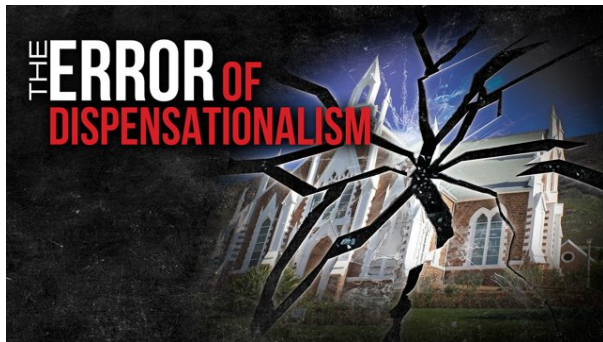


The Jesuit Origins of Dispensationalism and the Futurist Antichrist belief



My good friend Steve in California shared this lecture with me from Mark Fitzpatrick, the pastor of the Arann Reformed Baptist Church in Dublin Ireland. The description on the YouTube channel says, "We are the *only* Reformed Baptist Church in Dublin." Wow! The Irish didn't start off under the Roman papacy. It was some time in the 6th century they were converted to Roman Catholicism due to pressure on their monarch.

This is the fourth part of our studies in the subject of Dispensationalism and we want to look at this evening the origins of Dispensationalism. And because of that it's rare, that I have to make this admission. Most of our time will not be spent in the scriptures this evening so I want to admit that from the start. We will be looking more at history this evening. I do pray that that will not be a problem and a lack of blessing for us tonight. We will look at some scripture and we pray that that would indeed be a blessing to our souls.

As in our previous studies we will consider the writings of Charles Ryrie in his book Dispensationalism and we won't be looking as much at his writings as normal but we will be referring to some of what he says in the chapter which deals with the origins of Dispensationalism.

The origin of a doctrine is an extremely important part of our study of any doctrine. I remember many years ago the first systematic theology that I bought was Lewis Berkoff and then some time afterwards I saw that he had done a separate volume the history of Christian doctrine and I found that very beneficial. To see the historical setting of any doctrine whether it be a true doctrine or a false doctrine is always a very extremely important part of understanding that doctrine.

So, historically speaking, what was the origin of Dispensationalism? I've done quite a bit of research on this. It's so easy to in the modern age of Google and just sort of go on the internet and find whatever, but I wanted to get, and I did use the internet, but I wanted to get authoritative statements. I didn't just want to get the first website that came along to

find something that would fit to my need. So I spent a good number of hours researching this and I came across a historical paper given by a Brethren historian by the name of F.R. Code in a paper given in 1966 and he deals with the origin of Dispensationalism in that lecture that he gave at that time.

The title of his paper was [Prophetic Developments with Particular Reference to the Early Brethren Movement](#). In that paper, in the context of the Reformation and its view of the papacy as Antichrist, he said this, "Meanwhile, the papal counter-Reformation was not sitting quietly beneath the slur of Antichrist." We know the Reformers refer to the Pope as the Antichrist.

He goes on to say, "Two Jesuits, Francesco Ribera and Louis de Alcazar, 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 18th and 19th centuries, a very different Catholic writer had adopted his views. He refers here to a man by the name of Manuel Lacunza who lived 1731 to 1801. He was a Jesuit of Chile and 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.

Now at this point, I'm quoting, but to some degree, I'm not sure I totally agree with his point here, but I'm just quoting here at the moment. 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 and 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 Reverend Edward Irving.

He goes on to say this, the quote says this, "So it was that the famous Albury Conference held at Drummond's Country Seat in 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. Now these Albury conferences were held each year over a five-year period from 1826 to 1830. They were foundational regarding these doctrines.

In regard to these conferences, Code says, "Immediately after," and this is very important to get, "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. Again, just to remind you, this is a brethren, a Plymouth Brethren historian that is saying these things.

Also, he goes on to say, 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.

