

# Justification by Faith and the Identity of Antichrist

Justification by faith is not only that great New Testament light which illuminates the meaning of the eschaton; it is the only light to expose and identify the great antichrist who precedes the parousia. Apart from the light of justification by faith, men invent all sorts of speculations about last day events. So too, they look for an antichrist who is drawn by carnal speculations.

The



early church scanned the future in anticipation of the coming antichrist who was depicted so strikingly by Daniel, Paul (2 Thess.) and John the Revelator. It was generally thought that he would appear on the scene after the fall of the Roman Empire. It is not surprising that the early church had indistinct ideas about the great antichrist.

It is most significant that the evangelical church<sup>1</sup> did not come to any distinct or united conviction about the identity of antichrist until the clear gospel light of justification by faith began to chase away the shadows of the dark ages of the papacy. Not only did the church of the Reformation come to a united understanding of justification by faith, but at the same time it came to a united understanding about the identity of antichrist. It is important, indeed most urgent, that we realize this relationship between the light on justification by faith and the identity of antichrist.

Now we do not contend that the Reformers were without fault in their theology. There were points on which they could not agree among themselves. But we had better give serious consideration to the points on which the evangelical church reached total and united agreement. Such unity is evidence of the Holy Spirit's endorsement. Says James Buchanan:

Few things in the history of the Church are more remarkable than the entire unanimity of the Reformers on the subject of a sinner's Justification before God . . . and can only be accounted for by ascribing it to a copious effusion of the Holy Spirit. — James Buchanan, *The Doctrine of Justification* (republished London: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1961), pp. 165,166.

The same thing may be said about the Reformers' united testimony as to the identification of antichrist. With one united voice they said that the "man of sin" was the office of the papacy.

Nowadays many want to dismiss the Reformers' view of antichrist as mere "polemics of a bygone era." But it was not a matter of ill will in the midst of theological controversy. "This understanding of the position and function of the papacy became an important part of Luther's theology. It was not merely part of his polemic but apart from all personal animosity a sincere theological conviction." — George W. Forell, *Faith Active in Love* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Pub. House, 1954), p.171. Said Luther, "You must be armed with Scripture so that you cannot only call the pope the Anti-Christ but also know how to prove it so clearly that you could die with this conviction and stand against the devil in death." — Cited by Forell, *ibid*.

The reason why so many today cannot appreciate the united view of the Reformers as to the identity of antichrist is that

they do not see the importance of justification by faith as the Reformers did. They do not regard this doctrine as the great central article, as the very air which Christians breathe. They do not recoil with horror to see this doctrine adulterated or relegated to a position of only relative importance.

To the Reformation church the papacy was the very antichrist, the prophesied "man of sin," because it committed the ultimate impiety by making war on justification by faith alone. Dr. F. Pieper expresses the view of the Reformation when he writes in *Christian Dogmatics*:

There can be no greater enemy of the Church of God than the Papacy. In and by the doctrine of justification the Church lives . . . Can anything worse befall the Church than being robbed of the doctrine of justification, by which alone she lives and exists? When the enemy takes my earthly life, he can do me no greater harm in earthly matters. And when the Pope has taken away the spiritual life of the Church by robbing her of the doctrine of justification, the climax of harm has been reached. (St. Louis: Concordia Pub. House, 1950), Vol.2, pp.553,554.

Said the renowned English expositor of the nineteenth century, Dr. H. Grattan Guinness:

From the first, and throughout, that movement [the Reformation] was energised and guided by the prophetic Word. Luther never felt strong and free to war against the papal apostasy till he recognised the pope as antichrist. It was then he burned the papal Bull. Knox's first sermon, the sermon which launched him on his mission as a Reformer, was on the prophecies concerning the Papacy. The Reformers embodied their interpretation of prophecy in their confessions of faith, and Calvin in his "Institutes". All the Reformers were unanimous in the matter . . . And their interpretation of these prophecies determined their reforming action . . . It nerved them to resist the claims of that apostate church to the uttermost. It made them martyrs, it sustained them at the stake. And the views of the Reformers were shared by thousands, by hundreds of thousands. They were adopted by princes and peoples... —H. Grattan Guinness, *Romanism and the Reformation* (Toronto: S. R. Briggs, [n.d.]), pp.250-260.

