

## Dispensationalism

*{part four}*

### “The Origins of Dispensationalism”

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Intro:

This evening we will consider the origins of Dispensationalism.

As in our previous studies we will consider the writing of Charles Ryrie in his book “Dispensationalism”.

The origin of a doctrine is an extremely important part of our study of any doctrine!

Q. What was the origin of Dispensationalism?

F.R. Coad, the Brethren historian says: {In a paper given in 1966}

{The title of this paper was}

*‘Prophetic Developments, with particular reference to the early Brethren Movement’*

In the context of the Reformations view of the papacy as Antichrist he said:

*“Meanwhile, the papal counter-reformation was not sitting quietly beneath the slur of Antichrist, and two Jesuits, Francesco Ribera (1537-1591) and Luis de Alcazar (1554-1613) produced detailed studies of Revelation in which very different interpretations were advanced. Ribera projected the whole book after the sixth seal into the future age of Antichrist”*

**He goes on to say:**

*“So we must go back and trace this futurist interpretation which was in so many circles to supersede the old historicism. Ribera, it will be remembered, had put forward a futurist scheme some 250 years before, in an attempt to absolve the papacy from the reproach of Antichrist. At the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, a very different Catholic writer had adopted his views.*

*Manuel Lacunza (1731-1801), a Jesuit of Chile, had been expelled with his order from that country, and went first to*

Spain and then to Italy, where he became an anchorite. There he devoted himself entirely to the study of the Scriptures, and for 20 years was engaged in writing his book 'The Coming of the Messiah in Glory and Majesty'. Distressed by corruptions in the Roman church, his work may have followed Ribera's ideas, but it was far removed in purpose from Ribera's. In his dedication he wrote—'I desire and purpose to stir up and even to oblige the priests to shake off the dust from their Bibles, inviting them to a new study and examination, a new and more attentive consideration of that Divine Book . . .' His scheme was largely futurist, and his Antichrist would arise in an apostate Roman Church, the signs of which were already present: the title of the book describes its central theme— the glorious Second Advent.

Lacunza had no illusions as to the reception of his book by the Roman hierarchy. He wrote under a pen name, Ben-Ezra, and at first his book was circulated privately in manuscript form. Yet even in that form it had wide influence. Eventually, well after his death, the book was printed secretly in Spain in 1812. The book caused something of a sensation, and was translated into many languages. Two English translations appeared, one by the celebrated Edward Irving, and thus the book enters importantly into our story. As Andrew Miller, a 19th Century 'Exclusive Brother', wrote

*'It pleased the Lord to revive in many minds during the first quarter of the present century, a deep interest in the restoration of Israel to their own land, and the consequent glory of Messiah's reign. Several books were published on this subject between the years 1812-1825. But the one which created the greatest interest is entitled "The coming of Messiah in glory and majesty" by a South American Roman Catholic priest, Emmanuel Lacunza, who adopted the nom-de-plume of Ben-Ezra, a converted Jew . It was translated into English, and published in London in 1827, with a long preliminary discourse by the Rev. Edward Irving.*

He goes on to say:

So it was that the famous Albury Conferences, held at Drummond's country seat at Albury near Guildford, were convened, assembling at least in the earlier years some of the flower of evangelical belief from all denominations. Among them was **Edward Irving**, brilliant Scottish preacher from London, whose eloquence was having a great impact on all circles, and who sponsored Lacunza's book while the conferences were being held.

These Albany Conferences were held each year from 1826-1830

In regard to these conferences he says:

"Immediately after these Conferences the teaching of the 'Secret Rapture' of the Church (namely, that the Second Advent will take place in two stages, the first being a rapture' of the Church before the Great Tribulation, from which she is thus delivered) became prominent. This teaching is a variation of futurism, and was apparently unknown before this time,"

Also he says:

"The exact origin of the teaching of the 'Secret Rapture' is obscure, but in some recorded but unpublished reminiscences, B. W. Newton, the prophetic teacher who was so prominent in the early Brethren movement, suggests that Irving introduced it at one of the Albury conferences."

The Connection with Pentecostalism:

Another interesting development which arose about this time, and was fostered by the conferences, was an expectation in some quarters that at the times of the end the Pentecostal gifts would be restored. Prominent in urging this was the Anglican, James Haldane Stewart (1776-1854), who attended the Albury conferences.

In March 1830, there was therefore considerable excitement when news came of an outbreak of 'tongues' in a village near Glasgow, and the fifth and final Albury Conference in July of that year stressed the duty of praying for a personal possession of those gifts. From such details of these 'tongues' as are available it does not seem that they included coherent utterances. They were soon after followed by faith healings in the same group of persons.