He goes on then to talk about the connection with Pentecostalism. Another interesting development which arose about this time and was fostered by the conferences, so the same conferences that the secret rapture doctrine came out of, he goes on to say, was an expectation in some quarters that at the time of the end, the Pentecostal gifts would be restored. Prominent in urging this was the Anglican James Haldane Stewart, 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.

Now, we move from Albury, I keep writing Albany in my notes, but it's Albury, from Albury to Powerscourt in County Wicklow, actually I noticed a couple of people that I listen to refer to Dublin constantly, but it's actually Wicklow. So the five conferences in Albury were from 1826 to 1830, then the next year the conferences moved from there to Powerscourt in County Wicklow.

Meanwhile, the Albury studies had passed into saner channels. In October 1831, the year after the last conference in Albury, Lady Powerscourt threw open her home in Ireland to a similar but larger gathering under the chairmanship of the Rector of Powerscourt, the Reverend 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 those conferences. He goes on a bit, I think I'll just stop there.

We've said enough to show this, or we've quoted enough to show this, that according to this Brethren historian, there's a clear link from the Jesuits through Irving on to Brethrenism, an absolutely clear link. And that's from a Brethren historian. Where does Ryrie say that dispensationalism originated? Ryrie says this, "Informed dispensationalists recognize that as a system, dispensationalism was largely formulated by [John Nelson] Darby.

Now what we would say in response to that is it was *repackaged* by Darby. It started with the Jesuits. It was sponsored by Edward Irving, who many of us know that Irving was extremely dodgy (unsound, unstable, and unreliable) to say the least. Sponsored by him at these Albury conferences, which went on to Powerscourt, which done away with the Pentecostal end of things, but kept this secret rapture dispensational type doctrine, which had its origin in the Jesuits.

Ryrie says that it was formulated by Darby, but then he goes on to argue that the early church fathers had some form of dispensational doctrine. He says, it may be rightly said that they held to primitive or early dispensational like concepts.

He quotes Irenaeus who lived 130 to 200 AD, claiming that he had some rudimentary form of dispensationalism. He quotes Irenaeus in these words.

"The gospel is quadriform (four parts), as is also the course followed by the Lord. For this reason, where four principle covenants given to the human race, one prior to the deluge under Adam, the second after 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."

Now, the one thing you'll notice there is, first of all, not only does Irenaeus not use dispensational thought, but actually uses the idea of covenant and covenant theology. It's four covenants that God gave, not four dispensations.

It is exactly what we would believe, that God works not through dispensations, but God works through covenants, because the covenants

represent the great covenant, which is the covenant of grace based upon, if you want to get really theological, the covenant of redemption was made between the father and the son, and then the covenant of grace is made between God and His elect people.

Ryrie goes on to quote 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. It's not that we disagree with the use of the word dispensation, we just disagree with the idea of dispensationalism. In fact, even in part of his quote from Augustine, Augustine writes this, "If it is now established that that which was for one age rightly ordained may be in another age rightly changed, the alteration," listen to what he says here, "the alteration indicating a change in the work, not in the plan of him who makes the change."

Now, that's totally against dispensationalism, because dispensationalism, it's very premise is that there's a change in the purpose and a change in the plan. Augustine believed in one plan or one purpose of God in the world. Dispensationalism believes in at least two major ones, one concerning Israel and one concerning the church.

Listen to what Lewis Sperry Chafer said. This really proves the point. "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 the church shall meet." It's quite clear language, which is consistent but completely *unbiblical*.

Turn to Ephesians 3, and thankfully we're getting to the scriptures. Ephesians 3 and verse 8. Unto me, whom less than the least of all saints is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ, to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God.

Now look at verse 11. According to the eternal purpose, which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord. There is *one* eternal purpose. There is *one* eternal plan. This, yes, is the manifold wisdom of God, but it's all according to the *singular* eternal purpose, which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Now dispensationalists say that the main distinctive of dispensationalism is the literal interpretation of scripture. Well, I wonder, did they take the following literally? Galatians 3, verses 28 and 29. Galatians 3, and especially verse 29. We'll just read verse 29. Actually, that's the main verse. "And if ye be Christ's, **then** are ye Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise."