## **The United Testimony of the Reformers as to the Identity of Antichrist**

Let us now hear the united testimony of the Reformers, for their system of prophetic interpretation became unchallenged in the Protestant movement for three hundred years and actually became known as "the Protestant system" of prophetic interpretation.

## Martin Luther

We are convinced that the papacy is the seat of the true and real Antichrist — *D. Martin Luthers Werke*, ed. Briefwechsel (Weimar, 1930-1948), Vol.2, p.167, cited in *What Luther Says*, ed. Ewald M. Plass, Vol.1, p.34.

You should know that the pope is the real, true, final Antichrist, of whom the entire Scripture speaks, whom the Lord is beginning to consume with the spirit of His mouth and will very soon destroy and slay with the brightness of His coming, for which we are waiting. — *D. Martin Luthers Werke*, ed. Kritische Gesamtausgabe (Weimar, 1883-), Vol. 8, p.554., cited in Plass, *op. cit*, Vol.1, pp.36, 37.

## John Calvin

Daniel and Paul had predicted that Antichrist would sit in the temple of God. The head of that cursed and abominable kingdom, in the Western church, we affirm to be the Pope. When his seat is placed in the temple of God, it suggests, that his kingdom will be such, that he will not abolish the name of Christ or the Church. Hence it appears, that we by no means deny that church may exist, even under his tyranny; but he has profaned them by sacrilegious impiety, afflicted them by cruel despotism, corrupted and almost terminated their existence by false and pernicious doctrines; like poisonous potions, in such churches, Christ lies half buried, the gospel is suppressed, piety exterminated, and the worship of God almost abolished; in a word, they are altogether in such a state of confusion, that they exhibit a picture of Babylon, rather than of the holy city of God. — John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), Bk. 4, chap. 2, sec. 12.

## Heinrich Bullinger

By the little horn many understand the kingdom of Mohammed, of the Saracens and of the Turks . . . But when the apostolic prophecy in Second Thessalonians 2 is more carefully examined, it seems that this prophecy of Daniel and that prophecy of the apostle belong more rightly to the kingdom of the Roman pope, which kingdom has arisen from small beginnings and has increased to an immense size. — Trans. from Heinrich Bullinger, *Daniel Sapientissimus Dei Propheta (Daniel the Most Wise Prophet of God)*, chap. 7, fol. 78v.

## Nicholas Ridley

The head, under Satan, of all mischief is Antichrist and his brood; and the same is he which is the Babylonical beast. The beast is he whereupon the whore sitteth. The whore is

that city, saith John in plain words, which hath empire over the kings of the earth. This whore hath a golden cup of abominations in her hand, whereof she maketh to drink the kings of the earth, and of the wine of this harlot all nations hath drunk; yea, and kings of the earth have lain by this whore; and merchants of the earth, by virtue of her pleasant merchandise, have been made rich.

Now what city is there in the whole world, that when John wrote, ruled over the kings of the earth; or what city can be read of in any time, that of the city itself challenged the empire over the kings of the earth, but only the city of Rome, and that since the usurpation of that See hath grown to her full strength? — Nicholas Ridley, *A Piteous Lamentation of the Miserable Estate of the Church in England, in the Time of the Late Revolt from the Gospel*, in *Works*, p.53.

## Philip Melanchthon

18. Since it is certain that the pontiffs and the monks have forbidden marriage, it is most manifest, and true without any doubt, that the Roman Pontiff, with his whole order and kingdom, is very Antichrist.

19. Likewise in 2 Thess. II, Paul clearly says that the man of sin will rule in the church exalting himself above the worship of God, etc.

20. But it is certain that the popes do rule in the church, and under the title of the church in defending idols.

21. Wherefore I affirm that no heresy hath arisen, nor indeed shall be, with which these descriptions of Paul can more truly and certainly accord and agree than with this pontifical kingdom . . .

25. The prophet Daniel also attributes these two things to Antichrist; namely, that he shall place an idol in the temple, and worship [it] with gold and silver; and that he shall not honor women.

26. That both of them belong to the Roman Pontiff, who does not clearly see? The idols are clearly the impious masses, the worship of saints, and the statues which are exhibited in gold and silver that they may be worshiped. —Trans. from Philip Melanchthon, "De Matrimonio," *Disputationes*, No.56, in *Opera (Corpus Reformatorum)*, Vol.12, cols. 535, 536.

