactly every detail foretold concerning this new Religious entity and was therefore this apostate and Anti-Christ power which while purporting to be the only true Church of Christ

was actually fighting against Him. When this devastating exposure became revealed from the Scriptures themselves the first reaction of Papal Rome was to try to destroy the Bible. They thus gathered all the early English Bibles they could lay their hands on and had public burnings of them. One of these ceremonies was conducted by Bishop Tunshill in AD 1530, at Paul's Cross, London, when William Tyndale's English translation of the New Testament was burnt publicly. However, when this endeavor eventually proved fruitless they began to massacre and burn at the stake the living witness of the Truth, two of the most notable of whom were Bishops Ridley and Latimer who were burnt alive at Oxford in 1555 AD. during Catholic Mary's reign.

When it was seen that both these drastic measures failed to stem the incoming tide of Truth and of the Kingdom of God on earth the only procedure remaining to the Papal system was to endeavor to misinterpret all such verses of scripture which foretold and condemned it's system making the condemnation contained in these verses appear to fall if possible on some other party instead of themselves. This endeavor however produced two opposing schools of thought even within their own ranks. One of these schools is known as:

The Pretorists (Praeterists, Preterism)

Pretorists declared that the anti-Christ power of Scriptures had already come and gone being fulfilled in the Roman Emperors Vespasian and Titus, who had attacked the Jews, ransacked Jerusalem, destroyed the Temple and slaughtered over one million people in the year 70 AD.

The Futurists (Futurism)

The other school known as the Futurists said that this great power must be future, teaching that it would not appear until the Second Advent of Jesus Christ. The originator of this second erroneous thesis was a Spanish Jesuit priest, Francisco Ribera (1590). As he attempted to advance the Roman Catholic Counter Reformation, Ribera was embarrassed by the persistent Protestant identification of the Papacy with the Antichrist. To counter this he revived a futuristic interpretation for the Book of Revelations (he placed all but the first three chapters in the future). Antichrist was restored to a person and an individual ruler (not the Pope) who would arise in the future. Antichrist would reign for three and one half years and his teaching was embellished with a rebuilding of a temple at Jerusalem, revival of the Levitical Laws and Sacrifices, plus various Jewish aspects in addition to the wholly unfulfilled persecution of the Church. This futuristic interpretation was popularized by Cardinal Bellarmine and became widely accepted within Romanism.

The Reformers (Historicists, Historicism)

Quite distinct from the two foregoing schools, were the Reformers, who were without exception known as Historicists, that is to say those who believed that the Book of Revelation foretold a perfect sequence of the history of Christendom throughout this present evil age from beginning to end. Also the Book of Revelation is a revelation of Jesus Christ from his Ascension in power to His Consummation when He returns in Glory. The Book of Revelation as

taught by the Reformers exposed with paramount certainty the complete failure of both pagan and papal Rome and especially the utter and complete destruction of the latter (Revelations chapters 17 and 18)

How Dispensational Futurism Entered Into Protestant Christianity

The Reformers to a man, fiercely contested the futuristic thesis propounded by Jesuit Ribera, whose commentary on the Book of Revelation is in the Cambridge Library and all Futurist Commentaries since then are based on it. However it was left to another Jesuit, Emmanuel Lacunza (1731-1801) to complete the deception and through him Dispensational Futurism entered Protestant Christianity. At the time of the overthrow of Jerusalem in AD. 70, Rabbi Jochanon Ben Zakkai was carried from Jerusalem in a casket to Vespasian, who granted him permission to make his abode at Jamnai near the sea. Under his brilliant leadership, Judaism was revived and restored. Jamnai became the headquarters of the world Jewry, and remained such for four centuries when it was transferred to Babylonia where a heavy Jewish population had remained since the captivity. Rabbi Jochanon Ben Zakkai revived the Talmud and his was known as the Palestine Talmud and it's compositors were Rabbi Jochanon Ben Zakkai, Akiba, Meir, Judah the Great, being Rabbi Judah, whose title was "Ha nasi-the Prince". Babylonia remained the center of world Judaism for the next several centuries, but as they became a "state within a state" the Persian kings finally rose against her, some leaders were hanged, Talmudic schools were closed and the striving Talmudists fled, finding refuge in the city of Cordova in Spain. Cordova became the world capital of Babylonized Judaism for several centuries and here Jewry enjoyed her golden age. Jewish influence was felt in both "church and state" and in Spain thousands of Jews called "Marannas" joined the Roman Catholic institution while secretly adhering to Judaism. It was against this background that Rabbi Ben Ezra later wrote his book which altered the whole course of Christian History. Posing as a converted Jew under the name of Rabbi Ben Ezra he was the author of a book called "The Coming Messiah in Glory and Majesty". This book had a profound effect upon prophetic teaching during the early years of the 19th century. Strange of course to relate, he was neither a Rabbi nor a converted Jew for the startling truth is that Juan-Josefat Ben Ezra was the pseudonym behind which hid the Spanish Jesuit Emmanuel Lacunza. In his book Lacunza advanced the holy future "Day of the Lord" interpretation of the Apocalypse. (This was similar to the Ribera Futurist scheme in which he had tried spike the mighty guns of the Reformation and was virtually based upon his writings). It was also to Lacunza alias Ben Ezra that the two stages theory of the Second Advent of Jesus Christ owes it's origin and some competent Historians are of the opinion that its twin theory "The Secret Rapture" may yet be traced to him. The London publication in 1816 of a complete Spanish edition was the prelude to the advent of Dispensational Futurism. Not long after Dr. S.R. Maitland, Librarian to the Archbishop of Canterbury, issued a series of pamphlets assailing the HISTORIC PROTESTANT Interpretation of Prophecy and quite evidently based upon Ben Ezra's book, "The Coming Messiah in Glory and Majesty".