Now, if we take that literally, then there can only be *one* people. There are *not* two peoples. There is only one people. If we belong to Christ, then we are part of the seed of Abraham. And the promise that was made to Abraham is fulfilled in us being in Christ. There are many other scriptures we could look at, but that is sufficient to show that what Lewis Sperry Chafer says is wrong.

Going back to what Roy already says regarding the origin of the covenant theology. He says covenant theology, which originated in the 17th century. Now this, of course, covenant theology was more developed and more expanded in the 17th century. But it always existed in the church. Listen to what Augustine says.

“When it is said, the male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that soul should be cut off from his people because he has broken my covenant. Some may be troubled how that ought to be understood, since it can be no fault of the infant whose life 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 they have all sinned.”

Now that’s covenant theology. That is the covenant of works. That is God bringing to bear on the whole of the human race what Adam did in the Garden of Eden. Now if dispensationalism is right, then that wouldn’t fit in. Because Adam stood, and we’ll say this near the end of our time tonight, Adam stood as the federal head of the whole race, not just of his dispensation, but of all the world. And when Adam sinned, he brought all of the human race with him.

Augustine goes on to say, “Now there are many things called God’s covenants beside those two great ones, the old and the new, which anyone 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. For the covenant from the beginning is, you shall die to death.”

That’s the covenant of works, or as some say, the covenant of obedience. Now by the way, the word covenant appears 292 times in the Authorized Version. The word dispensation appears four times. Huge difference. So covenant theology is all the way through the Word of God. The Word of God is constantly speaking of the covenants as it reflects the covenant of grace and the covenant of works.

Now, it gets a little bit worse. Riley mentions Isaac Watts as a pre-Darby dispensationalist, which he was. Watts was a dispensationalist.

By the way, we’re a church that sings the Psalms only. Isaac Watts was probably the single most instrumental man to bring in non-inspired songs into the evangelical church. Why? Because he was a dispensationalist. He believed that the Psalms were not sufficient for the Christian church because it was a different religion. Now, is that my words? Now, listen to what Isaac Watts says.

"Each of these dispensations of God may be represented as different religions." That's Isaac Watts' word. "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."

And that's why Watts in another place talks about turning David into a Christian. And what he meant was taking the Psalms and rewriting them so that David becomes a Christian. David was a Christian because David believed in the Christ. So therefore, all who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, whether before his life or afterwards, are all Christians. It is one faith, one Lord, one faith, and one baptism.

Ryrie then quotes Darby and shows what he calls his philosophy of dispensationalism. But the dispensations themselves all declare some leading principle, this is interesting, of interference of God. That's Darby's view. God is interfering. Now, we can spend some time on that.

The idea of God interfering in the world. No, we believe in a God who providentially is constantly ruling not only the world, but all the events of this world. He goes on to say, in every instance, there was total and immediate failure as regarded man.

And this brings us back to a point that's worth staying on for a moment. Because the idea of dispensationalism is this. That each dispensation begins with a test. And man fails. And therefore, God has to go on to another dispensation. Now, the problem with this view is, there's a number of problems with this view. But one of the problems with this view is it's steeped in Arminianism, really. Because the idea is that man had not failed completely after Adam. That man still somehow had the ability to pass a test after Adam.

No, the Bible tells us that when Adam failed, we all failed, not just partially, but completely in him. And the Bible refers, the Word of God refers to Christ as the last Adam. As the one who would, there was no need for any other. He was not only the second Adam in that sense, but he was the last Adam.

The other problem with this viewpoint in return, I know we looked at Romans 5 very recently. Just turn there with me for a second. As we've already said, it destroys, this is very, very important. And this is why dispensationalism is so heretical. It destroys what Paul presents in Romans 5 of the symmetry between Adam and Christ.