## John Hooper

Because God hath given this light unto my countrymen, which be all persuaded, (or else God send them to be persuaded!) that the bishop of Rome nor none other is

Christ's vicar upon the earth; it is no need to use any long or copious oration: it is so plain that it needeth no probation; the very properties of antichrist, I mean of Christ's great and principal enemy, is so openly known to all men, that are not blinded with the smoke of Rome, that they know him to be the beast that John describeth in the Apocalypse. — John Hooper, *Declaration of Christ and His Office*, chap. 3, in *Works*, Vol. 1, pp.22, 23 (early writings).

## The Counter Reformation and the Origin of Futurism

Not only did the Reformers proclaim the mighty truth of justification by faith for the liberation of men's souls, but they nerved thousands to break from the tyranny of the dark ages of the papacy by clearly identifying the antichrist of Bible prophecy. The symbols of Daniel, Paul and John were applied with tremendous effect. The realization that the incriminating finger of prophecy rested squarely on Rome aroused the consciousness of Europe. In alarm Rome saw that she must successfully counteract this identification of antichrist with the papacy or lose the battle. She must present plausible arguments which would cause men to look outside the medieval period for the development of antichrist.

Jesuit scholarship rallied to the Roman cause by providing two plausible alternatives to the historical interpretation of the Protestants.

**1. Luis de Alcazar** (1554-1613) of Seville, Spain, devised what became known as the "preterist" system of prophetic interpretation. This theory proposed that the Revelation deals with events in the Pagan Roman Empire, that antichrist refers to Nero and that the prophecies were therefore fulfilled long before the time of the medieval church. Alcazar's preterist system has never made any impact on the conservative, or evangelical, wing of the Protestant movement, although in the last one hundred years it has become popular among Protestant rationalists and liberals.

**2. Francisco Ribera** (1537-1591) of Salamanca, Spain. took a far more successful tack.

He was the founder of the "futurist" system of prophetic interpretation. Instead of placing antichrist way in the past as did Alcazar, Ribera argued that antichrist would appear way in the future. About 1590 Ribera published a five hundred page commentary on the Apocalypse, denying the Protestant application of antichrist to the Church of Rome. The gist of his futurist system was as follows:

- a. While the first few chapters in the Revelation were assigned to ancient Rome in the time of John, the greater part of the prophecies of the Revelation were assigned to the distant future, to events immediately preceding the second coming of Jesus Christ.
- b. Antichrist would be a single individual who would abolish the Christian religion, rebuild the temple at Jerusalem and be received by the Jews.
- c. Antichrist's blasphemous work would continue for a literal three and a half years.
- d. The locale of the conflict with antichrist would be the Middle East — i.e., Palestine.



Ribera's futurism was expanded and polished by later Catholic scholars and became the genuinely "Catholic" system of prophetic interpretation.

Roman Catholic author G. S. Hitchcock summarizes the genesis of futurism and preterism as follows:

The Futuristic School, founded by the Jesuit Ribera in 1591, looks for Antichrist, Babylon, and a rebuilt temple in Jerusalem, at the end of the Christian dispensation. The Praeterist School, founded by the Jesuit Alcazar in 1614, explains the Revelation by the Fall of Jerusalem, or by the fall of Pagan Rome in 410 A.D. — G. S. Hitchcock, *The Beasts and the Little Horn*, p.7.

In 1898 English Protestant author Joseph Tanner made these observations on the beginnings of futurism and preterism:

Accordingly, towards the close of the century of the Reformation, two of her [Rome's] most learned doctors set themselves to the task, each endeavouring by different means to accomplish the same end, namely, that of diverting men's minds from perceiving the fulfillment of the prophecies of the Antichrist in the Papal system. The Jesuit Alcazar devoted himself to bring into prominence the Preterist method of interpretation, which we have already briefly noticed, and thus endeavoured to show that the prophecies of Antichrist were fulfilled before the Popes ever ruled at Rome, and therefore could not apply to the Papacy. On the other hand the Jesuit Ribera tried to set aside the application of these prophecies to the Papal Power by bringing out the Futurist system, which asserts that these prophecies refer properly not to the career of the Papacy, but to that of some future supernatural individual, who is yet to appear, and to continue in power for three and a half years. Thus, as Alford says, the Jesuit Ribera, about A.D. 1580, may be regarded as the Founder of the Futurist system in modern times. — Joseph Tanner, *Daniel and the Revelation* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1898), pp.16,17.