Other members of the Anglo Catholic party such as De Burgh, Newman, and

others were naturally attracted to it. In 1827 Edward Irving, a Scottish Presbyterian Minister who was based in London, translated the whole work into English. It is a striking thing that a short time after this the eloquent Irving was stirring the metropolis as with flaming oratory he preached the "Secret Rapture". Later in London, in the congregation of Edward Irving there broke out a series of emotional exhibitions, which included the communication of ecstatic utterances. One of these was to have widespread results, for soon after 1830, a woman, while speaking in tongues announced "The Revelation" that the true Church would be caught up (Raptured) to Heaven before the tribulation and before Christ's Return to Earth. Edward Irving was deposed from the Ministry and died in 1834, but not before his "Pre-Tribulationism" had been introduced at the Power Court Meetings. Dr. Tegalies tells us, "I am not aware that there was a definite teaching that there would be a secret Rapture of the Church at a secret coming until this was given forth as an utterance in Mr. Irving's church, from what was there received as being the voice of the Spirit. But what the brilliant though tragically misguided Irving regarded as the voice of the Spirit was nothing more than the spirits of the Jesuit which he himself so lately aroused". Indeed this entire congregation was later to defect to Roman Catholicism.

Meanwhile the young John Nelson Darby, a former Church of Ireland Clergyman and an extreme Anglo-Catholic, had not remained unaffected by what was happening. At the famous prophetic Conferences first at Albury Park, Dublin, in 1825, then Powercourt House in 1829. Darby met up with the leaders of the Brethren movement, the Irvingites, De Burge and others who had been influenced by Ben Ezra's book. J. N. Darby emerged as a powerful expositor and authority on prophetic matters. The Conferences were unanimous in the expectation of a future Antichrist. Darby, whose course had taken an evangelical turn, was later to succeed in fusing the diverse elements of this new "Futurism" into a scheme of his own, which he liked to call "DISPENSATIONAL TRUTH." But though it is often claimed that he recovered "the truth" of the two stages and the Secret Rapture concept of the Second Advent, the hard fact is that he borrowed these from the Roman Catholic Jesuit Priest, namely Manuel Lacunza, and his eccentric disciple Edward Irving. John Nelson Darby was followed by Dr. C. I. Scofield, who compiled what is known as the Scofield Reference Bible. Dr. Scofield was born in 1843 and entered the legal profession and was a practicing lawyer at the time of his conversion in the 36th year of his age. Three years later he abandoned his work and was ordained by a Congressional Council. Some years later with the assistance of an editorial board consisting of devoted Christian leaders, was produced the Scofield Reference Bible. It was first published in 1909 and revised in 1917, and again in more recent years. It is the Bible of the Dispensationalists and has been criticized by those who labor in the Churches as well as those on the Mission Fields of the world as "theories that are making the oral teaching of our Lord of NO EFFECT and that are BLIGHTING BIBLE STUDY all over the world. Many are forced to leave Prophecy alone for fear of confusing the Dispensational applications. Perhaps the worst feature of Dispensationalism is that it looks on all who do not hold it's viewpoint as heretics or religious liberals and modernists who deny the Bible altogether. Godly Ministers have been excommunicated from their denominations, devoted Missionaries have been dropped by Mission Boards and

Sunday School Teachers of unquestionable orthodoxy have been dismissed simply because they have come to have reservations about the scriptural soundness of the Darby-Scofield innovations. Little wonder that Alexander Reece speaks of them as "theories that are blighting Christian Fellowship all over the world".