If there's seven different dispensations and seven different tests, it totally is outside the picture that Paul presents to us here in Romans 5 and verse 12. "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for all have sinned."

From unto the law and down to verse 14. Nevertheless, death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude or likeness of Adam's transgression, who was the figure of him that was to come. So here we see in this verse that the only two men that matter, and here's the point.

Let me put it as clearly as I can. The only two men that matter in God's economy of salvation is Adam and Christ. There is no other test. There is no other two men that matter. In Adam we die and in Christ we are made alive. But what dispensationalism says is this. That mankind is tested in each period of time and then mankind fails the test and so God is to start again.

But here's where it really becomes a problem. And we will get into this in more detail when we deal. I think next time we're going to look at the hermeneutics issue and then salvation after that. But here's where it becomes a real problem. Dispensationalism says that this age in which we live is also itself a failure. And it will only be in the millennial kingdom that will be the success.

Now we've said this already in a previous, but this is worth really emphasizing again. The covenant view of Scripture and the covenant view of salvation says that the cross is the success. The cross is the center of God's plan. The cross is the very pinnacle of what God did for the salvation of sinners. Whereas dispensationalism says it's only in the millennial kingdom shall there be success in the ultimate sense.

Verse 19 of Romans 5: For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. One of the other, and we'll close with this, the other problem with dispensationalism, and I remember when I first realized this, when I first actually comprehended this point, it was an eye-opener to say the least. Dispensationalism says that when the Lord Jesus Christ came into this world he came not initially to die on the cross, but initially to offer the kingdom. He came initially not to die, but to reign.

Now this is strange because quite often Armenians will will challenge us because we we say that God commands people to do something that they cannot do, and that's true. God commands all men everywhere to repent. God calls all men everywhere to live holy lives. We can't do that. And they think that's a problem, but they present a much bigger problem. They say that God offered something that He could not give. That's a bigger problem. God can command something that we cannot do because our inability comes out of our moral inability, not our physical inability.

But God cannot offer something that He could never give. How could God offer a kingdom to a people if they accepted it means He cannot go to the cross? Now the very purpose for the Lord Jesus Christ coming into this world was so that he might die. In fact one of His disciples was chosen in his sovereign purposes to be the betrayer that would bring Him to the cross of Calvary.

One of the criticisms of dispensationalism is of the covenant view and the reformed view is this, they say that we put the emphasis on the salvation of the elect and they put the emphasis on the glory of God. And we said in the previous time, I reject that point anyway. But the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost. That was His purpose. Not to offer a kingdom. In fact the Lord Jesus Christ could say my kingdom is *not* of this world. I have not come to establish a kingdom in this world.

In fact as one commentator said that if He was trying to establish an earthly kingdom well then at least from a human point of view the Romans would have had issue with Him. The reason the Romans didn't have issue from their perspective was because they recognized that what the Lord Jesus was bringing was something spiritual.

We thank God that the Lord Jesus Christ did come. Not with a confused purpose. Not with a confused plan. But He came. He came for the glory of God and for the salvation of sinners. For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.

Well, we'll we'll stop there and we'll pray God's blessing and then we'll continue God willing next time. Let us stand for closing prayer.

O Lord we we bless you and we thank you. We thank you for the one who came. The one who came to be the salvation of his people. And Lord even as we have considered the origin of certain doctrines. O Lord we thank you that we look to thy word this night. We look to thy word as the foundation. As the cornerstone of all our relationship with the Living God.

O Lord we pray that you would fix our thoughts and minds upon the Lord Jesus Christ this night. And that Lord you would bless us in the rest of our fellowship. And even as we've considered that which is false.

O Lord we pray that you would bring us to the truth of thy holy word. Bless us this night. We give you thanks for the refreshments that we shall receive in our Savior's name. (I think it's better to say in Jesus' Name!)