Ribera's futurism was polished and popularized by the great Catholic controversialist, Cardinal Bellarmine (1542-1621) of Italy. This astute prince of the church took up the battle against Protestantism and became the foremost apologist for Rome in the Counter Reformation. Bellarmine insisted that the prophecies concerning antichrist in Daniel, Paul and John had no application to the papal power. Between 1581 and 1593 he published the most detailed defense of the Catholic faith ever produced, called *Disputationes de Controversiis Christianae Fidei Adversus Huius Temporis Haereticos*. The third part of his *Disputationes* was devoted to showing that antichrist is not the papacy but a single man who will appear at the end of time. Said Bellarmine:

For all Catholics think thus that Antichrist will be one certain man; but all heretics teach . . . that Antichrist is expressly declared to be not a single person, but an individual throne or absolute kingdom, and apostate seat of those who rule over the church. — Bellarmine, "De Summo Pontifici," *Disputationes*, Bk. 3, chap. 2, p.185.

Bellarmino further said:

Nor can any one be pointed out who has been accepted for Antichrist, who has ruled exactly three and one-half years; therefore the Pope is not Antichrist. Then Antichrist has not yet come. — *Ibid.*, chap. 8, p.190.

The Pope is not Antichrist since indeed his throne is not in Jerusalem, nor in the Temple of Solomon. — *Ibid.*, chap. 13, p.195.

For nearly three hundred years the Protestant movement had no lack of expositors who very ably defended the "Protestant," or historical, school of prophetic interpretation. Until the nineteenth century, Protestantism stood unitedly on the historical principle of prophetic interpretation, and futurism therefore made no penetration within the Protestant movement.

## Futurism Enters English Protestantism

Futurism first entered Protestantism in nineteenth century England by two seemingly widely separated developments.

1. The first was the appearance of a Romanizing tendency in the Church of England. Briefly, the development was as follows:

**a. Dr. Samuel R. Maitland** (1792-1866), curate of Christ Church at Gloucester and later librarian to the archbishop of Canterbury, was the first notable Protestant scholar to accept the Riberan interpretation of antichrist. Maitland held the Reformation in open contempt and freely admitted that his view of prophecy coincided with Catholic interpretation. His views were first published in 1826 and received widespread study and interest.

**b. James H. Todd** (1805-1869), professor of Hebrew at the University of Dublin, studied and accepted Maitland's futuristic views. He strongly attacked the Reformers' historical system of prophetic interpretation. Todd's views were published and widely circulated among the theologians of his time.

**c. John Henry Newman** (1801-1890), famous High Church Anglican who was converted to Rome and became a cardinal, was one of the leading spirits in the renowned Oxford, or Tractarian, movement. Five years before he joined the Church of Rome, Newman advocated Todd's futurism in a tract called *The Protestant Idea of Antichrist*. Newman wrote:

We have pleasure in believing that in matters of Doctrine we entirely agree with Dr. Todd . . . The prophecies concerning Antichrist are as

yet unfulfilled, and that the predicted enemy of the Church is yet to come.

Through the publication and dissemination of thousands of tracts, the Oxford movement leavened English Protestantism with the idea that the Reformers' understanding of antichrist was untrustworthy. It effectively diverted attention from Rome to some person to come in the future.

**2.** About the same time as the development of the Oxford movement, there was another development in England which played a decisive role in bringing futurism within the Protestant movement. There was a growing disenchantment with the deadness of the established churches, a reaction against the spiritualizing tendency of postmillennialism (with its tendency toward modernism and preterism) and a revival of hope in the soon coming of Christ and the last things. Two religious leaders played an important role in these developments:

**a. Edward Irving** (1792-1834), born in Scotland and a brilliant Presbyterian preacher, became a noted expositor in the British Advent Awakening. At first a historicist in his approach to the prophecies, Irving came to adopt futuristic views. He despaired of the church being able to complete her gospel commission by the ordinary means of evangelism and began to believe and preach about the miraculous return of the gifts and power of the early church.