Thus Ribera and Ben Ezra have succeeded beyond their wildest dreams for the attention of thousands of Protestants became deflected from the Papacy and a future infidel Antichrist is looked for and the historic Protestant view handed down by the Reformers is despised by many. These are the hard facts of history and a Protestantism saturated with Ribera's Futurism and Scofield's Dispensationalism, is not the Protestantism of the Reformers, and has thus opened the door to Protestant-Roman dialogue and the return of the Protestants to the Roman fold via the Ecumenical movement and the World Council of Churches. The Protestant Churches of this day are not Dispensational-Futurists in their theological makeup, but few will use the Book of Revelation as did the famous Reformers. What a great loss to our cause! The Christian scholar H. Gratten Guinness (1880) said, "The Futurist interpretation is Roman Catholic and unscriptural". Another Protestant Futurist preacher and a DD. at that, admitted that the Futurist Dispensational school of prophecy was indeed founded by Roman Catholic Jesuits but, says he, "What next? Then so are the mass and purgatory scriptural. How unthinkable!"

A Welsh Baptist Evangelist, Rev. J. G. Morgans said "Futurism is of the darkness of hell itself." Dr. Howard Taylor, son of J. Hudson Taylor, founder of the China Inland Mission said, "How any Protestant preachers can believe the Roman Catholic inspired scheme of Revelation, passes all comprehension. Dispensational Futurism is a colossal fraud and is still confusing Protestants and sheltering Papacy. Our Lord Jesus said not one word of rapturing the Church away in secret, seven years before his appearing or of His returning the second time to give the world when all will be converted. He did say, "Behold I come quickly and my reward is with Me to give to every man according to his work." (Rev. 22:12). His word tells us that His Second Advent is in Judgment, for He comes in flaming fire taking vengeance on them who know not God and who obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thess 1:7-9), and His word also tells us " But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? (2 Pet. 3:10-12). Our Lord never promised any future glory for this world, but only a fiery bath of destruction when all will be destroyed in readiness for the New Heavens and the New Earth (2 Pet. 3:13).

All Christless doctrines are false, no matter how many good men and "eminent" Bible teachers endorse them. The Canadian I.C.C.C. defender of the faith Dr. T.T. Shields said, "The Futurist- Dispensational doctrines are figments of the imagination. I class them as heresy". Christ is not coming the second

time to give the unsaved a second chance, in a second area of mercy for mankind. When Christ comes, The Day of Judgment comes and time ends." (Matt. 13:41-43, Rom. 8:20-26, 9:28, 1Pet 4:5, 2Pet 3:22-16, 1 Thess. 1:7-9) Most of the Reformers with [Luther], Calvin, the Puritans, Whitfield, Spurgeon, Warfield, Matthew Henry, are all in the company of renowned Christian men who utterly refuted the false theory of an earthly Jewish Kingdom. It was considered that Augustine was the most gifted theologian since apostolic days. In his book "The City of God" he so laid the Jewish Kingdom Ghost that it did not raise it's head for hundreds of years and was not revived until Ribera.

The Reformation And Confessions Of Faith

As the Reformation spread into the various countries of Europe these nations drew up their various confessions of faith:

The Augsburg Confession

This German confession was drawn up by Melancthon and approved by Luther and was submitted to the rulers and emperors of Germany, and the Lutheran Church. It among other things condemned Millenniumism as a Jewish opinion rejecting it along with other Anabaptist notions.

The English Confession Of Edward VI

From this came the 39 articles of the English Church, and also condemned Millenniumism in these terms, "Those who attempt to revive the fable of the Millenarians oppose the sacred Scriptures and throw themselves headlong into Jewish absurdities."

Calvin's Institutes

In the chapter on the final resurrection he wrote; "That Satan has endeavored to corrupt the doctrine of the Resurrection of the dead by various fictions." and adds, "not to mention that he began to oppose it in the days of Apostle Paul and not long after arose the Millenarians who limited Christ's Reign to one thousand years. Their fiction is too puerile to require or deserve refutation."