From Albany to Powerscourt:

Meanwhile the Albury studies had passed into saner channels. In October 1831, the year after the last conference at Albury, Lady Powerscourt threw open her home in Ireland to a similar but larger gathering, under the chairmanship of the Rector of Powerscourt, the Rev. Robert Daly, later Bishop of Cashel.

In general the conferences apparently eschewed the 'gifts' as a painful subject and the discussions appear to have been more moderate than at Albury.

Unfortunately, not a lot of information survives as to these conferences, but it is known that prominent among those present were leaders among the early Brethren, with whom Lady Powerscourt was in close sympathy (indeed, it is said that Darby almost married her).

So;

We can see from this Brethren Historian the clear link from the Jesuits through Irving to Brethrenism!

Q. Where does Ryrie say Dispensationalism originated?

"Informed dispensationalists.....recognise that, as a system, dispensationalism was largely formulated by Darby" {page 62}

**No!**

**We say it was repackaged by Darby!**

Regarding the early church fathers Ryrie says:

"it may be rightly said that they held to primitive or early dispensational-like concepts" {page 65}

He quotes Irenaeus {130-200} claiming that he had a rude form of dispensationalism {in page 64}

"the Gospel is quadriform, as is also the course followed by the Lord. For this reason were four principal (καθολικαί) covenants given to the human race: one, prior to the deluge, under Adam; the second, that after the deluge, under Noah; the third, the giving of the law, under Moses; the fourth, that which renovates man, and sums up all things in itself by means

of the Gospel, raising and bearing men upon its wings into the heavenly kingdom."

Note,

This from Irenaeus is a greater display of Covenant Theology than dispensationalism!!

Then he quotes Augustine:

Who refers to the "former dispensation" and the "latter period".

But all Augustine is referring to here is the times before and after Christ!

In fact, even in part of his quote from Augustine, Augustine writes:

"If it is now established that that which was for one age rightly ordained may be in another age rightly changed—the alteration indicating a change in the work, not in the plan, of Him who makes the change"

Note,

Augustine believed in one plan/purpose of God in the world!

Dispensationalism believes in two.

One concerning Israel and one concerning the Church!

L.S. Chafer:

"The dispensationalist believes that throughout the ages God is pursuing two distinct purposes: one related to the earth with earthly people and earthly objectives involved which is Judaism; while the other is related to heaven with heavenly people and heavenly objectives involved, which is Christianity..

Israel is an eternal nation, heir to an eternal land, with an eternal kingdom, on which David rules from an eternal throne' so that in eternity ...never the twain, Israel and church, shall meet."

Lewis Sperry Chafer, Dispensationalism (Dallas, Seminary Press, 1936), p. 107; Systematic Theology (Dallas, Dallas Seminary Press, 1975), Vol. 4. pp. 315-323.

**Read Ephesians 3: 8-11**

Also:

{Dispensationalists say that the main distinctive of Dispensationalism is the literal interpretation of scripture! Q. Do they take the following verses literally?}

### **Galatians 3: 28-29**

Regarding the origin of Covenant theology he says:

“covenant theology, which originated in the seventeenth century” {page 62}

Q. What about Augustine?

“When it is said, The male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that soul shall be cut off from his people, because he has broken my covenant, Genesis 17:14 some may be troubled how that ought to be understood, since it can be no fault of the infant whose life it is said must perish; nor has the covenant of God been broken by him, but by his parents, who have not taken care to circumcise him. But even the infants, not personally in their own life, but according to the common origin of the human race, have all broken God's covenant in that one in whom all have sinned. Now there are many things called God's covenants besides those two great ones, the old and the new, which any one who pleases may read and know. For the first covenant, which was made with the first man, is just this: In the day you eat thereof, you shall surely die. Genesis 2:17 ..... For the covenant from the beginning is, You shall die the death.”

Note:

The word covenant appears 292 times in the KJV

The word dispensation 4 times!

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Ryrie mentions Isaac Watts as a pre-Darby dispensationalist.

He quotes Watts. Here is part of that quote:

“Each of these dispensations of God, may be represented as different religions, or at least, as different forms of religion, appointed for men in the several successive ages of the world.”

Ryrie then quotes Darby and shows what he calls “His philosophy of dispensationalism”

“But the dispensations themselves all declare some leading principle or interference of God”

"In every instance, there was total and immediate failure as regarded man"

This is a denial of the teaching of Paul in Romans 5: 12-21

By one man! Etc.