In 1831 the "gift of tongues" and other "prophetic utterances" made their appearance among his followers, first in Scotland among some women and then in London. Irving never detected the imposture and gave credence to these new revelations. Under the influence of these revelations of "the Holy Ghost" "by other tongues," a new aspect was added to the expectation of a future antichrist — the rapture of the church before the advent of Christ. The novel origin of this novel theory has embarrassed some of its advocates, and in the face of certain lack of evidence heretofore, the defenders of this novel theory have tried to deny its historical beginning. But the recent discovery in a rare book of Rev. Robert Norton entitled *The Restoration of Apostles and Prophets; In the Catholic Apostolic Church*, published in 1861, establishes the origin of this innovative doctrine



beyond all question. Norton was a participant in the Irvingite movement. The idea of a two-stage coming of Christ first came to a Scottish lass, **Miss Margaret Macdonald** of Port Glasgow, Scotland, while she was in a "prophetic" trance. Norton has actually preserved Miss Macdonald's pretribulation vision and "prophetic" utterance in his book. He says:

Marvellous light was shed upon Scripture, and especially on the doctrine of the second Advent, by the revived spirit of prophecy. In the following account by **Miss M. M.** —, of an evening during which the power of the Holy Ghost rested upon her for several successive hours, in mingled prophecy and vision, we have an instance; for here we first see the distinction between that final stage of the Lord's coming, when every eye shall see Him, and His prior appearing in glory to them that look for Him. — Robert N. Norton, M.D., *The Restoration of Apostles and Prophets; In the Catholic Apostolic Church* (1861), p.15<sup>2</sup>

A little later the idea of the secret pretribulation rapture was adopted and polished by the Plymouth Brethren in their founding Powercourt Conferences of the 1830's. S. P. Tregelles, who participated in the Powercourt Conferences, admits that the Brethren obtained the idea of the rapture from the Irvingite movement. He writes:

I am not aware that there was any definite teaching that there should 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 then received as being the voice of the Spirit. But whether anyone ever asserted such a thing or not it was from that supposed revelation that the modern doctrine and the modern phraseology respecting it arose. — S. P. Tregelles, *The Hope of Christ's Coming*, p.35, cited by George L. Murray, *Millennial Studies — A Search for Truth* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1960), p.138.

**b. John Nelson Darby (1800-1882)**, one of the prominent founders of the movement often known as Plymouth Brethren, was not only an ardent futurist, but he added another new dimension to the futuristic scheme—dispensationalism. Says Oswald T. Allis in his book, *Prophecy and the Church*:

The **Dispensational** teaching of today, as represented, for example, by the **Scofield Reference Bible**, can be traced back directly to the Brethren Movement which arose in England and Ireland about the year 1830. Its adherents are often known as Plymouth Brethren, because Plymouth was the strongest of the early centres of Brethrenism. It is also called Darbyism, after John Nelson Darby (1800-82), its most conspicuous representative. The primary features of this movement were two in number. The one related to the Church. It was the result of the profound dissatisfaction felt at that time by many earnest Christians with the worldliness and temporal security of the Church of England and of many of the dissenting communions in the British Isles. The other had to do with prophecy; it represented a very marked emphasis on the coming of the Lord as a present hope and immediate expectation. These two doctrines were closely connected.

### 1. The Parenthesis Church

The beginning of the Brethren doctrine regarding the Church is found in the claim that an ordained ministry and eldership was not necessary to the proper observance of the great central rite of the Christian Church, the Lord's Supper. It was claimed that Christian believers might meet together to break bread, without any ecclesiastical order or government whatsoever. And since the New Testament speaks quite definitely of the ordaining of elders, it was claimed that this "professing church" which is characterized by a ministry or eldership having "successive" or "derivative" authority was Jewish and Petrine, and to be sharply distinguished from the Church described by Paul as a "mystery," which is entirely unique, utterly distinct from Israel, a heavenly body having no connection with the earth. So understood, the Church age is to be regarded as a "parenthesis" between the Old Testament kingdom of the past and the Old Testament

kingdom of the future, or in other words as constituting an "interruption" in the fulfilment of the kingdom promises to Israel. This distinction between the true (Pauline) Church and the professing (Petrine) church is of fundamental importance.