The Belgic Confession

This confession was adopted by Belgium and Holland, and regarding the Second Advent of Christ said, "That it will not take place until the full number of the Elect is complete." Thus guard against the pre-millennium scheme, namely that there will be people saved after Christ comes for His own.

The Second Helvic Confession

Quote: "We are to believe that at the last day there shall be a general Resurrection of the dead, both of the just and of the unjust, when they that are found alive in a moment shall be changed, and the selfsame bodies of the dead which are laid in the grave being then again united to their souls forever, shall be raised by the power of Christ. Immediately after the

Resurrection shall follow the general and final Judgment of Angels and men, the day and the hour whereof no man knoweth, that all may watch and pray and be ever ready for the Coming of the Lord." (Acts 24:15, 1 Cor.15:51-53, 1 Thess. 4:15-17, John 5:28-29)

In the light of the foregoing array of evidences from the Reformation Confessions of Faith it is evident that there is not one line of support for the Dispensational Jewish Kingdom heresy and it is not surprising when its advocates attack the Ministry, the Church or the Denomination to which one may belong. Says one Dispensationalist: "Christendom is dark and a dreadful anomaly; it is the corruption of the very best thing and therefore is the very worst corruption. It is the masterpiece of Satan, the corrupter of the truth of God, and a destroyer of the souls of men. It is a trap, a snare, a stumbling block, the darkest moral blot in the universe of God. It is worse by far than Judaism, worse by far than all the darkest forms of paganism."

Then again referring to the Ministry this same writer says, "We most certainly should keep clear of the evil of Clericalism, against this dreadful thing we solemnly warn our readers. No human language could possibly depict the evil of it." Referring to the Church the same writer says, "The Church has failed utterly. It has fallen from its high and holy position. It is under Judgment; it cannot be cheered by the church's proper hope, but is threatened by the world's terrible doom." Again "but alas the professing church is sunk lower and become darker than even the world itself." (Quoted from papers of the Lord's Coming by C. H. M. and published by Moody Press, pages 42, 82 and 87). So we see that Dispensationalism is directly opposed to the Ministry of the denominational Church. It is rightly defined by Dr. J. G. Voss, "As that false system of Bible interpretation, by the writings of J.N. Darby and Scofield Reference Bible which divides the history of man into 7 distinct periods of Dispensations, and affirms that in each period God deals with the human race on the basis of one specific principle. Apart from the above, Dispensationalists proclaim the restoration of the State of Israel along with all the trappings of Judaism. Dr. Patrick Fairbanks states that, "This doctrine was foreign to Christian theology during the first seventeen hundred years of the Churches existence." The fundamental teaching of the New Testament was what led the Fathers with one voice and all Christian writers down to the 17th century to reject the Jewish expectation, both of a territorial Restoration and a Revived Judaism."

The idea of Israel's Restoration has been injected into Christian doctrine by an extreme literalistic school of Bible interpreters, who, in the words of Gregory of Nyssa have, "enveloped their heart with the Jewish veil." The hope of Talmudic Israel has become the keystone in the prophetic scheme of modern Dispensationalism, as represented by such men as J. N. Darby and C. I. Scofield. The Dispensationalist is blinded to a truth basic in Christian theology, namely, that the Church is the proper sphere of prophecy. The racists among the Bible exegetes make the Church a parenthesis between two Jewish dispensations, namely that of the Law and the Kingdom. A well known American Dispensationalist, Dr. L. Sperry Chafer wrote, "that after the Christian Dispensation has run its course there will be a regathering of Israel and the Restoration of Judaism." (From book quoted: Dispensationalism

by Loraine Boettner, page 413).

The heresy of Dispensationalism results from the lack of proper understanding of the nature of the Old Covenant and its relation to the New. The Dispensationalists have never properly evaluated the change of Governments at Calvary. Rev. Clarence Larkin, one of the best known of all Dispensationalists wrote: "The New Covenant has not been made. It is to be made with Israel after they get back to their own land. It is promised in Jeremiah 31:31-37. It is unconditional and will cover the Millennium and the New Heaven and New Earth." (see Dispensational Truth, page 151), and again, "God has been trying to set up a visible Kingdom on this earth ever since the creation of man, but when 600 years of the times of the Gentiles had run their course God again made an attempt to set up His Kingdom on earth and the angel Gabriel announced to many the birth of a King. Thirty years later John the Baptist preached the Kingdom is at Hand! The king manifested did likewise, later by the twelve, then the seventy proclaimed the same thing. But the King was rejected and crucified and the setting up of the Kingdom was postponed." (Dispensational Truth, page 85, part 1)

What Is The Traditional And Orthodox Position Regarding Biblical Interpretation?