## **2. The Any Moment Coming**

Closely connected with the doctrine of the Church was the doctrine of the Coming. Brethrenism had its beginnings at a time when there was great interest in the doctrine of the second advent. Edward Irving had stirred London by his flaming eloquence, declaring in sermon after sermon that the Lord might come at any moment. The Brethren, who were ardent Chiliasts, took the position that the Church as a heavenly body had no connection with earthly events, that such events concerned Israel and the nations, that the Church must live in constant expectancy of the coming of the Lord, that no events of any kind must be regarded as necessarily intervening between the Church and this any moment expectancy, and particularly that the rapture of the Church would certainly take place before the great tribulation.

This any moment doctrine of the coming had a natural and inevitable consequence, which is of prime importance in Dispensational teaching. It led to the discovery of a second hidden interval or parenthesis in the course of redemptive history as set forth in the Bible. If the Church has nothing to do with earthly events and may be raptured at any moment, and if the Bible clearly refers to events which are to precede the coming of Christ to the earth, the logical inference is that there must be two aspects or "stages" of the coming: one which concerns the Church only and is timeless and signless, and the other which concerns the earth and will be separated from the former by an interval during which the predicted events will take place. Consequently, instead of adhering to the view that the rapture, the catching up of the saints to meet the Lord in the air, would be immediately or speedily followed by their return with Him to reign over the earth, which was the view generally held at that time by Premillennialists, the Brethren reached the conclusion that a sharp distinction must be drawn between the coming of the Lord for the saints (the rapture) and His coming with the saints (the appearing or revelation). In between these two events, they claimed that they could recognize an important interval of time; namely the 70th week of Dan. ix., the second part of which they identified more or less exactly with the events recorded in Rev. iv.-xix. Consequently, this second parenthesis, as we may call it, between the rapture and the appearing, is both a very necessary and also a distinctive feature of Brethren teaching, almost if not quite as important as the Church parenthesis referred to above.

## **3. The Jewish Remnant**

Closely related to this teaching regarding the Church and the Coming and indeed indispensable to it was the doctrine of the Jewish Remnant. If the Church consists only of those who have been redeemed in the interval between Pentecost and the rapture, and if the entire Church is to be raptured, then there will be no Christians on earth during the period between the rapture and the appearing. Yet during that period 144,000 in Israel and an innumerable multitude from the Gentiles (Rev. vii.) are to be saved. How is this to be brought about, if the Church has been raptured and the Holy Spirit removed from the earth? The answer to this question is found in the doctrine of the Jewish remnant. After the rapture of the Church a Jewish remnant is to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom and through the preaching of this gospel multitudes are to be saved. . .

This Brethren Controversy, as we may call it, has now become largely a thing of the past. The Plymouth Brethren are today one of the smallest of Christian groups, and their distinctive conception of Church order and government is very largely ignored. On the other hand, the fact that many of the views of the Brethren (their conception of the Church as a heavenly mystery and their prophetic program as a whole) are fully accepted in Dispensational circles, are indeed characteristic of Dispensationalism as such, has made Dispensationalism an issue of greater or lesser importance in practically all evangelical denominations at the present time . . .

## Dispensationalism in America

The distinctive features of Brethrenism were fully developed and formulated before the middle of the last century. Darby made his first visit to Canada in 1859 and subsequently paid repeated visits to Canada and the United States. In 1862 James Inglis of New York began the publication of a monthly, *Waymarks in the Wilderness*, which helped to spread the teachings of the Brethren on this side of the Atlantic. One of the most influential advocates of this teaching was James H. Brookes of St. Louis, whose *Maranatha* appeared about 1870 and passed through many editions. But while Brookes' Dispensational views so closely resemble those of the Brethren that it seems clear that they were largely derived from them, Brookes gave no credit for them to Darby or any other of the Brethren. This may be due to the fact that there were associations with the name of Darby which Brookes wished to avoid. But his attitude was characteristic of the movement as a whole. Dispensationalists have accepted the prophetic teaching of the Brethren, but until recently have shown themselves decidedly unwilling to disclose the source from which they derived them. Brookes was active in the summer conferences known as "Believers' Meetings for Bible Study" which were commenced in the seventies, and also in

the Prophetic Conferences, the first of which was held in New York in 1878.

Without attempting to trace the history of Dispensationalism in detail, it will suffice to point out that it has owed its rapid growth in no small degree to two books, *Jesus is Coming* by "W.E.B.", and the *Scofield Reference Bible*. Blackstone's *Jesus is Coming* was published in 1878... The *Scofield Reference Bible* was published in 1909 and revised in 1917. More than two million copies have been printed. It is the Bible of Dispensationalists, and has probably done as much to popularize the prophetic teachings of Darby and the Brethren as all other agencies put together. That Scofield was indebted to the Brethren for his Dispensational views cannot be questioned. He derived them first indirectly, from Brookes, and then directly from the Brethren and their writings. He held Darby's *Synopsis*, which is the standard commentary among the Brethren, in high esteem; and in the *Introduction to the Reference Bible* he acknowledged his indebtedness to the Brethren Movement without expressly mentioning it, and made special mention of the "eminent Bible teacher," Walter Scott, who was a prominent figure among the Brethren. There are today scores of Bible Schools and Institutes in this country and elsewhere, especially in Canada, where Dispensational interpretation of the Bible is stressed and the *Scofield Reference Bible* practically a textbook. And the number of books and periodicals in circulation today which represent this viewpoint is legion.—(Philadelphia: The Presbyterian & Reformed Pub. Co., 1972), pp.9-14.

## Two Outstanding Defenders of the Protestant Method of Prophetic Exposition

When these developments in England were seriously eroding the historical, or Protestant, system of prophetic interpretation, two great opponents of futurism arose:

**1. Edward Bishop Elliott** (1793-1875), graduate of Cambridge in 1816, produced a most elaborate work of 2,500 pages on the Apocalypse. He exposed the fallacious interpretations which involved abandonment of the Protestant position on antichrist, and attacked the Romanizing tendencies in the Tractarian movement. It was Elliott who presented a thorough, documented history of the rise of futurism and preterism from Jesuit sources.

**2. Dr. Henry Graflan Guinness** (1835-1910) of London published nine major works on prophecy between 1878 and 1905. Alarmed by the inroads of the futurist school of

counterinterpretation stemming from the Jesuits, Guinness mounted a tremendous defense of the historical school of Protestant view, which holds to the progressive fulfillment of prophecy from John's time to the second advent.

## A Summarized Appraisal

In the last one hundred years the Protestant movement has largely abandoned the prophetic convictions of historic Protestantism and has opted for theories which have their origin with the Jesuits. The liberal wing of the Protestant movement, often denying the inspiration of the Bible or spiritualizing away its most pointed truths, have adopted the preterist view of prophecy, first espoused by Jesuit Alcazar. But the right wing of Protestantism, espousing an extreme literalism in reaction against the liberals, have taken over Ribera's futurism, and in some circles they have made it a part of "evangelical orthodoxy." This represents a remarkable triumph of the theories of Rome's Counter Reformation.

Above all, we need to see the reason why Protestantism has swerved away from her historic prophetic convictions. It is because the great truth of justification by faith is no longer at the center of the church's attention. As we will see in the next article, that truth has been buried by an earthly, man-centered vision. Says Dr. Francis Pieper:

What, then, may be the reason that men are today disinclined to recognize the Pope as the Antichrist? Whence this strange and deplorable phenomenon, that nearly all recent "believing" theologians search about for the Antichrist while he is performing his work in the Church right before their eyes, his soul-destroying activity as plain as day? The trouble is that they have no living knowledge of the doctrine of justification and of the importance of this doctrine for the Church. From my own experience I must confess that I was vitally convinced that the Pope is the Antichrist only after I realized, on the one hand, what the doctrine of justification is and how much it means to the Church, and, on the other hand, that the real essence of the Papacy consists in denying and cursing the doctrine of justification . . .

Most modern Protestant theologians have adopted the Roman view of the doctrine of justification, as Doellinger pointed out in his lectures on the reunion of the Christian Church. — Pieper, *op. cit.*, Vol.2, pp.554, 555.

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### Footnotes:

<sup>1</sup> We use this term to distinguish the true Christian community as a whole.

<sup>2</sup> Those wishing a thorough documentation of these facts should obtain a copy of Dave MacPherson's *The Unbelievable Pre-Trib Origin* (Heart of America Bible Society, Inc., 5528 Lydia St., Kansas city, Mo. 64110).

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