This is well stated in the writings of the following:

De Witt

De Witt wrote: "The Old Testament is a great prophecy. A great type of Him who was to come and has come."

Dr. L. Berkhof

Dr. L. Berkhof wrote: "The theocratic nation itself was merely a type of the spiritual realities of a better day, and therefore destined to vanish as soon as the anti-type made its appearance. The Restoration of the ancient theocracy in the future would simply mean the recurrence of the type" (The Kingdom of God, page 170)

Charles Haddon Spurgeon

Charles Haddon Spurgeon says: "In any part of the Christian Church all National distinctions are swept away and we are no more foreigners and strangers, but Fellow Citizens of the saints and the household of God. (Eph. 2:12-22). God has leveled as the Gentiles. He has given us all blessing which belong to Abraham's seed. Oh! What a blessing it is that all national and ceremonial distinctions have gone down the Jews and made them stand in the same class forever, and Christ is all in all who believe in Him." (Gal. 3:26-29)

Dr. G. Campbell Morgan

Dr. G. Campbell Morgan wrote: "I am convinced that all the promises made to Israel have found, are finding, and will find their fulfillment in the Church. It is true that in the past in my expositions, I gave a definite

place to Israel in the purpose of God. I have now come to the conviction as I have just said, that, it is the new and spiritual Israel that is intended, i.e. "The Church of Jesus the Messiah." "The glorious promises as found in Psalm. 72, Isaiah 60:63, Ezekiel chapters 37 and 38, Zechariah chapters 10 to 14, prefigure the Lord Jesus and His people in the New Israel, the Church, in this Christian Era (Acts 4:24-25, and 2 Cor. 6:12). God has excommunicated the Jewish Nation, and Christ will never again be found within a Jewish Temple."

Professor J. I. Packer

Professor J. I. Packer M.A.D.P.H. of Bristol College says: "Dispensationalism is a monstrosity."

Dr H. C. Slade

Dr H. C. Slade ex-president of the I.C.C.C. said: "The Dispensational doctrines do indeed present a serious problem to the Christian Churches. Some of these doctrines are nothing short of heresy."

Dr. W. Perkiser

Dr. W. Perkiser (The Pasadena Bible Institute) said, "Dispensationalism is one of the most ingenious systems of interpretation ever devised to evade the plain statements of God's Holy Word."

Prof. F. Bruce

Prof. F. Bruce M.A.D.D. The Open Brethren Evangelical scholar wrote: "The Darby, Scofield influence has not been for the good of the Brethren movement. There are many Brethren today who are neither Futurist nor Dispensationalist. The Scofield Bible is shot through with Dispensationalism."

Mr. Philip Mauro

Mr. Philip Mauro, an American Lawyer said, "Dispensationalism may be fascinating as a work of art, but as a Revelation it rests upon a foundation of sand. The entire system of Dispensational teaching is modernistic in the strictest sense. It is modernism, moreover of a pernicious sort, such that it must have a Bible of it's own ("The Scofield Reference Bible") for the propagation of it's peculiar doctrines, since they are not found in the Word of God."

It should be quite clear from the above that there is not sufficient Scriptural ground for the expectation of a Millennium, and the Bible favors the idea that the present Spiritual Kingdom of God will be followed immediately by the Kingdom of God in it's consummate and eternal form. The Kingdom of Jesus Christ is represented as an eternal and not a temporal Kingdom. (Isa. 9:7, Dan. 7:14, Lk. 1:33, Heb. 1:8, 2 Pet. 1:11, Rev. 11:15). To enter into the Kingdom of the future, is to enter upon one's Eternal State (Matt. 7:21-22), to enter life (Matt. 18:8-9), and to be saved (Mk. 10:25-26, Jn. 3:3) This is the most universal and widely accepted view and is the only one that is either expressed or implied in the great historical confessions

of the Church, and has always been the prevalent view in Reformed circles. Therefore, let us earnestly contend for the Faith once delivered to the saints, and we be no more children tossed to and fro and carried about by every wind of doctrine by the sleight of men and cunning craftiness whereby they lie in wait to deceive. Let us not give heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men that turn from the truth, but speak the things which become sound doctrine showing uncorruptness, gravity, and sound speech which cannot be condemned. Thus we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, Who gave himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself, a peculiar people, zealous of good works. Seeing therefore that we are compassed about by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and sin which doth so easily beset us and run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our Faith (Hebrews 12:1- 2)

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